

## Press release

The Southern Institute of Technology Council approved the purchase of St Johns church, hall and grounds from the Anglican Diocese at its meeting on Monday night.

SIT intends that the church will become part of a larger Creative Centre between Tay and Esk streets that is likely to cost up to \$14 - \$15 million. SIT would fund the Centre from its reserves, Council Chair Peter Heenan said.

The Creative Centre will include the Church, a 3 storey, 2250m<sup>2</sup> new building on the footprint of the church hall, an atrium joining the two and a café extension to the north of the church facing Esk street.

It is envisaged the Church will provide exhibition, performance and teaching space, while the new building will accommodate most of the creative industry programmes which are currently delivered from SIT's Downtown site.

SIT is delighted to be in a position to be able to purchase, strengthen, enhance and repurpose one of Invercargill's icon historic CBD buildings, SIT CE Penny Simmonds said.

As well as teaching and exhibition space the Creative Centre will also provide co-working areas for graduates and postgraduate students in creative programmes to partner with, and produce industry ready work, with the significant advantage of access to SIT's extensive equipment and facilities.

The vision for the Creative Centre is based on the Australian Centre for Moving Imagery (ACMI) in Melbourne and Programme Manager for Creative Industries at SIT, Kathryn McCully said that while the exhibitions and associated public programmes would be focussed on moving imagery, technology and interactivity, the door has also been left open for other arts and creative practices to be part of the Centre. The Centre will provide a platform for the community to experience and participate in creative and educational programmes in state of the art facilities, providing a glimpse into the experience of SIT students and into the future of New Zealand's burgeoning creative industries, she said.

The demolition, strengthening and construction work would occur over the next 2 years with completion in time for the 2021 academic year. After a competitive concept plan process, McCulloch Architects had been awarded the design work for the Centre.

The project is important as both a showcase for the creative industries at SIT but also as a contribution to the vibrancy of Southlands cultural offerings, Peter Heenan said.

While Ms Simmonds acknowledged it would be sad for the St Johns parish to leave their much loved church, SIT would be working closely with parish representatives to ensure the development enhanced and respected the church to give it longevity of use for the people of Southland.

The current SIT Downtown Campus would still be needed for the 2-year duration of the Creative Centre build, and SIT was looking at options for the site from 2021 Mr Heenan said.

Penny Simmonds

Phone: 03 211 2606