

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Zealand's museums community pays tribute to Dr Bennington

Museums Aotearoa pays tribute to Dr Seddon Bennington with sadness and with warmth. His untimely passing has taken a valued member of New Zealand's museum community from us.

As Chief Executive of our National museum, Seddon was keen to play his part in the wider museum sector. He listened to the concerns of other museums and galleries, large and small, and worked to support them. He was a generous colleague to all those he met.

Seddon served on the Board of Museums Aotearoa for four years, ending his term in April this year. During that time, he rarely missed a Board meeting, engaged positively in Museums Aotearoa activities, and contributed wherever he could.

Chair of Museums Aotearoa, Lesley Colsell says that Seddon will be remembered for his leadership of Te Papa Tongarewa, "but also for the guidance provided to other museums in this country. He played a truly national and international role within museums and he will be missed".

Greg McManus, Director of Rotorua Museum and Museums Aotearoa Board member, agrees. "We have lost the leader of our national museum and a leader of our profession in New Zealand and internationally. Under Seddon's direction Te Papa has raised the bar for all of us and we can all be extremely grateful for his legacy while at the same time deeply saddened by his passing".

Board colleague Linda Tyler reflects that "he was a very nice man, friendly and generous to a fault with his time". Laureen Sadlier says that, "as a Board Member of Museums Aotearoa, Seddon was welcoming, very approachable and supportive of Kaitiaki Maori".

"He interviewed me for this position, and never failed to offer support and advice in the time I have been here," says Phillipa Tocker, Executive Director of Museums Aotearoa. "He was passionate about museums, always collegial, approachable, happy to talk to anyone, to share his varied experience."

Other colleagues acknowledge his open and friendly personal style that brought Te Papa through a difficult period. "It was Seddon's leadership that returned the *mana* of the national art collection to its individual core role within the institution. His recent work to bring our Venice Biennale exhibition back to Te Papa and New Zealand was part of that", says Scott Pothan, Director of Whangarei Art Museum.

We hope the following days are filled with warm memories and respect for all Seddon's achievements and the achievements of Team Te Papa. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and colleagues.

Me to aroha tino nui atu

Phillipa Tocker, Executive Director
On behalf of the Members, Board and staff of Museums Aotearoa

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