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International working party for  
**documentation and conservation**

**New International Selection**  
Full Documentation Fiche 2003

of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

**composed by national/regional working party of: NEW ZEALAND**

0. Picture of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden



depicted item: Warren & Mahoney, Christchurch Town Hall, Christchurch, 1965-1972.

source: V-Base, Venue Management, Christchurch

date: unknown

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## 1. Identity of building/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden

### 1.1 Data for identification

current name: Christchurch Town Hall  
former/original/variant name: n/a  
number(s) and name(s) of street(s): 100 Kilmore Street  
town: Christchurch  
province/state: Canterbury  
post code: 8013                      block: lot: Gaz 86/3002 Pt Lot 1 DP9143 Pt Lot 1  
country: New Zealand  
national topographical grid reference: BX 24  
current typology: ADM REC  
former/original/variant typology: n/a  
comments on typology: A civic building (ADM) for a recreational (REC) purpose (concert auditorium, theatre and associated facilities)

### 1.2 Status of protection

protected by: Christchurch City Council [City Plan listing]  
grade: 1  
date: 1993  
valid for: whole building  
remarks:

### 1.3 Visually or functionally related building(s)/site(s)

name(s) of surrounding area/building(s): Crowne Plaza Hotel (formerly the Parkroyal Hotel) (1988); Christchurch Convention Centre (c.1997)

visual relations:

Both these buildings are adjacent to the Town Hall and are connected to it physically via first-floor covered walkways; the Convention Centre is north directly across Kilmore Street, the Crowne Plaza Hotel is to the west of the Town Hall. Warren & Mahoney Architects designed all three buildings and all make use of beton brut and/or exposed aggregate panels. The Crowne Plaza Hotel uses the same vocabulary of paired fairfaced concrete blade columns.

functional relations:

The Convention Centre and the facilities of the Town Hall are managed, and often used, as one venue.

other relations:

Both the Convention Centre and the Town Hall are assets of the Christchurch City Council administered by a council-owned company, Vbase.

## 2. History of building(s) etc.

### 2.1 Chronology

Note if the dates are exactly known (e) or approximately estimated = circa (c) or (±)

Competition (only open to NZIA members) date: Stage one opened c. July 1965, closed 31 January 1966<sup>1</sup>

Stage two finalists declared: 15 February 1966, Stage two closed: 31 May 1966<sup>2</sup>; Winners publicly announced: 21 June 1966<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Christchurch New Town Hall and Civic Centre Competition', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, vol.33 no.10, October 1966, pp. 293. WJA Brittenden, *A Dream Come True: The Christchurch Town Hall*, Christchurch: Christchurch Town Hall Committee, 1972, p. 42.

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design period(s): c. December 1965 – May 1966 (competition design)<sup>4</sup> 1966-1968 (final design).  
Working drawings complete July 1968.  
start of site work: site clearing started 15 September 1968<sup>5</sup>  
inauguration: 30 September 1972<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 Summary of development

competition brief: The requirements for both first and second stages of the competition involved the preparation of designs for an integrated Civic Centre comprising two parts: Part I, a Town Hall and Theatre, which would be realised in the immediate future as Stage I of the project; and Part II a Council Administration Building, Mayoral Suite and Council Chambers (planned for Stage II of the Project) and a Library Building (planned for Stage III).

The first stage of the competition was an *esquisse*, requiring a design in some detail for Part I of the Civic Centre, and a limited design for Part II emphasising the relationship between Parts I & II. An extensive schedule of accommodation was provided for Part I, describing the requirements for the Town Hall auditorium, a separate concert chamber/theatre, foyers, a banquet and meeting rooms, a restaurant and associated facilities. General elements of the scheme and total floor areas for the separate functions were provided for Part II. It was "expected that ideal conditions... be provided for as far as possible, acoustically, visually and in connection with stages and orchestral facilities."<sup>7</sup>

The second stage of the competition required the five finalists to submit further developed schemes in response to the judges' detailed criticism of each of the finalists' designs.

design brief: The development of the winning competition design was restricted to Part I of the Civic Centre: the Town Hall.

building/construction: site clearing completed 21 October 1968; contract let 13 November 1968; construction commenced 18 November 1968; Foundation stone laid 12 February 1969.<sup>8</sup> Construction completed c. September 1968.<sup>9</sup>

completed situation: The Town Hall was completed as designed. The next two projected stages of the Civic Centre project were never further developed. The original scheme included the closing off of Victoria Street at the corner of Kilmore for the further development of the Civic Centre and the sealing-off of Victoria Square to the Northwest. This was not realised until the development of the Parkroyal Hotel in 1988 when Oxford Terrace also was closed between Armagh and Colombo Streets, realising the fully pedestrian zone of Victoria Square.

original situation or character of site: The area between Colombo, Kilmore and Durham Streets and Cambridge Terrace along the north side of the Avon River was originally occupied by buildings of mixed functions in differing architectural styles from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including a hospital called 'The Limes', a terrace of brick houses called either 'The Terraces' or 'The Bricks' and various offices, many of which eventually became part of The Limes Hospital.

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<sup>2</sup> Brittenden, 1972, p. 42. 'Christchurch New Town Hall and Civic Centre Competition', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, vol.33 no.10, October 1966, p. 293.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Christchurch Town Hall NZIA Gold Medal 1973', *Home & Building*, vol.35, no.9, May 1973, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Brittenden, 1972, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> 'Christchurch Town Hall', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, vol.39 no.10, October 1972, p. 296. Brittenden, 1972, p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> 'Christchurch Town Hall', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, vol.39 no.10, October 1972, p. 299; Brittenden, 1972, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> Corporation of the City of Christchurch New Zealand, New Town Hall & Civic Centre architectural competition conditions of competition, Christchurch, 1965, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> 'Christchurch Town Hall', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, vol.39 no.10, October 1972, p. 296. Brittenden, 1972, p. 54, 62.

<sup>9</sup> Citizens of Christchurch were invited to an inaugural inspection of the Town Hall on Sunday 24 September 1974. Invitation, 100 Kilmore St Town Hall file, Heritage Unit, Christchurch City Council.

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### 2.3 Relevant persons/organisations

original owner(s)/patron(s): Corporation of the City of Christchurch and associated councils of adjacent counties: Waimairi County Council, Paparua County Council, Riccarton Borough Council, Heathcote County Council.

architect(s): Warren and Mahoney (F. Miles Warren (1929- ) and Maurice Mahoney (1929- ))

landscape/garden designer(s):

other designer(s): Dr A Harold Marshall (Acoustics, Perth) ; Engineering Design Consultants (Acoustics, London)

consulting engineer(s): Structural: Holmes and Wood (from 1971 Holmes, Wood and Poole); Services: Maindonald & Associates

building contractor(s): Chas. S. Luney Ltd

### 2.4 Other persons or events associated with the building(s)/site

name: Patrick Hanly association: Artist of commissioned painting 'Rainbow Pieces' (1970-72) mounted on the exterior walls of the conference rooms suspended above the foyer.<sup>10</sup>

name: Mr & Mrs CJ Ferrier association: patrons of Ferrier Fountain (installed 1972)<sup>11</sup>

name: Robert Woodward association: architect-designer of the Ferrier Fountain.<sup>12</sup>

name: Coleen O'Connor association: designer of donated embroidered wall panel 'Pegasus Panel' (c.1969-72) in the conference room.<sup>13</sup>

name: Sir James Hay association: President of the Town Hall Promotion Inc, 24 March 1958-c. March 1971, for whom the James Hay Theatre in the Town Hall is named.<sup>14</sup>

event(s): Xth Commonwealth Games, Venue for wrestling and weightlifting, 1974.<sup>15</sup> Numerous art, theatrical and music performances, civic functions and other community events.

### 2.5 Summary of important changes after completion

type of change: extension to the southeast, in the space between the James Hay Theatre, the Main Foyer and the Limes Room (Banquet Hall) and Kitchen

date(s): June 1974- May 76<sup>16</sup>

circumstances/ reasons for change: the addition of a smaller, supplementary social room incorporating a dance floor initially called a 'supper room', later called The Cambridge Room, accessible to The Limes Room via three double doorways and also accessed off the first floor foyer. A small staff room and staff toilets were included in the extension at the mezzanine level.

effects of changes: While the addition broke the strict biaxial plan of the Town Hall the extension was easily absorbed within the existing scheme and executed entirely within the existing architectural vocabulary

persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney Architects; Holmes, Wood & Poole Engineers.

type of change: introduction of an acoustic 'doughnut' above the stage of the auditorium.

date(s): 1977-78

circumstances/ reasons for change: improve the acoustics of the auditorium

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<sup>10</sup> *University of Auckland News*, vol.3 no.3, April 1973, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Brittenden, 1972, p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 1972, p. 58 notes that the fountain was designed by the author of the Alamein Fountain in Sydney, which was designed by Australian architect Robert Woodward, see <http://www.smh.com.au/national/obituaries/armourer-and-architect-designed-the-el-alamein-fountain-20100315-q9i5.html>

<sup>13</sup> Unreferenced newspaper clipping, 100 Kilmore St - Town Hall file, Heritage Unit, Christchurch City Council.

<sup>14</sup> Brittenden, 1972, p. 25, 57,

<sup>15</sup> 'Christchurch Town Hall: Venue for Wrestling and Weightlifting', *Home & Building*, vol 36 no 3, November 1973, pp. 50-51.

<sup>16</sup> Warren & Mahoney architectural plans, held by Warren and Mahoney, copies held by Jenny May, Heritage Management Services, Christchurch. *The Christchurch Town Hall*, promotion booklet, nd, 100 Kilmore St - Town Hall file, Heritage Unit, Christchurch City Council.

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effects of changes: negligible  
persons/organisations involved: unknown

type of change: Alterations to the ticket office  
date(s): c. 1982  
circumstances/ reasons for change: unknown  
effects of changes: the replacement of the original rectilinear ticketing office with the current curved configuration introduced a new formal element into the foyer but kept within the range of existing materials.  
persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney Architects

type of change: extension between the James Hay Theatre & the Cambridge Room  
date(s): September 1984  
circumstances/ reasons for change: additional storage at the first floor level  
effects of changes: negligible, as it was contained within an area with no public access and limited views from Victoria Square on the other side of the Avon River  
persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney Architects; Holmes, Wood, Poole & Johnstone engineers

type of change: New building services addition along the length of the upper roof of the social wing  
date(s): c. 1985  
circumstances/ reasons for change: new and improved building services  
effects of changes: disturbs the expression of the roof form  
persons/organisations involved: unknown

type of change: extension to west end: a new enclosed footbridge at first floor level giving access to the new Parkroyal Hotel  
date(s): c. 1988  
circumstances/ reasons for change: create easy access between the Hotel and the Town Hall for the benefit of performers and conference attendees staying at the Hotel.  
effects of changes: The footbridge was easily accommodated within the existing fabric of the building and constructed in the same materials and with the same treatment, however, as it connects to a commercial hotel, it physically links the Town Hall to a function outside its own civic and community concerns.  
persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney Architects

type of change: alteration and extension infilling the remaining space between the entrance/foyer block, the Cambridge Room Block and the James Hay Theatre  
date(s): 1989-1992  
circumstances/ reasons for change: addition of a new coffee shop at the ground floor, new offices at the mezzanine level and conversion of the staff room in the Cambridge Room block to office and reception space.  
effects of changes: None of these extensions or alterations were executed with the aesthetic clarity and strict logic of the original design so have had a cluttering effect on the building. Most of these changes occurred out of sight of the public, the new coffee shop being the most visible discordant alteration.  
persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney Architects

type of change: alteration to the Victoria Square entrance. Entrance extended to the exterior with splayed walls, glazed roof with coloured glass decoration and brass signage.  
date(s): 1989-1992  
circumstances/ reasons for change: Allowed for a second set of doors to create an airlock to control temperature fluctuations and provided a greater emphasis to the Victoria Square entrance.

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effects of changes: Adds a discordant note to the Victoria Square frontage as aesthetically inconsistent but does increase the visibility and legibility of the south entrance.  
persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney Architects

type of change: major alterations to restaurant bar and restaurant interior  
date(s): c. 1989-1992

circumstances/ reasons for change: part of a refurbishment programme for café/bar/restaurant services  
effects of changes: Significant alterations were made to the Town Hall's original Aquarius Cocktail Lounge and Cascade Restaurant in the early 1990s. The alterations were part of a refurbishment programme for the café and restaurant services and both coffee shop and restaurant featured a similar, and unsympathetic, decorative motif. The internal entrance to the restaurant from the Town Hall foyer was altered, with new steps replacing the original pavers which were the same as those used on the exterior terraces. The original meranti double doors were also replaced and the internal partition wall with an inbuilt fish tank separating the bar/restaurant from the foyer replaced with the current design. The original interior layout of the restaurant was stepped down to match exactly the forms and stepping of the copper and glass boxes that make up the restaurant; this early 90s alteration changed that seamless and logical arrangement. The first level was extended out towards the river. This level was originally used as the Aquarius Cocktail Lounge, the bar to the east was altered at this time and new steps down into the restaurant area introduced. The original shiplap ceiling was replaced by white plaster and the distinctive, architect-designed hanging globe lights removed. The second-to-last box of the restaurant originally had a dropped floor at the outer edges (to the east and west) – this allowed most of the floor to remain level with the first part of the restaurant, while acknowledging the stepped down form of the box; in the alterations it was all made level. As part of the refurbishment the curtains and carpet with the 'town hall' motif were replaced and the original plastered walls were papered. On the east side, a toilet and storage cupboard were added between the restaurant and the kitchen, these pushed into the restaurant space, in addition new staff access to the bar was introduced from this corner of the restaurant. All these alterations to the restaurant undermined the logic and aesthetic of the original space and design.  
persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney

type of change: extension of the gallery from the north side of the foyer through the landing of the stairs to the west to meet the lift and alteration to the lift service  
date(s): c. 1992

circumstances/ reasons for change: allow for lift access to the mezzanine level  
effects of changes: the extension was entirely within the existing architectural language and detailing, however, it created a visual busyness that disrupts the clarity created by the direct expression and dual role of the structural system to the west of the foyer, where the stairs are set inside the twinned columns.  
persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney

type of change: alterations to the Kilmore and Victoria bars  
date(s): c. 1995

circumstances/ reasons for change: unknown  
effects of changes: These two bars are on the mezzanine level above either side of the foyer space. Originally, both bars ran the length in the centre of these spaces to the north (Kilmore) and south (Victoria) of the foyer. The Kilmore Bar was below the pendulum lights and signs that signal the end of the interval, the lighting in the ceiling of the south mezzanine indicates the original placement of the Victoria Bar. Both bars were shifted to take their current positions at either end of those spaces, that is, to the west and to the east on both sides, sometime in the mid-1990s. The original bar timbers and footrests were reused in the new configuration. This alteration has had negative consequences; the most unfortunate being that the business end of the bars, meaning the backs of the fridges, can be seen through the fully glazed walls from the exterior of the building. Although this is not such a major problem for the west end of the Victoria Bar, where the glazed wall overlooks the publicly inaccessible internal courtyard, it is a significant

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detraction from the architecture and pleasures of the view of the other glazed walls. The original clocks are missing from either end of the Kilmore Bar. In the Kilmore Bar there is also a new electric supply introduced at floor level at the bottom of the balustrade overlooking the main foyer that interferes with the reading of the balusters.

persons/organisations involved: unknown

type of change: New interior schemes for the conference room(s), Cambridge Room and James Hay Theatre

date(s): c. 1995-97

circumstances/ reasons for change: unknown

effects of changes: Around 1995, several of the key spaces in the Town Hall saw significant changes to their interior architecture, including the Conference Room, the Cambridge Room and the James Hay Theatre. All of these re-workings included a dramatic change in colour and tonal range – from the original colour scheme of golds and browns to one of spearmint greens and teal blues. The lining timbers in the conference room were blonded and the Pegasus Panel covered over. The new scheme involved the making of a new carpet using the same Town Hall motif used on the original Town Hall carpets, but this time in intense greens and blues. The scheme is off key with the original approach to the Town Hall interiors but is reversible.

persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney

type of change: Extension from north first floor promenade around auditorium in the form of a covered walkway giving access to the Christchurch Convention Centre across Kilmore Street.

date(s): 1997

circumstances/ reasons for change: to allow for easy access between the buildings over a busy road and allow the two to be used as one venue

effects of changes: a significant intrusion into the building and a dramatic change to the Kilmore streetscape, although reversible

persons/organisations involved: Warren & Mahoney Architects

type of change: New seating in the auditorium<sup>17</sup>

date(s): 1997

circumstances/ reasons for change: improve the seating of the auditorium

effects of changes: negligible

persons/organisations involved: unknown

type of change: New Rieger Orgelblau (Austria) pipe organ inserted on the gallery behind the auditorium stage<sup>18</sup>

date(s): 1997

circumstances/ reasons for change: the auditorium was always intended to house an organ but the city could not afford a suitable one until the mid-1990s

effects of changes: no real change to the architecture as space had always been left in the original design for the organ, although this organ took up more space than originally allowed

persons/organisations involved: unknown

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<sup>17</sup> Christchurch Convention Centre Press Supplement, March 1997.

<sup>18</sup> *The Press*, 11 June 1997, p. 1.

### 3. Description of building(s) etc.

#### 3.1 Site/building character

The Christchurch Town Hall is sited in the city centre between the Avon River and Kilmore Street with the main axis of the building running parallel to Kilmore St for most of the block between Colombo and Durham Streets. Organised according to a biaxial plan, the Town Hall's main functions are laid out on the principal axis, with the 1000-seat theatre and 2600-seat auditorium connected by an entrance block. This is bisected by a secondary axis through the main entrance from Kilmore St extending through to the main social wing, which extends out over the Avon with the banquet hall (The Limes Room) on first floor and a restaurant on the ground floor. A smaller block extending perpendicularly from the social wing to the east contains the kitchen. A pair of conference rooms is suspended above the main ground floor foyer space in a single volume, encircled by a series of mezzanine and first floor walkways opening to bar areas and giving access to the conference rooms and The Limes Room; these spaces and a broad promenade around the auditorium on the first and ground floors create places to see and be seen.

Each of the main functions is expressed with its own distinct geometric form: a tall, rectangular fly-tower and fan-shaped wedge of raked seating form the theatre, an octagonal lozenge for the entrance block and conference rooms, the elliptical auditorium with its slanted roofline and encircling promenade and the long horizontal rectangular social wing. The complex is unified by a rich architectural and structural vocabulary of paired blade columns in fair-faced concrete, pre-cast exposed-aggregate panels, extensive glazing with copper-sheathed window mullions and brise-soleil fins complementing the copper roof and flashings. Constructed in reinforced concrete poured in-situ, the thick solid walls allowed for sound-proofing, their u-shaped sections providing the strong rhythm of soaring paired blade columns and exposed aggregate panels. The spaces between the exterior paired piers of the promenade contain secondary exits and correspond in a non-axial way to the paired columns of the auditorium drum, which provide access to the interior of the auditorium. Perimeter promenades, the foyer galleries and the social wing are fully glazed, protected by copper-sheathed brise-soleil fins. The restaurant is expressed as a series of copper and glass cubes that step down to the river, strung between the over-scaled structural T-shaped pairs of columns and beams that support the banquet hall above, contrasting with the full concrete walls of the subsidiary kitchen block. Stepped terraces in pale terracotta-coloured paving bricks connect the building to Victoria Square and allow public access down to the water's edge for a closer view of the *sphere de fleur* forms of the Ferrier Fountain.

The interior makes extensive use of high-quality materials, including meranti timber, white-painted and fair-faced concrete, laminated timber beams, and marble. The twinned balusters and roof trusses in meranti timbers echoed the visual theme of paired units dictated by the concrete structural members. Textiles (leather and cloth) for furniture and wall panels decorated with an abstract pattern of timber slats are a rich red; on the first floor is laid a specially designed carpet with a geometric motif based on the form of the auditorium; Marimekko patterned curtains are used to protect the north-facing glazed wall of the entrance block and signage is cast in brass. On the interior, the soffit and whole units of horizontal concrete elements (for example the rib floor slabs) are generally painted white, while vertical structural members are in fair-faced concrete. Local white marble is used as a revetment at the base of interior vertical structural members and marble slabs line the main ground floor spaces. The architects designed the long timber benches, globe lighting and the geometric, stalactite-like fibrous plaster ceiling panels in the main foyer to create a complete design.

#### 3.2 Current use

of whole building/site: Civic, arts and performance events and conferences

of principal components (if applicable): Auditorium used for large concerts, both classical and popular and performance events (eg stand-up comedy) as well as other large civic and community functions; James Hay Theatre used for chamber concerts, plays and smaller theatrical and musical performances.

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Conference rooms used for lectures, workshops, meetings and gatherings. The Limes and Cambridge Rooms used for dining and social occasions.

comments:

### **3.3 Present (physical) condition**

of whole building/site: very good to excellent. There is a need for maintenance and repairs to the timber, concrete and other finishes.

### **3.4 Note(s) on context, indicating potential developments**

Due to have NZ\$20million refurbishment and renovation in 2010. Refurbishment and renovation will be directed by the policy stated in the conservation plan, which is still in progress.

## **4. Evaluation**

### **Intrinsic value**

#### **4.1 technical evaluation:**

Like many of the key buildings in Canterbury of the 1960s and 70s, the Christchurch Town Hall was conceived and constructed by a network of firms and individuals who were capable of ensuring that local reinforced concrete buildings designed according to Brutalist principles were engineered and constructed in a sophisticated, innovative and precisely-finished manner. The key technical innovation of the Town Hall, however, was the superb acoustic engineering of the auditorium. Using his own theories and recent technologies, including spark echograms and ray tracing computer programmes, Dr Harold Marshall, supported by Engineering Design Consultants (London), produced a design that gave superb acoustic conditions. Working within the architects' design and accommodating their concern for good sightlines, Marshall helped refine the shape and height of the auditorium, paired the sectioned, layered seating with laminated timber reflectors and treated high wall areas with diffusive elements. The resulting acoustic quality meant the Christchurch Town Hall became an international benchmark for auditoria design.<sup>19</sup>

#### **4.2. social evaluation:**

The Christchurch Town Hall was the result of the largest and most significant design competition seen in New Zealand until the competition to design a national museum (Te Papa Tongarewa) in Wellington in the 1990s. It was the first purpose-built Town Hall constructed in New Zealand for 50 years, and received wide community support. It was built using significant financial contributions from the public and the fact that Christchurch successfully realised a civic venue of this nature became a sign that the city had finally come of age. The Town Hall is an iconic feature of Christchurch's urban landscape and has become the civic and cultural gathering point of the city, a secular and artistic echo to the spiritual centre of the Anglican Cathedral half a kilometre south on Colombo Street.

#### **4.3. cultural and aesthetic evaluation:**

The Christchurch Town Hall was the most important, celebrated and prominent building constructed in the city in the post-war period. It is recognised as the premier and primary venue in Christchurch for a wide variety of arts and cultural events, local, national and international, as well as being the site for important educational, political and civic events, including university graduations and citizenship ceremonies. It plays a pivotal role in the civic and artistic life of the city.

The Town Hall is the pinnacle of a local response to Brutalist principles in modern architecture, a development spearheaded by the work of Warren & Mahoney in Christchurch since 1956. The specific technical and functional requirements of the building gave the architects full licence to put into practice the

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<sup>19</sup> John O'Keefe, "The New Understanding of Acoustics", *Aerocoustics*, 1998, <http://www.aerocoustics.com/papers/acou.html>, accessed 27 August 2009

Brutalist commitment to architectural truth – expressed as truth to function, structure and materials. What distinguishes the Town Hall in the history of Brutalist architecture is the fact that truth to function, structure and materials did not mean architecture became mundane; instead, the full aesthetic capacity of this approach was embraced. The main components of the building are legible from the exterior – with the functions of theatre, auditorium and social wings comprehensible due to their distinct shapes, the literal way in which their forms strictly follow the functional requirements they house and the clarity of the biaxial plan. These forms are simple, dramatic and grand in their scale and expression and the whole is saved from being clinical by the picturesque recession and projection of the forms and the irregularity of the rooflines. The structural columns and piers are treated as slender soaring paired units which give the building a "grand visual scale", yet they are multivalent and also serve to house building services, contain circulation and unify the design.<sup>20</sup> The weight and solidity of concrete is contrasted with the lightness and elegance of glass and the slim copper-clad brise-soleil. High-quality materials like marble and meranti timber complement and offset the highly refined treatment of fair-faced and exposed aggregate concrete. Every element of the design has been subject to close and consistent consideration, providing a complete design. This approach was combined with a high appreciation of fine craftsmanship, with the result that the Christchurch Town Hall is elegant and architecturally rich as well as being architecturally truthful.

### **Comparative significance**

#### **4.4 canonical status (local, national, international)**

On its opening the Christchurch Town Hall was keenly received by the national architectural press. Extensive and enthusiastic articles featured in the journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) and in their more populist magazine, *Home & Building* as well as the New Zealand Industrial Design Council's *Designscape* magazine and critical appraisal was published in New Zealand's noted literary journal *Landfall*. It received New Zealand's highest architectural accolade, a Gold Medal in the NZIA 1972-73 awards and its enduring contribution to New Zealand architecture was recognised with a 25-Year award in 2000. The Ministry of Tourism granted a Tourist Design Award to the Town Hall in 1973.

#### **4.5 historic and reference values:**

The Christchurch Town Hall, in its formal strategy and in its layered audience levels was undoubtedly influenced by Hans Scharoun's Berliner Philharmonie, however, it built on this approach significantly by establishing and following the latest acoustic theories. It is widely accepted that the Christchurch Town Hall has influenced the design of auditoria internationally:

"If there is a new confidence in room acoustics design, the turning point would probably be found in Christchurch, New Zealand, circa 1972. Its 2650 seat arena shaped Town Hall was the first room to be designed using the "sound from the sides" theory. Large overhead reflectors along the side walls of the room provide the required amount of early lateral sound for good source broadening. The room has at least 500 seats more than previously thought practical, layed (sic) out in a difficult elliptical plan. Despite this and its remote location, it is renowned for its good acoustics. After Christchurch, most of the rooms designed to promote good lateral reflections have met with success. One of the first in North America was Kitchener's Centre in the Square."<sup>21</sup>

Warren & Mahoney went on to design a civic auditorium for Wellington, New Zealand and with the consultation provided by Harold Marshall, followed the same acoustic and architectural principles they had established in Christchurch. This used a similar form and acoustic theories and also made use of paired columns, but chose a more mannered treatment in materials and finish.

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted from the Jury's report on the winning entry of stage two of the design competition. 'Christchurch New Town Hall and Civic Centre Competition', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, vol.33 no.10, October 1966, pp. 298.

<sup>21</sup> O'Keefe, 1998.

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## 5. Documentation

### 5.1 archives/written records/correspondence etc. (state location/ address):

Heritage Unit, Christchurch City Council (archives), 53 Hereford Street, PO Box 237, Christchurch 8140  
Heritage Management Services, PO Box 54, Christchurch 8011

### 5.2 principal publications (in chronological order):

Corporation of the City of Christchurch, New Zealand, New Town Hall & Civic Centre architectural competition conditions of competition, Christchurch, 1965

'Christchurch New Town Hall and Civic Centre Competition', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, vol.33 no.10, October 1966, pp. 292-299.

Allington, William H, 'Some Comments on the Christchurch Town Hall', *Landfall*, no. 103, September 1972, pp. 195-199.

'Christchurch Town Hall', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, vol.39 no.10, October 1972, pp. 292-303

Brittenden, WJA, *A Dream Come True: The Christchurch Town Hall*, Christchurch: Christchurch Town Hall Committee, 1972.

'The Christchurch Town Hall NZIA Gold Medal 1973', *Home & Building*, vol.35, no.9, May 1973, pp. 46-61, 79.

'Christchurch Town Hall: Venue for Wrestling and Weightlifting', *Home & Building*, vol 36 no 3, November 1973, pp. 50-51

'Tourist Design Awards', *Home & Building*, vol. 37 no. 6, November 1975, pp. 44-49.

Warren & Mahoney, Warren & Mahoney Architects 1958 – 1989, Warren & Mahoney Architects Ltd, Christchurch, 1989, 0-473-00840-8.

O'Keefe John, "The New Understanding of Acoustics", *Aerocoustics*, 1998,  
<http://www.aerocoustics.com/papers/acou.html>, accessed 27 August 2009

'25-Year Award', *Architecture New Zealand*, May-June 2000, p. 76.

Warren & Mahoney Ltd, *New Territory // Warren and Mahoney // 50 Years of New Zealand Architecture*, Balasoglou Books, Auckland, 2005, 0-9582625-2-7

### 5.3 visual material (state location/ address)

original visual records/drawings/photographs/others:

Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury, Christchurch (original drawings and watercolours)  
Warren & Mahoney Architects (photographs)

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recent photographs and survey drawings:  
Warren & Mahoney Architects (recent drawings and photographs)

film/video/other sources:  
The Elegant Shed, TVNZ, National Film Archive, Wellington  
Sam Neill, Four Shorts on Architecture, New Zealand National Film Unit, 1977, National Film Archive, Wellington

#### **5.4 list documents included in supplementary dossier Nil**

#### **6. Fiche report**

name of reporter: Jessica Halliday  
address: PO Box 25398, Victoria St, Christchurch 8144, New Zealand  
telephone: 0211104835 fax: e-mail: halliday.jessica@gmail.com  
date of report: 27 August 2009; redrafted 8 March 2010; final draft 17 March 2010.

#### **examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section**

approval by wp co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name): Dr Ann McEwan  
sign and date: 4 April 2012

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#### **examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R**

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:  
comment(s):

sign and date:

ISC/R approval:

date:

wp/ref. no.:

NAI ref. no.:

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