

STAFF REPORT

TO: Mayor and Councillors
FROM: Chief Executive
DATE: 30 March 2011
SUBJECT: Chief Executive's Report – RCN11-04-06

CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKE

We remain concerned about the effects of the Christchurch earthquake both directly and indirectly.

The short term immediate effect is that Tasman District Council staffing resources are being made available to help Christchurch but we expect this to come to an end in the near future.

Both in the short and the long term the council may face difficulty as contractors, on whom we are reliant, remove staff to Christchurch to help with the recovery and rebuilding leading to a shortage of contracting staff being available in this district to undertake other council programmes. The same thing is likely to happen with consultants and it can be expected that this will put upward pressure on prices. Conversely there may be some inflow into the region if some Christchurch businesses do decide to relocate permanently.

In the bigger picture there will be extreme pressure on central government's resources and it is inevitable that this will lead to some tightening in the approach to central government assistance for local government activities. Central government has promised to provide \$5 billion for the Christchurch rebuild. This does need to be kept in perspective; at the same time the government is committed with continuing with the Puhoi to Wellsford highway, the Waikato expressway, and the Auckland rail electrification. Collectively those three projects are estimated to cost at least \$4 billion on their own. However, with close to \$10 billion committed to just two areas, there will not be much left over for the rest of the country, especially provincial areas.

STAFFING ISSUES

The staff turnover continues to remain at historical lows but as the economy slowly picks up and as the recovery operation in Christchurch gathers speed, Council can expect to lose some staff who will be offered attractive incentives to take up employment either in Canterbury or in Australia.

While some losses must be expected we remain confident that current recruitment and remuneration policies will enable council to attract and retain sufficient staff to fulfil Council's commitments to its ratepayers.

One wildcard in this equation is the disturbing trend towards over-the-top criticism of some council staff by, what I can only describe as the 'grumpy old men/women' of the district. While anybody working in the public arena quickly learns that a degree of such behaviour comes with the job, the outbursts and comments by some individuals over recent months are unfair and harmful. Tasman District Council has a relatively low number of staff in comparison to other councils. Council staff are dedicated to providing quality services and making a difference in the district and it is disappointing when senior citizens who should know far better indulge in petty criticism. While no organisation is perfect and inevitably mistakes are made, at some point the recent trend towards personalisation of criticism is something that should not be accepted.

Work loads remain at high levels. The exhaustive Annual Plan process has occurred over the top of the District's flood emergencies and our assistance to Canterbury. While this accumulation of activity has tested the organisation to its limits, all programmes remain on track and on time. In this regard I would like to record my appreciation to the staff who have worked long hours and sacrificed holidays and time off to maintain the public good.

Paul Wylie
Chief Executive