

# Canterbury Community Life

## Prepared and responsive – The Hohepa Canterbury Story

**Christchurch, New Zealand. 4 September 2010, 4.34am**

At Hohepa Canterbury, 70 residents and 20 staff and volunteers slumber during the remaining hours of darkness. There's no inkling that, in 60 seconds' time, they would put into practice the emergency training they had rehearsed over time.

4.35am, the earth started shaking, violently. Staff gathered residents from their beds and huddled with them in safe areas of their homes. The ground rippled as houses were put to the extreme test. Emergency kits were unpacked. Torches became the only source of light. One staff member reported seeing amazing coloured lights in the sky – a not unknown earthquake phenomenon. The time to test disaster preparedness had arrived.

As dawn broke, gas barbecues were fired into action. Water was boiled and breakfasts cooked. We discovered that boiling water by barbeque is inefficient and takes a very long time. Houses at the farm lost tap water, the bore silted up with liquefaction. Constant reassurance ensured residents remained calm. Staff who received news that their own homes had been destroyed or damaged were relieved by other staff to attend to their own emergencies.

The farm complex at Halswell was the most affected. The historic highway bridge had been shattered, necessitating a five kilometre detour along 'closed' roads to access the site. Residents evacuated were moved to local motels, while others went home. Luckily we had recently bought two new properties at Somerfield; Sloss House residents moved into one of these. Eight months later they still reside there and are likely to remain so for up to another year, as EQC and insurance issues are worked through.

Overnight the farm village became a deserted ghost town, patrolled by a security firm to deter opportunists. Ponds of liquefaction – a wet grey concrete-like substance that would dry to a fine dust that infiltrated everywhere – appeared. Fractures appeared in pathways inter-weaving the homes. A large pond flooded the road near the wood workshop, while further down a new spring bubbled away happily.

Civil Defence officials 'red stickered' the wood workshop, its concrete floor riddled with

shaking fractures up to 80 millimetres wide. The building was eventually demolished, resulting in the loss of our tenant together with the income it provided. The Farm Day Base was similarly 'yellow stickered', having sunk up to 80 millimetres on one side.

The hire of portaloos enabled the horticultural day service to continue. A charitable trust renting space in the garden to propagate plants was faced with bucketing water from the new pond 60 meters away. Frustrations grew and they moved out.

Surveys revealed three of the four key residential homes at Halswell had suffered serious damage, having moved off their piles, their interior and exterior linings cracked and distorted. Sloss House was 'yellow stickered', which meant entry was allowed only to retrieve possessions. Luckily van Asch House, although damaged, was still habitable. The Farm Cottage our volunteers call 'home' was unfortunately 'red stickered' and a new home hastily rented in town.

Restoration of services began almost immediately as a Bore Driller brought in a rig to clear the bore. A new power cable was laid from the Farm Cottage, and a trench dug across the road, supplying a newly constructed pump house. A 33,000 litre tank, able to be powered by generator, has now been installed as an emergency water reserve. Investigations into the source of a new spring revealed an old capped bore buried under the road by previous owners. The Bore Driller rammed a capped steel casing over this to seal it off.

Jack and Martin, our two maintenance workers toiled alongside the contractors, plagued by numerous breaks to underground water lines supplying the farm.



*Farm access bridge damage*



*Volunteers came to help us shovel silt*

The homes at our Barrington Street campus suffered only minor damage, mainly cosmetic cracking, to repair estimated at \$5000 per dwelling.

*"Being on leave at the time, I saw Bee Jay, Juniper House support worker upon my return a few days later. Enquiring how things had been for her, with her characteristic smile she said, 'It's all been community living! We've had barbecues together and supported each other. The whole community finds its reflection ...' Little did I know this was the last time I would see the lovely Bee Jay – she died within a month of pneumonia."*

Raymond Eberhard,  
General Manager

## Christchurch, New Zealand. February 22. 12.51 pm

The February earthquake left our Halswell Farm site unscathed; this time it was Barrington Street's turn. When the 6.3 magnitude quake hit at 12.51 pm, Day Service staff immediately evacuated residents to a designated meeting place to the rear of the campus.

Administration staff raced out of our 101-year-old two-storied building, able to help comfort residents, as strong aftershocks continued to rock us through the day and overnight.

John Morrissey, Chairman of the Hohepa Canterbury Regional Board quickly arrived on the scene and, with the maintenance team, checked to ensure the houses were safe. Our Accountant, Catherine Coulter, oversaw staff able to remain on site as others made urgent trips to collect children from schools and inner city locations. Blankets and jackets were commandeered from the Day Base and close-by houses to ensure residents stayed warm. It was touching to see how some residents were able to comfort others who were terrified by the continuing aftershocks – 'it felt like the ground was booming' said Irene. Residents were moved to clear areas as large areas of liquefaction bubbled out of the ground.

Apart from Jade House, all surrounding houses were deemed safe and residents assembled in the Recreation Centre awaiting the arrival of residential staff at 4pm. As staff arrived, residents were marked off a register as they transferred to their houses and arrangements made for relocating residents to other homes where insufficient staff were available. Mattresses were set up on the floor in Bev Morrissey House for Jade House residents.

Landline and cell phone coverage was intermittent during this period and staff felt somewhat in limbo as to how the city itself had fared. Some news was gleaned via a transistor, but television was out as it was expected the footage would be frightening for residents. Members of the Management Team began phoning families during the early evening; all were grateful to receive these calls.

We found the driveway in a treacherous condition, dissected by two metre deep fissures, along with the stream's retaining bank. Jade House, nearest to this area, had moved 30 centimetres on its piles, holes in its brick cladding exposing the interior. Residents were relocated around several houses for the next few weeks until they were able to move into a recently purchased property in Somerfield Street – luckily we had a spare!

When the Ministry of Health called to inquire if we wished to be evacuated, we were able to report that residents were safe and secure in their houses in familiar surroundings. A base was set up in the Wellness Centre for the Management Team and two staff took on the huge role of coordinating and organising staffing cover for the next few days. A number of staff and/or their families had been personally affected by the quake and

were unable to come to work. Agencies too were in a similar situation.

A lack of running water and sewage were immediate issues – it was fortunate that power had been restored the previous evening. Although there were sufficient food supplies for a few days, we did not know how long we might have to manage on our own resources.

With our server out of action for 48 hours, wonderful support from the Hohepa Auckland and Hawke's Bay finance teams helped organise our banking facilities through their relationship managers.

Double staffing bolstered both emotional support for residents and moral support for colleagues during the trauma of the continuous aftershocks. Residents were introduced to unfamiliar toilet routines (often resisted!) and trips to the latrine pits and water stations. Some residents required additional support, one being very anxious and requiring a sleep-over person to support her during many weeks of aftershocks. 'Earthquake leave' was granted to staff who were impacted by severely damaged or destroyed homes, while others worked extra hours to fill in.

House-loads of laundry were taken to the farm houses, where staff worked very long days without respite. Day Service staff helped ease the load by taking residents out to the unaffected farm houses in relays for showers during week days.

Barrington Street itself seemed surreal in the days that followed as corrugations and sinkholes reduced traffic to a continuous crawl. Vast amounts of liquefaction dried into a dusty haze, rendering the scene to more like 'high noon in the desert' than a suburban roadway.

A temporary management hub was established in the Day Base, as there was initial anxiety about returning to our 101-year-old administration building. Twice daily situational meetings saw managers take on temporary roles, each focusing on a key issue, such as staffing, stores and provisions, water supplies, and the restoration of the computer server. With our computers out of action, we were unable to make transfers and pay accounts.

Cash was drawn from a bank in another district, as local banks were out of action, and a contingency plan for a remote payroll



*The Farm Pond that came from nowhere*



*Resident Joel Foreman surveys his bedroom*

actioned. Luckily the server and computers were restored within two days.

Hohepa Hawke's Bay and Auckland flew in extra teams to help us cope – fantastic support from our national community. Auckland's General Manager flew down and assisted in a house, helping with shopping or shovelling silt during the day. Leadership by example!

Drinking water became a priority, with one house down to four litres of bottled water. Shops were rationing. Service stations had long queues for fuel. Through our networks we contacted local farmers and, within hours, a truck complete with a 1000 litre tank was delivered, the farmer handing over the keys saying 'keep the truck until your water's back'. Another farmer drove for several hours to deliver a trailer and tank. Such was the spirit of people wanting to help. It took about three weeks before water was partially restored.

Maintenance workers began daily trips to the farm bore to replenish water supplies. Support workers and residents queued for water with buckets and containers, ferrying these to the houses like trails of ants.

Sewerage took lot longer – up to two months for some facilities. No running water meant no flushing toilets, bin liners inside toilet bowls a temporary measure before friends of Hohepa arrived with a motorised auger and dug latrine pits. Other friends arrived to help sort out the administration offices, a scene of



Farm Entrance way



Damaged Sloss House showing cracks



Silt and driveway cracking in Barrington Street from February 22 earthquake



Damaged Jade House



Patience is needed for boiling water on a barbecue



Farm Day Base showing movement on foundations

chaos with cabinets, files and pot plants strewn across the floor.

The Christchurch City Council began distributing portaloos and chemical toilets, but we were informed: *'You're a business and you need to hire your own'*. An appeal to the Ministry of Health resulted in portaloos being delivered that same day – a huge relief and saving us from evacuation.

Volunteers made a wonderful difference, with the Student Army arriving in numbers to shovel silt, a heavy wet mass that was incredibly laborious to move.

Once mains water was restored we discovered our supply line leaked in several places. An emergency line was laid above ground, and is still there today. Sewerage pipes were similarly broken in many places, or blocked with ingress of liquefaction. 'Grey water' from bathroom sinks and washing machines was routed to flowerbeds or other drains. Weeks of work eventually solved these problems.

A new 33,000 litre tank was installed as a water reserve at Barrington Street – a precaution for the future. Once again maintenance

workers spent weeks supporting contractors through an ongoing series of problems.

Hohepa Canterbury has lost three houses and submitted dozens of small claims for minor damage. The Farm Day Base is being restored, after a special mix was pumped under the foundations to level the building. Two properties are being rented for our displaced people, and plans are being drawn up for a renewed driveway. We are facing major delays with our insurers and EQC, but so are thousands of others.

Throughout the earthquake period, regular updates kept Board members, families, friends and the Ministries informed. These were highly appreciated with positive comment received.

As we go to print, Christchurch has just been hit by two major earthquakes measuring magnitudes 5.6 and 6.3. Liquefaction once again bubbles from the ground, Lamar House has under floor ingress, shovels emerge and huge trucks pound the roads ferrying their sodden loads to the landfill. The impact on Hohepa Canterbury has once again been considerable. The aftershocks continue.

This article is a way of documenting for present and future generations how Hohepa Canterbury responded to the September 4 and February 22 earthquakes. The February 22 Christchurch earthquake brought the country to a state of national emergency. Residents and staff will have their own personal stories as well.

*"Throughout the last nine months I have witnessed amazing selflessness and devotion among staff at Hohepa Canterbury. I can visit a house to find a solitary support worker huddled with a group of residents in the 'safe spot' as yet another aftershock occurred.*

*I have to admire the sleep-over support workers, whose inner-strength endured throughout frightening nights with up to six residents in the home. Day Base colleagues also worked tirelessly, often with extremely unpleasant tasks such as latrine duties.*

*Friend of Hohepa, Gary Spence has been a huge asset in assisting us with project management surrounding the restitution of damaged facilities – working tirelessly on our behalf.*

*A colleague lamented that she wished she had come in to help at the time of the September event. Her opportunity came with February's earthquake, as the General Manager's PA offered comfort and support to residents of Rata Cottage throughout the night as ongoing aftershocks rattled the city. We also witnessed the discomfort on the faces of support workers from Hawke's Bay and Auckland as they experienced strong aftershocks – and the realisation of what they had come to experience.*

*This has definitely been a time of inner resources shining through!*

*Regular aftershocks still keep us all on edge Tracy, one of our residents recently said: 'I woke up at three. It was horrible. I'm going to write to those people!'*

Raymond Eberhard,  
General Manager, Hohepa Canterbury



Wood workshop



Jade House earthquake damage



Lateral fracture running the length of the tunnel house



Damage to Barrington Street driveway following February 22 earthquake.

## A life saver. Can you help us?

A defibrillator is a life saving piece of equipment. If a person suffers a cardiac arrest, dialling 111 and performing CPR is not always enough to ensure that they will survive. A defibrillator applies a short powerful electric shock to the heart allowing the heart to regain its natural rhythm and so enhances chance of survival.

Unlike those we may have seen in TV hospital dramas, a battery operated defibrillator doesn't need any medical training to operate. Simple audio prompts and pictures reinforce every step in the resuscitation process and, in automatic mode, all the user has to do is apply the electrodes and push a button.

We want to be prepared for any future emergency with the purchase of two defibrillators (the HeartStart FirstAid model recommended by St John) - one for each of our Barrington Street and Halswell campuses. To do this we need your help.

A defibrillator costs \$3500 per unit (including its weatherproof carry case) plus \$247 for a long life replacement battery.

If you can help us to purchase these life saving devices, please complete and return the form below with your donation.

Thank you for your support of Hohepa Canterbury.

## Seeking Volunteers

We are looking for inspired people to come on board as volunteers to support our Day Service and Residential Homes with a variety of tasks, such as gardening, supporting residents with activities, outings, music, and hobbies.

Come along and enjoy being part of the Hohepa community! Widen your social horizons and reap the rewards of new relationships and activities!

To apply: contact Richard Oakden, telephone 332-3179 extension 205 or email [richard@canty.hohepa.org.nz](mailto:richard@canty.hohepa.org.nz)



**Hohepa**

creating opportunities...

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CUT ALONG THE LINE 

# Yes! I want to help Hohepa Canterbury purchase 2 portable defibrillators for emergency response at Barrington Street and Halswell campuses.

Your name and address are important.  
Please complete this section.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\$150

\$80

\$55

\$\_\_\_\_\_ other amount

Cheque payable to Hohepa Canterbury

Direct Debit donation to Hohepa Canterbury – Bank Account No. 031594 0032732 00. **Please insert your name in the Ref. box**

**PLEASE POST TO:**  
**HOHEPA CANTERBURY**  
**PO BOX 28101, BECKENHAM**  
**CHRISTCHURCH 8242**

*Thank you! All donations are eligible for a tax rebate up to the level of your income. We will send you a receipt.*

I am interested in setting up a regular donation to Hohepa Canterbury

Please send information about making a gift to Hohepa Canterbury in my Will

Please remove my name from the mailing list