

Media Statement – Anchorage Motel, Te Anau

Fiona and Nigel Humphries of Anchorage Motel, Te Anau are thrilled to be awarded the Motel Award in the 2010 Tourism Industry Awards. “It makes all of the hard work worthwhile,” said Nigel about their success.

Fiona and Nigel bought an 8-unit lease ten years ago and since then have been on a continual journey of reinvestment, developing the business to the current 16-unit freehold complex while bringing up three children. They are proud of their Qualmark Gold Enviro-Award recognizing their commitment to sustainable business practices and were recently awarded a highly commended in the Southland Environmental awards. A grant from EECA was gratefully received and helped in the installation of a large solar hot water heating system in a colder climate. It is a real test for a solar water heating system and has been a learning experience for all concerned. Constant monitoring enables the benefits to be measured. The Gold Enviro status was achieved through many initiatives, with benefits to the business ranging from waste reduction through to chemical free cleaning. Anchorage Motel’s Qualmark Case Study can be found on the Qualmark website. Fiona and Nigel are thrilled to have been given the opportunity to encourage others to get involved in sustainable business practices.

A 2008 refurbishment provided the opportunity to implement some major initiatives such as solar hot water, double glazing windows, installing heat pumps and replacing all appliances with energy efficient models. This was a substantial reinvestment which coincided with major economic turmoil and a declining tourism market. However, the results have seen Anchorage Motel return healthy occupancy and room rates in difficult times, along with high levels of guest satisfaction and referral business. The recent introduction of the ENJO cleaning system means that units are now chemical-free, “a more sustainable way of being in business in the 21st century” Fiona said.

Wholesale business has been a fundamental building block right from the beginning, and their strong relationship with Golden Chain Motels New Zealand (of which Nigel is the South Island Director) is a vital component in their success. Golden Chain provides up to 50% of their business although online booking options are also a very important revenue stream. This environment is extremely price sensitive, and Nigel says that survival requires them to respond to constantly changing markets on a daily basis while having confidence in their product. 70% of Anchorage Motel’s market comes from Australia, and they treat this as a domestic market. However, the New Zealand market share is increasing as customers search to get a high quality experience at a price they can afford.

Part of the philosophy Fiona and Nigel have had since their early days is trying to provide a guest experience they themselves would wish to have. They believe it is absolutely vital to know your market, and what they expect and desire. “Homewares are so accessible and cheap now that people often have luxuries in their own home. When they pay to stay in a motel, they are wanting to treat themselves – otherwise why would they go away? So they expect their unit to have at least what

they have in their own home” Fiona explained. Therefore an extensive and ongoing refurbishment programme is a key factor in their business.

Innovation has been a key aspect of growing their business, and their latest idea came from a recent family holiday to the USA. An afternoon of laughter in Yosemite meant the family wanted to offer a similar experience in Te Anau. Their retro bikes are now available to guests in return for a donation to the Pomona Island Charitable Trust, encouraging guests to “Slow right down and enjoy our town”. They hope this will catch on, and intend to encourage other business owners to do likewise. Fiona and Nigel have many more schemes in the pipeline for Anchorage Motel, which they are looking forward to implementing in the future. They plan to start building their new motel block when they secure finance, and are excited about their future in the tourism industry.

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