

UNDER

THE COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY ACT 1908

IN THE MATTER OF

**ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO
BUILDING FAILURE CAUSED BY CANTERBURY
EARTHQUAKES**

**KOMIHANA A TE KARAUNA HEI TIROTIRO I
NGA WHARE I HORO I NGA RUWHENUA O
WAITAHA**

AND IN THE MATTER OF

THE CTV BUILDING COLLAPSE

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MARGARET JANE AYDON
IN RELATION TO THE CTV BUILDING**

DATE OF HEARING: COMMENCING 25 JUNE 2012

STATEMENT OF MARGARET JANE AYDON IN RELATION TO THE CTV BUILDING

Personal Background

1. My name is Margaret Jane Aydon and I reside in Kaiapoi, Christchurch. I am currently employed with the Anglican Centre, Christchurch, as Bishop Victoria's personal assistant. I was on the 3rd floor (Level 4) of the CTV Building (**the Building**) when the building collapsed. At the time I was working for King's Education, which occupied the whole of the 3rd floor of the Building.
2. I joined Kings Education as their Operational Manager in early October 2010. My role involved working with the Managing Director, Brian Taylor, producing facts and figures for courses we were running and future courses. I was also the main point of contact for students with student related problems. I dealt directly with new students organising their enrolment and visas. I helped organise timetabling and staffing issues. I had a team of admin assistants, and worked along side our Account Manager, Deborah (Deb) Roberts. Kings Education occupied the whole of the 3rd floor of the Building.

Post 4 September

3. The 4 September earthquake was prior to my commencement at Kings Education. However, I did notice visible damage to the Building, both inside and out, when I joined in early October. The damage was noticeable right from the beginning and I immediately asked Brian Taylor if it had ever been assessed and what had come about as a result. He told me an assessment had been carried out and the building was safe to occupy.
4. Attached is a floor plan of the Building I have prepared (marked "A"). The positions of the rooms and internal walls have not been drawn to scale and their placement is approximate only. The cracks and other issues of concern that I refer to in my evidence are marked on this plan.
5. There was a crack in the video room, which ran down the wall attached to the pillar. I have marked this as "1" on the plan. I was particularly concerned with this crack because it was very noticeable. The room was painted with a dark paint and you could clearly see the plasterboard underneath. The crack was approximately 1cm in width. It ran vertically down the pillar and was approximately half the length of the

pillar. This damage prompted my initial query to Brian regarding whether a building assessment had been done.

6. Sandra Hii, our receptionist, could not put a pen down on her reception desk without it slowly rolling. We used to comment that we wondered what they had done when they had inspected the Building because it was clear to us that the floor was not level. The pen would roll in a south-east direction. The problem seemed isolated to the reception desk, although we didn't have anything around there with which to compare. I have marked this area as "2" on the plan. This again was brought to the attention of Brian and brought up in staff meetings.
7. There was also damage to a glass partition in the canteen area. I have marked this as "3" on the plan. The glass had been taped with blue masking tape. I think this was to stop it from cracking further. The tape was shaped like a cross and I understood that this was to hold the panes of glass together. The other panes, that didn't have cracking, were also taped. I think they were taped as a precaution.
8. There were other areas of damage in the Building, but these seemed superficial. For example, there were ceiling tiles that had moved and been left moved, and there were obvious cracks down the corners in rooms next to the lift, but these things were common in buildings at this time so were less of a concern to me. These areas of damage were included when the other issues of damage were discussed.
9. Ron Godkin, who was a tutor at Kings Education, had noticed some bulging or possible cracking of the glass along the south wall. I couldn't pick it up with the naked eye but I could see it when he pointed it out to me. The Building Manager arranged for someone to check it and the glass was subsequently replaced. I didn't query who the Building Manager was at the time. I have marked where I think the areas of damage to the glass were as "4" on the plan.
10. The damage in the Building was discussed by the staff numerous times both informally and formally. Sometimes I would simply drop by Brian's office and other times it was discussed during staff meetings or via email. The damage to the building was always mentioned in the meetings, but it was not of any more importance than anything else on the agenda. Brian's response was always the same, which was that he had been told by the Building Manager that the Building was safe to occupy.

Boxing Day

11. Staff members were reluctant to come back into the Building following the Boxing Day earthquake because shelving had not been secured to the walls after the September earthquake, as promised. This had been organised with the Building Manager. I had worked with Heidi Berg and Cristiano (Chris) Carazo-Chandler, who were both full time teachers, to clear the main storage room and the shelves along the walls of the staff room over the Christmas break to alleviate some of the concern. The aim had been to clear as much excess material as possible to clear the tops of the shelving units so things would not fall, let alone dislodge in an aftershock. We had taken several car loads to a lock up on Antigua Street.
12. The crack in the video conference room had increased. It was the full length of the pillar running ceiling to floor. At the top of the pillar, close to the ceiling, it was approximately 5cm in width. You could now put your hand right through the wall. It was also clear to me that whatever was causing the reception desk to slope had increased. I covered Reception a lot for the two weeks after Christmas so I had first hand experience of how bad it really got and it definitely seemed to get worse following Boxing Day. We had to use blutac and rubber-bands to stop pencils rolling off the desk.
13. Through a series of emails to Brian the staff asked if the Building had been inspected following the Boxing Day earthquake. The email that came back from him attached an email from the Building Manager, who I am sure was John Drew, telling us that the Building had been inspected following the Boxing Day earthquake and that the Building was safe to occupy. I had only taken the statutory days off over the Christmas period and hadn't seen anyone come through so I queried when the inspection had been done. I never received an answer. However, I am sure that Brian would have queried this with the Building Manager because he was a man of his word.

Water leaks

14. On two occasions we had water running down the wall outside of the toilets causing flooding on the floor. I have marked this as "5" on the plan. The first occasion was probably around the middle of October, but I can't be sure of the exact date. This was repaired, but the flooding occurred again and this time the flooding was worse. I think this second occasion was some time after Boxing Day. Again John Drew got it

fixed. We were never given an explanation of what was causing the flooding, only that water was coming from the floor above.

Demolition on adjoining site

15. The demolition of the building next door to the CTV Building started at about the same time as I started, which was early October. I am not sure what was previously in the neighbouring building. It was approximately 3 floors in height.
16. The wall of the CTV Building and the wall of the neighbouring building were only about three inches apart. The wall of the CTV Building was block work and the wall of the neighbouring building was brick. I had a view of the gap between the walls when I pulled into my car park and it looked to me like they were joined together using what looked like black, metal ties. It is difficult to say how many there were but they seemed to be in rows. When they removed the adjoining wall you could see that there were holes in the wall of the CTV Building. This was especially visible when you were in the underground car park because the car park was dark and you could see light coming through the holes. I came to the conclusion that when the ties were removed they had left holes in the wall of the CTV Building.
17. The CTV Building moved a lot more after the removal of the wall. I didn't notice any difference in the movement in the Building from foot traffic, but there was an increased movement when dump trucks drove past and from aftershocks. There was a big change to the way the Building felt. We would bounce constantly while the digger work was being carried out at the demolition site. Some days the movement of the Building was so bad that I felt seasick. I joked to the Brian and other staff about it because sometimes we wouldn't know if it was an aftershock or the diggers.
18. The whole feeling of the Building was somehow different. It is very difficult to put into words. It was just a constant sense of bobbing and bouncing. And some days were much worse than others. We soon realised that the movement we felt was proximate to the size of the diggers working on the demolition site. The bigger the diggers, the more the Building bounced. Whether I was sat at my desk or stood in the accounts room the feeling was like being on a trampoline, gently but constantly bobbing up and down. Yet for the most part an aftershock would send you from side to side. This was how we would distinguish between an aftershock and the diggers.
19. The demolition was completed about a week before the earthquake on 22 February.

20. On the Monday the same guys who were carrying out the demolition drilled holes in the wall of the CTV Building. We were told that this was to get the wall ready for the wooden bracing. I assume that this was part of the demolition process. The bracing was supposed to be put in place the following day. It never made sense to me that you would drill holes, without putting the bracing up immediately afterwards.

The 22 February Earthquake

21. At the time of the 22 February earthquake I was in my office on the 3rd floor. It was lunchtime and a student, Rosendo Ramos, had come into my office to see me. Rosendo is Filipino and spoke very little English. I had just got up from my desk and was extending a hand of greeting when the earthquake began. I have marked my position as “6a” on the plan and marked Rosendo’s position as “6b”.
22. The initial feeling was a jolt and I was thrown against the east wall. It felt like being on an ice rink in flat shoes. Then I was thrown back again, westwards, and struck the edge of my desk. I just remember screaming “get under your desks, get under your desks” at the top of my voice hoping that everyone on the floor would hear me. It was extremely noisy and violent. As I was getting under my desk I felt the sensation of falling. I was moving downward to get under my desk anyway but I knew that I had gone further than just ducking under my desk. This all happened in a matter of seconds.
23. I can’t be sure how long the shaking went on for. Everything seemed to be in slow motion. It was still shaking, but I just remember that I couldn’t see anything and I couldn’t breathe. The feeling of not being able to breathe was the most traumatic.
24. When the moving stopped my senses slowly came back to me and the next thing I noticed was the dust. I was now able to breathe. This was such a relief, but it was extremely difficult. I was in a sitting position. Instinctively I put my hands over my head, down my arms, down either of my legs to check for injuries. My left leg was extremely painful but I was able to move it. I tried to move my whole body but couldn’t and realised that my skirt and jacket were caught so I removed them. I was in auto-pilot mode.

25. It was at this point that I tried to get up and realised that the strip light from the ceiling was on top of my desk. I put my hand out to see whether there was room to stand up and realised the ceiling was resting on the top of my desk and I was jammed in. I then remembered the student who had come to see me so I called out his name asking if he was alright. He didn't answer straight away but he eventually said "yes, yes" and we were able to touch fingers through the crack in the surface of the desk. It was such a relief. I asked Rosendo if he could move or see the door to get out but he said no. I didn't realise the whole building had collapsed at this point.
26. He then got out his mobile phone and he used the light as a torch. I could see the light through the crack in the desk. With the little bit of light from the phone I tried again to get my bearings.
27. I was positioned with my back in line with the North wall, perhaps a metre or so from it. I didn't feel that I was level. It was a weird sensation; it felt like I was definitely on a slope southwards, perhaps even slightly to the west.
28. I could see that the cupboard which had been against the window wall was now next to my desk and the draws were on the other side so I was blocked in. Then my phone rang and I could see it had fallen on the floor, which was intact. It was Dave, my husband. I answered it but he couldn't hear me. Then the line went dead.
29. Approximately 10-15 minutes after the first earthquake, but I really can't be sure, we had another strong aftershock and I felt like I dropped again. I can not be sure whether I felt this same intensity of downward movement with the initial earthquake because I was trying to get under my desk and I was already moving. However, there was a definite feeling of falling with this one. There were other aftershocks but nothing as severe as this one. I could no longer sit up and was on my elbow and almost lying. The slope I was on got worse after this earthquake, it somehow felt steeper.
30. I began to smell smoke. I think possibly I had smelt smoke earlier but because of the dust and dryness it was difficult to tell. This time you definitely could and this seemed to spur us on.

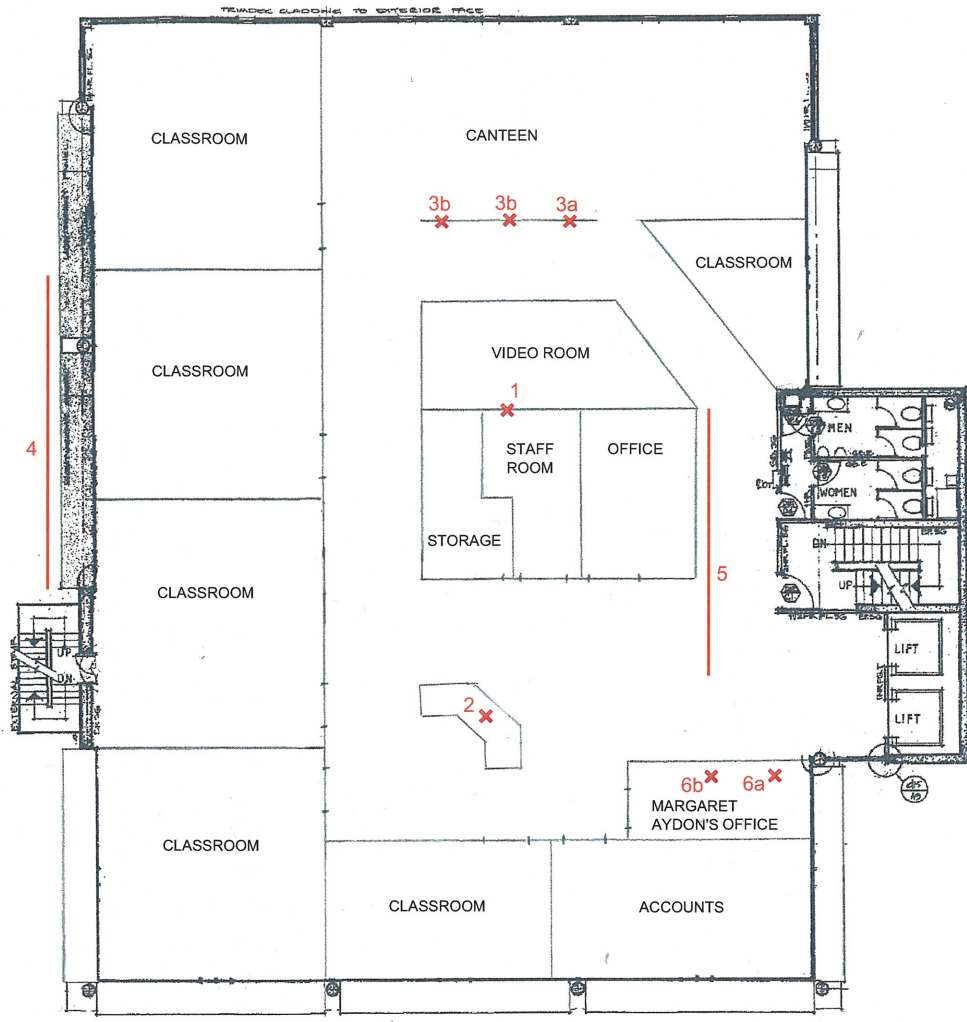
31. I asked Rosendo to turn off his phone to see whether we could see any natural light. I couldn't see the light, but he told me he could so at that point the adrenalin really kicked in. The light was behind me, to the North, so we knew he had to come over to my side of the desk. I began kicking the desk from my side and he began kicking it from his side and then it gave way. He managed to crawl over the top while I was underneath so he was on my side of the desk. Everything appeared to still be moving, but I can't be sure whether this was shifting material or aftershocks.
32. Rosendo and I started to move rubble and we managed to get it past us, far enough for him to be able to move forward towards the light. I managed to push myself using my heels so that I moved behind Rosendo, but I couldn't see where I was heading. We seemed to be moving for a long time.
33. I then heard Rosendo shouting for help so knew that he was out. A policeman and another man came to help us. The policeman asked me "are you alright, love?" and asked if I had anything stuck, after I replied no I was immediately pulled free. I was then dropped to someone below, but I am not clear on the details. I do not know how high I was before I was dropped.
34. I was in Latimer Square by the time of the next big earthquake. I saw helicopters dropping water on the Building and it was then that I knew that things were really bad.

Signed: M. Aydon

MARGARET AYDON

Date: 2/4/12

"A"



249 MADRAS ST - LEVEL 4

KEY

- 1. Crack in the plasterboard
- 2. Reception desk
- 3a. Cracked pane of glass
- 3b. Taped panes glass
- 4. Damaged windows
- 5. Flooding
- 6a. Location of Margaret Aydon
- 6b. Location of Rosendo Ramos