

Fleet Image NZ Ltd

Te Awamutu - Hamilton - Auckland

Fleet Image, previously named Roy Browne Car Painters was started by Roy and Pam Browne over 44 years ago in June 1976, and was originally located at 87 Albert Park Drive in the Waikato town of Te Awamutu.

Roy Browne Car Painters started out with four staff members, and was a car/truck/tractor painting operation, looking after the paintwork for panelbeaters not only in Te Awamutu, but Hamilton and Otorohanga as well. Being part of a large rural community, their work consisted of everything from cars through to trucks, buses and all sorts of agricultural machinery.

In 1992 the company employed two new apprentices, one the Browne's son Kris and the other Glenn Tervit, and in 2000 these two became shareholders in the company. At about this time they began a collision repair department to cater for their large commercial clients vehicle fleets.

In 1997 the company expanded into Hamilton, originally by leasing the paintshop of the Hamilton business of Lloyd Davis Panelworks, before in 2002 moving into their own commercial transport panel and paintshop to ensure that they had future capacity for their growing business.

With now four shareholders, and the business booming, they were running out of space at their original site, so in 2006 the decision was made to expand and they began planning their large purpose built facility on a large site on Alexandra Street in Te Awamutu.

This was a very exciting time for the shareholders as they, with the help of PPG, meticulously designed their dream facility. This took some careful planning as they had to cater for general collision repair as well as heavy commercial repair and paint.

Such was the standard of their new build that in 2007 it was awarded the CRA Overall Best Shop and the award for the Best Presented Shop in both 2008 and 2009.

This almost lead to the companies downfall however, due to the fact that as is usually the case it came in well over budget, and then with the bank firmly on board they decided to go the extra step and concrete the whole one acre yard.

Everything was fine until the GFC hit and work volumes fell away drastically. The commercial business was hit particularly hard, as an example the Hamilton facility, which usually had a monthly turnover of around $110,000 suffered a loss of some 95% of its revenue.

Things came to a crunch when the bank did what banks always do at times like this, starting putting pressure on the business for its funds. Kris believes that they were less than a month away from failing when two things happened, they changed banks and won a contract through PPG with NZ Bus as they were rebranding their entire fleet.

This contract certainly helped them weather some tough times and business slowly improved. Kris is quick to point out that tough times like these made him a much better businessman, as before that little attention was paid to their numbers, as long as their sales kept growing they were happy.

In 2009 an opportunity arose to further diversify into painting large planes, utilising two huge spraybooths that Seetal's Terry Blake had constructed for Hamilton Airport. These booths, one measuring 30mtres by 30 metres with a height of 10 metres and the adjacent one 12 metres long and 6 metres wide, could accommodate planes up to the size of a regional turboprop plane of the type that ply New Zealand's skies, and under the guidance of Roy Browne a number of planes were repainted.

However, the venture was fraught with problems, not the least the strict requirements of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Eventually they decided that the venture was not worth their while, there was plenty of business to had with their existing businesses and so they pulled the plug. The Airport Authority took it over but the facility was mothballed soon after.

Fleet Image took this facility over again in 2017, using it to paint many buses, trucks and cranes etc. One





contract that really bought this facility into its own was one for NZ Bus, which involved the repainting of 88 buses in 90 days. This involved not only the repainting, but converting them for wheelchair access and the supply and fitting of all signage and decals.

These had to be picked up, repainted and returned to the Tauranga depot, which required a constant shuttle service between the two cities.

This facility had always been run by Roy, and with his passing in 2019, Kris and Glen decided to let it go again, believing that they now had the capacity in their existing facilities to handle the workload. It proved to be a timely decision as their lease was up for renewal, and they vacated the site just before the Level 4 lockdown.

Fleet Image have long been part of the PPG Fleet Pool group, and as a result of that got the opportunity to acquire the Wiri based commercial transport company called Fleetline in 2016. Now renamed Fleet Image – Auckland, this commercial transport repair, refurb and repaint facility is performing well.

As signage is such a big part of what they do, they have recently acquired a 50 percent shareholding in a signwriting company.

They also have three employees, two painters and a sandblaster, stationed off site full time at PFS Engineering. This company specialises in the design and build of heavy equipment and structures, and the Fleet Image team stays on site to provide the finishing touches to these large projects.

Such is the growth of heavy engineering in the region that the decision has been taken to construct a 25 metre by 15 metre building on their 2.5 acre Hamilton site to accommodate the future growth of this section of this diversified business.

Fleet Image has grown to currently having 71 employees over the three branches, and is still on a growth path. While they have had approaches to sell, Both Kris and Glen, now the only shareholders following the death of Roy in 2019, have no intention of slowing down. They are already working on the next project and where they are diversifying too.



So what of Fleet Image today?

Te Awamutu Branch

The Te Awamutu Branch is still the head office of the three branch operation. It is a large operation in its own right with a workshop space of 1500m2. This impressive facility has picked up both the CRA as Overall Best Shop and Best Presented Shop awards. Run by Glenn Tervit this facility is staffed by eight painters, four panelbeaters, and a groomer. And in reception is Doug Schrieber who is in charge of assessing and quoting, Glenn's wife Jodie who joined the team in 2012 as the Financial Manager and a parts manager.

The work mix in this facility is roughly 50/50 between light vehicle and heavy commercial. There is a drive through truck spraybooth/bake oven as well as a drive through spraybooth/bake oven and a multi car prep bay. Also on the large site is a sand blasting building big enough to house the heavy commercial work that is carried out on site.





The Hamilton Branch

The Hamilton Branch is Fleet Image's biggest commercial division specialising in painting new commercial vehicles and machinery, as well as truck repairs and full refinishes.

With two 16 by 5.5m truck booth/bake ovens they are set up for large scale jobs and have painted everything from 400 Ton cranes to light aircraft, helicopters and buses.

Run by Dean Chandler who returned to Fleet Image two years ago after spending 20 years truck driving after completing his apprenticeship with Roy back in Albert Park Drive, this facility is staffed by nine painters, four panelbeaters, one sandblaster and two in administration.

Although they have sandblasting buildings at both their Waikato sites, Fleet Image also have a mobile sandblasting truck which moves in between their branches to help keep better control of their commercial transport refinishing.

It is on this 2.5 acre site that they are building their dedicated heavy machinery building. A full 25metre by 15metre industrial building, this will set up for full industrial blasting and painting.

The purpose built building that will have two five tonne gantry cranes, dust extraction for sandblasting, Cyclone collection for thermal metal arc spray (spray on galv for ultra-corrosion protection) and also full paint extraction.

This is being set up for massive steel projects, something that Fleet Image is seeing more of all the time. The family tradition will continue as it will be headed up by Kris's sister Carla Botha who is obtaining her Level 1 Nace coating inspection certificate.

This state of the art facility will mean even more diversification for Fleet Image, continuing the legacy started by Roy and Pam all those years ago.



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The Auckland Branch

The Auckland Branch specialises in trucks, trailers, collision repair and full refinishes. It has one truck booth/bake oven as well as all the equipment necessary for heavy commercial repairs and refinish.

Run by Kris Browne 3 days a week, this facility is staffed by 9 painters, four panelbeaters, one sandblaster, three labourers, 4 in the leadership team.

This large facility operates out of a 1883 sq metre building complimented by a 765 sq metre yard. On the yard is another building that houses a large commercial priming bay alongside a sandblasting bay.





The founders – Roy and Pam Browne

While Kris and Glenn now own Fleet Image, they are quick to point out that it is thanks to the work and vision of Kris's parents Roy and Pam that the company is as successful as it is today. Always a visionary, Roy kept up to date with latest technology, fitting what is believed to be the first spraybake oven in the country. He was still working and running the bus painting facility right up until passing away from cancer in 2019.

Pam ran the administration side of the business until she retired in 2012, but in the early days of their business she would often be seen rubbing down trucks and carrying out all sorts of jobs to help out.

Kris and Glenn speak of the perfect business partner in Roy, "He never tried to slow us down, all he would say after listening to a proposal was 'let's do it then'", they said. He would back the boys even when some of their ideas did not work out. He was an active and very popular member of the CRA CNI branch, being on the committee for many years as well as serving a stint as branch chairman.

Always debating the intricacies of the industry with his fellow repairers, Roy was an inspiration to many.



The think tank - Glenn, Kris and Roy



Roy and Pam Browne