

Office of the Mayor

27 August 2018

Provincial Growth Fund
Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment
re: Camera Obscura Sculpture Whangārei
cameraobscura.whg@gmail.com

To Whom It May Concern,

In support of Whangārei's Camera Obscura Sculpture project

As Mayor of Whangārei I am delighted to give my full support to the Camera Obscura Sculpture project.

This exciting community-led project will be sited on Whangārei's riverside Hatea Loop walkway (Huarahi o te Whai) and will become a jewel in our Town Basin district. The project consists of an eight-metre high steel sculpture housing a camera obscura that will project Whangārei's iconic bascule bridge Te Matau ā Pohe and surrounds onto the walls, floor and ceiling in an ever-changing show of light and movement.

This sculpture will join a select handful of obscura sculptures in the world and will be one of the largest.

The Camera Obscura Sculpture will add a tourist destination at the as-yet un-developed end of the Loop walkway, joining the Hundertwasser and proposed Hihiaua Cultural Centre and creating an extensive tourism hub for Whangārei. In comparison, The Portugal Obscura in Lisbon enjoys an average of 13,300 paying visitors/month - thanks to the Whangarei District Council, the Whangārei Camera Obscura will be free to enter.

While locals love the Loop, there is a lack of reported national and international visitors enjoying the Pohe Island area of the Loop walk. It is my belief that The Obscura project will attract and encourage visitors to walk the entire Loop, enjoying coffee and hospitality en route.

As a teaching destination, the Obscura offers educational tourism on the 'Science of Light' with schools travelling to Whangārei to experience this real-life science display.

Bringing together impressive community support, this fully designed and consented structure has a 6 month build time and can be the initial piece to the tourism puzzle the new riverside hotel, Hundertwasser and Hihiaua Cultural Centre will provide.

The Camera Obscura Sculpture joins 5 international Sculptural Obscura and will be the largest and only one currently using CCTV technology in the world. These high definition CCTV cameras, which record all areas within the structure, will offer not only security for the

public, but allow the viewer to see themselves inside the obscura and those outside, creating an interactive art experience.

The CCTV images will be posted to the internet, creating a unique web-cam integrating the age-old science of the obscura with digital technology, promoting our city and bridge to the world.

The sculpture's design reflects Whangārei's maritime history with the stainless-steel wrap capturing Māori and European history of the river and the soaring steel exterior paying homage to the steel shipbuilding history our city was built on. The aperture-styled roof evokes a camera lens and the science of light while also suggesting the form of a shell.

The Camera Obscura project has been community-led from its beginnings and has exceptional support. The team has collaborated with many different groups within our community including Māori, local businesses and the local arts sector. The team has consulted with the disability sector, including Te Tai Tokerau Deaf Society, to ensure the structure is fully accessible and able to serve the wider community. International Camera Obscura have also provided their support, technical input and visitor testimonials describing their popularity with tourists and residents alike.

I am excited about the future possibilities of this sculpture, be it innovative theatre (using the camera obscura and cameras), guest artists sand-blasting designs on the exterior steel (which fade over time), or purely as a place for our tamariki to take their whanau to experience an entry-fee-free light experience.

Once complete, the Camera Obscura Sculpture will be a significant visitor attraction for Whangārei and a unique destination for the entire Northland community.

The team leading this project have done an amazing job turning it from dream to reality and I sincerely hope their application meets with success to enable this project to launch.

Ngā mihi,



Sheryl Mai
Mayor of Whangārei