Are we really prepared for disaster?
Responding to the lessons from Christchurch

Catherine Forbes, GML Heritage
ICOMOS, ICORP, ANZ Cultural Heritage Risk Preparedness Working Group
Canterbury Earthquakes
Christchurch
Independent study
Impacts of earthquakes, emergency response and recovery on the built cultural heritage of Christchurch
Individual and focus group interviews

Christchurch City Council Heritage Officers
Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Heritage Officers
ICOMOS New Zealand
Architects and Engineers
Local residents
Mayor of Christchurch
Study findings
1. Built heritage was not included in emergency plans for the city or Civil Defence charters, operating procedures or training scenarios.
2. Heritage legislation was suspended under the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act (CERA)

https://www.edimaps.com/christchurch-cbd-map/
3. Decisions were made by outsiders who had no association with the place and limited understanding of its heritage values.
4. Heritage buildings were difficult to identify in the rubble.
5. **Damage assessments** were carried out by engineers with **limited expertise** in assessing heritage buildings.
5. Damage assessments were carried out by engineers with limited expertise in assessing heritage buildings.
6. Limited time to assess buildings, challenge demolition orders or record buildings prior to demolition

7. Heritage listings were inadequate in identifying heritage values and attributes to challenge demolition orders in court.

90–96 Chester Street East – George Kuek, 2011
8. **Historic interiors** have been delisted

*Great Hall, The Arts Centre*

*Isaac Theatre Royal*

*Interior of commercial building*

*Catherine Forbes, 2016*
9. **Conflicting values attached to cultural heritage by the community and property owners**

![Wharetiki House](image1)  
*Wharetiki House*  
*George Kuek, 2011*

![Christ Church Anglican Cathedral](image2)  
*Christ Church Anglican Cathedral*  
*Catherine Forbes, 2016*
10. Making **insurance** claims was extremely difficult

One of the oldest houses in Christchurch – ABC, 16 February 2016
11. Materials and artefacts were not saved from the demolition of historic buildings.
12. Focus on large lot development and anchor projects lead to demolition of heritage properties and loss of the historic development pattern.
13. **Cost of reconstruction is extremely high**

The Arts Centre, Christchurch
Catherine Forbes, 2016

Commercial Building, Christchurch
Catherine Forbes, 2016
Conclusions

• Built heritage not considered in emergency planning for the city or in the emergency response and recovery.

• With the scale and complexity of the situation, owners, responders, the National Government and Local Government were simply not prepared.
Response: ANZ ICOMOS Risk Preparedness Working Group

- Promote the protection of cultural heritage in times of disaster
  - (natural or human made, fast and slow onset, including climate change)

- Contribute to the national promotion of risk preparedness for cultural heritage
  - in accordance with Australia and New Zealand’s commitments to the
    - UNISDR Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
Response: ANZ ICOMOS Risk Preparedness Working Group

- Promote cooperation with government, emergency services and civil defence
- And the *inclusion of cultural heritage in emergency plans* at local, regional, state and national levels
Response:
ANZ ICOMOS
Risk
Preparedness
Working Group

• Build the capacity of heritage professionals in disaster risk management planning and emergency response for cultural heritage

• and establish a network of professionals that can respond responsibly to emergencies as they arise.