

# Demolition threat for old church

## Inglewood

Brianna McIlraith

Another Taranaki church is closing its doors to the public and faces the prospect of demolition if money cannot be found to bring it up to earthquake standard.

The 96-year-old St Andrew's Church in Inglewood will have its final service on January 27, before worshippers move to the church hall for services.

A 2018 engineering report found the building at less than 20 per cent of the current building code.

The finding follows the closure of New Zealand's oldest stone church, the Taranaki Cathedral of St Mary, in New Plymouth, in January 2016 and St Mary's Anglican Church in Hāwera last March. Both closures were due to the buildings being deemed earthquake risks.

Taranaki Cathedral of St Mary needs \$15 million to reopen, with \$9m for the strengthening work and \$6m for an extension.

Archbishop Philip Richardson said St Andrew's was being forced to close after the engineering report found it was not up to the modern building code.

"The report just states what is wrong and gives an indication of the steps to do to remediate it," Richardson said.

"The next stage is the parish and the trust board together need to decide whether they are going to go through what is quite an expensive process of getting further detailed engineering reports."

Those reports would determine what needs to be done to strengthen the church and how much it might cost.

"The parish will have to make a decision once they know what the potential cost of remediation is, whether or not that is within the capacity of the very small congregation and the wider community to fix the church," Richardson said.

Across Richardson's dioceses, which stretches from north of



St Andrew's Church in Inglewood has stood for nearly 100 years.

Whanganui to Whangamata, there are 18 buildings that don't meet building standards.

He said they did not have the capacity to fix them all and the responsibility for paying for the renovations would fall on the community.

If no money was available or costs were too high, demolition could be an option, Richardson said.

"If there isn't an ability within the church or the wider community to fix it then we're going to have to make some hard decisions about its future."

Victoria University heritage researcher Hamish Crimp said the church, which was opened in 1923, was an important part of the town's history.

"I think it's hugely important that it is retained and strengthened because it's been a big part of the Inglewood community," Crimp said.

It was very common for buildings of this age to face the prospect of demolition, he said, but taking them down would take away the unique character of small towns.

Crimp hoped if the Anglican Church could not afford to retain the church it would still stand in Inglewood.

"I think it's possible they may decide to sell it and I would have no issue with it being sold to a private owner and converted to a house.

"As long as they retain all the key architectural and heritage features of it."