

You'll get your kicks on Rig 66

Bar with oil and gas theme to open in city

John Anthony
john.anthony@dailynews.co.nz

Taranaki oil and gas workers now have a watering hole to call their own with the opening of an energy-themed bar.

This Friday Graeme Tompkins and his wife Tracey open Rig 66 – a bar and restaurant dedicated to the oil and gas industry.

Tompkins, a well services supervisor with 26 years' experience in the energy sector, said he had dreamt of opening an oil and gas bar for more than 10 years.

In the past 18 months that dream came to life in the form of Rig 66 – located on the corner of Eliot St and Devon St East in the old Crusty Corner building.

The building had a capacity of about 100 people.

Tompkins said he chose the location because it received a lot of sun and could allow for outdoor seating.

The interior is plastered with images of the oil and gas industry.

One wall features a timeline documenting the history of Taranaki's energy sector and another featuring a global oil and gas timeline.

On the ceiling is an enormous image looking up the derrick of an oil rig.

Tompkins said he anticipated about half of Rig 66 patrons would be energy sector workers or associated with the industry.

With the number of oil and gas workers in Taranaki expected to grow for the foreseeable future Tompkins reckoned he was on to a good thing.

In late 2010 a Venture Taranaki energy sector report estimated there were 5090 full-time employees in the oil and gas industry,



taking into account the indirect workforce.

Rig 66 bar manager Lance Mephram said he expected the interest from energy sector workers to be huge.

"Every person in the industry

will check us out at some stage and we'll try to capture them," Mephram said.

Rig 66 was catering towards an older market, Mephram said.

"It's not teenybopper music, it's all classic rock."

The bar would also feature a lot of sporting memorabilia and a variety of international sports would play on the big screens.

Rig 66 would be open from 7.30am every day and featured a coffee window on Devon St East.

Mephram said there was little in the way of oil and gas-themed bars in the world.

"This is probably a world first."

A large portion of Rig 66 patrons would be international workers who flew in and flew out, Tompkins said.

"I think we're going to be quite busy because we've got people constantly going offshore and coming back.

"It's just rotating all the time and they've still got to get a drink," Mephram said.

"Every person in the industry will check us out at some stage and we'll try to capture them."

Lance Mephram
Rig 66 bar manager

Gas man: Graeme Tompkins is opening Taranaki's first oil and gas-themed bar and restaurant, Rig 66.
Photo: ROBERT CHARLES/FAIRFAX NZ

The success of Rig 66 would come down to its service, he said.

"We want the experience to be really cosy and comfortable."

Feedback from fellow industry workers had been positive, Tompkins said.

"The support out there has been really good and there's a lot of anticipation."

Tompkins said he had been fielding calls and inquiries about Rig 66 from around the world.

Before now most energy sector workers didn't have a regular hangout and were usually scattered throughout New Plymouth's bars, he said.

Rig 66 food would be big classic pub meals cooked by a chef who had experience offshore, Tompkins said.

"I think I've got the right people to run the place and I'll just be happy to be a customer."