



## **Feedback of Civic Trust Auckland**

### **Draft Heritage Buildings and Places Recovery Programme for greater Christchurch**

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### **Civic Trust Auckland**

Civic Trust Auckland (CTA) is a non-profit public interest group, incorporated in 1968, with activities and interests throughout the greater Auckland region. We are affiliated with other Civic Trusts throughout NZ, including the Christchurch Civic Trust.

The aims of the Trust include:

- Protection of natural landforms
- Preservation of heritage, in all its aspects
- Encouragement of good planning for the city and region.

We have made submissions on matters of nationwide significance including:

- Improving our Resource Management System
- Building Seismic Performance Policy
- Resource Management Reform Bill
- Building Competitive Cities
- Mining in Schedule 4.

Civic Trust Auckland is a heritage advocacy group and therefore one of the types of groups from which feedback on the Draft Heritage Buildings and Places Recovery Programme for greater Christchurch is sought. We recognise that this programme could be applied to other parts of New Zealand, in the same way that the changes to the earthquake-prone buildings policy apply throughout the country.

#### **1. Christchurch as a heritage city**

1.1 Christchurch deservedly enjoys a fine reputation on account of its heritage buildings and has been a destination for local and overseas tourists for this reason. Its historic heritage is *the* most important defining characteristic of the city. Individual buildings hold their own importance and collections of buildings contribute to its distinctive streetscapes.

1.2 Many heritage buildings and places do remain despite the recent devastating earthquakes. Many more would remain today and be recoverable if they had not been demolished in the weeks subsequent to the earthquake, many for purported public safety reasons. Instead, these buildings should have been temporarily closed and made water tight to prevent deterioration, and, where necessary for safety reasons, cordoned off. Then there would have been time for proper assessments and consideration of options.

1.3 CTA supports the objective in the programme that recognises that heritage buildings and places are *“an important part of greater Christchurch’s identity”* and the programme’s outcome that acknowledges that *“heritage buildings and places contribute to a strong sense of identity, a quality urban environment, and tourism, which support the economic and cultural recovery of greater Christchurch”*.

1.4 Aside from the economic value of heritage tourism, the people of any city value a well-designed built environment and suffer a sense of loss when it is destroyed. Heritage recovery should not be seen as a liability or “road block” but an important part of rebuilding a city both for the current inhabitants and for future generations. There is much value placed on the buildings of Christchurch by its people, and these communities can be called upon to support recovery initiatives, as well as the wider community of New Zealand, which also benefits from the historic heritage values of Christchurch.

## 2. Community input into the programme

2.1 The Draft Heritage Buildings and Places Recovery Programme for greater Christchurch does not seem to have actively sought community input. The document seems to have been prepared almost exclusively by central or local government agencies. We consider that groups with an interest in heritage such as IConIC, the Christchurch Civic Trust, The Christchurch Heritage Trust and Heritage Places Aotearoa should have been consulted as stakeholders. Then there could have been public input into such matters as priorities for funding, protection, repair and strengthening.

## 3. The Recovery Projects

3.1 CTA supports the heritage recovery projects listed on page 3, i.e. to:

1. *retain heritage buildings and places*
2. *determine the best methods of strengthening heritage buildings*
3. *reuse heritage fabric retrieved from heritage and character buildings*
4. *ensure that District Plan regulation assists recovery*
5. *identify and restore sites of significance to Ngāi Tahu*
6. *retrieve archaeological information and artefacts*
7. *conserve artefacts recovered from archaeological sites*
8. *keep memory and awareness alive.*

3.2 CTA considers that the most important project is that listed as number 1, i.e. to *“Retain heritage buildings and places”*. We consider the interpretation of lost heritage to be a poor substitute to retaining heritage buildings and heritage places themselves.

3.3 As recognised by the programme, it goes without saying that after any disaster *“there are unparalleled opportunities to design new buildings”*. CTA hopes that future generations will regard such new buildings as heritage but the heritage value of that which already exists is unquestionable and that of new builds is

unknown. Furthermore, the craftsmanship of the past is, in many areas, lost knowledge.

3.4 There is likely to be no lack of interest in new builds. The emphasis of the programme should be on recovery.

3.5 CTA supports adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. This is something which occurs worldwide on an ongoing basis, separately from the occurrence of such disasters as earthquake.

3.6 The assistance offered in Box 1 is supported and needs to be readily and quickly available to owners of heritage buildings.

3.7 We support all the conservation work that is being carried out and are particularly pleased to see work progress on the 22 damaged Arts Centre Buildings.

#### 4. Funding

4.1 The challenge of the costs of repairing and strengthening heritage buildings is acknowledged in the programme and yet little money has been made available for this.

4.2 The government funding of matching donations up to a total maximum contribution of \$5 million does not reflect the Resource Management's section 6(f) objective to protect historic heritage as a matter of national importance. Such financial assistance is far too small to have more than a minimal effect.

4.3 CTA considers that the NZHPT's fundraising campaign was not wide enough in its scope. The NZHPT's National Heritage Preservation Incentive Fund's contribution of around \$175,000 to greater Christchurch is insufficient. The NZHPT's commitment of funds to the restoration of the Timeball Station is disproportionate and does not constitute an offer of assistance to the owners of private heritage buildings; it is a case of government funds being provided for a government asset.

#### 5. The CER Act

5.1 CTA considers that section 38 gives CERA, and, in particular, its chief executive, too much power.

5.2 It is of concern that the CER Act did not include the significance of the heritage of Christchurch. There was little money apportioned through the CER legislation to assist in the protection and recovery of heritage buildings, provided for in other legislation.

5.3 Decisions about the demolition of buildings, structures or other erections on land should either be shared with other agencies or should revert to the relevant territorial authority and be conducted through RMA process.

#### 6. District Plans

6.1 CTA encourages the CCC, SDC and WDC to review their District Plans to facilitate heritage recovery.

6.2 *Before* owners make decisions about whether to demolish or strengthen their buildings, it is imperative that incentive mechanisms be devised and implemented to

equitably share the cost of upgrading between building owner and the public, on whose behalf the building's heritage amenity is being retained. Any economic value that may be derived from assets on account of their heritage value needs be taken into consideration.

6.3 Any incentive mechanism that might be devised to share the cost of upgrade between the building owner and public should provide for a covenant to be placed on the property to protect the public investment in privately owned heritage amenity.

6.4 District Plans should have a combination of rules and incentives that equitably apportion the costs (arising as a consequence of heritage listing) between heritage building owners and the public (on whose behalf any heritage amenity is being protected). This will only be effective if the incentives are meaningful.

6.5 Council assistance could include planning, flexibility and the provision of financial incentives (that equitably share the costs of upgrading between those who benefit from it, i.e. building owner *and* the public). It would be good for local authorities to know that assistance might available from central government (by way of tax rebates, grants and loans).

6.6 Policies need to take adequate account of the collective benefit derived from privately owned heritage assets and the public's appetite for costs involved in retaining such heritage assets.

## 7. Conclusion

7.1 There is a need to protect what remains of Christchurch's historic heritage. The city lost many of its heritage buildings as a result of the earthquakes but it lost many more due to a focus by the empowered authorities on demolition rather than assessment and protection.

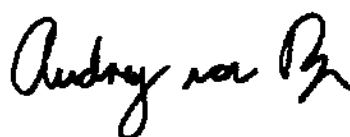
7.2 With the entire country facing the ongoing destruction of its heritage through such factors as higher insurance and compliance costs as well as intensification of cities such as Auckland, the recovery of the historic heritage of Christchurch is of importance to all New Zealand cities.

7.3 Aside from the fact that the programme would have assisted more in heritage recovery if it had been released much earlier, it needs clearer guidelines and the availability of a greater level of funding.

7.4 The programme should include the heritage conservation practices included in the New Zealand ICOMOS Charter 2010 as well as international best practice in the recovery of heritage buildings.

Date: 14 March 2014

Signature:



Secretary, Civic Trust Auckland