

New Zealand's deep tech sector gets massive boost as Icehouse Ventures & LevelTwo join forces

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, September 28, 2020 - New Zealand's deep tech sector is getting a massive boost thanks to a new partnership between Icehouse Ventures and [LevelTwo](#) that will see \$10 million of funding, more laboratory workspaces and new incubator programmes available for startups pushing the boundaries of science and engineering to address some of our world's most pressing problems.

This marks the first joint venture between a local investment group and a tech incubator in New Zealand.

LevelTwo is the birthplace of NZ's only two deep tech unicorns - Rocket Lab and LanzaTech - and home of the country's only commercial laboratory and workshop facility growing deep technology startups.

The new partnership means that LevelTwo will transition from an Auckland-based deep tech hub housing early stage companies spanning the aerospace, agritech, biotech, and cleantech industries, into an entity that will also invest into dozens of deep tech startups throughout New Zealand.

The success of similar partnerships overseas, such as Johnson & Johnson's JLABs, which has helped over [450 companies secure \\$11.6 billion in financing](#) within six years, was an inspiration for Icehouse Ventures to join forces with LevelTwo and power up New Zealand's deep tech sector.

Today's announcement translates into several benefits for New Zealand entrepreneurs advancing science, engineering and technology to deliver the next generation of transformational innovation:

\$10 million deep technology fund

Around 20 to 30 deep tech startups across New Zealand will receive investment from the country's first and only fund exclusively backing brave deep tech founders with aspirations to scale their breakthrough products to global markets. The LevelTwo deep technology fund was raised in partnership with Icehouse Ventures, with the fund's first two investments expected to be finalised in the next few weeks.

New Launch Lab programme

Entrepreneurs prototyping their innovative ideas can participate in a new pre-incubation "Launch Lab" programme. Two LevelTwo residents are currently piloting the initiative: Zenno Astronautics, which is developing the world's first fuel-free satellite engines for sustainable space exploration, and Helico Bio, which is testing the growth of human insulin in plants.

New laboratory facilities

More specialised laboratories and workshop spaces are being added to accommodate the growing waitlist of entrepreneurs wanting to access LevelTwo's world class facilities. The expansion of LevelTwo's footprint by an additional 25% to nearly 3,000 square meters has been made possible by new investment into LevelTwo, with a significant contribution from Icehouse Ventures, with Sir Stephen Tindall's K1W1 and other private investors also contributing.

Bigger talent pool

Startups participating in one of the above initiatives will have access to the combined talent pool of entrepreneurs, investors and mentors supporting the startups served by both companies. This thriving community includes Rocket Lab's Peter Beck, and LanzaTech's Sean Simpson and other high-calibre founders who've made successful exits from previous companies. Beck sits on the board of LevelTwo alongside newcomer Robbie Paul, CEO of Icehouse Ventures. The two organisations are across the road from each other in Parnell.

Imche Fourie, LevelTwo CEO says:

"Our mission is to bring New Zealand's deep technology innovations to the world stage by transforming unique, science and engineering-based ideas into companies that deliver real-world solutions on a global scale. The partnership with Icehouse Ventures bridges the gap for the growing number of deep tech entrepreneurs across the country who need access to specialised lab and testing facilities, technology investors and a supportive startup community."

Robbie Paul, Icehouse Ventures CEO, says:

Deep tech companies are cracking the big problems in health, the environment and food scarcity, and we

want to help more of those companies get their start in New Zealand. LevelTwo has unique features that cannot easily be built or bought including a purpose-built lab facility and links with iconic deep tech startups like Rocket Lab and LanzaTech. We believe they will continue to spawn the next generation of deep tech founders and our goal is to use our collective resources to open the doors to hundreds more founders and give them the best chance of success.”

Peter Beck, LevelTwo Board Member and Rocket Lab Founder, says:

“To build our future, we need to pay more attention to ambitious deep tech. The newly powered-up LevelTwo gives New Zealand deep tech startups and emerging entrepreneurs access to operational tools, infrastructure, funding and mentoring opportunities necessary to take their exceptional idea from the lab and out to the world as quickly as possible. I’m proud of what the LevelTwo team has built and look forward to being a part of its future.”

Dr Sean Simpson, LevelTwo advisor, former resident, and LanzaTech co-founder, says:

“LevelTwo has created exactly the environment and infrastructure that New Zealand’s deep tech startups need. Over the last decade I have seen the ad hoc cluster grow into a vibrant and supportive community backed by a team that understands what it takes to bring complex tech to market. It’s great to see LevelTwo and Icehouse Ventures come together to support the next generation of globally relevant technology ventures to make a bigger impact.”

Prior to the partnership with Icehouse Ventures, LevelTwo has helped grow 25 companies, which hold around 30 patents and have raised around \$20m in seed investment.

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Timeline:

A long history of deep tech development at what is now LevelTwo: 40 Kenwyn St, Parnell

- **1994** - first private company founded on site, BioConsortia (then named BioDiscovery)
- **2001** - Peter Beck started working on his passion for rockets via Crown agency Industrial Research (now Callaghan Innovation)
- **2005** - Sean Simpson founded LanzaTech, received investment, and access to specialised equipment from BioConsortia
- **2006** – Rocket Lab is born
- **2014** - Idea of LevelTwo was born by Mat Rowe (founder, Dotterel Technologies) and Dr Will Barker (founder, Mint Innovation)
- **2016** - LevelTwo is formally incorporated, initially housing six deep tech startups
- **2020** - Icehouse Ventures invests in LevelTwo, forms partnership to boost the number of deep tech startups emerging from New Zealand, now housing 16 deep tech ventures, with more on the way.

About LevelTwo

LevelTwo is the home of the country’s only commercial laboratory and workshop facility growing deep technology startups. Located in Parnell, Auckland, its mission is to bring New Zealand’s deep technology innovations to the world stage by helping founders turn unique, science- and engineering-based ideas into companies that deliver real-world solutions on a global scale. Currently home to 16 deep tech ventures, its entrepreneurs can access almost 3,000 square meters of lab and workshop spaces, technology investors and entrepreneurial networks while preparing their breakthrough solutions for global markets. See: <https://leveltwo.tech/>

About Icehouse Ventures: www.icehouseventures.co.nz

Icehouse Ventures is an investment group backing New Zealand’s bravest founders. The group includes Ice Angels and ArcAngels investor networks, active funds Tuhua, Eden, First Cut, and the Flux Accelerator. We have collectively invested >\$150m into 210 startups since 2001.

The company’s annual Demo Day and “[Showcase](#)” investor events are among the largest held in New Zealand, attended by 500 and 1,000 respectively. Icehouse Ventures was established with investment from Simplicity Kiwisaver, Jarden, Sir Stephen Tindall’s K1W1, and private investors with a commitment to continue backing New Zealand’s bravest founders for decades to come.