

Our Reference: EXE-26 /111027050069  
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27 October 2011

Sara Jamieson  
Legal Analyst  
Canterbury Earthquakes Royal Commission  
PO Box 14053  
Christchurch Mail Centre 8544

Dear Ms Jamieson

## **EARTHQUAKE PRONE BUILDING POLICY.**

In response to the Commission's request for information:

*1) Has your Council taken any steps to review any aspect of its earthquake prone policy since the Canterbury Earthquakes occurred?*

Prior to the September event the Council had scheduled its five yearly review of the policy for late 2010 through to early 2011. That review has now taken place and the Council adopted the reviewed and revised policy at its meeting of the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

The review process has introduced changes that seek a more active response from building owners. These changes include:

- a reduction in the timeframe for strengthening heritage buildings from 20 years down to 15 years.
- a reduction for the timeframe by which the detailed assessment of a building is undertaken, if required by the Council, from 5 years to 24 months, to ensure building owners and occupants can become quickly aware of the level of risk posed by each building.
- the introduction of a target to encourage building owners to consider strengthening their buildings to 67% of the New Buildings Standard to better secure the long term safety of their buildings.

The Council's policy prior to the earthquake followed the standard timeframes and processes generally applied across the country. This included the provision of initial desk top and street assessments of buildings, which were undertaken in May 2010. Owners would then be required to have a more detailed assessment on which to plan and programme any necessary upgrades and depending on the classification of the buildings, a period of between fifteen and thirty years to carry out the upgrades.

2) *If your Council has taken steps in relation to its earthquake prone policy since the Canterbury Earthquakes, or intend to do so, please advice to what extent your Council has or intends to consult with the following groups:*

- (a) Property Owners*
- (b) Tenants*
- (c) The community generally*

As described the Council has reviewed and revised its policy. In doing so it followed the special consultative process of the Local Government Act 2002. In that process letters were sent to owners of buildings that fitted the earthquake prone profile as determined by previous desk top analysis.

The Council has brought forward the implementation of the policy and provided additional funds for engineers to carry out detailed initial evaluation procedures on buildings to determine their earthquake prone status. The Council has also dedicated staff resource to this work so that consultation with owners and tenants is maintained. This is expected to continue through 2012.

Public notices of the policy review have been made for the wider community and media releases by the Council and interviews have also increased awareness.

In regard to the third question about any information that insurers are taking a more demanding approach to earthquake strengthening, although this appears to be a perception and reflected anecdotally by people, at this time the Council has no factual information to support that view.

If you have any questions please call me on 03 327 6834.

Yours sincerely



Nick Harrison  
Manager: Planning & Regulation