

Relocation of the Citizens' War Memorial

Deputation by Neil Roberts (Chair) the Inner City West Neighbourhood Association (ICON)

ICON Does Not Support the Memorial Being Moved

The Inner City West Neighbourhood Association (ICON) is strongly opposed to the proposal that the Citizens' War Memorial in Cathedral Square be relocated to a different site. Such a move would **not only compromise the heritage values of the memorial but also the heritage identity of places where it has been suggested it be moved to**. It would also be a breach of faith on several levels but three in particular stand out.

1 The intent of initiator and promoter of the Citizens' War Memorial deserves respect

When a war memorial for Christchurch was first suggested in 1919 many concepts were put forward, and debated, until a majority preference was given to building a bridge of remembrance. George Gould founder of Pyne Gould Guinness who had lost a son and five other family members in WW1 felt that there needed to be another memorial, and it had to be located in the heart of the city, within Cathedral Square. Gould campaigned vigorously during the 1920s to realise his vision to have a memorial built. There was much support, but also opposition with the strongest coming from the Returned Services Association .

As late as 1934, after Gould and his memorial committee had raised £10,000, and had a site allocated, the Returned Services Association were quoted in the Christchurch Times on 15 February 1934 as stating publicly that; "*the money should be made available for the assistance of returned men in distressed circumstances*". They considered this a better use rather than the money being wasted on the building of a second memorial that was not needed. Fortunately George Gould did not give up on his project and the memorial was built.

To remove the memorial from Cathedral Square **would fail to acknowledge the specific wishes of George Gould concerning its location**. Even though he died in 1941 he deserves some ongoing respect from the city in this regard.

2 The Designers of the Citizens' War Memorial deserve respect

From the beginning of its design the sculptor William Trethewey and his collaborator the architect George Hart conceived a site specific architectonic memorial standing in a closed space within a precinct that has a back drop of buildings. To take the memorial out of its original context and place it in a more open setting **would be to completely alienate the main tenets of its design**. This memorial is not a piece of furniture that can be easily moved from room to room.

The relationship to Christ Church Cathedral is also very important as it was a fundamental in the design concept that it incorporate certain features determined by the Cathedral Chapter. The principal element had to be a cross, and it was prescribed that any figurative representation on the memorial was to be of inspiring character, and include some if not all of the following symbolic references: youth, high endeavour, energy, aspiration, purpose, sacrifice and most especially victory.

The removal of the memorial from its site in Cathedral Square would **most certainly compromise its design integrity** by denying the initial intent of its designers.

3 Breach of the New Zealand ICOMOS Charter

To move the memorial out of Cathedral Square is in the view of ICON also not justified under the terms of the NZ ICOMOS Charter which states: *The site of a structure is an integral part of its cultural heritage value.* Relocation can be justified if; (1) *the site is not of associated value* (2) *relocation is the only means of saving the structure.* Neither of these we believe apply to this memorial.

The Christchurch City Council having adopted the NZ ICOMOS Charter for management and conservation of cultural heritage will be seen, if the memorial is removed from its site and relocated to a place where it has no historical identity, to have breached the guidelines of this charter.

For more than 81 years the memorial has stood in Cathedral Square, and now with the loss of so much built heritage it is vital that it remains for another 81 years especially as a decision has now been made to restore Christ Church Cathedral to its former state.

ICON asks Council to not endorse the request to permanently remove the Citizens' War Memorial from Cathedral Square.