

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Carter Observatory Lands Lotto Grant

Carter Observatory has big plans for the generous grant of \$698,400 announced by the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board last week towards its refurbishment. Carter Observatory re-opened to the public one month ago but has got big plans to cement itself as New Zealand's place for space.

Planning will begin in the next month on a new exhibition around rocketry and space flight and will be propelled by the historic contribution of our very own rocket man Sir William Pickering.

Sir William was born on Mt Victoria, Wellington in 1910 and was educated at Wellington College. He spent his early childhood in Marlborough before attending Wellington College and studied engineering at Canterbury University. He later obtained his Masters in engineering at Caltech in 1933 and a PhD in Physics in 1936 and became a pivotal figure with his involvement in America's space race when on 31 January 1958, the *Explorer 1* blasted into Earth orbit.

His inspirational story will focus the development of the planned exhibition around rocketry and space flight that will be added to the current gallery space and will feature new educational resources and interactive displays. This grant will also contribute to the creation of a new film on how Māori and Pacific Islanders used the stars that will feature in Carter's new mini theatre.

Dr Sarah Rusholme, Director says, "Carter tells the story of New Zealand's Southern Skies and we feature early Māori, Polynesian and European navigation in our multi-media exhibition. This film will add another layer of interpretation and will contribute significantly to our visitor offering". She continues, "We're very excited that we can now proceed with these exhibits that have always been a part of our long term plan. We're very grateful to the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board for giving us the means. We know this will only strengthen Carter's unique story of New Zealand and our place in space".

Planning for the next exhibit will begin in the next month with the intention of opening the new gallery in early 2011.

*For more information please contact:*

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