



PHANZA  
Professional Historians' Association  
of New Zealand/Aotearoa



Chief Executive,  
Nelson City Council  
By email: [enquiry@ncc.govt.nz](mailto:enquiry@ncc.govt.nz)

Tēnā koutou,

Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ), Professional Historians' Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (PHANZA) and New Zealand Historical Association (NZHA) urge the Nelson City Council to honour its commitment to fund the new archive facility in Richmond.

As professional organisations representing those who work daily with archival collections, we can confirm that the current facility poses an unacceptable risk to irreplaceable materials. The independent building assessment confirming the Isel Park facility cannot be made fit for purpose validates our professional concerns about the inadequate storage conditions threatening this \$20 million collection.

The collections held by Nelson Provincial Museum are of international and national significance, extending far beyond local importance. As New Zealand's second European settlement, Nelson's archives document crucial stories of early colonisation and settlement. The UNESCO-inscribed Tyree Studio photographic collection alone represents material of global heritage value. The loss or damage of such irreplaceable items would be catastrophic – not just financially, but culturally.

We understand the financial pressures facing ratepayers, but delaying this decision only increases both costs and risks. The Trust has already demonstrated fiscal responsibility by reducing project costs from \$15 million to \$9.8 million while maintaining professional storage standards. The Richmond location offers a pragmatic solution that serves the greater Nelson region while being significantly more cost-effective than the original proposal.

Council committed \$3.04 million to this project in 2018 based on the need to preserve these collections – that need has only become more urgent. The current building leaks litres of water during storms, requires plastic wrap and buckets to protect materials, and suffers from asbestos, wiring issues, and damp problems that no amount of re-roofing can resolve.

As custodians of New Zealand's documentary heritage, we emphasise that appropriate archival storage cannot be compromised. The proposed Richmond facility meets international standards that the current building simply cannot achieve, regardless of repairs.

This project will also generate economic benefits through heritage tourism and research visits. Scholars, genealogists, and tourists will continue to contribute to Nelson's economy regardless of whether they access the archives in Richmond or the city centre.

We urge Council to honour its existing commitment and approve this funding immediately. Further delay risks not only the collections themselves, but Nelson's reputation as a responsible guardian of New Zealand's heritage. Some losses cannot be recovered – and some responsibilities cannot be deferred.

Nāku iti noa, nā,  
Rebecca Lenihan and Matthew Woodbury, co-presidents, PHANZA  
Richard Foy, President, ARANZ  
Miranda Johnson, President, NZHA