

# State-of-the-art new hearse gives choice

by John Jones

HOLDEN or Ford, Gisborne funeral director David Parker is now able to make peace between the warring parties by offering a choice of one or the other.

That is possible thanks to a state-of-the-art new converted Holden hearse that has just arrived from Auckland. It includes a feature designed by Mr Parker, that is the first for any New Zealand funeral director.

The impressive and gleaming brand new hearse is actually a Holden SUV sports ute that has been cut in half with the wheelbase extended by one metre.

It was converted by Bunce Motors of Auckland, a company that converts left-hand-drive vehicles, who spent nine months on the job.

David Parker said Evans Funerals had always had Fords. However, since the demise of the Falcon stationwagon the only alternative was to buy a hearse from the United States.

Once he saw the Holden SUV and what Bunce motors could do with it he was convinced it was just right for the job.

This was the sixth model the company had built and it included nice touches like the Evans name on the boot and the inside door panels. There were things like the side trap door that could carry church trolleys.

One innovation that David requested, and is a first for New Zealand, is an electric retractable deck, so when the casket is placed in the hearse, it is



**THE OLD AND THE NEW:** Evans Funeral Services has a new customised Holden hearse but is keeping the 1971 Ford Customline on the right. A blessing was carried out by Baptist minister Jim McIntosh (left), who is pictured with Evans managing director David Parker.

Picture by Paul Rickard

still easily accessible to the family and mourners to pay their respects. It operates with a smart key held in the hand and slides backwards to make loading easier.

Delegates from New Zealand and Australia who were in Gisborne recently for the National Funeral Directors conference were impressed with the hearse and said they might not now go to

the United States for a vehicle.

The Holden-Ford rivalry was light hearted but deep.

David Parker said there were families who said their father was a Holden man all his life and he would not want to travel in a Ford.

As for Ford supporters, that is no problem. Along with two other Falcon hearses, the company still has the lovely

old Ford Customline brought to Gisborne in 1971 by the late Jim Evans after whom the company is named. It is a vintage car now but still in perfect condition.

David Parker could not have got a better man to bless the new hearse. Baptist minister Jim McIntosh is a self-confessed "petrol head" who eschewed his clerical gear to wear his Holden Special Vehicle jacket for the blessing.