



Wellington Harbour Board and Bond Store

The Wellington Harbour Board started in October 1880, following a campaign by the city's Chamber of Commerce, deciding that there was a need for its establishment. The Chamber of Commerce was made up of elected and appointment bodies from political and commercial interests.

The reason for the Board was to effectively manage and develop the harbour and its facilities. A few of its projects included wharf provision, reclamation schemes, and trade and commerce in the port. The Harbour Board succeeded in managing operations effectively after making a profit every year from 1882 on, and by 1889 it had a substantial amount in the bank. From 1887, the expanding administrative staff were housed in a new store on Queen's Wharf, with the understanding that they would move to a new permanent purpose-built office in the not too distant future.

In 1881 the Board purchased the old Queen's Bond (a corrugated iron warehouse, used to store items from whiskey to corsets) along with the Queens Wharf, the weighbridge, and all wharfage rights on Customhouse Quay. By the late 1880s the old Queen's Bond was no longer satisfactory and on May 1890 it was decided to create a new bond store and head office building.

By March 1892 the Bond Store and Head Office building were both open and a foundation stone was placed in the new building containing copies of Harbour Board reports from 1880-1890, along with by-laws of the Board, a lithograph of the proposed building, a tin box containing various coins, an impress of the Board seal, and one copy of the Evening Post and the Evening Press.

Between 1925 and 1926 the Board expanded and refurbished the head office to provide more office space.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Harbour Board's Bond Store and Head Office was the centre of Wellington's thriving commercial port.

Considerable reclamation had already been accomplished, and further schemes to increase the amount of flat land around the harbour front were underway. Over the years there were major waterside strikes. By the 1920s the number of goods requiring storage before duty was paid had declined considerably.

In 1954, the Harbour purchased a leasehold interest in Wright Stephenson's building in Fryatt Quay. In the 1950s the development of road and rail resulted in the disappearance of local ferries from the harbour and the rise of air travel saw the demise of inter-colonial passenger services to Australia. The advent of roll-on roll-off ferries from the early 1960s changed the need for a once vital coastal shipping sector and a great deal of wharf and shed space was freed up.

By the early 1970s the Wellington Harbour Board's status had altered considerably and members were conscious of the Board's past and decide to display its collection of artefacts and archival material of Wellington Harbour and maritime history. On 26 April 1972 the Marine Museum of the Wellington Harbour opened. In late October 1989 as a result of local government restructuring and privatisation the Bond Store and Wellington Harbour Board Head Office disbanded.