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Media Statement

Council and trust board should work together on Sarjeant gallery project

Associate Minister for Arts, Culture & Heritage, Judith Tizard said today that she had full confidence in the Sarjeant Art Gallery Trust Board, following her dealings with them over the last several years as they worked towards a major extension to the Sarjeant Art Gallery.

She said she had been surprised by the Council's call for the resignation of the Sarjeant Art Gallery Trust Board Chair, David Cairncross.

"All my dealings with Mr Cairncross, the Trust Board and the previous council, and working closely alongside Wanganui MP Jill Pettis, gave me the confidence to recommend the government's contribution to the project. I recognise that the fundraising is at a delicate stage but I had no doubt about the assurances I was given.

"I call on the new Mayor and council, and chair of the trust board, to sit down together to form a new relationship that has the same positive co-operative approach that will be necessary if this project is to go ahead.

"I recognise that all major projects require a great deal of negotiation and that fundraising is never easy. However this project can only be progressed with clear local support from the council and a great deal of hard voluntary work by the Trust Board.

"Major philanthropists are not going to be willing to donate significant amounts of money if local supporters are not united."

Judith Tizard said the release of government funding for the project would depend on clear local support and confidence that fundraising targets can be met.

"The Regional Museums Policy for Capital Construction Projects is designed to ensure collections of national significance, like that of the Sarjeant Art Gallery, can be well developed and exhibited for the benefit of local people and visitors.

"Wanganui Mayor Michael Laws was a member of the National caucus that had the courage and vision in the early 1990s to fund the Te Papa project. Te Papa has since helped to change the way Wellingtonians, New Zealanders, and international visitors view Wellington and indeed New Zealand.

"This government wants to encourage projects that are good for local economies as well as for the health of local arts and culture.

"There is a queue of projects from all around New Zealand for regional museum capital funding, and if Wanganui were not able to agree on a project, the funding would have to be spent elsewhere."

"I urge the council to clarify their vision for Wanganui and work with the Trust Board so that this project can be progressed."

ENDS

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