

**5. CRACROFT CAVERNS RESERVE - RESERVE CLASSIFICATION
AND LEASE TO UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY**

RR 7682

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Corporate Plan Output: Leases/City Plans Consents and Applications	

The following report was submitted to the May meeting of the Committee.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to classify Cracroft Caverns Reserve as an historic reserve under section 16(2A) of the Reserves Act 1977. Pursuant to classification, permission is sought to grant a lease to the University of Canterbury to carry out scientific research in the subterranean part of the reserve.

INTRODUCTION - CRACROFT BUNKERS

In 1995 the Parks Unit acquired, through subdivision of the Cracroft Estate, a 7111m² recreation reserve to the south of the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH), including part of the historic World War II Caverns by strata title. The reserve provides important walkway linkages between Nehru Place, Hackthorne Road, Bengal Drive and Delhi Place. Revegetation and construction of the walking linkages is underway.

Thirty metres below this reserve, but on the same certificate of title as the reserve, are the underground World War II caverns, designed to be the South Island's defence headquarters for "Southern Group"; a combined Air Force, Navy and Army intelligence unit during the war. The armed forces commandeered the old Cracroft Wilson estate and, using it as a base, began construction of the bunkers in 1942. Two years later, when it became apparent that an invasion of the South Island was unlikely, the partially completed caves were sealed and left until being officially rediscovered by a TVNZ journalist in 1987. When the news was reported the Physics and Astronomy Department of the University of Canterbury sought and received the permission of the owners to conduct experiments in the caverns. The University required the most stable environment for their ring laser gyroscope experiments and the underground caverns, with almost constant temperature and humidity so close to the University's Ilam campus, were an ideal location. Although extremely precise, the experiments use low power lasers similar to supermarket barcode reading lasers and have no military applications. The first ring laser experiment ("C-I") was housed in a building constructed inside the caverns before they came under Council ownership.

After the success of the first model, the University has installed two more ring lasers in the caverns. “C-II” was installed in an extension to the building which houses C-I and more recently a 4 metre square laser (“G-0”) was installed on a vertical wall near the entrance to the caverns, this one being the prototype of a ring laser to be installed in Germany after trials and refinement at Cashmere. The University requires a “shed” to be built around this apparatus in order to keep dust and draughts off the sensitive mechanism, and have applied for land owner’s consent for this to proceed. The proposed shed will enclose the laser with dimensions of 6x6m, and will extend into the caverns by 2.4m; enough to allow a person to stand in front of the laser. A 2m high door will provide access to the building. The placement and dimensions of the structure will allow plenty of room for access along the concrete pathway to the main building in the caverns housing C-I and C-II.

When the Council acquired the reserve above the caverns in 1995 the University was already well established and had installed security systems. Since the reserve acquisition the University has enjoyed existing use rights to the caverns through an informal agreement. It is now thought that with the University’s increased use of the caverns to a total of three experimental lasers a formal lease should be drawn up to protect its investment and to allow the Parks Unit to formalise public access at agreed times.

While the majority of the caverns are owned by the Council as recreation reserve the only usable entrance to them is on Princess Margaret Hospital land.

Therefore both the Council and the University can only enter the caverns over PMH land, the sole entrance having been made secure by the University of Canterbury.

RESERVE CLASSIFICATION

When the reserve was vested in the Council in 1995 it was listed as a recreation reserve, although has not been formally classified for any purpose. (Note: Reserves are not automatically classified when they are vested, even if the reserve purpose is mentioned in the vesting notice.)

It is now thought that recreation is not a suitable classification, since the reserve has mostly historic significance. Also, under the Reserves Act 1977 a lease cannot be granted to the University for the purposes of scientific research on a recreation reserve.

Therefore it is proposed to formally classify the reserve as “Historic” to reinforce its past and present uses, and to allow a lease to be offered to the University. To classify the reserve Historic, the following resolution must be adopted:

Resolution

Pursuant to Section 16(2A) of the Reserves Act 1977 the Christchurch City Council hereby resolves to classify the land described in the schedule below as Historic Reserve in accordance with Section 18 of the said Act.

Schedule

All that parcel of land containing 7087 m² being Lot 43 DP69643 and comprised of Certificate of Title 40C/372 in the Canterbury Land District.

PROPOSED LEASE AND LICENCE

A subterranean lease in favour of the University of Canterbury over the caverns would be a unique situation in Christchurch. The University has a recently extended building inside the caverns which houses both C-I and C-II experiments. Other structures installed in the caverns by the University include a water tank part way up the (blocked off) upper access tunnel and a seismic (concrete) block poured in one of the main caverns. While the whole of the caverns are not used by the University, the single entrance has understandably been secured by them to restrict access to the complex. Therefore it is intended to lease the entire cavern to the University but with conditions which allow access to the Council for 15 open days per year and for maintenance/monitoring purposes.

The Council is restricted in its ability to grant a lease to the University as it does not have formal access to the entranceway to the caverns. In the long term it may be possible to purchase all or part of the valley behind Princess Margaret Hospital but in the short term a solution is possible. The Property Unit is liaising with Healthlink South on this issue and should in the near future be able to offer a workable solution which will allow regular access to the caverns entrance across hospital land for University and Council staff, and visitors to open days.

At its meeting on 27 May, the Council referred the report back to the Committee to allow consideration to be given to making provision for more frequent access.

The Committee reviewed the question of access at its June meeting and endorsed the Parks Manager's suggestion that the number of public open days be determined by the Parks Manager on an annual basis in consultation with Princess Margaret Hospital, University of Canterbury and the Scout Group which provides the guiding services.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Council adopt the resolution to classify the reserve Historic under Section 16(2A) of the Reserves Act 1977, as described in the resolution and schedule above.
 2. That the Council grant a lease to the University of Canterbury over the Cracroft Caverns (the subterranean part of Lot 43 DP69643) for a term of 15 years, at a rental to be negotiated by the Parks Manager, subject to:
 - (a) The Property Unit to negotiate a suitable access agreement with Healthlink South which allows access over their land to the caverns

entrance for staff of the University of Canterbury and the Christchurch City Council for casual use of the caverns, maintenance and monitoring purposes, and which allows access for members of the public on open days only.

- (b) The number of public open days being determined by the Parks Manager, on an annual basis, in consultation with the Scouts, Princess Margaret Hospital and the University of Canterbury.
 - (c) Staff of the Christchurch City Council being allowed access to the caverns at any time for the maintenance of emergency lighting and fire extinguishers, and to monitor the conditions of the lease.
 - (d) The University of Canterbury abiding by the conditions of the Health and Safety plan for the caverns recently formulated by the Council.
 - (e) The University maintaining the standard lighting and smoke alarms installed in the caverns in good working condition.
 - (f) Any equipment installed by the University for their own use complying with the conditions set out in the Health and Safety plan for the caverns.
 - (g) The University of Canterbury taking out and maintaining a public liability insurance cover of \$1,000,000.
 - (h) The University of Canterbury being liable for all costs associated with the issuing of this lease.
 - (i) The prior adoption by the Council of recommendation 1. above.
 - (j) Public notification of the intention to grant a lease and no sustainable objections being received.
 - (k) The consent of the Minister of Conservation being obtained.
 - (l) All costs associated with preparing and issuing the lease being met by the University of Canterbury.
3. That subject to the adoption of recommendations 1 and 2 above, the City Council give landowner's

permission for the University of Canterbury to construct a building around the G-0 laser (with dimensions as described in the text of this report) on the condition that the necessary resource consent and building consents are obtained.