

## Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Christchurch

### Post-Earthquake Stabilisation

#### Fact sheet

#### Background

The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, one of the most significant buildings of its type in the Southern Hemisphere, suffered significant damage in the earthquakes that have struck Christchurch since September last year, particularly the magnitude 6.3 earthquake of February 22.

#### Situation

The Cathedral is currently in a precarious state, and the main dome and the north tower could potentially collapse further should a sizeable aftershock occur. These sections of the Cathedral also present a falling hazard, and until stabilised will continue to prevent the adjacent Cathedral College from reopening.

#### Identified damage

- Collapse of large sections of both front towers
- Substantial damage to the main dome over the sanctuary towards the rear of the building.

#### Assessment

A full assessment of the damage to the Cathedral is not possible until the building is made safe for assessors to enter. Parts of the two front towers and main dome must be dismantled for this to occur.

#### Work to be undertaken

Structural engineers and heritage specialists from Opus International Consultants are carrying out a controlled dismantling of these areas. The aims are:

- To reduce the likelihood of further damage to the Cathedral in the event of a significant aftershock
- To protect the adjacent school buildings
- To make safe the Cathedral so that assessors can enter the building and carry out a full assessment
- To ensure as much of the Cathedral building as possible is able to be retained and rebuilt.

#### Deconstruction

This is time-consuming task. It involves:

- The recording of heritage features
- The careful taking down of stonework and structure below the dome down to roof level, and other parts of the building so that as much material as possible can be salvaged.

#### Timetable

- Deconstruction of the north tower is expected to take up to two weeks to complete (April 7 – 21)\*
- Removal of the main copper dome and the stonework below the dome down to roof level, and subsequent stabilisation and weather proofing, could take a month (April 26 – May 20)\*.

\* These dates are approximate and could easily change.

**Expertise and equipment**

Removal of the main dome will be completed using a 400-tonne crane - one of the largest mobile cranes in New Zealand. A professional stonemason will also have a key role in the deconstruction process.

**Future decision**

No decision on the future of the Cathedral will be possible until assessors have completed a full assessment of damage to the inside of the Cathedral and the relevant experts have had an opportunity to study the report and consider the ramifications of the findings.

**Media contacts**

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