

# Disquiet over fate of mural



## Airport

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A mural commemorating one of the most significant milestones in New Zealand aviation has had pride of place in New Plymouth airport for 50 years – and plans to move it to a perspex box outside have left district councillors unimpressed.

They say the late Don Driver's 1966 aluminium relief sculpture commemorating the first passenger crossing of the Tasman Sea deserves better.

The mural, which hangs above the check-in area, celebrates Charles Kingsford Smith's landing at Bell Block in 1933. But the airport's new \$25 million terminal, which is currently under way, will focus on a cultural design of Puketapu hapū, with the Kingsford-Smith mural likely to be put outside in a perspex case alongside other aviation artefacts, in a runway viewing area.

"I'm not impressed with the mural of Don Driver being encased outside," councillor Gordon Brown told Thursday's meeting of New Plymouth District Council's performance committee. He said it was probably "too little too late" for the plan to be changed but he didn't think "the community will be impressed whatsoever".

Councillor Colin Johnston said he would be going back to Heritage Taranaki on the issue. "The biggest problem is we need it to be absolutely waterproof."

If it was outside, it had to be closed in, he said. "I want a commitment from the board to say it's going to stay in the airport and that's what Heritage Taranaki will be looking for too."

Richard Handley said they were "all grumpy" about the mural. "I still don't understand why it can't be included in the new business case."

Councillor Harry Duynhoven said there was another historic painting from the old airport that should also be brought back out.

"That painting is of the first trans-Tasman crossing."

Murray Chong said when he was a kid, the Don Driver mural was a lot lower and it was "all you noticed".

"A lot of people don't realise the impact it was."

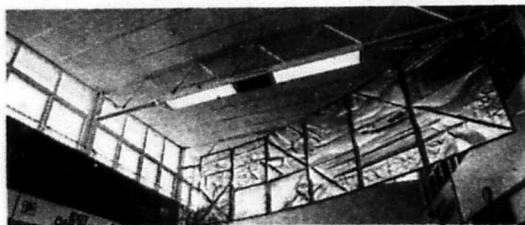
Over time the perspex was likely to turn grey, he said.

"That artwork, it's worked aluminium. It has shapes on the aluminium which is supposed to represent clouds.

"The reflection won't show the impact of that. It needs to be inside and it needs to be behind glass if it was outside."

Meanwhile, councillor John McLeod called for a report that stated the exact amount of money it was costing to build the terminal. "Nobody knows; there's no definitive cost is there? I think it's just courtesy that we should know what it is."

However, other councillors said it was a council-controlled trading organisation, owned by the council but operating separately, and knowing it was on budget was enough for them.



**There is no place in the new airport terminal for Don Driver's aluminium relief sculpture.**

SIMON O'CONNOR/  
STUFF