



19 May 2020

Information for the Featherston community from the Board of the Featherston Community Centre Charitable Trust

What's happening?

Today, the Board of the Featherston Community Centre Charitable Trust have opened a discussion with the Featherston Community Board and the South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC), about the possibility of the Council taking formal ownership of the Community Centre building.

1. We have proposed that the Trust gift the Featherston Community Centre building to the SWDC in return for immediate significant investment in new and upgraded facilities to be funded from the sale of the Fitzherbert Street property, and a long-term peppercorn rent.
2. We are asking that the SWDC take financial responsibility for upgrades to, and ongoing maintenance of, the property while the Featherston Community Centre Trust would continue to market, manage and grow the community services.

If this proposal is successful, we will work closely with the Council to help make the Community Centre relevant for current and future users.

We see this as the beginning of a negotiation process, and our aim throughout will be to protect the Centre. Any agreement will need to be "future-proof" against political and economic changes in the Council.

Why are you doing this?

To put it simply, we cannot afford the building upgrades that are required.

The Board and the Centre Manager already spend a considerable amount of effort raising funds to keep the Centre operational. Day-to-day costs, including part time salaries for the Centre Manager and a cleaner, are covered by small grants, rental income and donations.

In order to provide a fit-for-purpose facility and to expand and protect our relevance for community users, the building requires work. This includes sound-proofing and upgrades to our fire safety measures as well as some significant maintenance.

The pending costs are significant, and the Charitable Trust Board is exploring our options. This proposal is one of them and would allow the Board and the Centre Manager to better focus on developing and improving services to the community.



Are upgrades really needed? Why?

The Community Centre Trust Board believes so.

Some of the upgrades relate to maintenance, the carpark and grounds and fire safety. Others relate to our ability to draw in more sections of our community, improving our relevance and enabling us to maintain and grow our user base.

Existing clients and groups, including Connecting Communities Wairarapa and Pathways as well as counselling, legal and mediation services, use our facilities, but our rooms do not offer sufficient privacy for us to maximise the Centre's potential for the benefit of the community.

We need these upgrades to facilitate a more flexible and useful community service hub and to attract services that are currently operating from Masterton for lack of suitable short-term facilities in Featherston. It is possible that Featherston residents may not have to travel so far to those appointments if we can improve our facility.

The building was originally constructed in the 1950s as a technical centre with little or no privacy needs. An improved building will help us grow our own income to meet operating expenses in an environment where grants are becoming more difficult to secure. We are working to become financially self-sufficient in our own right, and to ensure the facilities are sustainable for years to come.

We have the potential to bring more sections of society through our doors. For example, with the opening of **Pae tū Mōkai Featherston Medical** next door, we could expand the wellness services operating from the centre.

Also, local small businesses could be using our rooms for meetings and quiet workspaces. But right now, the building is not ready for this.

How will this affect me or my community group?

It is intended that the upgrades will provide a climate controlled, modern and more comfortable environment. This may mean some short-term disruptions, but we will be seeking to minimise the effect on our customers.

We will keep you informed of progress!

For any questions or comments, please contact:

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