



## Mayor's Award 2024 Neill Price

The recipient of the Mayor's Award this year is a community stalwart and a Kaiapoi-boy through-and-through who has spent a lifetime giving back to his community.

Neil Price is this year's recipient.

Many of you will know Neill through his time with the Fire Service, Kaiapoi Borough and Waimakariri Councils, being the Kaiapoi and Canterbury District RSA President, receiving a QSM for services to the community, and much more.

Some of you will likely already be aware of his significant community service. But what we were in awe about during our interview prior to tonight, is just the sheer extent to which he has given back to Kaiapoi and to the Waimakariri District.

Neill is a lifelong resident of Kaiapoi. Now at 88 years old, he still lives in central Kaiapoi in the Smith Street home he's shared with wife Judith and family for many years.

It was in the 1950s when Neill first joined the fire brigade where he served 12 years with the Kaiapoi brigade, before transferring to the Christchurch crew for a further 30 years.

During this period, he was elected secretary treasurer for Canterbury Fire Service Association. He held this position for 25 years and was instrumental in raising the membership from 8-9 brigades to about 40. This was a big upsurge in membership, social activity and competition, and it was a 'golden era' for the fire service that was comprised of mainly volunteers.

For his efforts in both the service and association he was honoured with a Queen's Fire Service Medal.

At this point in his career, Neill had fought enough fires, and the department sought to better utilise his skills so he was promoted to the training division where he was given the responsibility for training all staff who visited the Antarctic.

A benefit of this was being able to visit Antarctica himself and Neill made many trips down "to the ice".

The most memorable was being in the cockpit of the plane on one occasion when the pilot tipped the wings so they could see Mount Erebus and the glacier known as the 'Erebus Ice Tongue'.

Now, if you haven't heard of this before, I recommend you search it later because that must have been quite the exceptional sight! And one very few people will ever experience.

After serving on the Fire Service for many years, Neill left and created his own company that specialises in fire compliance training called Compliance Training Canterbury. To this day he's still sought after and working in this field. In his own words, despite trying to retire, he's "not being successful".

Neill has also had a significant career in local government, serving for three terms.

He was first elected to Kaiapoi Borough Council in 1986, and following amalgamation, was a Councillor with Waimakariri District Council until 1998.

During this time Neill was heavily involved in commercialising Kaiapoi Electricity, was Chairman of Works during the redevelopment of the Rangiora Service Centre, was a Board Member and Chairman of Te Kōhaka o Tūhaitara Trust and led the redevelopment of the Rangiora Airfield.

His proudest moment during this time was leading a team who reviewed the management of the Rangiora Airfield. The airfield was in a bad way, unkept and overgrown, and progress on its development was fraught with delays and inaction.

By getting the right people together and putting in place a proposal for funding and development, Neill was able to turn the airfield around and open it up to more residents, enabling it to come back to life. Today we see the results of his work in this space with it being an exceptional community asset.

Neill instigated the purchase of the historic Kaiapoi schooner MV Tuhoe in 2003 and served as a Trustee and Secretary of the trust established to manage ownership of the ship. After the Tuhoe ran aground and was wrecked in 2015, Neill played a key role in the publication of a book entitled 'Taking the Bar', a history of the Port of Kaiapoi.

More recently, Neill has played a pivotal role in bringing back the Kaiapoi RSA from the point of closing. He was elected president in 2012 and set to putting in place a team and structure that would ensure the organisation would flourish.



Under his leadership over the past decade the team have worked tirelessly to increase membership and promote the welfare of veterans. They have also drawn on local relationships, such as the one with Ngai Tūāhuriri to ensure that Māori military heritage remains a strong aspect of the Kaiapoi RSA.

This community focus has seen the membership grow significantly – there are now more members than there were 100 years ago – thanks to partnerships forged with organisations like the Kaiapoi Club, local high schools, veterans and more.

Neill is also a member of the Waimakariri Passchendaele Advisory Group, which provides advice and support to the Council's twinning relationship with the province of Zonnebeke in Belgium.

Through his vision, energy and contributions in transforming the Kaiapoi RSA, Neill was given a salute of respect by fellow associations, and in 2022 was elected Canterbury District RSA President, a role that also means Neill serves on the National Executive.

For all this dedication to his community and more, in 2019 he was awarded a Queen's Service Medal for his contributions to the community. He has also been awarded a Certificate of Merit and Life Membership of the RSA.

Neill was recently awarded a Royal New Zealand RSA Merit Badge for his service to the RSA – a very high honour and justified for his many years of service.

Tonight, we add to these accolades.

One thing that stood out during our interview with Neill for this award, is that he credited a lot of his achievement to teamwork and being enabled by those around him.

But the best team he's been able to put together, and who he credits his success with, is his family - his wife Judith, two sons and daughter, who are here to celebrate with him tonight.

So, thank you to your family Neill for encouraging and enabling you to give so much back to Kaiapoi and the wider Waimakariri community over so many years.

This award is in recognition and appreciation of you Neill and your continued commitment to our community. Your exceptional work over many decades is inspirational, and on behalf of the District I would like to recognise your efforts and impact with the awarding of a Mayor's Award.

