

CHRISTCHURCH

Quake

Ex-Coaster loses more Chch buildings

by Lee Scanlon

Former Reefton man Craig Webster wonders whether he should have stuck to West Coast dairy farming rather than investing in Christchurch property.

Tuesday's quake demolished his central city office and has finished off several of the buildings owned by his Christchurch company, Ferry Oak.

His most iconic property, the historic Manchester Courts building, was demolished after the September 4 shake.

Mr Webster, 57, said he was at a meeting near Christchurch airport when Tuesday's quake hit.

His business partner Richard Peebles and five staff had to climb out over rubble in the Worcester Street office building they share with Pedro's restaurant.

"They ducked under desks and things and when it stopped shaking he (Mr Peebles) said there was clouds of dust, they couldn't see a thing and were yelling out to each other..."

"They couldn't get out the front door because the front had fallen down. They just climbed out the side..."

"Pedro's son was in the CTV building. Pedro's lost his business and his son."

The office building had been declared safe after the September 4 and Boxing Day shakes. It's next to the Westend Jewellers, the most visible casualty in television coverage of the September quake.

Mr Webster has been unable to get into the CBD to check on other Ferry Oak buildings there.

He understood another of its heritage buildings, known as the Harald's building, in Lichfield Street, had partly collapsed.

Before the September quake Ferry Oak had strengthened another building on Moorhouse Ave, formerly the Crown Hotel, to exceed earthquake safety standards. Afterwards, it had needed remedial work which was almost finished on Tuesday, when the 6.3 quake struck. It was now badly damaged.

Ferry Oak has about 20 buildings and 100 tenants. Most of its offices and warehouse buildings outside the central city had been hit by liquefaction, Mr Webster said.

Plans drawn up

Plans for a new three-storey building to replace the seven-storey Manchester Courts had been drawn up. Was he still confident of proceeding?

"We are kind of caught. To have our insurance

money we have to rebuild otherwise we will only get indemnity, which is probably about half.

"We haven't done the sums but if we took that we would pay the mortgage off and nothing else."

Ironically, the delay demolishing Manchester Courts had delayed some CBD businesses from re-opening. Now the damage they had sustained meant his own rebuild was likely to be delayed. He wondered if the entire CBD might be rebuilt as low rise.

"Watching what's happening on the news is like it's happening on the other side of the world but it's just down the street,"

Former Reefton dairy farmer turned Christchurch property investor Craig Webster

Asked whether it should even be rebuilt in the same place, he said: "When Greymouth flooded all the time did they shift the CBD? They build a flood wall and it's okay."

However, he said the question must be asked how much liquefaction had contributed to Christchurch building collapses.

After the September quake Mr Webster felt "pretty relaxed" and went into town with his camera. This time he hadn't taken one photo. To do so when people had died would not seem right, he said.

Television images seemed surreal "Watching what's happening on the news is like it's happening on the other side of the world but it's just down the street."

Because he lived near the quake epicentre, he felt most of the aftershocks.

Did he wish he had never left the West Coast? "I hadn't actually thought of that but it did cross my mind after this (quake) seeing we've got quite a lot invested in property - why have it in one city..."

"You can see in hindsight that if I'd stuck with farming, I would have been better off financially at times over the years, but there's no use doing that. You make a decision and make a change and you stick with it."

"But I think farming might have been a better bet."

After Tuesday's quake struck he took about three hours to drive across the city to his Cashmere home, trying various routes and getting turned back.

He was shocked to see Merivale shops destroyed, the Carlton Hotel, a sister building to his own building in Moorhouse Ave, badly damaged, and the church opposite reduced to a skeleton.

His single-storey home had escaped the main shake almost unscathed, sustained significant damage in the Boxing Day shake, and might now be irreparable. The top was sheering off the bottom on wall level, it had a 2cm crack around the outside, walls and ceilings were cracked and floors were no longer level.

Westport teen gives first aid

by Keira Stephenson

A Westport teenager used her Buller High School first aid training to help a woman hit by a falling shelf in the Christchurch earthquake, says her mother.

Maraea Casey said her daughter Raquel, 17, had been the only one with first aid training among a group of adults and youths at the Academy of New Zealand training institute on Manchester Street.

The floristry student told her mother furniture was tossed around and the whole room jumped when the quake hit.

She grabbed two friends and told them to link arms and hold onto the legs of the table they were sheltering under.

When the earthquake stopped a woman was trapped beneath a fallen shelf with a probable broken leg.

Raquel calmed the woman and elevated her leg once they had pulled the shelf off her, said Mrs Casey.

Her daughter had "kept it together" throughout the quake and its aftermath, she said.

After helping the injured woman Raquel had gone back to her classroom and led a group of students through the crumbling building to clear space outside.

"A lot of younger students were dazed and confused. She just held it together and said 'we've got to get out of here,'" said Mrs Casey.

Attaining a Red Cross first aid and health and safety unit standards through the Gate Way programme had really helped, she said.

Raquel and another two Coast girls walked home together through the destroyed city centre to her flat in Riccarton. When she got back everyone was in a state of shock.

Raquel had broken the tension by playing her guitar and singing, her mother said.

She had been unable to contact her daughter for several hours and only learned she was all right when a text came through to say Raquel was walking home.

Back home safe in Westport now, the shock had set in and Raquel still felt as if the ground was shaking.

Meanwhile Mrs Casey's son Alex had set off from Westport with a friend, Mitchell Rapito, to volunteer with the cleanup.

She said he would either volunteer with the Red Cross or get in touch with his friend Louis Brown who was coordinating the student/citizen cleanup.



Mereama Collins, two, with her family at the head of the queue waiting for the water tanker at Phillipstown School. (Photo - NZPA / David Alexander)

Coast schools enrol Chch pupils

by Sonia Beal

Terrified parents have plucked their children out of quake-devastated Christchurch and temporarily enrolled them into Westport schools.

St Canice's School enrolled one child yesterday, three this morning, and four more pupils from Christchurch were expected on Monday, principal Dan Moloney said.

Parents were leaving children with their grandparents in Westport before returning to Christchurch, as the children were otherwise in a dangerous environment, and parents didn't want their children missing school.

One mother told Mr Moloney she had had enough and needed a break with the mental strain of daily aftershocks, and having no water or working sewerage system.

Mr Moloney said the Ministry of Education had asked him to check whether the school had had any new pupils enrolling. The ministry gave full support and would provide assistance, such as additional furniture, if it was required.

Mr Moloney said he expected the pupils to be at the school for two to four weeks.

The enrolments had been handled smoothly, and the children appeared to have adjusted well.

"It's good we're able to give these families practical support at a very stressful time."

Other schools enrolling pupils from Christchurch included Reefton Area School, Sacred Heart Primary School, and Buller High School.

Reefton Area and Sacred Heart had two pupils starting on Monday.

Sacred Heart principal Marg Campbell-McCauley said one of the pupils had already been there for the week following the September quake.

The school had also published a notice in its newsletter letting parents and the wider community know that any relatives who were staying in Reefton were more than welcome to enrol their children while required.

"It's really the best thing for these kids is to get back into a routine and return to normal life."

Buller High Principal Dr Sheila Grainger said one student, who attended the school last year, had enrolled yesterday as a result of the quake.

Dr Grainger said it was hard to say whether Buller High would receive any more enrolments, but they would be accepted.

Council seeks community support

The Buller District Council is appealing to the community to help assist with the devastation in Canterbury.

The West Coast Regional Council will lead a coordinated resource response team including the Buller, Grey and Westland district councils.

Councils were already providing staff to Christchurch but Buller District Council acting chief executive Craig Scanlon extended the assistance appeal to the Buller community as the council had fielded many offers and enquiries.

Offers of assistance throughout New Zealand were held on a central database at the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) in Wellington, and as further assistance in Christchurch was required, regions around the country were notified to provide

specific needs and services.

NCMC stressed it did not require further supplies of food, water, or blankets at this stage. However, accommodation or office space for Christchurch businesses that could possibly continue to operate on the West Coast for a period of time was in demand.

Other services included counselling, and if required, the council could liaise with the appropriate local professional service provider.

To provide assistance contact the Westport i-Site at 1 Brougham Street, or call (03) 789 6658. Operating hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and Saturday and Sunday, 9.30am to 4.30pm.

Monetary donations should be made to the New Zealand Red Cross 2011 Earthquake Appeal.

Tales of horror and courage

Auckland, NZPA

Tales of horror and courage are continuing to emerge from the Christchurch earthquake today as the death toll mounts and hope fades that any more trapped people will be brought out alive from the rubble.

In one harrowing incident an Australian doctor visiting Christchurch for a medical conference amputated a trapped man's legs using only a hacksaw and a Leatherman multi-purpose tool while in another a woman held her dead brother's hand as she cried for help from under the debris.

The woman doctor was chosen for the grim task of cutting off the legs of the man who was trapped in the collapsed Pyne Gould building because she was the smallest of the medical team trying to extricate him from a tight space, the New Zealand Herald reported today.

As an anaesthetist gave the man morphine and ketamine, she used the multi-purpose tool with a foldout blade and a hacksaw offered by a tradesman, to amputate both the legs.

Brisbane urologist Dr Stuart Philip said his Melbourne colleague saved the man's life.

He said she was too traumatised to talk about the amputation.

He said the victim was not under a full general anaesthetic when his legs were amputated but he was heavily sedated.

He said there was only room for the anaesthetist and the woman doctor in the space where the man's legs were trapped by a heavy concrete beam.

Rescuers told of the heart-wrenching cries of a woman who held her dead brother's hand as she called for help from under the debris of the collapsed Iconic Bar in Manchester Street.

Jamie Gilbert, 22, a father of two, was dead when rescuers freed his sister, Amy and then recovered his body.

The siblings had been working at the bar for three weeks after it was bought by family friends.

Volcanic rock may have magnified quake

Wellington, NZPA

The strength of the earthquake which left much of Christchurch in rubble on Tuesday may have been magnified as it reflected off hard volcanic rock below its epicentre, an earthquake geologist says.

Tuesday's quake was part of the aftershock sequence which followed September's magnitude 7.1 quake near Darfield, 40km west of the city, GNS Science earthquake geologist Kelvin Berryman said today.

Mr Berryman said part of the reason why the quake was felt so strongly could have been because it reflected off volcanic rock near its epicentre.

Seismic energy travelled in waves and could be reflected off hard surfaces, much like sound waves, he said.

"With the epicentre of Tuesday's earthquake in the Port Hills, a large amount of energy could have been reflected off hard volcanic rock at depth. This would have compounded the impact of the earthquake at the surface."

He said there had been an unusual number of aftershocks following Tuesday's quake but these were beginning to weaken and become less frequent but warned there were often anomalies, "as the magnitude 6.3 earthquake had shown".

The quake was part of an expanding "cloud" of aftershocks which was a familiar pattern with large earthquakes following quakes of similar magnitude to September's 7.1 magnitude earthquake, he said.

"Aftershocks have been spreading both west and east since the magnitude 7.1 Darfield earthquake in September," he said.

Cathedral will be rebuilt - Mayor

Wellington, NZPA

The iconic ChristChurch Cathedral, one of the city's most badly damaged buildings in Tuesday's deadly earthquake, will be rebuilt, says Mayor Bob Parker.

Work started this morning to remove bodies from the destroyed building.

Up to 22 people are believed to have been buried in the rubble.

Engineers will start to carefully work on removing loose and insecure masonry to enable Urban Search and Rescue teams to search through the rubble.

The work would be "delicate, difficult and likely to take quite some time", engineers said.

Mr Parker said the cathedral was a stunning and symbolic building that would be rebuilt.

It was realistic to start thinking about the new, stronger city that would rise out of the ruins.