



# Cathedral's fate remains unclear

Michael Wright

The dome on the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament may be down in four weeks, but the fate of the Christchurch landmark is still unclear.

The Catholic cathedral has been too dangerous to enter since the September 4 quake, but engineers have inspected the interior from a crane.

The main dome is unstable and has to be removed to ease pressure on the supporting structure. Parts of the two towers will also be dismantled.

Cathedral management board chairman Lance Ryan said preliminary inspections of the main structure showed it was in reasonable shape, "but we won't really know the extent of the damage until we get inside the building".

The dome will have a steel frame built around it to hold the 20-tonne structure in place as it is taken down.

Opus structural engineer Jamie Lester said building and fastening the frame was a delicate operation.

"The structure we put around the dome has to be carefully designed because being old timber, it's quite



brittle, and if it moves too much it could partially collapse."

It would be at least a week before the assembly around the dome would start.

Naylor Love regional manager Peter Lockhart said the removal would be a "very early in the morning job" and should take half a day to complete. It was too early to know the building's fate, but parts of it would "definitely" be saved.

Heritage consultant Carole-Lynne Kerrigan is recording and storing the Oamaru and Mt Somers stone that has fallen to the ground. She said stone with decorative features was being saved for repairs.



**Neat piles:** Rubble from the cathedral, above and left, is sorted and some stone will be saved and used for repair work.

**Big job:** Site manager Peter Lockhart, of Naylor Love, near the dome of the cathedral which he says will take half a day to remove.





Victim: Work under way at the quake-damaged Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Barbadoes St, Christchurch.

Photos: KIRK HARGREAVES