

# Foreword

## Kō ngā tāhū ā o tapu wai inanahi hei tauira ora mō āpōpō

*The footsteps we lay down by those before us create  
the paving stones where we stand today*

There's a great temptation when hitting significant milestones such as a 20th anniversary to make a list of the great things you've accomplished, to map the distance you've come and to celebrate the successes that have brought you so far. And there's nothing wrong with that impulse. It's what makes us human — our ability to not only strive for good and great things but to reflect on the 'hero's journey' once we've achieved them. It's good to celebrate achieving something so remarkable as two decades of significant contribution to the wellbeing of New Zealand's business community.

But you take a risk in looking backwards — of becoming introspective and even exclusionary. It's never been in The Icehouse's DNA to exist for its own sake. From the very beginning, when it was launched in 2001, The Icehouse was formed to help build an ecosystem that would nurture New Zealand's SMEs and provide incubation and capital for the country's startup economy; to help founders catch the 'knowledge wave'.

To reflect, to look forward and aspire to greater things brings to mind the quote attributed to Bill Gates: 'most people overestimate what they can do in one year and underestimate what they can do in 10 years'. The Icehouse has always had its feet planted firmly on the ground.

Its purpose is to help New Zealand's businesses achieve their extraordinary potential, and in doing so to make New Zealand a better and more prosperous and more sustainable place to live. And that objective has no end point. There's no 'goal' because founders and entrepreneurs are never satisfied — that's the nature of the ecosystem.

So it is at The Icehouse. The target isn't 20, 30, or even 40 years — the aim is to never be satisfied, to

always be learning, growing, and developing a burgeoning knowledge economy. To that end, we don't look inward — we look forward and we look outward.

This publication reflects that perspective. We wanted to mark our first 20 years in a way that contributed to the conversation; reflecting on some of the milestones and achievements of our first two decades, but in the context of where New Zealand is now, and where it will be in the future. The voices you hear in the pieces we've included are those of the brilliant people who have made The Icehouse what it is — and brilliant because of their passion, determination, foresight, and their dedication to the wellbeing of the community and the success of others.

In the following stories, you'll hear them reflect on the past and the 'journey so far' — but you'll also recognise their determination to keep the story moving forward. They are people of deep insight and intelligence who have an unerring ability to read the moment and to see where the present might take us.

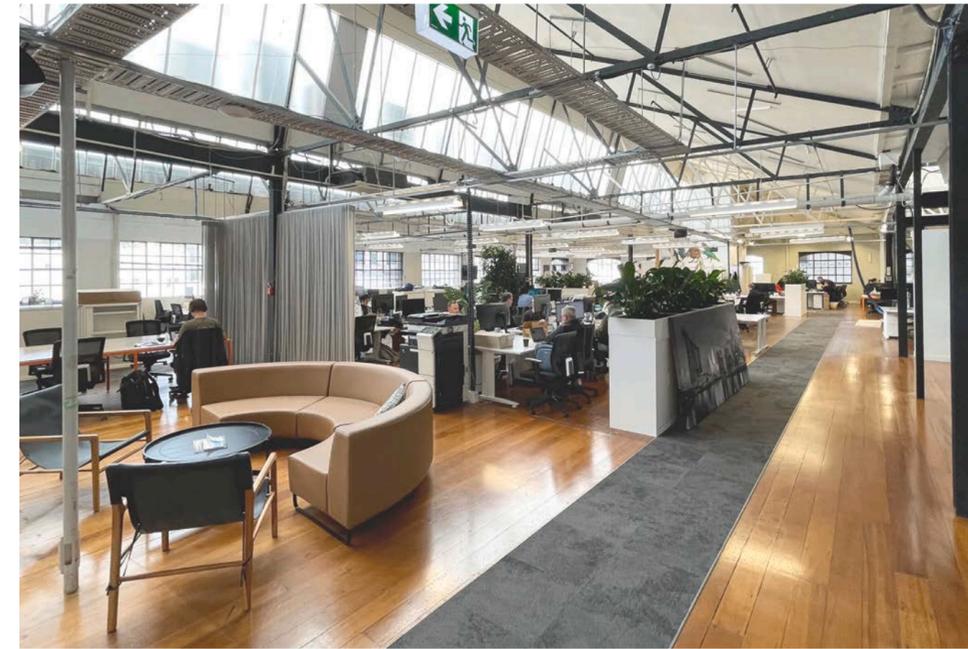
The Icehouse story begins well before its launch in August 2001 — even before those early spirited conversations among its co-founders. It actually begins before settlement, in the 'pre-history' of this coastal trading centre. We should never forget the communities and traders and families who occupied this land before any of us were here, or the circumstances by which it became such a thriving commercial centre. Which is why te ao Māori bookends this project. This is no token acknowledgment of our Treaty partners — it flags a commitment by The Icehouse to being shaped by a worldview that values relationships, community, the environment and sustainability as much as 'success'; a longitudinal and intergenerational perspective that has implications for entrepreneurs whose success will be measured by more than wealth.

When we began putting this 20-year publication together, we had no sense of a unifying 'theme'. But some key themes emerged from the conversations behind the stories you will read. One common theme is that you can't do good without doing well; and you can't do well without also doing good. You'll see that reflected on both the Growth and the Ventures parts of The Icehouse.

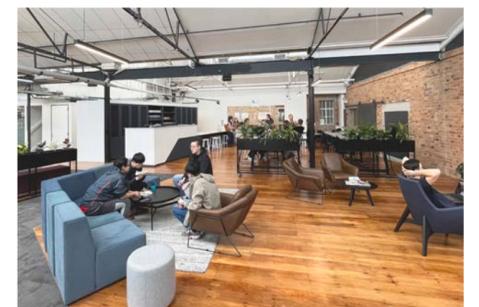
Another theme is that money is not a sustainable end in itself — the goal of business is to solve a problem that's worth paying for. This sense of problem-solving resounds throughout the stories of The Icehouse's first 20 years. In a sense, that's what everyone here does — they solve problems for other people, in many and diverse ways.

Finally, there's a very clear sense that everyone who has contributed to The Icehouse story so far has been able to recognise the extraordinary among the so-called ordinary — whether that's founders looking to start the next 'crazy' outlier, or the ICE Foundation supporting an innovation programme in secondary schools, or the Owner Manager Programme helping New Zealand's SMEs think bigger and smarter about their businesses, their communities, the environment and the society, or the many volunteers who have given their time to a bigger cause.

These extraordinary stories are what make The Icehouse extraordinary — and they are also what keep us humble, and very, very grateful.



The Icehouse (co-working space)  
in the Textile Centre, Parnell

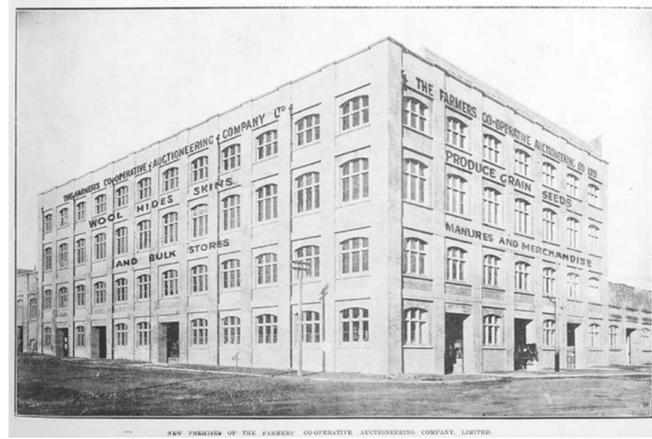


The Icehouse logo created to celebrate  
the 20 year anniversary

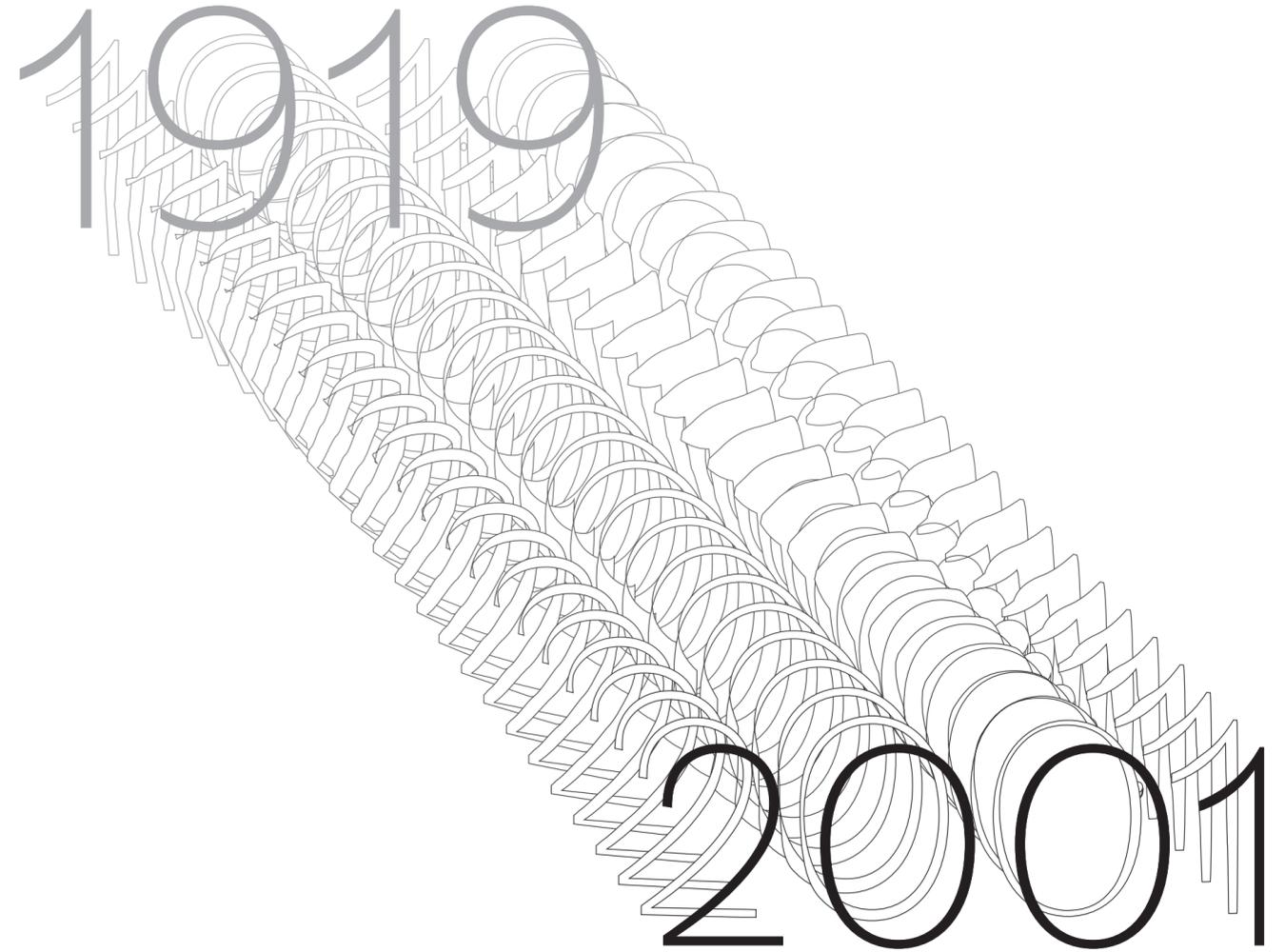
# The Textile Centre

## Cut by hand

1919 — 2001



The four-storey wool store building of the Farmers Co-operative Auctioneering Company Limited — what is now part of the Textile Centre. A team of horses can be seen emerging from an entranceway on the right. August 1919. Image: Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections AWNS-19190807-45-4



A note in a heritage assessment report on the Textile Centre that has housed The Icehouse for the past two decades highlights the jarrah wood post and beam structure that can be seen in almost all areas of the building's interior. The beams and columns came from overseas, used as ship ballast before being dropped in St George's Bay and traded, to be used as building materials for the four-storey building that now occupies 117-125 Saint Georges Bay Road.

Jarrah wood, durable, resistant to decay and resilient against insect attack, its high density the reason it still stands after almost 100 years, but also the reason it's difficult to machine and why, on the exposed columns and beams of the Textile Centre structure you can still see the irregular marks left on the wood... where they have been cut by hand.

The past matters. It was cut by hand. The signs of the handiwork of the artisans who carved our stories can still be seen like irregular notches in the beams and columns that form the structures of who we are now.

It's no accident of history that the Textile Centre, once a wool store trading in hides and skins, was built in the heart of a trading centre that became the country's first European suburban and industrial development. A place where mechanics and tradesmen congregated, to work and do business, to generate wealth and security, to grind the gears of a fledgling economy.

It's also no accident that the land was among 3000 acres gifted by Ngāti Whātua Ōrakei to Captain Hobson in 1840, the year of the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, for the purpose of establishing the new

capital of New Zealand. Or even that the land had been fought over well before it became a centre for commerce and trade, and before the bay was reclaimed for industry, a railway and the port.

That same land would host the fledgling trading relationship between Māori and Pākehā and model its potential. This enterprise was no by-product of the settlement's early commercial activity — it was a vital factor of early Auckland's survival. So fundamental was it to the life of the settlement in the days before a true marketplace was established in the 1870s, a reserve was set aside on the foreshore of Mechanics Bay just down from where The Icehouse now operates, so that a hostel could be built for visiting Māori traders. It was a functioning, mutually beneficial outworking of the treaty that is too rarely remembered, but which shaped the district and marked the uniqueness of that moment in history.

That history was cut by hand. The irregular marks of its very human handiwork are there for all to see.

Stories matter. Place matters. Our ancestry matters. Te ao Māori reminds us that in the interconnectedness of all things, the living is influence by the non-living, and the now is shaped by what has gone before.

So it is with The Icehouse, homed in a building that has trade and artisanship and commerce and innovation carved into its very structure. The history of The Icehouse is cut by hand, from early discussions about a startup ecosystem by academics in the halls of the University of Auckland, to the Knowledge Wave Conference from which The Icehouse was a distinctly tangible outcome.

That health is not measured by productivity alone, but also by the wellbeing of the community and a more sustainable use of our resources. All of which was imagined way back at the beginning, more than 20 years ago, as the conversations that would birth The Icehouse gathered steam.

The story of The Icehouse, like the building in which it operates and for which its people and partners have such affinity, was cut by hand, fashioned from material that is durable, resistant, and resilient, bearing the marks of that handiwork for all to see, now and into the future.

Jarrah wood used as ship ballast before being used as building materials.





Looking south from the foreshore of Mechanics Bay showing the Maori Hostelry (right), Gittos Street (left to right centre), Maori canoes in foreground. Circa 1860. Image: Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 4-2730

The story of The Icehouse, like the building in which it operates and for which its people and partners have such affinity, was cut by hand, fashioned from material that is durable, resistant, and resilient, bearing the marks of that handiwork for all to see, now and into the future.

Looking south east, showing reclamations in the bay and premises of New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company Limited (right of centre) in Old Kings Drive (now part of The Strand). The site where the Textile Centre now stands. August 1912. Image: Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 1-W1479



Looking north from Dilworth Terrace showing reclamation for the railway line and bridge in St Georges Bay (left), showing The Strand and premises of the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company (centre right), the Textile Centre (behind), and Campbells Point (left). May 1927. Image: Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 1-W795

# Transforming our economy and society through knowledge and innovation

2001



The Catching the Knowledge Wave conference in 2001 represented a pivot in how New Zealand thought about the knowledge-based economy — but it didn't happen out of the blue and its impacts weren't felt as soon as the conference finished.

The conference was a crystallisation of ideas and activities that had been fermenting for several years.

Geoff Whitcher, former board member of The Icehouse and an organiser of the Knowledge Wave conference, remembers then University of Auckland Vice-Chancellor John Hood visiting entrepreneurial universities around the world to see their models up close. It was a sign the ecosystem was gathering momentum.

It coincided, says Whitcher, with the realisation that if New Zealand were to get a knowledge-based economy much of that knowledge would have to come from the universities. However, universities in New Zealand only had two key activities: one was research to produce the knowledge — the other teaching to pass it on to students. What happened to the knowledge after that was not their focus or responsibility. It was realised that universities had to add a third stream of activity — that was knowledge transfer — transferring knowledge to the business community so their research findings could be utilised in commercial activity.

There was a mounting realisation too that New Zealand had to move further up the value chain and couldn't rely on commodity agriculture forever. There was also dissension between the business and political communities, and a prime minister, Helen Clark, who wanted to start a healing process that would also involve the social sector.

The conditions for not just the Catching the Knowledge Wave conference, but also a new paradigm of innovation and entrepreneurship, were ripe.

'At the time there was a lot of naysaying about it being just another talk-fest, that nothing ever came of them,' says Bridget Coates, co-founder of The Icehouse, which was launched the same month as Catching the Knowledge Wave. 'But shifting mindsets, which is effectively what happened, takes quite a while.'

Coates takes it all the way back to a trip to Israel in 2000 with then minister of research, science and technology Peter Hodgson, and a group representing the University of Auckland, to take a closer look at the 'startup nation' to see if a similar thing could happen in New Zealand.

'At about that same time, John Hood appointed Geoff and I to improve relationships between the university and the business community. So we set up a number of research institutes within the university, and with support from the Business School Dean, Barry Spicer, and David Irving, I was involved in setting up The Icehouse as a way of increasing innovation and entrepreneurship. It was literally the first of its kind in New Zealand.'

There was also the launch of The Great NZ Business Venture with Douglas Myers, long-time chief executive of Lion Breweries and Lion Nathan, and Stephen

Tindall. The programme ran a business planning competition that received three-and-a-half thousand entries.

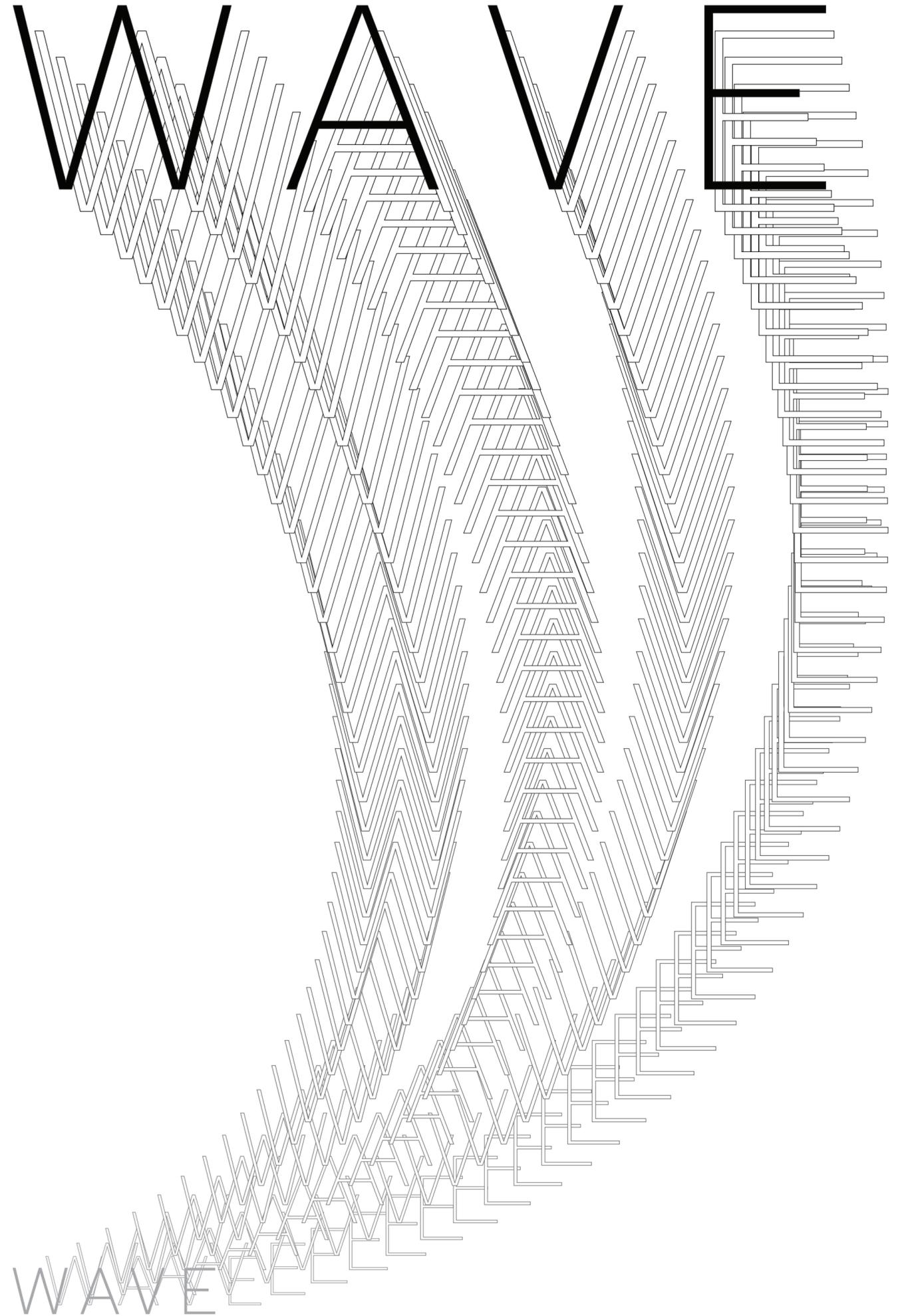
'We were completely blown away,' Coates remembers. 'We ran entrepreneur courses and got hundreds and hundreds of people. There was such a huge desire to know what it was like to start a business, and even to know what an entrepreneur was.'

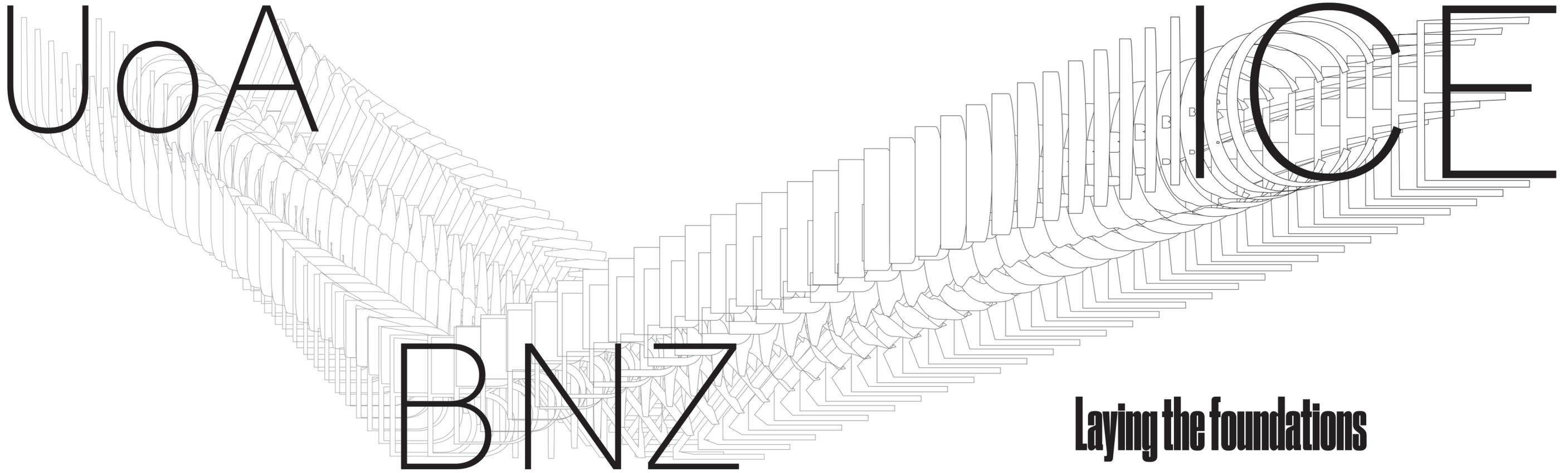
The conference took place against the backdrop of this fervour for change. It received Helen Clark's imprimatur through her co-chairmanship with John Hood. This, with a stellar list of international and local speakers, ensured widespread publicity.

In her opening speech, the prime minister said: 'While (other countries) have been transforming their economies and societies through the application of knowledge and innovation, we haven't kept up with them. Our export profile resembles that of developing countries, not that of a developed one. Our economy has not been generating the level of wealth required to keep us high in the first league.'

When the conference was over, her office released a communique praising its success, saying: 'The conference has stimulated new thinking on achieving growth through new approaches to education, innovation, research and development, promoting excellence, networks, mentoring, and building scale and clusters in key industries. A strong focus on entrepreneurship, the attraction and retention of talent, the transformation of public and private institutions, and incentives to promote innovation and creativity have also emerged.'

The fledging wheels of The Icehouse had been well and truly greased.





## Laying the foundations

2001



David Irving, Co-Founder of The Icehouse



### Founding Partners

When David Irving went to see BNZ's head of corporate banking in 2000 he had a very simple value proposition — he wanted to develop a journey programme for New Zealand's small and medium size businesses, these 'bloody things called SMEs'. They were like flies, buzzing everywhere, but you couldn't grab hold of them, and you didn't necessarily know where they were coming from — but they were the engine room of the New Zealand economy, and no one was teaching them how to grow. David Irving, retired head of Heinz Wattie, and Barry Spicer, Dean of the University of Auckland Business School, wanted to change that.

The BNZ listened. For 15 minutes. That's all it took for them to commit to backing the idea with a \$300,000 cheque. Just like that they could see what a gift it would be to their clients — a straightforward value-add to the BNZ's banking proposition.

The next morning, they firmed up their commitment and what would become The Icehouse had its first corporate founding partner. Others soon followed. Dr Alan Jackson, managing partner Australasia of the Boston Consulting Group put up half the \$300,000 himself and committed Boston Consulting Group to the rest.

'When you get people responding like that, it's a very tell-tale sign you're onto something,' Irving says, 20 years later. 'I didn't think of it quite like that at the time — I just felt hugely grateful.'

The partnership model that allowed the idea for The Icehouse to proceed was also something Irving had realised was pretty fundamental — they would be non-competing collaborative partners, one representative from each industry, each with board representation.

Irving and Bridget Coates set about approaching the people they already knew well — people who also knew that if the idea was coming from the likes of Irving and Coates it had real potential. With the University of Auckland Business School as a cornerstone partner they quickly secured the founding partners of what would soon become The Icehouse: BNZ, Boston Consulting Group, Carter Holt Harvey, and the associate founding partners Deloitte, Microsoft, Chapman Tripp and Compaq.

For the likes of the Business School, it was an opportunity to forge closer links with the business community, something Dean Barry Spicer had been particularly keen to see happen. University of Auckland's Vice-Chancellor, John Hood, had been a strong supporter of the idea from the beginning. The BNZ saw it as a branding opportunity as well as a way of supporting their SME clients. Alan Jackson, meanwhile, wanted to see the creation of more, and bigger companies, and saw in the journey model of learning being proposed an opportunity for New Zealand's SMEs to grow.

The winds were at their back, Irving reflects. Even if they didn't fully know it at the time, the past two decades has proven it to be the case.

# The ICE Foundation

## The International Centre for Entrepreneurship

2001 — Present



Young Enterprise Scheme Cohort.  
Image: ©Cactus Photography.

PhD candidates hoping to undertake studies with an entrepreneurial thrust.

Young Enterprise, established in 1981 to promote business learning and innovation in secondary schools.

Manurewa High School's Year 14 programme supporting students exiting high school and entering the foreign world of work and university.

New Zealand Dance's efforts to use dance to nurture learning in all disciplines, from the cultural and creative through to maths and science.

What do they have in common? They have all attracted the support of the ICE Foundation, the charitable trust that owns The Icehouse, and which hopes to become a leader in providing the type of financial support that enables entrepreneurship and SME business growth to flourish in New Zealand.

David Irving was on unfamiliar ground. He'd only had experience of corporates and the world of big companies. But as a retired CEO and an adjunct professor with the University of Auckland Business School, he was confronted with a brand new challenge — understanding owner-managed businesses.

The problem? They were fundamentally different from corporations in that the person who runs the business owns the business.

But there was some common ground with what Irving knew from his years in corporates. SMEs were still businesses, which meant they started with an idea. And what was an owner-manager other than an entrepreneur who had stuck around for a while and was now running the business? Which was the guts of a conversation he found himself having with

Bridget Coates, whose focus had been on startups and early-stage businesses and incubators.

Those conversations flourished into what became The Icehouse, and the charitable trust that owns The Icehouse — The ICE (International Centre for Entrepreneurship) Foundation. Bridget Coates was the foundation's first chair, and David Irving its second (and current) chair. The founding trustees were representatives of the major founding partners.

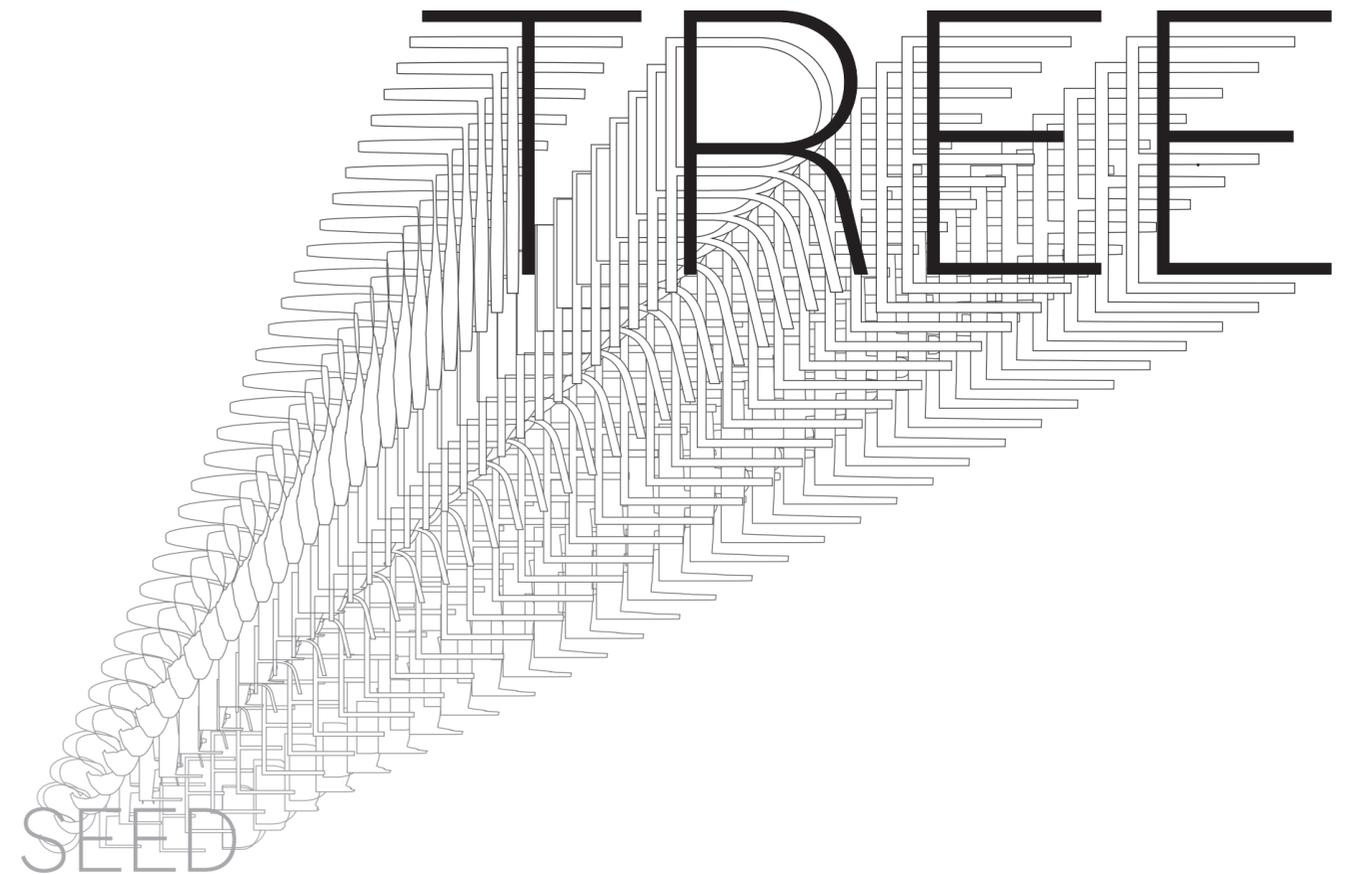
The ICE Foundation has come a long way since its formation 20 years ago — though its activities still tend to take place under the radar, as they always did.

From the early seeds of those first conversations between friends and colleagues has grown a charity that directly supports New Zealand business as a giver of donations, apart from its governance role with The Icehouse.

'The foundation grew to be an overseer of what was going on across The Icehouse activities,' Irving says. 'It was like an owner, which it was more than anything. I really felt the responsibility to those people who had granted us money and showed faith in us at the beginning.

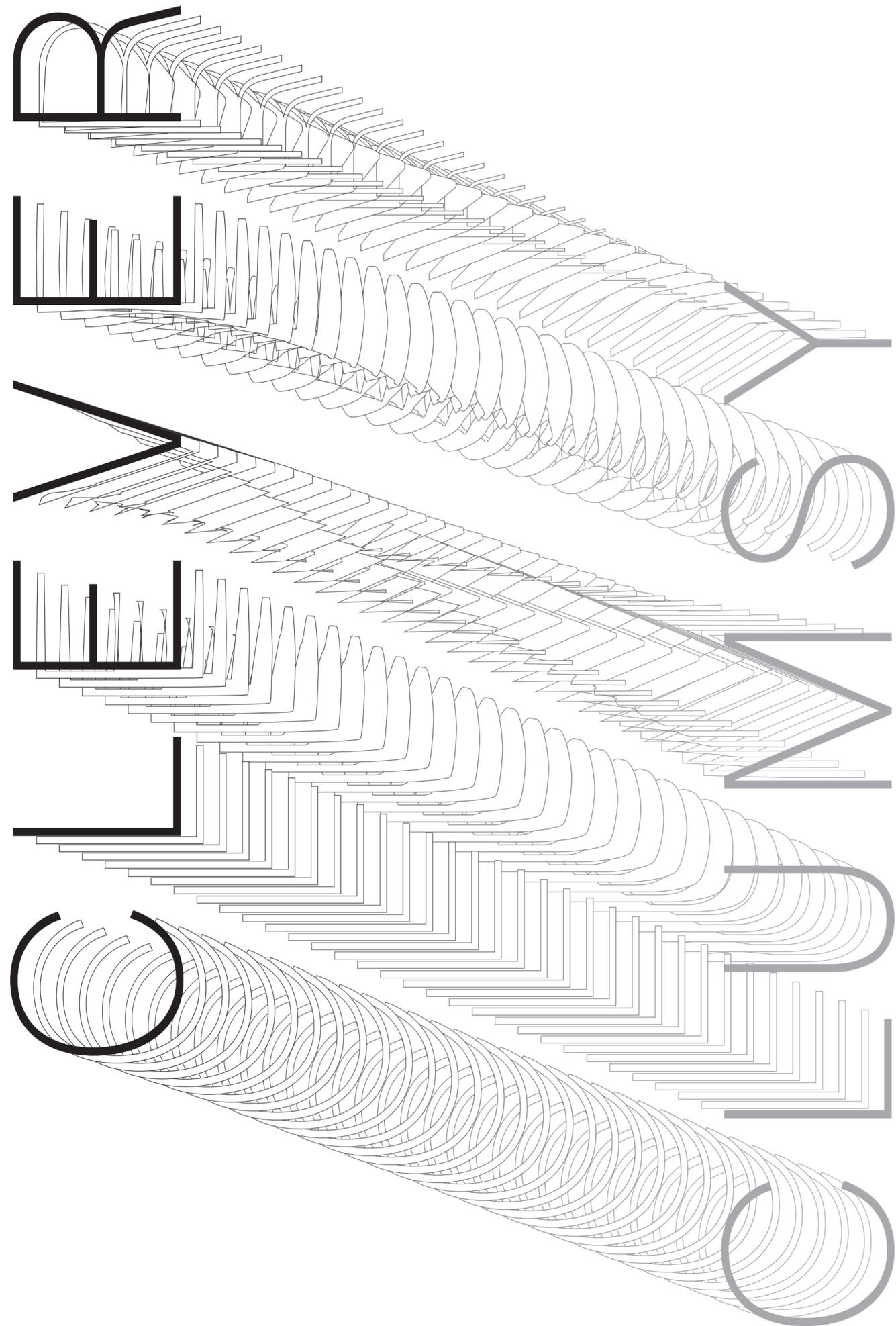
'But as the years have gone on it's become a place of charitable giving, allocating monies from its subsidiary as donations ourselves, which is very good.

'And that will get bigger and bigger as we go on. And I think we can be a quite significant philanthropist in New Zealand's business education sector for years to come.'



Artists of New Zealand Dance Company in a study for Lumina. Image: ©John McDermott. Courtesy New Zealand Dance Company





# Evolution of Governance

## Steering the ship

2001—Present

Clumsy isn't a word people typically apply to The Icehouse.

But it's the very word ICE Foundation chair David Irving uses to describe the governance of The Icehouse in the early days. And it's not like he's pointing the finger at anyone. He was the chairman of both the Foundation and The Icehouse, so has as much right as anyone to call it as he sees it.

'The view was, everyone should be there—and by everyone is meant all the people who were giving us money. As well as the few of us who were key in getting it going.'

He's speaking of the makeup of the ICE Foundation and The Icehouse boards in the early days—which were essentially the same thing. Board seats were given to the founding partners, which essentially made the practice of governance repetitive. But not just repetitive—informal and fluid, with everyone having a voice. In short... clumsy.

'We worked that way probably for too long before we decided we needed to act as a proper entity,' Irving says, reflecting on how the governance of both entities has developed over the years.

Irving is still the chair of the foundation. But he was replaced as chair of The Icehouse in 2009 by Greg Cross, who carried on the improvements that had been evident over the course of its first eight years. A bigger shift happened when Chris Quin became chair in 2012, when Cross left to focus more of his attention on his own entrepreneurial projects.

It was Chris Quin who announced the appointment of new Icehouse chief executive Gavin Lennox in December 2019, only the second CEO (Andy Hamilton being the first) in the organisation's 20-year history.

'After nearly two decades, The Icehouse has evolved from its early days into an engine of business growth serving the needs of New Zealanders who are starting, owning or managing a business,' Quin said at the time.

'We believe Gavin has the right mix of skills, experience and passion to drive The Icehouse forward and take us to that next level and we look forward to seeing the impact of his expertise across our three business groups.'

'Chris Quin brought a much more disciplined mindset, and he brought a lot more organisation and process to it,' Irving says.

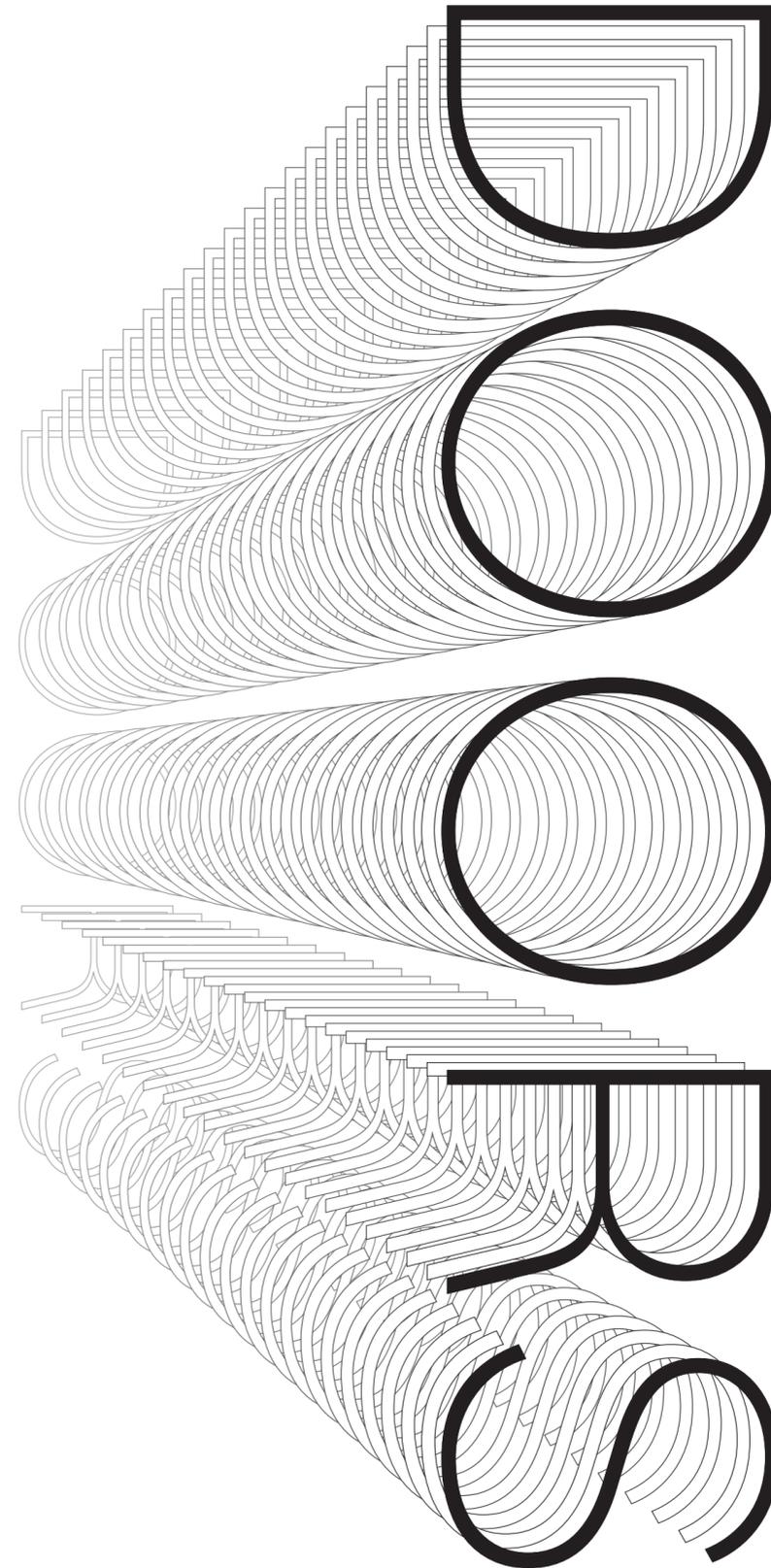
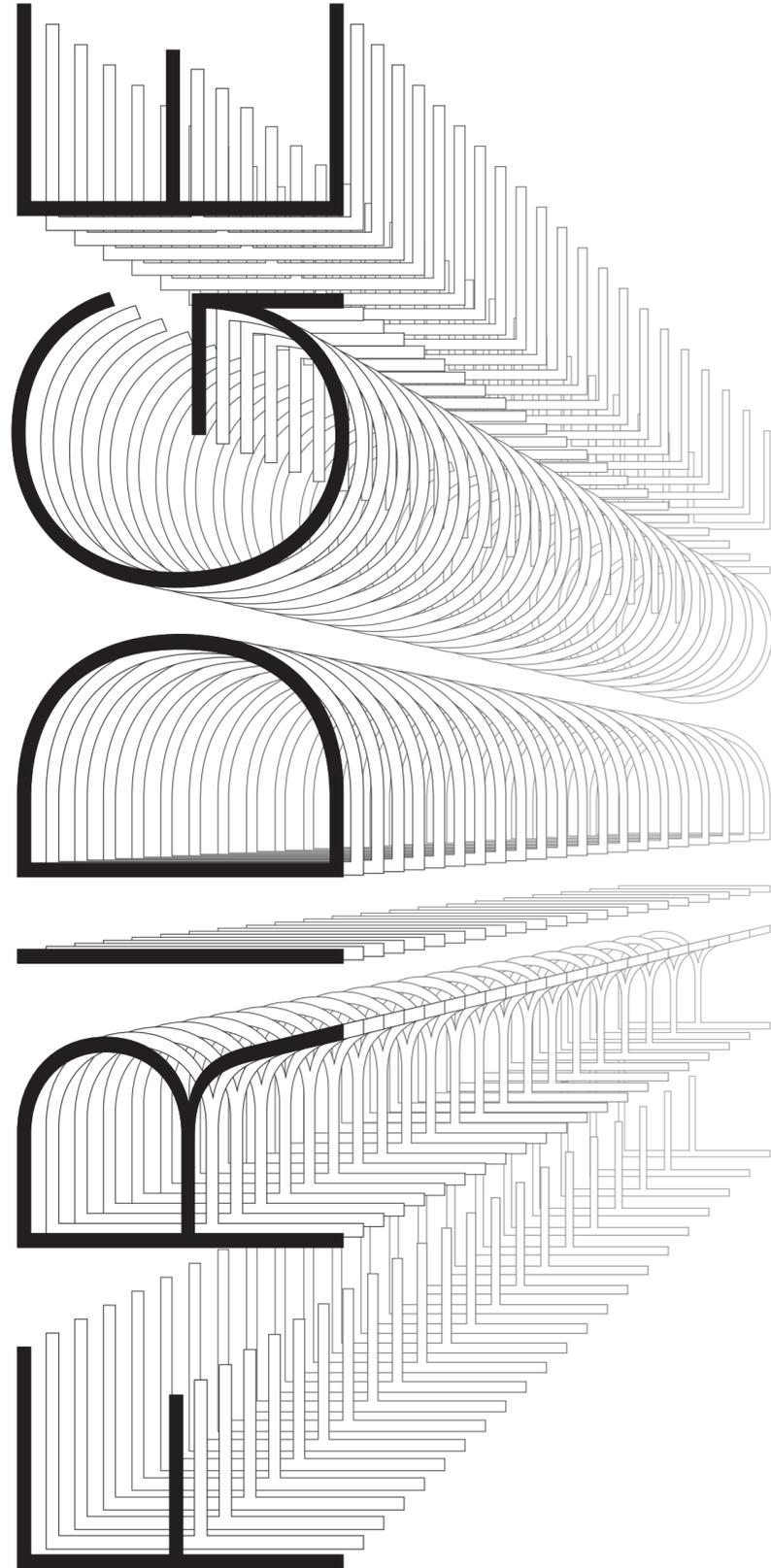
The Icehouse deserved it too, he adds. Over 20 years it has shaped itself to be the organisation it needs to be, a hefty organisation tailored to its specific needs—and the needs of the New Zealand business and startup communities. But that also demanded a lot of governance. It has charitable trust status (in the ICE Foundation), private enterprise, a limited liability company, some government support, and funding that recognises its value to the community. And it has volunteers, from the governance levels to the speakers who participate in the teaching programmes. It's the commitment and belief of the latter that provides the clue to the resonance of The Icehouse's purpose.

'And now since 2019 we've got Icehouse Ventures,' says Irving, alluding to Ventures' separate board and governance structure. 'You could say we're overrun with governance and if you were a critic, you'd ask whether we need it. And we've talked about that from time to time.'

'But Icehouse Ventures is fairly new, so we're sticking with what we've got for now. When you're investing people's money and doing it as smartly as you can, you need good, focused governance. Icehouse Ventures is, in many ways, a higher stakes, higher potential return enterprise, while The Icehouse's focus is on the Growth business providing capability building—which is more conventional, and without the same level of risk.'

Which leaves no time for clumsy governance.

# The Fridge Doors



# The first doors of the 'Ice-house'

2002

When Andy Hamilton was tapped to become the first CEO of the Institute of Entrepreneurship back in October 2000, there was one thing he wanted known from the start.

'If you say Institute of Entrepreneurship 40 times a day you think, give me another name,' he says now, more than 20 years down the track. 'So I didn't like it when I pitched for the job. That's why it's now called The Icehouse - "ICE" from the International Centre for Entrepreneurship.'

Hamilton gets The Icehouse like few others. He should do, after leading it for 19 years. He'll tell you how misunderstood it is, for one thing. He'll tell you it's perceived as a place for vibrant young cutters and startups and early-stage businesses. And that's the story that excites media - the outliers, the quirky, and the different. But the truth is, Hamilton says, a big part of The Icehouse's economic impact was working with owner-managers. In 2019, Icehouse Ventures was spun-out to better serve startup founders and the investors that back them. Ventures works with the bravest startup founders; The Icehouse, with gritty Kiwi business owners.

'They're just building their businesses,' Hamilton says, 'doing their mahi, in their towns. Yes, 20 per cent of them are exporters, but most of them aren't - they're builders, they're contractors, service providers doing just normal shit.'

But doing it in an extraordinary way. Which makes them outliers in a different way; outliers because they aspire to be better, and to drive themselves and their businesses.

This is basically the story Hamilton told a young builder who was working around the place in the early days of newly branded The Icehouse (in May 2001), on a 'very limited budget'.

'I told him it was a place for people to come and get hard and then take their product to market. And he was like, "Hey, I've been involved in some development work in Africa where we used this polystyrene type substance with metal around it. Why don't we put a big old door around there and do the central meeting room as well?"

'I was like, "Is it cheap?"'

They were cheap. They were big fridge doors. And The Icehouse proper was birthed.

Bridget Coates, the first chair of The Icehouse and the one who originally tapped Andy Hamilton for the role of CEO, still laughs when she recalls the big fridge doors. 'As I recall it, we couldn't afford anything else.' Partitions and office doors were 'ridiculously expensive' but, as she remembers, the fridge doors were being given away, or least came very cheap.

'I don't remember being consulted, but all of a sudden there were these doors.' Coates remembers them as enormously heavy, so heavy they could hardly be moved.

'It was hilarious, and it was so characteristic of those first offices, when there was Andy and two or three others and that's all it was.'



## The Owner Manager Programme



Left to right: Liz Wotherspoon, Deb Shepherd, Janene Draper, Wendy Kerr, Darl Kolb

# Grit Goes Further Together

*2001 — Present*

There are so many stories that illustrate the uniqueness of owner-managers of Kiwi businesses, it's too hard to choose just one.

Any one of the many stories would illustrate the sometimes precarious nature of owner-managed Kiwi businesses. When challenges strike the business, there is no corporate team to call to come and help fix it. There's often no HR manager. There's often not even someone to talk to who might understand the nature of the issue. But there are many issues that can plunge a business into crisis, and the impact on the owner-manager is always personal.

These are the peculiarities of the small to medium enterprise where the person earning the salary is also the person paying the salaries — not just to staff, but also to themselves.

It's these unique circumstances that made The Icehouse co-founder David Irving so determined to find a way to give owner-managers a learning experience that would help grow their businesses; and why so many founding partners were willing to make significant financial commitments to make it happen. It's why academics and businesswomen Chris Woods and Deb Shepherd designed the Owner Manager Programme (OMP) that has run for 20 years and has significantly impacted more than 1000 Kiwi and Australian businesses.

It's also why the likes of Liz Wotherspoon, The Icehouse's chief executive of Growth, and Raewyn Goodwin, Icehouse employee number 2 who provides the relational glue in the programme, refer to the impact the programme has on participants as being a kind of 'magic'.

Over their 20 years The Icehouse has studied success. Not flash-in-the-pan, easy-come-easy-go, overnight success. The real kind. People who achieved meaningful things. And kept achieving them. They asked what made them so successful. And what did they find?

It wasn't brains. Or beauty. Or luck. Or God-given gifts. It was grit. A funny little word for a great big important idea. That passion and perseverance are more valuable than anything when it comes to making it. And what do Kiwi business owner-managers all have in common? Yeah, grit.

'They are the unsung heroes of the New Zealand economy,' Wotherspoon says of all owner-managers. 'They are humble and recognised as gritty; people with passion and perseverance.'

Goodwin agrees: 'It's a privilege to be let inside the world of owner-managers.' It's worth mentioning the difference that Goodwin personally makes to the programme, as anyone who has gone through it would attest. A 'journey' with owner-managers over the course of five months is more than an academic programme — it requires relational connection. That connection is what Goodwin nurtures and facilitates. She is not only the relational glue in the programme, but a model of the operational difference a close attention to relationship between participants makes. She's like a human CRM. How many organisations can say they have someone working with them who has touched and interacted with every single customer they have ever had!

That 'privilege' extends to the bottom line. It's no secret that the OMP has been core to The Icehouse's sustainability as a business. Ask former chief executive Andy Hamilton, who can't say enough about the contribution owner-managed SMEs make to the New Zealand economy, or to how The Icehouse was able to reinvest resources in its operation and ecosystem so that it could push the boundaries on both the growth side of the operation, and the startup side.

'One of the hidden secrets of The Icehouse is the Owner Manager Programme,' Hamilton says, letting the cat out of the bag. That mission, as David Irving describes it, was to take owner-managers on a journey of learning — three days in a month, for five



Standing, left to right: Raewyn Goodwin, Chris Woods. Seated, left to right: Liz Wotherspoon, David Irving, Andy Hamilton.

‘It’s lonely being an owner. But you come along to an OMP and you realise it doesn’t matter what industry you’re in, you have similar issues. You can unashamedly talk about your business in an open and safe environment.’

Left to right: Hamish Pinkham (Rhythm & Vines), Mel Spencer (Socialites), Shane Anselmi (Overland), Mike Shin (Pocha), Sarah Ramsay (United Machinists)



Left to right: Mel Spencer (Socialites), Shane Anselmi (Overland)



Top: Mike Shin (Pocha), Bottom: Sarah Ramsay (United Machinists)



months — because they were unlikely to be able to access learning like it anywhere else.

Chris Woods describes that mission as helping owners grow their business; it’s not about making them a success because they are already that — it’s helping them grow sustainably. And the programme does that in two key ways.

‘From the very first OMP, the programme built confidence, and it’s a reminder of going back to the basics,’ Woods says.

A major factor behind that confidence is the fact the programme puts 25 or so owner-managers in a room with people who have gone through, are going through, and will go through similar challenges. For business owners who feel alone a lot of the time, they suddenly don’t feel so isolated or misunderstood. They discover the issues they face are also being experienced by other owner-managers — and a collective pooling of practical wisdom takes place.

This is where the magic happens, according to Wotherspoon.

‘It’s lonely being an owner. But you come along to an OMP and you realise it doesn’t matter what industry you’re in, you have similar issues. You can unashamedly talk about your business in an open and safe environment.’

It doesn’t stop when the programme stops either. They exit the programme with a cohort and join an incredible new network of alumni — of friends and mutual support.

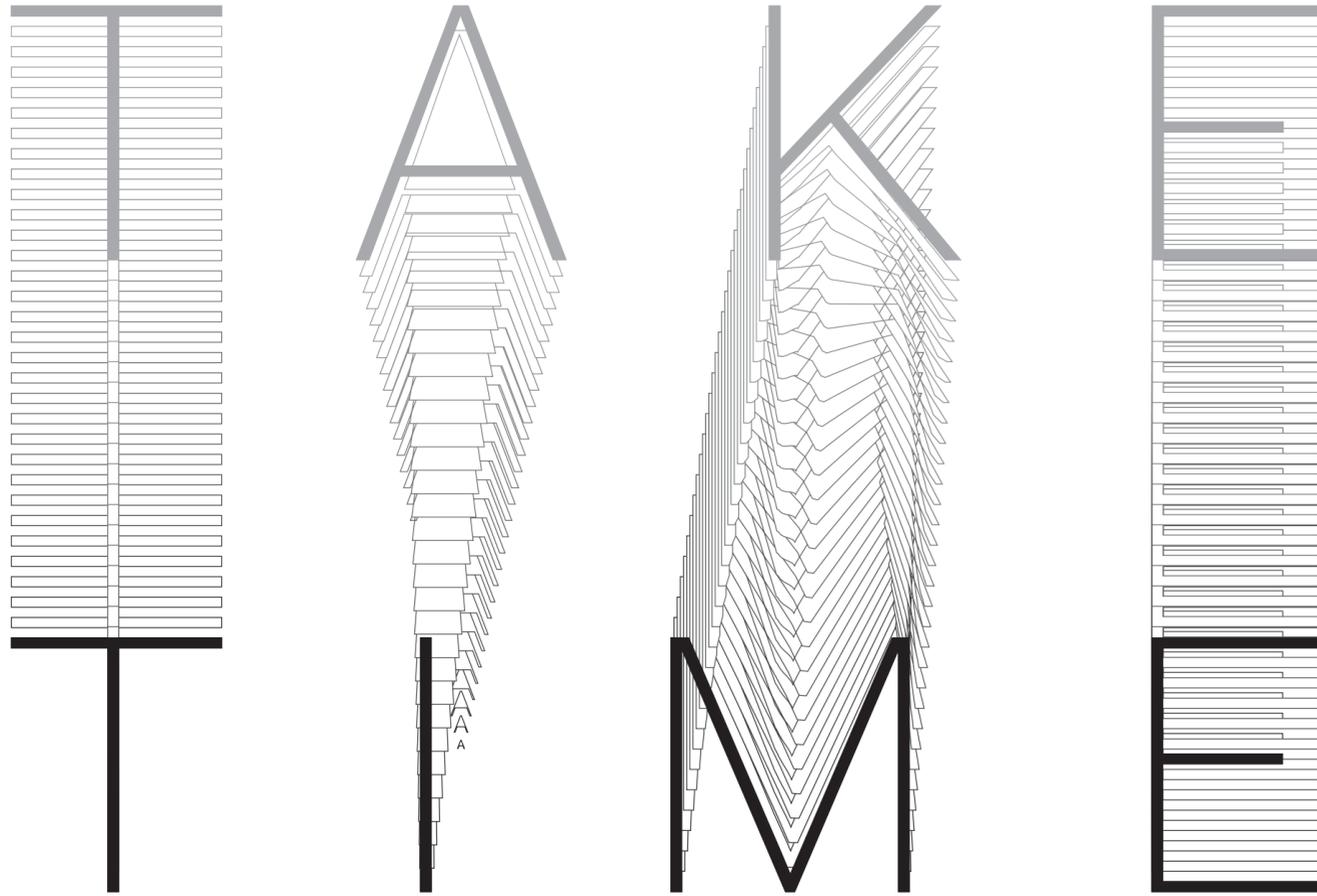
‘Many people don’t quite get owner-managers’ Wotherspoon says, ‘They’re not like managers in corporates. So, when you put a group of them in a room together, where they’re sitting with people

like them, and having conversations with people like them — about things that are going on in their heads and which are also going on in other people’s heads — and they realise they’re not so different, then good stuff happens.’

They’re determined, they’re street smart, they’re resourceful, they’re resilient. Where others say ‘we can’t’, they say ‘we can’. Where others just talk, they get out and do.

And that pays off. That grit gets them further than any amount of IQ or luck. Often all by themselves but the Owner Manager Programme changes that. It provides a way to experience the confidence found in a community of others that have that same abundance of grit. To learn from the best, and from each other.

As The Icehouse has seen from the more than 1,000 Kiwi business owner-managers who’ve experienced OMP since 2001, when they come together in this way they go on to grow at a rate that’s two and a half times the average business. They arrive alone, leave together and go much, much further.



Ice Angels at Showcase



Ice Angels Summit, 2013

## Ice Angels

# Backing the jockeys, not the horse

2003 — Present

It's a matter of dispute whether Kiwi company Biomatters was the first to be backed by the newly formed Ice Angels in 2003, or whether it was Nexus6. For Scott Gilmour, one of the five founding members of Ice Angels, the matter has been settled.

'I believe Biomatters was the first,' he says, with absolute conviction. He's even double-checked his emails from back in the day. 'I'm just stroking my own ego because I was lead investor it.'

At the end of the day, Gilmour, who was awarded Angel Association New Zealand's Arch Angel Award in 2019, doesn't really mind how history records Ice Angels' first investments — because he invested in both of them. Biomatters, the company that created the software product Geneious, which has changed the way scientists do genome research, and was acquired by US company GraphPad in April, 2019; and Nexus6, now Adherium, the global medical tech company and asthma inhaler maker founded by Garth Sutherland, who developed the SmartInhaler in his garage.

But it's the Biomatters pitch that stands out in Gilmour's mind.

'The way the club worked for the first 10 years was that we'd go along to an investment evening — and we'd hear a 20-minute pitch, have a bit of a Q&A, and then the founder would go away and the people in the room would say, Right, does that float anybody's boat?

'Biomatters presented — Daniel Batten was the CEO at the time and we met the team, and they were seriously smart people. And (Ice Angels founding members) Perry Knight and Greg Casagrande and I all said, Yeah, that's really interesting... bioinformatics, it's going to be big.

'Having been a founder in the US and having done the Right Hemisphere angel investing process of term sheets and legal documents and all that kind of stuff, I was appointed lead investor — and we went through months and months of discussions.'

Those 'months and months' are not insignificant. In one way, they symbolise what has set Ice Angels apart from the very beginning, as far back as initial conversations about an angel investor group between Gilmour and Andy Hamilton, the first CEO of The Icehouse, when the two of them were on the board of Unitech, which had been floating the idea of establishing a centre of entrepreneurship.

'What makes all of us reach into our pocket and put money into a company (like Biomatters)?' Gilmour says. 'At the end of the day, it's people. You don't back the horse, you back the jockey.'

'Now, the horse has to have good form — it's got to be built on good science or good technology and you have to have a sure path to market, and not just in New Zealand but globally. And you've got to believe this product they've developed meets a real business need and that somebody will pay more for the product than it costs to develop it. You've got to go through the economic analysis of the opportunity; is it really a valid sustainable business opportunity?'

But, Gilmour stresses, there are hundreds of those opportunities. He quotes Virgin founder Richard Branson, who once quipped that angel deals were like London buses; if you missed one it didn't matter because there was another one coming in three minutes.

'How many of them are truly bankable?' Gilmour says. And the answer? It comes down to the quality of the founders. Have they had any experience with what they're pitching? Do they understand the market well? Do they have the tenacity to really drive the product and the company?

'And then I go beyond that,' Gilmour adds, 'and eventually I counsel the entrepreneurs themselves. The due diligence process should be about values: Do we have a common agenda? Do we have common objectives? Do we have a common set of values? How will you, Mr Entrepreneur, treat your spouse and your staff and your shareholders when things get tough... or when they get successful?'

Because what kills most companies, Gilmour says, is human emotion.

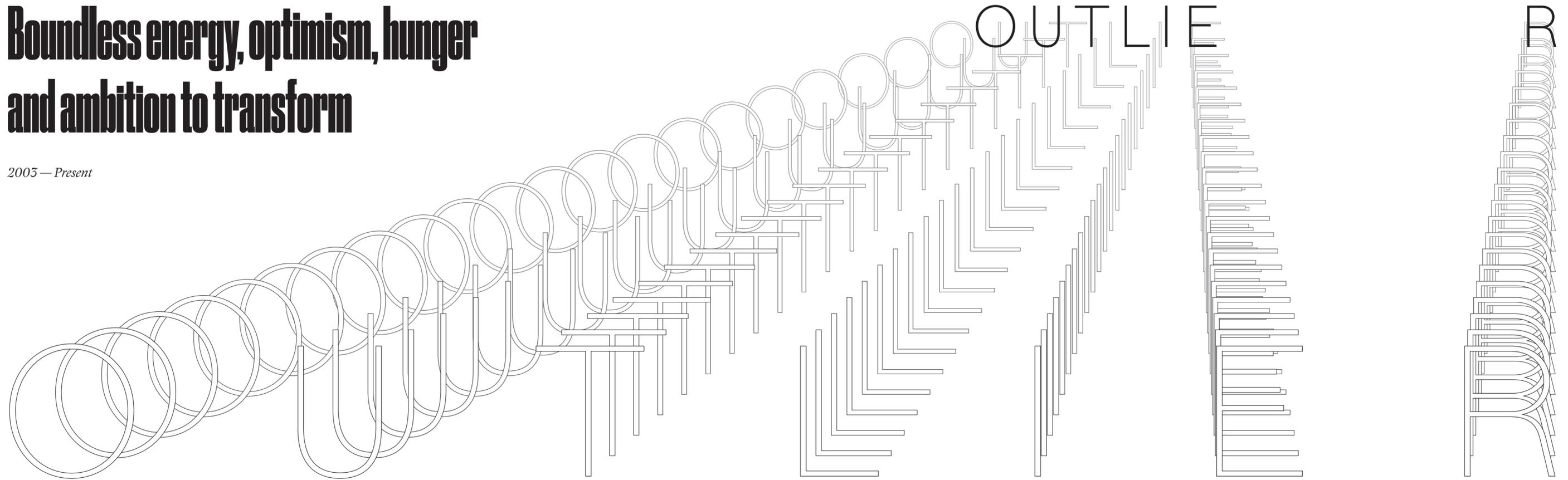
'We often got criticised in the early days because Ice Angels had a fairly long due diligence process. But you want to have lots of meetings with the entrepreneur. You want to take the team out to dinner. You want to have a conversation where they tell you about their background.'

It's like the two old guys on the Mainland cheese advert from a year or so ago, says Gilmour — fishing and lunching while they wait for their cheese to mature: 'Yeah, good things take time.'

The perfect summation of the difference Ice Angels, as a typically Kiwi unsung hero, made to New Zealand's knowledge economy.

# Boundless energy, optimism, hunger and ambition to transform

2005 — Present



## The Startups

Icehouse Ventures partner Jack McQuire has a framed email hanging on the wall above his computer which he refers to when he needs reminding why The Icehouse has been involved in startups for so long.

The email was a gift from Peter Beck, founder and CEO of aerospace manufacturer Rocket Lab. In 2016, Beck went to The Icehouse for a lunch with the Ice Angels team and presented the email, which had been sent to Beck by The Icehouse startups team in 2008.

It was an email to Beck saying it wasn't worth the time meeting with him because there was no chance Ice Angels would invest in his startup.

It's a lesson about the one that got away.

Why does McQuire keep it so close?

'It's a reminder,' he says. 'If something seems crazy, ask yourself — do you want to be the person whose name is on that email that says you're not even worth the time it takes to have a meeting? It's a reminder that we're here to back the crazy outliers.'

'Ultimately, success for us in 2030 will be measured by whether the company that replaces Xero or Rocket Lab as the household name of New Zealand startups was backed by us.'

There's another cautionary tale involving Peter Beck and the startups ecosystem endemic to The Icehouse, which from 2003 and the formation of Ice Angels, New Zealand's first angel network, has been instrumental in securing backing for some of the nation's most prominent new companies.

This tale is about Craig Piggott, founder and CEO of Halter, probably one of the most well-known, well-funded and most attention-grabbing startups in the Ice Angels portfolio.

It concerns the question of what makes a successful entrepreneur and founder, and whether there's any truth to the urban myth that you can only make it if you're young and sexy. McQuire says it's not a myth — it's true; if you redefine what you mean by 'young' and 'sexy'.

It's not about youth, he says, it's about being young at heart — having boundless energy, optimism, hunger and ambition. And in place of 'sexy', McQuire would substitute 'magnetism', that secret sauce that Icehouse Ventures looks for in the founders that it considers backing. It's a skill set, but it's also more than that. It involves personality, but it's not showmanship or pizzazz. It's also about an idea, but that's not enough to carry the day on its own. It's a different spin on the question of whether entrepreneurs are born or made — and if there's one thing McQuire is sure about it's that even if you have IT, it's not enough. The successful founders are those who have people close to them, showing them the way while also raising their aspirations.

Take Piggott, for example, who was 21 when Ice Angels backed him. He hadn't even finished his engineering degree. Still, it was obvious that he had the inherent features to become an iconic entrepreneur. But the key element to his meteoric rise? He had Peter Beck, his former boss at Rocket Lab, on his shoulder, steering him, challenging him, reminding him that he wasn't getting Peter Beck's time because he wanted to build a \$10m business... he

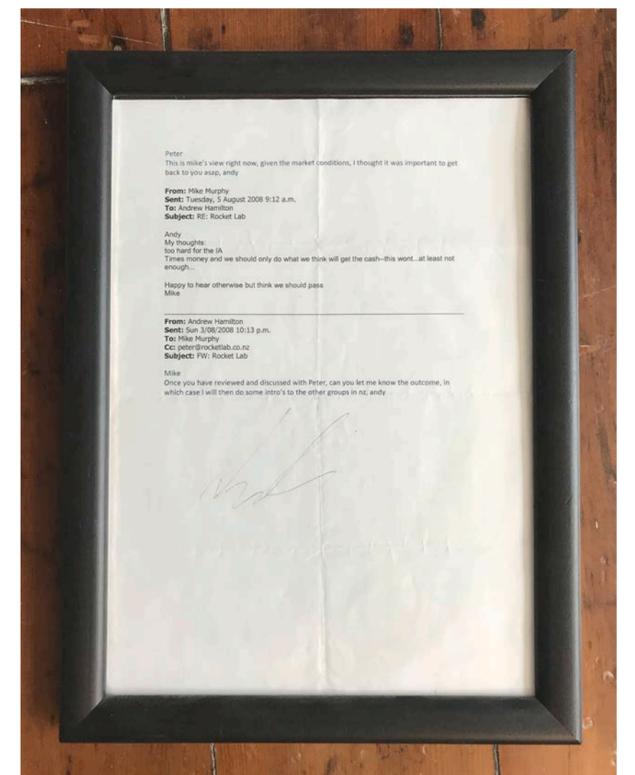
was being mentored by Peter Beck so that he could change the face of the industry and build an iconic, multibillion-dollar company.

'It's not that they start out with that idea,' McQuire says. 'It's that they're challenged to think bigger, to see their ambitions grow.'

'What's characteristic of the ecosystem and the startups we deal with is that the ones that are really successful tend to have people around them who bring that out of them.'

It's also a piece of the puzzle that organically links the startup side of The Icehouse with the owner-manager side — call it a dissatisfaction with the status quo. Whether it's Janene Draper from Farro or Bernie Crosby from Prolife Foods or Tim Alpe from Jucy or Hamish Pinkham from Rhythm and Vines or Graham and Anne Catley from Marstel Terminals, they all have one thing in common — they're not satisfied with building a small business.

'Startup is described as sexy because you've got these stars that changed the game,' McQuire says. 'But they became stars because they are transformational; they're not transformational because they are stars.'



Email exchange considering investment in Rocket Lab, 2008

# Velocity Programme

## Encouraging entrepreneurship from idea to commercialisation

2003 — Present

Fady Mishriki, Co-founder of PowerbyProxi



Fady Mishriki, co-founder of PowerbyProxi with Kiwi entrepreneur Greg Cross, still stands as a shining light of what the University of Auckland's Business School programme Velocity can help students and staff achieve and thereby achieve the goal of turning first class ideas into world-class businesses.

Mishriki has since risen to legendary status among the Kiwi tech startup world for his contactless power technology, which was bought by Apple in 2017. He was both a key foundation member of the Velocity organising committee and a graduate of the very first Velocity Entrepreneurial Programme when it had barely any infrastructure.

'Godfather' of Spark/Velocity, Geoff Whitcher, who helped drive the programme's creation, remembers Mishriki well.

'We started from nothing back then,' he says. 'Fady entered and came second that year with contactless power. That was 2000. They went up to Singapore and won a prize with it the next year. Fady then worked partly for the university and kept the contactless power going and in 2007 joined up with Greg and formed PowerbyProxi. Now here we are, it got taken over by Apple in 2017.'

It's a shining example not just because of its success, but because PowerbyProxi benefited from the full gamut of the experience and mentorship available through The Icehouse's involvement in Velocity, not to mention funding from Ice Angels.

'It is a wonderful story because it was built on the deep knowledge and research of the underlying technology of three or four academics at the university and kept churning out new developments,' Whitcher says. 'That's the sort of relationship you want to develop and I guess this is the biggest one to date.'

Velocity, which was founded as Spark in 2003 and rebranded as Velocity in 2016, is a not-for-credit student-led programme within the Business School to encourage entrepreneurship among students and staff.

Velocity involves a year of talks, workshops, events and challenges, from the Innovation Challenge where writing 1000 words on your idea can win you \$1000, to the Velocity \$100k challenge, in which the best ideas win a place in the Velocity Launch Pad Programme — rising entrepreneurs are given mentoring and workshops on how to convert their ideas to reality, and the finalists compete for the \$100k Velocity Grand Final and a share in \$100,000 seed-capital.

Integration between Spark/Velocity and The Icehouse was strong in the programme's early years and a key to its success, Whitcher says. Chris Woods and Deb Shepherd, both on the staff of the Business School as well as designers and facilitators of the Owner Manager Programme, gave sessions in the Velocity programme, and The Icehouse former chief executive Andy Hamilton was a conduit between the programme and industry people, such as patent attorneys. A number of people who came through the Spark/Velocity programme provided initial concepts and IP for several companies that Icehouse Ventures financed.

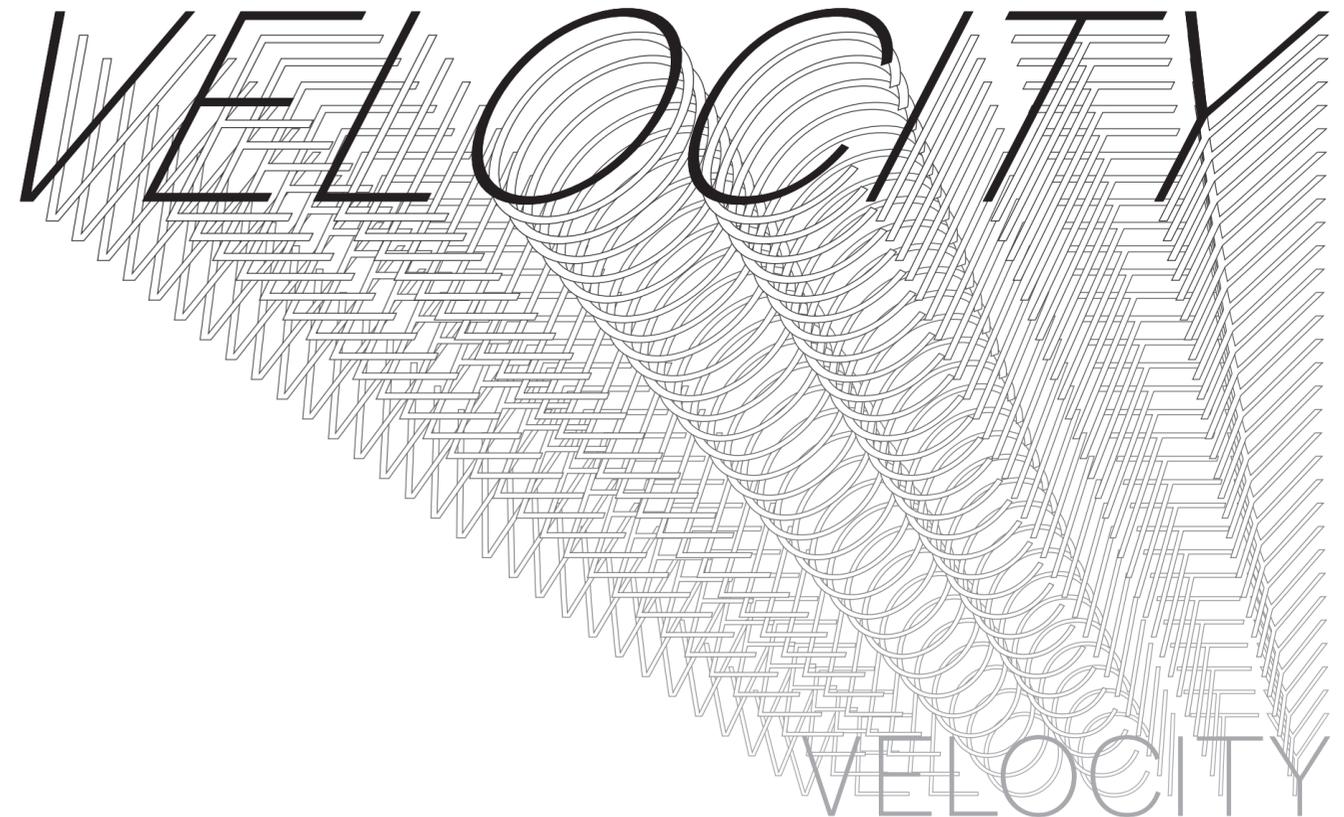
For Geoff Whitcher, it's a practical outworking of an ecosystem which was envisaged some 20 years ago and continues to develop. The universities are one of the places entrepreneurship should begin, he maintains — it's where ideas which are research-intensive are generated. And Velocity is a programme that, like The Icehouse, plays a key role in ensuring NZ keeps riding the knowledge wave and grows towards its potential as a thriving knowledge-based economy.

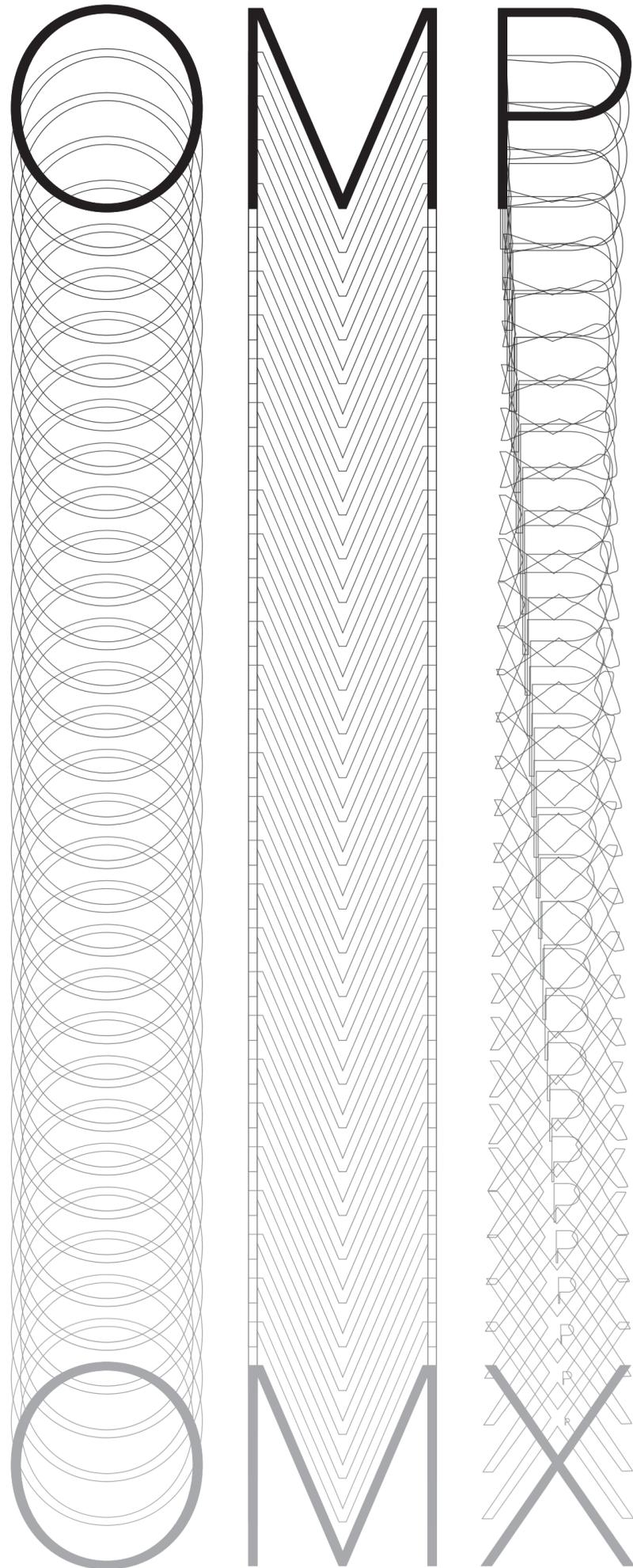


Grand Final Prize giving 2003. Fady Mishriki in the last row, Andy Hamilton in the front row, Kunal Bhargava front right.



Winners of \$10k, with Contactless, Patrick Hu, Fady Mishriki, Kunal Bhargava.





## The Continuing Journey

# Beyond the Owner Manager Programme

2006 — Present  
*Leadership Development Programme (LDP)*

2015 — Present  
*Owner Manager Exchange (OMX)*

2017 — Present  
*Coaching*

2018 — Present  
*The Icehouse Conference*

As business guru, educator and author Jim Collins puts it, sometimes companies fall into the trap of the undisciplined pursuit of more — which is the antithesis of what the Growth business of The Icehouse encourages their customers to pursue. It should never be about growth for growth's sake, but always about profitable and sustainable growth.

And there's a gulf of difference between the two.

A few years in The Icehouse acknowledged that to enhance its ability to achieve its purpose there was a very compelling logic to go from being a moment in time organisation to more systematically and deliberately journeying with their customers over time.

Beyond meeting the present and immediate needs of owner-managers, The Icehouse has a roadmap for how to journey alongside those businesses into the future. 'The challenge often for owners as they grapple with growth is how do they raise the business's ability to handle growth as rapidly as they do the revenue line,' says chief executive of Growth, Liz Wotherspoon.

In other words, how do they grow profitably and sustainably and avoid the wheels coming off, particularly as they work to grow their businesses in the context of uncertain or even chaotic times?

Part of the answer lies in how owner-managers resource the business and develop the people who work for them, the leaders and managers of their companies — which is why The Icehouse designed the Leadership Development Programme, the only programme in New Zealand developed specifically for leaders in Kiwi owner-managed businesses.

'They realised that at a certain point they had to work more on their business and less in it,' Wotherspoon says. 'Which means they have to delegate. They have to lift the capability and the capacity that exists

within the business so they can delegate to competence. So they asked us: Where is the programme for the people that work for us?'

The result is a programme that is very aligned to the OMP but was designed with the people who report to an owner in mind. It is a pared down version of OMP— two three-day residential blocks followed by a single day.

Jo Clayton, a seasoned businesswoman and valued member of The Icehouse delivery team played a crucial role in the development of LDP and 43 programmes later remains the lead facilitator. Having led many teams and businesses herself, Jo understands the issues leaders contend with and what is unique about the challenges and opportunities they face working for an owner of a business rather than in a corporate hierarchy.

The first 10 or so programmes were attended by managers who worked for owners who had already done the OMP. In more recent programmes, some 40 per cent of participants work for owners who haven't done the OMP but see the value of their leadership teams experiencing the Leadership Development Programme — which has had a considerable impact on the owner-managed businesses The Icehouse works with.

The Owner Manager Exchange is a different initiative that exists purely for OMP alumni — but again, it's designed to allow alumni to experience a deeper learning and re-immersion themselves in The Icehouse. OMX provides an opportunity to maintain a connection with other SME owners and with the wider Icehouse alumni ecosystem. It's another chance to step out of the business and share some of the opportunities and challenges owners are facing.

'It's an opportunity to get another shot in the arm from The Icehouse,' is how Raewyn Goodwin describes it.

“They come in on a Thursday morning and leave on a Saturday afternoon like they do for a block of the OMP, and they reconnect with us and with each other. Everyone in the room has done the OMP — maybe not the same one — but they’ve all been on that journey.’ And because they’ve already been on the journey there’s a genuine exchange of experiences and ideas, obstacles and achievements that are unique to owner-managers.

The Icehouse Conference completes the sojourners’ trifecta. In its third year (last year’s conference was cancelled due to the pandemic), the event builds upon a rich heritage at The Icehouse for conferences that have shaped or affirmed its purpose, from the Knowledge Wave Conference in 2001, to the StrategyNZ: Mapping Our Future conference in 2011, through to the annual Showcase conference that spotlights NZ’s latest startups.

The Icehouse Conference is distinct in that it exists for alumni of either the Owner Manager Programme or the Leadership Development Programme. And again, inspiration and the ability to connect is as vital as information. It provides Kiwi owners and their leaders with insight, energy and leadership to continue driving themselves, their teams and their companies.

‘We were excited about the opportunity of creating another Icehouse style experience,’ says Wotherspoon, by which she means creating moments of inspiration and celebration.

‘We want to send them away at the end of the day with a lot of provocation, excitement and energy for what they will do going forward.’

To that end there are two speakers in the morning sessions, two in the afternoon, and an inspirational speaker, such as Sir John Kirwan, in the evening. In between there is plenty of time for reflection and connection.

It’s also a chance to inspire owners and leaders of SMEs with the stories and examples of brilliant entrepreneurship and innovation — stories that inspire the people who work at The Icehouse daily.

“We feel genuinely blessed in our world that we get to experience so many great stories and examples of innovation every day,” Wotherspoon says. “It’s incredibly inspiring to us. But the reality is that business owners of SMEs in New Zealand don’t necessarily get to see that like we do — so The Icehouse Conference gives us a chance to provide that opportunity to get some insight and inspiration, and to hear stories of people doing really remarkable things.”



Annah Stretton, The Icehouse Conference, May 2021



Sir John Kirwan, The Icehouse Conference, May 2021



The Icehouse team members based in Auckland

Leadership Development Programme



Left to right: Jenny Green (OMP25) and Carol Gibb (OMP52)



David Letele (aka The Brown Buttabean), The Icehouse Conference, 2021

# How do farmers learn?

2004 — 2011

David Irving has always harboured a vision of a global network of Icehouses, bridging discoveries in learning internationally and transferring knowledge from SMEs throughout the world to those in New Zealand.

In a way, the Agribusiness Programme was born out of that idea—to push beyond what The Icehouse already offered, to press into Australia, finding other types of businesses that were in need of the type of learning opportunity that The Icehouse offered.

It was only a short step to forming the question: who does the country depend on? The answer... farmers.

And how do farmers learn?

'If you think SME owner-managers are on their own, think about farmers,' Irving says, as passionate as the day he first came up with the idea. 'It's crucial that we provide a service to them.'

The next step was getting representatives of the different agricultural industries in a room together—from Federated Farmers to producers of viticulture and horticulture. They talked about the business of making wine, and the business of growing crops, and the business of farming. And the question was asked, what could The Icehouse provide to those people?

What emerged was a programme for taking farmers on a learning journey, about principles of business and management and leadership—issues they are involved with on a daily basis but about which they might never have taken the time to learn.

Following the same principles as the Owner Manager Programme, the programme brought owners of land-based businesses from both sides of the ditch together to connect and learn—not how to be better farmers, they knew all about that, but to be better business people.

'It was a wonderful programme,' Irving says. 'Truly terrific for those of us who were involved through those eight years.'

'I am bold when I believe in something—that something was the uniqueness of farmers, that special quality hewn from their circumstances—self-made people, learning to do business alone, just them and their partner and family on the farm. They had fortitude and resilience in spades from that experience. And sure, they had other farmers to get together with. But the beauty of the Agribusiness Programme was that it brought farmers together in an education experience—and that's when great things happened.'

'When they got together, they were just wonderful,' Irving adds. 'We had some wonderful times with them.'

SELF-MADE

Wilkins Farming Co. (OMP Alumni)





"Changing Gears (How to Take Your Kiwi Business from the Kitchen Table to the Board Room)" by David Irving, Darl Kolb, Deborah Shepherd, 2009.

"Gearing Up (Leading your Kiwi Business into the Future)" By Darl Kolb, David Irving, Deborah Shepherd, 2020.

## Changing Gears and Gearing Up

When the book *Changing Gears: How to take your business from the kitchen table to the board room*, was published in 2009, it was as much about voice as it was about the principles of growth and profitability and market penetration.

There was the voice of the authors, for one thing. David Irving, Darl Kolb, Deb Shepherd and Chris Woods were key facilitators of the Owner Manager Programme at The Icehouse — as well as being business owners, lecturers, government advisors, entrepreneurs, and company chairs in their own right. Their experience was and is vast. But that doesn't always equate to voice.

'By that stage we had done *Seven Reflections*, a countrywide tour reflecting on seven years working with owner-managers and had enough experience under our belt to feel like we had a voice,' says Deb Shepherd.

'It's certainly not for us to be the voice of the OMP but we had enough experience to be able to share back and reflect: here are some of the things we've observed; this might be helpful.

'Unlike other academic books, we were really clear we were writing it for that audience. It isn't an academic book; it isn't ground-breaking, but it's a companion to the programme, and it speaks to other owner-managers who haven't done the programme.'

Then there was the voice of the owner-managers themselves.

Chris Woods says the key contribution of the book was to put on paper and give voice to the owner-managers they had worked with in The Icehouse's OMP.

'To me that was one of the most important things — to show the value of owner-managers, the need to respect what they do, and that owner-managed businesses are not just smaller corporate businesses.'

*Changing Gears* came out towards the end of The Icehouse's first decade. It was a decade worth writing about, says David Irving, and a noteworthy milestone. Apart from that, academics write... so it made a lot of

sense to put that learning in a book. Irving had already written about his time in the corporate world with the 1998 book *It Must Be Wattie's!* And Deb and Chris were both writers. But it wasn't until Darl Kolb joined them that things really got serious.

'He was a more senior academic,' Irving says, 'and more capable than the rest of us.'

He drove the first book, Deb agrees. A great writer!

The follow-up, *Gearing Up*, was published in July 2020, just as the Covid-19 pandemic was hitting its straps. It marks the second decade of the Owner Manager Programme and was a chance to reflect on what had changed, but also on what hadn't. Some fundamentals never change. But the goalposts can shift over time.

'As you get older you realise you had some good insight when you were younger, you just didn't necessarily know it,' Shepherd reflects. 'But it's nuanced differently and there are some contextual changes.'

*Gearing Up* is a refinement of *Changing Gears*, says Woods. It spends more time on strategy, but essentially both books need to be read together. And while the second book hit the market during the pandemic, its principles didn't need to be revised in line with what the world has collectively faced.

'The pandemic hasn't changed the fundamentals of business,' Woods says. 'The fundamentals are, what's the value your customers want, and can you deliver that value and have a sustainable business doing it? I think the way you can deliver value is changing; technology means it is changing. And we know that change is accelerating.'

Even so, the revision of the book's material from the ground up will see it remain relevant for at least the next 10 years of the programme, argues David Irving.

And then?

A new book, suggests Chris Woods. Perhaps called *Moving On!*

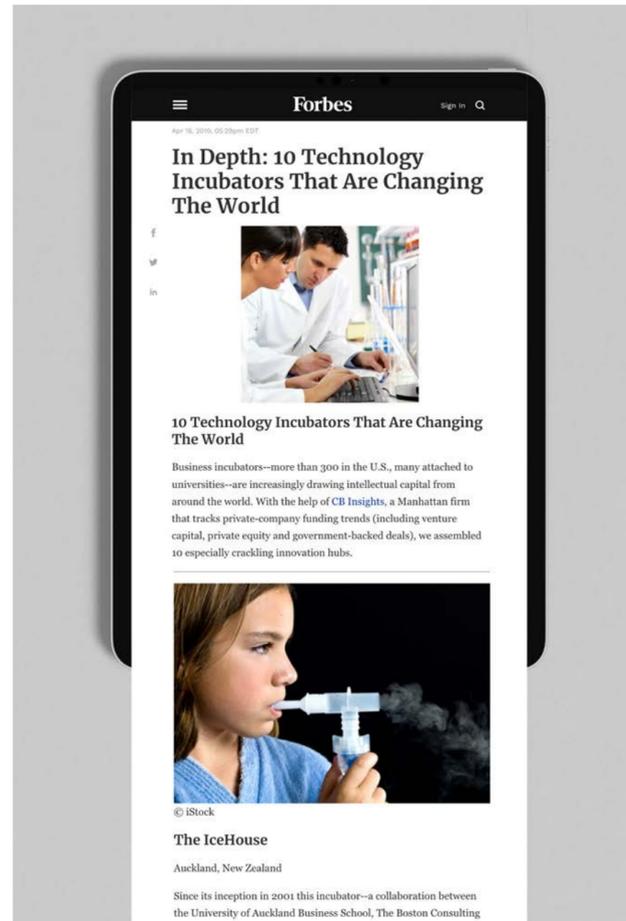
# From the kitchen table to the board room

2009  
*Changing Gears*

2020  
*Gearing Up*

# The Icehouse named one of the world's top 10 tech incubators

2010



In 2010, Forbes magazine featured The Icehouse among what it dubbed '10 technology incubators that are changing the world'.

If that wasn't significant enough, the fact nine of the 10 were US-based incubators made it more so. There were incubators from California, Massachusetts, Texas, Illinois, Georgia, Wisconsin... and Auckland, New Zealand.

'Since its inception in 2001 this incubator... has launched 75 technology companies and has raised \$50 million for them through its angel-investor network, the largest in New Zealand,' Forbes wrote about The Icehouse.

The NZ Herald, reporting on the recognition, quoted then Icehouse chief executive Andy Hamilton with his customary self-effacing take — the recognition hadn't been because The Icehouse was the most amazing organisation in the world, but because 'we work with some really good companies'.

Hamilton hasn't changed his tune. In fact, he can now say, with the advantage of 20 years of hindsight, that The Icehouse has never thought of itself as a 'success story'.

Remembering the Forbes recognition, what stands out in his mind is how The Icehouse team thought it was quite funny.

'We didn't think we were top in the world,' he recalls. 'We felt that they probably thought: New Zealand, that's a long way away, and that's kinda cool — let's do that.'

False modesty? Not with Andy Hamilton. For one thing, he has the inside scoop on how the recognition came about — a PR person for NZ Trade and Enterprise in Florida was aware of the Forbes ranking lists and put The Icehouse forward for nomination. Still, that didn't guarantee ending up as one of only 10 ranked, and the only one not based in the States.

Hamilton doesn't look a gift horse in the mouth. He was grateful of the profile and thought it was cool. It's just that a Forbes ranking isn't the type of recognition The Icehouse craves.

'What always mattered to us since day one was what our customers said about us,' Hamilton maintains. 'It's not ranking and stuff like that. If the customers like what we're doing and we're adding value to them, they'll tell others. And then we can build a business.'

Uppermost in Hamilton's mind at the time, as it had been for the nine years before the Forbes piece, was finding a way for The Icehouse to be sustainable without the financial backing of the founding partners.

That success, Hamilton believes, was because of two things: The Icehouse's ability to find ways of enabling resources to be reinvested in the operation and the ecosystem, and a board and team that were always trying to push the boundaries on new offerings.

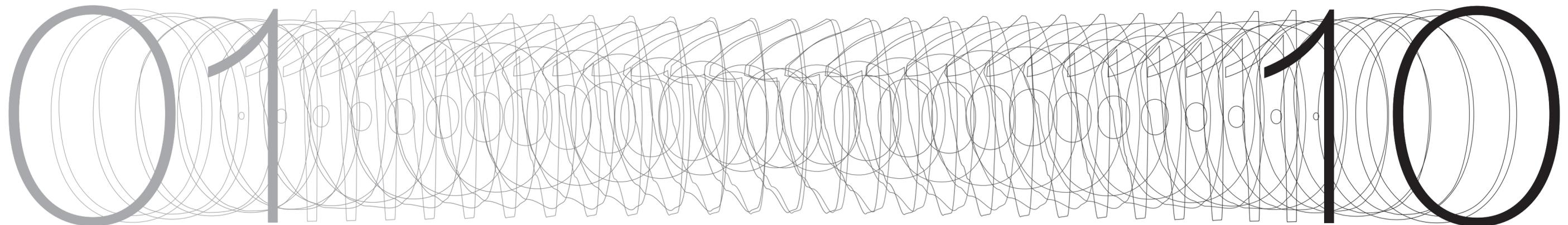
'We tried and failed a lot of them,' he says. 'And that failure propelled us to keep going.'

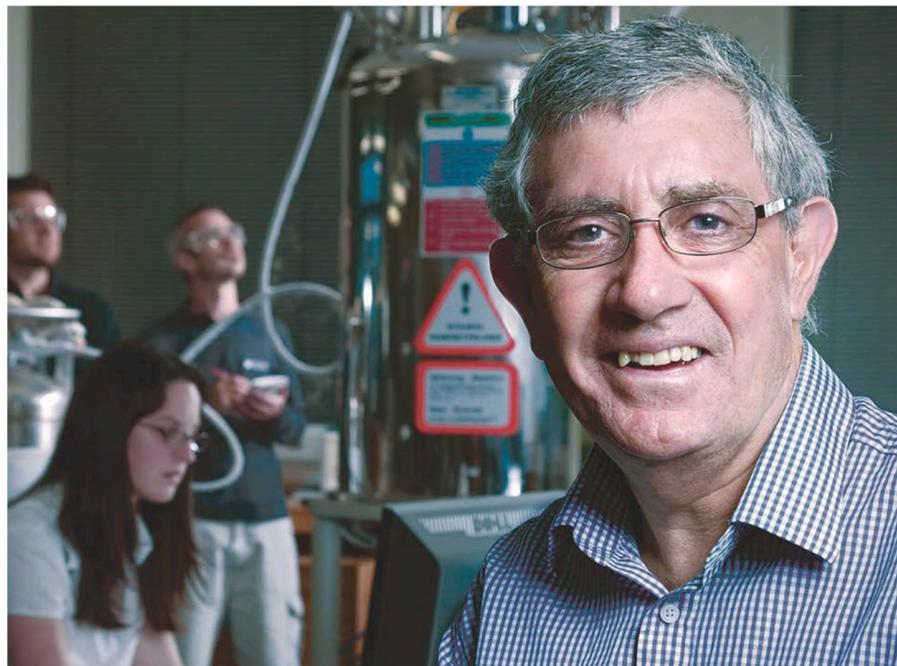
All that said, Hamilton admits the nod from Forbes was a welcome sign of their progress at the end of The Icehouse's first 10 years.

'Did it help with profile? Yes, it did. Did it help with investors from offshore saying, what are you, and what are you guys at The Icehouse doing? Yes, because, interestingly, there are not that many models around the world that are like us — incubators that also do courses.'

But, Hamilton stresses, now as much as he did then, The Icehouse culture has never been to seek adulation.

'It's all cool, it's all great,' he says. 'But it's also like, whatever. What we care about is customers because that's what actually matters — the impact The Icehouse has had on their businesses.'





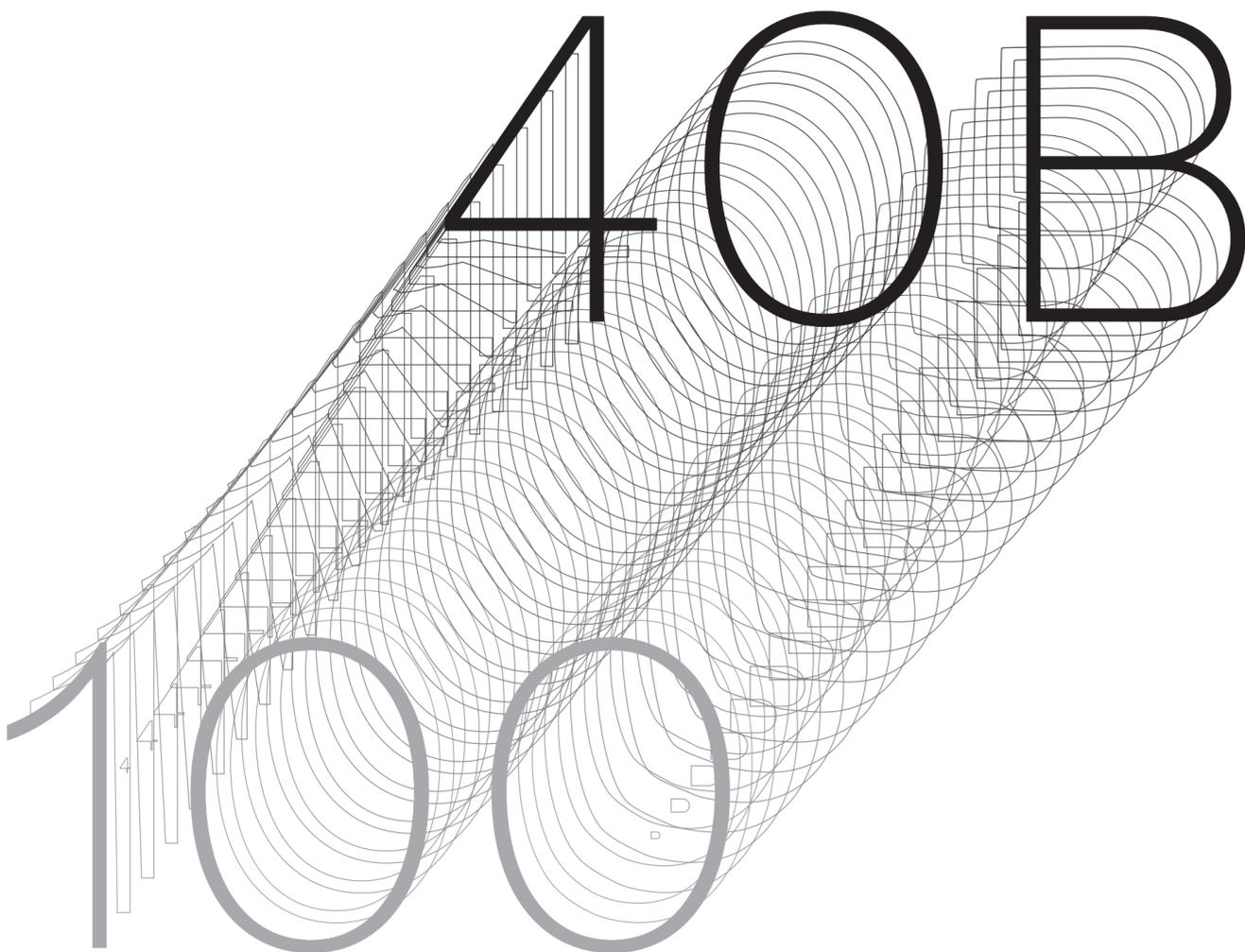
Sir Paul Callaghan

**Callaghan  
Innovation** | New Zealand's  
Innovation  
Agency

## Sir Paul Callaghan

# A call to arms

2011



We're 10 years on from the epochal speech of Sir Paul Callaghan, 2011 New Zealander of the Year, at the StrategyNZ workshop. But it's still uncomfortable listening.

A reality check, Callaghan called it, before launching into a broadside against some of New Zealand's most enduring myths.

We're an egalitarian society (when in fact we're one of the worst for income disparity).

We're clean and green (egregious hypocrites, Callaghan called us, who like to tell other nations how to live their lives).

We don't need to be more prosperous (when we can't even afford to fund Avastin, a life-changing drug for the treatment of bowel cancer, which he personally suffered).

We have a relaxed, easy-going lifestyle (when we're one of the hardest working but least productive populations in the OECD).

More tourism would be good for the economy (when tourism jobs generate only two-thirds of what our economy needs each employee to generate).

We can't manufacture in New Zealand (when our biggest export earner was manufacturing).

We need to specialise in what we are good at (when it's clear we don't know what that is).

A new story is what we need, Callaghan urged, one that begins with the realisation that just 100 great companies (birthed by 100 inspired entrepreneurs) can generate \$40 billion per year in export earnings and fashion a new New Zealand economy.

It's a compelling vision, and one The Icehouse has been part of for the past 20 years. The Icehouse didn't need any convincing by Callaghan that this was the story Kiwis needed to hear, to share and to grasp — but his speech came at a time that served as validation and affirmation of the journey The Icehouse had been on for a decade.

What's so good about this vision?

As Callaghan said, New Zealand is really good at the really weird stuff. Our biggest export earners are big performers in the knowledge economy, and we will continue to be good precisely at the things we will be good at. It only takes 100 entrepreneurs to make 100 companies like that (along with time to grow), and New Zealand's prosperity can increase tenfold with no environmental downside. That's a vital piece, because for those entrepreneurs and the companies they create to stay here, it needs to remain 'a place where talent wants to live'.

March 2021 was the 10-year anniversary of Callaghan's speech, a moment that continues to challenge and inspire. In a very practical sense, it was a speech that catalysed government thinking. He had the mana to bring both politicians and the academic world alongside, another echo of what has distinguished The Icehouse journey so far. He encapsulated the DNA of The Icehouse at a time that it was reflecting on its first decade and looking to the next 10 years.

Part of that DNA is conversation — connecting to what's being said elsewhere, having a voice in the dialogue and hearing what other ecosystem players are saying — leading and listening, inspiring and being inspired.

Sir Paul Callaghan brought the conversation to the front of the stage at a key moment in New Zealand's transformation towards becoming the knowledge-driven economy he heralded, and a pivotal chapter in The Icehouse story.

# SHOWCASE

## Showcasing the best startups to the world

2011 — Present

Ice Angels board member Ray Thomson had an idea. And Ray was such a force of nature, if he had an idea, you listened. His idea was genius. Ray, like many others, had the foresight to know that New Zealand's hosting of the Rugby World Cup in 2011 would bring with it a host of international investors. It was a rare opportunity to showcase New Zealand's top tier startups in order to seek capital from overseas investors — capital that was in pretty short supply in NZ at the time.

Brilliant.

That was Ray's challenge — to put on a grand event and showcase the best New Zealand had to offer. That would also be its name: Showcase. And Ice Angels would be the host.

Almost 300 people turned up. Around 290 of them were Kiwis. Most of the potential international investors were down at the Viaduct, drinking beers and champagne. Turns out they'd come to New Zealand to actually watch the rugby.

But all was not lost. For one thing, it showed for the first time that Kiwis were not as conservative when it came to investments as was previously thought. They were interested in startups. Here they were in a single place, really engaged. The event also rallied people to a common cause — backing great companies. It opened a door for people to invest who had never considered it before — and it drew back the veil on what had been suspiciously viewed as a kind of secret society.

It also made potential investors realise you didn't have to be a Sir Stephen Tindall with an ultra-high net worth to back a company and make a real difference. If your ambitions, and your attitude and what you were trying to achieve were aligned, you could get started for a relatively small amount. Showcase provided a platform for people to engage with the startup ecosystem, and it has grown annually from that inaugural event, and now draws more than a thousand people to the Spark Arena.

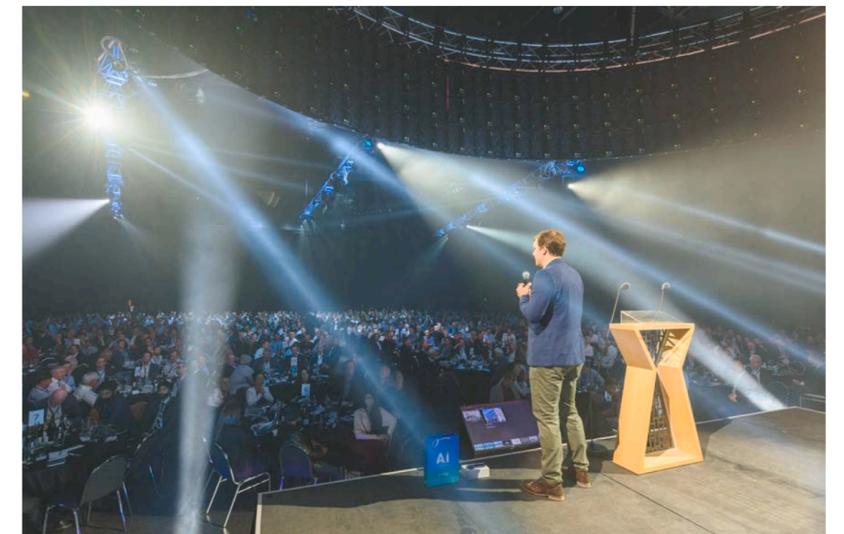
Showcase has become a valuable stage within that ecosystem, almost as much for the alumni of founders as for the new kids on the block looking to follow in the footsteps of the likes Jamie Beaton of Crimson, who was there in 2014, or Fady Mishriki of PowerbyProxi, who was there in 2015, or Brooke Roberts of Sharesies and Brianne West of Ethique who presented in 2017.

Showcase is the one opportunity every year when Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory opens its doors and a dozen Kiwi companies make the most of the spotlight in front of hundreds of investors.

So Ray Thomson was right. Sadly, the share broker, director and member of the Ice Angel's Advisory Board from 2010 to 2013 passed away in 2018 — but not before he had seen his vision realised, year on year.



Spark Arena, Auckland. Venue for New Zealand Investment Showcase, 2019.



Robbie Paul presenting at Showcase, 2019

# Investing in women founders

2014 — Present

Several things converged to make Bridget Coates realise the need for ArcAngels in New Zealand.

There was her own experience of a similar organisation connecting angel investors with female entrepreneurs in the US called Golden Seeds, founded in New York in 2005 by Australian woman Stephanie Newby, with the goal of achieving gender parity in investment and entrepreneurship.

'It had grown very well and became very successful,' Coates says — so well it was the fourth largest angel group in the US.

'It became a huge generator of momentum in attracting women investors to come into the industry and also provided a lot of capital for really young women entrepreneurs.'

The conclusion, for Coates anyway, was logical: 'I thought we should do the same here.'

It's not as if the thought hadn't crossed Coates's mind before. As a successful businesswoman in her own right, as well as being the foundational chair of The Icehouse, Coates was aware of the need for more financial literacy among women investors — she knew of a lot of women who had financial resources but didn't necessarily have the confidence or know-how to take the next step.

'They had significant resources but no knowledge of the space — they just weren't aware of it,' Coates says.

She was also keenly aware of the gender imbalance in the Ice Angels group, which was heavily stacked with men — perhaps as high as 90 per cent.

'It was completely disproportionate. There was this pretty clear vote by the market that the offering wasn't really meeting women's needs and that they would appreciate a slightly different offering.'

Kicking off in 2014, ArcAngels is approaching its ninth year and is a much different proposition now than it was then, when it launched with what Coates describes as a pure vanilla investment proposition. Now, more than \$1.7m has been invested in more than 20 early stage and emerging companies, and New Zealand's first startup fund exclusively for female founders has \$2m committed.

'We have a vibrant club,' Coates says, with more than a little well-placed pride. 'And a lot of investments have taken place. So I think it was pretty clear really that a different way of interacting with entrepreneurs than what had been done was needed.'

Coates is unapologetic about that 'different way'. Her goal was to inspire, energise and engage women investors and entrepreneurs, and that involved

playing to the strengths that women had over men — building community, having social events, making the experience fun.

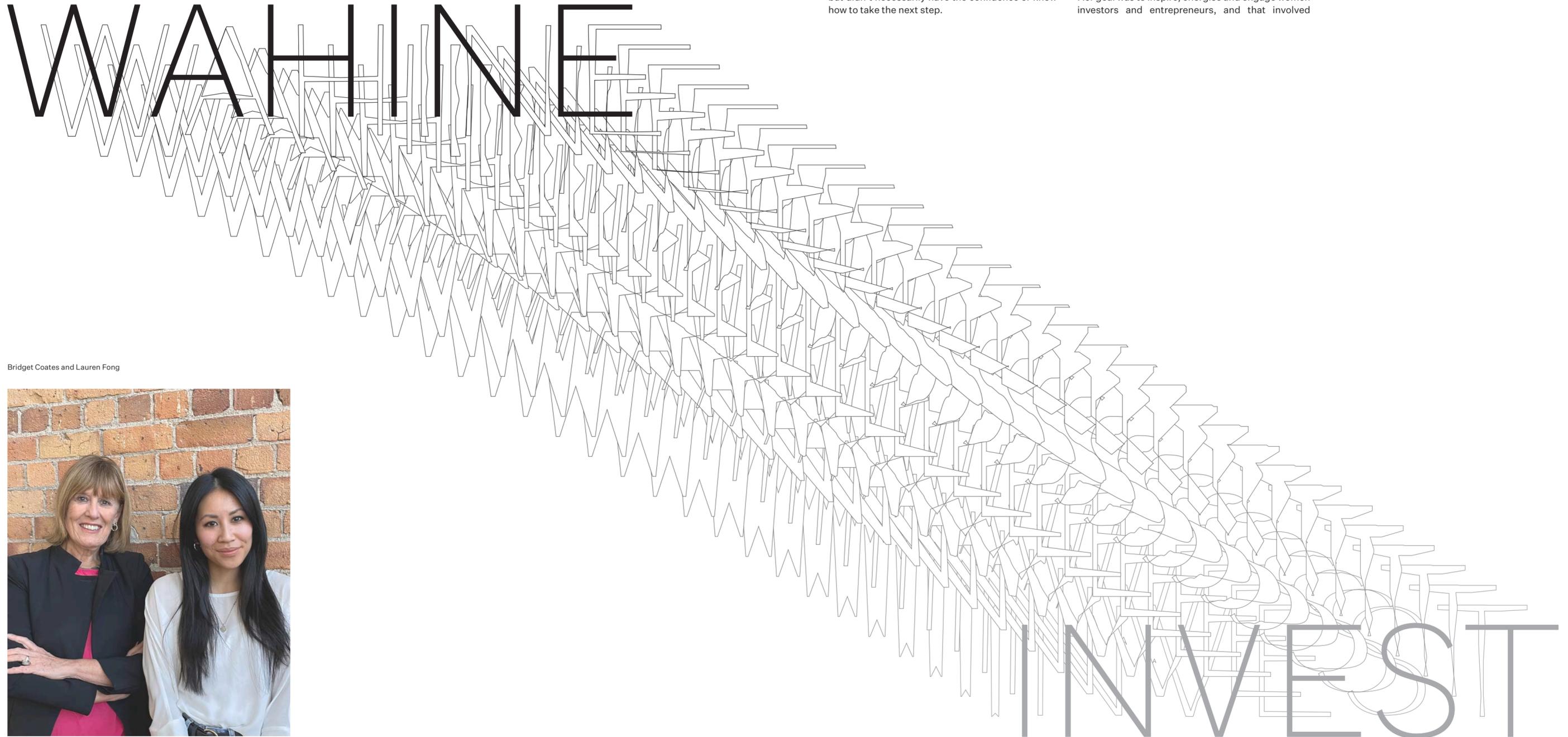
It's a goal shared by ArcAngels network manager Lauren Fong.

'The challenge that women founders face when raising capital has become a widespread global issue,' Fong says.

'I look to empower wahine leaders by allowing more access to capital for their startups. We need to recognise the importance of diversity in the startup ecosystem and prioritise supporting women with their ambitious ideas.'

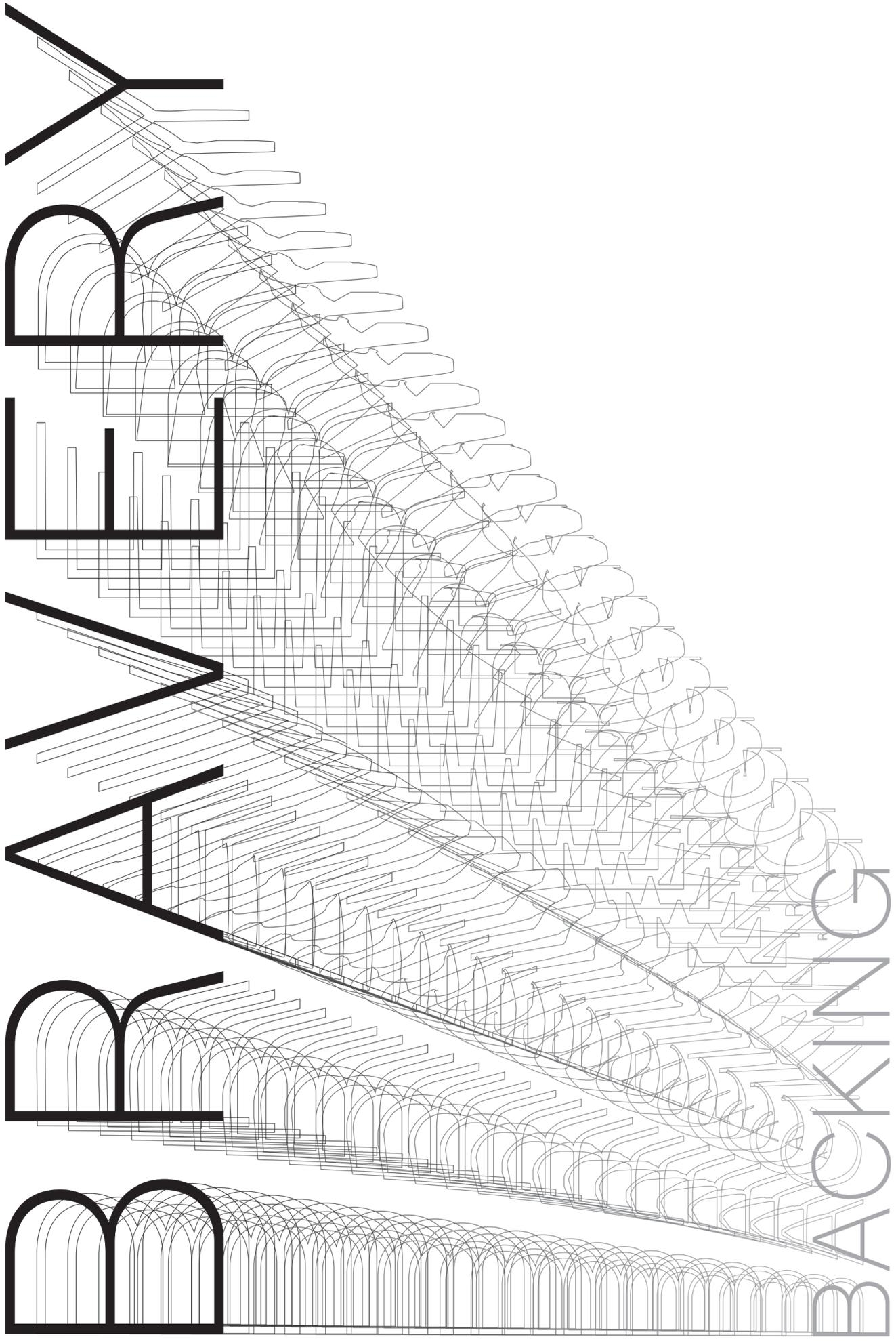
There's a difference in the types of companies attracting investment as well — an emphasis on those involved in health or family or consumer goods, as opposed to 'hard core deep tech'. Not exclusively, of course, but on balance there's a distinct theme.

'It's taken a few years to get going,' Coates concedes. 'But now it's gathered a whole lot of momentum, both in terms of members and in terms of deals.'



Bridget Coates and Lauren Fong





# Icehouse Ventures

## Backing Brave

2019 — Present



Icehouse Ventures team, 2021

Tim Williams was nine years old when he and a mate were approached by a woman while they were fishing with bamboo poles off the local wharf, something they did with every free moment.

The chairman of Icehouse Ventures remembers they'd caught a whole bunch of sprats and piper, and the woman wanted to buy some for her cat. Williams told her she didn't have to — that she could just have some.

'No, young man,' she said. In his memory, she's ancient — which he admits is probably a huge disservice. Her business nous, however, was as old as commerce itself. 'How long have you been here fishing?'

'Aw, about six hours,' the boys answered.

'Well, your time is worth something isn't it?'

It certainly was, they agreed — about five cents a fish, it turns out, which was nothing to sneeze at, especially since 20 cents back then could buy you a can of Coke. The woman of indeterminate age agreed to buy from them whenever they fished from the wharf — her neighbours would too!

And so was birthed a passion and knowledge for business that steered his life, from selling Christmas trees in the Takapuna Grammar toilets, to setting up an internet marketing company in Japan after leaving New Zealand with just \$2000 in his pocket.

In other words, Williams knows what it is to be brave in business, and whichever way you slice what Icehouse Ventures has achieved over the past couple of years (and its precursor, Ice Angels, before it), bravery is baked into the cake. That goes for the establishment of Icehouse Ventures itself, as well as the founders the group chooses to back.

'I think bravery is having the fortitude to say, I'm going to have a go at doing something myself,' Williams says. 'It's taking the plunge and having the tenacity to keep going at it.'

'You have to have a passion for what you do because if you're doing it just for money, I don't think that's enough. You have to have some interest in the problem that you're trying to solve for society.'

Icehouse Ventures was formed in 2019 specifically to back the bravest Kiwi founders and to launch global companies from New Zealand. From the beginning, it had to practise what it preached — going out to raise capital and talking to close to 50 prospective lead investors, people and institutions capable of writing multimillion-dollar cheques and being that cornerstone investor.

It was Simplicity CEO Sam Stubbs who laid down for them a bravery challenge of his own: your vision isn't big enough to get me excited, tell me a more ambitious story of what you could do with more capital; how you could make this something that changes the face of New Zealand.

Now Icehouse Ventures has more than \$250m of assets under management and a highly active co-investor network of more than 900 investors and operates a suite of funds with different portfolio strategies. In just two years.

Williams says that when Icehouse Ventures is considering backing a founder, it's that same level of bravery they're looking for.

'It's about drive and tenacity and who they have around them — do they have passion? Passion is massive because in business you have bad days, and if you can't pick yourself up and go again, you'll be dead pretty quickly.'

There are several startups backed by Ice Angels and Icehouse Ventures whose bravery stands out for Williams, who carried a notebook of business ideas around with him from childhood.

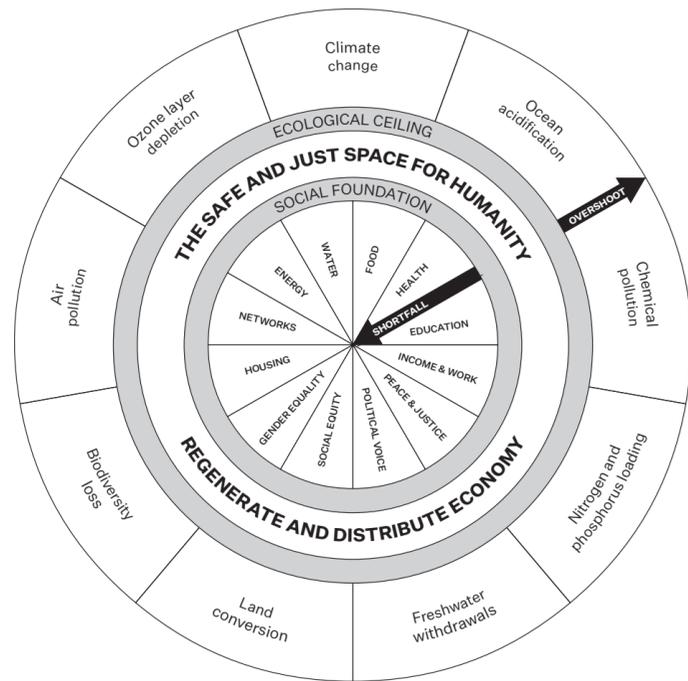
Mint Innovation is one — he remembers seeing founder Will Barker demonstrating how thermophilic bacteria gobbles gold off a single circuit board and knowing immediately that if it could scale, it would be a significant company.

Halter's cow herding necklace is another. He watched Tim Piggott's first raw pitch and saw right through the early business plan but couldn't deny that everyone had fallen in love with his passion.

Sharesies is another — a concept so simple and with tech and a business case just as simple, but a company that's 'gone bananas'.

'Leadership in entrepreneurship is being brave and tenacious enough to make it work,' Williams says. 'If you focus on money, money, money, people will sense it a mile away. You have to solve a problem for people that's worth paying for — and if you do that well, the money will naturally flow.'

'Kiwi investors have a firm focus on returns, but they do want to back young Kiwis to start companies because they realise that as much as we love our primary industries, there's only so many fish and sheep and trees that one can have — and that if we really, truly want to improve our standing in the world, we have to use our brains.'



## Future view: Doughnut Economics

# E kore tātau e mōhio kit e waitohu nui o te wai kia mimiti rawa te puna

*We never know the worth of  
water until the well runs dry*

*2021 and beyond*

Chief executive Gavin Lennox doesn't know what The Icehouse will be in 2040. Neither does The Icehouse board or stakeholders. They're not short of ideas, but they have no real way of knowing.

And that's the point. Because that's the pivot to what comes next.

Prediction is a frustrating (and futile) exercise. But spotting the signposts to the future, that's something else entirely, particularly when you know where to look.

'We took some time to think about the question of what The Icehouse will be in 20 years' time,' Lennox says. 'Everyone had lots of ideas. But we concluded we didn't know. It was almost too hard — like picking stocks.'

Instead, they considered the most important contextual drivers that were likely to shape the future. And it wasn't difficult to see what they were — not when you consider the increasing urgency around climate change, more (and largely unsustainable) pressures on GDP growth, deepening inequality, and the most immediate concern, navigating the pandemic and its implications on how to safeguard the health of the community while driving productivity.

Enter the Doughnut.

Oxford economist Kate Raworth developed the doughnut in her 2012 Oxfam paper *A Safe and Just Space for Humanity*. It's a simple visual aid for

understanding a complex problem — how humanity can live in the sweet spot of prosperity (the doughnut) between 12 social foundations and nine ecological ceilings.

These aren't random boundaries. The environmental tipping points were set out by Rockström et al in 2009\* to delineate where irreversible environmental degradation occurs in each ecological category. The social foundations comprise the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals set up in 2015. Raworth's doughnut (her doughnut economics) builds on these foundations and ceilings to lay out how humanity can thrive between these social and planetary boundaries in an environmentally and socially just space.

This is the context for The Icehouse's roadmap to 2040. As Lennox says, this century calls for a new goal — meeting the needs of everyone, within the means of the planet. In more simple terms, getting into the doughnut.

That's the context in which New Zealand and the world will be measured for success in the future.

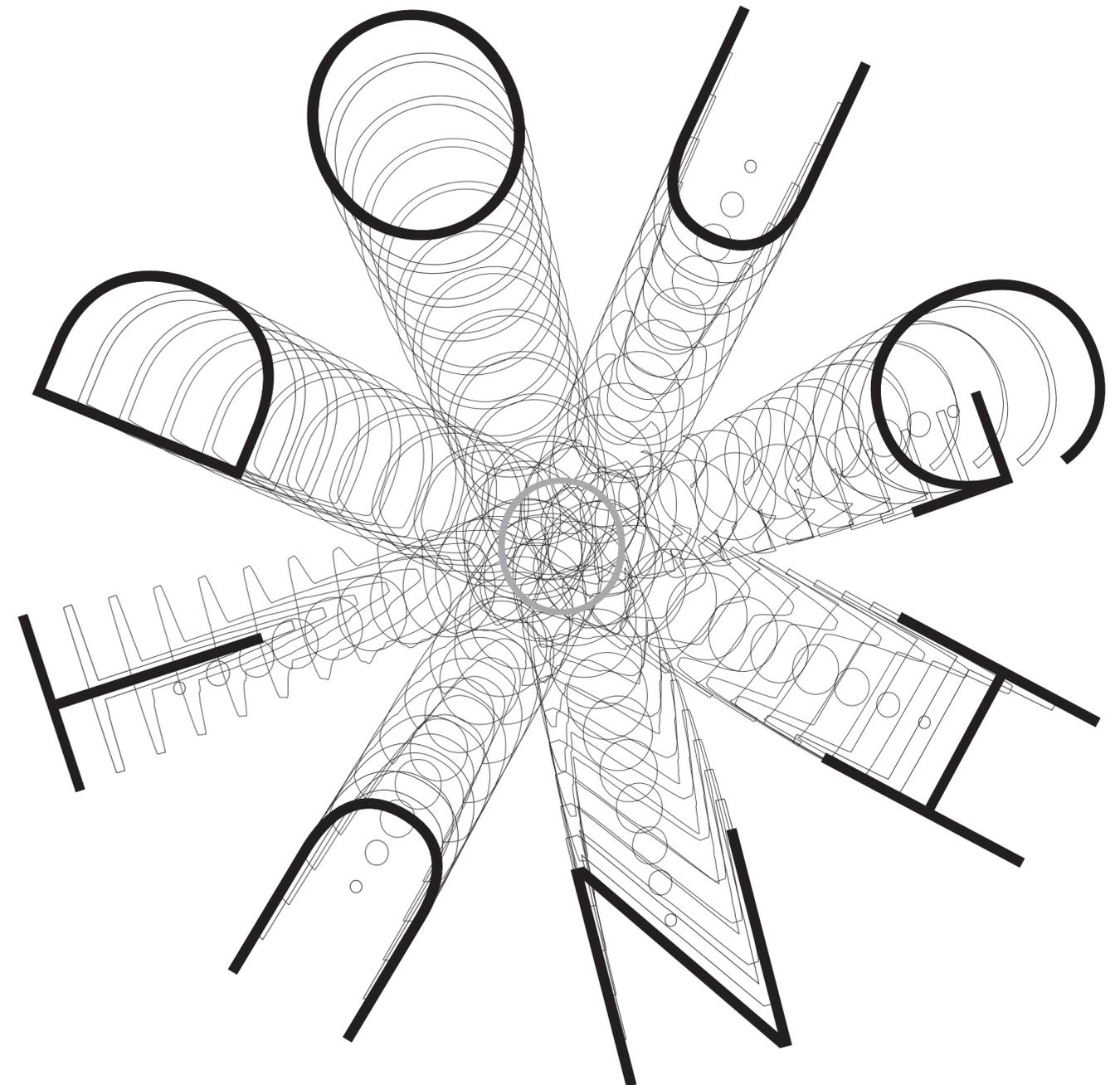
The Icehouse is uniquely placed to play a role in that success — 20 years of establishing networks of SMEs, innovators and investors, grants The Icehouse a privileged position to help small and medium businesses and startups to thrive and to find solutions to the damage we've collectively inflicted on the Earth's critical life support systems.

Kiwi business owners will require a more informed understanding of their role in the context of climate change as well as their contribution to the social fabric. They will also need the skills to grasp this future world. And New Zealand's best startups will need to innovate around issues of land conversion and chemical pollution, seeking to solve the imbalance that has resulted in the crisis in which the globe currently finds itself, while also improving productivity through innovation and exports, and developing products that add scale.

That's The Icehouse vision for the next 20 years — working with Kiwi businesses and innovators (as well as investors) to create a future world that thrives within the doughnut.

'The Icehouse will need to play its role to construct a better future,' Lennox says. 'But our purpose is still the same: improving New Zealand's economy by unleashing the potential of entrepreneurs and startup founders through knowledge, connections and investment.'

\*Rockström, J., Steffen, W., Noone, K. et al. A safe operating space for humanity. *Nature* 461, 472–475 (2009). <https://doi.org/10.1038/461472a>



## Future view: The virtuous VC feedback loop

# Investing from the balance sheet

*2021 and beyond*

Icehouse Ventures chief executive Robbie Paul likens the great entrepreneurs to animals that go extinct because they only breed every 10 years.

'Of course they went extinct, because they lay an egg once every decade,' he says, before flipping the metaphor around.

In certain ecosystems — those with the right conditions — those same animals can thrive and grow exponentially. And that's what is happening in New Zealand, and why the world of ventures in New Zealand, led by Icehouse Ventures, is heading in the right direction.

'We've got more of those rare breeds breeding,' says Paul.

Don't ask him about the goal though. Not the 20-year goal, or the 50-year goal or any time in the future. Because there isn't one. While it's inspiring to hear Sir Paul Callaghan talk about 100 companies producing \$40 billion of export earnings per year, it can't be a target, because the world of ventures is a journey, not a destination.

'If you go to New York and talk to those guys, they'll say what we need is one more unicorn — a billion-dollar company — or one more big anchor tenant, another Pinterest or a Google. Then we need one more big homegrown venture fund, and then we need a bunch of other \$100 million companies. So you have all these founders starting new companies but you're never going to be satisfied because that's the nature of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is sitting on the edge and continuing to push forward. All you can do is just keep moving along. But if you force me to say whether the startup and venture world is becoming transformed and isn't recognisable compared to what it used to be... then yes, we're definitely moving in the right direction.'

If your sense of the venture world has been shaped by the HBO series *Billions* then you're unlikely to think there's anything virtuous about it. You might picture it as populated by evil, exploitative financiers who have no concern for the people they tread on as they clamber towards great wealth. Fortunately, that's not the reality. But there is a common element

between the sensationalised and dramatic portrayal and the real world of venture capitalism. And that's the driver to do well. In Paul's words, the reality is that in venture you can't do good without doing well. And you can't do well without doing good. It's the virtuous cycle of ventures.

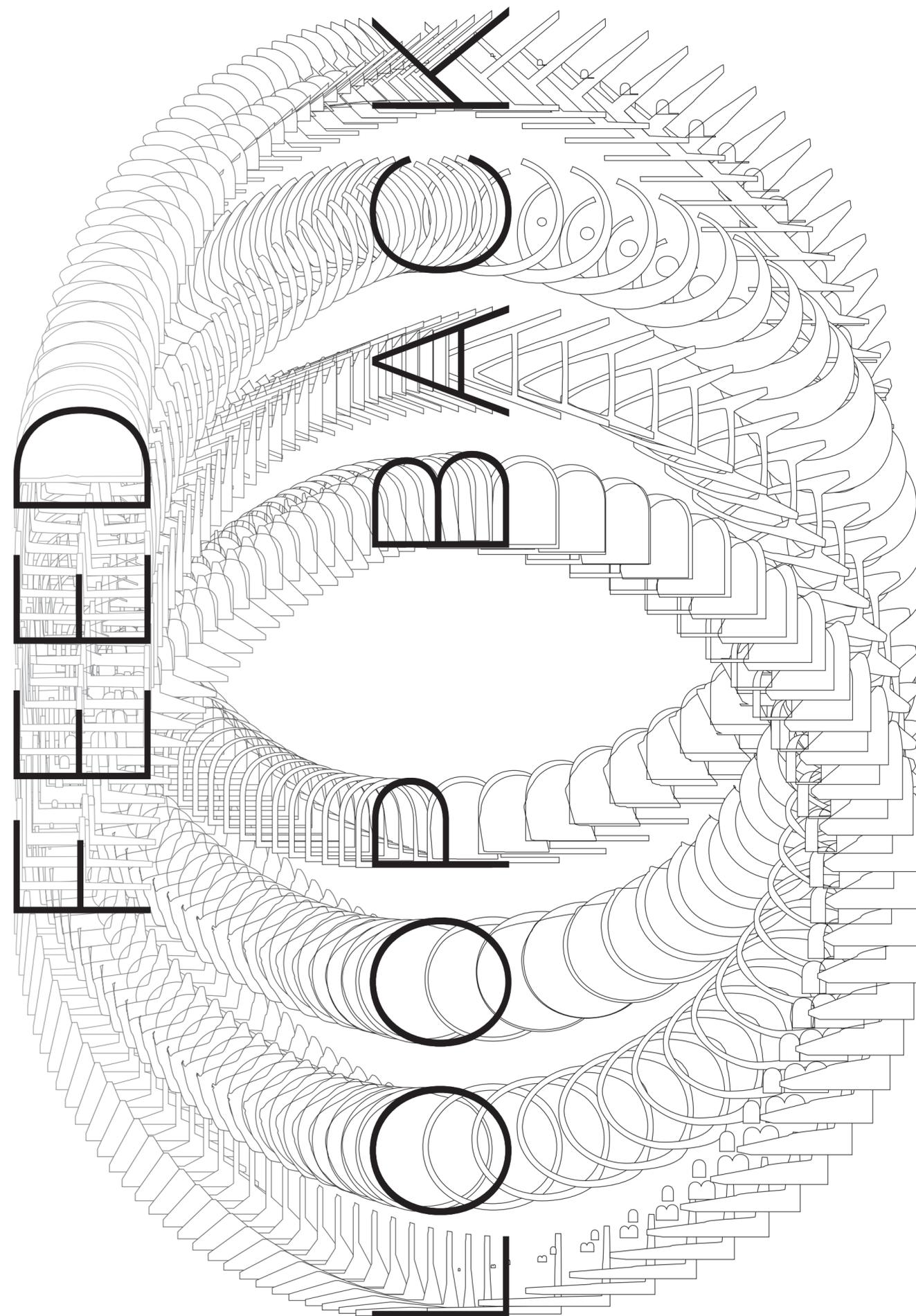
'I have total conviction in that belief,' Paul says. 'They're just not mutually exclusive. Our impact is delivered the same way that our value is delivered. If you attract, invest in and support a company that becomes immense, then you can do really well. And all of the impact goals that The Icehouse could ever conjure up are going to be achieved as well — more high paying jobs or more tech that can transform the future of New Zealand or more tech that can make the world a better place or a fairer place or a healthier place. They're just very tightly coupled.'

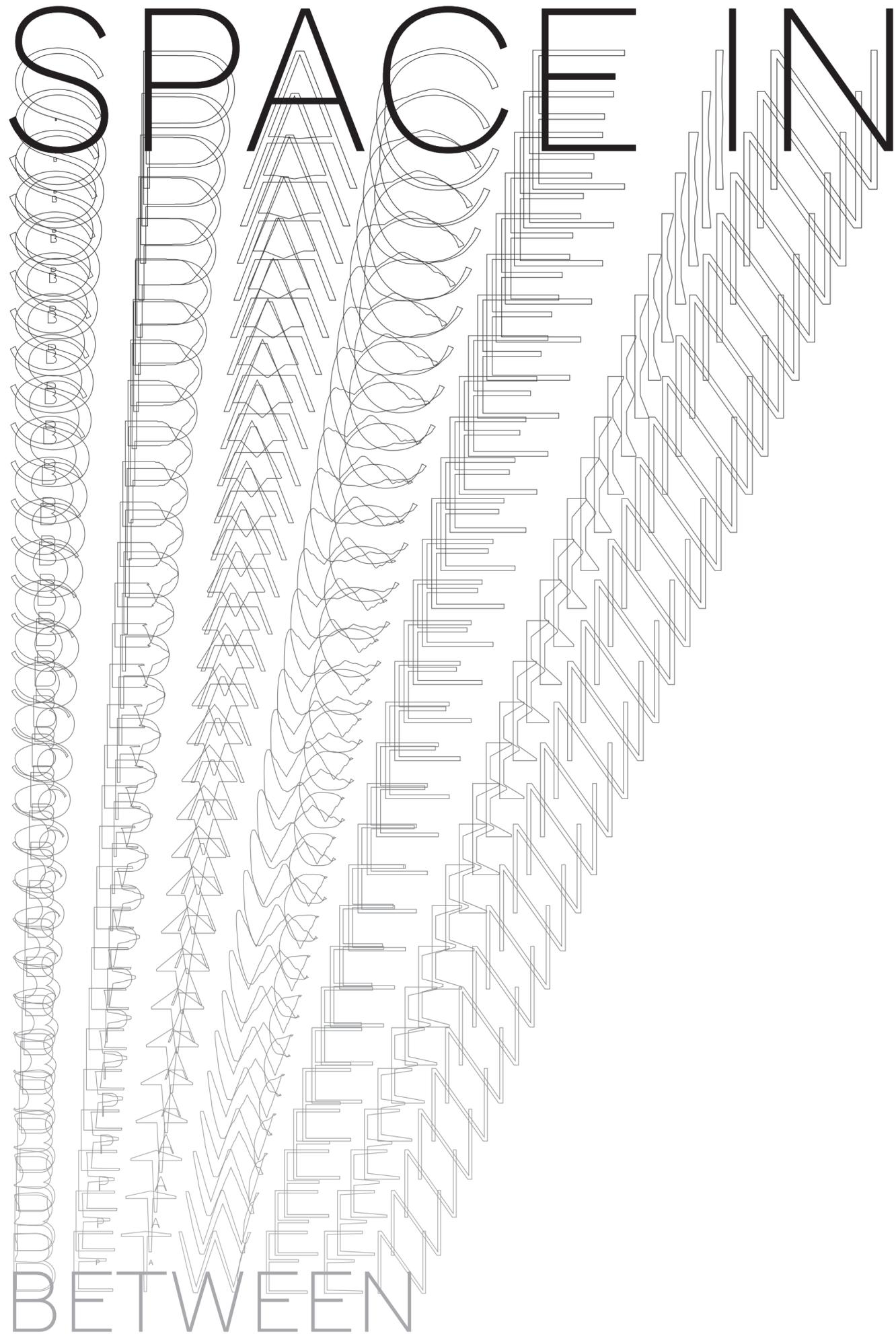
In other words, in the startup world, wealth correlates to creating new things, whether that's technology or a new product or a new way of serving people. Which is different, as Paul argues, from wealth creation that's only based on information arbitrage or exploiting people or driving consumerism or shorting companies.

It comes down to a key tenet of ventures — investors can't win without creating value.

'You could generate a ton of wealth just shorting a stock or winning some good bets in the listed equity market or doing aggressive takeovers of organisations,' Paul argues. 'But in the venture world, you can't create value by oppressing the founders. The venture world is 100 percent reliant on founders delivering extraordinary outcomes. We don't influence the outcomes, the founders do. You can help them along the way and you can give them some good connections and a bit of advice and a pat on the back — but ultimately, they're the ones on the playing field, and they've got to pull out extraordinary feats to build the businesses that we're looking for. And they deserve all that credit. So, in the finance world, if you were exploitative, it just wouldn't work.'

But, Paul adds with a laugh, maybe he's just biased and they are actually just evil finance people after all.





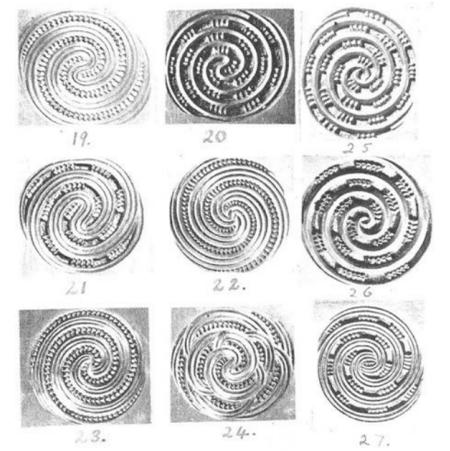
## Future view: Te Ao Māori

# Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini

*My success is not mine alone, it  
is the success of the collective*

*2021 and beyond*

The Journal of the Polynesian Society, Figure 25, Takarangi spiral, Volume 57, 1948, Maori Spirals, by W. J. Phillipps, p 30-40



The creation myth of Te Ao Māori is beautifully symbolised by the Takarangi, the double spiral pattern symbolising creation that is used widely in Māori carvings and art.

At the centre of the double spiral is the space representing the progenitor of all possibilities — the origin of all things, the beginning, the moment of creation. Rotating out from the centre are two solid spirals representing the separating out of Ranginui (the sky father) and Papatuanuku (the earth mother). The pattern represents their bond as well as their parting — togetherness as well as differentiation. But it's the space between the spirals that symbolises te ao Marama (the world of light and knowledge) and the link humanity has with Wairua (the spiritual dimension).

It's a space that's becoming increasingly important to how The Icehouse understands and participates in a richer worldview that has implications for entrepreneurs whose success will be measured by more than wealth. A priority for The Icehouse is to provide a bridge for entrepreneurial Māori and Pākeha, as well as other communities, entrepreneurs and innovators, so that each can learn from the best the other has to offer; to play in the space in-between, so to speak, to discover new ways of doing business in an innovative, socially aware and environmentally sustainable way by understanding the worldviews of others. The Māori community has always taken an intergenerational, longitudinal view of what success means. That worldview has much to offer with its holistic vision, its attention to wellbeing, and its sense of guardianship.

Drawing from that worldview can — and must — change the conversation.

The Icehouse is on a journey to more authentically connect with the Māori worldview in line with the people of Aotearoa. We're not unique in this. The rise in te reo and a more inclusive appreciation of Aotearoa's history and the implications of New Zealand's colonial past, are valued by The Icehouse and recognised as long overdue moves in a right and rich direction. After all, the blended universe that was the intent of Te Tiriti at the beginning was encapsulated and symbolised by the blended threshold of land and sea in the place where The Icehouse has operated from the start, the old Mechanics Bay, where Māori and Pākeha first came together to conduct trade and enterprise vital to early Auckland's survival. This 'bond' is part of our history, and one of which we should be proud.

Connecting with te ao Māori is the right thing to do but it also makes business sense. Demographic data shows an increasingly diverse ethnic mix of business owners and stakeholders, many of whom will connect with The Icehouse at some point in the future. But more than that, the long-term intergenerational perspective of te ao Māori has much to teach The Icehouse as it continues to be a place of spirited connection and conversation in the in-between spaces.

