

TURNBULL HOUSE

Some ten years ago it was reluctantly accepted that the Library would have to move permanently from its birthplace within a relatively short time. The compelling reasons for departure—an earthquake-risk rating and quite inadequate working space, malevolently reinforced by motorway access road demands—made it appear inevitable that the building could not long survive the withdrawal of staff and collections. The labour of planning for the temporary home in the Free Lance building almost concurrently with work on an even more challenging brief for the National Library building inhibited any sustained campaign for the preservation of what we have come to call Turnbull House. The often expressed wish that it could remain, looked, in 1972, as though it had a chance of becoming more than a last-ditch gesture when a combination of circumstances gave hope to those who felt that its place in the City's cultural and architectural history justified its survival.

The then Chief Librarian attempted to give some permanence to a precarious reprieve by seeking higher authority for its continued use for some Library activity but this was rejected. Happily, the individual efforts of several friends found support among members of the City Council. During 1973 the Committee of the Friends made a carefully planned effort to assess the physical limitations of the building and to interest the Council in its permanent preservation and the National Gallery and the National Museum in its possible use as an exhibition centre. The substantial progress which has been achieved to date is due, not merely to the merits of the case and the sympathy of members of the organisations potentially involved, but particularly to the sustained personal attention to the important negotiations by Professor D. F. McKenzie as President of the Friends.

A comprehensive report was prepared early last year in which some eleven specific recommendations were put forward as set out below. The subsequent negotiations, it will be seen from the President's most recent report, have ensured the preservation of the building for a minimum period of ten years, under the administration of the City Council and subject to specific agreements between the parties involved. Friends and all Wellingtonians interested in the retention of the building and its use as an art centre eagerly await an early and successful outcome to these discussions.

The initial recommendations of the Friends' Committee were:

1. That, pending a firm decision by Government to modify roading plans, thus ensuring the invulnerability of the site of Turnbull House, the Wellington City Council agree in principle to the use of Turnbull House as a period art gallery for the next ten years.
2. That the City Council seek formal confirmation from the Ministry