



**Greater Christchurch
Earthquake Recovery:
Transition to
Regeneration**

**Submission to the Canterbury
Earthquake Recovery
Authority**



For a better working life

New Zealand Public Service Association

Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

Greater Christchurch Earthquake Recovery: Transition to Regeneration

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Preamble

Who we are

The New Zealand Public Service Association *Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi* (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 62,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, and the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities, state owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors).

Following the a merger with the Southern Local Government Officers Union earlier this year we now represent employees at Christchurch City Council, ECan and both Selwyn and Waimakairiri District Councils, in addition to our other members in the City. Overall we have over 6,000 members in Christchurch.

In developing this submission we sought the views of

This submission mainly reflects the views of members working in local government but we also address issues to do with the relationship with central government and the role of specific central government agencies.

Submission

Introduction

Expiry of the CER Act is an opportunity

The PSA welcomes the opportunity to submit on this draft transition recovery plan for Greater Christchurch. The expiry of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act in 2016 is an opportunity to return the control of the recovery to Christchurch, given that we are well past the emergency and immediate recovery phase following the earthquakes. The plan, at page 10 states that:

International research shows that, for recovery to be sustainable in the long term, it needs to be 'owned' and led by local communities and institutions.

Effective long-term recovery will, over time, depend much less on central government, and more on local authorities, local communities and businesses, local branches of government agencies, and the people of greater Christchurch

themselves.

We acknowledge that the transition plan heads in this direction but five years after the earthquakes it is time for the leadership to shift to Christchurch, away from the control of central government. To do anything less is to ignore the research that the draft plan draws attention to.

Time to have faith in local democracy

The PSA believes that the government should have more faith in the institutions of local democracy and move as quickly as possible to transfer responsibilities back to local control. In this submission we also address the implications for central government agencies.

Legal framework for ongoing recovery

The principle that as much responsibility as possible should lie with local institutions should underpin any further legislation to support regeneration.

No power of veto or to override local plans

The role of central government should be to support those local institutions. Accordingly the Minister should have no power of veto and no ability to override locally developed plans. If any residual powers end up residing with the Minister or the Chief Executive of Regenerate Christchurch they should be appealable. The following statement on page 14 suggests otherwise:

The CER Act modifies appeal rights against decisions of the Minister or Chief Executive of CERA acting under the CER Act.

Further, the proposal to continue with the minimal 'checks and balances' on the exercise of powers by the Minister or the CE of the Authority, is not enough. These are inadequate already and should not apply into the future now that we are well beyond the emergency period.

There should be a continued role for the Crown in relation to Crown owned property and land, but the leadership around what should happen to the red-zoned land, for example, should lie with the City Council.

Driving the central city rebuild

We favour a Christchurch City Council-led approach

The Crown clearly has an ongoing responsibility to contribute to the central city rebuild through the large scale Christchurch Integrated Government Accommodation building programme. They have a role in working with local institutions to address the five recovery challenges for the central city, but of the three options outlined on page 20 we favour the third – a Christchurch City Council-led recovery approach, with the Crown in close support.

Funding for CIGA

We have some questions about the funding of the CIGA programme. If it is to just

come out of baselines it will increase the squeeze on already stretched budgets and the government should address this. We also note that the provision of adequate parking is an ongoing issue for this programme.

We support the proposal for a 'one-stop shop' for attracting private sector investment, but this should be led by Christchurch City Council and its CCOs, with support from central government and its agencies (such as New Zealand Trade and Enterprise).

We note that at the foot of page 21 the paper states:

The nature and extent of practical support provided by central government to local authorities will slowly decrease over the next three to five years as local authorities build up capability and capacity to lead the recovery of the central city.

Government support for local capability and capacity

We believe that the Council has greater capability than this statement suggests, but if even there are areas where capability and capacity are lacking it should be the role of the Council to identify these and for central government to provide any additional support needed.

New recovery arrangements

The proposal that the overall leadership and co-ordination of the recovery will be the responsibility of local authorities and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu does not seem consistent with the proposals for the continuation of powers for the Minister and the CE of the new Authority.

Funding required for resilience activities

Elsewhere in this section we support the role of local government in supporting community-led resilience activities, but while this is the type of activity that local government would normally lead, the nature of the challenge that Christchurch communities continue to face means that central government funding is likely to continue to be required for some time.

Our principle for the allocation of responsibilities

In terms of the proposals for the ongoing responsibilities of other central government agencies we support the principle that those agencies should have a continuing role where the functions they will be involved with are the same as their day-to-day responsibilities, but where those functions would normally be the responsibility of local government they should transfer to local government at the earliest possible date.

Resourcing for central government agencies

Where any of CERA's responsibilities are passed over to other central government agencies it will be imperative that resources follow. An agency like Land Information New Zealand, for example, is a small lean organisation that we understand is already under funding pressure. Extra resourcing may well be needed, whether it comes out of existing CERA funding or some other source.

CCDHB or the

We are unsure about the decision to pass the leadership of the psycho-social

Ministry of Health?

recovery to the Ministry of Health rather than the District Health Board. The DHB has faced extra-ordinary pressures and performed very well in the face of those challenges. They have good local knowledge and it seems counter-intuitive to just treat them as providers given the strategic role provided for DHBs in the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000.

Residual central government functions

We support a single point of advice within government

Government will clearly have an ongoing role in the Christchurch recovery and regeneration, even if it is a supporting rather than lead role. That will require a central point of advice on central government's contribution for some time yet and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet seems an appropriate place for this function to reside.

Notwithstanding this support, we would question whether some of the functions listed here should sit with central government or with local institutions. For example, we would agree that government has an ongoing role in part funding horizontal infrastructure repairs but would question whether it should maintain a governance role.

Recovery reporting

Involve the PSA in monitoring and reporting

There will be an ongoing need to regularly monitor and report on priority areas. We would recommend that as part of the monitoring and reporting process the agencies involved talk to the PSA. We have members across all the agencies involved in the recovery and have a group of delegates who meet regularly to share their experiences and shape the PSA's response to developments. Both the agencies and DPMC would benefit from our input into the monitoring and reporting process.

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