

Cathedral rebuild ignores opportunity

New Zealand's principal organisation for heritage professionals says the decision of the Christchurch Anglican Church Property Trustees to replace Christ Church Cathedral with a contemporary rebuild is a backward step for heritage conservation in New Zealand and ignores the building's significant heritage value and ongoing offers of support and engagement from the heritage profession.

ICOMOS New Zealand spokesperson David Reynolds said "Embarking on a contemporary rebuild without considering all the conservation and engineering options offered by the heritage and seismic engineering community rejects the goodwill that has been offered by the profession. It also fails to address the central part the Cathedral has played in the history, development, identity and memory of Christchurch City and its symbolic importance to the recovery of Christchurch."

The Cathedral is widely acknowledged as a treasured part of New Zealand's cultural heritage, reflected in its registration as a Category 1 Historic Place under the Historic Places Act, and its Group 1 Scheduling as a Protected Building in the Christchurch City Plan. Proceeding with a rebuild ignores its heritage values and potentially distances the church from the wider community and, more significantly, from the support of private funders who value the present cathedral.

Three years on, the fact that the government is still operating under emergency powers in Christchurch makes demolition of the cathedral possible, but not obligatory. While the cathedral still stands, ICOMOS believes the Church Property Trustees should further stabilise the standing remains of the building, buying time for the process of fund raising and endowment for conservation to be accomplished.

"In any normal situation, once a damaged building is secured and stabilised, its conservation would follow, guided by New Zealand's long-established *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value*. This would typically involve a range of conservation processes such as repair, restoration, reassembly, and reinstatement of disturbed fabric and inevitably a measure of reconstruction. We believe this is the only responsible option to follow with a building of such great cultural heritage significance," Mr Reynolds said.

With the guidance of architectural conservators under the *NZ Charter* and the involvement of New Zealand's experienced community of earthquake engineers, Christ Church cathedral could become a leading example of meticulous conservation, demonstrating that seismic strengthening can work hand in hand with the preservation of heritage value and authenticity.

// ENDS

For further information contact:
David Reynolds 09 379 7321
Mobile 02102 333 777

Information about ICOMOS

ICOMOS New Zealand, the New Zealand National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites is a UNESCO-linked professional organisation which supports the advancement of individuals and organisations engaged in the conservation of places of cultural heritage value in New Zealand.

Founded in 1987, ICOMOS NZ aims to develop expertise amongst those engaged in cultural heritage conservation and to promote high professional standards of conservation through the use of the *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter (2010)* a widely acknowledged national guideline for the ongoing long term care of heritage places.

ICOMOS was founded following the Second Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings in Venice in 1964, where the International Restoration Charter, better known as the *Venice Charter*, was adopted. ICOMOS has its permanent International Secretariat in Paris.

As a professional organisation ICOMOS NZ appeared before the Canterbury Earthquakes Royal Commission to advocate the use of the ICOMOS NZ Charter 2010 for heritage buildings within new building codes and in the ongoing care of the heritage of Christchurch.

Websites:

ICOMOS New Zealand <http://www.icomos.org.nz/>

ICOMOS New Zealand Charter http://www.icomos.org.nz/docs/NZ_Charter.pdf

ICOMOS International <http://www.icomos.org/en/>