

Speech by John Lindsay, Chairman of the Board, Ports of Auckland
Queens Wharf Open Day
25 April 2010

- The Honorable Murray McCully, Minister for the Rugby World Cup,
- Auckland Regional Council Chairman Mike Lee
- Members of Parliament
- Councillors from Auckland Regional Council
- Our many distinguished guests
- And very importantly - members of the public, because today really is all about you.

On behalf of Ports of Auckland, I'd like to warmly welcome you all here to Queens Wharf.

I would also like to acknowledge Lieutenant Hogg and representatives from the New Zealand Navy and reflect on how appropriate it is that this event is taking place on ANZAC Day.

That is because Queens Wharf has had its own role in our military history, as the scene of farewelling thousands of our soldiers as they ventured off to serve their country in wars overseas.

With that in mind, again on behalf of Ports of Auckland, I would like to express on behalf of Ports of Auckland the debt of gratitude that we all owe to those who have served their country.

This is also a special day, as we are here to celebrate the start of a new direction as the city of Auckland looks to the future.

But while Auckland Regional Council Chairman Mike Lee and the Minister will be addressing that future, it is my pleasure to look back a little and celebrate Queens Wharf as an important part of our city's past.

It is a fact that Auckland city is here because of the Port. It has grown because of the Port, and the Port will always remain an important part of the city.

This particular part of the waterfront has served the greater Auckland region for more than 150 years.

The original 'Queen Street Wharf' was a wooden structure begun in 1852. At the time it stretched 474 metres – nearly half a kilometre – out into what was then known as Commercial Bay, and was built principally to serve overseas vessels while coastal trade was handled at other wharves.

Construction of the concrete Queens Wharf on which we now stand was begun in 1907 – and built alongside the original wharf which was then demolished.

That's why the present day Queens Wharf (completed in 1913) is a little further east than the original wharf.

At the turn of last century, this wharf was the hub of the city's commercial activity. As business boomed and Auckland grew, it soon became important to both protect and inspect cargoes that were transiting.

That was when the process of closing off the commercial operations of the Port – and the famous Red Fence – began.

In 1909 plans were submitted and on October 30, 1912, a tender for the fence and gate was accepted at a cost of 2,350 pounds.

On March 12, 1914, the contract was completed and the lamps at the gate were lit for the first time.

Queens Wharf has continued to serve the needs of Auckland, and has been used for a variety of purposes ever since.

Throughout World War 2, for example, a total of 104 American warships and 284 transport ships docked here.

More recently Queens Wharf has served as a point of entry for fruit shipments such as bananas and pineapples, as well as for agricultural machinery and most of the vehicles being imported to New Zealand each year.

This operation, still important for Auckland and the Port, is now consolidated further east.

In recent times Queens Wharf has, of course, also served as a second berth for cruise ship visits to Auckland.

From this vantage point it is easy to see why this use is so appropriate; and why we are pleased to see that plans incorporate a cruise ship berth as part of the development through to the Rugby World Cup 2011 and beyond.

These plans will form the platform for the wharf to become an asset admired, enjoyed and - most importantly - used by the people of Auckland and visitors to this wonderful city for many years to come.

In this context, I note that that since 1996 more than 70 hectares of land and wharf space has been released by the Port for alternative use.

This is an area equivalent in size to the Auckland Domain.

Ports of Auckland is very aware of its responsibility as a port operating in the heart of a vibrant city.

As history will reflect, we have played an important role in contributing to that vibrancy, and we intend to build on that contribution into the future.

In the meantime, we are very excited now to be neighbours – and very supportive neighbours – of what will be a magnificent addition to Auckland's public spaces.

This brings me to a quote I heard from Riki Ellison – an inspiring New Zealander who has made an impact both on the sports field, with the San Francisco 49ers, and in the community as a founder of a programme for disadvantaged children in the United States.

Riki made the comment in a documentary on his achievements, that “what the world needs is not more dreamers, but more dream-makers.”

I think, in the context of today, it is a very relevant thought.

With that in mind, Ports of Auckland recognises all those who have been part of Queens Wharf’s history. We congratulate all those here who are now contributing to its future.

We wish the dream-makers well.

And we hope everyone here enjoys this day, and the activities that have been put on to celebrate the integration of Queens Wharf into the vision for the future of Auckland.