

Opportunity to further capitalise on private sector expertise in Canterbury rebuild

NZCID Media release
20 October, 2011

There is potential for greater public private collaboration to build momentum to the Canterbury recovery effort the Board of the New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development has found.

"Given the role of Christchurch as the largest city in the South Island and its significance to New Zealand as a whole, it is essential to bring together the best minds in commerce, central and local government together in partnership to speed the recovery of the region", says NZCID Chief Executive Stephen Selwood.

"The NZCID Board met in Christchurch on Wednesday and received briefings from community and business leaders, CERA and the Infrastructure Alliance. The briefings followed site visits to Kaiapoi, the eastern suburbs and the CBD. The itinerary and associated briefings were designed to provide a hands on understanding of the current situation.

"We found that strong progress is being made by Government, CERA and local authorities in dealing with the complex issues surrounding seismology, land use planning, insurance and the economic and financial challenges required of the recovery effort.

"NZCID is seeking to lend its support to the Canterbury rebuild by harnessing the expertise of its member organisations and building a stronger partnership between the public and private sectors in resolving the key infrastructure challenges.

"Strategic issues identified by the Board include decisions on suitability of land for redevelopment; the commercial viability of the proposed low-rise redevelopment of the Christchurch CBD; the economic costs associated with land remediation and revised construction standards to meet safety, insurance and finance requirements; timeliness of consenting and investment decision making processes; and the need to clearly and consistently communicate the path forward.

"The risk of capital flight will be a major threat to the rebuild of Canterbury until these issues are resolved in a timely way.

"From an infrastructure perspective the Industry is ready to go, but cannot proceed until these decisions are made. Businesses remain geared up to undertake the rebuild but maintaining this capacity will be difficult in the absence of the required land use and investment, funding, and consenting approvals to allow work to proceed.

"Opportunities for funding include partial or full sale of council assets, extension of user pays funding through such measures as volumetric pricing for water and the potential for private financing of infrastructure.

"While the big decisions need to be taken with some urgency the sheer scale of reconstruction means that the rebuild will take considerable time.

"However, that will be less of a problem if certainty about the pathway forward is provided.

"As a national infrastructure industry body NZCID is committed to support the Canterbury rebuild in any way it can bringing the expertise of its members to the table and facilitating industry input into the decisions that must be made.

"The NZCID has resolved to meet with as many agencies as it can over the next month to further develop a cohesive and informed industry response to the region's infrastructure development needs at its next Board meeting in December", Selwood says.