

## INTRODUCTION

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Inner City Wellington (ICW) appreciates the opportunity to submit our perspective on the future of our Central City Library. Our preference is for High Level Remediation (Option C) because, having weighed each option against the factors we consider most important, we believe that for the money invested it provides the City and our Community with the best value for money in both the short and long term.

✳ **ICW does not accept the cost estimates** having heard expert advice at a recent public meeting on the library that revised costings of Option C could reduce the cost by 25%.

✳ **ICW contends the process of consultation thus far has been substantially flawed.**

As ratepayers, we wanted to know much more precisely which option provides the best value for money over the lifetime of the building, which is the way we believe the options should have been presented – i.e. ‘apples with apples’! We note that the written consultation document does not contain the information that the ‘new build’ options do not include base isolation, and this was only registered on the website after ICW raised the issue. Most folk we have spoken to assume that the ‘new builds’ do include base isolation.

## THE INNER CITY ‘SUBURB’

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***This submission also has a most important message:***

**The Central City Library is our ‘INNER CITY SUBURBAN LIBRARY’.**

While we know it also serves the wider Wellington population and acknowledge that perspective is important, we ask that our views are given the strength they would have if we were simply a suburb and not also the Central Library for the city as a whole.

Wellington Central and Te Aro – our area – has the least land but the largest and fastest growing population and very different demographics from other suburbs in Wellington. The Library is our main community amenity and Te Ngākau/Civic Square (including Jack Illott Green) is our most significant public community space – and a key evacuation site.

In addition to wider city needs, the Central Library needs to offer the level of service a community library would have - particularly from the perspectives of our current three dominant demographics: Students, Young Professionals and the Over 60’s. The first two groups make up a majority of the inner-city residents, with 69% of constituents aged between 15-35. It is also noteworthy that Inner City Wellington has a higher proportion of residents on low incomes with 35% earning less than \$20,000 annually in comparison to the national average of 27%.

We can't know now how our people makeup might change with the doubling in growth predicted from 13,355 to 27,453 in 2043. However, it seems likely that the student population may remain more stable so proportionally less over time. Efforts to house lower income folk may lead to a new sizeable demographic and families may increase.

Current statistical projections suggest a significant increase in under 5's (we cannot ascertain on what basis) which, if correct, will require consideration: already we know those numbers are increasing particularly in the Te Aro area. Maybe one of the existing pop-up Libraries could be adapted for this purpose.

We note some recognition of the implications of our growth in the Consultation document where it states under What could Wellington's future Central Library service look like?

*"By 2043 the inner-city population is expected to double and an increasing number of central city residents will be under the age of 34. With this growing CBD population our library may need a greater emphasis on communal spaces, a more curated, heavily used collection, creative and makerspaces, plus a focus on lending non-traditional items and on seamless digital infrastructure and content."*

✘ **ICW submits** that more explicit recognition and even more emphasis on Inner City Community need is required, particularly as a meeting place and social hub for our community events. We don't want to be in the position of constantly competing with the wider city users for access to services such as internet and multimedia, meeting space, notice boards etc when others have such access in their own community libraries, but we do not!

## **PARTNERS**

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We see the Central Library as our major community resource for information and support.

✘ **ICW contends** that any Partners should be assessed against their contribution to this 'one-stop shop' for citizen services.

Having the Citizen's Advice Bureau back in the Library would be a significant benefit for our community and the city at large. WCC Services as currently sited in Manners Street Temporary Library would also be a sensible and useful service for the City Library to offer.

## **DECENTRALISED SERVICES**

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While we have appreciated the provision of the three 'pop-up' libraries as a temporary measure, they cannot provide the 'one-stop' place for all services. Nor do they welcome, inspire and nurture in the way the Central Library did and can, despite best efforts of staff.

## **NEW ENTRANCES AND WINDOWS**

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The Submission Form asks about *how appealing or unappealing you would find (a) having multiple entrances to the building from Civic Square, the Precinct, and/or surrounding streets at ground floor level and (b) More windows to help connect the library visually to the square and surrounding streets.*

- ✘ **ICW does not accept** additional entrances and windows are necessary **IF** they will add significantly to the cost.
- ✘ **We also question** whether adding multiple entrances could limit the way space can be used efficiently and effectively.
- ✘ **We see the current two options as adequate** – one from Victoria street (or Harris Street if that is a better option design and cost wise) and one from Te Ngākau/Civic Square which could be on the ground floor or to a mezzanine as now.

## RISK

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### Seismic

A significant factor in any consideration of the future of the Library is that of risk. We know that the current site is on Landfill which poses seismic issues and that it is within the zone where sea level rise due to climate change will bring it under water in the long term. Therefore, we understand that Council (and certainly ratepayers) will want to think very seriously about investing large amounts of money in Te Ngākau/Civic Square.

The information given us provides assurance that life safety in a significant earthquake can be assured.

We are convinced that any option without base isolation will NOT provide the level of resilience/damage avoidance that base isolation gives, and we are not happy that only one option has this. This is a significant factor in our determining which option to support.

- ✘ **ICW contends** it would be irresponsible of Council to approve such a high use public building without base isolation as it significantly reduces the potential for future remediation and significant cost following the inevitable earthquakes we will have.

### Climate Change

Our position on climate change causing sea level rise is that Council is already investing in significant expenditure in this high-risk area with the Town Hall. We note that the Convention Centre is also within the sea level rise area.

We accept that sea level rise will occur. However, it is not an imminent risk and the probable life of a remediated Library is 50 years and a New Build 64. At some stage prior to 2070 presumably there will be a plan to raise buildings or relocate out of the waterfront area entirely if sea level predictions are borne out.

- ✘ **ICW believes that,** for the existing Library, sea level rise as a risk should not be a consideration. In our view it is outweighed by the need to get the Central Library back as soon as possible so that we can enjoy what the building can offer over its new, always limited, lifespan. This is particularly vital in these stressful times when, to help deal with uncertainty, our community needs every amenity it can have.

## TE NGĀKAU/CIVIC SQUARE



**Note:** Council has already had expert advice (Mahoney/Miskell report 2020) that shows there is currently a deficit of green space in Te Aro and Wellington Central – and that is before their stated requirements for a further TEN TE ARO PARKS in these two areas to meet WHO guidelines for green space for the projected doubling of the population.

Therefore, the space available now in Te Ngākau/Civic Square, including Jack Ilott Green, must NOT be diminished any further and if there is a need for demolition of Council Offices, that space should be conserved for an even better public gathering place/green space/evacuation area than we have currently.

However, if there is to be a building on the site of the existing council offices, then it should sit on a low-level green podium which would also help provide a better view shaft to the waterfront and provide a welcoming entrance to the civic square (*see right*)



✦ **ICW urgently requests** that Council draw a line NOW on allowing any additional new building in Te Ngākau/Civic Square.

## HERITAGE

Another factor is heritage value. We are not wedded to the retention of the building exactly as it is, as we recognise that remediation will bring change

✦ **ICW strongly advocates** for retention of the existing building's shape/form, the curved window outlook to the harbour and the iconic nikau palms.



Photo: Athfield Architects

## THE OPTIONS

The Submission Form provides a list of factors which submitters are asked to rank. These are Making the building safe; Making the building resilient; Heritage; Accessibility including transport; Future-proofing the Library service; Opportunities for Partnership; Te Ngākau Civic Square connections; Climate Change; Sustainability; Cost to ratepayers; Timeframe; Other.

### Our ranking

1. Making the building safe
2. Making the building resilient
3. Timeframe
- 4. Community amenity/social resilience**
- 5. Value for money invested** to ratepayers (not simply cost)
6. Heritage

Based on the inaccurate, limited and at times seemingly contradictory or unclear information provided, our view of the various options is as follows:

**OPTION A: Low level remediation** – While providing the earliest opening date, it does not provide sufficient safety or resilience relative to cost/investment value. Up to \$90m would be spent for no gain.

**OPTION B: Mid-level remediation** - At only 80% NBS and moderate resilience (no base isolation), and 'nominal' (not specified) increase in the building's life expectancy, while the cost of \$151.8m quoted for this option is clearly inflated, the minimal improvements in level of safety, resilience and sustainability achieved do not justify the investment.

**OPTION C: High level remediation** – This option meets all of our priority factors: safety, resilience, timeframe, community amenity/social resilience, value for money invested and heritage. We believe this option should be pursued but with clear direction that further development of concepts has to find ways to achieve the remediation with significant reduction in cost.

**OPTION D: New build on the site** Our reasons for rejecting this option include our assessment that this would provide less value for money as an investment for ratepayers, the historic value of the Library building, cost and impact of demolition or of maintaining the existing building for other purposes, longer timeframe for getting a Library back, and the not insignificant issue of returning something familiar and accessible to the community in a time of significant stress.

**OPTION E: New build on another site in Civic Square** - We reject this option because we cannot accept it is a wise investment. In any case, we want the Library building retained in Te Ngākau/Civic Square to provide a major community centre for our growing population but we do not want any further reduction in green space available in this area. Also, the timeframe to achieve an outcome is unacceptable.

## CONCLUSION

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We recognise that Council has a difficult decision ahead and that decision is only a step along the way as another consultation will occur when the Library has to compete for funds within the Long-Term-Plan.

We hope that our Library will be considered as a significant critical infrastructure requirement for Wellington's most populous suburb as well as for the city as a whole.

The manner in which it is presented in the LTP must ensure that it is given fair weighting alongside other investments. It must not become a Vanity Project that can be rejected in the face of bursting sewer pipes.



**Rev Stephen King**  
**CHAIR**

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✘ **ORAL SUBMISSION:** ICW advise we wish to make an oral submission to all Councillors at the Committee Meeting and ask to be notified when the paper is being submitted to the Committee.

✘ **APPENDIX 1:** Letter from City Council in response to ICW Questions

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11 August 2020

Mr Stephen King  
Chair  
Inner City Wellington  
By email [innercitywellington@gmail.com](mailto:innercitywellington@gmail.com)

Dear Mr King

### **Re: Response to your request for clarification on the Central Library Consultation**

Thank you for your list of questions sent to all Councillors, the Mayor and the Chief Executive last week. The Chief Executive has asked me to provide you with responses to your questions which are set out below. We appreciate the time your organisation has taken to prepare these questions and look forward to your continued interest in this important project.

I would like to include the questions and our responses on our consultation website to allow others to benefit from your questions. Please advise if this is acceptable as we would want to attribute the questions as coming from your organisation. In addition, I note that Wellington Scoop have also published your letter so I would like to supply them with a copy of the responses we have prepared. Again, please advise if this is acceptable.

I have included your questions as they give context for the responses. Our responses are in purple.

#### **'LIKE for LIKE'**

We note that "In the case of the two new building options there is no concept design. Accordingly, the costs provided are based on industry square metre rates for a reasonable quality building".

**1. QUESTION:** Does a "reasonable quality building" equate with the specific design requirements for a library building? Put another way, are the remediation options costed to the same 'reasonable quality building' estimates, or are the remediation designs costed to a higher quality?

The new build costings were provided for the purposes of context and comparison and are not based on any specific design. The estimates are based on industry square metre (sqm) rates for a building of a reasonable quality that would be suitable for a library. The new building cost estimates are for a building of a comparable size.

**2. QUESTION:** If Option D or E is accepted, can we be assured that Council will ensure that the upper estimate of \$160 million is retained as the upper limit for a new build? We are seeking assurance that when we are choosing between options, the costs for the new build won't be significantly escalated post-consultation.

If Option D or E is chosen Council will use \$160m as the budget for the Long-Term Plan (LTP). However as noted above this estimate is based on sqm rates and not a detailed design. These estimates provide for cost escalation.

## FOCUSSING SPECIFICALLY ON THE FACTORS FOR COMPARISON

### Resilience

The website now states “The new build estimates do not include base isolation as the desired level of building resilience can be achieved in a new build without it. However, if the decision was made to base isolate a new building the additional cost would not be significant” and “The cost estimates for the new build option do include estimated demolition and removal costs.” As noted, neither of the foregoing statements are included in the Consultation booklet.

**ISSUE:** ICW has been advised by an engineer that without base isolation “The required level of life safety can be achieved but not an equivalent level of resilience/damage avoidance i.e. a conventional building is significantly more likely to require costly and lengthy repairs after a moderate or major earthquake” and “The additional cost of Base Isolation is typically estimated to be in the range of 5-10%”. We note that this could take the new build up to \$176m. Bearing in mind that a number of industry commentators have suggested that the base-isolation retrofit option has an inflated cost estimate, does this not mean that equivalent new and retrofitted, high resilience options are comparable in price?

### **3. QUESTION: Why in Option C is WCC pushing for the existing building to be base isolated, if less than this is acceptable for a new build?**

*Council’s preferred option is a highly resilient strengthening of the Central Library building. Base isolation, in conjunction with other strengthening components, would achieve the most resilient remediation solution for the existing building. A new building design (Option D or E) could achieve the desired level of building resilience without base isolation. However, if the decision was made to base isolate a new building, the impact on the cost estimate range is unlikely to be significant.*

### **4. QUESTION: Do the new build costs in fact include obtaining the same level of resilience/damage avoidance as has been costed in the remediation options?**

*No design has been developed for a new building however these costs are based on standard industry sqm rates for a reasonable quality building designed to a high level of resilience. Options C, D, and E all seek to achieve a high level of building resilience.*

### **5. QUESTION: What is the justification for the difference in wording between Option C “High level of building resilience with minimal risk of future building closures after a significant earthquake” and Options D and E “Design to high level of seismic resilience with minimal risk of further building closures after a significant earthquake”? Is there in fact no difference in outcomes between Options C, D and E in this regard?**

*Although there are no new build designs (for Options D and E) at this stage, Options C, D, and E all seek to achieve a high level of building resilience.*

### Accessible

**ISSUE:** We note that Option B has potential for improvement, Option C significant improvement, while Options D and E have ‘Opportunity to align with best practice standards.

### **6. QUESTION: What information supports the judgement that only a new build can be aligned with best practice standards?**

*Under the remediation options accessible design elements would be incorporated wherever possible. These opportunities are constrained by an existing building and accordingly cannot be assured of best practice. A new building provides a blank canvas and therefore opportunities to design it in a way that achieves best practice outcomes for accessibility and sustainability.*

### **Improved sustainability**

**ISSUE:** On page 15 it is stated that the performance of a new build would be superior to the existing building in relation to energy efficiency. This clearly conflicts with the next statement on page 16 which states that “Replacing building services will be included as part of any option. The new services will be equivalent in their performance as to what a new building would include. This means a remediated building will deliver similar energy efficiencies as a new building”.

**7. QUESTION: What exactly does the foregoing mean? It seems to suggest that the new build is a better option even though the existing building’s services will be completely upgraded to a similar standard.**

*Although building services are a significant contributor to a sustainable building, they are not the only elements that contribute to a building’s sustainability. A new build would provide greater opportunities to introduce sustainability elements as these can be incorporated into the building’s design and materials. Under the remediation options energy efficiency and sustainable practices would be incorporated wherever possible including replacing building services.*

**8. QUESTION: Given council must have had provision in their Long Term Maintenance Plan budget for replacing the stated services in the existing Library that are now at “end of life”, why has this provision not been shown as a plus against the cost of the remediation options?**

*A key purpose of the SOP is to demonstrate the cost estimates for each of the options. The specific funding requirements for the chosen option, and the impact this will have on existing LTP budgets, will be considered and consulted on as part of the upcoming 2022-32 LTP.*

**9. QUESTION: In terms of sustainability would it not be appropriate to note the considerable environmental plus of not demolishing the existing structure, not only in reduction of landfill but also in the energy consumption in constructing a new building.**

*Under Option D on page 25 of the Statement of Proposal we reflect this as one of the disadvantages – “Negative impact on sustainability objectives due to demolition.”*

**ISSUE:** Under option E (pages 28/29) the costs associated with the impact of the considerable delays of retaining the existing library and paying for its maintenance until it is sold or leased have not been identified.

**10. QUESTION 1: What financial loss or costs could the ratepayers expect to bear under this option, where the existing building is to be sold or leased (possibly at less than market value)?**

*The costs or revenue associated with resolving the future of the existing building are unknown. The objective would be to minimise the impact to the ratepayer. There could be revenue available from the sale or lease of the building that could offset the costs.*



**11. QUESTION 2: What are the costs to maintain the existing Library building while all these decisions are being made?**

*While the operating costs for the building have significantly reduced since its closure, there are some costs that must be maintained for a building when it is closed. These include rates, insurance, security and some utilities costs.*

**12. QUESTION 3: Why are these issues not identified as a possible negative impact in relation to this option in the same way that the possible negative impact of demolition is cited in relation to Option D?**

*These issues have been clearly identified in the SOP description of Option E. The future of the building needing to be resolved is listed as a disadvantage.*

**Te Ngākau – Civic Square**

**ISSUE:** Option E – New Build on another Te Ngākau Civic Precinct site has a stage to ‘identify and confirm a site which may take up to 18 months to resolve, and which would only be explored after public consultation. Therefore, should this option be accepted it would add another 18 months to the already long timeframe.’

**13. QUESTION: Why are the possible sites in Civic Square not identified so the public can make a properly informed decision, especially when the one identifiable site is clearly Jack Illot Green? Are there in fact any others?**

*If Option E is chosen, the timeframe includes identification of potential sites and associated public consultation.*

Yours sincerely

**Karen Wallace Project Director Central Library**  
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