

391/391A Worcester Street
Hearing: Thursday 15 December, 9.30am

Summary

391/391A Worcester St was a two-storey row un-reinforced masonry building in a suburban shopping block housing a pizzeria on the ground floor (391) and a residential flat upstairs (391A).

Following the September earthquake the building sustained damage to parapets and chimneys. Emergency repairs were carried out by Contract Construction Ltd and tarpaulins placed over the roof and walls of the upstairs.

The owner, Mr Pat Loke, made a claim with EQC in relation to the residential flat and with his insurers, AMP in relation to the downstairs premises.

The building was inspected by Tim Gwatkin of TM Consultants, structural engineer, on 10 October 2010 on behalf of a loss adjustor.

David Whyte, a builder of Whyte Construction Ltd, inspected the building on 8 November 2010 to quote on repairs. Present were the owner and his engineer, Mr Robert Ling.

Mr Whyte expressed the view that the upstairs was unsafe and should be demolished.

There does not appear to have been any inspection of the building immediately following the Boxing Day earthquake.

On 1 February 2011 EQC assessors inspected the building and concluded that the east and west walls of the upstairs flat were cracked and unstable and in danger of collapse.

In the February earthquake, some 3 weeks later, the west wall of 391A Worcester St collapsed onto the roof of Wicks Fish Shop, which was situated next door (at 389A) and a large volume of bricks fell through the roof.

Natasha Hadfield, the co-proprietor of Wicks Fish Shop and a customer, Betty Dickson, were killed as a result.

Proposed Witnesses

1. Peter Smith, Spencer Holmes Ltd, structural engineer
2. Christchurch City Council
3. Gary McGill, Contract Construction Ltd, Registered builder
4. David Whyte, Whyte Construction Ltd, Registered builder
5. Tim Gwatkin, TM Consultants, structural engineer
6. EQC
7. Pat Loke, owner
Robert Ling, engineer (written statement)
8. Geoffrey Hadfield (written statement)
9. Information from Warren Lewis

Likely Issues

1. Application of Council's earthquake prone policy to the building.
2. Whether EQC and/or Mr Loke should have communicated to the Council or neighbouring owners of the potential danger posed by the building.