



Terminal feedback 'positive'

Wellington International Airport says it has had positive feedback from the first members of the public to see inside its controversial international terminal.

Dubbed "The Rock" and likened to a pumpkin because of its round shape and copper plating when first announced, the new terminal is the final stage in a \$60 million development at the airport that began in 2006. It will be opened today by Prime Minister John Key.

Airport chief executive Steve Fitzgerald said the "edgy" new building doubled the airport's international passenger processing capability, from 500 passengers an hour to 1000. Airport traffic is expected to double by 2030.

"It prepares us exceptionally well for the World Cup and then the passenger growth that we expect through the next 20 years."

While criticised by architects when plans were first unveiled, feedback had so far been positive, Mr Fitzgerald said.

The first of the passengers who

went through yesterday had congregated in "The Rock" – at the far end of the terminal – which was "a great first impression".

"People are obviously attracted to the feel of the new bits."

Architect Nick Barratt-Boyes of Wellington's Studio Pacific Architecture said space was so tight that recesses had to be cut into the building to allow room for planes and ground-service vehicles to manoeuvre outside.

Modelled on Wellington's rugged south coast, the 1600 square metres of copper on the building's exterior would be left to oxidise, turning blue-green as it weathers in the salty air.

Mr Barratt-Boyes said the macrocarpa panelling and glass fissures on the interior gave the terminal a nice light, while windows were carved out for selective views of the planes on the tarmac. It was also a "sequence of spaces" that allowed people to explore the area and people-watch.

He was "pleasantly surprised" by the reaction to the terminal.

With the airport described by Mr Fitzgerald as having the most intense land use of any airport in the world, engineers and architects outlined the difficulty in constructing the new terminal – which ties together three existing buildings – while causing minimal disruption to airport operations.

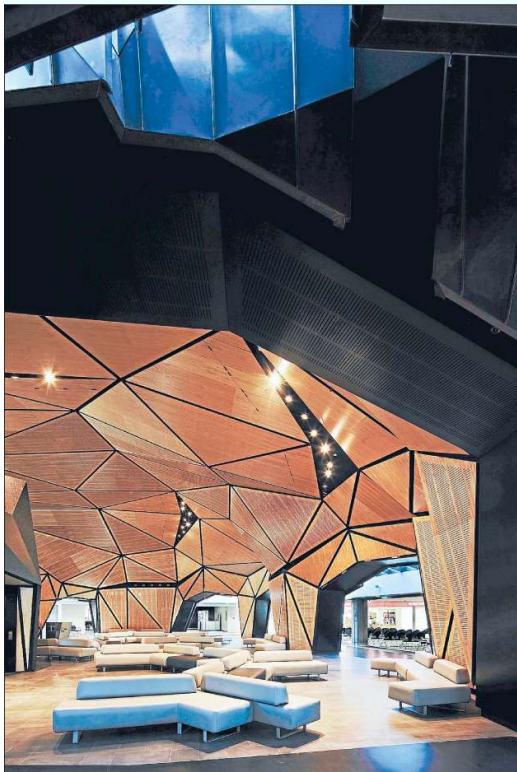
Project manager Garth Palmer, from Impact Project Management, said the creation of The Rock set a "new benchmark" for challenging projects.

"The Rock was arguably one of New Zealand's most complex and challenging construction projects to oversee."

Mike Kerr, regional manager of engineering firm Beca, said the easiest structure to engineer was a simple box.

"By contrast, The Rock's design is about as far from a straight-sided cube as it is possible to get."

Fairfax



Rock solid: Wellington Airport's new international terminal, dubbed "The Rock".