

605-613 Colombo Street

Hearing: Wednesday 1 February 2012 at 9.30am

Summary

605-613 Colombo St was the middle portion of a two-storied row URM (unreinforced masonry) building (between 603 and 615 Colombo St), situated on the west side of Colombo St, between Mollett St and Tuam St.

It would seem that originally the whole row was structurally one unit divided by party walls.

The building was classified as a heritage building.

On 5 September 2010 the building was green placarded. This would appear to be consistent with a brief engineers inspection on behalf of the owner on 14 September 2010.

The owner's engineer further inspected the building on 27 and 29 October 2010 and noted more damage and recommended propping of the front veranda.

After the Boxing Day aftershock there was much more significant damage, including that the front façade was leaning out some 40mm. The building was red placarded.

A Building Act notice was served on the owner on 28 December 2010.

Consultation between the owner and its engineers resulted in a decision to demolish the building. Because the building had a heritage classification, the Council required that the demolition application be a notified consent application. This process would have taken some months.

There was not any protection fencing in front of the building at the time of the February earthquake.

At the time of the February earthquake Andrew Craig was driving a Red Bus Company bus, No. 702, north along Colombo Street, approximately adjacent to 605 Colombo St.

During the earthquake a large amount of masonry and bricks fell from the building onto the left side of the bus.

This was witnessed by Kenneth Edwards who was driving a Leopard bus immediately behind the 702 bus. The Leopard bus was partially crushed by falling bricks and masonry which had brought both of the buses to an immediate stop. Mr Edwards sustained moderate injuries but went to the assistance of the occupants of the other bus.

Mr Craig was subsequently transported to Christchurch hospital but died 2 days later due to the injuries he had sustained during the earthquake.

The following people were found deceased on the 702 bus that was searched following the earthquake:

Jayden Andrews-Howland,
Jeff Sanft
Philip Coppeard
Joseph Routledge
Lucy Routledge
Earl Stick
Beverley Stick

Proposed Witnesses

1. Peter Smith, Spencer Holmes Ltd, structural engineer
2. Christchurch City Council
3. Matthew Bushnell, Bushnell Builders Ltd, Registered Builder
4. Michael Fletcher, Buchanan & Fletcher, structural engineer
5. Robin Cheng, Benson Cheng Holdings Ltd, owner
6. Peter McLeod, Mainland Claims Management Ltd, Loss Adjuster
7. Paul Campbell, Opus Consultants Ltd, structural engineer
8. Kenneth Edwards, Bus driver (written statement only)
9. Ann Brower, injured person

Likely Issues

1. Application of the Council's earthquake-prone policy to the building.
2. Failure to place protection fencing in front of the building to ensure safety of the public.
3. Timelines of make-safe work or demolition, particularly given the building's heritage classification