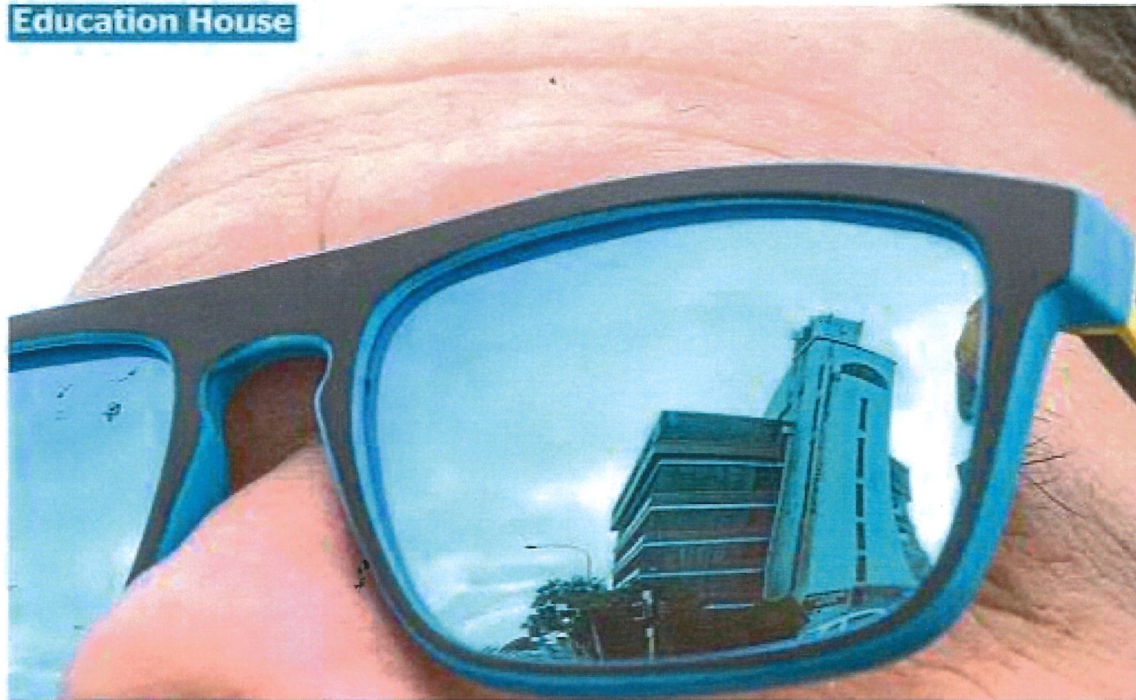


# An education in eyesores

## Education House



## Buildings

Stephanie Ockhuysen

[stephanie.ockhuysen@nzherald.co.nz](mailto:stephanie.ockhuysen@nzherald.co.nz)

It's been voted the biggest eyesore in Taranaki, but it looks like Education House is here to stay for the foreseeable future.

With its mix of drab, moss-covered concrete, glass and faded red paneling, the six-storey monstrosity, on the intersection of Eliot St and the Courtenay St one-way in New Plymouth, was picked by 27 per cent of voters in a reader poll to find the region's least-favourite buildings.

In second place for biggest eyesore was the Len Lye Centre (which also topped another poll of most-loved buildings) followed by the former Ravensdown site, Centre City Shopping Centre, and New Plymouth's Downtown Carpark.

Despite standing empty for the

past eight years, the future of Education House has yet to be determined.

Built for the Perry Dines Corporation in 1984-85, Education House was bought by the Government and land banked in 1997 and is within the robe (boundary) of Te Atiawa iwi.

"Te Atiawa has now expressed an interest in buying the building and both Land Information New Zealand and Te Atiawa have undertaken valuations to form the basis of negotiation but these discussions have not yet commenced," Land & Property Group Manager, Stephanie Forrest, said in a statement.

"The future of any upgrade of Education House will not be certain until the outcome of this process and any potential sale."

While the main body of the building is structurally sound, the property was identified as earthquake-prone in 2013 due to the construction

of the internal stairwell that could potentially fail in a seismic event, Forrest said.

Asbestos surveys were also carried out in 2011 but found no sign of it in the building.

Education House has been vacant since 2011 but Tony Van Raat, former head of architecture at Unitec Institute of Technology in Auckland, said being unoccupied doesn't necessarily make a bad building.

"It may not be being used properly but that's not the building's fault, that's the fault of the owner or the community.

"Bad buildings are like bad food and depress our spirits."

The poll found New Plymouth laid claim to the five biggest eyesores in the region.

The Len Lye Centre and New Plymouth Downtown Carpark are owned

## Centre City shopping mall



## Downtown Carpark



## Ravensdown site



## Len Lye Centre



SMITH DOWNING/STUFF

TURN TO PAGE 2



# From page 1 // Taranaki's biggest eyesores revealed

and operated by New Plymouth District Council (NPDC), which declined to comment.

However, Len Lye Centre also topped the list of the most-loved buildings, and Andrew Patterson, the architect behind the landmark, has spoken of his mixed feelings at seeing his work leading both polls.

Meanwhile, at the city's northern entrance stands the third least-loved building – the former Ravensdown fertiliser plant at Waiwhakaiho.

There are big plans for the sprawling site, which was chosen by 19 per cent of voters, but exactly when those will manifest remains unknown.

The site, at the corner of Devon, Smart and Katere roads, was bought by Blue Haven Commercial Ltd in 2016.

The developers want to transform the land into a commercial retail complex complete with food and beverage outlets, 30 specialty

retail stores, a supermarket, a six-screen cinema, a hardware store, offices and a 75-room hotel.

The development plans were announced in January 2018 but the site remains unchanged.

A spokesperson for Blue Haven Commercial Ltd said until the resource consent process was complete the Ravensdown site would remain in its current form.

Meanwhile, New Plymouth's main shopping mall, Centre City, was named by 10 per cent of voters in our poll as their least favourite building and a terrible use of prime seaview real estate.

However, AMP Capital, which now owns the 31-year-old Centre City, appeared unfazed by the criticism.

"Centre City has been part of the community for over 30 years," a spokesperson said.

"We welcome any feedback from our customers and the community that helps us continue to evolve."