



## **Love conquers all – including COVID-19**

New Zealand – and the world – might be in the middle of a pandemic but that hasn't dampened the wedding industry's spirits. Any business built on love will always survive.

That's why the 2020 Wedding Industry Awards will go ahead as planned. There's still room to celebrate and recognise wedding-related businesses that go the extra mile and stand out in the field.

"The awards couldn't come at a more crucial time," says Peter Duncan, Wedding Guy company owner and co-founder of the awards. "The support received to date from engaged couples, their families and industry peers is a much-needed encouragement at a time when businesses are struggling."

Despite the COVID-19 crisis, local wedding suppliers in Rotorua are holding their heads up. Lynda Stevenson of Lucy Loves Cakes has been rethinking the sizes of her products, given that weddings may be smaller for a while. "I had a few (wedding cake) orders cancelled but as soon as we went to level three orders started coming in. I've had three enquiries this week."

At Peppers on the Point, there's an on-site chapel, though weddings haven't been a primary focus for a while. Lodge manager Ann Gregor-Greene says the business is reinventing itself and an increased focus on weddings is part of this. "The chapel was built in the first place as a response to the global financial crisis and we see ourselves in a similar position now."

Work is underway to develop packages for people impacted by COVID-19 but who still want to get married, and the lodge has a dedicated wedding co-ordinator. "We're still attending wedding shows and developing marketing collateral for the wedding market," Anne says. "We're fortunate to have a beautiful chapel to hold weddings in."

Further afield, other New Zealand bridal stores have adapted through various measures such as launching virtual consultancies that offer free appointments with stylists and send sample dresses to the brides' homes. Others will only reopen at level two but have advised clients and answered questions via social media platforms during levels three and four. They've all been supported by loyal customers.

"The New Zealand wedding industry is full of dedicated, talented, and passionate people - many of whom may not be in business in the upcoming wedding season without the vital lifeline of continued support from their valued clients," Peter says. "We're all in this together."

The Wedding Industry Awards will be held on August 21, 2020. [www.weddingindustryawards.nz](http://www.weddingindustryawards.nz)