

Tribute to Robert McLeod on his Contribution as Chairman of the New Zealand Business Roundtable

Everyone here this evening knows Rob McLeod. Yet while many of us have been privileged to be his friend over many years, I suspect few people appreciate the amazing depth and breadth of his career, his personal interests, and of most importance his outstanding leadership in many spheres.

We know him as Rob McLeod, CEO of Australia's "Accounting Firm of the Year", and previously as CEO of Ernst and Young in New Zealand, and before that Managing Partner of Arthur Andersons. He is one of New Zealand's leading tax practitioners, highly expert not just as an adviser to clients but also as a formative influence on New Zealand's tax system through Chairmanship of the McLeod Tax Review in 2001 and a wide array of important subsequent reviews.

I know about the award EY won in Australia since when we were at the Barber of Seville opera at the Sydney Opera House a few nights ago, who should pop up but Rob with a splendid full page photo of him in the programme.

But do you know that Rob has been a member of the Waitangi Fisheries Commission, a Director of Telecom, Sky City, ANZ National Bank, Sealord, Tainui Group Holdings, Aotearoa Fisheries, Gulliver Travel Group, to name just some, and he has sat on Government task forces or advisory groups ranging from defence to tertiary education to infrastructure to capital markets to Maori economic development. He is a trusted adviser to various Maori groups and trusts and to some of NZ's wealthiest families. He is the Lead Negotiator for Ngati Porou in its treaty settlement.

Beyond that he loves NZ and owns a large chunk of the spectacularly beautiful seashore at Kennedy Bay. Rob is a keen fisherman, something of a technology guru, and he has over 8,000 entries for his family whakapapa or genealogy on his PC going back many hundreds of years.

Rob is of course part Maori, at precisely 43.75 % (62.5 % for his Father, 25 % for his Mother, add them together and divide by 2), in keeping with the fine tradition of other leading members of the NZBR such as Dean Bracewell and our former Chairman Sir Ralph Norris, so we decided tonight to surround him at our table with some of his Maori brethren, including Sir Gil's wife Joy, Lady Simpson, who is one sixteenth Maori, as is my wife Gillian, Shane Jones who can only claim 25 % Maori heritage and his wife Ngareta, who does much better than that I am sure.

All of this suited him unusually well to be the Chairman of the NZ Business Roundtable for 8 years, 2002 to 2010, longer than any of his predecessors.

We have been uniquely fortunate to have Rob in that hugely important leadership role, where he easily encompassed both the Maori and Pakeha worlds, the Labour and National political camps, the corporate and government sectors.

In the role of Chairman, Rob brought to bear high intelligence, a great grasp of economics, well tuned and very experienced commercial instincts, a strong liberal persuasion and a distaste of undue regulatory interventions, an ability to get along with all manner of people, an impressive network of friends and colleagues, and innovative and compelling leadership skills. He knows how to listen and he is a powerful advocate.

Rob McLeod is a gifted man of many parts.

Some of my warmest memories of Rob and Joanne are many walks along the beach at Kennedy Bay, our visits to the beautifully carved Marae at the Bay, eating crayfish together with their extended family, visiting their family and friends, listening to Rob play the piano and sing with his great friend Sir Howard Morrison, and visiting Te Ahu Ahu (or Mercury) Island together.

I know Rob would like me to extend this tribute also to his family who are of great importance in his life. Joanne is here tonight and I would like to thank her too for allowing us to use Rob in the frontline and for all the wonderful support she and the three boys provide for him. Joanne is one of the world's very special people and a wonderful friend to many of us here. I should mention that their son Kent last year was runner-up in the World Schools Robotics Championship, so it is reassuring to know the genes continue down the line in such good shape. It is a pity Kent, Lee and Adam could not be here tonight to hear these tributes to the Father.

So Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a real privilege to be able publicly and very warmly to thank Rob for leading the NZ Business Roundtable through thick and thin, through good times and demanding times, to have always done that with real strength, integrity and commitment to what is best for NZ, and to have made such a vital contribution across many spheres to improved economic policy and a better country for all of us.

Thank you Rob.

Roderick Deane

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