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Christchurch battles on

Survivors seek refuge in Westport

by Lee Scanlon

The Zintl family feels incredibly lucky to have survived the Christchurch earthquake and now be safe in Westport with relatives.

Shelley Zintl, her husband Marcus, and daughters Ava, two weeks, and Nadia, almost three years, managed to escape the ravaged city on Wednesday to the home of Shelley's Westport parents, Debbie and Michael Durkin.

They had tried to get out Tuesday, but had to turn back because bridges near their Opawa home were closed.

Mrs Zintl, 30, a psychologist, was home with her children and her mother when the quake struck.

"Mum was screaming in the lounge and I was trying to get the two metres across my bedroom to my newborn. The chest of drawers was coming out at me and it took me the whole length of the quake just to get to my baby, which was pretty freaky.

"We got down the hall and we huddled in the doorway for a while, and decided it was actually safer to be outside. We waded our way out through all the liquefaction that was all over the place."

She was unable to contact Marcus, 33, a Crown prosecutor, who works in a five-storey building on Durham St.

"About an hour later he turned up. He had literally run home (5km). The scenes he described as 'Armageddon-type scenes' - running and dodging the rubble as an aftershock came..."

"He was running past a lot of people hugging and crying and with injuries."

He didn't realise until later that the blue sheets he saw were covering bodies, Mrs Durkin said.

Their single-storey home had lost only its chimney in the September 4 quake. On Tuesday, shelves came down, walls cracked, their new garage moved on its foundations and a creek at the back of their section rose to the driveway.

They had no power or water.

Within a few hours they had packed clothes and were all heading for Westport in Mrs Durkin's car, because their own had been damaged in the quake. Marcus' efforts to siphon petrol from it had failed and they had only a quarter of a tank full.

"It took us over an hour to drive three kilometres," Mrs Zintl said. "We just couldn't get out. There were people everywhere - they looked like refugees, people walking, and just chaos."

"We eventually got told to turn around, all the bridges were closed out of town. That was quite an awful feeling, having to turn around and go back - meanwhile there's shaking every two minutes - to no water and no power with two little kids."

They spent a sleepless night on the floor of their eldest daughter's bedroom while one after shock after another rumbled through.

"You'd hear it rumbling like a train under the



Safe in Westport: Shelley Zintl (second from left with baby Ava) and, from left: Shelley's grandmother Joan Kennedy, sister Kylie Carlson with baby Indee, Shelley's daughter Nadia, and mother Debbie Durkin with Kylie's daughter, Tess, at Music and Movement in the Anglican Church yesterday. (Photo - Sheree Cargill).

ground and you'd be laying there thinking, oh God, how big's this one going to be?..."

"It was probably a good sized one every five minutes until about two in the morning."

On Wednesday morning her mother spent about 90 minutes queuing at petrol pumps to fill the car, then they set off for Westport again and were able to get out of the city.

Mrs Zintl said they had no idea when they would return. Her husband could not go back to work

because the foyer floor in his office building had sunk almost to the next level and the stairwell was closed. He had just left the office for lunch when the quake struck.

Mrs Zintl was out of town for the last earthquake. As a self-employed psychologist she later did radio interviews on how people could cope. On maternity leave now, she's coping with her own and her family's reactions.

She initially felt like the adrenalin was pumping,

she said. Now she felt numb, as if reality had yet to hit.

"It's a bit surreal being over here to be honest, being away from it..."

"But having a young daughter who's very aware of it, this time I'm careful of my own reactions - we talk about the naughty shake shakes and that kind of thing."

"I went to music yesterday to try and keep things fun and normal for her. But I think the real test will be

when we are back, particularly as the aftershocks will probably still be happening and there'll be all the destruction around..."

"I just feel incredibly lucky when you hear about how many deaths there are and how many people have been really affected..."

"But there is that slight sense of guilt when you see everybody rallying and think I could be back doing something."



West Coast and Canterbury DHB chief executive David Meates at a media briefing at the civil defence centre. (Photo - NZPA / Dianne Manson)

WCDHB to take Christchurch quake victims

The West Coast District Health Board (WCDHB) has agreed to take up to 10 elderly residents of rest homes hit by the Christchurch earthquake.

Most would go to Buller and Reefton hospitals, said WCDHB general manager Hecta Williams.

They would be among up to 200 residents of Canterbury rest homes affected by the quake who were being relocated across the South Island.

"We have requested that where possible they have West Coast family connections," Ms Williams said. "It is really important that if staff or members of the community have elderly relatives in rest homes in Christchurch, and you want to bring them over here, then in the first instance you should call your relative's rest home provider in Christchurch who will liaise with Canterbury DHB."

The West Coast DHB had treated several patients injured as a result of the earthquake, she said. They had turned up at Grey Hospital's emergency department after travelling independently out of Christchurch.

"We have also received five patients from different sources - mostly West Coast residents who have been treated in Christchurch (or Dunedin) who are now stable and have been

returned to recover here."

Grey Hospital had 39 general acute beds which could be used for medical, surgical or other patients. "We are currently operating with two theatres (as usual) and can assist with urgent elective surgery for Canterbury residents if required."

The hospital postponed some elective surgery after the quake to free up space if it was required to treat Christchurch quake victims. Ms Williams said surgery had resumed, but had been hit by the availability of some Christchurch-based specialists.

Patients with bookings for surgery should present themselves to Grey Hospital as arranged unless it had already contacted them.

The WCDHB had also resumed outpatient clinics, but the clinics had also been affected by the availability of some Christchurch-based specialists.

Patients with appointments should attend them as arranged unless they had been contacted by the hospital.

All orthopaedic fracture follow-up clinics at Christchurch Hospital were continuing as scheduled. Patients with elective outpatient clinic appointments for non-acute problems would be contacted by the Canterbury

District Health Board.

All elective surgery and outpatient appointments were postponed until Tuesday.

Community oncology would have no appointments for chemotherapy and radiotherapy until Monday unless patients had been individually contacted earlier. All patients would be contacted in due course.

Meanwhile, the WCDHB wanted people to urgently return loan equipment for quake victims.

Items like crutches, braces, walking frames and wheelchairs were required to help with mobility.

Patients requiring rehabilitation needed weights, wobble boards, and equipment like shower seats that could help people suffering disabilities to function in their homes, Ms Williams said.

The equipment could be returned to any WCDHB medical centre, general practice or hospital.

Civil Defence had set up a Welfare Advisory Group to look after the needs of Christchurch people who might relocate to the West Coast. The group would co-ordinate facilities those people might require, including accommodation, possibly at the Seaview Hospital site.