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1914 - 2014

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Trevor Follows

ON THE SPOT IN A TIME OF NEED

As our Taranaki Automobile Association celebrates 100 years this year, I'm sure many Taranaki residents can recall a time when they or family members have required the services of the AA to start their car, change a tyre or retrieve car keys from inside their locked car.

The origins of the Taranaki motoring club date back to 1914 when the South Taranaki club was formed by a couple of early car enthusiasts in Hawera. A second Taranaki club – North Taranaki – was founded in 1924 and the significance of the two clubs remains today with Taranaki AA District Council meetings alternating between Hawera and New Plymouth.

South Taranaki and North Taranaki were among 15 New Zealand motoring clubs that merged in 1991 to form the New Zealand Automobile Association. Today our Taranaki AA district represents more than 27,000 of the AA's overall membership base of 1.4 million.

In recognition of the Taranaki Automobile Association's 100 year milestone, the AA's national conference was held in New Plymouth earlier in the year. The conference theme was "Taking a Leadership Role" – something the AA has never been shy of doing. Our association has a rich history of being at the forefront of pushing for change to make our roads safer and today recognises that member interests extend beyond vehicles to include a variety of transport modes such as cycling, walking and public transport.

This supplement is a story unique to our Taranaki Automobile Association and reflects back on the club's fascinating history and its involvement in the community. I hope you enjoy the photos and interesting stories as much as I have.

Trevor Follows
NZAA President

MEETING THE NEEDS OF MOTORISTS

Celebrating the Taranaki Automobile Association's 100 years provides us with an opportunity to reflect on a century of service by the AA and recognise the changes that have occurred in that time.

The number of vehicles, and the extent and capacity of our roading network, has drastically changed over the last century and we, as a region, have always been innovative and progressive to meet the changing needs of motorists.

This supplement showcases the vast changes in motoring that have taken place in our region and the role the AA has played. We hope you enjoy the many stories and photos.

Thank you to the advertisers, with whom the AA has close association, for making this supplement possible.



John Sutton

John Sutton
Chairman
AA Taranaki

IN THE BEGINNING

For a long time, the AA in Taranaki was a story of two organisations - the South Taranaki AA based in Hawera, and the Taranaki AA, operating from New Plymouth.

Developments first took shape in the south of the region, when 17 car owners met in Hawera on the evening of August 6, 1914. Chaired by Mr F.G.Kimbell, the meeting expressed concern about the need for some sort of organisation to look after the needs of the growing numbers of motorists.

The subsequent meeting on August 13 marks the official birth date of the South Taranaki AA.

Membership was open to "any owner of a motor car or motor cycle, importer and any lady or gentleman interested in motoring".

The best wishes of those founding members - 30 by November 9, 1914, when the association was incorporated as a society - were not enough to carry through the war years and the society went into recess early in 1918.

Six years later, in 1924, the South Taranaki AA was revived - and the same year in New Plymouth, a meeting of

motorists there decided to apply for incorporation as "the Taranaki Association".

That name drew the attention of the South Taranaki body, which lodged an objection, suggesting that North Taranaki would be a more fitting name. This objection was not upheld, however, and in December that year, the general meeting of the new association in North Taranaki confirmed its name as The Taranaki Automobile Association.

That was altered in 1933-34 to Automobile Association (Taranaki) Inc.

Both associations prospered in the years to come as the number of motorists in the region multiplied. More services were introduced to create organisations focused clearly on their members.

In 1991, the story of two associations became one.

The merger of Wellington, Hawkes Bay and Manawatu Associations in the 1980s was widened to create a single, national body. And the effects of that joining flowed on to the Taranaki organisations.

Restructuring following the merger saw AA Taranaki and South Taranaki AA come together into one regional organisation.



Mike, Ton & the Team would like to congratulate AA on 100 years of service in Taranaki. Ton Deken & Mike Hareb are proud to be a 100% Locally Owned business, providing Taranaki's Luxury Cars, Wagons & Sedans for over 30 years www.harebdekenmotors.co.nz

AT THE TIME...

1903

Seven motorists meet to form the Auckland Automobile Association – the first autonomous district in New Zealand.

Five cars take part in the AA Auckland inaugural 'run' from Symonds Street to Howick.

1914

AA South Taranaki formed

1917

Many AA members serve in World War 1 and members help the Armed Forces. The AAs throughout New Zealand lobby the Government over wartime benzene (petrol) shortages and later pool their members' cars to provide transport during the influenza epidemic.

1921

AA South Taranaki goes into recess as people and

scarce resources, including transportation, are redirected into the nation's recovery from wartime endeavours.

1924

AA South Taranaki reactivated with revived interest in the Automobile Association.

North Taranaki Association formed with Mr Valentine Duff as Secretary. Later renamed as AA Taranaki (Inc.).

Formation of the North Island Motor Union Motor Vehicle Insurance which provided insurance services to members of the AA in the North Island.

1925

AA South Taranaki reaches 100 members.

AA Auckland introduces regular roading reports and road maps to members – the first in New Zealand.



The first AA signposting party on Mt Messenger in the early 1920s. From left, W.Beale, Val Duff and F.H.Blundell.

AA Southland puts a 'first aid car' in service, establishing the members' first breakdown service

1926

AA South Taranaki: Road Map of Taranaki and windscreen badges commissioned.

'Runs' held every 3 weeks to locations such as Mokau, Ohawe, Cape Egmont, Tangarakau Gorge, and Stratford Mountain House. 'Sunshine Day' excursions organised for nurses and patients to Opunake Beach.

1927

AA South Taranaki begins to organise signs for side roads.

1928

AA South Taranaki commences road patrols. AA South Taranaki provides service stations and petrol tankers at the A&P shows and horse racing club meetings for members. Flat batteries, flat tyres and other starting problems were common. AA South Taranaki forms a subcommittee to enquire into petrol prices.

1930

Fifteen AA Clubs exist; 100,000 cars in population of two million.

The New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils, Taranaki Regional Council and New Zealand Transport Agency congratulate AA Taranaki on serving the region's motorists for 100 years.

We look forward to working with the AA to deliver a regional transport system that benefits our community for the next century and beyond.





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NOW \$15,995



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 09 NISSAN TEANA MAXIMA 250 (New Model): 2.5VVTi, V6, auto, full opt, aw, spacious, **60km** ... Was \$18,995 NOW \$17,995

08 TOYOTA COROLLA AURIS: 1.8 VVTi, Auto, fully optioned, bodykit, spoiler, aw, **45km** \$17,995
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 06 MAZDA AXELA SPORT HATCH: 2.0 VVTi tip, auto, full opt, tints, leather, Bose, sound, spoiler, **78km** Was \$16,995 NOW \$15,995
 09 SUBARU IMPREZA SPORTSHATCH: New model, 1.5 tip, full opt, spoiler, aw, **22km** Was \$16,995 NOW \$14,995

07 HONDA FIT/JAZZ RS SPORTS (NEW SHAPE): 1.5 iVTEC, 7 Stage Tiptronic auto, full option, aw, **43km** \$14,995
 05 TOYOTA ALTEZZA AS200 LEXUS: 2.0 VVTi, auto, full option, ABS, CD, aw, **66km** Was \$15,995 NOW \$14,995
 09 NISSAN NOTE SX (New Shape): 1.6 VVTi, Ssp, full option, **46km** \$13,995
 06 SUZUKI SX4 AERO 1.5G: 1.5 VVTi, auto, full option, body kit, spoiler, aw, **52km** \$13,995
 08-06 NISSAN TIIDA ST: 1.8 VVTi, auto, full option, aw, **52-73km** FROM \$12,995
 07 HONDA FIT/JAZZ: 1.5 iVTEC: Ssp, full opt, **49km** ... NOW \$12,995
 09-06 NISSAN TIIDA 1.5G: 1.5 VVTi, auto, full option, **52-67km** NOW FROM \$11,995

07 TOYOTA VITZ/YARIS: 1.3-1.5 VVTi, Auto, fully optioned, keyless operation, 42-49km Three to Choose From \$11,995
 06 SUZUKI SWIFT 1.5G: 1.5 VVTi, auto, full option, **QWF 95km** Was \$12,995 NOW \$11,995
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 05 NISSAN NOTE AERO SL: 1.5 VVTi, auto, full option, b/kit, spoiler, aw, **33km - 84km**, beautiful hatch in blue metallic Was \$11,995 NOW TWO FROM \$9,995
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FOR SALE BY TENDER AS IS WHERE IS:
 97 FORD FALCON: 4.0 Auto, full option, cruise control, towbar, New WOF Reserve \$2000
 96 MITSUBISHI GALANT VR4: 2.0 Quadcam 24V V6 Twin Turbo, Fully Optioned, aw, has head gasket problem New WOF Reserve \$1500



Road safety has been a concern for the AA in Taranaki for all of its 100 years. This photo (PHO2014-0368) from Puke Ariki's photographic collections shows a car accident at the Opuia Bridge near Opunake on February 2, 1914. The vehicle plunged over the side of the bridge, pinning driver Dan Deegan underneath. He was discovered six hours later and rescued, subsequently making a good recovery. Broken steering gear was said to be the cause of the accident.

1931
AA Membership levels: South Taranaki 2228; North Taranaki 1628; and New Zealand 31,656.

1932
Membership numbers declining due to the depression.

The "star" system of rating the quality of hotel accommodation begins. Schools patrols begin. The AA service officers become heavily involved in promoting road safety in schools including painting bicycle mudguards white.

1934
AA South Taranaki: A free breakdown service for members commences.

1935
AA Taranaki (North) and AA South Taranaki join other lower North Island AA hubs to launch New Zealand Motor World magazine for members. (The forerunner of AA Directions Magazine.)

1936
First copy of Motor World was published.

1943
Land for the Princes Street Hawera AA Building purchased with construction to begin after the war.

1939-45
AA Taranaki and AA South Taranaki joins other AA associations around New Zealand to lobby

Government over the harsh wartime rationing scheme and defend members against prosecution for violations.

1950
Mid 1950s - AA (North) Taranaki Office moves to new building in Powderham Street, New Plymouth.

1954
Stratford AA office opened in the Public Trust building, Broadway North.

1962
Annual subscription continues to be one pound, one shilling Val Duff retires after 38 years and is replaced by Brien Bennett as AA Taranaki secretary. This title is later changed to general manager.

1965
The New Zealand Automobile Association is formed to co-ordinate services and advocacy nation-wide.

Connected and committed to quality



The AA in the AA Auto Service & Repair business is a connection to quality that owners Darren and Michelle Erb value and maintain. The couple bought the Taranaki franchise back in 2001, with the confidence built up by Darren's own eight years' experience in the AA fold as its New Plymouth Technical Service Manager.

"The AA brand represents quality and we don't compromise that for anything," Darren emphasises. That commitment from day one has continued through the growth of the business, its expansion into larger premises several years ago, and the addition of the Milemaster Tyreplus business most recently.

Their focus on quality is confirmed by their display of Taranaki Business Awards winner's certificates hanging on the wall of their Courtenay St premises in New Plymouth.

Darren and Michelle built quality into the experience that AA Auto Service & Repair customers enjoy. It starts with their first step through the Courtenay St doors into welcoming reception areas with comfortable seating and an offering of filtered water. "From here, our customers can relax and watch their car being worked on through the workshop windows or read one of the latest magazines."

Communication is another aspect that he emphasises. Before a job is started, he lays out options for customers to choose what they want to do. "It's not my car ... not my money ... I'm an adviser," he says. "And they appreciate that. If you know what is happening, then you understand it and can make the right decisions."

The same approach completes the repair or service work. "When a job is finished, we will often show people the parts that we replaced and explain what was wrong with them. Knowing what has happened allows people to take ownership of the situation."

A large number of their customers are also AA Members, but any motorist can call on the service and experience of the enthusiastic team here.

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A: 147 Courtenay Street, New Plymouth
T: 06 759 4242 **W:** aa.co.nz/asrnewplymouth

Auto Service & Repair

1966

Auto Age Magazine was published in conjunction with Motor World.

1970

AA Travel formed

1975

AA Finance Ltd formed

1987

New Plymouth AA building is under construction. Last copy of Motorworld was published and then replaced with Motoring Today.

1988

Warrant of Fitness testing by the AA begins. Annual sub now \$36.00

1990

Police and Ministry of Transport merged

1991

A new national journal, AA Directions is launched. This

replaced the Auto Age and Motoring Today publications. NZAA formed with headquarters in Auckland

1992

AA Taranaki formed – one AA for Taranaki. Inaugural meeting of the merged Taranaki AA districts (North Taranaki and South Taranaki offices). John Knuth appointed to manage the merged offices. Brien Bennett ceases to be Taranaki general manager after 30 years. AA Approved Repairer scheme begins

1993

AA raises the issue of the underpass south of Hawera

1994

NZAA establishes its own insurance operation in a joint venture with GIO – having earlier parted from AA Mutual, the national mutual insurance company formed



A line-up of AA service officers and vehicles in the 1960s.

out of the North (NIMU) and South (SIMU) mutual insurance companies.

1995

Graduated licence system is introduced with learner, restricted and full categories.

1997

Stratford AA office closes.

1998

NZAA links with BP to begin AA Rewards for members AA Taranaki lobbies for stock truck effluent stations. Ongoing concerns regarding the condition of SH3 north are reported by the Taranaki AA.

1999

NZAA is contracted by the Land Transport Safety Authority as an agent for driver licensing

2001

The safety of the Normanby overbridge a concern to AA Taranaki Council. Submission made to Transit NZ. Further submissions to Transit NZ re the Hawera south underpass.

2003

AA celebrates 100 years of service to New Zealand motorists (Auckland). National membership passes one million members in Oct 2003

2006

Long serving Western Regional manager John Knuth retires due to ill health. Karyn Stowers

appointed in his place as first ever female regional manager.

2010

William Arthur (past Taranaki AA chairman) was awarded the "Outstanding National Service Award" for his contributions to the NZAA councils.

2011

Bob Maxwell, current Taranaki AA council member is awarded with the gold AA lapel pin to recognise his achievements on the AA Board, AA Driver Education Foundation Board and NZAA Council since 1983.

2012

Taranaki AA advocates for improved public transport links between New Plymouth and South Taranaki. Western Region of the NZAA is merged with the Central Region. Current regional manager Karyn Stowers transfers to Auckland and Fiona Croot becomes Taranaki district manager in March 2012.

2014

Local AA members polled online re the Bell Block to Waitara 80kmh speed limit. 100 years of AA in Taranaki. National AA Conference held in New Plymouth in recognition of the centenary of the Taranaki Automobile Association. AA Taranaki reaches 27,146 individual members.

**Congratulations to the
AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION
on your centenary**

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AA COUNCIL STRONG ON STRATEGY

By Gordon Brown

As motorists, we sometimes get annoyed with the condition of some of our roads in the region.

And with good reason, the Waiwhakaiho bottleneck and the northern State Highway 3 are the most obvious targets for our discontent.

Now those problems are coming to an end and both are being worked on. In separate multi-million dollar projects the New Zealand Transport Authority, the body which oversees such things, is committing plenty of resources to get the jobs done.

While motorists will applaud the actions, they are almost certainly not aware of just who has been working hard on our behalf behind the scenes.

There are the obvious lobby groups, including the three territorial district councils, Taranaki Members of Parliament and other advocacy groups, but right alongside them has been the Taranaki Automobile Association District Council.



AA Taranaki council in 2014. Back row (left to right) - Denise Holmes, Kieran Best, Brian Phelan, Marion Webby, Roland Glass; Front row - Taranaki District Manager Fiona Croot, vice-chairman Graham O'Brien, chairman John Sutton, Peter Rhodes. Absent - Bob Maxwell and Anne Probert.

The AA has 17 such District Councils throughout the country. They are volunteers who represent the interests of AA members in their local areas. Needless to say, advocacy is a huge part of their work. They do that directly to the NZTA and other decision-making bodies, as well as passing on their concerns to the AA national body, says Taranaki Council chairman John Sutton.

He explains how it works. "Each council meets monthly, to discuss transport-related issues and work closely with local government agencies and other transport and safety groups in their region.

"We also help the AA develop its advocacy position on national transport issues such as road safety and road funding."

AA Finance

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Each council is made up of no more than 10 councillors who are elected at local annual meetings. Some councillors have professional backgrounds in the transport or road safety sectors, while others have experience in government or the legal community.

They work for the AA on a voluntary basis and use their knowledge and experience to act as a voice for their local motorists. John is a good example and becoming involved with the AA was a natural progression for him.

"I've had a close association with roading for many years. I came to Taranaki in 1981 at the time of the Think Big energy projects and was the site engineer for the construction of the Waitara bypass."

He moved to local Government in 1983, with the then Taranaki County Council and became the Country Engineer. With the amalgamation of councils in the 1989 local government reshuffle, John became the roading engineer for the New Plymouth District Council.

Recent issues that the Taranaki District Council has made submissions on include the 2015-2021 Regional Land Transport Plan, and improvements to State Highway 3 north of New Plymouth.

John says advocacy is a large part of the council's role and the Taranaki council has been typically forthright in getting the best possible deal for Taranaki motorists.

The other key campaigns for the AA council have been urging solutions for the bottleneck at Waiwhakaiho and the road north of New Plymouth on State Highway 3.

"We have been active in calling for the funding of regionally significant road projects," John says.

They wrote, they lobbied, they had meetings and lobbied AA's head office. "They represent AA members to politicians and decision-makers at the national level."

John says he is very happy that their advocacy has worked well over the years.

"It's been really good, we're very pleased with the outcomes."

John says the AA is also a valuable contributor to safety on the roads and spends a vast amount of its own money doing just that.

He cites the AA's latest initiative as an excellent example. The AA has invested more than \$2 million to "AA Ignition", which offers new learner drivers three free driving lessons, which helps give them the best possible start towards staying safe behind the wheel.

AA Driving School general manager Nigel Clark says lessons from professional instructors are essential to improving driving standards in New Zealand.

"For many young people learning to drive is a time filled with challenges and uncertainty. We've made it our goal to help improve road safety outcomes by ensuring new drivers are better prepared."

Since the launch of the first stage of the programme in July last year, more than 5000 lessons have already been provided to learner drivers.



More than 50 extra instructors have been recruited since the programme was rolled out nationally, bringing the total to more than 100.

Previously, AA members and their family members were offered one free lesson, but in October it was expanded to three lessons for any learner driver.


The AA's Taranaki District Council represents AA members living from Waverley in the south to Mokau in the north. Council members are: John Sutton (chairman), Graham O'Brien (deputy chairman), Kieran Best, Roland Glass, Bob Maxwell, Brian Phelan, Peter Rhodes, Marion Webby, Denise Mouat and Anne Probert.

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FIONA AT HEAD OF TARANAKI AA FAMILY

By Rochelle West

The AA is part of the family for the association's Taranaki District Manager, Fiona Croot.

It's hardly surprising that Fiona's employer holds such a special place in the mother of two's life. The 37-year-old has grown up within the AA, starting out as an office junior at the association straight from high school.

While the then 17-year-old's girlfriends were enjoying a summer holiday, Fiona was starting her first job and has never looked back.

"When I first started, we took the breakdown calls locally and called the patrol officers on their RTs in their utes. We had to manually type all membership cards on a typewriter, we had no email, so would have to write an internal memo, post it out and then wait for an internal memo back, it amazes me how quickly technology can develop."

"We would book international travel for clients, issue road signs out of the tech bay out the back of the centre and sell many, many sun shades in our retail section," Fiona said.

Prior to being appointed the first female district manager for Taranaki in 2012, Fiona held many roles in the Taranaki arm of the organisation. From office junior, she went into customer service, before becoming an AA insurance consultant.

"I was then chosen to be one of five trainers to help train AA employees for the processing of the photo driver licences, so I lived in Auckland for about two months setting up the training, being trained myself and learning the driver licensing rule book, until I knew the rules inside out."

In 1999, Fiona was appointed the AA Express team leader before covering for a regional administrator who was on maternity leave. This led to various managerial roles, including New Plymouth centre manager, regional administrator/group centre manager for Taranaki, before internal restructuring saw her appointed Taranaki District Manager.

"During that time, I've been on maternity leave twice, but was always determined to return to work. My family always came first,



District manager for Taranaki AA, Fiona Croot.

but I also considered the AA to be my family and I just love the people I work with."

A low point in her AA career was the loss of her first boss, long-serving Western Region manager John Knuth, to melanoma seven years' ago.

"I struggled with this, as John had been the one to give me a chance and employed me; he developed me and was like a dad to me. I had huge respect for John, as did many people in the association."

"John, past manager Karyn Stowers and my current manager, Brian Roberts, have all mentored me into becoming a strong leader, by teaching me to always lead by example, stay true to my own values and to treat people with the respect they deserve, but never accept anything less than what I expect."

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Her most recent role sees Fiona overseeing the management of nine staff in the New Plymouth Centre and another five in Hawera. They are there to help customers with AA Membership, AA Insurance, AA Life, mechanical breakdown insurance, travel insurance, and can also book domestic travel in New Zealand. She is also involved with the Taranaki AA District Council, which is the volunteer arm of the association that advocates for improved roading and road safety in the district.

Fiona says that, as an employer, the AA has given her many opportunities to grow in her career.

"If you are prepared to work hard, you reap the rewards. I have people who ask me why I'm still working at the AA after all these years. It's because the AA is forever changing. It always has new products and services being developed with our members in mind and I think that is awesome."

The AA has come a long way in the two decades since Fiona joined the association. The association has evolved as technology has advanced. Today, members can call out the AA's breakdown service through a smart phone application, which guides the specialists to the member's location through GPS, linked into their service vehicles. AA road maps are available on-line, and

member-only perks have become bigger and better.

Member benefits are varied and include a free Specsavers eye check every two years, discounts at Event Cinemas, three free driving lessons for any member of their family who has had their learner licence for two months or less, and members are automatically enrolled into the fuel saving and discount programme - AA Smartfuel.

The progressive work environment, along with the AA's "fantastic" loyal members (more than 27,000 in Taranaki and growing) is what keeps Fiona's love of the AA.

And it's a family bond Fiona has no interest in breaking any time soon.

Stats for Membership in Taranaki as at July 2014

Age of Members	New Plymouth	Hawera	Stratford	Total For Taranaki
No Birth Date Given	89	87	0	176
Under 25	1629	573	2	2204
25 - 34	1819	600	4	2423
35 - 44	2675	828	3	3506
45 - 54	3722	1263	9	4994
55 - 64	4103	1316	13	5432
65 and Over	6305	2096	10	8411
Grand Total	20342	6763	41	27146

Length of Service	New Plymouth	Hawera	Stratford	Total For Taranaki
Up to 10 yrs	9634	3040	17	12691
11 - 20 Years	4387	1310	7	5704
21 - 30 Years	3071	1169	6	4246
31 - 40 Years	1424	621	5	2050
41 - 50 Years	1029	313	5	1347
Over 50 Years	797	310	1	1108
Grand Total	20342	6763	41	27146

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30 YEARS AT THE HELM

By Mike Shaw

The years leading up to the merger of the North Taranaki and South Taranaki AA branches saw major changes, according to former Taranaki AA general manager Brien Bennett.

Brien headed the North Taranaki organisation from 1962 until the merger in 1992, a time that he says was "interesting and exciting".

A chartered accountant by qualification, he joined the AA as its secretary. "That's the name that the 'boss man' had been known by since 1924," Brien explains. "Some years later, that was changed to general manager ... a better description of what the job entailed."

Brien succeeded Val Duff, another accountant, who had filled the secretary's role for 38 years - from 1924 until retiring in 1962.

As general manager, Brien saw many of the significant changes that reflected the growth of the AA business in the region. The technical services were established in

the 1960s, he recalls, AA Finance was set up and AA Travel opened during the 1970s, and the breakdown service was enhanced, later becoming the AA Roadservice of today.

The New Plymouth premises changed significantly as well.

"When the AA was first formed here, there were only a handful of members and it was run out of accountancy offices," Brien says.

The first full-time office was established in the old Hotel Cargill building, where the IRD building now stands. From there, Brien says, the AA moved to today's site on Powderham St, where it had owned a section for many years. That land had been used as parking space for AA members.

The new building was opened in 1960, and a second storey was added in the 1970s to accommodate insurance services. Today's prominent AA Centre was a major redevelopment on the site in 1987.



Brien Bennett

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In July 2013, AA started with an initial free driving lesson offer to AA members and children of AA members who have held their learner licence for two months or less, which delivered more than 5000 free lessons to learner drivers.

This year, AA Driving School launched AA Ignition, offering three free driving lessons along with innovative content on its website, called Learn to drive the AA way. It provides information and guidance to help drivers at any stage of their learn-to-drive journey. The AA Ignition programme also means the right steps are taken at the start of the learning-to-drive journey.

AA Driving School's general manager for development Nigel Clark says lessons from professional instructors are essential to improving driving standards in New Zealand.

"For many young people learning to drive is a time that is filled with challenges and uncertainty. Professional driving instructors ensure new drivers have the best start on the road to getting a full driver licence," Mr Clark says.

"We've made it our goal to help improve road safety outcomes by ensuring new drivers are better prepared."

For more information on how to Learn to drive the AA way and on the AA Ignition programme, go to aa.co.nz/drivers



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AA Centre Staff - New Plymouth
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A badge of recognition

Soon after the introduction of the first automobiles, pioneer motorists banded together with a common interest and formed automobile clubs and associations.

During the early years of motoring, the car was considered a plaything for the rich, and regarded by most as a danger to pedestrians, horse-drawn vehicles, and other road users. The constabulary continually harassed motorists and local councils imposed fees and tariffs in an effort to curtail their use.

The number of automobiles only increased, as did club membership, and clubs became the voice of motorists with the aim of improving road conditions and to oppose restrictions enforced by bureaucracy.

Car badges were introduced to assist in identifying fellow club or association members. In Britain badges were used to allow road servicemen to identify and warn automobile association members of 'speed trap' locations. Although badges were

adopted in New Zealand they later became a sign of membership.

Early car badges were also used as 'membership cards' allowing members to obtain the services of the road patrols. Badges could be hired for an annual fee, however they remained the property of the automobile association. Most badges display a stamp on the back or front which states that the badge is the property of the issuing association and must be returned upon cessation of membership. Many associations in New Zealand issued annual transfers or decals for the windscreen as proof of membership.

The regional AAs in New Zealand issued badges up until 1990. Some associations produced special variations of their badges for president, vice-president and executive members of their councils. Car badges are occasionally produced to commemorate special occasions and many are limited editions.

Today, the AA emblem is recognised across New Zealand and is an icon for road service and emergency assistance for motorists.

(Article sourced from The AA Badges of New Zealand, by Adrian B Patterson)

Special release AA Taranaki centenary car badge

AA Taranaki plans to release an AA car badge to celebrate the regional association's 100 years in Taranaki. This limited edition will be designed along the lines of the iconic AA badge and will capture the essence of Taranaki.



If you are interested in adding this car badge to your collection, would like further details, or want to register your interest, send your contact details (name, address, phone number and email) to:

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ROADSIDE AID A MAJOR ATTRACTION FOR MEMBERS

On a cold, rainy night on a dark road, the last thing any motorist wants is to hear clunking noises under the bonnet.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of motorists end up stuck on the side of a road away from home because of a problem with their vehicle - and often this happens when it is least expected and at the worst possible time.

As the AA celebrates its Taranaki centenary, roadside assistance remains one of the primary reasons why people join New Zealand's biggest club - essentially as an insurance policy to ensure they have the peace of mind that someone will come and assist them get moving again.

In the 12 months to July this year, the AA attended more than 9000 Roadservice callouts in Taranaki - that's more than 170 a week on average with higher numbers at a certain periods of the year.

Winter provides one of the AA Roadservice's peak periods with calls ramping up as the cold weather sets in. One of the most common problems in the cold is battery failure and Taranaki has one

of the highest regional averages of battery-related callouts in the country. During the 2013/14 financial year, 51 per cent of all AA Roadservice calls in the Taranaki region were caused by batteries - many of which had limped through the summer and turned their last crank of the starter motor once winter set in. This compares to about 46 per cent battery-related callouts nationally.

In Taranaki, the "oh no" moment when the door slams shut with the keys still on the inside is responsible for 10 per cent of the total calls. As a result, AA Roadservice officers are very skilled with a raft of keyless entry techniques - in some cases, even showing different vehicle manufacturers new ways of opening doors without causing damage to the car.

Electrical faults and tyre jobs are each responsible for about 6 per cent of the total call outs in the region and fuel jobs a further 4 per cent.

Sometimes when AA Roadservice assistance is required, it can be a very easy fix. Nearly 5 per cent of total call outs end up with sharing a bit of automotive knowledge



The AA has provided technical assistance at the side of the road for more than a century.

and advice to ensure the member can continue on their way.

Nationally, there are nearly half a million AA Roadservice call outs every year. AA members can request breakdown assistance through the AA's website, phone or through the new AA Roadservice smartphone app available on iPhone, Android and Windows Phone 8 platforms 24 hours a day.

In addition to standard roadside assistance that comes with AA membership, motorists can boost their benefits by paying a little extra for AA Plus. This provides free towing to home (or to a suitable repairer, if that's closer), a rental car or accommodation if you are more than 100km from home and the repairs will take more than a day, and \$150 towards locksmith costs if keys are lost.

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WHITE KNIGHTS KEEP MOTORISTS MOBILE

By Lyn Humphreys

Meet Clint Bower and Keith Coombe, the white knights of Taranaki's roads.

The two are notoriously modest, media-shy men, who would be the first to disagree with that description, but for thousands of Taranaki motorists, they have indeed been white knights as they have come to their rescue.

Clint and Keith are these days called the AA's road service officers, or, as they used to be known, the patrolmen who get stranded motorists going again.

Keith and Clint are old mates, despite growing up in opposite ends of the region. Keith was born and bred in Opunake while Clint lived in Taranaki's most northerly township of Mokau.

They met while working together as mechanics at Energy City Ford. Eighteen years ago Keith left to join the AA and a year later Clint followed him. So between them they've been at the AA for a combined 35 years and still enjoy the job.

Both acknowledge that no two days are the same. They start at 7am and don't finish till 9pm, three days a week. They are long days, but it all works out so that they work 42 hours a week, which is fine with them.

Both Clint and Keith work different shifts, but still operate as a team. "You make sure you finish a job properly and don't drop your mate in it when he starts. That's not fair," says Clint.

Many of the problems they encounter are commonplace. Flat batteries, electrical gremlins, flat tyres, and owners locking themselves out of their cars all feature prominently.

Usually they find a way to get the motorist mobile again, but not always. "Some cars are deadlocked and there's no way into them, unless you have another key," says Keith.

"Cars are more complicated beasts these days," says Keith. That can mean not all solutions come from the text book.

Clint agrees. "There's a fair bit of the number eight wire ingenuity involved with a lot of aspects of the job. You've got to be reasonably dextrous and be able to think on your feet. That's because each job is different, even though they are the same in many ways," he says.

Both agree they come across some bizarre stuff, but protecting the members' confidentiality is paramount. Suffice to say a few of the more unusual problems have



Clint Bower, left, and Keith Coombe are AA Roadservice officers in Taranaki.
Photo: FAIRFAX NZ

involved rats eating wiring and various parts of cars. "The car owner is blissfully unaware of the cause of the problem and is shocked to learn what it is," says Clint with a grin.

"I got the car going," he says, recalling one case, "but I wasn't involved in killing the rat," he says with a chuckle. "You've got to be quite versatile in those sorts of situations."

Those examples offers one of the real insights into their job. The text book and their training will take them so far, but there's no substitute for being able to think outside the square.

That's when the case of the possum under the bonnet comes to mind ... but that's another story for another day.

Both Keith and Clint say they understand the frustrations of members when they can't always get there immediately. "Often the frustration doesn't come because we've taken a while to get there, it is more often because their car won't go and their day has turned to custard," says Clint.

"We understand that and do our best to help them." They both cite peak-time traffic as a real issue, and without going into too many details, the words "Waiwhakaiho" and "Bridge" feature prominently.

There are a lot of different scenarios to face on a daily basis. Some people's cars break down at home; others need help at roadside and that can complicate things, but as always the object of the exercise is to get the motorist mobile.

It's at this stage that the two point out how much their job has changed over the years. Almost inevitably, it is the computer age which has changed motor cars forever.

"It's the computer era. While cars still run on the internal combustion engine, there's a lot of things that have been added that can cause vehicles to stop running," says Keith.

"We have to be careful not to tinker with things we don't have knowledge about and create problems.

"We have generic scan tools, because there are so many makes and models of cars, so it only does the basics. That's because manufacturers are very careful to protect their systems.

"We use the scanners a lot. Often it gives us a bit better idea of what the problem is. Then we can often advise members whether it's safe to carry on driving the vehicle, or it's better to stop.

Both agree the AA's ongoing technical training systems keep them up to date. It's backed up by quarterly written exams.

"It's necessary because the technology in motor vehicles is changing so quickly," says Clint. Computers also play a big part in communications, with their laptops an integral part in keeping them connected.

Contractors also play a vital role in providing back-up for the pair, but if you are a Taranaki AA member, you know you're in good hands.

BOB'S EFFORTS ADVANCED BYPASS APPROVAL

By Lyn Humphreys

Taranaki's former chief traffic cop and police inspector Bob Maxwell is credited with being a major force in the existence of the Bell Block Bypass.

His strong personality and doggedness in assisting in gaining approval for the bypass, both through his position with the AA and his leadership of the vocal Bell Block and Districts Residents' lobby group, is now working in his favour as he recovers from his second major stroke in eight years.

Bob was in good heart when making himself available for this interview despite his disability and it being just his second day home after nine weeks in hospital.

The 73-year-old and his wife Pat spoke of the big day when, in acknowledging his role in getting the job done, Bob and his wheelchair were the first out on to the new four-lane highway at the official opening ceremony.

It had been a long struggle by many. By the time the bypass was a fait accompli, the project had been on the books for more than 20 years.

"The AA did a hell of a lot in getting it approved," Bob says.

He recalls the bypass, the recently approved Normanby overbridge and the completed Tariki underpass (the project was officially named Rugby Rd) and the widening of the Waiwhakaiho Bridge – all acknowledged danger bottlenecks on the region's



Former top cop Bob Maxwell has to date been Taranaki's only representative to take a seat on the AA's National Board.

State Highway 3 - were all on the wish list for the Taranaki AA.

It gives him satisfaction to know that all have been completed or are under way – including the current major Vickers to City project. In two years' time, that will give New Plymouth its new bridge over the Waiwhakaiho Bridge, in addition to a four-lane highway into the city, a continuation of the all-important Bell Block bypass through the industrial north.

The challenging Mt Messenger remains another major project on the yet-to-do list.

Bob's longstanding and close association with the AA began when he was posted to Taranaki from Hamilton in 1983 and became the region's senior chief traffic officer. The role brought with it automatic membership on the Taranaki AA Council.

He continued on the council when he became a police inspector in 1992 after the Ministry of Transport officers were disbanded and the MOT merged with the police force. His passion for the job and strong leadership skills resulted in him becoming vice-president in 1993 and

chairperson in 1995. He was appointed to the New Zealand AA National Council in March 1995.

Bob has deep pride in his election on to the NZAA Board in March 1997 at the board's annual meeting in Wairakei. It was the first time a Taranaki representative had been voted on to the board and there has been none since. As a board member, he was also a trustee on the AA Driver Education Foundation Trust.

After he suffered his first stroke, Bob was unable to continue with his passion and retired from the national council in March 2008. The following year he also stepped down from the NZAA board.

In 2011, his long and dedicated service was acknowledged by the AA when the then-chairman Peter Rhodes awarded Bob a gold lapel pin.

Over the years, Bob has gathered together AA badges which complement the extensive collection of police memorabilia that fills a garage at his home.

Despite the permanent effects caused by the strokes, he still enjoys taking people through the collection.



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POINTING THE WAY FOR MOTORISTS

By Gordon Brown

For many of us, when we think of the AA, among the first images that pop into our minds are the distinctive AA signs.

The yellow fingerboard signs have been with us since the 1920s, Taranaki District AA Council chairman John Sutton says.

"One of the earliest functions of the association was signposting," he says. The archive photo here and on the cover of this magazine neatly captured the way things used to be.

It was back in 1915 that the Auckland Automobile Association began voluntarily marking routes, but by 1922 there was a recognised need for someone to formally take on the role of improving signage and provide information on road conditions.

Offering his services free of charge, Roy Champstaloup, who in 1925 drew the first official AA map by hand, undertook this service and by May 1923 he had erected 70 signs and danger boards.

It was shortly after that work that Taranaki started doing the same, John explains. "Four years later, Taranaki took up the challenge and AA South Taranaki started signposting roads. That service, which the AA extended to all roads in the region, continued for more than 60 years and the yellow fingerboard signs became a familiar feature on roads throughout New Zealand."

This service came to an end in 1991 when central government passed legislation to require all work on roads to be competitively tendered. Road authorities would receive funding from central government, which came from fuel and road-user taxes. That only paid for half the cost of the signs.

The yellow "general information" fingerboard signs, very similar in looks to the AA fingerboard signs are still commonly seen on our roads, says John.

"In fact, you may still see the occasional original AA signs on our



The well-known yellow-and-black fingerboard signs were an AA institution for decades.

roads. We all grew up with those signs and they still look the same; they've hardly changed."

That's the good thing about the signs. When they're so well done, as the AA did for so many years, there's little need to change them.




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FATHER AND SON ON SAME COUNCIL

By Lyn Humphreys

Long-serving Taranaki AA council member Ray Cocksedge, 83, well remembers getting his driver's licence back in 1948.

Gaining your licence in those days was a simple affair - unlike today's strict three-tier requirements of learner, restricted and then full.

In fact, Len Hunt, the Taranaki County Council's transport officer at the time, even went so far as to come to the farm Ray was working on to put him through his paces.

Ray took the wheel of a five-ton truck, the officer beside him.

"He got me to drive two miles down a gravel road, into a gateway to do my reversing and home again."

An Okato farmer most of his life, Ray followed in his father's footsteps, joining the AA as a 22-year-old and becoming a council member in the 1970s.

"I was on the council with Dad," Ray says. "He talked me into it."

Clem died in 1982.

Ray continued on for no less than three decades, enjoying both the committee work and the company. His retirement is noted in the minutes of the February 2001 meeting.

And on Ray's departure, the Okato district still had strong representation from another well known resident. "Des Corbett [now deceased] came on before I retired."

In the early days, he remembers, there were the two AA branches: Taranaki, based in New Plymouth; and South Taranaki, with an office in Stratford.

The branches amalgamated and meetings were then held month-about in Hawera and in New Plymouth.

Ray spent most of his working life on a 1200-acre dairy and mixed farming block on Dover Rd owned by his father and Laurie Hickford, who took him into partnership in the 1960s.

Ray has been a keen user of the AA maps given out free to members, as they still are today.



The Okato district was well represented on the Taranaki AA council for many years. Ray Cocksedge, pictured, was a member for three decades and for a time both he and his father, Clem served together on the council.

Photo: LYN HUMPHREYS/FAIRFAX NZ

The retiree is happy with the move he made to New Plymouth two years ago. He is still driving and ensures he keeps in touch with many others he has befriended through the years from all walks of life including those he has met through the AA.

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FAMILY MILESTONES WITH THE AA

By Lyn Humphreys

Mike Morrison's dad was keen for his young soldier son to join the Automobile Association to ensure he got home safe and sound during his leave from his various posts around the country.

"It was for peace of mind," Mike says.

His father, Gordon Morrison, was with the AA for about 60 years and was rewarded with a life membership and free sub as a result, Mike says.

"Dad was a stalwart of the AA. He was as proud as punch when he got his life membership. And when I bought my first car, he wanted me to join the AA so I'd have help if I broke down. Cars weren't as reliable in those days."

Gordon continued to drive until a few years before he died, just three weeks before his 90th birthday in 1995.

And this year, Mike is celebrating 50 years' membership with the organisation.

As a reward for his own long-term membership, Mike's annual subscription to the AA has now been halved.

Mike's AA experience began shortly after he left school. "I joined the Army when I was 16 1/2," he recalls. "I did my School Certificate and joined in the following January."

A few months later, he gained his driver's licence during a leave break. "I didn't have a car and I did it in my older sister's car at Waitara, in her little brown Morris Minor."

Soon after, he bought his first car, a grey Vauxhall, to get himself around when on leave. "I was always doing quite a bit of driving, coming back to the family home in New Plymouth, or visiting friends in other cities and attending army training courses."

Mike has grateful memories of the times he was able to call up the roving AA Roadservice

staff member or contractor for help for a series of minor problems over the years.

"I recall I locked the keys in the car a couple of times. You would only have to ring them up and they'd arrive and put a wire through the door and open it up."

Three years ago, he and his wife Lorna - an associate member of the AA - drove down to New Plymouth's lee breakwater to take their family pet griffin Ming for a walk and when they returned to the car it wouldn't start. "The battery was flat."

The AA troubleshooter duly arrived "and I bought a battery straight off him".

Mike says he's never had an obsession with cars. "I only see cars as a means of getting you from A to B."

But he still has fond memories of one of his cars, the brand new 1974 XB Falcon he proudly drove out of the Ford dealer's showroom at Palmerston North as its very first owner. "At that stage I was based in Linton."

Four years earlier, as a 21-year-old, he had come home from his first tour in Vietnam where he served in Whiskey Company of the Anzac Battalion. "I got wounded in action in May 1970."

When he was fully fit again, he decided to return to Vietnam, this time to train Cambodians. It was Christmastime 1972 when he returned home as one of the last Kiwis to leave Vietnam when the New Zealand Labour Government decided to bring the troops home.

The new Falcon was a replacement for his XA Falcon that he bought from New Plymouth's Paritutu Motors following the second tour.

The XB Falcon served him well for several years, he says. "I kept that for a long time. Then,



Mike Morrison with Ming.
Photo: Lyn Humphreys

when I got out of the Army in 1986, I bought the Railway Hotel in Inglewood."

The Ford had to go and was replaced by a more practical vehicle, a Holden stationwagon, which was better suited to cart around a hotelier's stock in trade.

After he sold the hotel three and a half years later, he moved to take up a role as Taranaki's first professional rugby club manager - secretary, treasurer and bar manager for New Plymouth Old Boys'

Rugby Club. The stationwagon went and was replaced with a Mitsubishi.

A "Jap import" Corona followed and then a Corolla prior to the recent purchase of a new Toyota RAV4 GXL.

The Morrisons are very pleased with their new vehicle. "It's a nice vehicle," Mike says. "We'll use it for trips around the country, visiting friends and relatives."

And Ming won't be missing out on the road trips. "He's the first in. He loves the car."

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PRAISE FOR AA BUSINESS MODEL

By Lyn Humphreys

The Automobile Association has been given the seal of approval by one who best knows good business practice when he sees it. Bryce Barnett, New Plymouth-based entrepreneur and philanthropist, has high praise - tempered with a gentle warning - for the organisation.

"The AA has to be one the best managed businesses in New Zealand," Bryce says. "The AA just makes life easy. Their whole administration is easy. They have got their systems user-friendly."

In a world that is getting far too PC and bureaucratic, the AA has not compromised bureaucracy for service and has stuck to its core specialty, the automobile business, Bryce says.

"I'd even go so far to say their membership cost for what they offer is too cheap. The service is worth more than the premium you pay.

"Money for value, I think it's incredibly user friendly and family friendly."

And because the AA is so cost-efficient, it made sense for the AA to take over driver licensing and registration in 1999 when it was on offer, he says. "They have a slick operation."

With the core business going so well, he warns against management being tempted to diversify.

A lot of money could be spent on diversification "and then you lose strength in the core business. I think they have got a great model, but I say don't go outside it."

Bryce also praises the AA model which allows regional representation on the national executive ensuring it is picking up any mood change or swing in attitude at a local level. "Having regional representation contributes to their success."

To describe Bryce and wife Delwyn as car enthusiasts sells them short.

"I just love cars. I'm not mechanical. To me they are a form of art," Bryce says.

He has not one, but two stables packed full of magnificent cars. Just three examples are the 1937 Cord (one of only two in New Zealand), the '61 Corvette and the '39 Buick 8.

There are no favourites, he says. Whichever is chosen to go out on the road on any given day depends solely on his mood.

But the couple agree that it is the Porsche which they consider the world's

best. They have three - a Panamera, Boxster and a 911.

And intrepid biker Delwyn lays claim to not one, but three motorcycles - two BMWs and a three-wheeler Can-Am Spyder - stored in the two extensive purpose-built garages on their seven-acre spread on the corner of State Highway 3 and 3A north of New Plymouth.

The collection includes 24 cars, a jet boat, jet-skis, and even shiny child-size petrol-driven cars for the kids to play on.

The whole family are AA members.

The couple, who have five children, ensured each was signed up the moment they got their driver's licence.

And the reason: The AA's superior breakdown service, where there is someone on the end of the phone the moment you call for help.

It is second to none, they say. "Once the kids got their licence, we signed them up. The biggest thing with five kids travelling all over the country, all hours of the night, is that it gives us peace of mind," Bryce says.

It's a bonus that even if their kids are passengers in a friend's car, they are still covered if anything goes amiss, says Delwyn.

"AA membership and a cellphone are the biggest assets you can give your kids,"

Bryce adds. "All our kids have used the service - and we've used them. Once you have called them, you know they are going to come."

Whatever the wait, the certainty is there that the AA will arrive. "We've instilled that into the kids."

The couple's own example of calling the AA breakdown man still gives them a laugh.

They were travelling between Taumarunui and Ohura in their Hummer and had just pulled another motorist out of a ditch when their own vehicle broke down. "The power steering went," Bryce recalls. "You just couldn't turn the steering wheel".

Ironically, the Taumarunui-based mechanic passed them on the road on his way back to the township to pick up their call. And the people they had pulled out of the ditch drove past oblivious that the Hummer had broken down.

"They go flying past and go 'toot, toot'," Delwyn remembers with a laugh.

And when the breakdown truck did turn up it was far too small to take the huge Hummer, which is more often seen as a purpose-built workhorse in the United States Army.

No problem for the AA, a larger transporter was soon on its way.



When Delwyn and Bryce Barnett's American Hummer broke down in the central North Island, the Automobile Association sent a pickup truck to collect it. But on hearing what it was, decided to send a truck transporter. The Barnetts were suitably impressed.
Photo: PIP GUTHRIE

'MUM KNOWS BEST' IS TRUE FOR NIKITA

By Lyn Humphreys

Seventeen-year-old Nikita Kolose of Hawera has grown up at the sharp end of road safety.

Nikita's mother Marion Webby is Taranaki's road safety co-ordinator and Nikita has often been her right-hand supporter at the regular educational events held across the region aimed at improving driving skills.

They also have a close connection with Students Against Dangerous Driving (SADD).

"I've had a lot to do with SADD. And I've done lots to help Mum," Nikita says.

Demonstration equipment which assists teaching people about road safety issues and crash scene simulations includes "fatal vision goggles" and a seat belt simulator. She's also helped with organising the educational pamphlets and posters.

The AA supports roadsafe education through funding resources, Marion says. The major source of funding for Taranaki Roadsafes is through the New Zealand Transport Agency and through Taranaki's three district councils.

Marion says her role sees her sometimes working alongside the AA which she says does a great job in organising a wide range of practical skills training for young people.

Nikita, who attends New Plymouth Girls' High School, has her restricted licence and drives into New Plymouth from her Hawera home about three times a week.

She signed up with the AA two years ago. "My mum wanted me to join."

And she has more than benefited from the membership, Marion says.

Special deals on sign-up include a free eye test from Specsavers, discounts at food outlets and petrol discounts.

"I've saved so much on petrol," Nikita says.

Marion is impressed with the AA's recently launched Ignition programme, which offers three free driving lessons to new learner drivers who are, or are related to, AA members.

"I try and encourage everybody to join the AA. There are a lot of young people whose Mum and Dad are members," Marion says.

Her own grandmother was a member for 55 years.

In Taranaki and elsewhere outside Auckland, AA youth membership is \$39.50 a year; adults pay \$79.

Nikita now gets a 10 per cent discount because she has been a member for two years.

Nikita is hoping to gain her full licence in April next year, reducing the time she must wait for her full licence by six months through undertaking an AA-run defensive driving course.

Just recently Nikita has made good use of the AA's free maps of Tauranga and Auckland to help her get around while umpiring the under-15 girls' hockey tournaments. She also has a discount on insurance through AA Insurance.

Nikita says because many young drivers take advantage of driving schools they benefit from learning the extra skills need to become good drivers.

"All of my friends have had lessons. They are completely beneficial. It boosts your confidence. I think the younger drivers my age are quite good drivers."

She has noticed, in particular, that it is the younger drivers who have a more consistent speed on the open roads compared to older drivers.

However, she feels it is unfair that younger people get a bad rap from the small group of older teenage boy

racers who make the roads more dangerous for themselves and others.

"I feel, because there's a group of people who drive dangerously, all of us young drivers get put into that category."

Drunk and drugged drivers are also putting others at risk, she says.

"There's no need for it. It's not just you that it's having an effect on. They think they are fine to drive and they are not."

Nikita who is completing her Year 12 this year intends heading off to university when her secondary schooling is completed and has her eye set on a career in the police, as a teacher or social worker.



Team of two: Nikita Kolose has had a good teacher on the subject of keeping yourself safe on the roads. That's understandable because her mother Marion Webby happens to be Taranaki's road safety co-ordinator. Photo: LYN HUMPHREYS/FAIRFAX NZ

She's aware that she can call AA Roadservice should she break down, lock her keys in her car or run out of petrol. She's not needed to do so - as yet.

Marion says she was very keen to have her mobile daughter signed up to the AA to reap all the benefits on offer. "I want to know she's safe."

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YOUNG DRIVER RUNS UP THE KILOMETRES

By Lyn Humphreys

If the numbers of kilometres driven denotes an experienced driver, then at 24 years old Hannah Kelly can definitely lay claim to that title.

A physical education teacher, Hannah grew up on her parents' Kaupokonui dairy farm and is again living there after attending Massey University and taking up a demanding job with Sport Taranaki as a community sports adviser.

Based in Hawera, she is on the road most days running Sport Taranaki's physical educational programme in primary schools, a job she loves.

"It's a big job and enjoyable too."

As a sportswoman in her own right, as a rep netball player for both Taranaki and then Western

(Taranaki-Manawatu), having the ability to travel to practices and games as an independent driver has been a major bonus.

Living in Kaupokonui made having a licence at a young age a must and joining up to the AA was a no-brainer.

Hannah says her parents ensured she was signed up as a member when just 15 years old while she was attending Hawera High School. "My parents always encouraged me to have my licence. My whole life I have done a lot of driving.

"I love driving. Coming from the country I can drive on the open road with ease. It's independence. You really don't have to rely on anyone else."

An added bonus for her parents, Margaret and



Hannah Kelly

John Kelly, was having Hannah on hand and willing to ferry her two brothers around.

"I've used the AA a few times, mainly for silly things. Once the car needed a new battery. My first car was a bit of a bomb and was not that reliable."

Knowing the AA was there when she needed them was peace of mind, she says. "I knew if I broke down I could get help."

And as someone who knew little about mechanics, Hannah says it was good for her to know the AA was there on-call at any time with the expertise she lacked.

Earlier this year, her car broke down with steam coming out from under the bonnet and she called in the AA's roving specialist.

"He was very helpful. My dad forgot to tell me about checking the oil and water," Hannah laughs. "You can always have a chat with them. They are friendly people."

At one time, she recalls, she was taught by the AA specialist how to perform a rolling start. It was also good to know she did not need to put in a call to either her boyfriend or father to come and help her when things did go wrong.

"It was definitely peace of mind when I was travelling back after a game late at

night." It wasn't unusual for her to be driving back to Palmerston North after a game finished in New Plymouth at 10pm.

Hannah's parents and her two brothers have all been members of the AA, she says, and Sport Taranaki also has a company membership for its employees who are often out and about. "Joining up to the AA is commonsense for sport or for your work."

After seeing the chaotic driving in some countries she has visited, such as in Bali, Thailand and Malaysia, she has no doubt where she would rather be driving.

"When you come home, it's so easy."

She looks back and is grateful she did get her full licence by the time she was 16½, advising others to get theirs as early as they can. Hannah estimates about half her friends and other uni students didn't bother and continue to drive on restricted licences. "I'm so glad I did it at high school. A lot don't and then you miss your chance. There should be more encouragement for young people to get their full licence."

She sees it as very important to get professional lessons to ensure the new driver learns as many skills as possible. "You learn so much as a young driver."

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HELP AND HINTS AT THE ROADSIDE

By Lyn Humphreys

New Plymouth student Joshua Ritchie, 17, first called out AA Roadservice when his car refused to start.

"He was very efficient," Joshua recalls. "Within 10 minutes he found out the starter motor was bugged."

And the advice from the AA specialist to knock the starter motor if it happened again before he got it to a garage also proved helpful, Joshua says. "I took it home (it was a Sunday) and then needed the same trick on Monday to get it started again and took it in."

As a student at New Plymouth Boys' High School, Joshua is on a tight budget. While he has the use of a family car to get around, he is required to front up with the money to put fuel in the tank. "I get to

drive one of the cars, but I still have to pay for the petrol."

So he's more than happy with AA Smartfuel, which gives him a discount on petrol. "It's awesome. You can really save a lot of money."

Joshua could probably count himself among one of Taranaki AA's youngest members.

He joined up when only 15 when he first picked up his learner's licence. Parents Doug and Vicki-Ann Ritchie suggested the membership. "They have been AA members forever. They thought it was a good idea for me and I agreed."

He doesn't think that many others of his age have done the same and believes they may be unaware of all the benefits the \$39.50 annual youth subscription will bring them.

"I think they don't know much about it and think of the AA as more of an insurance company."

He now has his full licence after taking advantage of the New Plymouth Boys' High-funded defensive driving course, which took six months off the 18 months it would normally take before being able to apply.

Asked if he has any complaints about other drivers, he says one common bad habit which he sees on a daily basis is drivers' failure to indicate correctly when they are merging into another lane or turning off the road.

Another is motorists who fail to slow down when conditions are poor. "It's almost like there's a drop of rain and people forget how to drive," he says.

His own age group are mostly good drivers, he reckons. "A lot are over-confident. They might be good drivers, but they think they are awesome."

It was driving and a love of maintaining vehicles that has led Joshua into his chosen career as a mechanical engineer. "I really enjoyed it and realised that factories need someone to look after their plant."

He regularly carries out work on his own car, such as replacing spark plugs and shock absorbers - but has concerns that many other young drivers do not take sufficient care of their vehicles. "They don't take care of their cars and some of them drive around on bald tyres. They don't know how having a badly maintained car can be very dangerous."

And he points out that the added bonus of being able to do your own basic car repairs, those which can be done outside a vehicle workshop, can save a lot of money.

Joshua expects to be without wheels during his first year at the University of Canterbury but aims to ensure



Joshua Ritchie joined the AA when only 15. Photo: LYN HUMPHREYS/FAIRFAX NZ

he has a vehicle during the following three years when he will be working on the job, which will make it essential to have a car to get around.

He believes most young people his own age - still too young to drink in pubs - have learned their lessons about the dangers of drink-driving, a major cause of fatal crashes on New Zealand roads. "A lot go to house parties, but a lot don't drive, they walk."

The millions poured into advertising campaigns highlighting the danger of drink-driving has definitely brought the message home to his peers, he says. "We've been bombarded with ads. I think they have worked for kids that have a few clues."

In addition, he says school classes, where the biological affects of both alcohol and drugs have been explained, have made it clear to students the major risks they take in getting behind the wheel under the influence.

For Joshua, the lesson has well and truly sunk in: "Drugs affect the way the brain works and no good comes from it."

Joshua says Taranaki provides the perfect mix of roads for beginner drivers to hone their awareness of potential hazards and develop good reflexes. "You get a really good mix ... city, highways and rural roads," he says.

He first learned on the roads surrounding Inglewood where the family then lived before moving to New Plymouth. There the back roads provided him with the skills to deal with rural hazards such as cattle and quad bikes which could be around any turn.

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ANTICIPATING THE ROAD AHEAD

This publication is a celebration of the AA's role in Taranaki over the last century, but that also leads to a question: What might the next 100 years involve?

It would have been impossible to imagine back in 1914 that the AA would today be a nationwide association with more than 1.4 million members, so who can predict what will take place in the next 100 years? One thing is definite, the AA won't stand still. The association's vision is for every motorist to consider AA membership essential and continue to help members when things go wrong, give them expert advice, services, and benefits, as well as campaigning for better and safer transport.

Last year in Taranaki, seven people died and 254 were injured on our roads. That is five people hurt every week, and reducing the number of New Zealanders killed and injured in road crashes is a key focus of the AA.

Young people are the most at-risk group on our roads and the AA is determined to help lift driving standards through its AA Driving School. In rural areas like Taranaki, driving is even more vital for young people to be able to independently get themselves around and AA members and their children are now entitled to free professional lessons to help them get the best possible start on the roads. At the other end of the spectrum, people are now living longer than ever before and helping older drivers stay safe and independent behind the wheel will be a key focus of the AA's future.

Having safer drivers is one part of stopping road crashes, but having safer vehicles and roads are equally important and the AA will keep encouraging innovation and improvements in all areas.

As New Zealand's farming and energy heartland, roads are essential to Taranaki and it is

incredible to look back at how far it has come from the tracks cut out of bush that people first drove on.

The future is likely to be different, without the sprawling expansion of the last century and challenges over roading costs, but there still needs to be smart investment to make our roads safer and better.

This is not just about people using cars either. AA members are drivers, cyclists, motorcyclists, public transport users and pedestrians and the association supports a transport system that offers people safe and affordable choices. New Plymouth's Coastal Walkway has reinvigorated the city's waterfront and, in the years ahead, the AA wants to see more safe, separated cycle routes in New Zealand cities.

The way people travel will possibly be the biggest change the future holds, with vehicles and fuel sources that were once science fiction becoming reality. In the decades ahead, there may well be self-driving vehicles able to pick someone up in Hawera and drive them around Surf Highway 45 to New Plymouth, all without using a drop of fossil fuels. Through its connection with the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, the AA monitors the latest developments in vehicle technology around the world and will adapt to the high-tech future just as it has through the changes of the last century.

No matter how technology, vehicles or roads change, one thing that will remain constant is people. The Taranaki of the future will be different to today and the AA will also be different, but people will still need to travel quickly, safely and reliably and the AA will be there to help its members wherever the journey leads.



Projects such as New Plymouth's Vickers to City redevelopments are supported by the AA for their improvements to road safety in the future. Photo: FAIRFAX NZ



From the drivers of the regional economy to the drivers of the region's drivers, Venture Taranaki congratulates AA Taranaki on 100 years in the region 'like no other.'

www.taranaki.info

Photo: Rob Tucker





LOCAL MATTERS

Supporting the community that supports us

Established in 1857, the Taranaki Daily News is one of New Zealand's oldest, most-respected provincial newspapers. Our business has evolved into a multimedia platform offering an extensive range of products in newsprint, digital, web design and much more.

We congratulate Taranaki AA on its century of service in our region. During that time, we have been a partner with the AA on many occasions, reporting on its growth and activities here and carrying its concerns about road safety and driver development to our communities.

