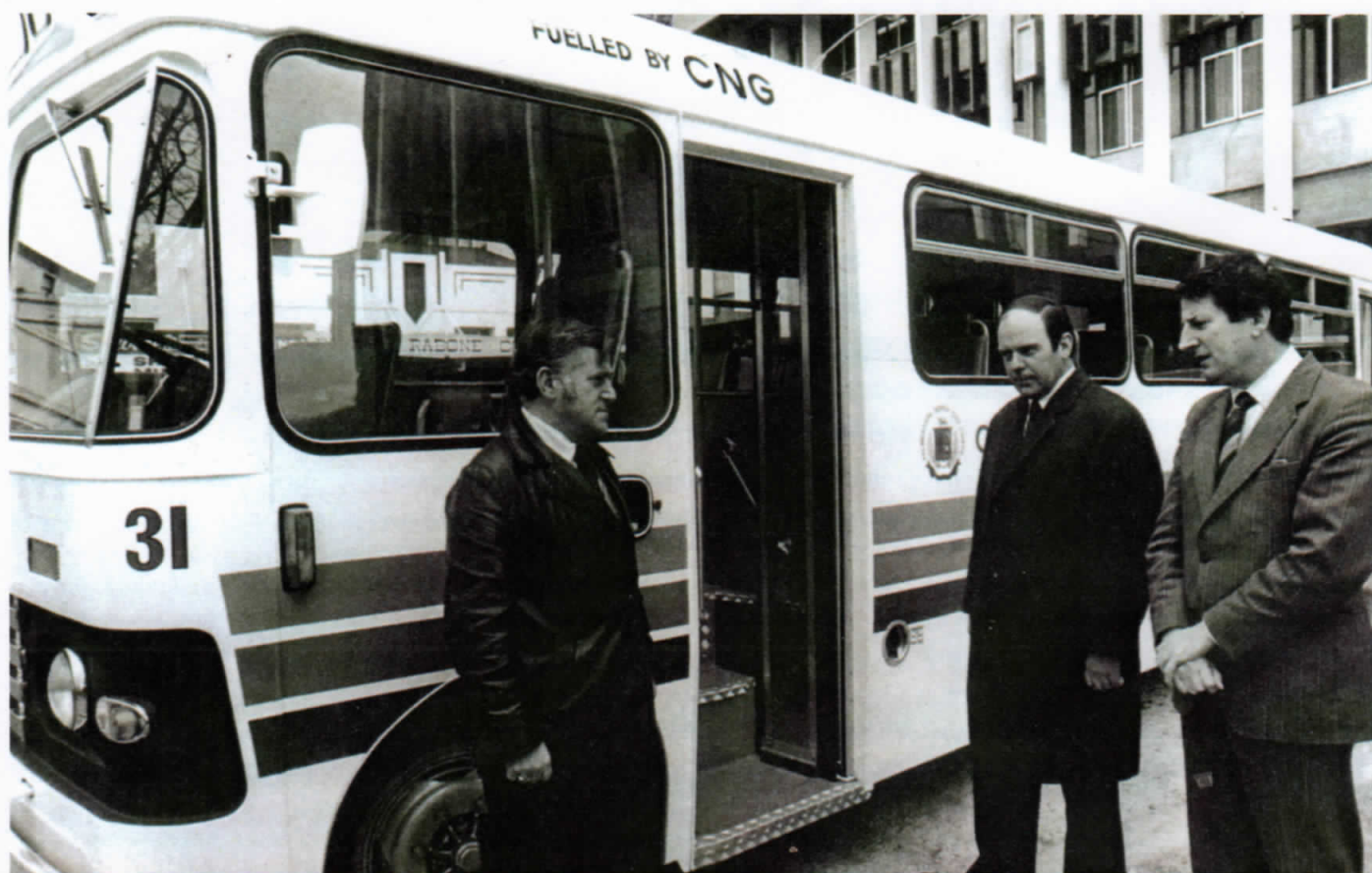


Gas bus pioneer hits the oct-age



John Galbraith (left) shows Palmerston North Mayor Sir Brian Elwood (centre) and Minister of Energy Bill Birch the gas powered buses, circa 1979

Long time Bus and Coach Association member John Galbraith recently celebrated his 80th birthday. 'MG' Gopalan reflects on John's legacy

JOHN GALBRAITH TURNED 80 LAST month. John was bus manager of the Palmerston North Borough bus service from 1970 to 1989.

Palmerston North was the first city in the world to have a fleet of buses all powered by natural gas. Though 22 buses is not exactly a big fleet, being the first in the world is a noteworthy achievement.

"We put our money where our mouth was. We said that it would work – and it did," says John. And John did make it work, saving the Palmerston North City Council several hundreds of thousand dollars in fuel bills.

The council made the decision to convert the bus fleet to CNG in 1979 during the second oil price shock of that decade. Natural gas sourced from the town supply was compressed before filling specially fabricated tanks that were fitted into the vehicles. A

gas compressor and filling infrastructure was installed in the Albert Street depot and tanks were refilled overnight. The Hino bus company of Japan was quite impressed with the technical strategy for conversion and hosted John at their headquarters to learn more about the Palmerston North experience in converting the bus fleet.

John's vision resulted in a low tailpipe emission fleet decades before concepts like zero tailpipe emissions became fashionable.

John Galbraith's bus career began when, as a young man, an allergy to sawdust cut short his apprenticeship in a joinery. After a stint at the Austin factory in Wellington, New Zealand Railways Road Services employed him as a tour coach driver for several years. He moved to Palmerston North with his wife Pat and their two daughters to take the role of bus manager.

For his contribution to the transport industry he was made a life member of the Bus and Coach Association.

A few years ago John and his wife Pat moved to Australia, where their two daughters live. They continue to travel in their motor home for much of the year.

John's time in Palmerston North was cut short when the local government reform of 1989 was implemented. The council's bus service, Palmerston North Passenger Services Limited, unsuccessfully tendered with the Manawatu-Wanganui District Council for the public service contract.

Failure to secure the bus service contract marked the end of an era which began on 7 September 1921 when the borough council's first bus service was established.

The gas bus fleet established by John was sold to Hamilton.

TRANZQUAL COLUMN

New training strategies



JIM DOYLE, Tranzqual's Manager Industry, Strategy and Development, tells members about Tranzqual's new customised skills' strategies



"The critical component in this entire exercise is to ensure that each strategy is actually developed by the industry itself."

TRANZQUAL WAS ESTABLISHED UNDER the Industry Training Act 1992, and was previously known as The New Zealand Road Transport and Logistics Industry Training Organisation.

Like other Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), Tranzqual was established by industry to develop qualifications and set standards for people employed in those industry sectors which Tranzqual represents.

Those industries are stevedoring and ports, road transport, passenger services and warehousing and logistics.

As an organisation, Tranzqual is committed to working with its industry groups to fulfil its mission to raise the skill levels of people working within those industries.

One way it is seeking to do that is to work with these sectors to develop skills strategies. Currently Tranzqual is in the process of developing these strategies for each of the sectors it works for.

It is anticipated that six such strategies will be completed by early 2011. The first two (stevedoring and ports, and bus and coach)

are expected to be completed by the end of this year and will cover the years 2010-12.

WHY DEVELOP INDUSTRY SKILLS STRATEGIES?

The success of any business depends to a large extent on the skills and attitudes of the people working in that business. Tranzqual, like other ITOs, has a key role to play in developing those skills by working with industry. An industry skills strategy is one way to achieve that.

WHAT ARE INDUSTRY SKILLS STRATEGIES?

An industry skills strategy seeks to answer a number of key questions about the industry. These questions are designed to establish:

- the purpose of the strategy
- what it should be attempting to achieve
- a clear set of goals for the strategy
- what needs to be done, who is going to do it, and by when
- a set of measures to indicate success.

HOW ARE SKILLS STRATEGIES DEVELOPED?

The process of developing skills strategies involves working closely with key players in each industry to identify:

- the skills that currently exist within the industry
- the skills that may be currently in short supply
- the skills the industry needs over the next few years
- how to work through these points to ensure the industry has what it needs for the future.

The critical component in this entire exercise is to ensure that each strategy is actually developed by the industry itself. In this way, and only in this way, can the industry achieve a sense of ownership, not only of the process but of the strategy itself.

- If you would like further information on Tranzqual's Skills Strategies contact Jim Doyle: jim.doyle@tranzqual.org.nz