NEW ZEALAND
Institute of Valuers

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A valuable award. Neill Sullivan, New Zealand's Valuer General, receives the 2026 Iain Gribble Memorial Award from New Zealand Institute of Valuers President Claire McLellan at the recent AGM and awards night in Auckland.

Holding the Line

Neill Sullivan has been New Zealand's Valuer-General for more than two decades. His first professional award, after 40 years in the valuation profession, is a prompt to talk about what valuers actually do — and why it matters.

Property is the foundation of the New Zealand economy. Every mortgage, every rates bill, every commercial transaction involving land depends on one thing: an independent valuation that can be trusted. Neill Sullivan has spent a big part of his career making sure that trust holds.

Last month, Sullivan, Valuer-General since 2004, received the Iain Gribble Memorial Award from the New Zealand Institute of Valuers (NZIV). He is the first person in the

Valuer-General role to receive it in the award's history. After more than 40 years in the profession, it is also his first award.

"This is the first award I've had in my career. I was surprised initially, then very grateful for the recognition, " says Sullivan.

The Iain Gribble Memorial Award is given to a person who has contributed significantly to the area of mentoring and support to the valuer community, who embraces the comradery of the profession and who is an advocate for valuer concerns and issues.

Why the Profession Matters

Sullivan states that the property system is so important to the New Zealand economy, so good valuation and independent advice is always going to be sought.

"The property system is a real foundation of the New Zealand economy. It must be well trusted and transparent. Valuers have a key role in that, by providing independent advice and holding that line, not getting drawn into client preferences."

"Particularly now New Zealand is not just a local market, but there is massive global interest in buying property in New Zealand and investors want to know that the valuation standards are being applied properly and the advice they are getting is independent."

The current North Island market downturn is a live test. Falling values put pressure on developers, who put pressure on their valuers. Sullivan is clear: report market value, not the number a client needs. That principle is what the system depends on.

Sullivan holds a unique role in the valuation eco-system as Valuer General.

The Valuer-General is a statutory officer under the Valuers Act 1948 and the Rating Valuations Act 1998. Sullivan chairs the Valuers Registration Board and sits on the NZIV Council, independent of private practice, with no clients and no commercial pressures. That independence is the point.

"I'd like think the governance view of a modern regulator, such as the Valuer General, is someone who is quite proactive in the systems they regulate, such as the private valuations system and we are not just there to say there are problems, we are there to actively look at solutions to help smooth the process."

"Being a regulator in a modern environment, you are encouraged to get in there more and mix with the operational side of things and try and find solutions and positive pathways."

Mentoring the Next Generation

Sullivan's award citation recognises his commitment to bringing graduates through the profession. When he qualified, registration was a lot like just posting off your details, saying you've worked three years, and getting registration. Today for valuers, there is a formal competency exam, and the first-time pass rate has climbed from 70 per cent a decade ago to 90 per cent now.

"We've matured as a profession. Employers and mentors are presenting graduates for the exam only when they genuinely believe they're ready. That duty of care for the greater good of the profession is a real shift."

His message to those graduates: the profession has a strong future.

"Independent valuation advice will always be in demand."

"Good valuers are those who network well and share and learn from each other. It is important not to treat valuation as a silo."

"Also don't fear AI, work with it. Harness what it brings alongside your own professional judgement. And back yourself: a good valuer makes good judgement calls."

The Workforce Challenge

The profession's age profile is a challenge to work through. Experienced valuers are mostly concentrated at the senior end, and it is important more valuers come through into the profession now and into the future.

Sullivan says: "On the rating valuation side, there are some issues with workforce interest getting enough valuers involved in the rating valuation system, it is perceived as not as attractive as private valuation."

But Sullivan gives rating valuation a plug for the next generation of valuers coming through: "You get to value all types of properties and have a much more holistic sense of the market."

Sullivan is optimistic about the direction but clear about the effort required to see the valuation profession thrive. With graduate numbers improving, preparation for registration at a high level, the case for valuation as a career option is good. He will continue to mentor and support the valuer community – one of the key reasons he has been recognised with this award.

Neill Sullivan is New Zealand's Valuer-General (since 2004), a Registered Valuer, and recipient of the 2026 Iain Gribble Memorial Award, NZIV.

For further information please contact Claire McLellan, President NZIV president@nziv.nz