

200-204 MANCHESTER STREET (ICONIC BAR)

AMY SARAH COONEY states:

I live in Christchurch.

My first involvement with the Iconic Bar that was at 200-204 Manchester Street was when my friend Leanna Christie was looking at that business from the owner of the business (and building), Symphony Projects Ltd in November 2010.

Leanna had been a co-owner of another bar in Christchurch but had lost that business due to damage caused to the building it was in from the September earthquake.

I went into the Iconic Bar in December/January with Leanna a couple of times to look at it with her.

Leanna phoned me on 27 December 2010 and told me the Iconic had been red stickered. She said the real estate agent had told her that an engineer was on the case and it would be all sorted out.

Leanna told me on New Years Day that she had been past the Iconic the night before and seen that some kind of work had been done to the building and that it was open for business.

Some time after that she told me that her lawyer had checked with the vendor and that the red sticker had been resolved.

In mid January I went with Leanna and did a reasonably comprehensive look around the Iconic Bar. The bar was open for business at that time.

Shortly after that visit Leanna signed up to buy the business and took over operating it in the first week of February 2011.

The Manager, Darryl Fraser, who Leanna had had most of the dealings with in relation to the purchase left at that time, as did the Assistant Manager, Lisa Grant, and the Day Manager.

From that point on I became the Assistant Manager to Leanna helping her to run the business.

My brother, Jaime Gilbert, started working at the Iconic Bar on a casual basis, Friday/Saturday nights.

Then, on 21 February 2011, Jaime started full time at the Iconic as the Day Floor Manager.

I did not work on 21 February 2011 as my son was in hospital that day.

The following day on 22 February 2011 I picked up my brother Jaime in the morning and we both went to work at the Iconic Bar.

When the earthquake occurred I was standing on the customer side of the downstairs bar talking to Jaime who was standing opposite me on the serving side of the bar.

I heard the earthquake and then saw glasses and bottles falling down behind Jaime as the building started to shake.

I said "lets get out". I was worried about the stability for two reasons:

- Because of the alternations that had been done some years before on the top floor where the building had been opened up to create a balcony (for smokers). Whenever you walked on that balcony area it shook and I had wondered about that area ever since first going there.
- I was worried about the make-safe repairs that had been done to the back wall. They had built into the roof space and you could see where bricks had fallen out and plywood bracing had been put on the outside of the building covering the holes. I could not see any bracing on the inside to which the outside plywood was attached. I thought that the top of the building in that area could well fold in, once the earthquake had hit.

Jaime came around to the front of the bar and as he did so I was 1-2 steps in front of him as we ran out the front door onto Manchester St.

As we ran out the masonry blocks on the façade of the building were falling. They fell on to the canopy over the door which then fell onto both of us, but more so on me.

We were both hit by the masonry blocks and trapped under the rubble. I was knocked out for several minutes. When I came round I was still holding onto Jaime's hand.

I couldn't move and started yelling out for help.

A short time later, Sam Siave, who worked at the bar and had been upstairs but had got out another door, came over and started pulling rubble off us.

He got me free first and then others were helping to get Jaime free.

I was walked to the middle of the intersection by 2 ladies, to be free of the building as masonry was still falling from upstairs.

A short time later Sam carried Jaime in his arms over to where I was standing. I could see Jaime was limp and I knew then that he was dead – his chest and head were crushed in.

We were put into a van and taken to hospital. On route to the hospital, 2 policemen jumped into the van and attempted to perform CPR on Jaime on the way to the hospital.

Although hospital staff carried out emergency treatment for some time, I was told a short time after we had arrived that Jaime had passed away.

I had been worried about the safety of the building from when Leanna first took it over. I knew that it had been red stickered. I was worried that the plywood bracing was insufficient, particularly as I have said, because it did not appear to be braced against anything in on the inside.

I talked about this to my partner who is a qualified builder and he saw that on a couple of occasions when he came into the bar.

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AMY COONEY

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