

**CHRISTCHURCH CIVIC TRUST AND HISTORIC PLACES CANTERBURY
DEPUTATION TO THE CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL OPPOSING THE RSA
REQUEST FOR THE SHIFTING OF THE CITIZENS' WAR MEMORIAL FROM
CATHEDRAL SQUARE 27.09.18 Ross Gray, Deputy Chair CCT, HPC**

The Citizens' War Memorial monument is a vital and integral component of the city's most important public space, Cathedral Square, and it is essential that it remains so in the post-disaster years. Its structural and visual form creates a carefully orchestrated synergy with the structure, form and symbolism of Christchurch Cathedral.

It needs the cathedral and the cathedral needs it, because of a shared meaning embodied in the crucifix form of both structures. We can see this in the Latin cross floor plan of the cathedral and in the 15m high structural cross of the War Memorial. This is no accident or coincidence: the Anglican Church gave explicit instructions on these design matters and sculptor William Trethewey and architect George Hart fully and faithfully executed them. In doing so they created what eminent New Zealand historian Jock Phillips says is possibly '...the finest public monument in the country'. To separate the two structures would be to considerably diminish both heritage structures.

Re-stated: for more than half its life Christchurch Cathedral has been the core of a shared civic experience of great profundity with its nearest neighbour, the Citizens' War Memorial. The Civic Trust and Historic Places Canterbury cannot see any valid reason to sever this physical and deeply symbolic bond.

The Christchurch City Council through its ratepayers has recently agreed to contribute a generous \$10m to the reinstatement of Christchurch Cathedral, with some stated restrictions. This follows a long history of the council making a significant contribution to the cathedral, including re-roofing and earthquake strengthening. Furthermore, the current concept plan by Regenerate Christchurch for the future of Cathedral Square shows the

Citizens' War Memorial in its present position. Planners have clearly not considered its presence a problem: rather they see it as part of the mix of features contributing towards a vibrant civic centre. The council has agreed to contribute half the initial costs for the redevelopment of Cathedral Square and must do all it can to strengthen the "Square experience". The objection, that the cathedral is some years away from re-occupation, may be true, but in the interim, the south facing areas of the new City Library offer quiet spaces with views out to the War Memorial.

In light of these factors it would be highly counter-productive for the council to accede to the RSA's request to move the Memorial away from Cathedral Square to another city location.

The RSA submission takes little account of the War Memorial's function to be a reminder and a memorial of war and sacrifice for everyone, certainly not just for the comrades, family members or descendants of Association members. For instance: thousands of German and Japanese tourists come to Christchurch annually. Those tourists, descendants of some who will have fought against New Zealanders, are most unlikely to make a special trip to another open space to visit the Citizens' War Memorial relocated there. In fact, because Christchurch Cathedral is so close to the War Memorial, visitors to it are provided with a magnificent, enclosed space whose prime purpose is to give people of any and all persuasions a place in which to reflect.

The Citizens' War Memorial, when viewed from east of The Square, presents a relatively plain rear façade. This is not a significant problem given the extent of the surrounding built environment, but if it were to be shifted to another open city space, this would present a serious visual difficulty given the possibly long vistas from any direction. The Memorial is absolutely a site-specific monument and as such is totally unsuitable for shifting away from its designated site. The Christchurch Civic Trust has a particular concern for urban planning matters and is alarmed at the ramifications for inner city neighbourhood living that any shift would raise: siting, orientation, impact on living values and the like.

It appears to have been all too easy for the RSA to claim some sort of ownership of the Citizens' War Memorial. It commemorates the ultimate sacrifice made by men and women from Canterbury, but those who remember are in fact all people – from greater Christchurch, Canterbury, New Zealand, the globe. The memorial is owned by the citizens of Christchurch and is administered and cared for by the funds from those ratepayers. The RSA's line of thinking, that the War Memorial must be shifted at its request, may well be borne of years of post-earthquakes frustration, but it carries an ill-founded proprietorial attitude and fails to take into account all relevant heritage and urban planning factors.

I'd like to conclude with a brief comment from Professor Chris Kissling, Chair Christchurch Civic Trust: "The submission certainly represents my personal view regarding the war memorial staying where it is. I do not believe the restoration work on the Cathedral requires the shift of the war memorial and I have not seen any cogent arguments for such an undertaking.

The Citizens' War Memorial is not a chess piece to be moved from square to square at the whim of current players who have decision-making power."

The Christchurch Civic Trust and Historic Places Canterbury both urge Mayor and Councillors to reject the request by the RSA for the removal of the Citizens' War Memorial from the heart of the city, Cathedral Square.