Introduction:

The hearing set down for the next two days will address the Terms of Reference requirement of the Royal Commission to inquire into the legal and best-practice requirements for the assessments and remedial work on buildings after an earthquake having regard to lessons from the Canterbury earthquakes and how those requirements compare to similar matters in other countries.

The assessment process after the September and Boxing Day earthquakes has already been considered in some detail in the hearings related to individual buildings. The Commission has held hearings to consider the failure of some 21 un-reinforced masonry buildings, the PGC building, the Forsyth Barr building, the Hotel Grand Chancellor and most recently, the CTV building.

This hearing is an opportunity to consider the issues that were raised in those hearings and other issues in order to determine how we can ensure we have a post-earthquake building management system that meets legal and best-practice requirements.

The current building assessment process arose out of guidelines developed by the New Zealand Society of Earthquake Engineers.

The Canterbury earthquakes were the first real test of those guidelines. The huge scale of the earthquakes and their consequences severely tested the process and the resources needed to operate it.

Whilst generally, the process worked reasonably well in the circumstances, issues and short-comings and gaps in the regulatory framework became apparent.

This hearing is an opportunity to examine those matters, not in an attempt to unnecessarily go over those problems, but rather to accept that they occurred and look at how they could be remedied so that a better system is in place for any future events.

Submissions in relation to building management after earthquakes have been received from some 20 people or entities, including a statement from Ted Blaikie, an Opus engineer, which has been treated as a submission.

Those submissions cover a wide range of issues, including:

- the “trigger” to require a building assessment process

- the test to be applied by engineers/inspectors to determine re-occupancy
- the publics understanding of that test and the issue of “risk”
- whether different considerations should apply to different types of buildings, such as URM buildings, multi-storey buildings or heritage buildings
- the placarding system, in particular the green placards.
- the transition from the emergency period to the recovery period and the legislative framework that provides for that.
- the capabilities and training of engineers and building inspectors involved on the process.
- Communication between engineers and the public over concepts such as “safe to occupy”

Hearing Plan:

The format for the hearing is a number of presentations today and a panel discussion tomorrow.

Monday:

This morning we will hear from Mr David Brunsdon who will deliver a power point presentation providing an over-view of the evaluation and management of building following earthquakes.

Mr Brunsdon is a Director of the Kestrel Group. He is a structural engineer with considerable expertise in the areas of infrastructure risk management and emergency response management. He has been responsible over the last decade for developing and implementing New Zealand’s post-distaster building safety evaluation and rescue engineering arrangements. He assisted the CCC with the coordination of the building safety evaluation process following the September earthquake and was involved in the USAR response following the February earthquake since October 2010 Mr Brusnden has led the Engineering Advisory Group which has developed technical guidance for the assessment, repair and reconstruction of the buildings in Canterbury.

At 2.15pm we will hear from Bret Lizundia from California via video link. Mr Lizundia will provide comment on Mr Brunsden's presentation and offer insights into the building management process in the USA.

The Commission has heard from Mr Lizundia previously, in the hearing into unreinforced masonary buildings. Mr Lizundia is a structural engineer and principal of Rutherford and Chekene Consulting Engineers in San Francisco. He has considerable expertise in the field of post earthquake safety evaluation and management.

Following that presentation the Commission will hear from Dr Ken Gledhill who is the GeoNet project director and department head of Geohazards monitoring within the Natural Hazards Division at GNS science. Dr Gledhill is a technical and scientific project manager, seismologist and telecommunications specialist of over thirty years of experience.

Dr Gledhill will comment on developments in operational modeling and communication within GNS which could be of assistance to territorial authorities, building owners and occupants following an earthquake.

Tuesday:

Tomorrow it is intended to hold a panel discussion covering the main issues with building management after earthquakes. These will include:

1. goals and objectives for building management
2. how the assessment process should be implemented
3. capabilities and training
4. framework for the management of the process
5. follow up action, particularly of green placarded buildings
6. barriers to the repair, rebuild or removal of buildings
7. cordons
8. information management.

The panel will consist:

- Dave Brunsdon
- Peter Smith, New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineering (NZSEE)
- Mike Stannard, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)

- Peter Mitchell, General Manager Regulation and Democracy Services and Steve McCarthy, Environmental Policy and Approvals Manager, Christchurch City Council (CCC)
- John Hamilton and Peter Wood, Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management (MCDEM)
- John Hare, Structural Engineering Society (SESOC)
- Esther Griffiths, former Emergency Management Advisor, Christchurch City Council
- Tony Sewell, Property Council
- Richard Toner, Chief Building Officer, Wellington City Council