

NZI's 2011 got underway under a searing South Canterbury sun, with the business in marketing mode – launching a new nzinsulators.co.nz website, followed a week later by a new A5 full-range product Catalogue.

February was all about getting around our clients, presenting our updated offer, walking the talk. We also started making changes to our product packaging, upgraded our Kiln Control software during the month, and then Denise returned from maternity leave. Ian and Greg were in a parked car outside Connetics in Woolston when Christchurch's fatal earthquake struck, and all NZI staff were deeply saddened by the loss of life and calamity which followed. Our parent company Tiri Group donated \$125k to the relief fund, demonstrating that we're owned by Kiwis that care.

In March we re-opened the Temuka Pottery Shop in Mendelson Barn on Temuka's State Highway 1 Bypass. Wow – immediate success, and we spent several months trying to keep up with the shop, which was selling everything we could make. In March we also retuned our insulator pricing to be more competitive, and in a leap of faith – completed a significant tree planting project at our factory, to be ready for NZI's Centenary in 2024.

In April we had the first of several Networks choosing to move from imported insulators, back to Temuka-made NZI brand. We owe them a debt of gratitude, because momentum is everything in commerce, and to gain momentum you need some early wins. Ian and Greg attended a Trade Show in Seoul (Korea) – looking to fill gaps in NZI's wider product offering. And we took in our first intake of new staff as manufacturing volumes started to grow.

May included taking CAD drawing back in-house, as the business is reinvesting in infrastructure to remain a New Zealand manufacturer. Greg/Linda also swanned off to Italy for 3 weeks in May, meeting up with their daughters who are doing the OE thing.

Through the year we had many NZI staff acknowledged for 5-year service milestones. They were Margaret (10), Alistair (15), David H (15), Robyn G (15), Brett (20), Gary A (20), Ian (20), Peter C (20), David C (30), Dave J (35) and Robin B a whopping 45 years!

In June we launched our new 11kV Linepost, David and Dan fronted our stand at the EEA Conference in Auckland, and we endured another decent shake in Temuka later in the month.

Julie in Customer Services morphed into Mandy late July, Greg won the NZI Super 15 picks comp (which was popular as you can imagine) and we took in our second intake of new staff.

It was with deep regret that we learned of Rainer Dornauer's passing away in August. Rainer was a vastly experienced insulator practitioner, and a loyal supporter of NZI. He will be greatly missed by NGK Stanger, our client in Melbourne, where he was Engineering Manager.

Brian won the digital camera spot prize at winter staff drinks in August, we signed up a new agency agreement with DTR of Korea, and had an amazing day on Tuesday 23/8/11 when about six important things went NZI's way, all on the same day! We also agreed to sell an acre of bare land over the road from our Temuka factory, including our unused Tool Room.

In September we launched our new AX brand of spindles, won a really significant piece of new business in the North Island, and made moves towards a new combined HV/LV warehouse in our Temuka facility.

October saw the market launch of DTR polymer insulators distributed by NZI, and the end of brown-glazed product as we move NZI brand to be entirely grey. Our neighbour in Thomas Street, Brian Jamieson, died very suddenly mid October – a horrible shock for everyone. It was Brian, the energetic MD and owner of Mackenzie Supply Services who purchased our bare land for a new storage facility.

November has seen a flurry of building activity. Mackenzies are pushing on with the big new shed, and our old Tool Room is a goner. We've started upgrading and maintaining the main exterior of our office and factory, including warming up our austere entry stairwell. A new phone system was also installed and the NZI Temuka number is now 03-6878100.

December has arrived, with Ian in Europe evaluating new equipment, our 2012 Catalogue in production, many product initiatives underway for a January launch – and we've got our staff Christmas event on the 19th at Temuka Lawn Bowls Club. Play some ends, spit roast and some drinks in the sun.

So yep, that's the story of our 2011. By anyone's measure it's been an action-packed twelve months. NZI is competing, winning back share, developing products, investing in a future as a local manufacturer. It's not easy, and to be fair it hasn't been easy – but we're trying hard and we're getting generous support from our clients, for which we are profoundly grateful.