

Unified rebuild is the way to go

Nick Regos writes on tragedy and the urgent urban planning opportunity it offers

AS CENTRAL and local government contemplate the rebuilding of Christchurch, both should look to lessons learned from post-disaster recovery operations around the globe. Damage from disasters is estimated to affect 231 million people annually with costs from 1991 to 2005 alone estimated at more than \$1 trillion.

Closer to home, as a result of Australia's devastating bushfires, rural communities were decimated and have not managed to bounce back. This has happened in part because of the failure to adopt an integrated recovery programme.

Several of these Australian communities are now ghost towns. Residents and business owners have packed up and left and there are no tourists in sight.

Conversely the Japanese, after the huge Kobe earthquake, developed a detailed multi-goal plan based on project management methodologies that resulted in economic recovery to 90 per cent of pre-quake levels within four years.

Being in Cashel St on February 22 and witnessing the tragedy of the Christchurch earthquake provides some understanding of the social and human issues that will undoubtedly reach far beyond Canterbury and greatly impact the whole country in social and economic terms.

The transition from a rescue to recovery phase has had an immediate effect on the people closest to this tragedy and the business community has been appreciative and tempered in the manner in which it has advertised the need to restore the city to a semblance of business continuity quickly.

This presents a challenging dilemma. While everyone understands and appreciates the sorrow and hardships faced by the people of Christchurch, there is also a pressing need to move forward with an integrated plan that will address the immediate and long-term needs of the community.

The longer this is delayed, the more these hardships will be compounded. Put simply, priority projects addressing the needs of the Christchurch people, such as the provision of housing in the short to medium term and ensuring Christchurch retains its role as the gateway to the South Island, need to be immediately addressed if there is any chance of long-term success.

These priority projects need to be balanced and integrated with the overall long-term aim



START AGAIN: Priority projects such as providing short-term housing need to be balanced with the long-term plan to build a safer and sustainable city.

PICTURE / GREG BOWKER

to build a safer and sustainable city.

The cost to implement this programme of works is estimated at \$20 billion to \$30 billion over a proposed 10-year period.

This creates unique challenges. Previous non-residential building work annual spends nationally over the last decade range from \$2.7 billion to \$5.1 billion at their peak.

Should the rebuild be undertaken for the current estimate in the proposed timeframe, this equates to a lineal spend rate of \$2 billion to \$3 billion a year not accounting for cost escalation, a common problem in recovery programmes.

This work will have complexities not seen here before and complicated social and human issues that will have a national economic impact.

Success will only be achieved by applying specialist skills where they best fit, sourcing local experts with previous international experience, or importing expertise if required and aligning the various goals of the numerous stakeholders to a common purpose.

To overcome the strain on resources and materials, an integrated review of design, source of supply and logistics of movements is required to ensure an integrated and efficient supply chain model.

This will only be achieved by effectively engaging with the business leaders of the country.

In addition to this, the implications for our export markets will require assessment as those materials (such as logs) being exported may be required in greater quantities locally than currently supplied.

This domino effect exists throughout projects of this scale and complexity and prior experience in managing overall project programmes is essential to understanding all the moving parts.

The talent pool will be exhausted unless an integrated approach is adopted as specialists will be busy working on "less important" projects.

In addition, excessive spending on short-term solutions has, in the past, led to

difficulties in funding for permanent solutions.

It is necessary to provide leadership at a national level through a designated "taskforce" that can identify and deal with the issues over the short, medium and long term. Only at this level can common reconstruction problems such as cost escalation, inadequate supply of materials and labour and quality of construction be addressed.

An alignment of the various stakeholder groups is necessary as otherwise these groups will work in isolation and the best result will not be achieved.

Initiatives that I have been involved with in the past involved the identification of key industry leaders and utility providers through stakeholder mapping followed by the establishment of executive committees which met monthly.

Representative of these committees are people at chief executive level, people who have the authority to make immediate decisions. Issues that are stalling, or that have

the potential to stall, the project are elevated to this group. This taskforce has a mandate to make immediate decisions to remove these obstacles to the project.

Having been involved with the planning and delivery of city developments on a global scale, I can see that the sheer scale and complexity of issues to be addressed in the rebuilding of Christchurch are huge and, with even the best intentions, not yet fully comprehended.

This tragedy provides us with an urban design opportunity not seen since in this region since the creation of Canberra in 1913.



Nick Regos is South Island chief executive of Impact Project Management. He established the management team and processes required for building Abu Dhabi.

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Craig: If there are so many taxis there that they have to wait four hours to get a customer then there are too many taxis. Don't hike your prices up to keep supporting more taxi drivers.

Sage: The charge was extortion no less. The airport should assume responsibility for transport between national and international terminals free at frequent intervals as they already gouge enough out of the travelling public.

Ella: I have to agree with the taxi company. If you see the queues of taxis and how long they wait to get a customer, I can understand that they'd need a minimum fare.

Peter: What a major copout. So what if the drivers have to wait several hours for a fare. They don't have to stay at the airport.

Richard: How about completing multiple smaller journeys and really working for your money, rather than sitting in a queue for hours trying to score a large fare back into the city.

Andrew: It is cheaper to hire a car, with petrol cost included, than take an airport taxi.

Raza: I drive at the airport and I don't think the driver is to blame. In this particular scenario, the customer must have agreed to the approximate fare price before getting into the car.

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