

Save the Karori Campus Group **Compilation of Campus Updates from July 2017**

The Save the Karori Campus Group seeks to protect the interests of current community users of the campus, and to achieve a repurposing of the campus land and buildings that creates the most benefit for the Karori community and the city.

Save the Karori Campus Group Update 13 **6 December 2017**

Ministry of Education Pulls Out of Buying Land

Below is a statement received by the Mayor and CEO late yesterday. As the WCC point out apart from the uncertainty about getting a new technology hub for the district, the statement does not refer to the recreation courts at all. The courts had been identified by the WCC as a community need and the WCC had agreed with Min of Ed to negotiate under the PWA.

Ministry of Education Statement

Our negotiations with Victoria University relating to a parcel of land at the former Karori Campus site have now concluded. Unfortunately our offer was substantially less than some of the other offers.

We are satisfied that Public Works Act 1981 requirements have been met and have advised Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) accordingly. The University is now free to progress to an open market sale.

We know that this decision will be disappointing for some in the Karori community but we have worked hard to secure the land for a technology hub and are obliged to consider value for money for the taxpayer. As we stated in March 2017, we could only buy the land if we could get it at the right price.

We will now investigate other options to meet technology provision for Wellington schools.

We will use this statement in response to any media queries we receive. We do not intend to release this proactively.

Kind regards

Iona Holsted
Secretary for Education

On the face of it the decision releases the land for the University to complete its sale process. The community has been duped and we now are at the mercy of the University and the presumably one of the cashed up retirement village operators itching to get hold of the site. The WCC is culpable as it should have undertaken its own PWA processes for the community facilities. Its time for the WCC to stop flag waving and to start really looking after the communities interests. However the real villain in all this is the property department of the Ministry who have been far from direct in their dealings.

There are high level meetings this week between the Government, the University and the WCC, and we hope these can lead to some positive outcomes for the thousands of you who use these facilities.

Richard Bentley and Andrea Crawshay for the Karori Campus Group

Save the Karori Campus Group Update 12
27 November 2017

We are in a period of considerable uncertainty and the University may take actions this week which change the discussion significantly. However quite a bit has happened in the last few weeks and we thought it would be at least be useful to update you all on these.

On last Friday Victoria University completed its tender process for the sale of the campus and the land and we understand that some offers were received and that these will be evaluated during the coming days.

However, the government believes that the Public Works Act processes are still running and that the Ministry of Education will therefore be able to come to an agreement with the University to buy the land (and courts) for their proposed technology hub. The Ministry made a new offer to the University late last week.

The way this Act works gives little room for the seller to move, except to negotiate compensation. The prolonged negotiation process we are seeing here, and the parallel tender process being run by the University, seem quite bizarre.

The resolution of this muddle now sits with the new Minister of Education and Tertiary Education, the Hon Chris Hipkins. Last Thursday, Mayor Justin Lester, our three ward Councillors Diane Calvert, Simon Woolf, and Andy Foster, and myself met the Minister and his officials for a briefing and discussion of the situation.

I presented the community's perspectives to the Minister stressing that nearly 1000 people use the campus each week in busy periods, the importance of retaining the courts and access to the dance studio, the gymnasium and the Hall, and that we supported the building of the new technology hub. I also presented our ideas for redeveloping the campus buildings as a commercial and community hub, and that once they were refitted and strengthened the buildings would be attractive to city businesses seeking to increase their resiliency by moving some operations to the suburbs. The point was not lost on the Minister that that might include the WCC. I supported my presentation with an 11 report page review of our ideas, current community usage of the site, our ideas about repurposing and the extent of public consultation and support for all this.

We hope there will be discussions this week between the University, the Ministry and the WCC. I remain optimistic that with a bit of give and take by all three parties a solution to the redevelopment of the campus that meets most community needs can be found.

We continue to explore ways of using a repurposed campus building complex. Our focus has been on contacting community organisations with a potential interest, for example music teachers and educators (for the Oldershaw Block), and conference organisers. We gained access to the campus building for two hours on Monday 20 November and conducted two tours involving 40 people.

These included WCC executives, potential tenants in a repurposed complex, community and church leaders, plus a number of architectural and historic building specialists who had not been into the buildings before.

The site visit and associated discussions have also assisted us develop the argument that the saving and repurposing of the campus buildings into a large commercial and community hub is not only good for Karori and its adjacent suburbs, but good for Wellington in numerous ways, and deserving of ongoing WCC support.

Richard Bentley for the Karori Campus Group

richardj.bentley@xtra.co.nz Please forward this update on to others. Please email me if you would like to add others onto the circulation list.

Save the Karori Campus Group Update 11 **23 October 2017**

We continue to monitor the discussions between the Ministry of Education, the University and the WCC. As outlined in my last update the Ministry believe that the public works act processes are still running and that they will be able eventually to come to an agreement with the University to buy the land and courts for their technology hub. However the University continues with its expression of interest process, and it expects to be in a position to sell the site in late November. Clearly there is a substantial difference in what is an acceptable process here.

It remains unclear what impact the change in government will have on these processes, but given Grant Robertson's extensive involvement in the matter over several years, we are hopeful that the new government will be more proactive than its predecessor in seeking an outcome with the University, Min Ed, and the WCC that reflects as much as possible the community's interests.

We have formed the view that however the process evolves, it is now highly unlikely that the campus buildings will be demolished. My only caution here is that it is still remotely possible that on closer inspection some of the buildings may be earthquake prone to the extent they could not be easily strengthened.

However we are less sure how the ownership and use of the land including the courts and cricket nets will pan out, and we continue to monitor this aspect of the discussions closely.

We are actively developing concepts for the repurposing of the campus buildings for new uses that benefit the city and the western suburb communities. As I have discussed in previous updates the campus contains a variety of special purpose buildings and facilities including:

- the five large lecture theatres and the Ward Allen VC Hall
- the rehearsal and concert facilities in the Oldershaw Block
- the (decommissioned) gas fired pottery kiln and the photography darkroom on level 1 of the Waghorn Block
- the film studio on level 3 of the Waghorn Block
- the truly expansive spaces that were the Training College library with its extensive mezzanine floors - in the Panckhurst block
- the commercial kitchen on level 2 of the Gray Block adjoining the quad

In addition there are substantial areas of open floor spaces in the Waghorn, Panckhurst, Gray and Tennant buildings available for redevelopment for commercial tenancy. Some of these areas have already attracted attention – for example a new medical hub on Level 3 Gray and Waghorn anchored around the Karori Medical Centre, and Suburban co-working and innovation spaces on Level 2 of the Tennant Block adjoining the quad.

We have started talking to potential users and building a picture of how much space they might need and their ability to pay commercial rents. The University has agreed to give us access to the campus to show interested parties around which is a great help. In addition the University has asked the main parties interested in buying the campus to talk to us and I expect we will be sharing ideas with them through November.

Alongside these processes, we continue to talk with the WCC about how a repurposed campus could be managed and organised, and to what extent the WCC would assist in this redevelopment process. In particular, we seek the WCC assistance in finding tenants for the commercial spaces.

If you feel you could assist in the development of our thinking please do not hesitate to contact me via email below.

Finally, I am indebted to Councillor Simon Woolf for noticing the display on the old Training College in the University's Adam Gallery (at the Kelburn Campus). The display is titled 'What Remains, The Karori Commission' and it contains a stylised photographic interpretation of the campus buildings, several pieces of pottery by Dame Doreen Blumhardt, and a collection of 42 large head shots of notable NZer's that have worked or studied at the Training College. These include Murray Ball, Brian Brake, Janet Frame, Maurice Gee, C.E. Beeby, Lloyd Geering, Roger Hall, Sam Hunt, Ralph Hotere, Fiona Kidman, Margaret Mahy, Guy Powles, Jon Trimmer, Marilyn Waring, and Toss Woollaston.

Richard Bentley for the Karori Campus Group

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Save the Karori Campus Group Update 10
12 October 2017

I attach below today's press release by Western Ward Councillor Diane Calvert. The release deals with the WCC and the Ministry of Education's mounting concerns over the University's apparent belief that they have completed their obligations under the Public Works Act.

Statement from Diane Calvert, Wellington City Council (Onslow-Western Ward) re Karori Campus

Victoria University, Wellington (VUW) recently advised they have put the whole of the Karori Campus site, (excluding the carparking area purchased by Wellington City Council for the Karori Swimming Pool) on the open market with tenders closing in late November. VUW considers that the University has complied with its obligations under the Public Works Act.

The Ministry of Education had been negotiating with VUW under the Public Works Act in relation to its requirements for educational purposes. Recreational courts space on the campus site is included in these requirements (for both educational and community use).

On Tuesday this week, myself, the Mayor and the Chief Executive from the Council met with Minister Kaye, local MP Grant Robertson and senior Ministry of Education officials to discuss the current state of negotiations in respect of the Karori Campus and the Ministry's requirements under the Public Works Act.

The Ministry has advised that I may publicly release their letter to me and which is attached to this release. The Council supports the Ministry's position.

We look forward to these negotiations reaching a satisfactory outcome for all parties. Local councillors (myself, Simon Woolf and Andy Foster) will also continue to advocate for the continuation and expansion of community activities on any part of the site that is not subject to the Public Works Act.

Diane Calvert
Councillor, Wellington City Council
Onslow-Western ward
12 October 2017
Ph 029 9718944 Diane.calvert@wcc.govt.nz

4 October Letter from Ministry of Education to Diane Calvert

Tena koe Councillor

I am writing in response to your recent correspondence with the Minister of Education Hon Nikki Kaye, regarding the potential sale of the Karori Campus by Victoria University. As this is an operational matter, Minister Kaye has referred it to the Ministry of Education to provide you with an explanation of the process and the current status, from our perspective.

Our understanding has been that the open-market sale process referred to in the communication you received from the VUW, was taking place in parallel to the Ministry's continued negotiation with VUW over the Ministry's requirement under the Public Works Act 1981 (PWA).

On 3 October I received correspondence from Professor Guildford which implies that he considers that the PWA process has been completed. The Ministry does not agree with this position. I have written to him to reiterate our expectations and remind him of the public commitments we have made, including our joint statement of 11 August in which he said:

Professor Guildford says "while we complete these discussions, Victoria University will not be accepting offers on the parcel of campus land on which the Ministry has made an offer."

It is disappointing that we appear now to be negotiating a process that we understood had already been agreed, and I hope that this matter can be quickly resolved.

I have also advised Professor Guildford that we will be sharing valuation advice with him in the next 1-2 weeks. This valuation was commissioned on the main campus to support our discussions. Once finalised, we will present another offer for part of the site. This would allow us to recommence discussions.

Thanks you again for your interest in this matter.

Nga mihi
Iona Holsted
Secretary for Education

Drilling on the Campus

Many will have noticed the current drilling programme on the campus. We understand this is a University funded programme to better document the geotechnical state of the campus. Clearly the information will be valuable, but the timing seems bizzare.

I plan a further update soon discussing the overall situation in more detail and also the implications of the election outcome on the processes if any.

Richard Bentley for the Karori Campus Group

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Please forward this update on to others. Please email me if you would like to get onto the circulation list.

Save the Karori Campus Group Update 9

11 September

Update on Sale of Land and Buildings

The good news is that the WCC and the University appear to have been talking constructively about the future of the campus, although details are sparse. The bad news is that there doesn't appear to have been any no significant progress in the negotiation between the Ministry and the University over the sale of the land, with the Ministry commenting to us that they are still trying to get a better perspective on market values.

Meanwhile the University's 'expressions of interest' process continues for the land and campus building complex but excluding the houses between the complex and Campbell St which are now nearly all sold. The latest information from the WCC is that it is unlikely that they will be submitting their own expression of interest but that they continue to make it clear to the University they would be pleased to meet any potential developer and to discuss possible developments with them.

The situation therefore remains very unclear, but as I argued in the last newsletter the likelihood of the building complex being acquired for demolition and redevelopment seems to be a bit less than 6 months ago. The WCC needs now to initiate - on behalf of the community - a comprehensive process that will clarify how the refurbishment and refurbishment of the building complex could be undertaken, and to start seeking developers interested in the project. Only then will it become clearer what the options are and the possible future roles of the WCC and the University in these, if any. It is essential the community keep the pressure on the WCC to start acting on the matter, and to give the University comfort that they are serious about exploring new uses for the campus.

Repurposing the Campus

Last week, Simon Woolf arranged for a number of us to undertake an extensive tour of the campus. All of us were again impacted by the sheer scale of the complex, the extensive facilities that remain, and the opportunity that repurposing the complex offers.

A casual tour around the outside of the campus gives a feel for Level 2 of the Gray and Tennant buildings that open out onto the Quad. Many of you will have visited the very large Allen Ward VC Hall. This is at what is called Level 3 – the Donald St level. The Gray St Level 3 has been identified by the Karori Medical Centre as a possible new home, and it connects seamlessly into the Waghorn building Level 3 which offers vast areas for connecting allied health and DHB medical services.

The general feeling is that both Levels 2 and 3 of the Tennant Block (fronting the car park on Donald St) could be the home for a variety of day to day and active community-based activities. These could include co – working community focused organisations like Johnsonville – based SubUrban, community service - focused organisations, church - based organisations with new community outreach activity centres, and of course a multitude of possible club activities. These activities would be anchored around the Allen Ward VC Hall and a new café at Quad level using the existing kitchens and café infrastructure in the Gray Block.

However from the outside it is virtually impossible to get a feel for the remainder of the campus complex.

The main interconnecting pathways across the complex are on Level 2, the Quad level. The Gray Building Café joins up with the Waghorn building and you can continue on the same level to cross over to the Theatre Block and the Pankhurst Block. The bridge joins the Theatre Block with direct access to three lecture theatres which I guess could each house 100-150 people. The large lecture theatre and a further lecture theatre are accessed from the lower levels. The excellent connectivity between these theatres, the café and the Allen Ward VC Hall suggests that they could be used as an integrated conference facility, something Wellington is famously short of.

The Theatre block houses the purpose built Dance Room that Fiona Haines uses. This connects upwards into the Panckhurst Building level 1 and opens up into the vast library space with its extensive mezzanine floor. The potential for this area hasn't been given much thought so far but it is so large (250 square metres plus a mezzanine of 150 square metres) it could become a museum or art gallery of city significance. Above this are two floors with dimensions of the order of 32 meters long and 20 wide.

Beyond the Panckhurst block is the prominent 7 storey Malcolm block. This building comprises a central core with lift, and the typical floor contains 11 small rooms around the perimeter of 11 square metres each. Various potential uses have been suggested including office accommodation or student or post graduate accommodation.

We return to the vast Waghorn block. This is approximately 60 meters long and 20 meters wide, and comprises three floors with stairway access. The current layout is a central wood-lined corridor with three very large rooms on either side. The three floors of the Waghorn and the two main Panckhurst block floors are the main spaces for future commercial use. On the ground floor of the Waghorn are the old pottery workshops with the large kiln still in place (jutting out into the Lopdell Gardens), and adjacent there is a large dark room. A further facility in the Waghorn is the film studio at the South end of the block at level 3.

To the north, the Waghorn building opens into the Oldershaw Block housing music rooms over two levels. The distinctive octagonal building houses at Level 2 a 90 square metres concert room and below, on Level 1, there are 6 fully sound proofed practice rooms. There has got to be a user for this space!

Where to Now

I have described the facilities in some detail to see if any readers have ideas for the use of these facilities they would like to share with us. Our intention now is to start talking to prospective community-based users and building a profile of user aspirations and needs. These will become the basis of a briefing to the WCC to support their repurposing evaluations. Contact me if you have some suggestions.

Richard Bentley for the Karori Campus Group
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**Save the Karori Campus Group Update 8
5 September**

Sale of Land to Ministry of Education

The Ministry and the University are some distant apart on value on the land sought by the Ministry for its technology block development. It may be that the University’s expressions of interest process underway is designed to try and achieve more transparency on market value, though it is hard to imagine a developer showing his hand given all the uncertainty. The increasing likelihood that the campus buildings will be repurposed may also be incentivising the University to seek a premium well above market for the land and delaying resolution until the Ministers involved (including at least Tertiary Education, and Education) are drawn in and intervene.

Call for Expressions of Interest

As noted in previous updates, the University have invited parties interested in bidding for the campus land and buildings to register with their agent PriceWaterhouseCoopers by 22 September. In the second phase, following immediately they say, the University will negotiate with a short list of bidders and seek to close a sale through October. We have now obtained a copy of the registration documents and they contain in my view no new information of significance to the community.

Of concern is that both Fiona Haines Dance Academy and the Karori Taekwondo Club, the two main users of the campus facilities, have been given notice of the possible termination of their lease arrangements at the end of October and advised that beyond this nothing is guaranteed. While this may be seen as a the University simply being polite given their sale process, it can also be interpreted, as these organisations do, as a disruptive and aggressive action, given the likelihood that the fate of the campus may not be resolved for years.

Netball Club Rally

The Netball Club called a rally at the Campus courts on Saturday morning 2 September. About 200 braved the cold and heard short speeches from Rachael Hanna, myself, election candidates Grant Robertson, Nicola Willis, and Andy Foster, and Councillor Diane Calvert. There was a common view about the importance of saving the facilities and the buildings. Rachael also stressed the importance of getting more and better quality womens sports facilities. Speakers stressed that the obvious strength of the views of the Karori community on saving the campus is having a material effect on the university's approach, on the desire by government for the land sale to the Min of Education to be concluded if necessary through some special arrangements, and on the commitment and resources the City are putting into trying to find a commercial solution to the long term future of the buildings. The process was becoming more complex as the likelihood of some form of repurposing of the campus increased, and it therefore might take some time to work through. It was essential the community 'kept the faith, maintained its vigilance, and kept the pressure on'.

WCC Involvement

During the last week the WCC have been actively reviewing the situation, and have also been talking further with the University on next steps. Alongside the University's expressions of interest sale process and the Ministry of Education's interests, WCC are commissioning a feasibility review of other opportunities (for economic and community use) for the repurposing of the campus. This is a significant but necessary step forward if a campus repurposing concept is to get some serious traction, and something we have been seeking for some time.

Richard Bentley for the Karori Campus Group

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Save the Karori Campus Group Update 7

22 August 2017

Call for Expressions of Interest

As noted in update 6, the University have embarked on a process to sell the campus buildings. In the first stage the VU are inviting parties interested in bidding for the campus buildings to register with their agent PriceWaterhouseCoopers by 22 September, the Friday before the election. Interested

parties can now register with PWC, obtain access to due diligence material, and get access to the site. In the second phase, following immediately, the University will negotiate with a short list of bidders and seek to close a sale through October.

The buildings included in this are all the main campus buildings including the Quad and the Allan Ward VC Hall, the buildings that used to house the Marae, and a couple of remaining houses near Campbell St.

This process could be delayed by the collapse of the Min Ed discussions, or by a failure to attract serious bidders. At the risk of being a tad political the process might possibly be influenced by the intervention of a new government, but do not take this for granted, as the University operates, by legislation, with substantial autonomy.

The process could also be delayed if the three way discussions between the Min Ed, the WCC, and the University due in early September find a way to a collaborative compromise solution that includes the repurposing of the campus.

As noted, we regard the WCC as our representative in these discussions, and we are becoming increasingly reliant on them to find a solution that protects community aspirations. But as I have repeatedly noted, readers should be aware that the WCC activities so far have focused on meeting the parties and gathering information. They have been comforted, we gather, that the netball courts will stay if the Min Ed and the University reach agreement on the current proposal, but all indications are that the parties are still significantly apart on value.

NOTE: To further assist the WCC we have agreed to compile a list of Karori businesses and organisations which might be tenants of a repurposed campus, and we have agreed to check amongst our contacts in Karori as to whether there are investors or property developers who might be interested in taking an interest in the proposed development.

We have very little time to do this however.

Please contact either Andy Foster (021 2278537 Andy.foster@wcc.govt.nz) or myself if think you can assist in this process.

Netball Rally on Saturday 2 September

Arguably the biggest user of the campus is the Netball Club with over 400 members. I understand a short rally will be held at the courts on Saturday morning 2 Sept, at 9.30 to publicise their concerns over saving the court facility. It is possible this might become a significant event, so keep a look out for further publicity.

Campus Redevelopment

I have been asked to be more specific about how the campus redevelopment might look. There are numerous possibilities, so the following is speculative. Refer to the diagram attached to this email. I have floor plans of each building if anyone would like further information.

- The current thinking is that the **Medical Hub** would be at the Donald Street level comprising the top floor Level 4 of the Gray Block and Level 4 of the Waghorn Building, on the same level. Access is either through the main entrance or the side entrance to Level 1 Gray Block (though currently there are no lifts).
- **Premises for Commercial Activities** would extend across the Panckhurst, Malcolm, and Waghorn blocks.

- The **Community and Innovation Centre** would include at the Donald Street level Tennant Block 2 and the Allen Ward VC Hall. Down the stairs are the large rooms of Level 1 Tennant Building, the Quad, the commercial kitchen and cafeteria spaces on Level 3 Gray building, the walkway through Level 3 Waghorn building to Level 2 Theatre block and the Panckhurst building. This north end is the obvious home for community environments, co working and community – focused activity spaces such as Sub Urban runs, innovation centres and a café running onto the quad.
- The **Conference and Seminar Centre** would include the lecture theatre block, the Allen Ward VC Hall, and I see the Waghorn level 3 with its high stud as the natural home for seminar rooms and activities.

I stress this is all very speculative, and a commercial developer might have entirely different ideas.

Richard Bentley
 For the Karori Campus Group
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Please forward this update on to others. Please email me if you would like to get onto the circulation list.

Save the Karori Campus Group Update 6 **18 August 2017**

There has been considerable activity since the last update on 12 August. At the risk of being a bit pedantic I attach separately my previous five updates going back to early July, as I keep adding names to the email list.

Public Meeting on Monday 14 August

Our three Western Ward Councillors, Diane, Andy and Simon, called this meeting after the University posted its decision to put the campus buildings on the market. The meeting objective was to update Karori residents on the situation and to give the local political candidates an opportunity to give their perspectives on the issue. The meeting was attended by about 200 people.

The meeting provided something of a call to action for the various parties involved (that is the Min Ed, the University and the WCC), and prior to the meeting there was quite a lot of interaction and discussion between them that seemed to reflect a desire by all parties to reduce the pressure and to begin discussing pathways to win - win solutions.

The meeting started rather unexpectedly with senior Min Ed staff arriving and asking for the floor to make a positive statement about the progress of discussions with the University regarding the sale of the land for the new Technology block.

Netball, Fiona Haines dance, and Taekwondo leaders spoke of their use of the campus facilities and the difficulty in finding alternative sites if it came to that. I commented that the Karori Campus Group saw that the best way to influence the outcome of the current processes was to persuade the WCC to get more involved in discussions and also to assist by looking in more depth at the possible options for a repurposed campus facility.

Repurposing the Campus

I then spoke to how a repurposed campus might look:

- tenants who lease space at market rates for commercial activities
- a major western suburbs health hub
- the Donald St north end, Allen Ward VC Hall and courtyard as a home for a significant number of clubs, churches, and for innovative community developments like Sub Urban from Johnsonville, plus a cafe using the extensive commercial kitchens available
- a conference and seminar centre using the Ward VC Hall and the existing lecture theatre plus associated facilities

We believe that the new complex could become a significant centre of commercial activity and a new centre for community activities and engagement. We believe it could revitalise everyday life in Karori, start the process of bringing more commercial activities into Karori, provide the City with an opportunity for businesses to create satellite offices in an effort to increase resiliency from earthquake, and it could be a pilot for similar developments in other parts of Wellington. And it could also provide a way of ensuring the Allen Ward VC Hall is saved and repurposed for unfettered community use.

Jeff Lowe from the Karori Medical Centre then spoke about the opportunity the extensive campus offered for the creation of a medical hub involving primary care organisations like the KMC, associated health organisations (eg physiotherapists) and also the DHB. Jeff presented a perspective of the evolving health care business that brought the centre of activity away from large complex hospital environments into the suburbs, and in addition taking advantage of new ICT technologies and the integration of medical support services for patients. The KMC see the campus as offering an almost unique opportunity for the establishment of a modern health hub in the western suburbs in the foreseeable future.

The new Min Ed Technology Block

The Min Ed proposals appears to involve buying the open land including the roadway, the courts and cricket nets and the grassed areas between Donald Street and Campbell Street. We estimate the proposed block to be about 12 rooms equivalent in a two storey configuration, and that this would leave room for the significant recreational spaces that this kind of development requires. Details have not been revealed pending the completion of negotiations with the University.

Mt Cook and Karori West Normal deliver technology in traditional classrooms that are not purpose built for technology delivery. This includes programmes in hard and soft materials technology, food technology, biotechnology, visual art, design and graphics, and information and communication technology.

But as the Ministry says:

‘We’d like to create a technology hub that provides an innovative learning environment for our young people.’

‘The hub would have a mix of dedicated areas to deliver specific areas of technology, for example a digital technology area, a potential robotics lab or a food technology space, and flexible spaces, which could, for instance be suited to group work and teaching.’

‘We, here in Wellington, are the innovators! This hasn’t been done anywhere in the country yet, so it’s hard to give you an idea of what the hub will look like exactly.’

For the record, the curriculum calls up technology in this way:

Technology is intervention by design: the use of practical and intellectual resources to develop products and systems (technological outcomes) that expand human possibilities by addressing needs and realising opportunities. Adaptation and innovation are at the heart of technological practice. Quality outcomes result from thinking and practices that are informed, critical, and creative.

Technology makes enterprising use of its own particular knowledge and skills, together with those of other disciplines. Graphics and other forms of visual representation offer important tools for exploration and communication. Learning about and with digital technologies will contribute to developing an informed digital society.

The new facility would concentrate capability and provide a step change in technology education in primary schools from Newlands and Johnsonville through the western suburbs, Northland and Kelburn, and including the CBD schools. For further information, see the Min Ed's learning environments site at <http://ile.education.govt.nz/>.

Recent Discussions

Since the public meeting, Councillors and WCC officials have been in detailed discussions with the University Council, University management and the Min Ed. These discussions are said to have been very positive and appear to reflect a significant change in the University's tone. The current proposal is for a summit meeting in a couple of weeks involving senior decision makers from the University, the Min Ed and the WCC.

Our three WCC Councillors are well acquainted with the Karori community's views on this process. However the reality is that the WCC has conversations underway with the University across a multitude of issues, including for example the refurbishing of the Town Hall and the development of the adjoining music hub. My read so far is that the remaining city councillors (outside of the Western Suburbs Ward) remain distinctly underwhelmed by the prospect of supporting any significant WCC investments to save the campus. And just where the Mayor sits on the campus remains unclear. That is why it is important that the proposals to repurpose the campus be seen as obviously good for the city as well as Karori and the Western suburbs.

I am advised that the University, in addition to actively engaging with the Min Ed and the WCC, are seeking general expressions of interest in the campus buildings. Their plan is to work through September on this, and that by late September, coincident with the election, the University believes it will have flushed out prospective buyers of the buildings and that a sale process could then proceed. They have retained PWC to assist them. This will mean that campus visits can restart, providing they are relevant to the marketing process.

To wrap up, the parties are talking, but the community remains a peripheral party to them. We remain reliant that our position and views will be presented and argued by our three councillors. However, the WCC officials working under David Chick, appear to be committed to trying to shape a considered view on the design, usage, refurbishment costs and value of the 10,000 square metre campus by late September. Subject to the outcome of this, the next step would be to find a developer who could consider making an offer to the University when their sale process commences. It would be hoped at that point the WCC would be ready to consider how they could assist the developer make it happen. Nobody should be under any illusions about how much work is required to get to this point, and that even then nothing is guaranteed.

I would be remiss though in reminding readers that:

- Heritage NZ is well into the process of registering the campus, and if this is concluded, and if this is adopted by the WCC in the district plans (as would be normal), their demolition becomes much more difficult as it would be subject to planning processes.
- The Public Works Act processes are still in play and appear a long way yet from closure.
- The site is still zoned for educational purposes.

Any developer wandering into this minefield would be well advised to talk to the community!

On the other hand, the last thing we want, surely, is to see the campus become a stranded asset, sitting there empty and slowly decaying, like the flats on the Terrace.

Richard Bentley
For the Karori Campus Group

Please forward this update on to others. Please email me if you would like to get onto the circulation list - at richardj.bentley@xtra.co.nz

Karori Campus Update 5 on 12 August

Good morning

I attach for your information this morning's press release from the Min Ed and VU.

Hope to see you all at Monday night's public meeting.

Richard

Media Statement

The Ministry of Education and Victoria University of Wellington are continuing with positive and constructive discussions over the future of a parcel of land on the University's former Karori campus site.

The Ministry has indicated previously that it is interested in potentially developing a Technology Hub on the campus land.

Victoria University Vice-Chancellor Grant Guilford and Ministry of Education Head of Infrastructure Service Kim Shannon say: "discussions are ongoing to see if an agreement can be made in a timely manner. We're mindful of the strong interest from various other parties and the community regarding the Karori campus land."

Kim Shannon says "We are working hard and trying to secure a parcel of the land for schools and for community amenities. The Ministry is keen to help facilitate progress with the community and the Wellington City Council. It is important that we continue negotiations to try and secure a path that balances all parties' interests."

Professor Guilford says “while we complete these discussions, Victoria University will not be accepting offers on the parcel of campus land on which the Ministry has made an offer.”

Kim Shannon and Professor Guilford say it is in the best interests of all parties to take the time to get this right.

For more information:

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From: Richard Bentley [<mailto:richardj.bentley@xtra.co.nz>]

Sent: Wednesday, 9 August 2017 12:58 p.m.

To: Richard Bentley

Subject: Karori Campus Update 4 Notice of Public Meeting Mon 14 August

Hi all

Please find below a media release from Wellington City Council’s local ward councillors regarding Karori Campus.

Help Influence the Future of the Karori College of Education Campus

This week Victoria University announced it was putting the Karori College of Education Campus on the open market. Wellington City Council has previously agreed that it has an interest in part of the land for additional car parking for the pool and recreation courts (netball and tennis). This is currently under negotiation between the Council, Ministry of Education and Victoria University. The Council has also been working with the community group “Save the Karori Campus” in compiling a viable business case for the establishment of a mix of commercial and community facilities for the remaining facilities and land.

Given current negotiations, Onslow-Western Councillors (Andy Foster, Diane Calvert and Simon Woolf) were surprised by the sudden announcement yesterday from Victoria University. Councillor Andy Foster says “This will have a significant impact on the development of the community led proposal and an integrated ‘masterplan’ for the whole site”.

The Councillors have therefore decided to hold a public meeting on **Monday 14th August from 7.30 until 9 pm** at Karori Normal School hall to discuss how the community can have a greater say and influence on the outcome of the Karori Campus. The focus will be on ensuring the government is aware and committed to ensuring community concerns for the future of Karori Campus are addressed.

The Campus is currently used by many western suburbs residents for sports like netball, tennis, cricket practice and football training. Young dance students are taught every week in the Campus dance studio. The courts in particular are enormously important to Karori Normal School. Within the buildings there are a range of specialized studios for music, pottery, film and shared office space.

“It’s not just what happens already on the campus, it is the enormous potential the site and the buildings have for both the local community and city as a whole. The buildings are in good condition and seismically strong, and would be easily converted into a range of commercial and community uses, in a way that should be commercially viable” says Councillor Andy Foster.”

Save Karori Campus spokesperson Richard Bentley says “We have been talking to a number of prospective tenants and are aware that Councillors have been talking with others. We see real opportunity for a medical services and primary health care hub.”

Councillor Simon Woolf says “At the heart of the campus is a superb, sunny, sheltered quad with adjacent commercial kitchens and one of the largest halls in the western suburbs. There has been interest from café operators and performing arts groups. There is potential for this to become once again a special destination in the western suburbs, not just for the facilities but also the additional resilience it offers to the city.”

In addition to community groups, the local Councillors are inviting representatives of all the major political parties standing in Wellington Central to seek their personal and party commitments to helping the community achieve their vision.”

“Wellington City Council cannot do this alone nor do we think the Ministry of Education should be the only government agency involved in helping to develop a masterplan for the site’s future. We also want to send a clear message to central government that this is a long standing publicly owned asset that we are seeking their support to retain for mixed commercial, education and community tenure” says Councillor Diane Calvert.

For enquiries:

Councillors

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Karori Campus

Update 3 for the Karori Community

7 August 2017

Today, Victoria University released a statement advising that it had initiated a process to market the land and buildings on the main Karori campus site. The statement is found at their website - www.victoria.ac.nz/about/explore-victoria/campuses/karori.

I have consulted with the Ministry of Education on this release. They advise that the negotiation for the sale of land back to the Ministry is stalled due to a failure to agree a price.

Thus the Victoria University action, apparently taken without consultation with the Ministry, needs to be seen as a process to better estimate the market value of the property, and presumably to assist find a resolution to the impasse. The action does not mean that the Ministry have pulled back from their STEM project.

Richard Bentley
For the Karori Campus Group

Karori Campus

Update 2 for the Karori Community

28 July 2017

This is my second update on the state of discussions on the future of the Karori Campus. I leave the first update appended below, as most of it is still current. Please feel free to circulate this note widely.

Firstly, the purchase (back) by the Ministry of Education (Min Ed) of the premises for early childhood education on Campbell Road has been concluded.

In regard to the wider project, the situation remains that the Min Ed continues to negotiate with Victoria University under the provisions of the Public Works Act to acquire land for a two storey 12 block technology and STEM centre, with associated recreational facilities. The parties seem well apart on value, but there is the provision in the Act for an arbitration on value (to market) though apparently this process has not been seriously considered so far. My simple take on this is that an arbitration would favour the Min Ed as it would value the land without complexity and exclude the opportunity premium that the University seem to be angling for. Any advice from experts out there would be appreciated.

Both the Min Ed officials and National Party candidate for Wellington Central Nicola Willis, who is close to the Minister of Education Nikki Kaye, say that as far as they can tell the government is right behind the project and they remain determined to find a solution. I gather that the three Ministers involved (including the Minister for the Tertiary Sector and the Associate Minister of Education) have also been fully briefed by Min Ed and that there have been Ministerial level meetings with Victoria University.

The proposed STEM class block (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) would replace facilities currently spread across the city and western suburbs. Existing facilities are often in prefabs, low tech, and becoming increasingly outdated. They are located at Newlands (Cardinal McKeefry and Kelburn schools bus there), Mt Cook, Karori West, South Wgtn Intermediate, Evans Bay Intermediate, Rongotai College, and at St Catherine's. The new central facility would replace most of these facilities and provide a first major upgrade in the Wellington region for decades.

The desire to step up primary school STEM education reflects the now widely understood need to expose children (and their parents) to sophisticated science and technology education at as young an age as feasible, as this is where many start forming views around the attractiveness or otherwise of science and technology careers. Because few primary school teachers have a science or ICT background or understand the possible breadth of potential STEM career choices, this process is normally pretty haphazard at best. The technology programme offers a way to improve this process and to influence children when it most matters. A new properly designed scale facility with good equipment, as is proposed, would radically improve STEM education in primary schools across the western suburbs and the city.

I find it ironic, that the Victoria University, blinded by the opportunity to cash up its gifted asset, doesn't seem able to see the bigger picture – that this is an opportunity for a significant leap in Wellington STEM education which would have long-term benefits for the University itself. In an enlightened environment, the University would gift the land back to the Ministry, and the government would find some other way to address the University's financial situation.

In regard to the campus buildings, we remain convinced that the WCC is best placed to evaluate the proposal that the campus be preserved and repurposed for commercial tenancy. The group established by City Planner David Chick has commenced work and we have met with them and briefed them on the interest within Karori on the future use of the campus (see Update One below). I am currently trying to get them to visit some of the potential local tenants.

I mentioned in Update One that the WCC had started to talk to prospective large tenants for the campus. These include WCC staff, as they are currently spread over at least 5 buildings and more once the Town Hall rebuild commences, and a number of other large organisations. As we have previously mentioned, there is an increasing interest amongst government ministries and other large Wellington organisations to build more resilience into their businesses by having multiple sites, and by having access in emergency to others.

We hope that the WCC working group will quickly scope out a preliminary commercial proposal for promotion to a commercial property company and developer. Or to put it another way, the business case for a repurposing of the campus would throw up a first estimate of the value of the campus buildings. This would assist the WCC and us, and may even assist the Victoria University, in getting a sense of reality around values and future options. However, at this time I do not see the WCC becoming interested in buying the campus.

However, as I noted in Update One, there is a lot of water to flow under the bridge, and it may still be necessary, as a minimum, to mount a specific and focused campaign on the WCC to save the Allan Ward VC Hall and its associated facilities for community purposes.

In my next update I will report on where Heritage NZ has got to in their registering of the buildings and what it might mean.

Finally, thanks to the WCC for their efforts to investigate repurposing options, thanks to our Councillors Diane, Andy and Simon, in assisting us in our dealings with the WCC, and thanks to Nicola Willis and our MP Grant Robertson for their support.

Richard Bentley
For the Karori Campus Group

Karori Campus

Update for the Karori Community

9 July 2017

The University have recently released a new update, see

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/explore-victoria/campuses/karori/latest-update>

which adds little new information, except perhaps the deal with the police to use the campus buildings. We presume they have agreed to a short termination notice on the arrangement. WCC advised they have recently promoted the campus as a possible venue for the NZ Ballet (who have been ejected from their earthquake prone premises), but the University was apparently not interested. The WCC are now investigating the refurbishing of what I know as the Show Grounds to house them, for several millions.

Our assessment of the current situation at the campus goes like this:

The MoEd have been seeking to buy land to build a large block say 12 classrooms for a new Western Suburbs technology and STEM centre. This project would relieve intense pressure on the Karori West School's facilities and would be wholly welcomed by the community. However the MoEd is finding it difficult to negotiate a reasonable price with the University for the land it needs. The community thinks the government should step in and sort out this stand-off. A poor outcome, but one that seems to be emerging, is for the MoEd to downgrade their plans and buy a smaller block for a smaller development – for example the car parks adjacent to the school and Donald St.

If the deal falls through, as we suspect the University would prefer, then they can sell the whole site to a property developer, with unclear outcomes to put it mildly. If the MoEd deal is consummated in its current form, then there would appear to be a much better chance that the best buyer of the campus buildings would be a developer who wished to refurbish the complex and turn it into a commercial and innovation park. As part of this process the community would seek to finally get unconstrained access to the Alan Ward VC Hall.

Wellington City Council could still play a critical role in facilitating a good outcome for the community. For example, the University is interested in putting their new music school into the refurbished Town Hall, and perhaps this could be linked to the saving at least of some of the campus, especially the Alan Ward VC Hall.

In addition the Campus offers a refuge, and resilience building option for businesses not wishing to have all their staff in the CBD in case of further disruption from earthquakes. It seems bizarre that as businesses contemplate exiting Wellington altogether, the WCC isn't pushing harder to realise the 10,000 sq meters that the campus offers for commercial tenancy. The campus could also be a refuge for WCC staff if some of the WCC complex is to be demolished, as is being considered.

Our recent focus has been to try and assist the WCC understand the opportunity for the city the saving and refurbishment of the campus offers, and to be more proactive in the saving of the campus. We have provided the WCC with information of possible Karori businesses and organisations who would be very pleased to occupy a revitalised campus and paying commercial rents. A small group under David Chick, City Planner, has started to dig into the issues, but we

remain an outside observer so far. To complicate things more, the University have stopped given us or community groups access to the campus, making it harder for us to assess alternative future uses in any detail. We have also indicated to the WCC that we would be prepared to form a campus restoration trust, if that would assist the process. To date, this seems premature.

In a separate process that we are not involved in, we understand that the architectural community has initiated applications with Heritage NZ for the site to be registered. However this is not likely to stop its demolition, if it came to that.

My assessment and Rob's is that community has little leverage, and is relatively powerless as these processes run. We feel significantly let down by the government in letting the University buy the campus for a few dollars without protecting the Alan Ward VC Hall, or by considering more alternative community – focused outcomes for this extraordinary site, knowing full well that the University would seek to cash the asset up. We are also frustrated by the WCC, who could have secured an interest in the campus buildings future without spending a cent through the public works act process but chose not to.

We assess that the bottom line for many of us is the saving of the Alan Ward VC Hall for community use, and I intend to give this more prominence in our discussions with the press.

Finally, I can acknowledge the intense efforts by our Councillors Diane, Andy and Simon, to assist us in our dealings with the WCC, and to our MP Grant Robertson.

Richard Bentley
For the Karori Campus Group