

# National Erebus I

Project updates

# (MCH, 2023a)

## National Erebus Memorial Project Updates

### 1 August 2023

On 1 August 2023 the Ministry met with Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue to provide them with a project update.

*Rev Dr Richard Waugh*

At the meeting Rev Dr Richard Waugh offered an opening prayer before talking to the origins of the memorial project.

Government made a decision to build a national Erebus Memorial in 2017, at which time responsibility to undertake this work was handed to Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage. Since then, Rev Waugh has provided pastoral care for families and continues his work as a trusted advisor on aviation history.

*Site selection*

We have now shared the refined criteria for site selection with a prospective third-party assessor, so they can give us their feedback, and the criteria has been shared with Auckland Council for their initial feedback.

Feedback has been incorporated into the site selection criteria by Professor Jacky Bowring, who is providing support to the Ministry with this mahi. We will provide the finalised site selection criteria to Auckland Council by 1 September, to begin the process of identifying a list of potential memorial sites.

*The Erebus Story for all New Zealanders*

We provided a brief update on the narrative work we are facilitating, to ensure that the Erebus story is known to all New Zealanders, now and into the future. We confirmed that some individuals have expressed an interest in having their story shared. Some people have indicated that there is existing content that they are happy to have included in the Erebus story for all New Zealanders.

If anyone else is interested in being involved, please let us know by emailing [erebus@mch.govt.nz](mailto:erebus@mch.govt.nz).

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### 4 July 2023

On 4 July 2023, Manatū Taonga provided Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue with a project update. This update included information about the site criteria feedback and refinement and work we are undertaking on the Erebus Story for all New Zealanders.

*Site criteria*

We thanked families and shared some of their feedback on the draft refined site criteria. We received 19 responses with a number relating to site preference(s) and design considerations and, a smaller number specifically related to the criteria.

We have commissioned from Jacky Bowring, Professor of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University, a review of the draft criteria and feedback received. Professor Bowring has incorporated this feedback as far as is practicable, and a refined set of criteria was presented along with a weighting approach for the criteria. The next step is sharing the criteria with Auckland Council to beginning the process of identifying potential sites.

*The Erebus Story for all New Zealanders*

An update was provided on the broader work that the Ministry is undertaking around the Erebus Story for all New Zealanders, noting that this is an important example of core work that the Ministry undertakes to ensure that stories critical to New Zealand's history are curated and widely shared.

We have been adding material to the New Zealand Curriculum in the education section of the NZ History website as well as reviewing existing content with a view to refreshing content and adding new stories. We have also been investigating places and spaces that could carry elements of the Erebus story in its widest context.

There is an opportunity to add material on the stories of people involved in order to share their stories, reflections and insights. Family members and those associated with Operation Overdue have been invited to contact the Ministry at [erebus@mch.govt.nz](mailto:erebus@mch.govt.nz) if they would like to participate in this work.

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## 31 May 2023

On 31 May 2023, Manatū Taonga met with Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue to talk through the next steps in the National Erebus Memorial programme. At the meeting the Ministry provided an update on the National Erebus Memorial programme, including how we will engage and consult with Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue moving forward, our goals for 2023, sharing an invite to participate in Matariki observations from Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, and our approach to site selection and the refinement of site criteria.

The first step in our approach to site selection is for the Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue to provide feedback on the criteria for a National Erebus Memorial site. The criteria have been reviewed and draft refinements developed to align with our expectations of an enduring memorial site. After we have received feedback on the criteria and evaluated this, we will confirm the criteria and begin the process with Auckland Council to identify a list of available potential memorial sites.

We will then have discussions with relevant tangata whenua, entities and authorities, before confirming a short-list. The shortlist will then be assessed by an independent third party against the criteria. Following this we will engage with Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue.

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## 28 April Update

On 28 April 2023, Chief Executive Leauanae Lauu Mac Leauanae and Deputy Chief Executive Delivery Glenis Philip-Barbara shared with Erebus families and members of Operation Overdue that we will be seeking a new site for the National Erebus Memorial.

Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage had been preparing to resume site establishment works and construction of the National Erebus Memorial at Taurarau / Dove-Myer Robinson Park in Parnell, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

However, the extreme and unprecedented weather events in the North Island in January and February led to significant land slips occurring along the cliff line at Dove-Myer Robinson Park. One of the slips occurred in the vicinity of the memorial site.

In light of these events, the Ministry commissioned updated geotechnical engineering advice to ensure the memorial design is appropriate both now, and in the future.

### Updated geotechnical engineering advice and decision-making

The new geotechnical engineering assessment concludes that there are significant ramifications for constructing the National Erebus Memorial at the site. Notably:

- The report concludes that the damage to the site caused by the recent extreme weather means the land is now unsafe to build the memorial on for the long term.
- The recommendations in the original geotechnical investigation report are no longer deemed valid, and this may have implications for the regulatory approvals previously granted for the memorial.

While the report identifies potential options that could allow the memorial to be built at the site (including installing a large palisade wall or piling the structure down to rock) neither option is feasible for the long term.

After careful consideration of the advice, and receiving feedback from our project partners Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and Auckland Council, the Ministry has made the difficult decision that a new site for the National Erebus Memorial needs to be found.

### Next steps

The New Zealand Government and Manatū Taonga remain absolutely committed to realising the National Erebus Memorial. Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei has also reaffirmed its ongoing support for the Erebus families and outlined their commitment to seeing the Memorial built in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

We will be taking some time to consider what the next steps will be and will continue working closely with Erebus families and our project partners to secure a new, enduring home for the memorial and complete the project.

Manatū Taonga will also be progressing plans to ensure the Erebus story, which occupies an important place in our nation's history, is understood and appreciated by present and future generations.

Further information about next steps in the project will be publicly available soon. If you have any questions, please contact [Erebus@mch.govt.nz](mailto:Erebus@mch.govt.nz).

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13 February 2023

## February 2023 update

Our thoughts are very much with everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand who has suffered from the impacts of recent extreme weather events and flooding.

We are pleased to advise the Chief Ombudsman has now completed his investigation into aspects of the processes and decision-making by Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage in relation to the Memorial. The Chief Ombudsman has confirmed that the Ministry has taken appropriate steps to implement his recommendation and that the matter is now closed. This conclusion to the investigation gives further confidence in our intention to proceed with construction of this important national memorial.

[Read our statement here](#)

Secondly, the extreme weather last week has caused land slips to the escarpment in the vicinity of the Memorial site. Auckland Council is seeking updated advice on the geotechnical aspects of the site from Council specialists, as the landowner/manager. We have also commissioned updated geotechnical advice to ensure the design of the Memorial is appropriate both now, and in the future. We'll provide an update once this advice has been received and considered.

In the meantime, in November 2022 we requested an extension of a condition to the Landowner approval letter for the Memorial, to extend the time period (initially listed as 7 December 2022). At its meeting, the Local Board elected to defer its decision, so since then we have been working closely with Auckland Council and the Board to ensure they have fulsome, accurate information to inform future decision making. Auckland Council has confirmed the extension won't be considered until the Board's meeting on 21 March, at the earliest. We'll continue to ensure they have all the information necessary from us in order to grant the extension, and provide an update after this meeting.

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12 December 2022

## End of year update

### Hui whakamaumahara

Erebus whānau were welcomed on to Ōrākei Marae in Auckland by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, for a pōwhiri on the date of the 43rd anniversary of the disaster. It was a special ceremony of reflection and commemoration, with time afterwards for connecting and conversations over breakfast afterwards. Erebus family members powerfully reminded us all of the scale of loss for all New Zealanders, and many international friends, by reading the names of all 257 passengers and crew who were lost on 28 November 1979.

Watch Te Karere's coverage of the pōwhiri online: [Tumutumuhenua welcomes Erebus mourners - YouTube](#)

### Ombudsman's report

Since the last project update in March, Manatū Taonga has been working to implement the recommendation made in the Chief Ombudsman's report about aspects of the Memorial project processes. The recommendation was: "that before a decision is made to begin any construction on the Dove-Myer Robinson Park site, the Ministry undertakes reasonable steps to attempt to resolve the sense of grievance that the failure to consult more widely has created."

The Ministry has worked diligently to resolve the sense of grievance held by some in the community and address their concerns. We have since briefed the Ombudsman and remain committed to keeping the dialogue with all parties open and constructive.

### Engaging with the local community

We also look forward to (and will be proactive) in engaging with the local community regarding the next steps of the project, alongside Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust.

To that end, the newly elected Waitemātā Local Board considered the National Erebus Memorial proposal at its November meeting (minutes available [here](#)).

Officials from Manatū Taonga attended the meeting and discussed with the Board our request for an amendment to a condition in the Landowner approval **letter**, namely an extension to the time period (initially listed as 7 December 2022).

At that meeting, the Board decided to defer a decision on the request for three months while it obtains further information. We continue to work closely with Auckland Council and the Local Board to ensure it has fulsome, accurate information to inform future decision making.

### Site update

We remain fully committed to constructing the Memorial at the site, however, with final decisions by Auckland Council for the Memorial pending, construction is unlikely to commence before the end of January 2023.

On this basis, we decided to temporarily remove the fenced construction area installed at the park, providing more green space for

locals and visitors to enjoy over the summer break.

We look forward to sharing updates about progressing the Memorial in the new year.

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28 March 2022

## Ministry welcomes the conclusion of the Chief Ombudsman's report

Today the Chief Ombudsman completed his investigation into complaints his office received regarding some aspects of the National Erebus Memorial project.

We have reviewed the report, and the findings announced today indicate that construction of the memorial can, and we believe should, go ahead.

The Chief Ombudsman has found that:

- Manatū Taonga acted reasonably in relation to the protection of the notable pōhutukawa tree near the memorial and significant steps have been taken to protect the tree to ensure it will not be harmed by construction of the memorial.
- The memorial design process was reasonable.
- The Ministry acted unreasonably by not consulting more widely in 2017/18 before forming a preference for a location for the proposed National Erebus Memorial in Auckland, but that the selection of Taurarua/Dove-Myer Robinson park site was not wrong and that significant consultation has been undertaken since.

While the process the Ministry undertook around our preference for Taurarua/Dove-Myer Robinson followed practice established over decades, we appreciate the Ombudsman's comments and will consider these in the future.

The Ombudsman has recommended that, before construction begins, the Ministry takes "reasonable steps" to engage with opponents of the memorial to attempt to resolve their sense of grievance. Ministry officials have already commenced dialogue with the opponents of the memorial.

We know the conclusion of this report will be welcomed by friends and family members of those who lost loved ones on Mount Erebus more than 42 years ago. Many Erebus whānau are eager to see the memorial built as soon as possible.

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22 December 2021

## Site preparation works progress and remembering Greg Gilpin, MNZM

Work to prepare the site at Dove-Myer Robinson Park for the construction of the National Erebus Memorial continues to progress. Last week, contractors established part of the fencing around the construction site.

Now that the first part of fencing at the memorial site has been successfully established, contractors will be able to continue site preparation works more easily and safely. We'll continue to work closely with our partners to ensure we can proceed in a way that minimises risk and maintains the health and safety of everyone on site.

It's been a long journey to get to this point, and the delays were felt most strongly following the passing of retired Police Inspector Greg Gilpin recently, who was eager to see this memorial built. Greg truly exemplified excellence, and was a person of great integrity, courage and compassion. In particular, his absence will be felt keenly by many of those involved in the Operation Overdue recovery operation following the Erebus disaster in 1979 and by families of those who lost their loved ones in the tragedy, who he met and supported in the years following.

Staff in the National Erebus Memorial team at Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage were deeply saddened to hear of his passing and have greatly appreciated his ongoing support. Our thoughts are with Greg's family, friends and local community, and by the many former colleagues he worked with during his distinguished career in the New Zealand Police.

An obituary of Greg's life is available [online](#).

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20 October 2021

## Site set-up begins

Site establishment of the National Erebus Memorial began this week.

This is a significant milestone for what has been a long process. Construction has been delayed while we worked to fully understand and accommodate concerns about the memorial project held by some people in the local community.

There are still some individuals who oppose the construction of the memorial, and it is disappointing to see protestors acting in this

manner, given how much time and work has gone into addressing their concerns over the past few months.

The team is troubled by continued claims that construction of the memorial will harm the notable pōhutukawa tree in any way. Anyone concerned about the pōhutukawa is encouraged to read the [Arboricultural Assessment report](#) from an independent arborist and reviewed by a range of similarly qualified experts. They have all concluded the memorial poses no risk to the tree.

In terms of tikanga, we are guided by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, whose rohe the site (including the tree) lies within, and they have said many times that the hapū is confident the tree will remain safe.

The team continues to progress with site establishment as soon as possible. Health and safety is a priority and we are managing works carefully, in line with approved resource consent and landowner approval conditions and all COVID-19 requirements.

In recognition that the Office of the Ombudsman is currently undertaking an inquiry into some aspects of the project, we have agreed to only carry out preparation works at this stage, which can be reversed if necessary. We remain confident in the integrity of the process followed to get to this point, and are supporting the Office of the Ombudsman in its inquiry. The Office has agreed to undertake its investigation as quickly as possible, to prevent further unnecessary and painful delays.

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7 October 2021

## Ministry prepares to commence construction

Construction of the National Erebus Memorial will be getting underway shortly and is expected to take approximately seven to nine months. The team is working closely with partners at Auckland Council, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and other agencies to ensure construction proceeds in a safe, peaceful and positive manner. The first stage of construction will consist of site set-up, and we will provide regular updates as work progresses.

Further information about site management can be found in our [website FAQs](#)

Some people in the local community have concerns about the effect of the memorial on a notable pōhutukawa tree nearby. However, careful planning has taken place over the past three years to ensure this tree will not be harmed.

The pōhutukawa will remain protected and there is no evidence to suggest any risk to its health or longevity. The tree will be outside the construction area and will remain untouched during construction. Any works carried out in the vicinity of the tree will be done by hand and under the supervision of a qualified arborist. All necessary steps have been taken to ensure the tree will remain a healthy and treasured taonga for many years to come.

After listening to concerns about how the pōhutukawa might be affected by building the memorial we have decided to take the extra step of reducing the length of the white 'ice wall' by about one metre, to completely avoid the protected root zone of the pōhutukawa (subject to securing the necessary variations to regulatory approvals). [Read further details about how the tree will be cared for.](#)

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19 May 2021

## Construction update

Construction of the National Erebus Memorial, scheduled to commence in early March, has been delayed due to a small, peaceful protest currently taking place at the memorial site in Auckland's Dove-Myer Robinson Park.

Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage is working to address concerns held by those involved in the protest, and provide further assurance around the ongoing protection of the notable pōhutukawa tree nearby (great care has been taken to ensure its health and longevity will not be affected).

We are aware of inaccurate information about the memorial circulating within the community. To help build greater understanding of the memorial project, the web pages have been updated to share more detailed information about both the site and design, including how the pōhutukawa and heritage of the site will be protected.

The government remains committed to the construction of the National Erebus Memorial at Dove-Myer Robinson Park.

Manatū Taonga is confident in the robustness of the planning process, including in selecting the design and site for the memorial. Securing all the necessary consents from independent and/or elected representatives demonstrates the thoroughness of the process over the past three years.

The Ministry is working closely with all relevant agencies and local hapū Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, to enable construction to begin safely on-site as soon as possible.

We will provide a further update about this as soon as we are able.

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22 February 2021

## Construction to begin

Construction of the new memorial is expected to commence **during the first week of March** and will take approximately six months (works are scheduled to finish mid-October). The main contractor working onsite will be Naylor Love. Construction will take place between the hours of **7am – 5pm, Monday to Friday**.

You may notice increased activity at the park during construction, and detailed plans are in place to ensure any disruption is kept to a minimum. All works will be completed in line with the approved Resource Consent and Land-Owner Consent conditions.

The map below shows the construction site area of the memorial:



The first stage, scheduled to take 2-3 weeks, will consist of site set-up and include installation of secure fencing around the site and construction of a temporary access road within the park so tools and materials can be brought onsite. This road will be completely removed at the end of the memorial's construction.

- Three car parks, near the entrance to the construction site, will be unavailable during the works.
- The main road through the park will be impacted by large deliveries from time to time, for a short duration, in line with a Traffic Management Plan prepared by the main contractor.
- A temporary access road through the park is being installed to protect sub-surface archaeology.
- The contractor site area will include containers for the site office and staff facilities, and parking.

If you have any queries, please do get in touch as the team working on the memorial project will be very happy to speak with you. You can email [erebus@mch.govt.nz](mailto:erebus@mch.govt.nz) or phone (04) 499 4229.

Further FAQs about construction are available on our [website](#).

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8 December 2020

## Landowner approval granted

On 17 November, the Waitemata Local Board considered the Ministry's landowner approval application for the **construction of the National Erebus Memorial in Auckland's Dove-Myer Robinson Park**.

Staff from the Ministry, including chief executive Bernadette Cavanagh, and architect Nick Barratt-Boyes presented at the Board meeting. A number of family members who lost loved ones in the Erebus accident also attended, sharing their experiences and perspectives with the Board and members of the public also present.

After several hours of public submissions and debate, the Board voted 4-3 in favour of granting landowner approval. This decision effectively means that construction of the memorial can now begin.

The project team is now working to finalise the project plan and works schedule for the construction phase, which is expected to commence during the first half of 2021.

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7 September 2020

## Archaeological Authority granted

On 7 September, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga granted an Archaeological Authority to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage for installation of the Memorial at the Dove-Myer Robinson site.

- [Read the Letter from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga and attached Authority \(PDF, 214KB\)](#)

As part of the Archaeological Authority application an updated archaeological assessment was submitted to Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. This final assessment includes several additional mitigations to the Memorial design, to further ensure that the proposed works avoid or minimise impacts on the archaeological and heritage values of the site.

- [Read Clough and Associates, Archaeological Assessment of Effects, July 2020 \(updated from December 2019\) \(PDF 9.2MB\)](#)
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20 March 2020

## Resource Consent Granted

The Ministry for Culture and Heritage was advised by Auckland Council yesterday that the resource consent for the National Erebus Memorial had been granted. This is a key milestone for the project. This decision was made by Independent Commissioner Ian Munro.

- [Read the Commissioner's decision report \(PDF, 346KB\)](#)
- [View the approved plans \(PDF, 14MB\)](#)

Resource consent is one of three consents and approvals which the Ministry must obtain before the construction of the Memorial can get underway. The others are archaeological authority from Heritage New Zealand and approval from Waitematā Local Board who are the landowners of the proposed site Dove-Myer Robinson Park. The Ministry for Culture and Heritage continues to work through these important regulatory processes.

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6 March 2020

## Memorial resource consent will be non-notified

Auckland Council have advised that resource consent for the National Erebus Memorial will be non-notified. This decision was taken by an Independent Commissioner.

The Commissioner has reviewed the Ministry's application to build the memorial at Dove-Myer Robinson Park and was satisfied that no one would be adversely affected by the proposal and there will be no more than a minor impact on the park itself. This means the application can proceed on a non-notified basis.

The Ministry believes this decision reflects the thorough design process and planning approach followed for this project. The memorial has been designed to sit lightly on the landscape and enhance the surrounds of Dove-Myer Robinson Park.

The Commissioner has not yet made a decision on the resource consent itself.

Resource consent is one of three consents and approvals which the Ministry must obtain before the construction of the Memorial can get underway. The others are archaeological authority from Heritage New Zealand and approval from Waitematā Local Board who are the landowners of the proposed site Dove-Myer Robinson Park. The Ministry for Culture and Heritage continues to work through these important regulatory processes.

The Commissioner's full decision is available on the [Auckland Council website](#).

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18 February 2020

## Archaeological assessment reports now available

The archaeological assessment of the proposed site for the National Erebus Memorial in Dove-Myer Robinson Park is complete. A [summary and the full reports](#) are now available.

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5 February 2020

## Exploratory archaeological work complete

The exploratory archaeological work at proposed site of the National Erebus Memorial was completed as planned on Friday 31 January. The project archaeologists are now finalising the report on their findings. This will be submitted to Heritage New Zealand

Pouhere Taonga as part of the Ministry's application for archaeological authority to build on this site.

The full report will be published on the Ministry's website in the next few weeks.

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28 January 2020

## Exploratory archaeological work planned for proposed National Erebus Memorial site

Before construction of the National Erebus Memorial can begin at the proposed site in Dove-Myer Robinson Park, Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage must gain an archaeological authority from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

As part of this process, an archaeologist will be undertaking some exploratory work at the proposed site. This will determine whether there is anything of archaeological significance at the site which might affect the plans for the memorial.

This archaeological exploratory work is scheduled to take place on 31 January 2020. It is expected to take no more than one day.

The Ministry has consent from Auckland Council and Heritage New Zealand to undertake this work. This consent from Auckland Council is unrelated to landowner approval, which is also required before construction of the memorial can begin. The Ministry will submit an application for final landowner approval for Waitemata Local Board's consideration once the resource consent and archaeological authority are in place.

### What is involved in the archaeological work?

An archaeologist will hand-dig a series of small test squares of no more than 0.5m<sup>2</sup>. These excavations will allow the archaeologist to further investigate several areas of potential interest identified during earlier testing on the site. Any archaeological evidence discovered will be recorded and re-covered with soil.

The proposed site for the National Erebus Memorial is located on land likely to be associated with the late 19th or early 20th century landscaping works undertaken by Sir John Logan Campbell within the grounds of his property *Kilbryde House*, which was demolished in 1924.

The proposed temporary access road required for the memorial construction will run across the site of the *Kilbryde* house itself. This road will be built up so as not to disturb the existing ground. Although no surface remains of the house have survived, earlier testing of the site indicated subsurface features (likely remnant foundations) may be present. The exploratory work currently underway will help establish the nature of these subsurface features.

The surrounding area is also significant to Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei and Ngāti Paoa.



### What happens then?

The results of this exploratory work will form part of the Ministry's application to Heritage New Zealand for an archaeological authority to build the National Erebus Memorial on the site at Dove-Myer Robinson Park.

Archaeological authority is one of three consents required before construction of the memorial can begin. The others are resource consent and landowner approval from Waitematā Local Board.

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## Quick Links

- [FAQs about the National Erebus Memorial](#)
- [About the final design: \*Te Paerangi Ataata - Sky Song\*](#)
- [About the Erebus accident](#) 
- [Names of those who lost their lives in the Erebus accident](#)
- [Media releases and enquiries](#)
- [40th Anniversary of Erebus Accident at Government House](#) 

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Updated on 11th August 2023