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Prime Minister visits Chatham Islands

• Last Updated 01 Dec 2022

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Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was on the Chathams on Friday 25 November to open the new Ngāti Mutunga o Wharekauri Civic Building, and Chatham Islands Museum.

At the same time a local taonga was returned – a patu carried by Pōmare Ngātata in 1835 when he first led Māori over to the Islands.

The new building was a significant day for the community and had been in the making since 2012.

Here is a copy of Mayor Monique Croon's speech from this special occasion.

"Tena kotou, tena kotou, tena koutou katoa. Welcome to our Right Honourable Prime Minister, to our community, and to our manuhiri.

It is with immense pride that we are celebrating today with our official opening of our Civic/Council Building and Chatham Islands Museum. This building has become the magnate for many gatherings and meetings, and brings along community warmth, sharing knowledge and the place to work together to create a better future for our Island.

The journey started in 2012 with Auckland University students creating concept designs to create a shared facility between Council, CIET, library, museum and a sports hall. I have to say they were very conceptual. A more robust design was developed by Bull O'Sullivan Architecture and the next step was how to fund this new building. After many unsuccessful attempts to redesign and fund, a meeting with Nga Mutunga o Wharekauri Iwi Trust Asset Holding Company Directors in 2019 brings us here today.

I would like to acknowledge our CEO Owen Pickles who facilitated many meetings, Ngati Mutunga o Wharekauri Iwi Trust Asset Holding Company, Apollo Projects, Somerville Builders and special mention to Jocelyn Powell, my fellow Co-Chair for the Museum. The build started in December 2020. We moved in January this year. The project was conducted during COVID-19 supply constraints and is a model build that was extremely successful with a genuine partnership approach and willingness that could be used for future projects.

Chatham Islands Council in 2025 will be commemorating 100 years and it is the first time there is a Mayor's office. The future for our Island local governance is essential to the wellbeing of our community. The future vision for the next 30 years is shared conversations with Ngati Mutunga o Wharekauri and Hokotehi Moriori Trust, our treaty partners, and exploring what modern leadership for our Island should be. Our Crown relationship is pivotal to how we fund our critical infrastructure and how we address the high cost of living. It should be recognised that treaty settlements need to align with the whole of the Island settlement with other potential projects such as an Island emergency services centre and a health centre that provides elderly and end of life care.

Our Chatham Island Investment Strategy identified three key priorities in 2019; Longer Stronger Airport, due for completion in February, we received cell phone coverage a year ago, with renewable affordable energy still to be capital funding this project, clearly demonstrates economic growth for the Island and a greener future which is needed to offset our cost of living and to move away from a diesel economy.

The Island's four entities are working towards a refresh of the Chatham Islands Investment Strategy and future priorities. We look forward to the infrastructure and the funding review and how we as an Island can lobby, as our own unique region and how we can achieve a positive Crown/local relationship with funding support equal to that of other New Zealanders and the level of services that are taken for granted when you live in the 'mainland'.

We thank you Prime Minister for the support we as an Island have received, and the many Government agencies

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that have continued to work on our behalf. We always invite everyone to come to our Island to really understand our challenges and so we are really pleased to host you today."



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