

# PORTAL

MAY 2026



## UP FRONT



*As Taranaki people will know, the region's decades of success have largely been built on two key industries – agriculture and oil and gas.*

While farming and agricultural and horticultural production continue to prosper, for some time our region has been aware that the golden summer of oil and gas is coming to an end.

The announcement by OMV in April that New Zealand's largest gas field, Māui, is nearing the end of its life and could be closed by year's end, is a huge blow to our region and wider industrial New Zealand.

For 47 years, the field has been a major source of natural gas – at one point accounting for 75% of New Zealand's gas production – and a key supplier to industrial manufacturing, particularly methanol producer Methanex.

In response, Methanex, New Zealand's largest gas consumer, indicated that when Māui closes it will cease production at its last-operating methanol plant at Motunui, having already significantly cut back operations in recent years as gas supply has dwindled.

The flow-on effect of these closures is sizeable – hundreds of jobs gone, the loss of work for associated engineering contractors and fabricators, regional sponsorships ended, and hundreds of small businesses, from cafes to car sales, impacted as money is taken out of our region and people leave searching for new opportunities.

Here, at Port Taranaki, we're also facing a difficult period.

Having been at the heart of Taranaki's energy industry, a large part of our business has been tied to oil and gas, with Methanex our largest customer.

There's no sugar coating the fact that Methanex's closure will significantly reduce trade volumes and impact our bottom line.

Port Taranaki has been preparing for this change for some time, and looking for new business to fill the sizeable hole.

We see liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports as an important development – for the ongoing sustainability of our business, the continual success and growth of our region, and to halt the deindustrialisation occurring in New Zealand as a result of the energy shortage.

While we continue to await confirmation of this project going ahead in Taranaki, we're undertaking a programme across our business to reduce costs, remain resilient and efficient, and in control of our future in a lower volume trading environment.

As an important long-time strategic and economic asset for Taranaki, we have an important role to play in Taranaki's future and are working hard to ensure we continue to provide valuable and valued services to our

customers so we can make a positive impact in our region.

As mentioned, while it's a difficult time for the energy sector, agriculture is performing strongly, through good milk solids prices, lower interest rates, and a payout to Fonterra shareholders as a result of the sale of Mainland Group to Lactalis.

At Port Taranaki, we've seen a boost in dry bulk, with increased volumes of mixed animal feed coming across the wharves.

Log volumes are also buoyant, and we're pleased to see an expansion of the logs on rail service, where logs come from the Whanganui area to port by train.

There are now two trains a day (week days) arriving at port, with the logs being unloaded on KiwiRail land, then moved into the port log storage areas.

Previously, the logs were discharged on Blyde Wharf directly. However, if there was a vessel berthed and either loading or unloading on the wharf, it caused delays when receiving the log train. The move to discharge directly into the KiwiRail yard has improved the efficiency of the service.

Congratulations to KiwiRail, Forest360 and Qube for delivering this expanded service, and thanks to our port team for working on the logistics to make it happen.

Ngā mihi nui

Simon Craddock  
Chief Executive

# OPERATIONS

## Crane skills transform tricky heavy lift

*They made it look easy, but the precision and skill of Port Taranaki's crane drivers had their boss in awe during a heavy lift operation recently.*

Dion McGovern and Mark Hofmans were at the controls as Port Taranaki took delivery of a 140-tonne electricity transformer destined for Transpower's new Ōhangai substation development in South Taranaki.

Carrying out a twin lift from the 200m Samoa Chief cargo vessel, the operators of the port's two mobile harbour cranes expertly raised the transformer, which was suspended between the two crane jibs, and carefully pivoted over the wharf before settling the transformer on the waiting heavy lift vehicle.

"They did a wonderful job," says Port Taranaki cargo and wharf services manager Kim Daine.

"The guys made it look really easy, but there are points when the precision is absolutely crucial, and great skill, control and communication between the crane operators and the stevedore dogman [director of the lift] is vital to make sure the jibs don't come into contact with each other.

"The lift was carried out safely and went to plan, so we're very pleased."

The successful lift was the culmination of meticulous planning over the course of a month, which included a number of meetings with the stakeholders – key port staff across the business, the vessel and shipping agent, Move Specialist Lifting and Transport, using their Tranzcarr Heavy Haulage equipment, and Transpower, the customer.

"There were a lot of logistics and technicalities involved, particularly around the heavy lift requirements, with our engineering team designing a heavy lift plan, working through the plan with the crane operators, and being on-hand throughout the operation to ensure the plan was followed," says Kim.

"There was bad weather leading up to the operation, which we had to factor in, and we worked around other customers and vessel arrivals and departures... so the team did a great job."

The transformer was then transported to site in South Taranaki by the heavy lift vehicle during the night to avoid day traffic.



Move general manager specialist division Warwick Bell says the project went "very smoothly from ship to site".

"We're thankful to Port Taranaki for the support received. The planning has gone on for almost 12 months with great cooperation from all parties," he says.

The transformer had initially been transported from Transpower's Ōtahuhu substation to Port of Auckland, where it was loaded on Samoa Chief before being shipped to Port Taranaki.

"In 2004, the very same transformer was discharged at Port Taranaki and then barged up to Auckland, then hauled and installed at Ōtahuhu," Warwick says.

Transpower project manager Darryl Yorke says the project was logistically challenging.

"At 140 tonnes it was too heavy to be transported from Auckland to Taranaki by

road, so we decided to take the coastal route," he says.

"This required two 450-tonne road cranes to load the vessel at the Port of Auckland. Offloading at Port Taranaki was simpler, using the port's shore mobile harbour cranes."

An NZTA over-dimension load permit was then needed to transport it the rest of the way to the Ōhangai site on the Good Friday public holiday.

"Overall, the whole operation went very well and is a significant step towards delivering the new substation, which will power two new electrode boilers being installed at Fonterra's Whareroa site, as part of the co-operative's investment in electrification projects across New Zealand. The substation will also support resilience for the overall electricity network in South Taranaki," says Darryl.

# COMMUNITY

## Work begins on city marae

*The long-held dream of a permanent home is becoming a reality for Ngāti Te Whiti hapū.*

Earthworks have begun on Ngāmotu Marae – a community marae – on hapū-owned land on Ocean View Parade, beside Ngāmotu Beach.

Having been without a home for more than 150 years, the hapū says the marae will be a cultural focal point and a legacy for future generations.

Once complete, it will boast a whareniui that sleeps up to 80 people, a wharekai (dining area) catering for up to 100, ātea (welcoming space) and gathering spaces, and administration and support facilities.

The project will cost approximately \$15 million, with \$9.5 million raised to date.

"Without a permanent home, our hapū has never had a pou in the ground. This marae has always been a big mountain to climb, but with community help, we've been able to start that climb," says Ngāti Te Whiti Whenua Tōpu Trust chairperson

and chair of the marae build, Shelton Healey (pictured).

The marae aims to bring people together, and in that vein, Ngāmotu Marae will be a welcoming cultural hub for all the community, providing spaces for meetings, conferences, celebrations, education, events and workshops, teaching and sharing the history of Ngāmotu, and contributing to economic and tourism growth.

"Ngāmotu Marae is a city marae and everybody will be welcome," Shelton says. "It will also be an added asset to the tourism infrastructure of New Plymouth district – that has always been our vision."

The on-site project began last December, with the placing of a mauri stone. Infrastructure and civil works – the marae foundations – are now underway.

Standing alongside his 10-year-old grandson, Shelton shared his personal aspirations for the marae.

"When this marae is open, I can see



myself and this young fella sitting inside, lights off, in the dark, looking out over our whenua, our moana. That's my ultimate dream. And I know that all our people have their own dreams and aspirations for this marae."

Port Taranaki neighbours the marae, and chief executive Simon Craddock says the port is very pleased to see it become a reality.

"We operate on the hapū's rohe, which is land of deep cultural and historical significance, so we are genuinely supportive of Ngāmotu Marae. It will be a cultural and community anchor and provide opportunities for wider ambitions in the future."

# CUSTOMERS

## Role change for Liquigas depot

*A shipment of LPG is now arriving weekly at Port Taranaki, as Liquigas flips its on-site depot from export to import to meet domestic demand.*

Established in the mid-1980s as part of New Zealand's burgeoning oil and gas industry, the Liquigas depot at Port Taranaki was historically a liquid petroleum gas (LPG) storage and export facility.

All domestic production of LPG came from Taranaki, with the LPG first used to meet North Island demand. The excess was stored at the Port Taranaki depot and loaded onto vessels to supply the South Island depots of Dunedin and Christchurch, and exported to the Pacific Islands.

"As LPG supply reduced, the Port Taranaki facility was used less," explains Liquigas chief executive Christo Janse van Rensburg.

"This trend has continued over time to the point that now it makes sense to import product to New Plymouth to meet North

Island demand.

"The South Island runs on majority imported LPG, which all goes through our facilities, so we're setting up the North Island in the same way."

Following several intermittent shipments, the first of the planned weekly shipments arrived at Port Taranaki in May. Gaschem Odyssey unloaded LPG at Port Taranaki, having made previous stops at Christchurch and Dunedin.

Christo says while the change of model was straightforward – "we had the infrastructure in place to reverse the flow from export to import" – Liquigas has upgraded its facility to support the distribution of the LPG, which comes from Australia.

"We modified the depot to be able to load out trucks quickly and efficiently when the ships come in, and are now ramping up the imports as winter is the busy period for LPG, when it's used more for heating.

"The Port Taranaki depot holds 1,000



tonnes, and at some stage we'll have to upgrade further to receive more frequent imports," Christo says.

Liquigas expects to have about 10 trucks a day load and head off for bottling facilities and bulk customers throughout the North Island.

"For Liquigas it means our future is bright, and our volumes are increasing through New Plymouth.

"We're here to support New Zealand's energy needs going forward. The reality is we need energy in the country, and if we can't produce it locally then we have to bring it in.

"It's really exciting for our business and we're looking forward to the future."

# PEOPLE

## Brent paddling towards rare achievement

*Brent Sharp is just a summer away from achieving something only a handful of people have completed or even attempted.*

The Port Taranaki site works co-ordinator, is closing in on a solo kayak circumnavigation of New Zealand – an odyssey that began nearly a decade ago when he set out from New Plymouth on the first leg of a journey that will take in more than 5,600km.

Each summer, Brent uses his annual leave and long weekends to bite off chunks of his mission – the North Island took three years, and this past summer he was to have completed the last stretch of the South Island, from just south of Kaikoura to Monkey Island in Southland.

However, bad weather cut into his schedule and meant he ran out of time to complete the mainland circumnavigation, finishing at Curio Bay in the Catlins – just 140km short of his destination.

"The east coast was more difficult than



I had anticipated. I had some rough southerlies on the way down, which meant I was only able to paddle 50% of the days I was away, when it should have been about 70%," he says.

However, Brent's philosophical about coming up short.

"I am disappointed, but it is what it is, and it will still be there next year.

"Throughout the whole voyage I've never forced anything, and I don't intend to start now. It's not a race, I'm about doing it organically, not pushing it with a deadline."

Next summer, he and his support crew, wife Sharon, will load up the campervan, and head to the bottom of the South Island where Brent will complete the South Island leg, before eyeing up Stewart Island.

"I've decided to tack on Stewart Island. It's scary as it's the most daunting piece of ocean there is, alongside Fiordland, and Sharon would prefer that I didn't do it, but I'm pretty determined and am already planning for it."

Once complete, Brent will join a small group to have kayaked around New Zealand, and, at 68, will be the oldest.

"I've wanted to challenge myself, and even at my age I want to get as far as I can and strive to get better," says Brent.

"With solo kayaking you have to really enjoy it because it's hard. But I love it. The path least travelled and all that."

To read the full story about Brent's adventure, head to <https://www.porttaranaki.co.nz/news>.

# VESSELS

## Successful dry dock for Karoo

*Port Taranaki tug Karoo recently sailed to dry dock in Lyttelton for her five-yearly, out-of-water full warrant of fitness.*

During the 'special survey', she was assessed and maintenance work was carried out before a surveyor from Lloyd's Register, which is globally recognised for marine classification and compliance, gave her a final inspection and renewed her certification of class and survey for another five years.

"It went very well – she's been well-maintained throughout her working life and is in really good condition for her age," says Port Taranaki marine technical manager James Watson.

Karoo, which was built in 1991 and joined the Port Taranaki fleet from Australia in 2024, has become a valuable member of the port team, providing back-up when frontline tugs Kinaki and Tuakana are out for maintenance.

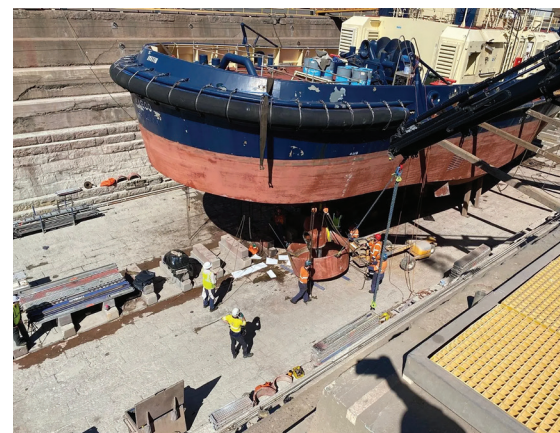
After more than 30 hours sailing to Lyttelton, during which the crew of six encountered some rough weather, Karoo was manoeuvred into the historic dry dock, which opened in 1883 and is a Category 1 listed heritage site.

"It can be a bit nerve-wrecking docking a vessel for the first time. The vessel is shut down before going over the sill [the raised entrance of the dry dock where the gate sits], then a winch line is attached at the bow to pull the tug into the dock. At the same time, four people on either side with lines attached to the vessel keep the vessel aligned as she's brought in.

"Being pulled into dock rather than driving in prevents the vessel hitting the sides of the dock," explains James.

"A diver then checks the vessel is in position on the blocks, which were positioned beforehand, and the water is pumped out of the dock."

During the next 37 days, a range of work was carried out, including blasting



and painting; applying anti-foul to the hull to help prevent marine growth; maintenance on the forward winch, thrusters, and anchors; cleaning the tanks; and checking all safety equipment. Two specialist technicians from the United States disassembled and inspected both propellers with assistance from Port Taranaki staff and workers from Lyttelton Engineering.

Fittingly, with Karoo freshly refurbished and certified, the crew sailed her back to New Plymouth in perfect conditions.

"While she'll have annual inspections from class and flag state, she's now good to go for another five years before her next dry-docking survey," says James.