

# Doubts over much-loved old building

## Facility closure comes as shock

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The future of Patea's historical 93-year-old Hunter Shaw Building is on shaky ground after it was deemed unsafe.

Cracks were found inside the building after the Seddon earthquakes, and the South Taranaki District Council has closed the building to the public pending an engineer's assessment.

The Patea community was caught out by the council's decision, because there had been "very little consultation" with residents, Patea community board chairman David Honeyfield said.

"I only found out about the decision through the council's other staff members," he said.

Community board member Ruth Mackay said she understood their last meeting with the council's engineers in July was to yellow-sticker the building and that it would be used by people at their own risk.

"That was the last time we heard anything about it until I received calls from people to say they can no longer use it," Mrs Mackay said.

Patea resident Rosanna Oakes said she was shocked to learn Hunter Shaw had been closed.

"It was the town's library and I spent my childhood there. It's a magnificent building," she said.

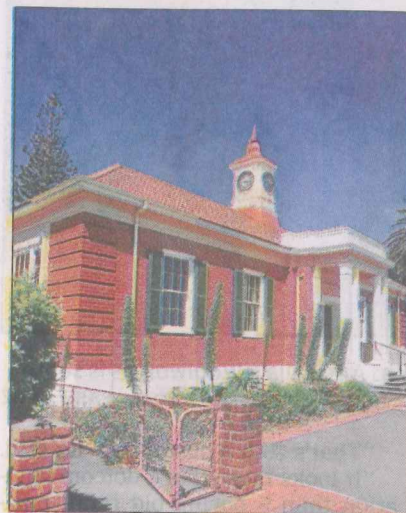
Mrs Mackay said the council's policy on buildings seen as an earthquake risk was overkill.

"It's like an excuse to close it rather than repair it," she said. "If a quake hits Patea, I'd feel safer inside the building than out on the streets."

John Hughes, also of Patea, said he wanted a multipurpose complex built in its place if the Hunter Shaw was demolished.

"If the cost of fixing it is reasonable, then we should fix it, but if it's expensive then it needs to be moved," Mr Hughes said.

"But if it's demolished, I'm extremely determined to get the coun-



**Shaky grounds:** Patea's 93-year-old Hunter Shaw Building has been closed to the public as engineers assess its safety.

Photo: LAIRD HARPER/FAIRFAX NZ

cil to take the old clock out and make it a feature of the new building."

Patea Historical Society president Jim Baker said it would be sad for Patea to lose "all its nice buildings".

Mr Honeyfield said Hunter Shaw's future depended on whether the community wanted to keep it and also the cost involved in maintaining it.

District council communications manager Gerard Langford said the move to temporarily close the building came after Plunket New Zealand, which uses the facility, asked the council for guarantees about the building's structural integrity.

"We haven't stickered the building. The building has been closed to the public and meetings and bookings are not taken until we have received an engineer's report," he said.

The report will also allow the council to decide whether to sticker the building.

Hunter Shaw is listed as a heritage building in the council's district plan and classified as a category two heritage item by Heritage New Zealand.

The district council will meet with the users, Patea ward councillors and community board members on August 30 to discuss the matter.