

# Tairawhiti history project launched

## Celebrating 40 years of higher education

by Mark Peters

A MANUAL instruction block in the shadow of a red-brick Victorian building in Derby Street was where tertiary education began in Gisborne.

The Eastern Institute of Technology Tairawhiti now stands on that site and on Friday a meeting was held there to launch the Tairawhiti history project.

The history project is part of the larger scheme to celebrate 40 years of higher education on the East Coast.

EIT comprises the Taradale and Tairawhiti campuses so the written history will encompass both institutes' stories. The campuses share community programme origins common in the 1970s. They now offer degree and postgraduate programmes.

Retired EIT Tairawhiti staff member Jean Johnston will co-ordinate the Tairawhiti history while EIT Hawke's Bay research professor Kay Morris Matthews will co-ordinate the Taradale history.

"We will jointly edit the book to be released in 2015,"

says Professor Morris Matthews. "The aim is to have book sections written by a range of interested colleagues."

Past and current staff members have been asked to gather ideas, archival material and images, and begin a conversation about what they would like to see included, says Professor Matthews.

Friday's meeting gave some of those interested colleagues and prime movers of Gisborne's earliest tertiary institute the opportunity to tell their stories.

What those stories had in common were humour, determination, creative use of limited resources and practical solutions.

"To forge ahead you had to beat bureaucracy," said former community education organiser David Scott, who started at the senior technical division as a rural education activities programme employee in 1979.

"You worked on many ways to survive. There was a real commitment to make this place work."

In 1983, the automotive department of what was Tairawhiti Community College was housed in a cold trucking building. A shortcut to the building was created by bending back a sheet of corrugated iron in a fence.

"The trucking building was as cold as hell but we got it started," said Mr Scott.

"What you have here now is built on the back of hundreds of amazing people."

One tutor from those grassroots days recalled how the early tertiary institution had no vehicles, and no funding for transport was forthcoming.

Funding was available, however, for an engine and gearbox to teach mechanics.

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—David Scott

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**HISTORY IN THE MAKING:** A history project which will capture the story of Gisborne tertiary education facility EIT Tairawhiti's evolution was launched on Friday by (from left) EIT chief executive Chris Collins, retired staff member Jean Johnston and EIT Hawke's Bay research professor Kay Morris Matthews. The project is part of a wider scheme to celebrate 40 years of higher education on the East Coast.

Picture by Mark Peters

GISBORNE'S primary tertiary educational centre has gone through several incarnations since its continuing education origins in 1973.

"In those days, the high schools ran all continuing education courses," says Ann Deans.

In 1973, Mrs Deans was employed to teach a typewriting programme for boys in the manual block next to the old Central School building in Derby Street.

In 1979, the Gisborne Boys' High School senior technical division was established on the Central School campus. Along with

the secretarial course it taught carpentry, automotive, electrical and New Zealand Institute of Management business studies.

The senior technical division was re-established as a tertiary institution, Tairawhiti Community College, in 1981.

The name was changed to Tairawhiti Polytechnic in 1987.

When the polytechnic merged with EIT Hawke's Bay, it became EIT Tairawhiti.

EIT Hawke's Bay began in 1975. Its 40th anniversary falls on 2015.

"This was converted into a functioning car," he said. "Whenever anyone from the Ministry of Education came around, we had to hide it."

Professor Morris Matthews has asked for people willing to become part of an advisory group.

"It's a collaboration about sharing ideas

and stories."

She and Mrs Johnston want people to submit their stories or refer them to people they can talk to about the evolution of tertiary education in this region.

"We would like to be steered on this project."