

# CHRISTCHURCH QUAKE

## Ex-local trapped 10 floors up

by Lee Scanlon

A former Westport woman, Kirsten McMullen, spent about two hours trapped on the 10th floor of Clarendon Towers in central Christchurch yesterday after stairs collapsed.

Ms McMullen, 24, a solicitor at Cavell Leitch, was in her office on the 15th floor when the huge 6.3 magnitude quake struck.

"I thought it was going to be like any other earthquake and jumped under my desk," she told The News today. "Then my desk started flying around and my door slammed shut."

"I looked out the window and all this dust was flying up from below and bits of buildings had fallen down and I thought, I don't want to look down there anymore..."

"The building had such a sway on, I was praying we weren't going to topple over..."

"I was pretty terrified."

Her computer fell on her and bookshelves toppled.

When the shaking stopped, she helped a co-worker who had been hit by a falling bookcase, then ran for the stairwell.

"We got down about four flights of stairs and got to the tenth floor and looked down. All the stairs had crumbled and there was just a big hole..."

"There were holes on both sides of the stairs so we couldn't take either of the emergency exits."

Ms McMullen said she and about 60 other workers from Cavell Leitch and neighbouring law firms sat on the floor waiting for help.

"I sat myself near the lift shaft, which was in the centre of the floor, because I thought that would be the safest place to be. It was really creaky. There were just aftershocks after aftershocks."

"Everyone's patience was wearing a bit thin, and there was crying and everything, and it wasn't helping people stay calm..."

"It was quite unnerving, just waiting and having all these constant shakes and hearing all the creaks..."

"It was definitely the closest to death I have ever thought about."

Fire wardens did an excellent job calming everyone down and someone was able to make a phone call to Wellington to let people know they were trapped, she said.

But rescuers had more urgent priorities. "There were buildings on fire and things like that, so we were just waiting, sitting patiently."

Finally, a civil defence worker managed to climb up inside the building to them.

She and her colleagues escaped one at a time, with two pregnant women going first. Each person took about 10 minutes to worm their way out, emerg-

ing soaked from the sprinkler system, she said.

On the way down she could see gaping holes in buildings below, including Christ Church Cathedral.

"The civil defence people were absolutely amazing. They had about 20 of them and they were stationed at each turn because we didn't really know where we were going."

"There would be a person and he would say, go left here, then there'll be another man and he'll pull you through to the next stage. We were worming our way through holes, and through water."

"There was a wall of water at one point and there was a fireman waiting to pull you through and turn you around a corner...I think we went through some electrical part in the middle of the building where they can get access to something, but I'd never seen any of it before."

People emerged with bumps and scratches, but no one was seriously hurt, she said.

They were directed to the Civil Defence at the Arts Centre, then she and some colleagues walked to Cranmer Square.

"There was sand up all over the grass, which was crazy, and all of these bewildered looking people around."

She helped some friends in Fendalton, then her boyfriend, James Graham, who also comes from Westport, drove her to her flat at Waltham because her own car was still stuck in a parking building.

They had now evacuated to her parents' home at Darfield.

Ms McMullen said she still felt shaken today. "It's a little bit surreal...Just watching it on the news is terrible. I think I'll be coming over to Westport for a few weeks."

The McMullens lived in Westport for eight years while her father, Markham, was principal of Westport North School.

Mr McMullen said he had received a distraught call from his wife Anita yesterday to say their daughter was trapped.

"From there, it was really a waiting game and trying to get clarity about what happened," he said.

It was a great relief when she emerged safe and well about two hours later, he said.

Darfield, the epicentre of last September's 7.1 quake, was less affected this time.

"It (yesterday's quake) was quite drawn out, and it sort of rolled through, then there was another aftershock punched."

His pupils at Darfield Primary School had followed procedure and huddled under their desks. Some of the 250 children remained at school until about 4pm, waiting for their parents - many of whom worked in Christchurch - to pick them up, he said.



Rescue crews look for staff in the damaged Pyne Gould Guinness building in central Christchurch. (Photo - REUTERS/Simon Baker)

## 'Bounced between the walls'

by Lee Scanlon

Former Westport man Justin Warren, 35, hurt his hand, shoulder and leg as he dived for a doorway during yesterday's 6.3 earthquake.

Mr Warren, deputy head of economics at Papanui High School, said he was with two female teachers in a ground floor office when the quake struck.

"I jumped up and was being bounced between the walls of the office and made a dash for the door. I crashed into the door frame and cut my hand, bruised my knee and bashed my shoulder."

His companions were flung to the floor, computers fell, glass smashed and CDs flew off shelves, he said.

Elsewhere in the school, a concrete floor sank a couple of centimetres and a ceiling cracked, he said.

Afterwards, staff herded pupils onto the school fields as a 5.7 magnitude aftershock hit.

"We were out by the tennis courts and the tennis

nets started going back and forwards, two or three metres either way.

"Across the road from the school a new building is being built. There were two massive cranes and they were going backward and forwards too."

Staff calmed pupils while they waited for parents to collect them. "There were quite a few kids upset, quite a few distressed and crying, but generally they were quite good."

He headed for his parents-in-law's house at West Melton because his own home at Avonhead had neither power nor water.

The 5km drive took about 45 minutes. "The roads were just packed, the traffic lights were all out. There was no one controlling at any intersections. People were just ducking and diving to try and get through."

Mr Warren said his two sons, aged three and 18 months, and his wife Melissa, also a teacher, were unharmed in the quake.

They planned to evacuate later today to his parents in Westport.

## Coast sends emergency help

by Keira Stephenson

The West Coast has responded immediately to the Christchurch quake by sending over a raft of emergency service workers.

A dozen police officers from the Coast left for Christchurch yesterday afternoon and another two sections are on standby.

Inspector John Canning said Westport police sergeant Sean Judd was leading five other disaster victim identification (DVI) specialists including Constable Mike Voice from Westport.

Another six Coast officers had gone to Christchurch and would probably be assisting with policing the cordons, general law and order and search and rescue, under the commanding officer there, said Mr Canning. "It's entirely their call as to how they use them".

The officers had been working all night. "They're going to have a very unfortunate job over there."

Some of the DVI officers had been deployed at the Fox Glacier air crash. Some might have experienced the devastation of assisting after the Boxing Day tsunami in Thailand but there had been nothing of this scale so close to home.

He had another two sections ready to go and was just waiting for the word.

He said all the roads west from Christchurch were in good shape.

### Council

Buller District Council (BDC) sent two civil defence personnel to Christchurch yesterday and have more staff on standby.

They were part of a West Coast contingent coordinated through the West Coast Regional Council, said BDC manager of community and environment services Craig Scanlon.

The officers were Stuart Gray and Mike Casey who would also be assisting with ambulance services.

Some building inspectors also had bags packed,

ready to be deployed.

"Other staff are available as required and we will continue to assist wherever possible," said Mr Scanlon.

Council had also been assured that land search and rescuers were also available and ready.

### Fire

A fire truck crewed by six volunteer fire fighters from Westport left for Christchurch this morning.

Another two from Granity were heading to Greymouth in a water tanker to meet up with other Coast firefighters ready to be deployed, said Westport fire chief Pat O'Dea.

They were part of a Coast wide firefighting team being coordinated from Greymouth.

Mr O'Dea said he had no idea what they would be doing once they got there and would be following instructions from the commanding officer in Christchurch.

### Victim support

Victim support was still waiting for confirmation on its role, but Westport Victim Support officer Sonia Hoetjes said her organisation had spent weeks in Christchurch after the earthquake last year.

McManus Buller Mayor Pat Mr McManus said yesterday's earthquake was "devastating".

"The September earthquake last year was bad enough but that was all about concentrating on buildings. Now all the concentration is on loss of life. It's a totally different scenario. It's bloody awful."

He said everyone on the Coast would know someone in Christchurch who had been affected.

"Hopefully we can get through the day and rescue some more people."

"We're not used to disasters of that magnitude in New Zealand. Now we've had Pike River and this straight up behind it. The old South Island's getting a hell of a hiding."

## ON THE SIDE

### CPR fails to save life

by Keira Stephenson

"There were hundreds of people outside, just chaos, like a Third World country or a war zone. Probably similar to Libya at the moment."

Ex-Westport man Louis Brown was in his central Christchurch office on Hereford Street when the earthquake hit.

The Love Your Coast South Island events director stumbled across two prone young men dragged from a building and someone called out "can you help with CPR?"

Mr Brown carried out CPR until two nurses arrived and took over.

The young man he was working on died, but Mr Brown had no time to dwell. He set about smashing a window and getting a ladder to people stuck on the first floor of a building.

After walking round town to see if he could help anyone else, he was asked to leave the centre and leave it to the professionals.

Undeterred, he spent most of last night planning and organising the student/citizen volunteer response. He was organising food and water for hundreds of volunteers while waiting for a call from civil defence to deploy them.

His experience of organising beach cleanups had set him in good stead, he said.

"To be honest it's a dirty big beach clean up the logistics are very similar. It's just the timeframe is very compacted and it's not a bunch of trash that's washed up its dead people."

Mr Brown said if people wanted to help but didn't know how they could go to UC Student Volunteer Army on Facebook.

He was hoping to aggregate and give people instructions through that site.

He said the West Coast was just reeling from its own big tragedy, and the earthquake reminded South Islanders: "we're very much on the same island in more ways than one".

## Pharmacy supplies slightly delayed

by Sonia Beal

The Christchurch quake will slightly delay the daily delivery of Westport's pharmacy supplies.

However, the amount of supplies available would not be an issue as products could be sourced from elsewhere in the country, said Buller Pharmacy manager, Julie Knudsen.

Buller Pharmacy had about one week's worth of most supplies, and slightly less for a couple of other products, she said.

Its main supplier, located in Christchurch, had branches throughout the North and South islands, but Mrs Knudsen expected deliveries to return to normal soon as warehouse damage was "not too bad".

"I just rang them yesterday, and they just had a couple of their middle aisles of stock collapse in but they were clearing that up, and it didn't sound it was quite as bad as the time before, so they'll probably be up and running in a few days."

Mrs Knudsen said orders were normally received from the warehouse, but were now diverted to another branch for delivery here.

In the first 7.1 magnitude earthquake, supplies were delayed for a week, but this time it would probably only be a few days.

Orders were sent to Auckland and then products were dispatched to whichever branch ordered them, before they were sent on to stores.

## 'Like being in a movie'

by Lee Scanlon

"It was like being in a movie, it was unreal."

Former Westport man Kerry Dellaca, 55, was today still trying to comprehend the devastation of yesterday's Christchurch earthquake.

Mr Dellaca, New Zealand Cricket's manager of domestic cricket, was walking back to his Hereford St office with operations manager Tim Murdoch after a lunch meeting at nearby cafe, Joe's Garage.

Glass shattered and bricks began falling around them, he said.

"Tim and I held on to each other to stand up. We got in the middle of the road, away from buildings and things...It would be the most scary thing I've ever been in."

The pair ran to their office, where about 20 shocked NZ Cricket staff were evacuating the six-storey building. None was hurt, but ceilings had fallen in and water was pouring inside.

Police moved them to Latimer Square. On the way, they walked past Joe's Garage.

"The parapet had fallen down and part of the roof had collapsed, and one of the chefs was apparently stuck under the parapet. That's probably what hit me most, that two minutes before that I was in there."

His vehicle stuck in a multi-storey car park and his car keys trapped in his office, Mr Dellaca set off with about four colleagues to walk home to Halswell, a 20-minute drive from Christchurch.

"There were just streams of people heading out of the city. In some respects you were going faster than the cars were...It wasn't a state of panic, it was just people trying to get out of the central city."

He saw scenes of "utter devastation".

"In the inner city, it was just mind boggling. Really, you were just focusing on the best path to go to keep away from buildings."

"You had people in a state of shock who were just

scared sh...less...The aftershocks kept coming as we were walking."

Outside Christchurch Public Hospital, he saw people waiting in wheelchairs and wrapped in blankets, he said.

He feared for his family, until he received texts to say they were safe. His wife, Mandy, teaches at Halswell School which had to be partly demolished after the last quake and now uses prefab classrooms.

Mr Dellaca said a friend picked his group up near Addington Raceway and drove them the rest of the way home. He checked on neighbours, some of whom had again been hit by liquefaction.

Seventeen houses on the other side of his street had already been seriously damaged or faced demolition after the September quake.

His own home had again escaped damage, apart from some doors being twisted.

His daughter Katrina's home, also at Halswell, was badly damaged in the first quake and had been hit by liquefaction again.

Today, he felt shocked and helpless.

"You want to go and help but you know that they don't want every man and his dog in town, so you can't do anything."

The television images including of the collapsed Pyne Gould Guinness and CTV buildings had been unbelievable, he said. CTV was only a couple of blocks from his office.

He did not expect to return to work for several weeks. He was unsure whether his office building would be repairable, or how Christchurch would recover.

He and his family would probably evacuate to Hanmer today, before he and his wife headed to the Coast this weekend.

They had been extremely lucky, compared to many others, he said.