

# Bank and trust boost funds for Opera House revamp

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By ANTONY PALTRIDGE

FUNDRAISING for the New Plymouth Opera House upgrade has almost reached the \$6 million mark with a \$600,000 injection from TSB Bank and the TSB Community Trust.

The bank and the trust would contribute \$300,000 each for the naming rights to the opera house complex and the existing theatre, fundraising committee chairman Brian Mason said yesterday.

But while the naming rights were for perpetuity, a new name for the complex has not yet been decided upon.

The previous largest grant by the bank and trust was \$350,000 for the TSB Stadium in 1991, of which the trust contributed \$225,000.

When the bank-trust contribution of \$600,000 was added to the grant of up to \$4.5 million from the New Plymouth District Council, \$600,000 from Lottery Grants Board and \$100,000 from the New Plymouth Operatic Society, about \$5.8 million had been raised.

Mr Mason said the naming rights for the two foyers, the new 400-seat theatre and the new function room were also available. As well, early next year, the fundraising committee would begin selling seats at a cost of \$250 each.

The Opera House Trust was now looking at upgrading the fly tower in the main theatre to ensure that it could handle any of the shows or productions which it was offered, he said.

Opera House Trust chairman Kingsley Fletcher said the base construction contract let last week to Fletcher Construction was for \$4.58 million, but the project total was \$5.6 million.

This included curtains and seating for the new function room, but did not include the upgrade of the fly tower, he said.

TSB trust chairman David Walter said this was the largest grant the trust had ever made to a project.

"It also reflects that from the trust's viewpoint that culture is very important to Taranaki people, not only from the performance aspect, but from having very good facilities to attract national and international performers.

"We see the opera house as the jewel in the crown as a regional performance centre with a lot of aesthetic appeal and a great history."



**OPERA BUFFS:** Taking the grand view of the New Plymouth Opera House yesterday were, from left, Opera House Trust Board deputy chairman Kevin Landrigan, opera house manager Bryan Robb, TSB Bank chairman Ian Parker, fundraising committee member Mike Brooke, fundraising committee chairman Brian Mason, TSB Bank managing director Kevin Rimmington, TSB Community Trust chairman David Walter and Opera House Trust Board chairman Kingsley Fletcher. Photo: MAARTEN HOLL

Such projects would help grow the region, its economy and population and help raise the region's profile, he said.

TSB Bank managing director Kevin

Rimmington said the donation showed the bank's commitment to the region and the advantage which the public of Taranaki had in owning their own bank.