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For immediate release

Limited clean-up for Anzac Day wreath laying at Citizens War Memorial due to some land contamination at Christ Church Cathedral

General Manager of Church Property Trustees (CPT), Gavin Holley says, “This Anzac Day CPT had intended to clean up the area close to the War Memorial to allow easier access for RSA members to pay their respects and lay a wreath.

Unfortunately recent soil sampling at the Cathedral has shown traces of asbestos. The traces appear to be in the hard fill that was delivered to the site in 2012 to cover the paving stones after the earthquakes. The hard fill was placed over the stones to protect them from heavy machinery during deconstruction and stabilisation work”.

Holley says, “There has not been very much disturbance of the site since then, so we are confident that there have been limited circumstances for any exposure to asbestos by anyone visiting the Cathedral or looking at it through the gates.”

Canterbury Medical Officer of Health, Dr Cheryl Brunton, says the risk to people visiting the site is very low, given that the amounts of asbestos in soil at the site are very small and the area has not been disturbed.

Dr Brunton says there are no short-term adverse health effects from exposure to asbestos. Health conditions in those who have prolonged exposure usually develop many years or decades after high levels of exposure.

CPT has worked closely with the Christchurch RSA to enable access for its members to lay a wreath at the Citizens War Memorial this Anzac Day.

RSA Christchurch President, Pete Dawson says, “We are looking forward to paying our respects at the Citizens War Memorial on Wednesday.”

The area on Wednesday where people will walk to lay wreaths will be covered to ensure there is no disturbance to the soil.

Last Anzac Day CPT was pleased to facilitate entry to the site for a small group of RSA members to pay their respects at the Memorial, for the first time since the February 2011 earthquake damaged the Christ Church Cathedral.

Holley says that planning for the overall Cathedral site clean-up is progressing well and is an important piece of work.

Suzanne Price, CPT Recovery Programme Manager, says, “We are working closely with the Christ Church Cathedral Reinstatement Trust, LINZ, Christchurch City Council and Minister Megan Woods.

“Our clean-up plans now need to involve the removal of the asbestos, which will see experts extract the contaminated hard fill from the site with the appropriate health and safety measures in place.

Of course this makes the wider clean-up of the site more complicated than previously thought”, says Price.

**Please note the wreath laying ceremony is a private ceremony and is not open to the media. CPT has no further comment to make at this point.*

-Ends-

For further information:

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