

Ian Patchell - Patchell Industries

He carries the name that is synonymous with the New Zealand Truck-trailer manufacturing industry.

Ian Murray Patchell heads up one of the largest heavy transport equipment manufacturers and suppliers in the country - the Patchell Group, this year, in 2023 celebrating its 50th anniversary. That half century stretches back to the time of legends of the industry, particularly in Rotorua.

H. Allen Mills, Manu Tuanui, Neil Peterken, Pat Mear, Graeme Kelly and Lyall McGee among others—Ian Patchell knew them all, competed with them all, and outlasted them all.

Like most of those mentioned above, Ian started small and was (and is) old school. He had an assortment of minor jobs in and around Rotorua. And then, in 1969, he became a boilermaker at Kinleith Mills in Tokoroa. To this day, Ian still takes pride in the skill and craft of being a boilermaker and will often describe himself as one.

Yes, he is old school.

In 1971, Ian returned to Rotorua and a year later, in 1972, started a small engineering workshop in View Road on the western edge of the city.

Patchell Industries, now Patchell Group, had started on its long and often colourful, journey. Along the way, Ian Patchell has had many distinguished milestones. In 1984, the global giant Caterpillar Corporation accorded Patchell

Industries Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) status – a rare honour.

He was a founding member of the NZ Log Transport Safety Council. In 2007 he was sworn in as a JP and, in 2019, won the Westpac Rotorua Business Excellence Awards. In 2020, he was inducted into the “Wall of Fame” at his old alma mater Rotorua Boys High.



Today, the Patchell Group is among Rotorua’s largest employers, and Ian is quick to acknowledge the hard work and skills of the team he has built around him. Ian, himself, is still active in the business and he will often be seen in his workshops running the practised eye of an ageless “boilermaker” over the products his companies produce.

Ian has no known plans for retirement. But when he does go, that much vaunted Patchell name will live on in the form of the contribution it has made to the trailer building industry and, in keeping with the theme of this chapter, his two sons, Colin, who heads up Roadmaster, and Don who

has a senior role in the Patchell Group.

Ian was inducted into the Road Transport Hall of Fame in 2022

Patchells have been a member since 1981 and Ian was awarded Life membership of the TTMF in 2023



Left: The Patchell Group celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2023