

PIPITEA BLOCK OPENING REMARKS

Forrie Miller, Chair of the Board of Trustees

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Wellington Girls College Charitable Foundation, I welcome our guests today:

There are many VIPS in attendance, and I wish to extend a particular welcome to a number of them:

The Hon Hekia Parata, who is Minister, among other portfolios, of Womens Affairs. She is also one of us, for she is a parent and a recent member of this Board;

The Hon Annette King and Grant Robertson, Members of Parliament;

Deputy Mayor McKinnon;

Roger Moses, Principal of Wellington College;

Kim Shannon, General Manager, Property, for the Ministry of Education;

Two former Principals of the College, Mrs Elaine Barnett and Marg MacLeod. Mrs Barnett was instrumental in creating the Foundation and acquiring the properties which stood on this corner. One house has been demolished to create the forecourt on which the students are arrayed. The Foundation has played an important role in raising the money for this project.

I also welcome former members of the Board and the Foundation, all of whom played a part in making this project possible.

It's a pleasure to see a number of former staff and pupils here. One of them, Edna Whittaker, has the distinction of being the most senior old girl here today. She was a pupil between 1926 and 1929. Your presence is especially welcome.

I welcome too the staff and students of the College. The students are sharing a common perspective with Mrs Barnett, who as a pupil of the College recalls standing, outside, in 1947, at the opening ceremony for Brook.

That small detail should convey a sense of how important this building is. The building is for you, the students of today, but it is also for many generations who will follow you through these doors. Decades may separate you from them, but you will share a history and a sense of place that rests, in part, on this building and what will happen within its precincts.

The Pipitea Block is first and foremost a suite of state of the art classrooms in which students will benefit from the outstanding education that is the proud tradition of this institution.

It is also an entrance to the College. In its confident style and positioning, open to the city, the building reflects the leading role that the College plays in secondary education and its place in the heart of Wellington.

To me falls the congenial task of thanking those who chose this project and those who designed it and those who built it. Many have contributed, far too many to list by name, but I must single three people out for mention. They are two former chairs, David Morris and Cathryn Ashley-Jones, and the principal, Julia Davidson. Together they formed a committee to whom the task was delegated. David began with a blank sheet of paper in 2008, and he has contributed tirelessly ever since. Cathryn led us through the work of adopting the design and letting the contracts. Julia has been the project owner within the school, adding another job to the two or three she already does. Without the commitment and skill of these three people, this building would not have been erected.

The building is an architectural achievement. It knits together and remarkably enhances the spartan architecture of past eras. It is distinctively modern and highly functional. And it makes superb use of a small site. For these qualities I pay tribute to the architects, Designgroup Stapleton Elliott.

Many professionals have contributed to the building going up, on time and with minimal disruption to the daily work of the College. I acknowledge their expertise and their commitment. I mention in particular the project managers, Arrow International, and the quantity surveyors, Davis Langdon.

I express too the Board's gratitude for the work of the contractors, Naylor Love, who have brought the project in on time while working in a live

environment. They have been unfailingly professional and responsive to the day to day needs of the College, particularly during exams.

The money came from a productive partnership between the Ministry of Education and the school community. The Ministry have delivered about 60% of the cost through the College's 5-year property funding. I thank them for entrusting us with the money and letting us get on with it.

The remaining 40%, the part that makes the building so much more than just a set of classrooms, the part that has really allowed us to design for 21st century teaching, was mostly paid by the parents of student generations past. I acknowledge their willingness to contribute to the future of the College, knowing that others had done so before them.

That sense of continuity remains today. In a couple of years time the contributions that today's parents are making will bear fruit in our next project, which is likely to involve rebuilding the area now occupied by the music and performing arts departments.

Finally, my appreciation goes to the staff and the students, who had to endure some unavoidable disruptions, and to our neighbours in the Thorndon community, who have tolerated a great deal of construction work over the past couple of years.