

## AM23/215 National Erebus Memorial – Decision-making and announcement on next steps

22 May 2023

Date: 27 April 2023

Title: National Erebus Memorial – Decision-making and announcement on next steps

Author: Ministry for Culture and Heritage

This document has been proactively released by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. The package contains the Aide Memoire and Appendices 2 – 7, as listed below.

This information was supplied to the office of the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage as a notification of operational matters and does not relate to a decision required of the Minister.

- AM23/215: National Erebus Memorial – Decision-making and announcement on next steps
- Appendix 2: Wording for the Minister’s pre-recorded message
- Appendix 3: Draft letter to Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue
- Appendix 4: Timeline of key events for National Erebus Memorial
- Appendix 5: Key messages-talking points for Chief Executive Manatū Taonga
- Appendix 6: Media release
- Appendix 7: Media advisory document

Appendix 1 – Memo to CE Construction of the National Erebus Memorial 24 April 2023 is publicly available on the Ministry’s website here:

<https://mch.govt.nz/erebus-memorial/updates>

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA). Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the OIA that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

- 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons
- 9(2)(ba)(i) to protect information which would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information
- 9(2)(g)(i) to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions

Hon Carmel Sepuloni

Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage

## AIDE MEMOIRE: National Erebus Memorial – Decision-making and announcement on next steps

<b>Date:</b>	27 April 2023	<b>Priority:</b>	Urgent
<b>Security classification:</b>	In Confidence	<b>Reference:</b>	AM23/23/215
<b>Contact</b>	Glenis Philip-Barbara, Pou Mataaho o Te Hua   Deputy Chief Executive, Delivery 9(2)(a)		

### Purpose

- 1 On Friday 28 April, Manatū Taonga will announce the decision regarding the future construction of the National Erebus Memorial (the memorial) at Taurarua/Dove-Myer Robinson Park (DMR), Auckland. A copy of the Memo to Chief Executive Construction of the National Erebus Memorial (with accompanying Geo-Tech report) 24 April 2023 is attached (Appendix 1).
- 2 As part of this announcement, a pre-recorded message from you will be played during an online meeting with Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue, at which they will be advised of the decision and next steps.
- 3 The purpose of this Aide Memoire is to provide an overview of the day and supporting documentation, including a summary of key events relating to the memorial and DMR.

### Event details

- 4 An agenda for the meeting on Friday 28 April is provided below. The meeting is being hosted by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei at their Whai Māia office in Auckland. Manatū Taonga staff and Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei representatives will attend in-person, with guests attending online. Ministry officials in attendance will include:
  - Leauanae Laulu Mac Leauanae, Chief Executive
  - Glenis Philip-Barbara, Deputy Chief Executive Delivery
  - 9(2)(a)
  - 9(2)(a)
  - Communications staff will also be in attendance to support.
- 5 Marama Royal, Chair of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust, will be in attendance.

## Agenda for meeting 28 April 2023

Time	Duration	Item	Speaker(s)
11 am start	5 mins	Karakia and welcome. Meeting starts	Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei
	15 mins	Update on memorial programme	MCH officials
	5 mins	Pre-recorded message by the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage	Hon Carmel Sepuloni
	40 mins	Q&A with families and Operation Overdue	MCH officials
	5 mins	Closing and thanks	MCH officials
	5 mins	Closing karakia. Meeting ends	Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei

- 6 We have attached the wording for your pre-recorded message (Appendix 2), which we have previously supplied to your office. We have also included the follow-up letter from you to Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue, which will be sent following the meeting (Appendix 3).
- 7 For your information, we have also attached the following:
- A timeline of key events for the National Erebus Memorial (Appendix 4)
  - Key messages -talking points for Chief Executive Manatū Taonga (Appendix 5)
  - Media release (Appendix 6)
  - Media advisory document (includes list of media to receive an embargoed copy of the media release (Appendix 7)

9(2)(ba)(i),9(2)(g)(i)

9(2)(ba)(i),9(2)(g)(i)

## Next steps

- 8 Following completion of the event, Ministry officials and the Chair of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust will be available for media interviews and a media statement will be published.
- 9 A record of the meeting, including your speech, will be published online and a copy of your letter will be sent to Erebus family members and members of Operation Overdue.

- 10 We will also be publicly releasing the geotechnical report to Erebus family members and members of Operation Overdue. During the week starting 1 May, it is intended that the report and the decision memo will be published on Manatū Taonga's website.
- 11 Arrangements will be made to meet again with Erebus whānau by the end of May to provide an update on the forward plan.
- 12 We will continue to keep you informed of progress through the regular ACH fortnightly reports. We will also work with your office to arrange a suitable time for when you can meet Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue in person.

9(2)(a)

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the majority of the page content below the list items.

Glenis Philip-Barbara  
**Pou Mataaho o Te Hua | Deputy Chief Executive, Delivery**

Proactively Released

## Speech for video message

Tēnā koutou katoa and thank you Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, Laulu Mac and Glenis for your warm welcome and manaakitanga today. And thank *you* –, the Erebus families and members of the Operation Overdue recovery team. The National Erebus Memorial is about you, and remembering those treasured loved ones lost over 43 years ago.

Whilst I had hoped to have been with you today, I am in New Plymouth and so I do send my apologies that I can't be with you. I do however look forward to meeting with you *kanohi ki te kanohi* – face to face – very soon.

I know that the news Laulu Mac and Glenis have communicated today is probably not what you wanted to hear – and you can be sure that it's not the news we wanted to be sharing with you, either. The already long road to building the memorial probably now feels even longer, however today I want to reaffirm and underline with you my absolute commitment, along with our Government's commitment.

On behalf of the New Zealand Government and Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, I want to reassure you that we are on this journey with you.

We remain absolutely committed to creating the National Erebus Memorial and this commitment will not waiver.

I can see how deeply needed a National Erebus Memorial is. All of you who lost someone on the 28th of November 1979, or who were involved in the recovery operation to bring them home, deserve a place to remember those who were lost and reflect on your own experience; a place where all New Zealanders can understand and appreciate the significance of the Erebus disaster in our nation's history.

I know that it is with a heavy heart that Laulu Mac has made the decision to seek a new site, and I share with him this feeling – a National Erebus Memorial is simply the least you deserve, and you have waited too long already.

Unfortunately, Dove-Myer Robinson Park is just one of many areas affected by the severe and unprecedented weather that has swept the country this year. Cyclone Gabrielle has deeply affected thousands of New Zealanders, in all sorts of ways.

The damage at the park has emphasised that not only do we need a National Erebus Memorial, but we need it to be an **enduring** one – a monument that lasts for future generations, at least 100 years from now.

We will work at pace, as fast as we can, to pave the next steps and pathway forward on this journey, and as soon as there is an update my officials will be in touch about what those next steps are.

Officials will continue working closely with Auckland Council, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, and other project partners as we navigate this difficult decision, and I want to thank them all for their support.

Despite today's setback, the team at the Ministry is looking ahead, and will prioritise securing a new site for the Memorial to ensure that the Erebus story is never forgotten. They have my full support in this.

I cannot stress strongly enough that we are on this journey with you, and we *will* create a special place of remembrance that endures for you and future generations.

Go well, my thoughts are with you, and once again, I look forward to meeting you all soon.

Appendix 3: Letter from Minister Sepuloni to Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue, which will be sent following the meeting

---

**Draft letter to Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue**

27 April 2023

Tēnā koutou katoa

I am writing to you today, as Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, about the National Erebus Memorial. It is my privilege to oversee this project of national significance.

I appreciate and acknowledge that the decision to seek a new site for the memorial, due to the damage caused to Taurarua/Dove Myer Robinson Park by the recent extreme and unprecedented weather, will have been very difficult for you to hear.

Unfortunately, the damage caused at the memorial site is just one of many examples of the severe impact the events experienced in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and across the country earlier this year have had. Cyclone Gabrielle has deeply affected thousands of New Zealanders, in all sorts of ways.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the commitment my officials and I have to ensure the memorial is realised. I want to emphasise that while this latest setback is challenging, the Government's commitment to seeing a National Erebus Memorial built remains absolute.

You, the families, friends and supporters of those who lost their lives in the Erebus tragedy, will have a place to celebrate and remember your loved ones; a place where all New Zealanders can understand and appreciate the significance of the event in our nation's history.

Over the coming weeks, officials will be considering the way forward to secure a new site for the memorial and I am taking a keen interest in this matter. I intend to be in touch with you again soon to arrange to meet in person.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support for this incredibly important memorial. You remain at the heart of this kaupapa.

Nga manaakitanga

Hon Carmel Sepuloni  
Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage



## Appendix 4: Timeline of key events for National Erebus Memorial

### Key events

Date	Event
November 2017	Government announced Manatū Taonga would lead the construction of the National Erebus Memorial
By August 2018	Manatū Taonga worked with Erebus families, Auckland Council, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust and others resulting in the identification of DMR as the preferred site for the memorial.
November 2018	Cabinet approved \$3.10 million for construction of memorial
March 2019	The design of the memorial was chosen by a competition, and the final design was approved in March 2019
18 March 2020	Resource Consent granted by Auckland Council
7 September 2020	Archaeological Authority granted by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga
7 December 2020	Landowner approval granted by Waitemātā Local Board
March 2021	CE of Manatū Taonga made decision to establish site for construction however efforts to establish the construction site were met with opposition from a group of residents and their supporters.
4 October 2021	Manatū Taonga notified of an investigation by the Chief Ombudsman. In November 2021 all construction activities halted pending result of investigation.
24 March 2022	Chief Ombudsman issued recommendation that Manatū Taonga take steps to attempt to resolve the complainant group's sense of grievance about the memorial before commencing construction on the site.
2 November 2022	CE Manatū Taonga provided with a memo noting the reasonable steps undertaken by Ministry to address the Chief Ombudsman's recommendation and directed the Erebus Programme team to proceed to prepare a final decision memo
22 November 2022	Waitemātā Local Board considered and deferred a decision on our request for an extension to the National Erebus Memorial landowner approval 'for an initial period of three months, until the local board obtains further information, and has a reasonable opportunity to consider that information'
28 November 2022	43rd anniversary of the accident, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei hosted a pōwhiri for Erebus whānau at Ōrākei Marae.
27 January 2023	A state of local emergency was declared for Auckland due to severe weather. This was followed by further severe weather events over the next two weeks. Three landslips appeared along the cliff face adjacent to the site of the memorial, including one directly downslope of the memorial location.

1 February 2023	Ombudsman completed investigation into Manatū Taonga's actions. No further action in regard to the complaint.
7 February 2023	Manatū Taonga commissioned geotechnical engineer's report to assess the stability and ongoing suitability of the site for a national memorial.
10 March 2023	Investigation of the complaint against the Council completed. Investigation found the Council did not act reasonably regarding its actions that no further recommendations from the Ombudsman were appropriate or necessary.
11 April 2023	Geo-technical report received - concluded that the long-term stability of the site does not meet the minimum required factor of safety in several respects.
24 April 2023	CE provided with a memo, which specifically addresses the impact of the extreme and unprecedented weather events of late January and early February 2023, and makes decision to seek an alternative site.

## Key messages

### **Top key messages to keep coming back to:**

- The extreme and unprecedented weather in Auckland earlier this year caused significant damage to the cliff line near the site for the National Erebus Memorial.
- Updated geotechnical engineering advice concludes that the Memorial site and surrounds are no longer safe or practical for us to build on for the long term.
- We have had to make the difficult decision that a new site for the National Erebus Memorial needs to be found.
- We have met with families today to share the news with them. They are at the very heart of the project, and we know this setback will be hard for them to hear.
- Government remains absolutely committed to realising the memorial and we will be taking time to carefully consider what the next steps will be.
- We will continue to work closely with Auckland Council, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust and other project partners to secure a new, enduring home for the memorial.

### **Context messaging**

Manatū Taonga has been preparing to make final decisions about resuming site establishment works and construction of the National Erebus Memorial at Taurarua / Dove-Myer Robinson Park in Parnell, Auckland.

However, the extreme and unprecedented weather events in the North Island in January and February led to three slips occurring along the cliff line at Dove-Myer Robinson Park. One of the slips occurred in the vicinity of the Memorial site.

In light of the damage, Manatū Taonga commissioned updated geotechnical engineering advice to ensure the Memorial design is appropriate both now, and in the future.

### **Fact sharing messages**

We have now received and considered an updated geotechnical engineering report and are able to provide an update on next steps.

Unfortunately, the updated engineering advice has significant ramifications for constructing the National Erebus Memorial at the site. The report concludes that:

- The damage to the cliff line caused by the recent extreme weather means the land is now unsafe to build the Memorial on for the long term.
- The recommendations in the original geotechnical investigation report are no longer valid. This may have implications for the regulatory approvals previously granted.

While the report identifies two potential options that could allow the Memorial to be built at the site - installing a large palisade wall OR piling the structure down to rock – neither option is feasible.

Another option could be to move the memorial back several metres away from the cliff line, but that is not possible either, due to the location of heritage trees nearby including a notable pōhutukawa.

After careful consideration, we have had to make the difficult decision that a new site for the National Erebus Memorial needs to be found.

Unfortunately, this is one of many examples of the significant impact the recent extreme weather has had across New Zealand.

### **Next steps messages**

We have met with the families today to share the news with them (and communicated in writing to those unable to attend).

The families remain at the very heart of this project. We know this news will be hard for them, and many others connected with the Erebus tragedy, to hear – especially those involved in the recovery operation.

The New Zealand Government and Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage remain absolutely committed to realising the National Erebus Memorial.

We will continue working closely with Auckland Council and Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and other project partners, to secure a new, enduring home for the memorial.

Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei has reaffirmed its ongoing support for the families and outlined their commitment to seeing the Memorial built in Tāmaki Makaurau.

We will take some time to consider what the next steps will be for the National Erebus Memorial.

We will also be progressing plans to ensure the Erebus story, which occupies an important place in our nation's history, is properly understood and appreciated by present and future generations.

## Media statement

**EMBARGOED until [insert time, Friday 28 April 2023]**

### **New site required for National Erebus Memorial due to safety concerns**

Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage announced today that significant damage caused at the National Erebus Memorial site by recent extreme and unprecedented weather events in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, means a new enduring home for the memorial needs to be found.

“This morning I met with families who lost their loved ones in the Erebus disaster, and members of the Operation Overdue recovery team, to inform them of my decision to seek a new site for the National Erebus Memorial,” said Leauanae Laulu Mac Leauanae, Secretary and Chief Executive for Culture and Heritage.

“This has been a difficult decision to make because I know how upsetting it is for families. They remain at the absolute heart of this kaupapa.”

“When Taurarua / Dove-Myer Robinson Park in Parnell was selected as the site for a dedicated National Erebus Memorial in 2018, it was a safe and fitting site to commemorate the 257 people who tragically lost their lives on the slopes of Mt Erebus, Antarctica on 28 November 1979.

“Following the unprecedented and extreme weather in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland earlier this year, and the significant damage to the coastline near the site for the memorial, Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage commissioned updated geotechnical engineering advice to ensure the design of the memorial is appropriate both now, and in the future.

“However, the updated geotechnical advice shows that building the memorial at the Taurarua / Dove-Myer Robinson Park is no longer suitable or safe for the long term. Based on careful consideration of the advice, and after discussions with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust, Auckland Council and our other project partners, I have decided a new, enduring site for the memorial needs to be found.

“This morning I spoke with Erebus whānau, who have been incredibly supportive and gracious throughout this long journey. It is upsetting that we were not able to share better news with them today. I know the families have waited for years to see a National Erebus Memorial realised.

“While this setback is undoubtably difficult to hear, we remain committed to realising the memorial and will be taking time to carefully consider what the next steps will be.

“Manatū Taonga will continue to work closely with Erebus families, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, Auckland Council and our other partners to secure a new, permanent home for the National Erebus Memorial.

“Erebus remains the worst civil accident in our history, and the sheer scale of the loss shocked the nation. The tragedy and its aftermath have left a lasting legacy on our national identity and deserves, along with the 257 treasured people who lost their lives that day, to be appropriately commemorated.

“I am speaking directly to the Erebus families when I say that despite this setback, me and my team at Manatū Taonga are absolutely and resolutely committed to securing a home for the National Erebus Memorial that endures for present and future generations of New Zealanders,” said Leauanae Laulu Mac Leauanae.

## Media advisory for National Erebus Memorial update

### Plan

On Friday 28 April at around 9.30am we will reach out to a small number of journalists with a personalised email (template below) who have an ongoing interest in the National Erebus Memorial story.

This will contain the embargoed media statement and an invitation to interview Ministry leaders after the hui with families.

On Friday 28 April, during the meeting with families (approximately 15 minutes into the hui) the media statement will be sent to all general media lists and Auckland media lists on Fuseworks, embargoed until the meeting has concluded (approximately 12.30pm TBC).

All media requests that come into the [media@mch.govt.nz](mailto:media@mch.govt.nz) or via the media phone will receive written responses unless they are for a major outlet/on the advisory list ie 9(2)(a) [REDACTED].

### Contact list for embargoed PR and offer of interview:

9(2)(a) [REDACTED]

### Email

*Subject line: Media Advisory: National Erebus Memorial update*

Kia ora [name],

This morning, officials from Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei are meeting with Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue to provide them with an update on the National Erebus Memorial.

I have provided a strictly embargoed copy of the media statement that will go out for general release this afternoon once the meeting with families has concluded.

In the meantime, Leauanae Laulu Mac Leuanae, Secretary and Chief Executive for Culture and Heritage, and Glenis Philip-Barbara, Deputy Chief Executive Delivery, will be available for interviews this afternoon. Interviews will be available with Laulu Mac between 12.45pm-1.30pm and Glenis between 12.45pm and 2pm.

Marama Royal, Chair of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust, will also be available for interview after the meeting.

Please let us know if you would like to schedule interviews. You can contact the team to arrange a time on the following:

9(2)(a)

In the meantime, thank you for your interest in the National Erebus Memorial project.

Ngā mihi nui,

9(2)(a)

***About the project:***

The National Erebus Memorial will commemorate the 257 people who passed away when Air New Zealand flight TE901 crashed into Mt Erebus, Antarctica on 28 November 1979. Erebus remains our country's worst civil accident.

For more information visit:

[National Erebus Memorial website](#)

[NZ History, Erebus Disaster](#)

***Background information:***

- On 28 November 1979, Air New Zealand flight TE901 left Auckland for a sightseeing flight to Antarctica. The aircraft crashed into Mt Erebus, killing all 257 passengers and crew.
- Erebus remains the worst civil accident in New Zealand's history, and the scale of loss shocked the nation.
- The New Zealand Government has committed to a national memorial acknowledging the loss to the families and the nation. Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage is leading the project.
- The memorial fulfils the need of the Erebus families to have the effects of the tragedy recognised. It also provides a place for them to remember their loved ones and for all people to gather, remember and reflect on the accident.
- Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust has provided valuable input and expressed support for the memorial throughout the planning process. Auckland Council is a key partner in the project.