

# TEPHRA

KIA TAKATU TAHI TATO

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## Community Resilience: case studies from the Canterbury earthquakes



Ministry of Civil Defence  
& Emergency Management

Te Rākau Whakamarumarū

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**case studies from the  
Canterbury earthquakes**



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**Tephra:** n. fragmented rock, ash etc ejected by a volcanic eruption [from the Greek word for ash]. Concise Oxford Dictionary.

New Zealand Government

# Community Resilience:

## case studies from the Canterbury earthquakes

TEPHRA  
Volume 23

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# Director's Foreword

Tephra has an established reputation for providing those involved in civil defence emergency management with thought provoking concepts and ideas that are intended to challenge the status quo and stimulate developments that contribute to greater resilience in communities.

Earlier editions have looked at community resilience from the research and planning points of view. The 2012 edition of Tephra will undoubtedly stimulate thoughts and discussion, but is different from earlier editions. This time it looks at emergency management from the community's perspective rather than from the viewpoint of those involved in managing the response or endeavouring to implement initiatives that enhance risk reduction and readiness.

This edition draws on the experiences of communities impacted by the Christchurch earthquake and other emergencies from around the world. It is less about the theory and much more about how communities saw the response to their situation. It is about the experiences of real communities and community organisations. It illustrates how communities work in practice and how they are connected geographically, socially and economically to provide people with a sense of place and belonging. It shows how those outside a community can easily misinterpret community needs and mechanisms and as a consequence, find that their well intentioned efforts in the response might be met with disdain and distrust.

Importantly, the contributions to this edition of Tephra indicate how the official approach to communities in the response during an emergency, and with initiatives that are intended to generate community resilience before an emergency, can be more effective if they are based on an understanding of the dynamics that occur in communities. Community action comes in many forms. The challenge for officials and the community is to embrace that action in a constructive manner.

While largely developed from an emergency management perspective, the concepts and models provided in this edition are also applicable to the work of other sectors in communities. Irrespective of where the lessons identified in these articles are applied, developing the resilience of a community depends on understanding the community through two-way contact and engagement, allowing the community to be involved in planning and decisions that affect it, and assuring the community their initiatives and involvement will be supported by the authorities.



John Hamilton  
Director, Civil Defence Emergency Management

# Exploring Resilience: Learning from Christchurch communities

Ljubica Mamula-Seadon, Karen Selway and Douglas Paton

**Resilient communities successfully draw upon their individual, collective and institutional resources to cope with, adapt to and develop in the face of adversity encountered during and after a disaster.**

Understanding community's resilience to the consequences of infrequent, large events is only possible in the context of the experience of a significant event. Learning what makes communities resilient in real life situations provides us with the evidence-based knowledge needed to develop effective policy and practice and to adequately support communities affected by emergencies.

The Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management partnered with Massey University, the University of Tasmania and a Christchurch based social research group Opinions Market Research to conduct an inquiry into community resilience following the 22 February 2011 earthquake. Through exploratory workshops and interviews with residents of the eastern suburbs of Sumner, Redcliffs, Southshore, Aranui and Bexley, as well as those living in the central Christchurch City, stories of resilience were recorded. This article summarises community experiences as told by community members themselves. It is hoped that their stories of resilience will inform policy and practice and lead to meaningful integration of community action into emergency response, as the cornerstone of community resilience in disasters.

## The Canterbury Earthquakes Sequence

Despite a high exposure to a wide range of potentially destructive hazards (frequent earthquakes, local and distant-source tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, landslides, flooding, and extreme weather), New Zealand had been spared a major disaster for several decades.

The lull was broken at approximately 4.35am on 4 September 2010 (New Zealand time), when a magnitude 7.1 earthquake occurred on a previously unknown fault, 35 kilometres west of New Zealand's second largest city, Christchurch. A combination of fortuitous timing (early weekend morning), relatively distant location from the main population areas, and good seismic building codes resulted in no deaths and only a few serious injuries.

However, Christchurch was not so fortunate

when a magnitude 6.3 aftershock struck at 12.51pm on 22 February 2011 (New Zealand time), directly under the city. The proximity and shallow depth of the February 22 event, combined with the direction of stress release, and susceptible ground conditions resulted in extremely violent ground shaking in the centre and east of the city.

The unprecedented intensity of ground shaking was well in excess of engineering design criteria and resulted in extensive damage to buildings within the central city business district (CBD), including toppling of unreinforced masonry buildings, collapse of three reinforced concrete multi-story buildings, and major non-structural damage to other buildings.

The short duration of intense shaking induced extensive liquefaction, especially in the soft soils of the eastern part of the city, causing flooding and silt inundation across roads and into houses. The ground damage on February 22 was more severe than September 4, with extensive disruption to buried infrastructure (water and waste-water networks in particular) in the eastern and southern suburbs, and many house foundations. Much of the city was without power for the first few days.

The event is set to become the most costly disaster so far in New Zealand history. The death toll stands at 185 people. There have been extensive losses to commercial and residential infrastructure. It is estimated that 30-50 per cent of buildings in the central business district will be lost. Total economic losses are estimated to be near NZ\$20 billion, or approximately 9 per cent of New Zealand's current GDP.

## The Eastern suburbs

In addition to the central city, the eastern suburbs of Christchurch (Lyttleton, Bexley, Aranui, Southshore, Redcliffs and Sumner) suffered extensive damage in both the February 2011 and June 2010 earthquakes.

The immediate response on February 22 focused on the CBD, where it was obvious there were casualties and potentially trapped people. The numerous aftershocks

and the risk of further building collapse were perceived to require immediate action.

The Eastern suburbs suffered extensive land damage – liquefaction, landslides and falling rock – as well as severe damage to residential houses and infrastructure. While emergency services were mostly focused on the CBD, local communities responded by organising themselves and assisting each other; perhaps in a way unprecedented in the recent New Zealand disaster experiences.

## The research

A few months after the February 2011 earthquake, the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, in partnership with Massey University and Opinions Market Research from Christchurch, engaged with Christchurch communities and undertook explorative, qualitative research into perceived community resilience. Five large discussion groups, complemented by a series of 20 individual in-depth interviews were held during July and August 2011. Altogether, about 100 randomly selected Christchurch residents participated.<sup>1</sup>

The workshops and interviews explored the challenges participants faced, how they overcame them and how those challenges changed between the initial earthquake and the interviews. The interviews were designed to build an understanding of the personal and community competencies, experiences and knowledge that helped or hindered people's ability to adapt to the situation. They also revealed how relationships between individuals and communities, as well as government agencies and communities, influenced vulnerability and resilience over time.

## Common resilience themes

As stories began to unfold, it became obvious that a spontaneous, organic process of 'connecting' during the emergency was often how communities self-activated, self-managed and became self-sufficient, seeking resources and responding to needs. This process did not seem to be instigated, directed or planned for by 'official' agencies, nor by the communities themselves. Individuals got together with an assumption that they were assisting their community until outside help could take over the responsibility. This outside help often did not, and at the time of interviews was perceived to still have not, arrived in a form required for the community to 'heal' and recover.

<sup>1</sup> More about this research can be found in reports: Community resilience: an exploration of Christchurch experience, Opinions Market Research November 2011; and Paton D., Mamula-Seadon, I. and Selway, K. 2012 Christchurch community resilience project, GNS technical publication.

Self-activation, self-sufficiency, self-responsibility and self-management were identified as the key traits that contributed to individual and community resilience in the days following the earthquake. The extent of community infrastructure, personal property (e.g. house) damage and accessibility were also identified as key to resilience.

Although each community's experience was different, a common pattern of organic community response could be identified. Individuals were turning to their immediate family and neighbours in the first hours after the quake. This was later followed by formation of local self-help groups that often evolved into community-led action groups.

## Individual participants and resilience

As research continued over a couple of months, it became apparent that an individual's attitude, outlook, physical and mental health and, in particular, physical mobility, sociability and connectedness with others were the most significant factors in determining people's individual resilience.

Interestingly, there were indications that those who liked to be 'in control' or had 'strict routines' found themselves less able to cope than the more flexible, adaptable types.

Individuals who were described as able to cope the best often had an outdoor lifestyle (e.g. campers, trampers, hunters or those who used to live in the countryside). Also those who had been involved with Scouts, Girl Guides, the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Spirit of Adventure or similar outdoor leadership development and survival programmes demonstrated what was described as 'greater resilience'. Those involved in voluntary organisations (e.g. St John, the volunteer fire brigade, coast guard, surf life-saving or civil defence) or who worked in a trade were often among the most resourceful at a community level.

The extent of community infrastructure, personal property damage and accessibility were also key to resilience.

## Connecting with immediate family and/or neighbours and emergence of community leaders

As mentioned, in the first minutes or hours after the disaster, the impulse was to connect with immediate family and neighbours. This was mainly motivated by safety and security concerns. With each event, people's first priority was to connect with close family, friends or immediate neighbours, spontaneously grouping into small nuclei units. The participants described that their worlds became smaller geographically, and also less complex (e.g.

individuals focused on survival needs rather than other activities). Connecting, helping and supporting each other came naturally to most and formed a key part of what they described as their early resilience, both physically and psychologically.

Fundamentally, community connectedness through formal groups that existed prior to the earthquakes was identified as advantageous – but was not necessary for their experience, the participants told us. This included connection with neighbours or at a wider neighbourhood level, as well as through groups and activities within the community. At the time of an event, it was the latent connections of individuals and the resulting availability of community intelligence that were typically able to be utilised.

It is interesting that the participants identified the 'generic connectedness of individuals' as being critical to community resilience and not necessarily connectedness created through existing groups, many of whom never met or activated in the aftermath of the earthquake. Spontaneous interactions, connections and a culture of sharing were seen as crucial to creation of the community spirit that the participants highly cherished. It appeared that the processes were largely organic, unplanned and unpredictable, driven from within the community, for the community.

As the groups became more aware of their needs they started self-organising, and at this stage local leaders began to emerge. Some were known within the community, while others were born out of the situation.

The participants described 'emergency leadership' as born through and a natural outcome of the emergency. The leaders who surfaced were often not the most likely candidates (i.e. not those who were community leaders in 'normal' times). Key qualities in these emergent leaders were identified as a can do attitude, connections within the community, availability and a strong sense of commitment to helping others.

The newly emerged leaders utilised the latent connectedness within a wider group to shape the group, to connect with the broader community and to establish resources and understand needs.

## Emergence of self-help emergency response community groups

In Sumner and Redcliffs, and to some extent Southshore, more structured response groups emerged from the grouping of individuals at established or what became known as community gathering points, such as undamaged halls or even street corners. At the same time a few church

groups were seen as successfully adapting and reinventing themselves and supporting the community.

These citizen groups eventually connected with other community-led groups, such as CanCern (a strong advocacy group originating in central Christchurch after the 4 September 2010 earthquake), Student Army, Farmy Army, Māori Wardens, volunteer fire brigade and others. They were supported by local politicians and eventually started lobbying with local and central government. These 'grassroots' support groups were described by the participants as often taking the lead and selflessly supporting the community.

As different issues arose, these emergent groups would find themselves becoming the owners of the issue and working towards a resolution in order to progress as a community; albeit sometimes with the sentiment of having been failed by government agencies and still awaiting assistance.

The participants believed that the community groups were catalysed into existence and made effective by the emergent leaders who were described as pillars of the group, and highly respected by the locals.

## Community leaders

When asked to summarise what transformed community members into community leaders and made them so readily accepted by other members of the community, the participants responded that:

- These leaders were found to have local knowledge, connections, the ability to listen to the community and to have a good grasp of community dynamics and needs.
- Their initiative and their success was due, in part, to the fact that they acted on their own initiative and had little need for formal structure in order to be effective, especially in the emergency response phase.
- Those leaders were described as able to function with little resource, to be flexible, and able to adapt fast. They were skilled, open minded, selfless and focused on the wellbeing of the community.

This issue of Tephra is dedicated to sharing the stories of some of those leaders.



# The Grace Vineyard Church Response

**Sam Harvey**  
**Beach Campus Pastor**  
**Grace Vineyard Church**  
**[www.grace.org.nz](http://www.grace.org.nz)**

22 February 2011 was an unforgettable day, and the beginning of one of the most incredible experiences of a community serving and supporting one another that I have ever been a part of.

The morning had been spent with the pastors from our church, Grace Vineyard, and a colleague from the United States talking about how we could develop our church to further serve the community's needs. The irony of this was not lost on us in the subsequent weeks! My wife and our one month old baby were at the meeting with me and we were located in the Parklands Suburb of the eastern suburbs. Just as we were winding up the discussion the earthquake hit with incredible violence and force. I remember trying to find my wife and child who were in an adjacent lounge as the earthquake was shaking, and was relieved to see that they were under a table. I think the emotional impact was lessened knowing my wife and baby were safe.

We went to a park across the road and I remember looking at one of my friends and saying, "this is different from September". There was heaviness in the air, and a strange sense of isolation when power is out, phone lines

don't work, and cell phone usage is intermittent. As the ground trembled with aftershocks we tried to get a picture of what was happening from the radio in our cars. We heard reports that that the CTV building was down, which was where the brother-in-law of our Senior Pastor worked. We then heard that the personal assistant of our Senior Pastor was trapped after a concrete wall had fallen on her car. We felt very helpless. Thankfully, both of them survived, both quite miraculously.

After a few hours we tried to get to our home in New Brighton as we needed supplies for our baby. It took two attempts as the roads were jammed, and the conditions were very dangerous. Driving the car was a very scary experience – deep muddy waters, the car lurching up and down, driving past cars in sinkholes, hoping and praying that the road was strong enough to hold the weight of our car. Arriving home to a huge mess, we packed some bags, and made the long and sometimes scary journey across to the other side of the city to stay with friends who had power. Having a new born upped the stakes for us as a family. We needed to be at a place with power. I wondered how other

vulnerable members of the community were coping. The first day was spent in survival mode, there was little we could do but check on our neighbours, try and phone loved ones, and make wise decisions in very difficult conditions.

The next day we began to consider how we could be of assistance as a church. Our church consists of two campuses. A congregation that meets in New Brighton called the “Beach Campus”, and one near the city centre called the “City Campus”, with about 2000 members between the two locations. The City Campus was severely damaged and red stickered but, fortunately, our Beach Campus seemed to have come through unscathed. This was to become the focal point for our work in the community in the weeks following the earthquake. With a leadership structure, administrative staff, and direct access to a large number of willing volunteers, a church is a resource that can be mobilised very quickly.

It was at this time that Senior Sergeant Roy Appley from the New Brighton Police Station contacted us requesting that we open our church building to hand out whatever supplies we could. He had realised that the focus of the civil defence and the Red Cross was going to be on the inner city. It was difficult to know how the rest of the city had fared, but we knew that the eastern suburbs were in terrible shape, with supermarkets, dairies and services stations all closed. There was no power and no running water. Something had to be done.

We opened the church doors, rigged up a generator, fired up the barbeques and began to distribute whatever food we had at the time. A grassroots relief effort that supplied food, water and other essential items to the hardest hit and poorest areas of Christchurch City, the Rangiora Express, had very quickly mobilised a helicopter to survey the city, and after seeing the state of the eastern suburb, they landed and talked to a policeman from New Brighton. Soon, helicopter loads of food and water were arriving at the school opposite the church.

Over the first couple of days we ran the entire operation out of the church. People would arrive. We would send those who were coming to volunteer to shovel silt, help people in their homes, or work in the lounge. Others who were in need of help were asked to fill out a needs assessment form. From there we would direct them to an appropriate station set up in the church. We were distributing food, we had people available to provide a listening ear to those who were struggling to process the enormity of what was happening, and a team that would collect information if people needed help in their homes,



#### Care Centre – community legal advice

and send teams to serve them.

As the days progressed the demand for these services increased exponentially. What began as a trickle became a flood of people needing assistance.

After about the third day we realised we would need to restructure the operation. A management team was formed and based at the New Brighton Police Station. It consisted of myself (or a representative from Grace Vineyard), Senior Sergeant Appley, and our local Member of Parliament (MP), Lianne Dalziel. I cannot speak more highly of Roy and Lianne. Their passion, wisdom and love for their community shone during this time. A lasting gift from this time is my friendship with these two wonderful people. They say that community is formed in two ways – over time, or during times of trauma. A very deep sense of community formed amongst the key leaders of the response.

The operation was split in two. We moved all of our food and supplies to what we called the “distribution centre” based at the Roy Stokes Community Hall, which was 50 metres from the church and directly opposite the police station. This was where we handed out water, food and essential supplies.

The second area we called the “care centre”, and this continued to be based at the church and focussed on social needs. It was where we processed our volunteers, organised teams to shovel silt or move belongings, provided support and a place to chat, had a place to charge phones, housed a community legal advice centre, organised food runs to



### Youth Alive Trust holiday programme

elderly people unable to leave their homes (its hard to charge a mobility scooter with no power!), and provided a needs assessment for those needing specialist support.

Within these two centres we assigned a site manager who reported to me or someone delegated to oversee the entire operation. The site manager would then delegate leaders to lead different teams. For example, at the distribution centre we would have a team overseeing the incoming arrival of food, a team organising the volunteers, a team overseeing health and hygiene, a team running the kitchen to feed our volunteers, and a team providing security. This was all displayed on whiteboards visible to both the public and our volunteers. We would close down both centres every three hours for a half hour break to restock and brief the volunteers on who was leading which team. Communication between the different team leaders was via walky talkies. Every volunteer would sign in as they arrived, receive a lanyard or crew t-Shirt, and be assigned a team. We needed about 80 volunteers to make the operation function, and processed hundreds of volunteers every day. There was an overwhelming sense of relief from the volunteers that there was something practical that they could do to help others.

Running alongside this was our “Youth Alive Trust”. The Trust was based at the church and began a “holiday programme” on Monday, February 28, six days after the

earthquake. It was for young people of the area that were at a loose end with the closure of the schools. Sports Canterbury partnered with them, and hundreds of young people came everyday to a programme filled with sports, clowns, bouncy castles, and activities that kept a sense of routine and order in a very chaotic time. This was run in the school grounds between the care centre and the distribution centre.

From the beginning we were aware that we needed to make hygiene a high priority, and requested that every person who walked into either the care centre or the distribution centre sanitise their hands. We had a surprise visit from the Ministry of Health one day, and at the end of the tour they seemed impressed with our focus on hygiene and the systems that we were using.

The operation exploded around us. We had 2,500 people coming through the distribution centre alone every day, there were queues down the street waiting to enter both sites. We were supplying food to other initiatives all around the eastern suburbs. We have conservatively estimated that at our peak we were supplying food to 10,000 people at our centres and at other groups.

It was during this time that we were delegated some help from the civil defence to liaise with the Christchurch Response Centre. The people that were sent were of the highest calibre, and I think they were amazed at the size of

the operation and the needs in the eastern suburbs. They immediately began to put orders through for whatever food was available. Because we were not an “official” operation they struggled to get the response they would have liked, but they worked tirelessly advocating the work we were doing.

Food arrived from all quarters. Senior Sergeant Appley and his team rang every corporate food distributor they could think of. We could never tell when a truck would arrive, or a van full of cans, or a bus filled with goods from around the country. There were times that we ran low on food, but we never ran out. I will never forget the site of an 18 wheeler truck pulling up just when we thought we were over. The truck filled to the brim. We discovered that this particular truck had driven from Palmerston North, crossed Cook Strait on a ferry, and stopped at every town along the way collecting food. Someone had simply taken the initiative. It arrived at the perfect time. The Rangiora Earthquake Express organisation was incredible, constantly supplying food and resources. The “Fiji Water” Company dropped two shipping containers filled with water to us. The local Chinese Christian Church provided hot meals every evening for our delivery to the elderly. It was a beautiful movement of love and support for one another. A group formed in Auckland called “500 Friends” and sent down a shipping container filled with food parcels.

On the first Sunday after the earthquake, February 27, we ran our church service in the car park opposite the

hall. Senior Sergeant Appley shared and Lianne Dalziel reassured her constituents. We sang the national anthem together, and remembered in silence those who had perished. As we stopped in the midst of a whirlwind of activity it was a reminder of what really matters. To see a community gathered, finding support in one another and in their faith was very precious and poignant. To stop and reflect on the response of the community to serve one another was beautiful. I remember commenting at this service that of everyone in the country, we were the privileged ones. We knew that so many people were desperate to help in some way, and because of our location we were the ones that could support those in the most affected suburbs. We were the ones who were fortunate enough to be able to serve each other in a meaningful way.

Our distribution centre closed two weeks after February 22 when our local supermarket finally reopened. Our care centre continued running for the next six months and, subsequently, there have been a number of community initiatives that have been established. I believe that there is a sense of reassurance from the wider community knowing that the local churches, the police, and our local MP are all committed to the area for the long term recovery. We shared in the challenges of that time and we are here for the long run to support each other in the rebuilding of our beautiful city.

# The New Brighton Community Response Following the Canterbury Earthquake



**Senior Sergeant Roy Appley**  
**Sub Area Commander**  
**New Brighton Police**  
**Christchurch**  
**Canterbury Police District**

I hope you will be uplifted as you hear about the work we were involved in. In setting the scene, I want to share some words that were spoken by Sir Jerry Mateparae during his speech upon being sworn in as Governor-General of New Zealand. When speaking about what is the most important thing in the world, he said the answer is “he tangata, he tangata, he tangata...it is people, it is people, it is people”. I was interested to discover that these words are derived from a Māori proverb and their origin can, amongst other things, come from exchanges between opposing Chiefs during battle.

I cannot help but suggest an analogy between the possible origins of these words and the recent earthquake events in Canterbury, and suggest that each of the people who worked in partnership with us might have uttered these same words as a call to action, or a cry out against the unfolding adversity that was befalling us. Never were those sentiments truer both as far as those people are concerned, and in the transformation that was evident in the community of the greater New Brighton as a result of their work.

The Governor-General described the “Kiwi spirit” - companionship and with that a generosity, compassion and resolve when things need to be done – that was indeed very evident in this community as a result of men and women asking “what can I do?” I suggest to you that that Kiwi spirit actually exists in nearly every community and needs very little encouragement, but does require nurturing and guidance to ensure that what is offered meets the needs and adds value to the recognised official responses, which depending on the emergency, may take some time to be delivered to all.

So, how did it all come about for us? In a word, partnerships. I believe understanding about partnerships is vital to establishing, maintaining and building partnerships.

By understanding partnerships I am talking about working co-operatively to achieve desired outcomes. In order to do this I suggest that three factors are critical:

actively networking (being proactive and taking the first step), inspiring trust (being open and honest), and sharing information (communicating professionally and sharing knowledge). When you are committed to these objectives collaborative planning flows much easier as no one person or entity has a desire to work in isolation.

In the eastern suburbs, which are communities that I am responsible for, we have an intimate knowledge of the needs within our community. We have undertaken a commitment to the community policing model, which in its simplest form, is about high visibility and being accountable to the community in which you police. We recognise that as a police service we do not have all the answers, and that there is a strong need to engage in community partnerships and involve the community in taking responsibility for its own issues and possible resolutions to those issues. In truth, many community groups already provide assistance for many of those living in the eastern suburbs on an almost daily basis, and as such these entities already exist with the aim of improving outcomes for those people who reside there.

What we saw were many of our immediate policing area suburbs badly affected by the earthquake and subsequent flooding. On the ground this translated to no services of any sort for most of the first week (and for many this extended for several weeks) in the communities of New Brighton, Sumner and Lyttelton. The nearest services were some 10-15kms from these areas. If people were able to travel then the trip could be described as arduous and might take up to three hours to complete. This was on top of a completely devastated central business district and almost constant aftershocks. Parts of the greater New Brighton area are home to many of Christchurch's poorer families. Many had no option but to stick it out without power, water or sewage. There were serious questions of how people who struggle through a normal day would get their next meal. Roads were broken, houses were broken, and people were suffering. We made decisions to invest in the human capital.

What did this actually mean to the public? It meant reassurance. That is, making sure that people knew they were valued, and putting in place tactics that ensured the responses offered were aligned to that. This was achieved by directing patrols to cover the entire policing area to make contact with people, gather intelligence as it related to people land and infrastructure, and then conducting appreciations (a planning technique) to ensure risks were considered and mitigated. Feeding back to civil defence and Police Headquarters all the intelligence gathered is also very important for the purpose of strategic planning.

A simple example of the importance of all of this came to me as I stood quietly very early one morning on what would have normally been one of the busiest arterial routes in our area. The complete blackness and isolation felt in that moment brought home to me what fear could be evident in the minds of a huge part of our cities population and therefore what a responsibility lay with those of us charged with looking after our communities.

Locally, two key management functions were constantly required. These were leading the Police response, which was aimed at protecting life and property, and leading the community response, which was aimed at providing welfare in the form of food, clothing and shelter. Both goals are really part of the same.

In order to lead a community response the establishing of a small collaborative community leadership team was a key strategy. This allowed like-minded community leaders to come together and contribute to forming response tactics. This strategy allowed for others to sub-lead parts of our tactics, and meant that a division of tasks was able to be made. The coming together regularly to bounce ideas off each other and to understand how things were unfolding ensured a good understanding of each other's responsibilities, and an opportunity to manage risks and to continue to plan ahead.

Collating the community response, which included who was doing what and how, was essential to avoid that duplication of support services, and ensure everyone who needed assistance was being offered it, and provided with the information they needed.

Co-ordinating, legitimising and making safe a large number of community responses to ensure the valuable work being offered was not putting those it sought to help at risk was essential to ensuring success.

The Police Station at New Brighton was backed up with a generator so electrical services were still operating. This allowed the Police Station to become the community hub and was able to be opened up to all, as a place of safety and security. A beacon of hope, perhaps. This paid huge dividends for Police, the face of the official response in the area, as we delivered on behalf of all our formal partner agencies the reassurance message: "We are still here, we are in control, we are an expert emergency management organisation, and we can and will facilitate an answer to your response questioning". The option of having a location such as the Police Station right at the heart of the event was fortunate as it both drew the many and varied response effort to it, and meant that a forward headquarters was



### Distribution centre - a “free supermarket”

always operational close to the action.

It was almost immediately obvious that many people affected by this event would not leave their community. As the infrastructure was so badly damaged the opportunity to move was very difficult anyway. A decision to work with people where they wanted to be was made and influenced all the community and then formal responses into the area. The setting up of the distribution centre (free supermarket) under the management of Grace Vineyard Church was a highly successful initiative which further enhanced the hub concept established at New Brighton. From this location entities such as the Farmy Army, Student Volunteer Army and community hubs from all the suburbs which form part of the greater New Brighton area (including Sumner and Lyttelton communities) were able to be provided for. They received seemingly endless supplies of grocery and survival items. These flowed in from numerous voluntary sources such as Rangiora Express, 500 Friends and communities from within New Zealand, including the people of Palmerston North, who all in turn were supported by others and other formal organisations.

There is a critical factor, often overlooked initially, when working with volunteers. This is to ensure that those volunteers know that what they are doing is meeting a need that exists. Volunteers need quality feedback and to be thanked for their efforts. They need to hear from as close to the coalface as possible what their effort is achieving and how that is making a difference. This then gives meaning to their work, encourages them, and strengthens their resolve, which ultimately sees them continue on day after day. This was done many times, both informally and formally, at a series of briefings and debriefings.

The communication of exactly what is happening cannot be over-emphasised. It is important to communicate with stakeholders, using as many channels as possible, so all involved have a good understanding of what actions are being taken. As Police, we understand and practice this in our normal operations and attempted to continue to do this as best we could in a similar way throughout this event.

The establishment of the initiatives mentioned above and many other smaller likeminded plans, and the subsequent support for them from more official agencies gave all these initiatives the authority they needed. Multimedia reporting and word of mouth spread far and wide. Both advertised what was happening here, and continued the work as more and more support was offered.

The Police working so closely alongside the community allowed a unique opportunity to be realised.

The New Zealand Police have a strategy of strengthening communities, and our response was an opportunity to show people exactly what that means. We were able to provide tangible help to people; meet their needs, reassure them and therefore allow them to make the best decisions for their futures.

Very early on the morning after the major devastation that claimed so many lives, I arrived at the police station to find one of my staff caring for a number of people in a makeshift triage station. One woman in particular had suffered several epileptic episodes during the night, and had another almost immediately upon my arrival. It did not take long then to realise that we were in this for the long haul and things would be far from normal for us over the next few days.

Something needed to be done to supplement the official effort (that was mainly being focused, quite rightly, in the central city business district) that took into account the situation as it was unfolding in the suburbs, and that did indeed invest in the interests of the people.

When examining what was around us and looking at who could assist, it was obvious that some of our community partners could and would support us in this work. It is my view that the local leadership that exists in communities is all you need to ensure that this happens.

The only question is: how do we ensure that the local leadership is the right leadership, and they are empowered to operate maybe without direct official support but within some guidelines that consider welfare, safety and costs? How this is properly managed without detracting from the innovation of the responses is the challenge that faces us all. In our situation, a mix of official leadership

(Police and civil defence) working collaboratively and focusing on the critical factors I mentioned earlier, made a significant difference to the response that unfolded through New Brighton. As all this was being formulated and established, community groups were already beginning to establish themselves. As is evident in many disasters around the world, help begins to arrive often before an official request has been generated. Again, how to harness that and ensure the real need is met and the resources are channelled to where they are needed is the age old question.

The value of resilience is that it is organic and does not rely on rules or policies. Help and assistance is provided and needs are met almost immediately (just in time), and right where they are needed. The question then might be not what value has resilience, but how do you fit that around more traditional emergency management policies - the official response versus the unofficial response? We often hear the adage that you must be able to fend for yourself for the first three days. If we want people to be able to achieve this, then I suggest that the common themes that flow between the Government wants and the community needs could be considered and discussed further. The Government is concerned with community complexities and how best to work with those: the relationships that exist between state and civilian entities, social trust and opportunities to support local action, and meaningful exchanges. The community wants understanding, to know who is the lead, who serves who, who do we trust and how are they going to make a difference.

Now, back to the Kiwi spirit I wrote of earlier. The following are two examples of help that not only speak of meeting physical need, but also speak of meeting the very real human needs of being valued, cared for, and understood. These can often be the difference in how quickly a person can recover in a way in which they feel they can have an input, and can make meaning of the situation they have in front of them.

One of the partner groups that worked with us put together 500 boxes of groceries.

While out on patrol I came across an elderly couple doing their garden in the suburb of Bexley. Bexley is in part built on relatively recently reclaimed wetlands. As such there is an abundance of wildlife that lives around the river and wetland vegetation. The most popular bird in this area is a pukeko (I'll come back to that later).

The elderly couple were in their garden mowing lawns and weeding. They live in a small unit attached to another and their street was still rough shingle and a

generator and portaloos were still providing their services. When it was warm dust was blown everywhere and when it rained surface flooding still ruined most of the gardens. There are only a few residents who still live permanently in this area. Still, this couple continued to tidy up and look after what was an immaculate property.

Their names were Jim and Betty and it turned out that they are in their 80s and on the day of the earthquake they were intending to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. They are a lovely old couple and just like you would want your grandparents to be. Clearly though not too many good things had happened to them in the last few weeks. They do not know what the future held for their property or themselves but they just get on with it, like they always had. There were no moans about their situation or the authorities or how slow anything was. Clearly they missed their neighbours and their community.

I spoke to them for quite a while and suggested to them that I might be able to call back later with something to brighten up their day. Later that day the Commissioner of Police, Peter Marshall, arrived at New Brighton. He was just two days into his new role and came for a ride around the area. Amongst other things we went to Jim and Betty's house with the box of food.

It was several hours since I was last there but they were still out in their garden which was now looking terrific. We went in and spend quite a bit of time with them, looking around their house and seeing what had happened to their property. The toilet was damaged and now makeshift, the walls had lots of cracks in them, and many of Betty's precious things had been broken. Although the house was very clean the carpet was dirty, stained from all the mud and water that had been walked in, the bottle of special wine bought to celebrate their wedding anniversary was smashed and along with other liquids had made a mess in the house. We heard a story about the sideboard, which fell just a few inches from where they had both been sitting and could have certainly injured them or worse. Still, no complaints just a happy and content couple who still had and rely on each other.

The box of food was decorated with pukekos. It looked to me as though someone has hand drawn and coloured them in. They have been very well done and made the box look extra special. This couple suggest that someone else could be more in need than them. After assuring them that they are in as tough a situation as anyone else they gratefully accepted the box. Betty remarked about how appropriate it was that this box should find its way to her

area and to her with the bird decoration. That pukekos were common there made it seem this box was especially made for her. Both were clearly touched by this gift and the time spent preparing it. It really made their day and they listened with interest to the story about how it arrived. Both Peter and I were pleased to be able to offer a tangible gift in the form of this box to this couple.

Here is another amazing couple: Jim was in his 70s and a former European wrestling champion, having wrestled for 20 years in Europe in his younger days. He got slammed into the canvas with no padding, and the body was obviously punished very hard. He was waiting to have major spinal surgery, and lived with lots of pain. This is incredibly debilitating. Sue looked after him, while working part time to make ends meet. They do not know when the surgery will take place; they are in the public system and are waiting.

They lived in a modest home, which started its life as a beach bach and had been built onto over the years. They did not have major damage but will find it difficult to put their home back together due to their situation.

I gave them their box of groceries and told them the story about how it arrived. This box was plain cardboard, with no fancy pictures. As I went through the contents with them suggesting that not everything would be of use to them, Sue told me of others she could give those items to. It turned out that Sue has been looking after many others throughout this event. Sue is a can-do woman and although, arguably, she had enough on her plate with her husband's condition, she continued to do lots for others. She had been doing "cook ups" for many in her neighbourhood.

Sue then detailed to me the story of her best friends, whose daughter was caught up in the Pyne Gould Corporation building, which had collapsed, and how this young woman had lost both her legs. It's a sad story. A young girl went off to work that morning and when she returned home had no legs. Sue and her husband had been supporting their friends and doing what they could for them in lots of practical ways, as well as providing emotional support. Amongst all this Sue had a crook husband, looked after her immediate neighbourhood, and was worried every time there was an aftershock.

What terrific people they are. And it has been my experience that they are similar to many I have met who have just got on with it despite sometimes quite extraordinary circumstances.

Sue said she loved the gift and would make great use of the contents. I know that many people will benefit out of this plain box of groceries.

Our effort combined with our many partners came about by a combination of factors. A faith I will expand on a little later, a desire to help, and an ability to provide. In the end all that was needed was a conduit to allow these things to operate intertwined. Central to this (although no guarantee was provided) was a strategy to never say no.

An example of this is that one particular group had the ability to source and fly hot food by helicopter directly into the worst affected suburbs so that people could have a hot meal. They had sought to get an official response to this initiative but were not able to. After many failed attempts, they decided to do it anyway. The embracing of this initiative by myself and the managing of the risk associated with it, met an immediate need which would not have been able to be achieved in such a timely manner otherwise. It also began a relationship that continued for nearly two weeks and evolved in numerous ways to form part of a wider community response effort that benefited thousands.

The second example was one where two container loads of bottled water were turned down by the official providers because of lack of storage. It was accepted at our local level and in turn provided directly to thousands of people in need. The acceptance of this offer not only provided the water, but also allowed an opportunity to enhance the Police relationship with the community by forming part of a tactic of practicable help to supplement our strategy of strengthening communities.

Ultimately it is all about a way of thinking: encouraging and trusting your existing community partnerships and being open to their way of responding, as opposed to dictating a process or being too rule orientated. Challenge, be flexible, responsive and guiding but, overall, aim to exceed expectancy – not expectations.

Consider it in this way, expectation could be rules and procedures that must be followed and are usually built on a basis of meeting a pre-defined goal. It seeks to achieve compliance based on some authority: a who or a position, and the value and need for, or importance of, the task.

Expectancy could be viewed as an ability to respond to any situation which you might encounter, and can be built on a basis of knowledge and trust. Achievement comes as a result of personal responsibility and commitment to do the best.

If you allow yourself to operate in the latter with your partners, then less authority needs to be exercised as you let others achieve tasks without constant overseeing; safe in the knowledge that those partners will achieve the outcomes that are in line with the vision of the leadership of

the operation.

Many collateral advantages have become evident (bearing in mind the potential for social unrest was quite possible) as a result of the immediate response given to people. Serious policing concerns about increases in family violence, fraud, and mental health related issues have not been evident in the high numbers that were feared. Community spirit, although dampened has not been overtaken by grief. In the numerous groups I am aware of, the people who came together to assist those in need has been truly valued and sustained for the good of all through the non-judgemental and caring approach taken. Remarkably, this is being sustained even now due to the ongoing commitment of those involved.

Finally, in regards faith, my personal view is that the dedication of those people who come from a faith-based understanding cannot be underestimated. I would qualify this by saying that having a faith is not a prerequisite for doing good works, but those with faith are able to explain it in a way that encapsulates a greater meaning and is not self-centred in any way. These church-based groups believe that when events such as the earthquake happen the needs of people are best met by those who have a heart for others. This is based largely on Jesus' example and is detailed in many biblical stories. In the familiar story of the loaves and fishes, as told in the book of Matthew, Jesus' disciples were brought right into the centre of that miracle. Jesus gave thanks, broke the loaves, and then gave them to the disciples who gave them to the people.

Thus the miracle begun by Jesus was transmitted to the people via the disciples. From this it is clear that there is a mandate for church (faith based) people to see themselves as transmitters or ministers to the people.

Time and time again, resources arrived just in

time and from our base as a distribution centre more than 10,000 people had their needs met right where they were. Church organisations were at the heart of this work. It fits perfectly with their hand to man, heart to God philosophy. They already have the infrastructures needed to formulate a response and can easily work with other groups and as such, would be an excellent starting point to empowering communities in events such as we have experienced.

The value of non-faith-based organisations is also not to be forgotten. As I wrote earlier, many of these organisations work tirelessly on a daily basis to ensure that many resources are provided to those who otherwise might not access them by themselves. Many community improvements have been achieved for vast numbers of people as a result of the outstanding commitments by these organisations and their constant advocacy. Other smaller groups are formed on the fly and usually concentrate on a smaller catchment of people. All have value and demonstrate elements of that Kiwi spirit, and as such need to be captured and enhanced.

As leaders and emergency service managers we must promote that our hope for people is firm. Real hope and comfort is not found in a self-help program, or the latest political movement. Real hope comes from a desired expectancy of something looking forward, thinking and planning and delivering when it is needed most. Every grace, encouragement and hopeful thing we receive is not just for us, we need to learn how to communicate hope to those who place their trust in us.

What I have taken from all that has been done is that both the provider and the receiver have given and received unconditionally, and we must do everything we can to ensure these activities continue.



# Students vs. The Machine:

## Lessons learned in the student community following the Christchurch earthquakes

**Sam Johnson**



For the first eight months of 2010, Sam Johnson was an undergraduate student studying law and political science at the University of Canterbury. In September that year, things changed. He shares his experiences at the centre of the response to the earthquakes that hit Christchurch. Government officials were wary of accepting his offer to help, but Johnson would not take no for an answer. He put out a call to friends and within days had recruited hundreds and then thousands of volunteers to help with the post-quake cleanup, and earned the respect and support of those same officials. Sam describes how he learned to manage volunteers, and how others can use social media tools to connect to young people for emergency response.

At 4.31am on 4 September 2010, thousands of people's lives dramatically changed when a 7.1 magnitude

earthquake struck Christchurch, the largest city in the South Island of New Zealand. The most significant damage was caused on 22 February 2011. Many lives were lost, homes and businesses destroyed, and the thousands in our communities continued to face emotional hardships. Aftershocks have been incessant. Christchurch has suffered over 10,000 earthquakes and aftershocks since September 2010, with major seismic events every few months, complete with aftershocks that send glassware flying, heighten nerves, unsettle communities, and erode public confidence in the land beneath our feet. Another common worry has been the liquefaction process which created thousands of tonnes of fine silt that, when dry, literally choked half of Christchurch. In the face of all this, what could ordinary people do?

### **Emergency management response**

Emergency management in New Zealand is coordinated and staffed primarily through local government bodies. In an emergency, an operations centre is established and a swift response set in motion. After the first major earthquake, I assumed local government would also coordinate the volunteer response to support communities in need, so I rang and offered my assistance. How wrong I was. A Civil Defence official gave me a lengthy phone interview, established I had no 'skills' to offer, declared this to be a situation for 'experts,' and advised me to go home and check on my neighbours. That was not a response I could accept.

Meanwhile, I was amazed at the level of activity on social media sites immediately following the earthquakes. Very quickly, street journalism rivalled mainstream media, with countless people sharing their real life, real time experiences via Facebook and other social media outlets after each quake and aftershock. My initial contribution was to gain leverage from this dynamic medium. With a few friends, I set up an event on Facebook called the Student Volunteer Base for Earthquake Clean Up. We invited 200 friends to the event, asked them to invite their friends, and left it open for friends of friends and so on. The campaign went viral. Over the next two weeks we provided safe and organised volunteer placement, transport, food and support for over 2500 students. We focused on low risk areas during the immediate response period and cleared over 65,000 tonnes of liquefaction silt.



Figure 1: Student Volunteer base for earthquake clean up Facebook page

Far greater damage was sustained five months later, on the morning of February 22, when the second major earthquake hit. 185 people lost their lives, thousands of homes were destroyed, and the central business district was cordoned off for 12 months due to severe destruction. In overcoming the challenges after the first earthquake, we were better ready to respond to the second. We already had a name for our effort. The Student Volunteer Army (SVA), and a Facebook page for the organisation. We were using the Facebook page as the primary means of communicate and coordinating residents, students and resources to areas most in need. As the crisis grew, our team members encouraged friends to participate in person, declare their support by 'liking' the SVA page, and spreading the word by posting our events and status updates on other people's Facebook pages.

## Using the tools in our pockets

Three weeks after the February earthquake, our Facebook page increased in 'likes' by 47,157%, to nearly 27,000, and our status updates had been viewed a total of 10.6 million times (Figure 2). For a group of young students, this type of social media influence was unprecedented in New Zealand.



Figure 2: SVA Facebook traffic statistics in the 4 weeks after the February 2011 quake

The Facebook page was leveraged to communicate with volunteers. The biggest benefits were speed and reach, as each update got information out instantly to thousands of people whenever we wanted. Every evening, we posted plans for the next day. Our volunteers knew to check Facebook daily at 8pm, giving details on when and where to meet, what to bring, and what to wear. They could ask questions and, as the page was constantly managed, get answers very quickly. Beyond this, as anyone could view and post on the page, people from all over New Zealand and the world could post messages of support and encouragement.

The organisation was built on a team approach. We trained our team leaders to use their common sense, prioritise safety, and ensure that the volunteers enjoyed themselves. Most importantly, we gave individuals responsibility and trusted them to make the right decision, and we accepted that this wouldn't always happen. Working organically, we established new teams for different purposes (equipment, funding, welfare, food, logistics). At the peak of our operations in February 2011, we were coordinating work, welfare and catering for 1800 volunteers.

Building cohesion, support, and energy was a great challenge. We needed to ensure students not only

volunteered for one day, but sufficiently enjoyed the experience to want to bring their friends along for a second day. The Facebook page enabled us to survey the volunteers on their enjoyment of the day before, and helped to maintain enthusiasm. It provided a familiar place for volunteers to interact with one another and tell stories from their experiences. And that team cohesion fed out through the work to the community. While the initial workload involved cosmetic clean-up, the impact on community mental health and wellbeing was phenomenal. The physical volunteering helped the grieving process, and allowed individuals to feel that they were contributing to the recovery of the city. Each day, volunteers were encouraged not only to focus on manual labour, but to spend time listening and talking to residents, strengthening intergenerational connection, and supporting virtual and physical communities.

### **The bureaucracy machine**

On a number of occasions I have publicly expressed my disappointment in the civil defence response around volunteer management.

At its core, SVA uses a pattern of communication to discover who needs help, and who wants to help, together with the flexibility to do what is needed to help them. To produce those results, SVA and many other Christchurch volunteer groups have no option but to deal with the bureaucratic machines in charge. But breaking into the bureaucracy for any organisation is always a challenge, and our leadership and members had to use persistence, compromise, cooperation, and a healthy disrespect of 'the rules'. It certainly took time to alter the attitude of officials towards the spirit and power of volunteerism and community engagement.

One example was rigidity and risk sensitivity around health and safety for volunteers. The entire volunteer operation was on the brink of evaporation because local government and the New Zealand Army were deeply concerned about the perceived associated health, safety and liability issues. It is an ongoing contentious issue and requires serious debate, but if we had stopped then, over 100,000 hours of organised volunteering would have been quashed in a heartbeat. Volunteer health and safety was a concern for us too, and while New Zealand's accident compensation scheme provides comprehensive, no-fault personal injury cover for all New Zealand residents and visitors, it severely limits the ability of lawyers to chase ambulances and forbids private law suits for personal injury.

That said, we were careful to appoint all liability and risk to the individual volunteer, which each person acknowledged when registering and receiving a volunteer task from SVA.

Officials were also very keen for us to keep records of exactly where volunteers were placed, their contact information, and any medical health issues. We accepted these and other rules to keep officials happy, mitigate the liability from local government, and to ensure we were doing everything reasonable to support the wellbeing of the volunteers. The authorities refused to accept how common sense should trump bureaucratic set ways of doing things. But the official processes and manuals were stagnant, outdated and irrelevant to our generation's spontaneous, modern and impatient volunteers.

We persuaded officials that their forms and manuals mattered less than the results we were achieving, and we set up our own systems for communication, registration, volunteer tracking, mapping and reporting. At registration time each morning, volunteers would scan their student ID or driver's license, rather than signing in with pen and paper. We despatched and relocated them via text message through mobile management software ([www.geoop.com](http://www.geoop.com)) as the operation grew. The tools in our pockets – cell phones, Google maps, Facebook, Twitter and everything in between – were the key to our success.

Grappling with the bureaucratic machine also means working hand-in-glove with other volunteer groups to gain influence and shake up the bureaucracy. One such was the 'Farmy Army', comprising hundreds of farmers from neighbouring districts. They used common sense, were strong, practical, and no-nonsense. I agree with John Hartnell, the 'Generalissimo' of the Farmy Army, who described his group's response as: "we did what comes natural to most Kiwis and that's to head to where help is needed. [We brought] healthy disrespect of those who tell you what you can't do in the face of common sense."

### **Gen-Y volunteers: lessons learned**

Some lessons are particularly worth passing on to enable other volunteer groups:

- 1. Leaders at every level.** Volunteer efforts require leadership, and every single leader is as important as the next. Volunteers all want to help, but average people aren't interested in being in charge. We appointed leaders right down to the smallest groups to break any friction that can exist when someone self-appoints leadership and takes charge. The leader didn't necessarily have to do much above directing

when it was time for that team to move to a new property, but a command structure was vital to minimise wasted time.

2. **Big teams.** Many hands make light work. The work was hideous, with nothing glamorous about shovelling thousands of tonnes of endless silt from house after house after house. The trick was to make it simple and social. Large teams problem solve better and get work done faster, boosting each other's morale.
3. **Instant gratification.** They like to see themselves making a difference. This was essential in maintaining motivation and enthusiasm, and ties into large scale team work. So we considered space and equipment and made decisions at the beginning: do we send five students for half a day, or 15 students for half an hour? Clearing a property with just three or four people would have been depressing. You would dig all day and seemingly make no substantial progress. With team work, we powered through properties which allowed students to see themselves making a difference to not just a single property, but to an entire suburb.
4. **Food.** The amount of time volunteers would commit naturally hinged on their energy levels. Considering their workload and level of personal physical effort, we felt duty bound to provide food and drink. Feeding up to a thousand people every day was the most complex element of this entire operation as we had to blindly guess at the number of volunteers we were expecting to feed. The biggest challenge wasn't paying for the food or preparing it, but finding enough in the supermarkets.
5. **They're volunteers, not free labour.** Volunteers are motivated by a desire to help individual families, real people. They made a direct correlation between the cause they were volunteering for and the task they were actually completing. Anything removed from this, we discovered, led to protest and resentment. If they didn't see the link, they felt exploited and used and their enthusiasm would dissolve. This comes down to the difference between volunteer work, and work that one should be employed to do. For example, they disliked handing out emergency information flyers, digging holes to check the status of sewer pipes, or clearing garden waste that wasn't created by the earthquake.

6. **Keep it simple.** They dislike logistics and are not good at it. We made things very simple so people didn't have to think about anything but the task at hand.

## Japan

When the huge tsunami rolled over Japan in March 2011, SVA was invited by Global DIRT to travel there as advisors. With SVA Committee member Jason Pemberton, I spent two weeks in Japan, first working with groups of students in Tokyo and then going to northern Japan near Ishinomaki, where we physically volunteered with different organisations each day in the disaster zone. We placed only one condition on our trip to Japan: that we would work with students and student communities only. We were not fixated on leveraging our 'experience' onto already burdened authorities; we wished for students to establish a volunteering system of their own, and to support those most in need by assisting with the simple tasks. While Japan was dramatically different from New Zealand, with cultural differences playing a major role, our small group of volunteers supported local people to use the lessons we learned in New Zealand to build a strong team of Waseda university students. The SVA team now understand how disaster volunteering operates in Japan. They use social media to promote volunteering causes and have travelled back to Ishinomaki to support a local community. While the nuclear crisis curbed the operation's success in our eyes, the more organic approach to volunteering continues to support the community there, with students offering their assistance, and doing anything that is necessary of them. Most importantly, they are prepared to organise a volunteer force in the future and have an established relationship with volunteer centres.

## Where to next?

A major benefit of social media is how it eases long-distance communication. The support we received from fellow New Zealanders and other nationals was incredible. Two of my personal favourite comments we received on our Facebook site are:

*We had a 'dress as your hero' day at school this week, and among the children dressed as police officers, fire fighters, rugby players and batman, there was a collection of 5 year olds wearing their gumboots and carrying spades, dressed as the Student Volunteer Army... you guys are fantastic! – Carolyn Gregg, June 18, 2011*

*Just wanted to let you know, we had a man stand up at church on Sunday, who hasn't come before and he said he was really struggling after the earthquake and he prayed for help and the student*

*army turned up and he said he sat there watching you work and that it was like you were angels and it brought a tear to his eye, he was so grateful and wanted to extend a big thank you and he doesn't know how he would have done it without you... – Ruby Knight, March 8, 2011*

These are the reactions and the support which made the long hours achievable. The fact that New Zealand as a country trusted in a group of students and other young people to bring hope to those in need made it all worthwhile. It revealed to many of us the clear desire in our community to strengthen voluntarism amongst young people in New Zealand. We have established the Volunteer Army Foundation to promote opportunities for young people to be engaged in volunteering and to build on the lessons learned and opportunities realised from the volunteer response to the Christchurch earthquakes and other disaster related experiences.

We are creating a version of RockCorps in New Zealand. Focused on a “give-and-get-back” philosophy, this program seeks to broaden horizons and empower youth with event management and leadership skills by utilising social events as a reward for selfless behaviour and community contribution. In Christchurch, the aim will be to maintain the momentum and desire to volunteer, and importantly create a positive physical and emotional connection between Generation-Y and a dramatically changing city. Schools, churches, community groups, individuals and corporations are welcomed to organise and participate in a volunteer programme that we will guide. SVA will oversee its development and help to make it happen by clearing administrative roadblocks. We incentivise the volunteering by producing a Rock Concert to which every volunteer receives a ticket. The great irony in this project is that the reward a volunteer gets from their ‘first time’ service is not the concert at the end. It’s the process along the way, and the fulfilment deep inside. Together with RockCorps, we’re also developing and sharing our knowledge of disaster youth volunteering.

## **Conclusion**

The Student Volunteer Army had the ability to do whatever was required, the organic processes to complete the impossible, and the willingness to break rules for the greater good. Its model for leveraging young people’s desire to volunteer has been internationally recognised by politicians, academics, celebrities and disaster experts. This was acknowledged when, towards the end of 2011, Jason Pemberton and I attended and spoke at the Partners of America World Summit for Youth Volunteering in

Colombia. It was clear to us that many countries had not yet considered how their emergency responses could make good use of younger people, the technology at their fingertips, and their willingness to support authorities through a disaster. We shared our experience of youth volunteering and highlighted the vital role that younger generations can play in disaster response and recovery. We spoke about how grassroots, self-coordinated disaster response aligns well with New Zealand culture and the instinctive nature of New Zealanders to ‘get the job done.’ We used this attitude, and with Gen-Y skills and their second-nature aptitude for social media and cellphone connectedness, allowed us to organise, coordinate and dispatch volunteers through simple self-managed systems quicker than officials knew which room to have a meeting in.

I was privileged to meet Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on her visit to Christchurch soon after the 2010 quake. She applauded our team for utilising the technology at our fingertips and strong practical leadership to effect positive social change and strengthen community relationships. This was the base concept then as it is now, and we hope the lessons learned will inspire and empower youth leadership, creativity, organic processes, and encourage calculated risk-taking by officials. It’s incredible what can happen if you destroy bureaucratic red tape and replace it with concerted leadership action focused on results.

This year our team has established the Volunteer Army Foundation to continue the momentum of volunteering in our rebuild. The Foundation’s first major project generated over 40,000 hours of volunteering, and allowed 10,000 Cantabrians to attend a major music event, ‘The Concert’. The Foundation team have worked to produce a music event featuring 24 of New Zealand’s top artists, where only four hours volunteer time, instead of money, purchases a ticket! This has resulted on more than 900 community projects being created and hundreds of residents’ lives improved as we gardened, weeded, shovelled and cleaned our way to a music concert! [www.VolunteerArmy.org](http://www.VolunteerArmy.org) (website not live yet, but will be soon)... check out [www.theconcert.co.nz](http://www.theconcert.co.nz)

He aha te kai o te rangatira? He Korero, he korero, he korero. The translation of this Maori saying is: “What is the food of the leader? It is knowledge. It is communication.”

Kia Kaha,  
Sam Johnson



# Sumner Community Hub

**Marnie Kent**

22 February 2011 was a day to celebrate as I moved my work from home back into our red zoned office in the city. The power was connected that morning and by 11:30am I had half completed cleaning the mess from the September earthquake and was ready to start cleaning the rest of the office when the earthquake struck.

The days following were full of uncertainty. Where would I live now that my home felt unsafe, threatened by rock falls and heavy roof tiles collapsing into the roof space above our heads? Pitching a tent in the grounds of the van Asch Deaf Education Centre felt safe, even from the earth rumbling and shaking during the week of the big event.

Three days after February 22, I was bored. I needed to do something to help the community. My family were safe; we had food, water and shelter sorted. I was Co-Chair of the Residents Association and it was time for me to put my hand up and help, so I went to the local fire station to ask if I could help somehow. The following day another resident, Stephan Dujakovic, called to say the Fire Service needed people to open a local service centre, a community hub. The two of us knew there had been nothing like this in existence previously and we had no particular knowledge of civil defence systems. We knew we'd need to depend almost

entirely on the skill sets of local people, but we didn't yet know what we'd need to do, and we had nowhere to work, as the regular community hall was damaged in the earthquake. The only building available was an old school hall, which until the quake had been destined for deconstruction, but local Member of Parliament Ruth Dyson stepped in and persuaded the Education Ministry that a stay of execution was necessary. We 'took over' the after-school care programme and negotiated access to their IT systems, assuring the school that we'd maintain their confidentiality. By 8:30am the next day, the doors of the Sumner Hub were open and hand written signs were displayed to let the public know we were up and running.

Days passed and we spread the word around the community using noticeboards and word of mouth. Willing people came into the Hub and volunteered, and the crowds grew. The Hub was open seven days a week from 10am till 6pm, with rotating rosters of volunteers from the community. People came in thirsty for information about power, sewage, food, housing, and safety, and concerned to get in touch with relatives. Our volunteers helped with queries, sorted food and resources such as hand sanitiser, toys, blankets, buckets for makeshift toilets, and second



**Community members at a local food swap**

hand telephones. We also received donated whiteboards and paper to display a community noticeboards (lost and found, wanted and available, services updates, and contact information). We developed work rosters to relieve tired volunteers, organised public meetings with fire, police, council, civil defence (occasionally), and government and health officials to keep the public informed on progress.

The workload of the Hub included greeting people and directing them to the right team for help; providing information and resources; delivering information and resources to vulnerable folk; holding public meetings with key organisations for information updates; running the temporary school, providing telephones and cell phone car chargers; helping with sleeping arrangements; providing whiteboards for notices. We also put on entertainment, including indoor and outdoor movies on the school grounds.

To identify people in need, a group of volunteers worked with the Red Cross to knock on doors to see who was vulnerable and needing help. Meanwhile, we asked residents walking into the Hub if they knew of vulnerable people. Later, by the time the June earthquake struck, we had addresses and contact details and were able to send volunteers out to the vulnerable with resources and buckets of water so they could flush their toilets. Once a day we visited with supplies and checked on them.

Clearly, hygiene was an issue as the reconnection of power, water and sewage took four weeks. Although portaloos relieved the lack of reticulated sewage, it was less than ideal for vulnerable folk who were unable to walk two blocks to a toilet. Life was tough, but in the scheme of things we still had roofs over our heads, warm beds to crawl into, and people who understood our emotions because they were in the same predicament.

Three weeks after the February quake, parents and children were at their wits end. Everybody needed some normality. So I started a makeshift school with qualified local teachers unable to return to work, and with classrooms from donated tents and the old school hall. For the next two weeks the school offered an educational program for primary and high school children from 10am until 2pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. A register of children included emergency contacts and medical condition declaration, and each child had a registered number written on their hand. This gave parents a chance to sort out their living situation and the children a chance to socialise in a happy space. It turned out to be a huge success and the Education Minister visited and commended our efforts.

Slowly, residents who had fled Christchurch started returning to their battered homes. The Hub information sessions grew in size as residents wanted to know what would happen with homes that were in dangerous locations, and the safety of travelling in and out of Sumner. Demands mounted for supplies and resources, and with some people better able than others to look after themselves, we in the Hub decided that resources were to go to the elderly and vulnerable.

After four weeks, electricity began to return to the streets, more portaloos were delivered, and on every corner there was a decorated plastic box with chairs outside. But we were all still living in a disturbed and disturbing place. The extent of the damage was huge, and safety was always at the forefront of people's minds: what to do in the event of another disaster, where they should go for information. The only news was the local newspaper and the radio. Some people avoided venturing out of Sumner for fear of being prevented from returning by one of the only two access roads.

It seemed that things only got sorted if you knew someone who had contacts, and the Sumner Hub was fortunate to have some well connected people to pull in resources. Stephan Dujakovic, whose regular job was with Telecom, was able to source the telephones and other resources. We had regular visits from City Council staff,

occasional visits by Red Cross, and daily visits by our local Member of Parliament Ruth Dyson and City Councillor Yani Johanson. Ruth and Yani got involved answering people's concerns, and following up on insurance issues. These politicians played a vital role in communities due to their connections and resources, and have better access to decision-makers and service providers. Out in Sumner, we saw nothing of other politicians, including government representatives. Other political agendas need be put aside and the focus should be assisting the local community and its needs.

There were some things that we needed but didn't have, and that need to be in place in time for the next civil defence emergency. To get things rolling right from the start, some cheap working pre-paid cellphones would have helped. Within that, we needed a community cellphone so everyone could know what number to call. The government should have instantly dispatched the basic stationery to get hubs like this one up and running (butchers paper, white boards, folders, paper, marker pens, and instructions in a desk file). These could all be pre-prepared and stored long term, ready for dispatch when needed. Electronic equipment such as laptops and printers were vital. Also, money. The Hub needed ready access to a system for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses. Our local people happily donated their time and skills, and the government should have been ready to reciprocate to ensure those willing helpers did not have to dig into their own rapidly emptying pockets. The school and citizens were never reimbursed directly for their costs. I'm on a low income, paying a mortgage, and raising a child alone. But I am the sort of person who puts their hand up in times of need regardless of my financial situation. I do not know of any financial support for people like me, who struggle after the event when bills come in for cell phone calls, petrol etc. One can only apply for funding towards expenses that have not been spent at the time of applying.

The Sumner Residents Association is creating a community equipment and resource pool <http://sumnercommunity.org.nz/Community-Groups/Community-Support/Community-Resources-and-Equipment-Pool>. We are looking for funding to expand on our vision to provide the community with a free library-like facility to borrow resources (e.g. generator, defibrillator, projector, whiteboard, laptop, printer, public address system). We will



### **A makeshift preschool helped give parents time to sort out their living situation**

also need a venue to store them. We created the Community noticeboard <http://sumnercommunity.org.nz/Community-Groups/Community-Support/Community-Noticeboards>

Later, after the Hub wound up, I created a community website to continue delivering information to local folk. Every community needs its own community advisor; a local person employed by the community with funding from a number of sources, including central and local government. It is unfair for government organisations to lean on communities to do the sort of work that Sumner did without some financial support along the way. The best way to communicate throughout a community is through a community advisor/coordinator. By having this structure in place, people and organisations would be aware of each other and know what to expect in the event of a disaster. The government needs to invest now and help establish community resources (website, newsletters, noticeboards), and provide them with professional support to create templates, designs, and social media set up. Not all communities have access to these skills for free.

The Hall is still standing and widely used by community groups. The noticeboard and website are still providing information. However, getting information to the folk who only find out through TV, newspaper or mail are missing out on what is happening locally. A regular newsletter delivered to everyone's letterbox is needed too. This takes time and energy, but is necessary.

# Lyttelton's Grassroots Response

**Wendy Everingham**

**Treasurer Project Lyttelton [www.lyttelton.net.nz](http://www.lyttelton.net.nz)**

**Chair Lyttelton Information Centre [www.lytteltonharbour.info](http://www.lytteltonharbour.info)**

## Background Information

Our small port town of approximately 3000 is tucked into the arms of the Lyttelton Crater. Only 12 kilometres from Christchurch central, it seems miles away from the city with the impressive Port Hills blocking the view of greater Christchurch and the surrounding Canterbury Plains.

We have always been a remote township and as such since European settlement began in 1850, there has been a strong culture of self sufficiency and a very strong culture of community building and community service. With just a quick glance at the local community directory, there are around 30 volunteer organisations within the township alone. These range from service clubs like Rotary and Lions, to school fundraising groups, churches, youth networks, museum societies, emergency response groups, the Lyttelton Information Centre, various environmental initiatives, Volcano Radio and sustainability focused groups like Project Lyttelton.

I was asked to write about our community response to the earthquakes that have continued to rock our area since 4 September 2010. I can write personally about the role of two organisations that I am heavily involved with, the Lyttelton Harbour Information Centre and Project Lyttelton, and can give you a broad overview about the roles that other groups played.

The Lyttelton Information Centre was established in 1996. For many years it mainly focused on the tourism sector and for a large part of its history was part of the formal Christchurch City Council iSite Network. In 2007 we re-formed as an independent community run information centre with a focus on being the hub of quality information for residents and visitors. We wanted to broaden our relevance to the wider community. With that decision we invited Project Lyttelton's Timebank to share the office space with us in 2009, and the two organisations worked very closely together.

The synergies were interesting. The Information Centre was the place for new residents to visit and find their

way in Lyttelton and discover community activities. Lyttelton Timebank was the conduit for "settled" residents to have a need to visit the information centre. From 2009 we were actively strengthening each others networks and helping to shape a more connected community.

Project Lyttelton was established in Lyttelton in 1994, originally to be a conduit for the Main Street Programme. It broadened to focus on historical preservation and, when Margaret Jefferies became the chair in 2003, broadened further to focus more on community development and sustainability. Project Lyttelton gave people in the community the permission to "create whatever they wanted", as long as it supported the mission statement: "Portal to Canterbury's historic past, a vibrant sustainable community creating a living future". Some of the initiatives that have been created since 2003 include the Lyttelton Farmers Market, Lyttelton Timebank, Lyttelton Harbour Festival of Lights, and the Lyttelton Harbour Food Security Project.

## What is timebanking?

Timebanking is a way of trading skills in a community. It uses time, rather than money, as the measurement tool. Everyone's time is equal. Members of a time bank share their skills with other members within the community and are given time credits for the work they do. With the credits they gain, each member can 'buy' someone else's time, and get the service they need. Membership is open to all residents and community groups in the area. Generally membership is granted on application. Transactions are facilitated by a broker and transactions are recorded on a computerised system. This builds up a great resource of skills and a great information network.

Timebanking is a great way to build your community. People meet one another via trades who would never have met otherwise. They get to know one another and so the circle they know gets bigger and friendships develop. People experience the compassionate side of humans and this just helps them feel part of the community.

A timebank is such a flexible tool. Its use is only limited by the imaginations of the people who trade and the people who co-ordinate it. At the time of the major earthquakes Jules Lee was our co-ordinator. Currently the Lyttelton Timebank has 435 members from the nearby communities.

Some highlights of a timebank that exist in normal times but are significant in times of disaster, include:

- You know the many skills you have available in the community because timebank members list them on the timebank database.
- You have rapid ways of accessing the members information via the extensive database.
- You can send information quickly to large groups of people as the system has a messaging system to contact all members.
- You know who the key people in the community are because the co-ordinator is tasked with linking with all the relevant groups.
- People are already practiced in using such a connecting system – so it kicks in fast.
- There is a strong human element. This builds a sense of community where compassion and love become the norm.
- It allows all people to be involved.
- Above all, it creates hope.

## Earthquake specific responses

Several groups in Lyttelton have played a key role in our earthquake responses, and it is interesting to note that different responses have occurred after each major event.

For example, for the 4 September 2010 earthquake the key organisations involved in the community response were:

- Lyttelton Volunteer Fire Brigade
- Lyttelton St John
- Lyttelton Police
- Lyttelton Information Centre
- Lyttelton Timebank
- Lyttelton Health Centre
- Volcano Radio.

Immediately after the earthquake our Volunteer Fire Brigade, St John's and the Police got to work helping people with damaged property. This included fixing chimneys, hot water services, boarding windows, cordoning off buildings etc. The commitment from these mostly volunteer people was amazing. As our Fire Chief, Mark Buckley, acknowledges skills and knowledge have been passed down from fire chief to fire chief. The Volunteer Fire Brigade know where fuel supplies are, how to source water, and where to locate generators. Together the fire fighters and their volunteer team, including their family and friends, have such great skills. Some are builders and engineers who can help with

advice on building issues. Our brigade and family members are like most of our volunteer groups, very versatile, multi-skilled and talented. These guys worked all weekend helping people alongside the Police and St John.

The wider community didn't realise that Civil Defence Lyttelton was not called into local service but was directed into central Christchurch. It wasn't until two days after the earthquake on Monday morning that the Lyttelton Timebank and the Information Centre realised there was no community hub for a response. At that point we swung into action.

The Information Centre



Members of Lyttelton's Volunteer Fire Brigade fixing one of the chimneys damaged during the September 2010 earthquake



### Army truck coming up Canterbury Street

was perfect as a drop in point and both organisations gained significantly from all the new people that came in volunteering their services or those that needed help. The Health Centre used timebankers to phone the elderly to ensure they were okay. The Volunteer Fire Brigade requested help taking down simple chimneys and other smaller jobs. The Timebank and the Information Centre became the central point for all these activities to be facilitated, plus becoming the perfect drop in point for locals who needed a place to be.

In September, some of the lessons we learned were:

- Do not assume someone else is going to step in when an emergency happens. Community groups, except for emergency services, did not respond immediately. We thought civil defence would have everything under control and that the City Council's Ready Net, a new information management system that stores and shares emergency information, would kick in letting us know what to do. This did not happen.
- You need multiple community emergency hubs because you never know what buildings are going to be available. The Information Centre became the de-facto hub of the community response. Council owned buildings remained closed. The local civil defence sector post was not opened as those

volunteers were sent to central Christchurch.

- In earthquakes all communities have civil defence needs. The local civil defence team was needed, and the community needed access to the civil defence hub.
- We needed more robust information networks. The Timebank had the most comprehensive list so it also became the principal information source. At this stage Lyttelton Main School didn't have email contact lists. The Information Centre had contact lists but mainly for its wider tourism community. Information supply was quite disjointed. We were lucky that we also had our volunteer operated radio station, Volcano Radio, to add another level of back up and they were able to broadcast updates to the general harbour community as well.
- All community groups needed to network even more.

In the 22 February 2011 earthquake, the key groups to the earthquake response were:

- Lyttelton Volunteer Fire Brigade
- Lyttelton St John
- Lyttelton Police
- Lyttelton Civil Defence
- Local employees of Christchurch City Council who took on a civil defence role
- Lyttelton Timebank
- Lyttelton Health Centre
- Lyttelton Community House
- Volcano Radio
- plus, outside groups, the New Zealand Navy and Army.

Initially, the formal response to this earthquake came from our civil defence team, the Army, Navy, Police, St John and the Lyttelton Volunteer Fire Brigade. The Lyttelton Timebank was working alongside these guys in an unofficial capacity. As in the September earthquake, these agencies took the lead role in making the town safe and ensuring we had water, food and shelter.

Three days into the emergency the usefulness of the Timebank was recognised by the wider team, and the Timebank was invited to be part of the daily emergency briefing system.

Whilst civil defence and the other organisations have specific roles, there are lots of community related jobs that need to be done to make the overall response to the emergency run better. Some of this work was done by the Timebank, Volcano Radio and Lyttelton Community House.



**Julie Lee hard at it as team leader at the first point of contact at the Lyttelton Recreation Centre**

Our Timebank coordinator would later refer to this as ‘a hole’ or ‘a gap’ in the emergency process.

Key things that the Timebank was able to facilitate while working in partnership with the other agencies were:

- Finding local accommodation for people. They were able to do this by putting messages on the Timebank network, and helping civil defence by registering people who came into the Civil Defence Centre offering accommodation.
- Directing tradespeople to homes that needed emergency repairs. Residents just popped down to the emergency centre or phoned and left the details of what help they needed. This saved stressed residents having to try and find tradespeople and relived the work load on the Volunteer Fire Brigade. For example, in my home they directed the Navy to board up a window, and organised a tradesman to fix the hot water cylinders for all houses within the body corporate complex that I live in. Timebank worked closely with the Volunteer Fire Brigade and Fletcher’s Hub (hubs were set up around the city as places residents could visit to discuss repairs

and rebuilding) during this period. These were an excellent source of communication. Safety was paramount and some repairs (e.g chimneys) required the go ahead by the Volunteer Fire Brigade.

- They could source people immediately for various tasks. Kathy Bessant got her team at Community House together to ensure the elderly were being looked after and in particular, fed
- They got the information desk up and running.
- Timebank coordinator Julie Lee (Jules) produced information broadcasts on the Timebank email network, sometimes four days a day. Plus she updated the information white board on the footpath for those that didn’t have power or computers. The information that was shared came from the emergency meetings she attended, so was very reliable and up to date. I don’t know who would have done this if the Timebank hadn’t picked up this task.
- Jules also helped civil defence volunteers source extra helpers for people who were trying to evacuate. There was a lot of furniture and belongings to move.

- Whilst civil defence got the water tankers, Jules and her team organised a roster for the water tankers, plus ensured the volunteers had shade and food.
- The Timebank helped put a local face on the emergency effort. Many outsiders have no idea who the right contacts are.
- They helped co-ordinate donated supplies.
- Helped co-ordinate the myriad of volunteers who registered at the recreation centre.
- Helped facilitate food for volunteers. Initially this was coordinated by the Navy, and then local people started baking and sustaining the volunteers. This was particularly appreciated by the Police and Volunteer Fire Brigade.
- Some of the Timebank responses were totally unorganised. People really want to contribute as life goes on in the midst of a crisis. A group of timebankers – not trading, just living the ethos of time banking made hand stitched heart brooches. Hundreds of these hearts have been made. Ministers of the Crown, sports celebrities, Lyttelton people and crumbled Lyttelton buildings all wore the hearts visibly. This was our community's outward sign of love and support to one another.

In a nutshell, our Timebank coordinator was able to easily identify the 'gaps' and 'holes' as they arose, and was quickly able to fill these. She was able to do this because of her extensive grassroots work with the community. The Timebank knew the community.

It should be noted that during this period the Timebank was working with members and non-members. Most of the trades during this period were not recorded. Our Timebank Coordinator had a natural flair for organising in a crisis, and her work with the Timebank gave her the unique opportunity to play a significant role in the emergency response.

Another group that had a significant impact on the community response was Community House. This team of people have generally supported the elderly and disadvantaged, and they run the local youth centre.

Key things Community House was able to facilitate:

- Our elderly and vulnerable people were able to be cared for. As a result of the September earthquake, the Health Centre and a local club for elderly, called the Hibiscus Club, were able to identify all at risk elderly quickly and began cooking evening meals five days a week for 42 people. This service continues to this day, however, only 25 people are looked

after now. This programme ensured our vulnerable residents had good food and a visitor every day. This meant no elderly were forgotten. We truly have a community that cares for everyone.

- The volunteer cooking team were hospitality staff who had been displaced from local restaurants. They chose to use their skill to help our older people.
- Local teachers were looking for a place for youth to get some sort of structure. Community House is also a youth centre. Community House became available to qualified and non-qualified teachers who had skills that teenagers might be interested in. For a week Portside High operated from Community House. Feedback from students was great. For example, some students got song writing lessons from local musicians. This had a profound effect on some young people.

#### Volcano Radio

- Once again this organisation was able to play a great support role informing the wider community of the situation.
- They were also able to organise an impromptu concert on the day the township was supposed to have its Summer Street Party. This was so therapeutic on Saturday, 26 February 2011.
- Our Timebank coordinator would ring the radio station and they would air out urgent requests immediately. Our Timebank coordinator described a local community radio station as a fantastic source of communication.

#### Lessons learned:

- Authorities have to trust local initiatives. We can really compliment the emergency and recovery effort.
- Authorities should respect community groups more. They can unlock a community for them. No one knows a community better than the people that work and play within it. Talk with them first. Find out what is going on prior to deciding what they think is best. There was a lot of doubling up because authorities decided not to communicate.
- Often the volunteers are more skilled than the experts. The Volunteer Fire Brigade highlighted this. Many of their volunteers were multi-skilled and so they could perform multiple functions, not just fire related.
- Volunteers have a vested interest in their special place. They will go that extra mile. It's not just a job.

- Volunteers can be coordinated within the various community groups and the main emergency team. Our community showed that clearly. The main thing is to make it clear what the needs are, and then let people get on with it.
- Local knowledge makes the emergency phase much easier.
- Our local community information systems needed to be wider. The Information Centre now produces a weekly newsletter called the Lyttelton Review. This gives updated council, community and Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority news that is specific to our area. We have over 800 people on the database, but we know the reach is much greater as many people forward it on.
- A community radio station is really important especially for people who do not have the Internet.
- Communities really benefit from organisations that exist to build communities all the time rather than those that exist for a narrow purpose (like civil defence). It is easier to get people involved in something dynamic rather than fairly static. The Volunteer Fire Brigade, Timebank, Information Centre, Volcano Radio, Community House and St John's are good examples of this.
- Community information centres and timebanks work really well together and should be encouraged to link all over the country. They could also form a new link to civil defence and emergency networks, broadening the skills and information base.
- Community initiatives can create spontaneous initiatives to solve problems, and at the same time

give people a role and create hope. It might be the local coffee shop opening a coffee tent or the heart stitchers creating a talking point, or Volcano Radio getting local musicians together to create a spontaneous concert.

- Lyttelton's community response should inspire you. In particular, city councils need to help create community resilience everywhere because the benefits of a grassroots response to coping in a crisis and then moving forward are huge. You must invest in your people, and enable your volunteer groups to flourish. It's a bit like preventative health. Don't wait for the "heart attack", be proactive. The majority of our community are now taking responsibility to shape the future of our town, and it excites most of us and gives us great hope for the future.
- We know we have a fantastic community that really cares for each other, because that's the sort of community we have been striving to make. All communities have this potential, they might just need a bit of help to get there.

At one of the emergency briefings City Councillor and Local Community Board Member, Claudia Reid, was heard to say: "This is emergency heaven in Lyttelton".

I believe she said this because the collaboration of all the groups had reached a new level. Both the official and unofficial responses to the emergency had created this new teamwork, and together Lyttelton was acting as a cooperative collective producing a more holistic response for all residents in our emergency situation.

# Challenging disaster management through Community Engagement

Tom McBrearty

## A land to be shaken

The Avon River meanders eastward out of the Christchurch central business district toward the sea, across land that would have been swamp, shallow lagoons, oxbow lakes and low-rolling countryside of metres-deep silt before Christchurch existed.

For decades, Christchurch had suffered no significant earthquakes. There was no shaking, or liquefaction, and so the geological problems of the eastern suburbs did not impinge on the minds of the population. Homes were needed for the city as it grew through the 19th and 20th Centuries, and some of the easiest places to build were either side of the Avon River where the suburbs of Richmond, Avonside, Dallington, Shirley, Avondale, Burwood and Bexley now sit.

Following the river's twists and turns is River Road, fed by tributary roads, home to largely low-to-middle income families. The people have typically grown up there, love it, and tend to shift only about once every 15-16 years – a length of stay more than twice as long as the rest of Christchurch. These local people know the area very well and how the land, homes, businesses and people fit together. People know each other and there remains a strong sense of community ownership (Māori might say kaitiakitanga or guardianship) of the river and the area around it.

This community spirit came into its own after the first quake. With aftershocks shaking and shunting the suburbs, opening holes in the roads and pumping silt-slurry out of flower beds, the chances were high that people in leadership positions would take immediate action. The locals thought that it would have been wrong for decision-makers to make hasty choices, and decided to make sure their voice was heard. Our communities had long histories and (we hoped) optimistic futures, we knew that we would need to keep dealing with central and local government politicians and other officials for months and years beyond

the immediate crisis. We also thought that seeking victories over them, therefore, would have been an unwise approach. We decided, instead, to seek win-win solutions for our community and for government.

## Shattered lives

After the September 2010 earthquake we felt that in the main, politicians and government officials continued to communicate with the community in the same way they did before the quake. That is, top-down, “we know best, follow our instructions”. We thought their standard information sources that worked in normal circumstances were not working for our community.

A group of local residents took the initiative and sprang into action, trying to organise themselves. A local Member of Parliament (MP) for Christchurch Central, Brendon Burns, tracked down some of these people and got them together in a room. Brendon seemed well attuned to respond at the community level, as too were some of our other local politicians.

Each of the community members had a story to tell and a way of helping their neighbourhood, street or suburb, and after a bit of eyeballing and learning about each other, they quickly understood that they could work together to take action in pursuit of common goals to serve the people of Christchurch.

At local level the impact of the earthquake was about the simple things in life – toilets, water, food, phones and petrol. All that was about to get worse: the February 2011 earthquake struck, the power stayed off for days, petrol stations closed, there were no communications, and no cooking facilities for whole blocks. Radios with batteries were our most sought after assets. There were no working fridges to store food, no ability to recharge cellphones, and even home gardens were destroyed by liquefaction. All sorts of social challenges were created because the quakes made

it very difficult to maintain relationships with friends and family in scattered locations. That would not have been a problem when we could use our cellphones and cars, but many of us couldn't even get to our cars because the Earthquake Commission (EQC) and civil defence had, quite rightly, prevented access to damaged office blocks and mall car parks. It was a time when neighbours, family friends and strangers stopped opening conversations with "what school did you go to?" and replaced it with "are you OK? How can we help? Let's check on each other."

## Shaping the CanCERN organisation

We were asking ourselves, "was it possible to get vital local knowledge to the people in power, to facilitate good decisions for recovery and restoration?" In normal times, this familiar question attracts cynical responses, especially for lower income people, who so often feel snubbed and disregarded by those in power.

Within a week of the September 2010 quake, some community members had started to become known as spokespersons for their street or neighbourhood. They all had different ages, shapes, genders, socio-economic backgrounds and political beliefs. The common denominator was they had the capability to care about the people they knew in their communities; seeing them for who they were, not as abstractions. It wasn't that officials could not care in the same way as individuals, it was that their jobs made it safest for them to adopt a formal approach. There's a time and place for that, we felt, but maybe not in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster. To be told to listen to radio, phone in with problems, or to go to websites, etc. is easy to say, but harder to do when you have no power or phone, or are disorientated by a disaster.

This issue of the adequacy of information was to the fore when a dozen neighbours met soon after the 7.1 Darfield earthquake in September 2010. CanCERN was born from these meetings. We had about a dozen active members who knew their street, block, community and suburb. Many were complete strangers, while others were neighbours who got on well. Our small group sat eating a restorative fish and chips supper in Avebury Park, and talked about how we all had knowledge that would be useful for the community. Among us were people who knew a lot about engineering, law and other professions, and many had contacts with people of influence in local and central government. We figured we had the capability to help officials understand what needed doing, to challenge misconceptions, highlight the consequences

of bad decisions, and choose better policies and actions for outcomes that local people needed. We set to work identifying where the quakes had cut off water supply, where food was short, and where sewage and drains had failed. We then made sure the authorities knew the facts and prioritised things in a way that was centred on the needs of the people rather than the officials.

By January, we had 60 members and a recognisable level of influence and community respect. We spoke to more than 4,000 people initially in meetings at schools, churches, scout halls and homes. We had developed a reputation as a voice of the people, of common sense, and of understanding and knowing how to link to others. We had, or were forming, branches in North Canterbury, Christchurch (North, South, East, and West), and Selwyn and Waimakariri Districts. By the end of January, membership was 200, and within a week of the February quake we had 400. The media calls ramped up and we tried to remain careful in our public positioning of having higher expectations, and demanding high standards. We called ourselves "CanCERN".

The CanCERN management structure was initially small so it could be viral and organic, and was organised out of a workmen's club. We set up street, block and suburb coordinators. Through this, we figured out what people needed and wanted. Their needs were the basics of life: food, water, shelter, toilets and medical help. Their 'wants' were mainly information.

Initially we met on the side of the streets, and then at various homes, school halls, and community outlets, such as parks (the advantage of summer!). When we met, we discussed individual houses, the state of a street, or the region. We identified needs, allocated crew members to help where we could, and taught other suburbs how to organise street, block and suburb coordinators. At first, because needs were so acute, individual volunteers became household coordinators and maintained good contact with about a dozen households. Handling them were street coordinators (often picked because they had the least damaged houses), then block coordinators, and eventually suburb coordinators. We met everyday, then every three days, then weekly, and by mid 2012, fortnightly.

We believed we knew what was happening in our community, but we rapidly began to realise we needed to pass on this information to decision makers, who often had incomplete or out of date information. We were persistent and insistent, and were seen rightly as activists. We were seen as politically motivated, and we were. We were seen

as noisy, and we were that too. But the authorities couldn't ignore us. They needed us because we were able to tell them what was needed where. Each of us had business, school, health, social and political connections, and so the collective of CanCERN initially won grudging acknowledgement, then acceptance, and then was finally invited to meetings. We ended up having weekly meetings with civil defence, meetings and discussions with the Ministry of Social Development, and we presented to council meetings and communities explaining how we worked.

This was all in our own time, and with our own resources. It worked then, and still works now.

Some examples of what CanCERN did:

- **Street level coordination.** We divided the street up and allocated street coordinators to 12 to 18 houses each. Initially, we organised the coordinators ourselves, but as things expanded we allocated block coordinators to look after groups of eight to 10 street coordinators. The block-level staff attended regular meetings with insurance companies, EQC and government officials (e.g. civil defence). At the public meetings we quietly asked people as they entered the meeting what street they lived in, and sat them all together. When officials declared a street or area had been fixed, we got all the people from that area to stand up and raise their hands if they agreed things were indeed fixed. In the face of that, with the media watching, it didn't take long for the platitudes to stop.
- **Correcting the Gospel.** We told civil defence what was needed and where (electricity, sewage, portaloos). EQC geotechnical experts walked and drove door-to-door down the streets examining buildings with engineers' eyes. But CanCERN got busy and interfered, taking EQC staff down the sides of houses, and clambering over back fences to see what was really going on behind the frontages. There was subsidence, gardens ripped apart, and endless liquefaction. The experts' notepads were quickly filled.
- **Public forums.** We provided a place for residents to meet with agencies like EQC. Many households had no power and could not access email and the Internet. We asked for, and got, public meetings.
- **Advocacy with central government.** Discussions with central government agencies commenced in January 2011. For the Ministry of Social Development, we led identification of needs for

temporary accommodation and pursued rental subsidies for residents made homeless.

## Shifting ideas and opinions

In CanCERN, a number of us were known to have strong personal connections to opposition political parties and MPs and we could have been seen as biased by central government Ministers and MPs, and some local councillors. However, we had not set up as an opposition group.

We needed to work collegially and in good faith with all politicians, and for that to be possible, we needed them to trust us. We were not perfect in attempting to achieve this. We had our difficulties and our barriers, but we did achieve as much as we could. We sought to:

- **Attract influential friends.** Help from people that both sides of today's politics would listen to, including former Prime Ministers (Labour's Helen Clark and National's Jenny Shipley). I asked them through intermediaries to talk informally with key politicians, urging them to put aside those perceptions of CanCERN's bias, just for the time being
- **Gain emotional buy-in from key figures.** We sensitised officials to the personal effect of their decisions, especially choices that might give them a short term advantage. We needed them to worry about the consequences for real people, creating a do-it mindset, and overcoming communication blocks.
- **Develop strong formal relationships with key authorities.** We contributed to government initiatives, attended meetings on a regular basis at management level, and helped organise public meetings. Through this, we influenced decision makers, the EQC, insurance companies, local and central government officials, and many non-government organisations (e.g. Red Cross and church groups). Sometimes the barriers were unusual, "patch protection" being one. Established administrators, and their leaders sometimes saw us as a nuisance or impediment to their way of doing things. I personally believe we brought energy, ideas, humanity and good old fashioned Kiwi "can do". We promoted the idea that there needn't be only one official response to a given problem, and that it could be more effective to harmonise a range of responses with what was already happening at a community level.

Despite pressure from some frustrated members, we decided early on to avoid trenchant public positioning. It can easily be framed as conflict, and conflict is the last thing you need in a true negotiation, which will only work if the parties are able to be flexible. Otherwise, you'll never even get to the table, let alone start talking.

Every natural disaster is different in its impact and severity, and the ability of any given community will vary just as much. In Christchurch, we were privileged to be in a first world country, with the machinery of democracy around us, relatively good levels of employment, and well developed roads, telecommunications, electricity and other infrastructure. Many other disaster zones have none of these advantages. But some things are likely to hold true for other people seeking to head in the same direction as CanCERN:

- **Be straight**, direct, open and honest.
- **Accept what you can achieve immediately and what you'll have to wait for.** You can't always have everything you want, as soon as you want it.
- **Avoid public "scraps" with officials.** Most of the time they'll resist being seen giving in to a "mere" community group. Equally, remember it's not about you and your victories, it's about the people and what they need. It can be more effective to quietly encourage alternative solutions.
- **Polite and professional.** Thank people in private for their time and effort, and also as much as possible in public. Remember that after this episode, you still want them to take your calls. So play nice.
- **Positive approach.** Don't waste time whining and repeating useless topics. You're there to help them do a better job and get it right for the people – so get on with it.
- **No party politics.** The apolitical nature of the relationship between CanCERN and politicians kept going throughout the intense response period after the quakes.
- **Media.** Journalists love negativity and conflict, especially when powerful individuals are involved. On occasion, you may have juicy information that enables them to write those stories. Think twice. Will it damage or assist what you need to achieve for the community? How would it affect your relationships with people you need to persuade?

And some final advice for the people in positions of authority who may have gotten this far:

- Plan for disaster? Yes.
- Educate the people? Yes.

- Embrace, engage and activate the community?  
That's a no brainer, of course, yes.

## Acknowledgements:

It would be wrong if I did not personally thank some individuals from the community. These people offered and provided support, encouragement, guidance, laughter, leadership and values. They all started as strangers to me, and now, through a disaster, have become lifelong friends.

Evan Smith developed our focus, and allowed me to have dark days without judgement. Leanne Curtis taught me community values, the need for listening and the ability to close a debate. Brian Parker's skills in developing systems and forms gave us respect. His caring and sensitive way added value to us all.

Finally my wife Yvonne and my family allowed me to commit energy and time, and they had the skills to make my feet stay on the ground. Pillow talk was more like pillow listening as I freely downloaded to Yvonne at 2am many mornings.

Mahatma Ghandi said: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." These people helped me to deliver on some of my wishes. Thank you.

## About the author

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# Mobilising for Resilience: From Government to Governance

Robert L. Bach

*Resilient communities adapt through creating innovative approaches to collective governance, seizing unexpected opportunities to decide for themselves how to respond, organising to work with government agencies in new ways, and accepting both the promise and responsibility of joint decision-making.*

Throughout much of the world, national leaders have realised that in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters, government agencies and programmes cannot do it alone. Local communities are increasingly recognised as a critical partner in their nations' resilience.

In this changing world, the challenge for governments is to learn and design ways to best support these local activities, especially in situations when the government is not in control. Top-down managerial and even logistics frameworks fail to mobilise and incorporate the knowledge, access, resources, coordination, and commitment of the broadest sectors of local communities. A new whole-of-community approach is called for, but governments with their very different organisational shapes and authorities do not yet seem to know how to work as supporters of local communities rather than as authorities, directors and agenda-setters over subordinate entities and clients.

## The Multinational Resilience Policy Group

In 2009, a group of senior policy leaders from several countries organised themselves into an informal working group to examine this central transformational issue. They decided to examine real life practices of communities (acting in vastly different national contexts) in the face of various natural and manmade hazards. The central question involved a "how to" inquiry, seeking first to understand the value of community engagement and empowerment, and then increasingly to identify a range of potential governance arrangements and experiences that successfully support local community resilience.

This article highlights a few issues explored in this continuing policy leadership discussion. They are selected out of an expanding array of case stories constructed

locally by a combination of practitioners, researchers, and community members who have survived disastrous events of both large and modest scale. Common themes that influence community resilience have emerged from these policy leaders' engagement with local communities in over ten countries. These include:

- the nature of communities
- state-civil society relationships
- social capital and social trust-leadership
- meaningful exchange.

The group has selected a dozen of these case stories to assemble into an edited volume. For purposes here, the focus is primarily on governance activities that help illuminate how public decisions are made before, during and after crisis events - that is, on "state and civil society relations".<sup>1</sup> How does government work to build the relationships and institutions that enable and strengthen the capability and capacity of local communities to resist disasters, respond effectively, and recover to levels of well-being above those that existed before the emergency?

## Partnering with the 'right' groups

One of the most difficult challenges for government leaders, especially those from national departments and agencies, is to understand community complexities throughout the cycle of emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery. The perceived natural partners for government are often the established community institutions that have developed to provide both non-emergency and emergency services to local residents. Governments are comfortable with these organisations because they have administered government programmes and funds before, and there is a presumption that their legacy attests to familiarity and

<sup>1</sup> The case stories mentioned in this article are fully presented in the Policy Group's forthcoming edited volume. The authors of the case stories have presented them to the Policy Group at various conferences or provided draft versions of chapters to be included in the volume. The author of the present article is solely responsible for the interpretation of these stories presented here. His views do not necessarily represent those of the authors of the final versions of each case story. Contact with the authors of each case story before the volume is published may be arranged through this author at rbach20010@aol.com.

representation of local residents.

These reasonable assumptions, however, are often wrong. Although large established service organisations may have begun as grassroots programmes, they have evolved to become bigger, more complex, institutionalised, and expensive operations. Many have lost touch with local residents and become formal service providers to a broad geographical area. Their primary function within urban systems is to serve as intermediaries and brokers for government programmes that seek to pass nationally focused initiatives down to local areas. Their institutional evolution has made them less flexible and agile than what is often needed during emergencies. Increasingly, with financial cutbacks in many areas, they have also become competitors with local, grassroots community-centered activities.

The result of this institutional evolution is a paradox for governments focusing on emergencies. In good faith, national governments may reach out to established partners and believe that they have effectively connected and communicated with the public. Reports of successful meetings and even periodic exercises of emergency procedures adds evidence of this outreach. Yet, with the gaps between established organisations and local residents widening, more people and local groups may be excluded from participating in local affairs. As a consequence, they feel no particular responsibility for taking action before a disaster. The result is that governments are reaching out more frequently and energetically and getting less and less response.

One case story from the United States provides an account of this isolation and fragmentation of large sectors of the community, while at the same time Federal programmes have increased their efforts to deliver messages to the area.<sup>2</sup> On one afternoon, for instance, Federal and large local health organisations exercised their expertly-crafted vaccination programme, complete with bilingual pamphlets and well-designed logistical plans. As local TV cameras came to record the effort, they found no one from the organisations involved that could actually speak the several languages spoken by the local residents. After local residents lined up initially to receive the vaccination, no one was there to communicate directions. The local residents left the area. The only way some returned was when members of a local community center (that received no government support for their activities) helped and brought them back.

A small example to be sure, but it reflects many

<sup>2</sup> This case story is elaborated in the chapter by Jorge Riquelme and Robert Bach, forthcoming.

other disaster-related activities, from education, planning, preparing, and response, that have had similar experiences. The large organisations that now serve as the social infrastructure of many cities are no longer capable of connecting with the diverse and changing residents who need to be partners in emergency preparations.

This mismatch between government, institutions and communities also affects efforts to form partnerships to counter violent extremism. Several case stories from this project show how the selection of community organisations often is the key source of success or failure between effective engagement with local leaders and residents and failed programmes. In communities undergoing rapid demographic change in particular, understanding and being able to forge partnerships with groups and organisations that are fully involved with youth groups and disaffected individuals are critical initiatives. Governments have launched expensive programmes with established groups that have had little impact, while more effective initiatives have emerged from diffuse connections with diverse and even fragile local groups.

## Changing governance relationships

In numerous disaster situations individuals, groups, and combinations of groups emerge as new leaders to influence the direction of response and recovery operations. Small groups of neighbours have self-organised both to help those not yet reached, or excluded by government aid programmes, and to challenge and redirect government operations that were deemed misdirected. A few case stories illustrate these changes.

During a flood in one city in the United Kingdom, a group of 10 or so neighbours organised hundreds of local residents who were neglected by existing response plans. They spontaneously formed committees to provide information to each other, protected each others' property, and using personal connections, broke through some of the barriers that existed between local residents and official responders. Their leadership and subsequent advocacy provoked a review of the national government's assessment of the flood response, and generated wide-ranging reforms of disaster relief plans and operations.<sup>3</sup>

Dutch researchers have found, in a review of case stories from crisis scenes, that the primary source of decision-making and response occurred among immediate

<sup>3</sup> This case story is drawn from presentations made to the Policy Group by the "Diarists," a group from Hull, UK, who participated in the spontaneous actions.

bystanders. These true “first responders” had already set the agenda for the response before the professional responders arrived, and long before emergency officials came on scene. They argue that new rules of situational governance are needed, which will require re-education of civilians, professional responders and government officials, and a redesign of how collective decision-making occurs.<sup>4</sup>

In 2011, after nearly unprecedented flooding in Brisbane, Australia, local government took extraordinary steps to adapt to the changing circumstances of the disaster, demonstrating a wise and effective way to support local mobilisations rather than trying to control them.<sup>5</sup> Soon after the flood, tens of thousands of citizens arrived in Brisbane to help clean up the city. Their spontaneous mobilisation outstripped the government’s pre-arranged volunteer registration programme, even though it had been well designed and had accommodated an impressive number through its formal channels. The local government adapted by deciding to “take a step back” from efforts to control the scene. It found a way to support the spontaneous crowd through opening and expanding the city’s transportation system to make it easier for the crowds to self-deploy to various downtown neighborhoods where social media, television and word-of-mouth directed them.

Opportunities for adaptive collective governance also occurred among the community-led groups and citizens in Christchurch, New Zealand, after the earthquakes. As described elsewhere in this issue, community-led groups formed to provide leadership on particular policy issues. They also became new central partners with national and local governments as the collective work on recovery began.

## Social infrastructure innovation

Changes in governance also result from adaptations to former disasters in a region and only become evident with the next crisis. Between disasters, local leaders from various sectors reorganise around the need for social innovations inspired by the perceived failures of earlier government efforts.

Government agencies and programmes often find it very difficult to innovate, typically defaulting to incremental and only marginal programme adjustments designed to fix particular problems. Rarely are they able to attack systemic shortcomings. Such efforts often reinforce rather than

subvert the top-down managerial approaches that create the problems. Post-disaster reforms, for example, may actually increase governments’ established authorities, and political reactions often compel national leaders to become even more directly involved in local community efforts. Perceived improvements in the government plans may include more robust outreach efforts in an attempt to explain to local residents what they should do in preparation for and in response to disasters. These agenda setting efforts often accompany the delivery of more technical expertise and planning requirements.

As useful as government reforms are, however, they do not transform the authorities and relationships that would allow local institutions, groups and individuals to take on greater roles in disaster leadership. New forms of governance arise out of, and fuel, innovation and transformation. Hybrid and totally new forms of governance (ways of making decisions and deciding collectively on goals and the rules) involve the co-production of new designs, rules and procedures, and approaches to decision-making.

Leaders from various sectors along the Mississippi River in the United States tell stories of adaptation and innovation that followed a series of large-scale emergencies following Hurricane Katrina. Throughout the Mississippi River flood plain, chaos repeatedly resulted from efforts to evacuate and shelter large numbers of residents. From one hurricane to another, the region strained to accommodate the tragedies and hardships seemingly generated as much by government shortcomings as by the natural threat.<sup>6</sup>

In the area surrounding the City of Memphis, an informal network of faith-based leaders and their congregations joined forces with local government emergency and Homeland Security officials to create a new approach to evacuation and sheltering. Local leaders constructed a new philosophy and framework for making evacuations and sheltering a part of community activities. Local government leaders, working through personal and social relationships with church leaders, formed a new partnership with private institutions to take over much of the sheltering responsibilities. The private institutions, led through the large congregations whose members were connected to nearly all parts of the local economy and society, agreed to organise and financially support sheltering of evacuees in their churches. They did not see this activity as becoming a client of the government, and specifically

<sup>4</sup> This case story is part of the chapter by Jose Dr. José Kerstholt and Dr. Marcel van Berlo, forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup> This example is drawn from a presentation made by Sharan Harvey at the Melbourne Conference on Community Resilience, December 2011.

<sup>6</sup> For this case story, see the chapter written by Bob Nations, Craig Strickland and Robert Bach, forthcoming.

insisted on their partnership role with local emergency officials as sharing the duties and the accountability. As one church leader said, “this is what we do every day, and when everyone else [professional responders] are gone, we’ll be around every day after the disaster is over.”

The partnership transformed the relationship and authorities between government and local institutions. They shared in the plans, in the expenses, and in the responsibilities. The initiative replaced the established sheltering effort that often involved volunteers recruited from places far away from the local community, and a governmental infrastructure that had grown in size, complexity, and cost. National government leaders recognised the value and strength of this innovative approach, and in 2011 when the Mississippi River approached historic flood levels, they wisely accepted a support role – ready to provide the resources that only they could provide if needed, and championing the community innovation as perhaps a better way to lead sheltering efforts.

## Conclusion

The need to support new forms of local governance through collaborative efforts has become an essential dimension of resilient communities. Resilience involves transformation of the role of citizen and grassroots organisations from that of stakeholders, who are able at best to advise governments, to full equity partners. Equity partners are full shareholders, equally able to participate in the design and implementation of disaster-related efforts.

The challenge for governments is to find ways to

embrace these innovations and redesign their own structures and processes to incorporate the changes. Across the numerous case stories collected for this project so far, no clear way to reorganise government stands out that meets the challenge. Should governments decentralise and flatten, or done correctly, is it time to designate or restructure a single national agency to be in charge of all matters related to disasters? Or should there be something in between?

The debate has been engaged, but it should be clear that the discussion is more about governance than it is about the structure of government itself. In some countries that have struggled with disaster response and recovery, proposals have emerged to strengthen the top-down efforts so that national level resources will be ready and in charge. Other experiences support efforts to embrace a devolution of authority to local government. While seemingly more compatible with some of the lessons from the case stories mentioned here, many local leaders fear that devolution is a way to shift the costs and responsibilities of emergency programmes away from financially strapped national governments.

Certainly, responsibility and accountability are central themes in any discussion of the relationship between states and civil societies. One significant transformation that may arise from these examples of community resilience is that, when new forms of governance work, they establish partnerships that depend clearly on sharing decision-making and its benefits. But, they also create a willingness to share responsibility and accountability for how local communities prepare, respond and recover from disasters.

# GET READY GET THRU

## YOU COULD BE ON YOUR OWN FOR 3 DAYS OR MORE

- Make sure you have a Household Emergency Plan
- In an emergency, do not use the phone unless urgent. For Police, Fire or Ambulance dial 111
- Ensure you have emergency survival items to cope on your own for three days or more
- Listen to the radio for civil defence advice. Tune in to National Radio, Newstalk ZB, Classic Hits, More FM, or Radio Live

### WHAT TO DO – YOUR SURVIVAL GUIDE



#### EARTHQUAKE

##### Before an earthquake

- Practice your earthquake drill: DROP, COVER and HOLD
- Identify safe places very close to you at home, school or workplace, such as under a sturdy table, or next to an interior wall
- Protect property. Secure objects and your home. Keep insurance up to date

##### During an earthquake

- Move no more than a few steps to a safe place, drop, cover and hold
- Do not run outside
- If in a lift, stop at the nearest floor and get out, drop, cover and hold
- If you are driving, pull over to the side of the road and stay in the vehicle until the shaking stops

##### When the shaking stops

- Treat injuries and put out small fires
- Turn off water and electricity at mains if it is safe
- Evacuate if fires cannot be controlled
- Check your neighbours
- Be prepared for aftershocks



#### STORM

##### When a strong wind warning is issued

- Bring pets inside and move stock to shelter
- Secure outdoor furniture

##### During a severe storm

- Stay indoors
- Close curtains and keep away from doors and windows
- Avoid driving unless absolutely necessary
- Avoid damaged power lines and report these to your power company



#### TSUNAMI

- Find out what warning systems are in place in your community
- If you're near the coast and you:
  - feel a strong earthquake that makes it hard to stand up, or a weak rolling earthquake that lasts a minute or more
  - see a sudden rise or fall in sea level
  - or hear an unusual loud noise from the sea
- Then quickly go as far inland and as high up as you can
- Alert other people if you can
- Do not go sightseeing to the beach or river
- Listen to the radio for information and follow civil defence instructions

#### EMERGENCY SURVIVAL ITEMS

- Water (3 litres per person, per day, for at least 3 days or more)
- Canned, non-perishable food
- Torch and radio (with spare batteries)
- Toilet paper, plastic bags and bucket
- First aid kit and essential medicines, including paracetamol for fever
- BBQ or other means of cooking
- Face and dust masks

TO FIND OUT MORE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL OR GO TO [www.getthru.govt.nz](http://www.getthru.govt.nz)



#### VOLCANIC ERUPTION

##### Before a volcanic eruption

- If you live in an active volcanic zone, learn about your community's warning systems and emergency plans and what you need to do

##### During a volcanic eruption

- Stay indoors, along with your pets, as much as possible
- Save water at an early stage as supplies may become contaminated
- Keep gutters and roof clear of ash to prevent roof collapse
- Do not go sightseeing
- If you must go outside, use protective clothing. Cover your head, breathe through a mask or cloth and carry a torch



#### FLOOD

##### Before a flood

- Find out about the flood risk in your locality and know how to reach the nearest safe ground
- Keep your insurance cover up to date

##### When a flood threatens

- Listen to the radio for information and follow civil defence instructions
- Disconnect electrical appliances
- Raise valuables, weedkillers and chemicals above floor level
- Avoid flooded areas
- Do not drink floodwater as it could be contaminated
- Bring pets inside and move stock to shelter



#### PANDEMIC – WORLDWIDE DISEASE OUTBREAK

- Stay home if you are sick, keep away from other people and avoid visitors
- Wash and dry your hands before handling food and after coughing, sneezing, using the bathroom, wiping children's noses or when looking after sick people
- Use tissues to cover coughs and sneezes. Throw used tissues in a bin
- Give fluids to people who have a fever and/or diarrhoea. Paracetamol can be used to bring down high fevers
- For more information, see the Ministry of Health website: [www.moh.govt.nz/influenza](http://www.moh.govt.nz/influenza)

#### IF YOU HAVE TO BE EVACUATED TAKE YOUR GETAWAY KIT

##### Items to include:

- Essential medicines, toiletries and baby needs
- Important documents (identification, insurance)
- Radio and torch (with batteries)
- Emergency bottled water
- Extra clothing and footwear

##### Before you leave:

- Consider your pets
- Turn off water and electricity at mains if there is time

##### When you have reached safety:

- Listen to the radio for information and follow civil defence instructions



# New Zealand Government



Ministry of Civil Defence  
& Emergency Management  
Te Rākau Whakamarumarū

[www.civildefence.govt.nz](http://www.civildefence.govt.nz)