

RWC big influence on museum shift?

Cr Merv Williams has resigned as chairman of the Whangarei Art Museum Trust Board over plans to shift the museum from the Cafer Park rose gardens in Water St to the vacant Hubands' building at the Town Basin.

When the move was discussed at the council meeting last month, he said it was always planned the museum would move into the former Northland Regional Council building at the Town Basin if the proposed Hundertwasser project went ahead there.

"I think we've rushed this and we're going the wrong way. We don't need to rush this work in time for the Rugby World Cup," he said.

Cr Williams was concerned the council was "putting the cart before the horse" and as trust board chairman he didn't want to be "taking flak" over the Hubands move.

"My resignation is implicit in passing this motion," he said.

The council gave the move the green light with only Crs Williams and Brian McLachlan voting against it.

Cr Sharon Morgan subsequently took over as trust board chair.

Cr William's later told the

Report the main reason he had opposed the move was because he did not consider the council had a mandate to spend \$4 million on projects including the art museum move before the Rugby World Cup takes place in September.

He was concerned because he had not seen full costings for the art museum move.

"After the agenda item came out I was told third-hand the art museum would have to get external funding to make this happen," Cr Williams said.

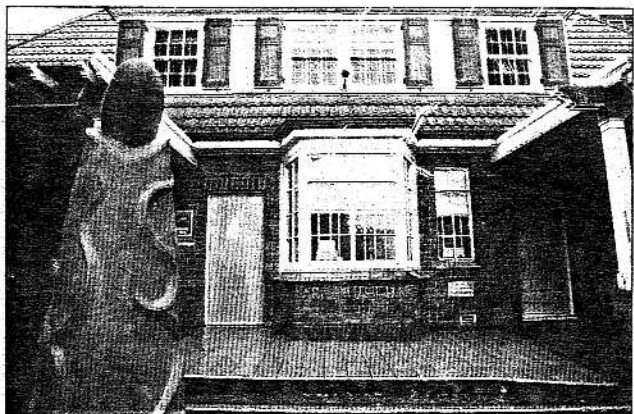
"The art museum's budget has been reduced in recent years and without knowing the full cost implications I felt it was a slap in my face and I wasn't prepared to continue as trust board chairman."

The agenda item has council staff suggesting the art museum should be renamed as the Whangarei Art Gallery.

The air conditioning at the rose gardens site needs upgrading and it makes sense to consider shifting

the museum collection to a centralised, highly visible and upgraded site while enhancing the climate control, the agenda says.

Two galleries are planned in



ON THE MOVE: The Whangarei Art Museum has been in Cafer Park for about 15 years but could soon follow its predecessor, Claphams Clocks Museum, to new premises at the Whangarei Town Basin.

the Hubands building, one of them holding art museum exhibitions with an adjacent climate controlled storage area for art works not on display.

The other gallery would be an "inviting ambient area" displaying Host City Whangarei RWB 2001 Hub exhibitions of material such as local rugby memorabilia and local art.

It could also have a display showcasing Whangarei district attractions, a staffed Visitor Information Centre, perhaps a cafe, television screens showing RWC games and event advertising, noticeboards and free

internet.

Meanwhile, art museum director Scott Pothan was last week excited about the planned move, with his only misgivings over the need for it to be completed six weeks before the RWC begins in September.

He told the Report a move had been on the agenda for a least five years. A proposed shift to the Old Library had been withdrawn by the previous council.

The air conditioning, lighting and other equipment apart from the security system at the Cafer Park site was 15 years old and "not worth transplanting".



PLEASED: Whangarei Art Museum director Scott Pothan — move to the Town basin an "exciting and appropriate concept".

It was inadequate to store and display the museum's constantly growing collection, which had an estimated worth of more than \$2 million and was of national significance.

Mr Pothan considered ASB Trust and Lottery Grants Board funding could be available to help the museum move, but time was needed to produce the business plans needed for funding applications, and funding organisations could take months to consider applications.

However, he thought the move to the Hubands building an "exciting and appropriate concept" and was already planning a major Rugby World Cup exhibition.