

E NA MANA, E NGA REO, E NGA HAU E WHA
TENA KOUTOU TENA KOUTOU TENA KOUTOU KATOA

I would like to begin by extending to you Prime Minister, on behalf of the Patrons and Trustees of the Ashburton Performing Arts Theatre Trust and the special guests before you — and I refer of course to all of you here tonight — a very warm welcome to the Ashburton District. It is indeed a privilege to have you present in our community for this very special occasion.

The development of the Ashburton Trust Event Centre has been in anyone's terms, a massive project and I would like to acknowledge the team of architects, planners, builders and tradesmen who have ensured that we are here tonight. This has been without doubt a true community achievement, and while receiving Council support at crucial times (beginning with Mayor Murray Anderson), it has essentially been driven by the community through a tireless band of volunteers — volunteers who simply would not allow the dream to die.

I refer of course to the Ashburton Operatic Society these days known as the Ashburton Variety Theatre and to the Ashburton Performing Arts Theatre Trust. While it might have been Alan McQuarters' idea in the beginning it has been Russell Anstiss who has led the charge, hassling and nagging anyone and everyone — as only he can — in the pursuit of making this project happen. George Brown has masterminded the fundraising campaign, assisting Russell make numerous presentations and funding applications, and has been the perfect complement to Russell's enthusiasm.

If the success of this project can be credited to one individual, then Russell you are that person. The Ashburton District and in particular the performing arts community owe you a huge debt of gratitude brought about by your perseverance and 'never – say – never' attitude.

“RUSSELL WE SALUTE YOU” !!!

I believe the development of this performing arts centre marks a coming of age for the Ashburton District. It will provide greater opportunity for our emerging talent to perform and flourish — it will complement the growing multi-cultural element in our society as well as providing a wonderful venue for entertaining our community.

The Ashburton District has risen to the challenge in providing this excellent facility, but in a sense the challenge has just begun. The real challenge is not just to ensure that it works to full capacity as the entertainment, cultural and conference heart of our District — but that it is also genuinely accepted and taken ownership of, by all in our community.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you have performed magnificently, and on behalf of the community of the Ashburton District, and the generations to come, I sincerely thank you.