

Media Release

Tourism Industry Awards Recognise Kelly Tarlton's Innovative Marketing

Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter and Underwater World has won the Tourism New Zealand Innovative Marketing Campaign Award at the 2010 Tourism Industry Awards – cementing the popular attraction's reputation as a pioneering tourist destination with fresh, original thinking.

"Innovation has been part of Kelly Tarlton's DNA right from our inception back in 1985 – so it's great to be recognised as a leader in this area yet again," says Kelly Tarlton's Marketing Manager Tessa Lawrence.

The winning campaign spanned an entire year and focused on giving New Zealanders repeated reasons to keep returning to Kelly Tarlton's.

"We wanted to communicate – specifically to our Kiwi audience – that there's always something new to see and do at Kelly Tarlton's – regardless of whether the last time you visited us was as a kid or with your kids last school holidays," Ms Lawrence says.

To entice local visitors to keep coming back Kelly Tarlton's ran six promotions across the year – designed to add extra value and give visitors a deeper, more engaging experience with different aspects of the attraction.

Key promotions included *Megalodon – the Monster Shark*, which cleverly combined kids' love of the scary and the prehistoric with Kelly's ever-popular sharks, *25 Years Under the Sea* – a celebration of Kelly Tarlton's 25th anniversary that also paid homage to the man behind it and *Meet the Babies* – a very special opportunity to get up close to a host of new arrivals, including baby sharks that were born in a bizarre caesarean section after a scuffle between two sharks. Meanwhile *Penguathlon* transformed the penguins' usual enrichment activities into Olympic style events and gave the public the opportunity to test their own skills by taking part in human versions of the challenges.

The winning campaign came from Kelly Tarlton's marketing team's decision to focus on the domestic market as a way to mitigate the flow-on effects of lower international tourist numbers.

"Visitors from overseas love Kelly Tarlton's and we are consistently on the 'must do' lists of tens of thousands of international travellers every year. The worldwide economic downturn and events such as last year's Swine Flu scare meant we knew our international visitor numbers would be down, so we worked very hard to give New Zealanders – and Aucklanders particularly – great reasons to come back and visit us," Ms Lawrence says.

Their winning strategy is one the team intend to continue and Ms Lawrence says there's a lot coming up at Kelly Tarlton's that will continue to lure local and international visitors.

"We are hugely excited about introducing some new permanent residents to Kelly Tarlton's – six Sand Tiger sharks coming all the way from Maryland, New York. They are due to arrive by

the end of the year and for most New Zealanders it will be their first opportunity to ever see these amazing creatures.”

The arrival of the Sand Tiger sharks will also coincide with the re-opening of Kelly Tarlton’s Oceanarium, which is currently going through its first significant revamp in its 25 year history.

Plans are also underway to upgrade the Antarctic Experience. The improvements will include increasing the penguin colony’s landmass, creating additional viewing areas and incorporating new Antarctic experiences that will allow visitors to spend more time up-close with the birds.

Ms Lawrence says the team was delighted to win the Innovative Marketing category at the 2010 Tourism Industry Awards. She says it has capped off what has been a most successful campaign.

“We have had a fantastic reaction from the New Zealand public. We have mums telling us that, because there is always something new to see and do, Kelly Tarlton’s is a ‘must visit’ every school holidays. We also have had a huge influx of people who last visited when they were kids themselves returning and rediscovering the attraction.”

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