

“Hang on Minister” urges heritage group

A leading national heritage group urges the Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee to seek advice before deciding to demolish damaged heritage buildings.

ICOMOS New Zealand agrees that safety must take priority before heritage.

“But we should carefully assess the state of the heritage buildings, before making fast decisions to demolish them,” says ICOMOS chair, Kevin Jones.

“Many heritage buildings may seem beyond repair, but experience in other countries has shown that, once a building is stabilised, rebuilding and reconstruction using the building’s own materials is often possible,” he says.

Mr Jones urges the government to support Historic Places Trust staff working with national authorities in Christchurch.

ICOMOS has talked to colleagues throughout its world-wide network, who have immediately offered support and encouragement.

“Much of Christchurch’s identity and image comes from its wonderful built heritage,” continues Mr Jones.

“Being able to save as many buildings as we can safely will have a huge positive effect for the city – not just for tourism and rebuilding the city’s economy, but for the soul and spirits of the Christchurch community”.

Background:

ICOMOS is an international non-governmental organisation of heritage professionals dedicated to the conservation of the world's historic monuments and sites. The organisation was founded in 1965 as a result of the international adoption of the Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites in Venice the previous year.

ICOMOS is UNESCO's principal advisor in matters concerning the conservation and protection of historic monuments and sites. It also advises the World Heritage Committee on the administration of the World Heritage Convention to which New Zealand is a signatory.

The New Zealand national committee was established in 1989 and incorporated in 1990.

ICOMOS New Zealand has over 60 members covering a wide range of professional disciplines concerned with the management and protection of cultural heritage property, including archaeologists, conservation architects, planners, historians and property managers.

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