

# AON relocates in New Plymouth



Aon House at 9 Young St in New Plymouth is the new home for Aon Insurance. Photo: SAM SCANNELL/FAIRFAX NZ

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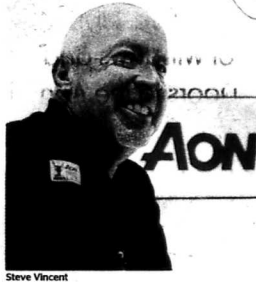
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Steve Vincent

## Future growth insured

New offices for Aon Insurance in New Plymouth are an investment in the years ahead, writes Mike Shaw.

Moving from Vivian St to Young St is not far in terms of distance, but for Aon and its clients the two New Plymouth locations are a world apart. The new two-storey Aon House at 9 Young St is a purpose-built base for the business, says manager Steve Vincent, and future-proofs it well into this century. For more than 10 years, the Aon team worked out of the early 1900s villa on the one-way system,

making the best of the rooms within its former residential design. "We were basically working out of bedrooms," Steve recalls. Significant growth prompted a review of the premises and Aon's future needs, he says. "We simply ran out of room. The business was growing and staff numbers were growing to support the business growth." Business projections showed that growth would continue, so Aon took the opportunity to lease offices in the spacious commercial environment planned by Lifestyle Building & Construction for the Young St site. The company also negotiated with Lifestyle's managing director Peter Snowden for the right to name the building Aon House. By becoming involved in the planning for the building at an early stage, Aon could also promote

some of its clients as subcontractors on the build and the Lifestyle Building team was happy to accommodate that, Steve says. The Aon team is now settled into its ground-floor premises in the building, and the contemporary presentation is a major improvement on its previous premises. Visitors are welcomed into a light and sunny reception area with convenient meeting rooms adjacent. That avoids the need to negotiate busy work areas to meet with someone. There's an appealing mix of glass, paint and light timber panelling throughout the interior - and colourful carpet and funky furnishings brighten the look further. A grouping of unusual and brightly coloured chairs offers an informal area in which

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A light and appealing reception area is customer-friendly, while staff enjoy natural light and an efficient layout in their work area.



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staff can sit and confer.

Aon's experience in refurbishing offices around the country was used in the fitout here, Steve explains. "Currently, we have more than 70 branches throughout New Zealand and a number of them have gone through or are going through similar refits and changes.

"We used an architect who has been involved in a lot of these to put this together. We wouldn't have had the ideas they did with colours, furniture, layout and logo ... and that's now consistent across the business."

A wealth of window glass gives the reception and workstation areas a pleasingly light look. "The design was driven by natural light."

Extra lighting is there for dull days and evening use, but it is a feature in its own right. Striking light fittings in the open-plan workstation area caught the imagination of staff and visitors immediately, Steve says, with a smile. "They look like something out of Star Wars ... light sabres, maybe?"

With its long experience in Taranaki, the Aon team feels part of the region, Steve says. "We've been able to grow with it and achieve good growth."

Commercial, rural and small business sectors are the strength of the business here, complemented by a level of personal insurance. Clients range from the

very large companies to smaller businesses, farming and personal insurance.

A team of 14 provides the service in the New Plymouth office, while another two staff are based in Hawera. They are involved in broking services, claims, employee benefits, personal insurance advice, and Work Aon which is a third party administrator of the ACC scheme.

Personal contact is an important aspect of Aon's business in Taranaki, Steve emphasises. "Claims are dealt with in our office ... we don't ask our clients to ring an 0800 number to discuss claims; we do it here with them."

Staff here have a wide experience with which to advise clients, he adds. "In Taranaki, we have to be the general practitioners of insurance, but we utilise the specialist skills available throughout Aon New Zealand"

Aon New Zealand is part of a global business, he explains, with 66,000 employees around the world. "Resources come with that and the Taranaki team has access to a lot of knowledge and a lot of experts."

People might have noticed the Aon name on the shirts of Manchester United players a season or so back, but community support is seen in New Zealand as well with a notable sponsorship for Rowing New Zealand, the Aon Maori Cup and Yachting New Zealand.



Funky furniture is set up for a casual conference area.



Meeting rooms near reception are conveniently placed for clients.



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