



Movers and shakers

WOMEN'S STORIES FROM THE CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKES



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Movers and Shakers

Women's stories from the
Christchurch earthquakes

Women's Voices Project - Ngā Reo O
Ngā Wahine

NCWNZ Christchurch Branch

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The UC CEISMIC team have ensured that most of the interview records are publicly available through the QuakeStudies digital archive. We are particularly grateful for the input of Lucy-Jane Walsh.

We wish to once again thank all the women who agreed to tell their stories. You inspired us, made us happy/sad and made us cry. The resilience shown by the women of Christchurch in the face of thousands of earthquakes is remarkable.¹

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Rosemary Du Plessis, Helen Gibson, Liz Gordon, Judith Sutherland.

Women's Voices Research Committee

¹ Some research participants chose to use pseudonyms. Others chose to use only their given name. The full names of participants are only used with their consent.

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Blame the earthquakes!

How did this project come to be? Well, without the earthquakes there would be no project, so we might blame the earth-moving gods. On the 22nd April 2014, the Canterbury Quake Live website noted that there had been 14,083 felt earthquakes since the first ‘big’ one occurred early in the morning of 4 September 2010. Everyone in Christchurch has been affected in some way since that first major quake.

At the National Council of Women’s first Christchurch meeting after the devastating 22 February 2011 earthquake, members raised questions about the need to record women’s experiences of the quakes and their aftermath. At the time, the media was full of recovery, demolition and rebuilding stories, but there was not much about looking after ageing parents, getting children to relocated schools across crumbling roads, or trying to juggle increased family and work responsibilities.

The NCWNZ Christchurch Branch responded to these concerns by setting up a small committee, which came to be known as the Post-Earthquake Strategy Team, or PEST. This committee met a few times, usually on the weekends, and this research project is the largest and most enduring outcome of that group’s work.

The Women’s Voices Research Committee took on the task of recording a range of women’s earthquake stories. We were aware of material written about earthquakes during 1800s in the region, but these records, while tantalising, were disappointingly short. We thought that, through recording the earthquake stories of Christchurch women, we could create a much more detailed and lasting record of these quakes.

Over thirty women volunteered to be trained to interview other women about their quake experiences. At training workshops they interviewed one another about their earthquake experiences. Their stories are available in the NCWNZ Women’s Voices archive on UC CEISMIC as ‘interviewer profiles’. This report draws on these stories as well as those of the women they interviewed.

At the start of the project we attempted to record the stories of women in different parts of the city, of different ages, involved in different forms of work, and in different family arrangements. A student researcher interviewed ten younger women, many of them active in organisations that sprung up in response to the quakes. We interviewed politicians, a school principal, an opera singer, the Mayor's partner, civil defence specialists, a funeral director, teachers (quite a few!), GPs, nurses, lawyers, an architect, engineers, a hairdresser, a factory supervisor, a fitness instructor, small business owners, an artist, a real estate agent, a journalist and many others. They were identified through NCWNZ networks, via snowballing (someone we interviewed suggested someone else) and through people known to interviewers. Sometimes women found out about the project and volunteered to be interviewed.

After completing over 80 interviews between late 2011 and 2012, we decided that we needed to record the stories of women living in eastern Christchurch, especially women who were struggling financially, who had children with special needs or children who were stressed as a result of the quakes. We also wanted to record the stories of more Māori women as well as more Pasifika women and new immigrants. Ōtautahi Māori Women's Welfare League and PACIFICA representatives worked with the research team to ensure that this goal was achieved. The project became - Women's Voices/ Ngā Reo O Ngā Wahine

This interest in extending the range of women who were interviewed and especially women living in the eastern suburbs most affected by the quakes, led to the second stage of the project – Women's Unheard Voices. As a result, another 45 earthquake stories were recorded between mid-2013 and early 2014 with women living in social housing, rental accommodation or badly damaged owner-occupier homes in suburbs like New Brighton, Wainoni, Aranui, Avondale, Avonside, Bromley, Bexley, Waltham, Phillipstown and Woolston. Their stories have been combined with those interviewed in 2011-12 in this report.

September 2010

“It was an earthquake”! “It was an earthquake”!

It was a bright and starry night, although quite chilly. Early spring in Christchurch, the daffodils in full display, lambs frisking and cherry blossoms emerging in pink and white. Helen Heddell remembers having a conversation about earthquakes in the car on the way home from her dinner at the Flying Burrito Brothers at about midnight. But this was not a premonition. Few appeared to have the slightest sense that there might be a significant earthquake here. After all, the Alpine Fault only ruptured at rare intervals, and there were “no fault lines in Canterbury”, as Jo Nichol-Parker put it, were there?

There had been few earthquakes of significance in Christchurch in living memory, and certainly nothing like what was about to be unleashed. But, as the *Lost Christchurch* website notes², people were writing about earthquakes, earthquake swarms and building damage stretching back to the beginning of European settlement. After around 20 years of quite active smaller earthquakes, the 1869 quake was quite severe, as the Lyttelton Times recorded:

At five seconds past eight o'clock a severe shock was experienced, its direction being from south to north, and the vibration continuing for fully twenty seconds. Great alarm was caused, in the more populous thoroughfares, and especially in the vicinity of stone buildings. While houses were still shaking, and chimneys falling in almost every direction, men, women and children were rushing terror stricken into the open air, and one person living at a short distance from the city compared the mingled sound borne through the air to the rush of a large railway train with the steam-whistle giving forth its shrill shriek.

The earthquake of 1888 partially destroyed the first Cathedral, and significant shakes were also reported in 1901, 1922 and 1927. Further earthquakes were felt from time to time up

² <http://lostchristchurch.org.nz/a-history-of-quakes-in-christchurch>

until the 1960s, although none seemed to be centred in Christchurch. Since then, and in the living memory of most of the population, there have been very few felt earthquakes. Only those, like Wendy Hawke, whose husband worked as a volunteer with civil defence (and others in scientific communities) thought about quakes: "To me, September was my worst earthquake experience - being woken out of my sleep for an event that I must say I had been expecting. And of course we thought it was the Alpine Fault".

At 4.37am, on 4 September, most people were asleep. Only two participants in this study slept through the earthquake in Christchurch. Jacqui Gavin was a bit embarrassed about this, as she thought: "only pissed people and teenage boys slept through it!"

Is it a monster?

"...we were rudely awakened by this tremendous noise..."
(June Allwright)

There were a lot of monsters strutting around Christchurch at 4.37 a.m. on the morning of September 4, 2010:

The younger ones had no idea what it was. They thought it was a big scary monster stomping down the street. They were screaming with everything bashing around and toppling over. It was very frightening. (Adele, mother of four boys, Avonside)

Ellenor who is in her 70s remembers being in bed asleep in her home in Southshore for the September quake and feeling the house shaking "as if a giant had got hold of the whole house and was shaking it... It was out of the blue... no one expected an earthquake in Christchurch".

Caroline, who was living alone in a skyline cottage on her New Brighton back section, describes the vibrations from the quake as if "King Kong had walked down the street and, thinking the house was a money box, had picked it up and shook it to see if there was any money in it".

A whole lotta shaking...

“On the night of 4 September I was awoken with the almighty shaking” (Myra Kunowski).

While not everyone heard the earthquake, nearly everyone who was in Christchurch – and some much further afield - felt it. Anne is a light sleeper, and was awakened to the feeling that someone was shaking the bed violently. She described it as a bit like sifting icing sugar! Peggy Kelly thought it felt like "being in a washing machine" at her house. Guine Newport was annoyed. She called out to her husband, "Why are you shaking the house and where are you?"

Helen King who lived in Avonhead and is 92, remembered "that September was a very bad one". She got out of bed and "I didn't know what was going on and I went around the house - once it had stopped - and I looked to see if the windows were still in, because I have very big windows in this house. I then went back to bed. And, I thought things will be alright. In London during the air-raids you got used to it - whatever was coming, you know. We used to say 'if your name was on it (the bombs) you'll get it'. But there were dangerous effects on some of the girls. The earthquakes here in New Zealand have been shattering to a lot of people”.

Rosemary Du Plessis got out of bed, and “the floor seemed to come up towards me as I got to my feet.”

Wendy Hawke thought her house was going to fall down, “because it was an old house”. Marie Rean said her husband “did want me to stand safely somewhere but the house was rocking to the extent I didn't know where safe was and so we stood in the doorway clutching one another”.

Rachael White noted her “house was twisting, turning, and shaking”, while severe damage was immediately apparent in Joyce Wallace’s house:

...my daughter, who was upstairs, got out of bed and went to get her daughter and it wasn't easy getting her daughter ... because the house was built on river sand ... The concrete slab has snapped in half ... and her daughter was on the other side of the house ...

Lynne Smith and her family also had problems getting through their house: "The shaking was so severe we were unable to stand and had to get down on our bottoms". Water was flooding down from upstairs and broken glass was cutting their bare feet. Katie Gilbertson's house "seemed to lift up and sway like a boat", and Ange Davidson also noted "As we live in an old wooden two stored house that is 147 years old, it was like being in large boat".

Loretta had just arrived home from a visit to Samoa:

And the earthquake hit in the early hours of the morning. I was thinking 'No, I must be dreaming'. And my husband goes 'No this is for real'. And it actually really shook. It was really terrifying. And I said to him, 'Oh I think I made it home so we could die together in this house' ... You could not get up; it was just shaking. We were on the Eastern side.

They ran through the house, with all the cupboard doors flung open, and into the lounge, where they dumped the cushions off their settee, turned it upside down and crawled underneath.

Sue was asleep in bed when the quake struck. Because she was sleeping east-west, and the quake's movement came from the north-south, she was almost thrown out of bed: "I wasn't thrown out of my bed but I'm aware that rolling out of my bed with the impact of the quake to get my dressing gown was easier than it should have been". Although Michelle was living in New Brighton she did not think about a tsunami. "I woke being shaken... things were just moving all around me... It was ferocious... The whole house just rocked, and then there was no light". The quake seemed to "shake forever"; even though it was actually only thirty seconds. She is someone who does not like to be in the dark and "it started to freak me out a bit".

It felt like you were on a rocking boat on the ocean. Then there was just silence, absolute silence. And then I started thinking about everything. Where is my son? I rushed into [son's] room and he was still soundly asleep. He slept right through it and was totally unaware of what had happened.

Michelle dashed outside and there were lots of her neighbours “all fresh out of bed”. Everyone was just in a state of disbelief and everyone was asking, “What was that?” And someone else said, “It was an earthquake, it was an earthquake!”

Is it a plane? Is it a train?

It was remembered as a loud earthquake. Woken from sleep and disoriented, people struggled to make sense of the noise they were hearing. They attributed it to all sorts of things. It sounded like a train, a plane, or “a long, loud thunderous noise, like all the bricks were chattering away alongside of my head”, as Diane put it.

Rebecca Gordon³ heard “an almighty sound - just like, oh my God - it was like aeroplanes going over the house with the house shaking like crazy”. Salma and Ruth Todd both thought “a train had come through the house” and Lynne Smith thought it was a plane, then realised that if it was that loud it would be landing in her garden. Katie Gilbertson reported that “it was so loud. My first thought was that the train had derailed, because we live by the train in Darfield”. Anne also stated “the noise was horrible, like a freight train coming”. Laine Barker was woken up by a rumbling noise, which at first she thought was a truck from the nearby trucking yard.

Jenny May also remembers the first earthquake in September as very loud. The house was shaking and things were crashing all around. Kirsty just heard “an overwhelming noise” and Helene Mautner noted “the incredible noise”. Rachael White reported “a roaring sound”. Others reported “loud rattling”. Kath Graham was already awake and “heard the rumbling coming towards our house and was quickly out the door and in the hall. By the time the earthquake hit the house I was yelling ‘Earthquake, earthquake’”.

³ Four Rebeccas were interviewed – Rebecca Gordon, Rebecca Macfie and a Rebecca who chose to only use her given name. Another Rebecca chose to use a pseudonym.

For Judith Sutherland, the main noise came from her house. "There was creaking, groaning, and rumbling and I thought the house was going to break into pieces". Anna Mowat could "hear things crashing". Raewyn Dawson said "We were all terrified at the crashing and creaking". Many others heard glass smashing, things falling down and houses creaking. For a small number of participants, the house noises heralded the total destruction of the property. It was difficult to differentiate between the noise that came from the ground itself and that caused by movement in the buildings.

Gina King was living near the AMI Stadium, an area that would be heavily affected in the February shakes. She was woken by the noise and thought that a train had derailed from the track. Her children knew it was an earthquake. They did not lose power at all. On investigation, the top ceramic part of the neighbour's chimney had fallen and was sitting on the windowsill. There was little damage and they lost virtually nothing.

Estelle Laugesen, in her 80s and with fifteen grandchildren and thirteen great grandchildren, describes the September earthquake "as something we will never forget. I would say everyone would say that, who experienced it". The hour that it occurred was a time when people were still in bed. She does, however, remember waking up and "all this shaking going on and all the crashing and banging I could hear but there was nothing I could do".

Legally Blind⁴

Susan Barnes was jolted awake by the quake on 4 September.

When I woke up being shaken, I first thought I was having a cataclysmic hypo. Then I thought, 'if it is not a hypo, then I can survive'...Then an image sprang into my mind... there was some out of

⁴ This account is Susan Barnes' story who was declared legally blind in 1984. It is with considerable regret and much sadness that it is necessary to record Susan's passing on 12 March 2014 after courageously battling major health issues over many years. Her story was recorded in October 2012.

control ship's furnace and it was the sound of my house moving that made me think of that... And then I thought 'this must be quite a big earthquake... this could be the end of the world', then 'if I am going to die, I am going to die in my own bed, thank you'... So I stayed in my bed. I heard a noise that I thought was Sam, but in the end it wasn't.

She put the radio on. Vicki McKay was the announcer and she looked on GeoNet and expected the epicentre of the quake to be in various places around Wellington. Susan was sceptical about Wellington being the location of the quake. She went out into the living room; the heat pump was going and Sam was standing up in his basket. Later she discovered only two things fell, the unopened phone bill that was on the back of the couch and a little pewter vase that had been on the window sill in the kitchen. The vase falling into the sink was the sharp metallic noise she had heard from the bedroom. Some doors had closed, but nothing was damaged. Susan got back into bed before 5 am and the power went off about that time. However, she was warm in bed and Sam was alright. Susan heard on the radio about the impact of the quake on Canterbury and Christchurch.

The first phone call came through about 5.35 am and it was someone who was phoning to find out if she was alright. She was worried about Susan's blood sugar levels (Susan had done a test when she got up and she always had some jelly beans next to her bed). Her sister rang, and then another blind person rang who was very unprepared for the quake – she had no water and no transistor radio. Susan thought, "Oh, you are a really bad advertisement for blind people!" She made some calls, but got more calls that she made. People called from Australia and from out of town. She was careful about how many cell phone calls she made because they were told not to overload the system.

Susan had not expected the aftershocks. "I was a bit surprised when they first started coming, but they were nothing compared with the whopper." She stayed in bed listening to the radio and remembered Stuart Keith playing 'Good Vibrations' early in the morning – it was the scheduled

song - but not very appropriate at that time. The Radio New Zealand announcers were wonderful - "they were very professional and matter of fact." At that stage, Susan was warm and comfortable; she had a transistor radio with batteries and she was not hungry. There was an element of unreality about it all.

Michelle Whitaker⁵ was alone with her son when the quake struck. Michelle always left the hall light on, and it never went out. "We must have been part of this tiny grid in South Brighton that didn't lose power". She is very grateful for this as she felt she would have been "freaked" with no power and being in the dark. They had a small puppy that was housed in the laundry, and on reaching her, found she had "shit herself". In between aftershocks, Michelle Whitaker cleaned up the laundry, and then they all cuddled up in the bedroom.

"I prayed, I prayed, I cried, I cried"

Roman is an Ethiopian refugee who has family in Christchurch, but lives alone. When she felt the shaking she opened the curtains. To her surprise she could not see anyone else outside. In Ethiopia if there is a major occurrence, like a big wind, everyone goes outside and talks about it. But here it was "quiet, no one, no light... I prayed, I prayed, I cried, I cried". After a while she went outside, but still there was no sign of anyone else. She went back to bed and slept.

Her sister and brother-in-law had been trying to ring Roman, but her cell phone was on silent and her landline was switched off. In the morning they went around and knocked on the window: 'Are you alright? Are you there? How can you sleep?' "My brother-in-law told me to turn on the TV. It was so horrible. In the English school you are taught about New Zealand and the volcanoes, but if you don't experience it, you don't get it, there is nothing like that at home".

⁵ Two people called Michelle were interviewed. One is only referred to as 'Michelle'. She lives in Central New Brighton. The other participant is Michelle Whitaker. She lives in South Brighton.

Pregnancy

Emily Adcock's⁶ partner wanted her to get under the bed but, five months pregnant, she could not fit. Her son and his friend were in the lounge, terrified because a mirror had fallen down and smashed. But there was little other damage.

Where is the earthquake located?

A number of participants initially thought that the earthquake must have been located somewhere else. Melissa Parsons thought: "Oh my goodness, if we are feeling it this bad here, what is happening in Wellington?" Jane Sutherland Norton also thought that "something big had happened in Wellington".

Some, like Diana Madgin, thought the Alpine Fault had ruptured. She stood under a doorway, coolly thinking "six hundred years is up". Susan Allen and others also thought it was the Alpine Fault. Chris Wilson agreed, but also took a broader view:

All that ran through my head was 'Where is the epicentre?' I immediately thought of Wellington or the Alpine Fault, never dreaming that it was Canterbury centred.

Liz Gordon said to her husband "that I thought that the earthquake, while big, was not the Alpine Fault going - the shaking did not last long enough. All that time as an MP studying earthquakes had paid off!"

Adele thought that the quake centre was on the West Coast of the South Island or in Wellington. However, "as the quake got bigger and bigger", Adele started to have irrational thoughts such as, "Is this the end of the world?"

6 There were two Emilys interviewed for this project. Emily who lives in Aranui is referred to as just as Emily. The other Emily, who currently lives in New Brighton, but moved out of Christchurch for a period after the quakes, is Emily Adcock.

Is it a tsunami – “Should you go, should you stay?”

Rebecca Gordon went outside and saw many neighbours standing around “in disbelief”. Lots of cars started going past, with people fleeing inland from the New Brighton coast in case of a tsunami. Her thoughts were: “should you go, should you stay?”

Leanne Everingham and her family did drive inland, to her mother’s house at Shirley, even though Leanne had some doubts about whether they should go. The roads were covered in liquefaction and potholes and she found it quite scary. She said:

An irony is that the name of our street, Chimera Crescent, comes I think from an old Greek word meaning two-headed dragon which comes up out of the sea, and a nearby street is called Atlantis Street. Both, in later earthquakes, were to be covered in water and liquefaction.

The whole family hopped into bed with Leanne’s mother until it got light.

Karen’s oldest daughter, who lived in a flat in Barbadoes Street, contacted her and said, “Aren’t you scared of a tsunami coming?” Karen “hadn’t even thought about tsunamis until that point and that completely freaked me out. I could hear cars going down the street so I knew that obviously other people had thought about the same thing and they were going”. Bundling her family together with “clothes, dressing gowns, whatever we had on” they drove off as aftershocks were still happening. “We jumped in the car, grabbed the dog, didn’t think about the cats, just left them, thinking, ‘they can look after themselves if a tsunami comes’, and got in the car”.

“There were just people driving everywhere. It was pitch black and some people had forgotten to put their headlights on so you were driving in the darkness and cars would just suddenly be there. It was just frightening”. Karen remembers driving through Linwood where “there was water everywhere so you were just driving through water and massive potholes”. She “didn’t even think to put the radio on

in the car because I didn't think that would go either. I don't know, I guess it was just shock".

In Linwood they noticed "a dog had been hit by a car and ... I can remember the blood and stuff like that so obviously the dog had freaked out as well and run on to the road". They made it to her daughter's flat, "but by the time we got there, there was no power again and it was pitch black over that way, and they were all sitting outside in the car listening to the radio". Inside the flat they "just sat there for quite a while and just didn't really know what to do. Somebody had a radio so we turned that on and listened to little bits and pieces coming on". After a couple of hours, her daughter's friend became "quite worried about her mum because her mum lived in South Brighton and she hadn't heard from her. She didn't want to go home or anything like that though and she was in a state of shock". Karen decided to return home "as it didn't sound as though there was going to be a tsunami".

The tsunami threat created big fear for residents near the sea. Rebecca and her partner heard their neighbour outside start his car. They called out to him and he yelled back that he was very concerned about a possible tsunami. Even though they lived a long way up the hill Rebecca said that his reaction demonstrated how rational he was at the time. She admired his coolness in being able to think about other possible outcomes of the earthquake. He couldn't get his car out of the driveway because a block wall had come down and sealed off the exit. His wife was overseas at the time, and he had two small children with him. He and his children, aged six and four, came into Rebecca's house. In retrospect, she saw this as being a positive decision because it took her mind off her immediate concern with herself and the earthquake. She read the children stories and they all snacked on biscuits until it was light enough outside to see the extent of the quake's damage and their relative safety in the continuing after-shocks. They had no power or water. She was very worried about the little girls without their mother as their father was traumatised; he wasn't coping at all.

Rose was one of those who began hearing cars going past and realised that they had to move to higher ground. However, when she tried to leave the house, they "couldn't get out of the front door. All my doors were jammed and I thought we were going to have to get out of the window and I think that really scared me that I was stuck and couldn't get out."

Another woman, Caroline, who lived in Brighton, got out of bed "and told myself 'you have 5 minutes'... I got Rico my dog and without stopping for a bag got in the car and tore off... I was gone". Wanting to get away from the sea, Caroline found herself driving in pitch black towards St Albans. With no street lights and familiar landmarks gone, it was disorientating.

I shot past QEII I reckon I was the first person out of Brighton... The road appeared to be wet then dry and wet then dry, so I slowed down thinking that if the road is slippery ... there might be power lines and I might get electrocuted".

Caroline may have been the first out, but she was by no means the only one to leave her home because of fears of tsunami.

Nicki, a single mother in New Brighton with a sick and autistic son, began to wonder if they were safe in the house. She thought about a tsunami. She found a candle and lit it. She didn't know the safest thing to do. After reassuring her son, Nicki finally went outside "and there were people everywhere". She managed to get her car out of the garage, but still didn't know what to do, as there were no phones working. Nicki threw stuff in a bag, especially the insulin for her son. She had trouble getting him into the car because there were broken things all over the floor and with his autism he couldn't cope with the change and the mess. She drove to a friend's house, but returned home once the threat of a tsunami has passed.

Alia Afzali, a refugee from Afghanistan, was already up when the earthquake struck, as it was Ramadan and she had to eat before the day started. She was walking through the house when the shaking started.

It was very scary and I had heard about tsunamis before. I thought it was something shaking our house, it was like a washing machine I had, big noise, but it (the house) was suddenly jumping and I fell down, and my children, I shouted them to get off their bed and my son yelled 'come to the yard, Mum we don't want to die'. The power went out. It was a really hard time for me and I was really confused where I go, what I do, because another daughter and son lived separately.

I thought we are near the beach in New Brighton and I wanted to save my children from the water. I thought there may be another earthquake that came from the sea.

At around 5a.m. Alia left her Bromley home with her children and went into the city, and then the whole family decided to go to the Cashmere hills. They stayed there all day along with other Afghani families, returning late afternoon.

Some other participants also braved the roads to go and make contact with family members. The rest were divided between those who stayed in bed and those who hustled into hallways, kitchens, gardens and elsewhere to escape the shaking. With no children at home that night, Nippy did not feel the earthquake that strongly and "just slept through it really. Mum rang. Stop ringing, Mum. Daughter rang – she was chucked out of bed".

The flight response

Woken from sleep, one group of participants stayed in bed and let the earthquake happen, while another group leapt out of bed and sought shelter. Apart from some cases where there was a need to reach scared children, it is not clear why people reacted as they did. This section examines those who evacuated their beds quickly, while the next looks at other responses.

Letitia Meadows was out of bed almost before she was awake:

I remember waking up and [partner] trying to stuff me down the side of the bed, which was a bit of a futile effort! We crouched down on our hands and knees on the other side of the bed waiting for the shaking to subside.

Lianne Dalziel and her partner got out of bed and:

... didn't aim for the doorway or anything. I just wanted to get out of the house. Now I know that breaks all the rules... The power went off as we went down the stairs. I got out of bed - we were being tossed around. We got out - we were tossed down the stairs.

As they got to the front door the shaking stopped. "We were standing at the front door, naked, and we went outside".

Salma and her partner also ran down some stairs, getting bruised on the way as the house rocked, and ended up outside.

Deborah McCormack and her partner were awake, talking, and jumped out of bed and under a table:

In retrospect this was an unwise thing to do; we ran past many pieces of furniture that could have landed on us and we would have been just as safe in bed. My partner ran after me. His only concern was that he was naked and that if we unfortunate enough to be crushed, he would be found with no clothes on!

Staying in bed

The current advice given to those in bed when an earthquake occurs is to stay there. Given the number of bruises and injuries caused by those who left their beds in the September quake, this seems like generally good advice. Helen Heddell recalled:

We'd had a good old party and we'd come back home in the early hours of the morning to feed 23 pet lambs, which we finished at about half past two in the morning. So when the earthquake struck, we didn't really want to know about it. So we just lay in

bed and to me it felt like being in an old-fashioned wooden beer crate on rollers...

Helen McCaul said that she and her partner did not jump out of bed but lay there reassuring each other that it would be over soon. Teruyo and her husband covered themselves with the duvet and lay there, panicking. Susan Hird and partner were in bed and just stayed there, figuring it was as safe a place as anywhere else. By the time Rosemary Baird realised it was “a big one”, it was over and she was still in bed.

Alana Harvey stayed in bed. Her daughter had joined her there earlier, so they just stayed together. Tufuga thought she was having a dream and could feel herself rocking....Her doorbell rung as her neighbours came to check on her, and as she got up she hurt herself.

Susan Allen had woken just before the earthquake, and remained “frozen in bed”. Her husband did not wake up, and she had to wake him. Tracey Shewan remembers waking up just moments before the earthquake and with little energy, because she had been sick all the previous day, remained in bed throughout. Nicky Wagner stayed in bed while her husband leapt up to try and stop things falling.

Like many others, Fiona, who lives in Avondale, was awakened by the quake and wondered what was happening. “Well, we were all in bed and when it hit – it was the noise - I couldn’t understand what the noise was and I actually couldn’t understand what the movement was... It never even occurred to me, I never consciously thought “earthquake.”” It never occurred to Fiona to stand in a doorway.

Fiona had no power; they were in darkness and were not at all prepared for an earthquake. They decided they needed to get a torch from the kitchen. Not thinking about broken glass, Fiona stepped into the kitchen barefoot. She stood on a glass which had fallen down in the shakes, but fortunately hadn’t broken. They grabbed the torch and some candles and then all went back to the bedroom.

Jane Higgins and her husband, Paul, woke up and shot under the bed; they initially didn’t really click that it was as big as it turned out to be. Jane recalled that when it stopped they went outside and everything was completely

dark; neighbours were wandering around, but everyone seemed to be okay. Once they had contacted everyone in the immediate family and realised they were okay, with the power still out, they went back to bed.

Standing in doorways

Standard advice given to New Zealanders in earthquakes used to be to stand in doorways. The extra framing was expected to provide protection. This advice is now no longer given, especially since many people were hurt in doorways in the February 2011 earthquake. But it was advice that many of the participants followed in the September quake. Rosemary Du Plessis got out of bed:

The bed rocked and the floor seemed to come up towards me as I got to my feet. I rushed to the doorway of my flatmate's bedroom and called out to her. She joined me in the doorway and we wrapped our arms around one another as the brick-faced, wood framed house swayed in the dark.

Wendy Hawke and her husband also dashed to the doorway, "as we had been taught to do", as did Guine Newport and her partner. Marie's husband "bellowed" at her from the doorway, and she got out of bed and joined him there. Helen Gibson and her family "'stood under doorways most of the time" during the first few hours.

Leanne Everingham ran to the doorway shouting "earthquake" and calling to her children to get under doorways. Melissa Parsons did not feel the need to get under a doorframe, as she trusted their recently built house to remain standing.

Anne, Kirsty, Clare (plus new baby), Carol Hides, Kath Graham and others took refuge in their doorways, with or without children, and often with household items falling on the floor around them. Rebecca and her partner leapt out of bed and she screamed at him to get under the doorway, which they both did. She remembers crying out loud and being "so terrified".

Dee Turner, a pensioner living in Christchurch City Council housing in Sumner, recalls being in bed when the 4th September quake struck. She had a tallboy with a TV on it close to her bed. "Suddenly this fell off and the room started rocking. All my glasses were on a shelf and they all fell down." Dee got out of bed and stood in the door frame watching everything falling around her - "I think in shock".

Treena, a young single parent, was asleep, with her son in the next room. After she had gotten over her initial shock and the realisation that this was an earthquake, her first thought was for her son. Treena crawled to the next room to discover, to her surprise, that her son was still asleep in his bed. Not knowing what to do next, she dialled 111. She spoke to a police woman who told her to remain calm, grab a torch or some kind of light, and shelter under a doorway with her son until it was light.

Freda was on the toilet when the quake struck. "I got up to go to the toilet and I was sitting there, but I recognised quite quickly what was happening... At first I thought it was a plane overhead... Then I realised that it was an earthquake". She stayed calm and walked out of the toilet and stood in the doorway. "Then the big bang came and all the lights went off".

Saving the children

Many of the women interviewed had children or other dependents in their home, and leapt out of bed to their rescue when they felt the earthquake. June Allwright:

... dived out of bed to pull the youngest two out of bed to stand in the doorway, it seemed like forever, our youngest son and the next son were sandwiched between us till he said, 'Mum can you let go now as the shaking has stopped'.

Emma Butler was alone with her children. She ran into their room and said "get in the doorway". Belinda Grant and her partner had two children and a Thai student in their house. They grabbed the children and stood in a doorway, joined immediately by the Thai student. "J ran to get the torch and

came back with the iron. We were just in shock and did very crazy things. The kids were so frightened and had the tremors, shaking for an hour. We all got into our big bed, including the Thai student, and tried to contact family”.

Jane Sutherland-Norton was woken by the bed shaking and wondered if her partner, as he was known to do, was playing some sort of trick, but then she realised "that this was something more serious." She screamed to him to grab the children and they all huddled under a doorway. The lights went out and they listened to things crashing around them. "It seemed to go on for a long period of time."

When the earthquake hit, Zara immediately ran to her son's room. "He was one and half years old. I knew that my husband would go to my daughter. I ran to the doorway with my son. I was yelling, 'Where do we go?' And I was thinking 'void space, void space', and looking around the room and there was nowhere to go”.

Kathryn O’Connell Sutherland was sleeping downstairs and had to run up “the moving stairs in the dark” to reach her daughters. While Shelley Harford ‘leapt’ out of bed to reach her 10 month old son, but couldn’t reach him because furniture had toppled. Her partner reached the boy and dived under the bed with him. The baby did not wake up and they all stayed under the bed for two hours, listening to the radio.

One of Kirsten Rennie’s children was terrified and would not leave his mother’s side, even to go to the toilet. The inevitable happened, which is now a family in-joke.

Rosie Laing's son could not get out of his bedroom because of an obstruction against his door so she stood at the doorway and talked to him in the dark. "You stay in bed. You are against this great huge wall that has been there for 130 years and you are in the safest place in the house, so stay there." She recalls her calmness and doing what she believed was the best thing, which she puts down to both her personality and her training.

Those with young children barely had time to be fearful for themselves, as they collected up their children and made them as safe as possible.

For Gillian Laing, this was the most frightening earthquake as it was so unexpected and she knew that her sister-in-law and children were up in Arthur's Pass. "When the earthquake happened I automatically assumed that it must be up in Arthur's Pass and assumed the worst for them. I never dreamt in a million years that we were actually in the worst possible spot and actually they were OK".

Nellie and her three children were all at home asleep in their rented home in Waltham when the earthquake struck:

My son was in bed with me... I got a fright... I woke him up and he said, 'what are you doing woman?' and I said, 'earthquake son, get up' and he said, 'Mum I am still in my undies...let me go back to sleep'. I said, 'No you can't do that'. I could only hear the children's voices as everything was pitch black. The children did not know what it was. 'What is that?' they asked as they came into my bedroom. But I wanted to get them outside quickly. Not realising that the chimney had been damaged, I took them right out under it!

It was the school holidays the night of the quake. Adele Kelly, who lived in a Housing New Zealand house in Avonside with her four sons, was sleeping in the living room on mattresses with her boys after they had watched a movie together. When the earthquake started, Adele was woken, startled. "Even though I knew it was an earthquake, and that the Cathedral had lost its spire during a past quake, I never thought Christchurch was a city for quakes".

"The children screamed, it was terrifying, the TV fell down and smashed and it seemed like a long time from the beginning... The younger ones had no idea what it was."

The street lights went out and "it was pitch black", so Adele used her cigarette lighter to shine on the front door. When she opened it, she saw her neighbour with a torch shining. "All the lampposts were on a lean. It was like a disaster zone". Adele went back inside and lit a candle to enable her to find a torch.

She got the children into her bed after making sure there was nothing to fall on them. "We lay under the blankets

for several hours as the aftershocks occurred". The aftershocks were unnerving as "you never knew how big they were going to be". Adele kept reassuring the children that "if the house was going to fall down, it would have fallen down by now". As she cuddled them, she could feel their hearts racing.

Adele listened to the radio talk back. When it got a bit lighter at 6.30a.m., they looked outside at the back yard. Adele thought that "the river must have come down the street, as there was all this dirty sand stuff, in the yard", but then she noticed that the ground itself was not that wet, but there were "all these little holes, a huge big crack in the yard, and liquefaction everywhere and out on the road. I thought 'where has this all come from?' because I did not know anything about liquefaction".

Then they left and Adele risked driving on the roads to visit her grandmother in Linwood... "I assumed the whole city was like Avonside, but once I got past Eastgate it all looked quite normal... no cracks, no liquefaction".

Shaking houses

Many houses danced on their foundations during the September earthquake. The severity of the shaking, and what it felt like, varied tremendously.

Katherine Ewer said her house was weatherboard and "situated on a slope so it was moving all over the place and it was really loud".

Archana Tandon had woken up when her partner went to the toilet. She thought she heard someone knocking on her door, and sat up. Things started toppling over the TV in the bedroom, and an ironing board. They live in a wooden framed, plaster/brick clad, two storey house with a double entranceway with two large pillars - and it was really moving. They started to hold on and chant. The front door had opened by itself, and they ran straight down the stairs and outside. Then they remembered they had a student staying with them downstairs. She was under her bed. They grabbed her and ran back out on the street. They could see their house

swaying. They had "cold bare feet, standing in our nightdresses on the street."

Zara and her family were occupying one of the first houses in Christchurch to be made uninhabitable by the earthquakes. Once they had grabbed their children, Zara realised there was nowhere to go: "The chimney smashed outside. The rimu floor split apart. Then we hunkered down under the table. The aftershocks were unreal and I wondered if it was real that the earth was undulating under us". This turned out to be the last night that her family ever slept in their lovely home in River Road.

Rosie Laing's home was also "totalled" on 4th September. She had bought the house twenty years earlier, loved the community of Lyttelton, and had decided that was where she most wanted to live. It was "quite a quirky old house that was the Quarryman's cottage", built sometime in the 1870s, and had been added to "so it has grown in organic fashion". It was "the only house I have ever owned and I loved it and always intended I would be carried out of there in a box kicking and trying to get the lid off - it always felt like the right place to be".

Guine Newport has a library of books next to her bed and they all fell on her during the quake. "The books fell and the mirror fell on my hand, and I was cut." Guine also fell on the floor and injured her leg. But she did not pay attention to that at the time, she was just thinking about the cut on her hand.

Jasmine was asleep on the floor of her prison cell at 4.37 am. Woken by the quake, she sat up and "rolled a cigarette, I am actually really glad that smoking was permitted then and that I was on medication or I don't think I would have coped otherwise". Jasmine was nervous and she worried as to "how long she would be stuck in the cell". Her anxiety was exacerbated by being unable to get out of the cell. She worried that another quake might strike and, being in Rolleston, near the epicentre, it "felt quite large".

September shaking

Many participants were nervous and fearful, at least initially, and as numerous aftershocks rocked through their homes. Some fled in their cars, but most stayed put.

Petra van Asten literally lost her voice from fear:

I've never been so scared in my whole life as during the September quake. Although I had never experienced one before, I knew, the moment I woke up to it, we were hit by an earthquake. I will never forget the sound of it. I tried to get [partner] out of bed. But because of fear I'd lost my voice.

Rebecca was pregnant, and puts her 'extreme' terror at the earthquake down to that. She believed that they were going to die and she would never get to meet her unborn child. She judged herself to be bordering on hysteria.

Diana Madgin said that while she had been fearful at times in her life, she was not afraid the night of the earthquake. Those with children and other responsibilities did not have time to be frightened.

Dame Grace Hollander, asleep in her unit at the Kate Sheppard Retirement complex, was not scared:

We were all just in our own homes and it really wasn't a terrible happening. Alright, it was a very big shake but it settled down again. The worst part about it was that we had no power or water or sewerage and that took some putting up with.... Although...the rest home had to be evacuated and a lot of the villas were damaged, our little street with about a dozen villas in it was perfectly all right. There wasn't anything wrong with any of our houses...we were quite safe apart from the [lack of utilities] but what happened was we were all friends and we all helped one another...everybody helped one another...it was a real community spirit and it was just wonderful.

Tinks, who lives in Waltham with her grandson, doesn't recall much damage: "to be honest with you, the first earthquake didn't affect me - they don't frighten me. I am a very

fatalistic type of person - what's gonna be, is gonna be, so there is nothing that you can do about it. I can't say I liked it. I didn't like it but it didn't frighten me. I just look up to the heavens and say 'if you're gonna take me you're gonna take me. There is nothing I can do about it'.

As this earthquake occurred early morning Rebecca and her husband were in bed asleep. She woke and realizing what was happening roused her husband who initially was very disorientated. They leapt out of bed and she screamed at him to get under the doorway which they both did. She remembers crying out loud and being so terrified.

Earthquakes – “interesting and enjoyable!”.

A small number of women found the earthquake interesting and enjoyable. Raewyn Crowther reflected, "Those who experienced it will never forget it". She heard the quake coming, felt the first jolt, and woke her husband. They both "kind of enjoy them" so she was keen for him to experience it - a habit formed from living in Wellington. It didn't take long to realise that this was a big one. "I couldn't get out of bed. I kept being thrown back, like in a bouncy castle". The house just screamed.

Raewyn Dawson thought the front end of her house had collapsed yet at no time did it occur to her that her life might be in danger. She felt more excited than frightened, "which is bizarre really as I should have been scared out of my wits".

Ella, a student at Avonside Girls' High School, was at her friend's birthday party and still awake. She was not scared. Because of the birthday setting, "it was kind of enjoyable, like all of my best friends hiding under a table and eating chocolate and barbeque for breakfast. We didn't realise how severe it was until I went back home... so yeah I didn't have too bad an experience".

Annikke remembers that after September she felt incredibly good about the earthquakes. She felt privileged. When she and Lorraine lay in bed during the rocking, she would think, "Oh my God, here is another one, here is the

earth just doing its thing!" She thought it was extremely beautiful. It felt like being rocked in a cradle, especially when it happened upstairs in their house. After all, at that point, no one had died.

A dark night

Most people lost power for at least a short time after the September earthquake. Raewyn Dawson felt the need for a hot drink after the big quake and although she initially felt a sense of excitement she later felt nauseated and in shock. But as she was filling the kettle, the power went off.

Liz Gordon commented as the shake was still happening that "power is still on", and that second the power went off. With her husband dependent on oxygen and alarms screaming at her, Liz had to get up and go outside to find some portable oxygen bottles. With the power off, a bright sky full of stars greeted her.

Jenny Harris and her family were left without power, water or telephone as a result of the earthquake. They were told to evacuate to a welfare centre, which they found noisy, smelly and overcrowded. Noodle the dog was not allowed in there. So they went back home.

Radio waves

June Allwright and her family found a torch, got together mattresses, pillows and blankets and spent the rest of the night in the hallway until it got lighter. They could hear running water in the street. Kirsty was also able to find a torch, radio and batteries, as her house had instantly lost power and phone. Like others, Helen Gibson spent most of the day without water or power.

Helene Mautner and her partner got into the car so they could listen to the radio, as did Deborah McCormack and her partner: "While listening to the National programme the size and scale of the quake became apparent."

Myra Kunowski was pleased she had a radio and a torch beside her bed when the power went off, as she heard that aftershocks could be expected.

Lianne Dalziel and her partner found themselves outside the front door with no power:

It didn't feel totally dark outside - it did inside - which means that the stars were out. We went back in and I made [partner] go back upstairs and get the transistor radio and torch, and he got blankets so we could lay down in the lounge. We switched National Radio on. I remember just before the 5 o'clock news they played a song - was it Good Vibrations? - it was one of those songs - All Shook Up... and the announcer had already said there had been a big earthquake down in Christchurch but he hadn't clicked about the song, and about halfway through he said that this might not be the most appropriate song.

The most useful item Chris Wilson identified at this time was a small transistor radio. "We listened to the National Programme in an effort to find out what had happened and the extent of any damage". Belinda Grant said that listening to the radio was reassuring. Allie McMillan turned on the National Programme to hear Vicki McKay and her soothing words. Rosemary Du Plessis thought "the announcer on the National Programme was brilliant - very focused and informative about the quake".

At Lynne Smith's house a torch and transistor radio were quickly located and she found the national programme a calming voice of reason. She felt connected to what was happening elsewhere in Canterbury and knew that this event was enormous.

Zara was under the table with her family as her house was destroyed around her. "We had a radio, and the chirpy announcer on National Radio said, 'Oh we have had a message from a little old lady from Christchurch and there has been an earthquake and she is under a table. Don't light any candles and we will just play another tune'. It was interesting and it was revealed on the National Radio what

was going on and the magnitude of it. At that moment I realised that we were part of New Zealand history."

As neither Estelle Laugesen's radio nor phone was working due to the power outage, she was left wondering what to do. After a while she decided to get up and get her battery radio and a torch. She recalled "the minute I opened the door, and put my foot down, there was glass under it, so I was frightened to do anything. And, I thought, 'What do I do?' and so I went back and I lay in bed thinking, 'What can I do?' I don't want to cut my feet and I didn't know how much had fallen out".

"All our neighbours began to come out in to the street"

The stories of the earthquakes display many examples of the comfort and kindness of neighbours and sometimes strangers.

When Peggy Kelly and her partner opened their front door, they were greeted by their neighbour's chimney on the porch. As it was still dark, "all our neighbours began to come out in to the street and people found ways of warming water to make a drink and comfort each other".

Wendy Hawke and her partner "... got a torch and went outside. And there were other neighbours outside with torches, so they were OK."

Diana Madgin's neighbours arrived in their dressing gowns. She lit up her old charcoal barbeque and found a whistling kettle that her mother had used in the 1950s. She "rose to the challenge; she set to work making tea and breakfast. Neighbours used their camp cookers and barbecues".

Anna Mowat recalls that her neighbours came to check on them:

Their neighbour's chimney had fallen, and broken their fence. Helicopters started circling above. They heard that the tunnel was closed. It was an odd, strangely surreal time.

Jacqueline could not get out of her house, as the door was jammed. A neighbour was outside calling to her, so she

asked her neighbour to push the door hard to open it. They had a chat; the neighbour had a reasonable amount of liquefaction, but Jacqueline only had liquefaction by her garage.

Brigid Buckenham recalls that “in the early morning the footpaths were dotted with clusters of neighbours talking amongst themselves. People were wrapped in duvets and sleeping bags”

In Anne’s case, it wasn’t until a neighbour knocked on the door of her house in Avonside Drive that they realised the full extent of the damage to her property. The neighbour’s house, along with many others along Avonside Drive, was in the same damaged situation, which is why he was checking up on them. They couldn’t get out the back door, and had to go out a different way through another door. But then - Anne feels it must have been shock setting in - she decided to go back to bed, thinking it was too early to ring family at that time of day! They still had one working landline, so listened to radio coverage and rang around family from 7am onwards. Her mother was terrified, but was being well looked after by staff at Windsor House, so Anne felt she didn’t have to worry about her. Other family members were OK, but didn’t believe her when she said that the house had broken in half.

The family had breakfast, and then Anne was straightaway on the phone to EQC and their insurers, to make sure that a claim was lodged! Anne’s husband then got busy helping in the community, but Anne decided her role must be to support the younger family members. They went for a look around the area, and saw evidence of liquefaction everywhere, but none on their property. They bought extra food supplies from Wainoni Pak ‘n Save which was still open, but things were disappearing really quickly off the shelves and people were panicking. Anne felt no panic, as she had maintained an emergency kit for the last 30 years, but just wanted a top up, as she didn’t know how long this crisis would go on for. Later on that afternoon, family members visited, and could see for themselves the extent of the

damage, and that Anne had not exaggerated. Their advice was that the family should leave.

Irene's neighbour Eric, from over the back, had a little battery radio that Meridian Energy had given out to people who were clients with Meridian. He shared his radio after the quake. "Those that had extra shared: 'Would you like my radio?', 'Can I help you with a phone?', 'I know where there's water - the water truck's on such and such.'" Eric told her at first what he heard on the radio and then he realised he had a spare radio. "Would you like my radio?" "Yes! We don't know what's happening, we're in a bubble!" Irene and her family could see all the planes going over. They could hear the police, the ambulance. It was very good to have a working radio to listen to and know what was going on and where to go for things. They avoided using their car where possible as they only had a quarter of a tank of petrol when the earthquake happened.

Mary then heard a knock at the door. "I thought, 'Who in the world would be visiting me in this dark morning?'" She thought, "'This is impossible. I've got no clothes ... and no eyes and no ears. And actually I didn't even know where my bottom teeth were. I've got my top teeth in my head, but not my bottom teeth. I thought 'Oh this is terrible'. Anyhow I opened the door, didn't have a torch. All these things I was unprepared for of course ... It was my neighbour, a lady about 40 years old, at the door. She says 'Come on Mary, come to my place. Where are your gumboots? The liquefaction is very thick along your driveway.'" Of course, Mary's gumboots were in the garage which she could not get to. She has now learnt the lesson to have her gumboots ready, especially as the weather is so changeable.

Mary waded through the liquefaction and silt to her neighbour's house. The neighbour was upset she couldn't offer Mary a cup of tea. She only had a torch and the electricity did not come on for some hours. She stayed there until daylight and then they returned to Mary's home. Together they picked up broken glass and crockery and put it in the garbage (which meant Mary later on couldn't claim

insurance on these items). They also found Mary's hearing aids and glasses. "Once I found those two things I was happy ... I could hear and see."

Freda explained "Then neighbours came from everywhere to see if I was alright because they know I'm a bit crippled up and I have only one eye. My neighbour from across the road here came over with a flask of boiling water... and my neighbours from next door brought boiling water when they came in. A young married couple came in at about six o'clock in the morning and bought my breakfast over for me, which I thought was lovely". As she remembers it, "I didn't even feel scared of the first one. At a quarter past nine in the morning the little boy who regularly delivers her medications dropped round to see how she was. "I said to him that I was fine".

"I had about seven offers of beds that first night... but I stayed here. I eventually moved into the small bedroom. My big queen-sized bed in the main bedroom rocked with each quake, whereas the little single bed was stable. And I'm still there!"

Treena's neighbour arrived: "She came over, she was just holding this basket and she was like right, get your son, get some old shoes, come outside, quick, quick, come on". Treena grabbed her son's pram, put on some old shoes and went outside. At this time she was not aware of what it was like outside, and of the damage the earthquake had done. Her only experience had been the rumbling she had felt and heard inside. Outside, Treena was knee deep in sewage and she could see that her house was on a massive lean. This was at about five in the morning. Around her "all I [could] see [was] chaos: there [were] cars trying to go everywhere, cars falling, beeping, yelling, screaming.... sirens, alarms, everything".

As Treena and her neighbour stood on the footpath discussing what to do next, a young man driving a big truck offered to give Treena and William a ride out of Kaiapoi. Treena put the pram on the back of the truck with food, blanket and nappies and got in and "just fled", to her brother's house.

Irene and her husband had a good friend, Gareth, who used to do metal polishing, who lives at the other end of the street, and after her husband's death he took it upon himself to keep a close eye on them. Within half an hour of the September quake, he was at Irene's back door to see how they were. He stayed ten minutes or so and then went across to friends' place across the road to check on them. Then Irene thought about their blind and elderly neighbour, Noel.

After the earthquake

There was not too much damage in Nippy's house in Aranui. There were "broken glasses, but no pictures fell down". She was not aware that the drain behind her dishwasher had broken, causing the floor to rot. An EQC assessor finally arrived to do an assessment just two weeks before the February earthquake.

Gina's rental accommodation near the AMI Stadium also appeared to have little damage, and she spent her time out and about helping her neighbours. She did notice some signs of damage later: "We noticed bugs were coming up from under the house. And we noticed damp coming up the wall. I reckon the sewer main was cracked".

After returning from her day spent on the hills, Alia was not comfortable with all the aftershocks:

It was very scary especially for me. My youngest daughter was very scared but especially for me as I thought I am very unlucky. When I was born and grew up it was the Mujahedeen war in Afghanistan and in Kabul - I had a hard life with the war. I really was under pressure, you know. It was a very hard time just for me and my youngest daughter also - she worried like me.

She slept at her married daughter's house for a week, as it was away from the beach, and during the day went back to clean up all the broken items. There was a small amount of liquefaction around the Bromley area but everything was "okay" except for one week without power and no running water for three days.

Helen King in Avonhead felt lucky as she did not lose power or water during the September quake. Family members came around and used the shower and took water. She feels that she lives in a 'safe' area: "It is quite a safe house - or well it has been, so far".

Estelle's home, also in Avonhead, was damaged in the September quakes but she "kept thinking how lucky I was. There was nothing greatly damaged, but oh the cracks that appeared in the walls, and things like that were frightening, especially when I saw one of my ceilings had two large cracks right across it. The others all had cracks in them so it was more than I realised. I kept saying 'oh aren't I lucky there is nothing much damaged'. But then the family came in and said, what about that and what about this?' There was quite a bit of damage, really".

Christine, who lived in Bexley at the time of this quake, explained that the liquefaction, house damage and community damage were a sign of things to come. The area was covered in liquefaction and flooding. Christine did put on her gumboots at one point and wade out to have a look around at how things were. The Bexley Road garage was a great source of amazement, because the tank had been empty and the force of the quake had pushed it up out of the ground. But the power came on within a few hours and the New Zealand Army came and cleaned up the liquefaction. Christine's house was checked and seemed OK.

Nicki was fortunate that her property in New Brighton had little damage once the mess was cleaned up. She had power and water fairly quickly and no liquefaction. Her son's school was open. But he was very disturbed by all the aftershocks and couldn't understand why the floor was moving. He would get very upset, especially at night; his sleeping was very disturbed and Nicki was up sometimes between six and twelve times a night to try and settle him.

Communication

The first communications, barring the odd neighbour, that occurred after the earthquake were telephone calls. For those

who lost power, many found that their landline telephones did not work because modern handsets require power.

Susan Allen remembered she checked with her children using the cell phone, because she had no electricity and couldn't use her land line. June Allwright found a "novelty Coke cup phone" and was able to make calls on that.

Others dug out old plug-in phones and spoke with friends and family in other parts of the country or overseas. Some got more information from family in the UK or USA than they were able to get directly, for Lynne Smith "a close friend in London who could see images of what was happening on the internet". Susan Allen's son was able to tell her that the earthquake was 30 kilometres west of Christchurch.

Helene Mautner found, once she got her power back on, that many friends had written emails enquiring about her welfare, especially from overseas. "This was the first time I had ever been involved in a natural disaster and it was reassuring and wonderful to see how people contacted each other and networks of friends checked on each other".

In the early hours of 4 September Jennie was awoken by the earthquake. The first priority was making sure her family and neighbours were safe and contacting her son who lives in the CBD. Her main concern was the funeral that she was looking after that Saturday morning. It was a large service.

She and the family had spent a lot of time setting up the chapel with pictures, personal items, and testing a video the day before. Communication was difficult and Jennie kept being cut off when she tried to liaise with the family by cell phone. But as time went by, and the severity of the quake became clear, the family decided to call off the funeral.

While still in the dark, Liz Nichol's whole family texted each other. This became pretty standard for all the earthquakes and aftershocks: "We [the family] are very dependent on texting. The texting was a life saver mentally, just to know how everyone was."

Surveying the damage

As it got light, people started venturing out from their beds, cars, doorways or tables, wherever they had taken cover, to view the post-earthquake landscape in the spring sunshine. Even before that, city dweller Nicky Wagner MP was concerned about the Arts Centre, and decided to go down and have a look at it. She drove down Victoria Street; the front of some buildings had fallen down and were lying on the street so she couldn't go down there. So she went down Park Terrace, it was pitch black because the street lights were out. The Arts Centre seemed OK, but she couldn't see a lot.

Joy Brownie felt a strong need to leave the city. After ensuring her neighbours were safe, Joy fled in her car to her friend at Prebbleton, and arrived there shaking. "I was very, very traumatised". Then, having arrived safely, she said:

I have got to go back, I have got to go back'. 'Why?' her friend asked. 'For my jewellery. Let me go, let me go.

She drove back into the city, and her home was a sorrowful sight. "One corner had sunk and the mounds that were there when I first left were like mountains with liquefaction shooting out the top like a volcano. It was devastating to see it like that". Jewellery retrieved, she went to her daughter's nearby home. The next day it was confirmed her unit was unsafe and it was boarded up.

Salma had an interesting encounter shortly after the earthquake, as she waited outside for her husband:

...this van appeared which was the driver of The Presshe stuck his hand out of the van and sort of put this newspaper out, this was all in silence and darkness and I was holding onto the paper and he wouldn't let it go and he said to me the Sockburn substation was on fire and the earth (was)...moving...and he said that I was the first person he had seen since the heaven was on fire.

Lianne Dalziel had no way to make even a cup of coffee. Once it was light she decided to go out and see how things were. In Bexley, the streets were flooded and the huge

underground tank at the petrol station had been pushed up. There were cracks all down Queenspark Drive. Out at Brooklands all the utilities had popped up out of the ground. Lianne spotted that the Volunteer Brooklands Fire Brigade members were drinking coffee, so she stopped and they gave her a cup.

Liz Gordon saw that most of the chimneys in her streets were cracked or fallen, and felt pleased that her chimney had been removed previously. She made herself useful:

At 8am I fired up the BBQ and made coffee. I live in a poor area and thought that my neighbours would not be having hot drinks. I managed to find five thermos flasks and set off around the neighbourhood delivering hot water. People were grateful!

Raewyn Dawson was also involved in her area, working with community groups and supporting the police through her church.

Myra Kunowski got back into bed to keep warm and listen to the radio. When daylight arrived:

I went into the living room and found a shambles as a very large bookcase on an east-west wall had fallen over. CDs and books were all over the floor and broken lamps and furniture were shoved to the north end of the room. I was amazed I had not heard the noise it must have caused. Yet cabinets in the living room and kitchen on north-south facing walls full of glassware and crockery were all still intact.

Myra then found that her chimney had to come down and her hot water cylinder was leaking and had to be replaced. She considers herself "fortunate".

For the first night with no power, Lynne slept downstairs on a mattress with a torch and transistor. After that "I went back upstairs to sleep. I thought that if the worst happens, it would be better to come down from above than be underneath it". If something happened she felt that she would stay up there and not attempt to go down the stairs.

"There was a mess to clean up. There was water everywhere as the header tank had come through the bathroom ceiling and water had flowed downstairs. Toilets had also overflowed. There were many breakages, but not major items in this quake". Lynne stayed at home for at least a week before going out to a friend's place to have a shower.

Laine Barker had not had an emergency kit, but put one together after the earthquake. She considers the September event was "a warm up for the February quake".

Rebecca Macfie thinks 4 September was an eye opener for people to "get ready", although she still "didn't really prepare to the extent that she should have done". She thinks this was because the power had come back on and the water flowed and so there was room for complacency.

Carol Hides went to check on her business, and found the building smashed. She went inside to retrieve some things (a beautiful and loved vase was among the shattered ruins). The landlord was there:

He (landlord) got upset with the stress I guess ... I just dissolved. I went into the corner. I realised my business dream had gone - everything I'd worked for - that whole scenario, that beautiful building - because it was old - I'm passionate about Christchurch, its heritage, its buildings - I was finally in a building I loved - in line with my beliefs, and my roots here - it fitted with everything. And having to walk out and leave that because I'm a realist. I knew it was finished. I just dissolved. Matthew came up behind me. He was lovely. I don't know what he said.

Among those most affected were farming families, so Helen Heddell was kept busy. The earthquake caused major disruption in the rural community, with huge cracks across the land and damage to infrastructure like silos and milking sheds.

Helen knew many of the affected families and, with others, quickly got involved, offering support, providing practical help like ensuring electricity generators were working, and keeping in touch. She was perturbed though,

that some did not take the situation seriously. "There were such funny scenes that went on... those cracks in the ground; they let children climb up and down them ... absolutely daft things that really you just thought, 'Come on guys. This isn't the way to handle a natural disaster.'"

Kaiapoi was badly affected and Helen went to one of the welfare centres in the town on a couple of days and offered to help. But she was rebuffed, turned away, she says, for reasons like privacy protection. She describes this attitude as too precious. "You just think 'Stuff it all.' Leave them to it, if they don't know how to channel [offers of help or] give you something to do."

As it was in the dark and things were crashing about, Johanna thought it was sensible to stay in bed for another half hour. Once up, as there was still electricity and the lights were on so it was possible to see everything broken and plants tipped over in the living room. The villa was not damaged but there was no water. As the cafe was closed and other villas were badly broken, it was possible to make cups of tea for friends and others in her villa. There wasn't much liquefaction but big machines came and noisily cleared pumped away the water.

Evacuation

After the September quake Jasmine and other prisoners at Christchurch Women's were either "stuck in their cell or in the yard" for safety reasons. They were given drinking water, and buckets for toilet use which were changed a couple of times a day, due to the water shortage. Food was delivered from the kitchen with the help of a back-up generator.

A couple of days after the quake, the "whole jail was shipped up to Auckland" because of the power and water failure at the prison. In preparation for the shift the prisoners were asked to hand over their "smokes and lighters" and told to pack a change of clothes and toothbrushes. Some of the prisoners were put into a New Zealand Army Hercules, but others had to travel in a small plane. They arrived in

Auckland late at night, and were strip-searched and given a medical, before being given a meal.

Jasmine was put into a cell which she had to share with another woman. Toilet flushes per day were limited to five times each. However there was a shower in the room. Once at Auckland Women's, they were able to use the telephone to call family. However, there were problems with the lines being overloaded, and calls were unsuccessful. "It was quite horrible not being able to get hold of your family to see if they were OK".

Jasmine spent a week in the prison before being returned, along with the rest of the women in her wing, to Christchurch. One reason for the return was that some of them had court appearances and the water had been restored to their wing of the prison. Jasmine had some smokes left in her room and a lighter. "It would have been a lot worse if we had not been able to smoke, as we were able to calm ourselves down a bit".

Although being evacuated to Auckland meant that she missed the severe aftershocks straight after the September quake, there were still times, on her return to Christchurch, that "the ground felt as if it was rolling" with the movement. Jasmine remembers holding onto other women at times and "wondering when they [the rolling aftershocks] were going to stop".

Wedding Day

September 4, 2010 was Katherine Ewer's wedding day. Both the church she was supposed to be married in, and the hall where the reception was to be held, were badly damaged. However, they decided to go ahead with the wedding in the church grounds. The vicar organised people to come and help set up an "amazing impromptu little church" outside St Cuthbert's.

For the reception, the caterers had no power or water, but they lit everything with candles and rigged up a water supply from a well. They had a truck with a generator so could still prepare the meal. Katherine said: "I just thought

it was incredible that people would actually go to this amazing effort to do something. You know everyone had the most amazing day because everyone had something in common to talk about. It was just so lovely to think that people wanted to come and share in that experience".

Rockfall

Having extricated her son from his bedroom, Rosie Laing's family huddled in the car until dawn, then went to the neighbours. The moment of looking over at her house will stay with Rosie forever. From her neighbour's driveway she could see what remained of her son's bedroom walls. "I had been telling him he was in the safest place in the house". Because it was an original room, the bedroom wall was a metre thick, an old stone wall with brick on the outside and gib on the inside. "The outer wall had completely collapsed - it just tore away and what we didn't know was the wall between my bedroom and his bedroom had emptied outwards like a bag of marbles and spilled out on to the neighbour's driveway and it was also leaning into the room. "Not only was my son lying next to a piece of gib, but I was saying "stay next to the big strong walls" without realising he had a huge weight of rock leaning over him in the dark. Discovering later her son had been in dire jeopardy and her telling him to stay there was hard for Rosie to take.

Shaky city

The period after the September 4 earthquake was one of re-adjustment, coping with aftershocks and, for some, dealing with the loss of a home or business. Yet most remember the time as being relatively positive, as summed up by Melissa Parsons:

We recognised that our city had been through a massive, scary and expensive event which would take time and effort to recover from, but we were so relieved that no-one had died.

In the days after the earthquake, Christchurch was shaken by aftershocks every few minutes, it seemed. Diana Madgin thought that some people coped well, while others fell apart. This was a rough time for her and she found herself shouting at the earthquakes, and encouraging others to do the same. Teruyo said that repair work started on some of the buildings near her office in the CBD. "Sometimes we felt shaking but we didn't know which one was an aftershock or a shake from the construction work." The shaking just continued. Teruyo found the aftershocks 'unusual' as she remembered the huge earthquake in Japan did not have many aftershocks. After three months, Teruyo and her colleagues started putting back the office furniture such as bookshelves.

After the September quake, Katie Gilbertson's family slept together in one bed for a whole month. Then the aftershocks died down and Katie said, "This is ridiculous" as the children kept them awake all the time. The two young girls then shared a bed together for a couple of months. "They were having nightmares and kept waking up. It wasn't very nice and just as we were coming right, we had the February one".

Melissa Parsons said that her parents' "dodgy" chimney was taken down by three male members of the family. "I looked after the kids at home for a few days more until their day care centre opened again. I remember calling around my senior students who were due to have an assessment, to reassure them".

Carol Hides was barred from entering the wonderful gym that she had sacrificed a lot to set up. She felt that when the building was demolished they would lose everything – all the contents, the:

... equipment, personal stuff, big things, little things, stuff we had to put on the mortgage... it was my life, my dream, there were pictures on the wall.... certificates... It seems completely irrelevant now, but at that time in September, we knew nothing else.

One day she drove past and noticed other tenants of the building going in and she pulled over. She started hauling

stuff out "like a woman possessed - it was an out-of-body experience. I was carrying quite a bad injury in my foot - I don't even remember it - adrenaline kicked in. I carried it all into the communal area. I don't know how I did it - rowing machine, weights, benches, everything - it was bizarre".

By Christmas she was back training in her own garage – exactly, as she noted, what she didn't want.

After the September quake Isabel was "stupidly busy" with her work on the recovery. She worked long hours, and during the weekdays all she had time for was work and sleep. During this quake response, Isabel was still living in Clifton as her cottage had hardly any damage. Isabel's friend, Jessica, who was also working in the recovery, stayed on Isabel's couch for two months. It was good having her for company. And because they were working in the same situation and with the same people, they "could have a pretty good whinge to each other when we were tired".

Jenny Harris and her daughter, Tanya moved into her caravan parked in the driveway. No day services for Tanya, who is autistic, were running, and in the unsanitary conditions Tanya got very sick. Eventually Jenny sent her to live in Nelson with her sister.

"You just kind of walked up and down your street. We were trying to hear people's stories because we couldn't understand it. We would have these secret stories, the two of us, about somehow we wish we had been there for it because not many people could say they had survived a 7.1 but also we thought that if we had felt it, if we had been there and understood it, then it would have made sense."

Leanne also felt a "disconnect between us and our friends who had been through it because they had had this trauma and this story that connected them and yet we didn't have that. We just had the mess. We could make no sense really of what they were talking about. You couldn't imagine the fear. I mean it was shaking by then and we were certainly there for all of the aftershocks. We were outside for most of it, digging."

This was the only major earthquake where Jennie was with her family; during other quakes she was away from

home. In retrospect, it was a comfort to be at home with family on 4 September. In all the other quakes Jennie has not liked "being separated from my own family". In her neighbourhood the community was strong; Jennie and John's neighbours supported each other.

Even though the property was only six kilometres from the quake epicentre, and there was a terrible mess everywhere, there wasn't too much serious damage done to the house.

While still in the dark, the whole family texted each other. This became pretty standard for all the earthquakes and aftershocks: "We [the family] are very dependent on texting. The texting was a life saver mentally, just to know how everyone was."

Christchurch City Council on alert

At the Council building, a couple of minutes' drive away from Jo and Bob Parker (then Mayor of Christchurch) alarms were going off all over the city and there was some rubble on the roads. But certainly, a "very eerie feeling - shadows of people ducking between buildings as they, I assumed, went to check their properties by night." Jo and Bob ran up the City Council building fire escape stairs. "There was a little damage in the stairwell; a bit of gibling had fallen off the walls, the concrete slabs superficially fractured under foot. The building had lit up like a beacon; everything else in the city had been thrown into darkness. This was because the new City Council building generates its own power ... you could see it from a mile away - it was the only thing lit."

At this point, another aftershock came through. The building responded as if the shock were a fire, it "started to deploy an internal fire screen." Jo said that it was a 'James Bond' moment. They were now on the 2nd floor where the screens were whirring as they steadily unfolded. Jo found herself having to recall the one and only emergency briefing she had had in the new City Council building to determine which side of the screens being deployed they needed to be on, in order to get out of the building.

Jo and Bob left the new City Council building, got into the car, and made their way toward the old City Council location. Just before the earthquake the City Council was in its final stages of logistically traversing between the two buildings, and, as it happened, emergency intelligence was still oriented to the old City Council building. On their way to the old City Council, they noticed increasingly more rubble, police out on patrol, and a few individuals had already emerged with cameras. It was about this point that Bob's phone started to go. This was "normal territory" for Jo, as the media would often call Bob for comments and information.

Back at the new City Council building, quite a few of the Civic Emergency Management team were beginning to gather. The Parker's soon returned to the building as it was not possible to approach the Tuam Street building via the route they had taken. Back at the new Civic Building one of the first things to be established was that the computers were not working efficiently. This was because the building had assumed fire and therefore the electricity supply had been considerably reduced to the building.

General Manager Michael Aitkin made an early call to set up in the Christchurch Art Gallery across the road. Although the new civic premises had the potential to resume electricity supply, none of the actual Emergency Management systems were geared to this new building, so there was little time lost by relocating. Jo explained, "The call to relocate to the Christchurch Art Gallery didn't mean that a whole lot of systems had to be re-established. These were being set up for the first time, and it was unclear at this point how long the new Civic Building would need to be closed for repairs. And the Art Gallery looked good; it had many open spaces ... once the Emergency Management Operations team had located whiteboards, laptops, desks, satellite phones and other supplies in the Art Gallery, the collation of information really gathered momentum - all this was established and comprehensive within the first two hours after the 4:35am earthquake."

It was a very busy time. Jo recalls that she only found the time to tidy away the broken glass and bottles in

their home, the main studio, a month after the earthquake. They didn't have power for quite a long period because they lived close to the CBD which was shut down, "commercial areas were a low priority on Orion's agenda when re-establishing power to the city." Instead, they stayed in a small part of their warehouse/studio but spent very little time at home anyway. They stayed at the Civic Emergency Management Centre until 10.30pm most evenings in the early days, and would return at 5.30am each morning in time for Bob to be briefed on overnight developments and appear on the 6am News. Jo "stayed close" with Bob all that time.

Further outcomes

Cassandra considered they were lucky in that we did not lose power for long, and did not lose sewage or water. I was more stressed about the university and assignments. I returned to work in the short weeks after the quake, and to university (with extensions on assignments and take-home examinations to lessen the stress caused by the quake).

Having survived the rest of the night, Erica's family was greeted by a very upsetting sight once daylight came. On opening the back door, "the smell of sewerage was horrendous, it was really horrible". The whole property was flooded, as well as the street, so to begin with they were not able to leave the house. The house had suffered major damage, with large cracks in the walls both inside and outside. The lounge had split in half; the fireplace which had a wood burner was damaged and not able to be used again. The garage that Kevin's grandfather had built had collapsed.

Power, sewerage, and water were lost. There was no power for 24 hours, no water for 2 weeks, and sewerage was not connected for another month. Being without power was probably the hardest part to deal with. Water could be collected from the school, showers were taken at friends' homes and the boys decided they were on a nice camping trip when they had to access the portaloos down the damaged road. Outdoor play for the boys had to be restricted due to the damage on the property. Erica found this period very

hard work with maintaining a house, looking after the 3 boys and being pregnant. The good news was that the baby was going to be a girl.

April felt the shaking but as the damage to property was so slight she did not lodge any insurance claim. Her younger daughter was quite upset and returned to live with her parents for a while. Her daughter living in Avonside reported a bad experience and damage with a car outside which went down a sink hole. When she walked down the road closer to the river her daughter encountered more flooding, liquefaction, big rifts and even a twisted footbridge. The more they saw, the worse it seemed, and strangers were walking around dazed while talking to each other.

Aftermath

As people started to adjust to their circumstances, they began to survey the damage to their homes, businesses and surroundings. Some were out of New Zealand on 4 September and their accounts are also included here.

About one o'clock that day, Jane and Paul walked down to their local café because they thought that as a brick building it had probably fallen down. However, the Addington Coffee Co-op was still standing and was open, so they had a coffee and talked to people; there were lots of people out and about chatting.

The following few days there was some disruption as the schools were closed, and all kinds of disruption to work. But Jane Higgins' family and friends were okay. Jane spent a lot of time cooking for people. Jane confessed that she got earthquake brain like everybody did because of the aftershocks. She noticed herself and other people would be walking down an aisle in the supermarket and would just stop, and everyone knew why they were stopping because their brains weren't really functioning. This impacted on work because Jane's productivity, like everybody else's, just plummeted. However, Jane says that she and Paul managed and, as they didn't know anyone who was very badly affected,

they assumed that things would get up and running again pretty quickly.

We lost power and water for three days. The house wasn't damaged and we spent time with family and friends ensuring that all was well. My elderly mother, living in a local rest home, was safe but feeling vulnerable

It wasn't until Emma was on a walk the morning of the quake that she discovered it was far worse than she originally believed. Emma said that she was, "walking down to the local shops in Beckenham (and) one of the lovely row of old brick terrace buildings, the end building, had completely collapsed and that was the first quite visible damage I had seen, it was quite amazing ... After that when I was listening to the radio, I was kind of like 'Oh ... there is going to be that sort of thing quite a lot over town'". At this point she quickly got in touch with everyone, and it seemed that all her friends were fine, albeit other parts of town were a lot worse off than hers, some with no power or water. However for Emma, "it was more of a novelty to experience in a way, I felt lucky that I was okay and I was in an area that was fine"

Isabel Jack, a geologist, missed the September earthquake as she was holidaying in Iceland and visiting geological features there. She decided to head home early, returning to the UK to pick up her things then flying non-stop to Christchurch. As soon as she arrived on September 10 she did a ten hour day, and work continued like that for days. Her role was to liaise between the science community and civil defence staff, and also to put together fact sheets for the public.

When Dame Malvina Major got back to New Zealand on the 29 September, everything that was broken in her Darfield home was in a big pile on a tarpaulin on the garage floor. She said that a huge armoire, which wasn't attached to the wall and was filled with her china and other precious things, had fallen over and smashed everything including a table and one of the kauri chairs. The jars of jam and the broken china which were in this cupboard had to be photographed and sorted for EQC.

Prior to her return home, the gardener and a friend who was staying in the house in Darfield attempted to start cleaning up. They took everything that was broken and put it in the rubbish, but the lawyer advised them, not to get dispose of anything. "They had to get it all out of the rubbish and they had to put it on the garage floor on a tarpaulin. The EQC and insurance companies have to know what it is broken, what is damaged".

Dame Malvina says "I had a habit of buying china from various places overseas, for example, I had purchased from Covent Garden a figurine that represented the character I was playing, and, over a period of years, had acquired three beautiful dinner sets." Dame Malvina can remember being in shock as she viewed the damage as she went through her Darfield home. "They had straightened up a lot of it inside of the house but in the piano room, they hadn't quite got to tidying it up. The strange thing was that in the other music studio the big heavy ornaments had stayed on the shelves while the smaller, lighter ones had fallen onto the floor. So there was just chaos. I couldn't get my head around it. I know that I thought at the time 'they were only things', but the shock of it didn't really hit me immediately".

Dame Malvina went to four sessions with the counsellor. "I felt that I was coping... I also realized about this time that I wasn't very happy and I think that the earthquake had unsettled me enough to make me analyse my life and where I was at this stage in my life. I'd been travelling down a path at great speed, I was ignoring the signals that say number one, you're going too fast and, number two, you're not happy".

On 4 September 2010 Lois Herbert was in Sydney welcoming a new grandchild. When she turned her phone on at 6.30am Sydney time there were already 20-30 text messages for her relating to the Christchurch earthquake. She was particularly concerned by her son's message. Although his family was unhurt, their house was wrecked and a chimney had fallen through the ceiling in her grandson's bedroom. She found that first day incredibly frustrating as she could not make contact with Christchurch and there was little first-hand

information. "I was worried about the Refuge organisation as well as my immediate family. I could not get a flight home for two days. My experience of 4 September was one of feeling very anxious and alienated". She was glued to the news and then finally could make e-mail contact.

When Lois arrived back in Christchurch, she found her own home had some damage but it was not serious. A leaking cylinder had been attended to by her son and a plumber and there was mess to clean up inside. But the main loss was some family crystal broken - the loss of memories.

Anne from Avonside slowly got used to the damage in her house, and that they would rebuild on the same site – a site with great views. They received an EQC payout and were contemplating the rebuild. Her son changed schools in early February to Shirley Boys' High. Anne's husband had managed to keep his business going, but she had taken a couple of weeks off work. While aftershocks were still disruptive, things seemed to be going OK.

On the Sunday, Annike and Lorraine went to the Women's Centre, and discovered a lot of glass damage. They spent hours cleaning the broken glass up. Looking back now, this damage feels like "nothing", as there were no casualties. The Women's Centre was up and running again quite quickly. Just before Christmas, the carpets were cleaned. Although some windows were boarded up, all in all the Centre was well set up for the New Year. Annike went to Holland for her usual trip over Christmas, so she was not in Christchurch for the Boxing Day earthquake. However, the Centre Coordinator, Diane, coped well and there were no big problem

She says they lost track of time. It was only when it was starting to get light that they realised how widespread the earthquake had been. They used their cell phones to call family, asking not so much "are you OK?" as "What was that? What happened?" They realised they didn't have an AM radio but got information from Mike's brother. Their families gave the message not to come over as power was out in their suburbs. Their landlords lived two doors down and came to see how they had fared.

Janelle and her colleagues coped well considering their stress and sleep deprivation: "Everyone did incredibly well that day ... I spoke at a conference about a month later and I said, 'What I don't think you can ever prepare for is the aftershocks'. If I was ever organising a prolonged exercise for earthquake response again, when people are off duty [I would] ring them every two hours when they are trying to sleep and yell 'Aftershock' and just hang up. Because that's what it was like. Within 24 hours, people were sleep-deprived because, even when they were off duty, they weren't getting proper rest". In spite of the stress, the emergency centre had a committed and professional atmosphere. Members of the Police and Fire Services walked in the door and offered help before they were even called in. Janelle relied on the 'Duck Theory': she tried to remain calm on the surface, even while under the surface she was kicking and flapping.

Janelle took her search dog, Cairo, into work with her and he sat in her truck during the day. She was all ready to go on duty if needed, but she wasn't required by her search and rescue colleagues working in the city. She kept expecting to hear about fatalities on the 4 September and still finds it incredible that there were none.

Janelle's house had just a few cracks. "It's plaster over concrete block and I remember ... as I drove out of the garage I put my lights on high beam to look on the outside to see if there was any cracks or damage ... nah, nothing at all."

A state of emergency management remained activated in Christchurch for prolonged period of time after 4 September. Janelle was kept very busy for the rest of 2010 trying to catch up on training, debrief after September, having Christmas, and planning stuff for next year.

The one thing that Tufuga concentrated on was "what God has said to the children of Israel: 'Fear not, for I am there with you'. And I sat here... and I prayed, after they [the neighbours] left. I prayed ... I said to God, 'If this is what you want us to do, please don't make me fear or angry... And from there on I feel the calmness of myself. Because to the people who believe and trust in God, they have no fear". Tufuga believes that if you show fear you are

not acting out what you've learnt and heard at church about trusting in God.

Genevieve's parents had power, so they packed up the car with the kids to go to their house. Tim wanted to check on his parents in Bromley first, so they decided to drive there first. But as they drove over they quickly realized how bad the damage was. They got up to the corner of Worcester and Manchester Street and had to turn back at the cordon. So they turned back towards Genevieve's parents' home.

The Pacific Trust Clinic was in Worcester Street, behind the cordon and the staff was unable to access the building. Their building had only suffered minor damage but surrounding buildings were quite badly damaged, so they had to stay out of the red zone for a week or two before they could return and clean up their premises. To complicate matters, their CEO was in Auckland at that time. But Genevieve, who was acting practice manager at the time, was able to find an alternative clinic premises: "We quickly shifted our population to be seen at the 24 hour clinic in Bealey Ave. So we were able to continue to practice and see our patients there". Fortunately the Pacific Trust's data had been recently stored on the cloud, with servers based in Auckland: "We were able to access our patient information straight away even though we weren't able to get to our building".

Tokanga states "the family's garage was filled with stuff (wall units, washing machines, bedroom suites) which they were planning to take back to Tonga in a container. Fortunately the garage's contents were largely undamaged and they were able to send the stuff to Tonga soon after September. Their cars were "sleeping outside" and so avoided damage.

When the quakes stopped Laurence went and got her daughters. There were then the aftershocks to deal with. Her first thought was to turn the TV on. That seemed to be normal. After a while the usual programmes stopped and something was said about the earthquake. She stayed at home and kept close to her children. She looked around the house to assess the damage. Laurence called her Kiwi mother

and father. At first she couldn't get through, but eventually she managed to talk to them and they were okay.

Then she didn't know what to do next. "I had this feeling when I was sailing around the world - my first trip - ocean crossing trip - when you look at the land and suddenly the land disappear[s] and you end up looking all around you 360° and only seeing the sea...You are absolutely nothing. You are like a speckle of dust in this world ... The elements are much more powerful than we are." She gave the example of the dinosaurs which were bigger than us yet they did not survive. Things like having a house and a roof over one's head didn't make sense any more. "Just surviving was already a huge achievement."

Laurence's house was damaged, the kids were going round the house, and there was stuff everywhere. She said, "I couldn't cope with it and left it for a couple of days. When I felt stronger I went back again."

Laurence went home twice. The first time she only shifted things a little bit. She was completely discouraged. She said, "I just couldn't cope for very long. I didn't stay long. I just walked away again. And then I went again and I cleaned up. And then I was missing my home. I moved back into my house and we cleaned slowly". They took all the broken things off the floor. The wooden floor was stained with plums and brandy because she does a lot of preserves. These jars had been shattered on the floor. The plums stained the wooden floor red.

Liz Nichol thinks it probably wasn't till about a month down the track, after talking to other people who'd been through the same process, she recognised or realised that she was suffering from trauma. "So I set about coping with that, and after about six months I think I'd pulled myself together, really". Even though the property was only six kilometres from the quake epicentre, and there was a terrible mess everywhere, there wasn't too much serious damage done to the house.

At Gill's business, one member of staff was at the Sydenham factory at the time and he said it was terrifying to be in the building by himself, with power out. "He said it was

very bizarre, when he went to go to work his cat was behaving very strangely and wouldn't eat its food." The business lost a lot of stock because of the loss of power. Insurance has been good but there are still a lot of issues to resolve.

At the Air Force Museum there was no serious damage to the various collections either; they were all well boxed and preserved. Thérèse felt really lucky about this. "We had volunteers showing up at the museum at September to ask: 'Can we help', just amazing!"

In many ways this first quake prepared the museum for future events: "There was a lot of learning we did in September that kind of prepared us for February." One of the things the management team of the Air Force Museum learned after the quakes with regard to looking after their staff was the importance of normality and routines: "We have got a women who works for us... she was in a really bad way after September so we had her making tea and scones every morning. Because this was a way of keeping her focused."

For Phillippa, seeing her own building on the footpath was "quite surreal". "Obviously it looked very dramatic and it was one of the shots that was seen around the world, in Sydney and London and so forth, for it being quite dramatic with all the facia fallen off." Authorities "chained off our building the next day and we weren't allowed in... running a business that's quite a frightening thing to think that I couldn't get in". Using initiative, Phillippa was able to retrieve her computers and "my partner, who is a joiner, built some desks and put them up in our lounge at home". It was from her living room that Phillippa and her staff continued with business as usual.

"We decided just to keep going and you know it was a pretty surreal day because when you are a typical business with seven staff, what ends up happening is you've got to keep your business going, you have got to keep the income going and because none of us really knew what was going on in our world, there were still a lot of clients that still wanted stuff done and we seemed to kind of carry on as normal". Phillippa "found it quite traumatic" as 'the boss' because she

didn't have additional insurance and needed her staff to continue working to enable the business to survive.

Phillippa's business was one of the businesses that was "quite affected" in by the September earthquake. Having to move out straight away, they shared the premises of a client and "rented off them for six months and then they have come here after February because, of course, we lost both the buildings in February....Losing both buildings was pretty horrific." Phillippa has always been considered "quite an inspirational person". However, she says that, "I don't feel like it sometimes because I keep picking us up and getting back on and going for it and to think back now, you just do what you have got to do but to think that, crikey, all I had left was our back-up data box and insurance, and I've rebuilt this office". "You just have to keep reinventing the wheel."

In subsequent geotechnical reports Sue and Nigel have discovered that their land was shunted north in the first impact of the September quake. There is a layer of earth 1.5 metres down which liquefied and slid off the underlying volcanic rock and into their ditch. Ironically this ditch had been constructed as a precaution against flooding, yet had humans never dug the ditch the land would not have moved to the same extent. Sue recalled, "There's a very funny story when one of the engineers was here. Because there'd been huge amounts of rain prior to the earthquake. And I said 'So do you think if the land hadn't have been so wet it wouldn't have been so bad?' and he said 'Mm, I'm thinking if there hadn't been an earthquake it wouldn't have been so bad'".

Their new addition was split right through - there is a 20mm crack in the tiled floor, which reaches right through the concrete slab and foundations. There is an equivalent crack in the ceiling. This fault line continues out onto the road. The large bridge over the creek moved forward about 15 - 20cm. The old house was also badly damaged: it came off its piles, floor levels changed, things ripped, plaster fell off, and the chimney fell down. Another aftershock in October 2010 was the only quake to cause further damage.

After the September quake, Rebecca's partner, Zach, who worked in a multi-level building in town, received

a report about the safety of the building in which he worked. It was constructed in the 1970s. A structural engineer was called in to assess its safety after the quake. He reported that the building had strong concrete columns which were reinforced with steel. He described the building as being 'very strong' with the columns supporting the whole building. There was no need for concern regarding the safety of the building and its ability to stand up in any ensuing earthquakes.

The end of the beginning

The earthquake on 4 September 2010 came as a shock to everyone, and yet there were as many different reactions as there were people, houses, businesses and other circumstances. People first thought of their own safety and that of their families and friends, then of communities and the city. There was a great deal of relief that Christchurch had been through such a big earthquake and come through unscathed. There was no inkling that this would be only the first instalment of a long and dangerous story.

The February quake: around the city

Christchurch residents considered themselves 'lucky' that the September earthquake had occurred at night, when people were relatively safe in their beds. Subsequent aftershocks were annoying and sometimes frightening, but generally not dangerous. However, Christchurch's luck ran out at 12.51 pm on 22 February 2011 when an earthquake of 6.3 magnitude, located under the Port Hills around 6 km from the city centre, and only 6km deep, struck the city.

There has been a lot written about why the earthquake was so damaging. Apart from the obvious features such as size, proximity and shallowness, the silty nature of the ground (which led to immense liquefaction) and the highest peak ground acceleration ever recorded in an earthquake, caused a so-called trampolining effect on the city's buildings.

Premonitions

Some of the women interviewed acted on premonitions that an earthquake was coming, showing an interesting apprehension that something out of the ordinary was going to occur. Rebecca Gordon:

...was almost ready for it because the "Moon Man" had predicted a lot of earthquakes. Although I am not into believing what everyone says, I have done some research on his predictions and I had a feeling he could be right.

So strong was that feeling that she took a week off work and packed up all her ornaments.

Jenny Harris felt uncomfortable all day, but didn't know why. She moved from her normal teaching 'spot' and was teaching a class standing between two desks. With growing feelings that something was not quite right, 30 minutes from the end of the class Jenny:

...decided at that time to say to the class, 'I don't know what's going on, but I don't feel okay, so I am stopping the class to go home'.

But then the earthquake happened. Everything shook violently. She held onto the two desks to stay upright and students were sitting screaming. If Jenny had stayed in her teaching territory, she would have been squashed by a book case that had fallen over.

Helen Trappit got a “funny, nervous feeling” as she was sitting with her baby son at the Columbus Café in Riccarton Mall. She bundled the rest of her unfinished scone into a napkin and shoved it in her bag and then they went back to their car in the mezzanine car park. Helen can distinctly remember looking up at one of the concrete upper level beams (as engineers do) and thinking to herself, “I don't want to be here when the M6 aftershock happens”.

Emily, who lives in a Housing New Zealand home in Aranui, didn't feel comfortable sending her seven-year-old granddaughter to school that day. “I rang up the school and said, ‘I'm not sending her to school today’. Emily took her granddaughter to work with her.

She does volunteer work at the Salvation Army – just on the corner of her street. “All day we had been talking about it at work... We said, ‘Well this is a funny day, it feels like an earthquake day’ ... and then we started laughing and I thought ‘that's not funny, yeah’”.

They were back home when the earthquake struck. Emily became tearful as she remembered what her granddaughter said to her as the earthquake was shaking the house. “It was what she said to me... she said, ‘If I die... don't ever forget that I loved you’... and I knew then, if I wasn't strong enough... because I didn't want her to think that I was going to be weak... so I just pulled myself together and I said, ‘Just hang on to me, we're going to be alright!’ ... and then she hurt herself... knocking against the door. The door wouldn't open for us to get out of the room, and I started panicking a bit... and then I thought, ‘I can't panic’, so I just said to her, ‘do you trust me?’ ... I said, ‘We are going to be alright, as soon as the door can open, we'll go outside’.

Emily's phone was in the house, but “I couldn't get hold of it to ring anybody”. She managed to push through the door and get to her phone, but there was no reception. Then

they went outside and saw the liquefaction. "My neighbour next door, he had ...a [sink] hole... and all the liquefaction was coming out from it. And it came under our fence and it just – I couldn't believe it – it just filled our whole back yard. And then it shoved this door... and everything was just filling up with liquefaction... through the gap of the door".

Feeling relaxed Caroline that morning and decided to go for a drive to view a flat and visit a friend. After viewing the flat in Amberley from the outside, and deciding that she liked it, she and Rico the dog drove on. At Greta Valley she turned inland through Scargill to visit a friend who lived in Waikari. As she got closer to Waikari she became tense: "I felt uptight, a sense of urgency and a desire to get back to Christchurch".

Caroline had a cup of coffee with her friend and went to leave. Her friend asked her to stay longer. Caroline was beginning to feel as if she was trapped and needed to return to Christchurch. She replied to her friend:

I need to get back, can you feel the energy, it's everywhere? I held up my hands and then next minute boom... the lamppost went... it was a good jolt.

Caroline drove back to New Brighton as quickly as possible, anxious about her cat. It was a long, slow trip:

It was unbelievable coming down Queenspark Drive... I couldn't see any asphalt on the road; it was a sea of mud. There were eruptions on one side and metal things coming up in the middle of the road. Families with children in bare feet were plodding knee deep through the mud... it was like a horror movie... there were no service vehicles, you just had to make your way along the streets, not knowing what you were driving over, and if there were deep holes... I just followed the cars in front.

Caroline's street was a mess, with abandoned vehicles, holes in the road, mud and water everywhere. She rescued her cat and Rico and carried them through the lake of mud into the house. She only lasted until six the next morning, when she

put the animals in the car and drove to Amberley, hopefully to take up the new flat.

On the day of the February quake, Adele recalls saying to her son "we will never have another one like that" as he had become anxious again and had started to talk about the earthquake. This was a time when there was a lot of media coverage of Ken Moon, who was predicting the actual date and the size of the quakes. "That very morning, a pupil in her son's class announced that his father believed there would be another quake". Adele was in the classroom that morning and commented that "no-one can predict anything" to reassure her son.

Prior to the February quake Sue had a premonition that another big quake was due: "I'd been watching the pattern of the quakes and I just felt that there was something probably going to happen. And my nephew had not long come back from Europe. And I was sitting at my desk in the old house ... I had just sent him an email saying 'Might be a good idea just to be a little bit prepared. I think there's a big one coming'. And after February happened I got an email that evening from him saying 'You were 15 minutes early'".

At work

When the quake hit, "everyone knew it was different". Katherine Ewer and her colleagues all "knew it was bad and hid under their desks. The quake seemed to go on and on". She remembers feeling scared: "I just thought 'This is not what September was like'. It felt completely different". From under her desk Katherine could hear glass breaking and people screaming and calling out but she couldn't see what was going on. She noticed one of the office walls split down the middle. Once the shaking subsided, people emerged from under their desks. The back of the adjacent Cafe Roma building had fallen down and the nearby Provincial Chambers were in ruins.

Helen Gibson was meeting a friend for lunch and had just gone to the toilet to get organised.

I couldn't get out of the toilet on the 5th floor. I could feel the severe shaking; the noise was like an unbalanced washing machine trying to spin. It was terrifying. I finally got the door open and then with hundreds of other people went down the stairs in blackness. Some people had lights on their mobiles that they used. I left my car keys and cell phone behind. On our way down I saw people were becoming panicked and couldn't open the door to the stairs. I'll never forget their looks of fear. We helped get the door open and then all gathered on the banks of the Avon River opposite the Band Rotunda. We looked at the PGC building which had fallen. People were in shock. People were walking, running, or just standing looking dazed.

About a month after the September earthquake Emma moved into her own granny flat in Mt Pleasant. Emma was not at home when the February earthquake struck. "I was at work for the February one. It was a lot scarier; you just knew that it was a lot worse having been through that first one. Being up here on the second floor was obviously a little bit shakier and it's a new building which was built to move around, everything was just thrown all over the place and we all jumped under the desks".

Emma described the chaos around her post earthquake. She said that many people left work, and there were "lots of people with families, all the mothers were wanting to get to their kids straight away, so I offered to take one of the girls (Rebecca) here in my car because she cycles, (but) obviously the traffic was gridlocked straight away. It was just crazy, you know panic stations ... She just wanted to get on her bike... you couldn't stop her. She just jumped out of the car, and that was the last I saw of her, she was in quite a state".

Lynne's business had recently moved to new premises in High Street. It was a nice area with lots of busy shops around them. The new premises were lovely with a courtyard out the back. They had been having a few shakes over the previous

days and the building, one in a row of many, had shaken a bit. Tuesday morning had been busy, but the shop showroom was empty apart from one woman collecting a repair when the quake hit. One of Lynne's work mates ran past her from out of the back room, where she had been working yelling "Get out, Get out". She remembers running after her and trying to push the front door open. They ended up out on High Street, with lots of other people stumbling out of buildings. They were all covered in debris and dust. Next minute her other work mates came flying out.

Raewyn Crowther's office went to pieces, "absolute mayhem." Every filing cabinet toppled, computers were on the floor. "September was gentle in comparison, like a boat being tossed around in the sea. This time it was like being tossed around by a dog with something in its mouth". Raewyn got under her desk eventually. One woman went to pieces and people were trying to keep her calm. The office was surrounded by old brick buildings. Creighton Cobbers, an old brick factory, and old 1910 brick houses, were next door, they exited their building into dust, the sound of sirens, helicopters, the plume of smoke from CTV building. Within minutes Fitzgerald Ave was full of traffic going nowhere, it was totally gridlocked. Creighton Cobbers fell into the road in the 3 pm aftershock.

At the Women's Centre where Annike was at work everything just began to shake. Things were falling everywhere. Diana and Noelene came out of the course room and Diane yelled "Get out, get out!" Annike went back to grab her bag but forgot her coat and glasses. Everyone in the Centre realised it was a big earthquake. Deborah, one of the counsellors, together with her client, came running from the back room. Julie, the other counsellor, and her client were stuck in their room as the door was jammed. They managed to open it - "with woman power". The door into the Centre was wrenched off its pegs and the whole wall twisted and cracked. Diane recalled that when they looked outside from the course room they saw a whole chimney fall in, imploding glass, and falling concrete. If they had not moved they could have been injured.

Police, Fire, Civil Defence

Janelle, along with her colleagues and key staff from Police, Fire and Civil Defence, was at an emergency management conference in Wellington. "Someone mentioned at the conference in the morning that this would be a hell of day for something for happen in Christchurch with so many people in Wellington." It was during lunch that someone said to her "We've just heard about a big quake in Christchurch". Janelle thought they were kidding, but they she got a text message from her Operations Manager in Christchurch which convinced her: "He's the most unlikely person to ... He doesn't text a lot ... and he certainly wouldn't be one to swear that often. And I got a text from him that said 'Biggest F***ing quake ever. F***!'... So we knew."

Janelle found Kelvin Berryman from GNS Science who was also at the conference and asked him if he could find out more. He got his laptop out, logged into the drums (seismology drums), and said, "This is really bad". Pagers started going off and it was decided to send a few key Christchurch staff to the National Crisis Management Centre under the Beehive. The other emergency staff all went to Wellington airport to try and organise transport to Christchurch. A few Police, Fire, and Ambulance staff jumped on Westpac helicopters and left almost immediately.

Genevieve was in the Pacific Trust premises on Worcester Street. When the quake struck it was lunchtime; the doctors and receptionist were out for lunch and the nurses were talking in their offices. Genevieve was covering reception over lunch for the receptionist. "I remember trying to get down and under the table was absolutely impossible 'cause the ground came up and met my knee when I bent down". When she crawled out from under the desk, a light fitting fell and hit Genevieve on the head, which made her feel dazed. She crawled around trying to stay away from the glass windows.

Genevieve then called out for everyone to evacuate the building. "I yelled at everyone, 'Get out of the building'.

So we all ran out of the building. I counted everyone that we knew was downstairs. I was the only manager on site. So when we got out, lots of aftershocks were constantly still happening and the big huge TVNZ building which they knocked down not long ago ... that had water spitting from the top". She remembers looking around thinking "What the heck. This is really, really bad". Genevieve gathered the staff, and they went down to Latimer Square.

Funeral Services

Jennie was working on a funeral during the February earthquake. She was preparing for a service in a Kaiapoi church. Together with a couple from the church and a colleague, she was setting up equipment and the casket. The church was an old solid concrete building. When the earthquake hit they were all taken by surprise. Jennie grabbed the sound equipment. Fortunately her colleague was very close to the casket which was swaying, and was able to support it. Jennie is sure that if her colleague had not held the casket it would have fallen over.

Jennie and her colleague were shaken but stayed calm. She lost all communication with Christchurch and didn't know whether to proceed. The hearse was in place and all the arrangements made so she continued on. The minister, organist, and family arrived. The funeral turnout had been estimated to be 200, but far fewer people attended. The service went ahead, but was punctuated by at least two severe shakes. Several elderly people became very unsettled. Jennie took on a calming role and reassured everyone. At one stage, after a severe aftershock, several people left the church before they re-entered. Jennie encouraged people to do what felt right for them. Towards the end of the service there was a second bad aftershock and people became upset. The minister ended the service earlier than planned and then the family carried the casket out. Jennie's colleague drove the hearse back to Christchurch. Jennie had been worried about crossing the Waimakariri Bridge; however it was open, so the hearse was able to continue on to the funeral home.

Panic in the City – Panic in the Suburbs

Beverley Price was in Peterborough Street:

It was really frightening and I remember the shaking and everything falling around me. After checking that work colleagues were alright, I went outside. Seeing everyone else outside made the enormity of the situation become real. A colleague took me home, which meant leaving my car at work and I was not able to get it back for another three days. The traffic was terrible getting out of the city. Liquefaction and flooding were evident, as were the potholes and uneven surfaces.

Kaiapoi

Erica's baby had had a very unsettled night due to reflux, so Erica had been feeling particularly tired this day. The plan had been to go into the city this day to register Chloe and get her birth certificate. After lunch, Kevin had taken Jack into town before going to Kindergarten to enable Erica to have a rest. The Charles Street Kindergarten had relocated after the September quake and was now operating out of the Kaiapoi Club Rooms.

Kevin and Jack had just arrived at Kindergarten when the shaking started. He protected Jack by placing himself over his body. As he was the only male at the Kindergarten the staff wanted him to stay as everyone was much shaken, but he felt he needed to get to the other two boys at school. On arriving at the school, all he could see was 550 children dressed in black and red out in the playing field. Fortunately friends had located the boys and had them together. Erica had been woken up and Chloe slept through all the shaking.

Hornby

At the time of the February 2011 earthquake Ngaire was visiting a client in the Hornby area when the shake happened. Sitting down she thought, "Well, there's a door there and when it stops I can bolt out if I feel I have to". After the shaking had stopped she "walked out the door and thought, "Oh, well, I better go back to work", fully anticipating returning to the office. "Just going back and carrying on. I hadn't realised the severity of it". She felt several aftershocks on the road back to the office in Papanui, where she found everybody outside. She was told, "No, you can't go back in." It was then that she saw some of the damage.

Her car had been parked out on the street, so Ngaire "grabbed it and another colleague whose car was parked in the parking building but they couldn't access it and we attempted to drive home. And that took nearly two hours to get home in the traffic". Again she couldn't see the extent of the damage. Travelling home through Riccarton with the radio on, "I panicked when they said there had been serious loss of life in the earthquake". The only information they had was what she could hear on the radio, all within an hour of the earthquake, "the news media hadn't quite got up and running." Ngaire passed her cell phone to her colleague and said, "Here's my son's cell phone number, text him". It took about half an hour before she received a text back to say "I am OK, are you all right?"

When Ngaire eventually made it home, there was no power at her house, "so I turned off my water in case there was more damage." Ngaire believes she has "been lucky as there was not a lot of damage in my house. I have cracks in corners and a few more things thrown around in my kitchen, things in cupboards thrown out in a few places, but I haven't lost anything greatly major and pictures weren't thrown off the walls or anything like that".

Christchurch Women's prison (Templeton)

Jasmine was locked in her cell at 12.51pm and due to collect her mail. During the quake the prison officers tried to keep them calm. The prisoners were allowed out, "ten at a time, to

get their mail, and to try to use the phone, but no one could get a line out". She had to return to her cell and was kept locked up as they said "we were safer in our cells than being out in the open". While in the cell, they were able to talk with each other and offer reassurance.

The water and power remained on after the February quake. It wasn't until the television news in the evening that Jasmine, and the other prisoners, really learnt about the catastrophe that had hit Christchurch. This was upsetting for a lot of the women prisoners, as they had family and friends who had jobs in the inner city. For the women in prison, the February quake was "more devastating, as people died, but no one knew if they knew anyone who was killed". Jasmine was shocked that such a large quake could happen in New Zealand. The only other time she knew of such a large quake was the 1931 Napier quake.

Some families sent notes and others rang in to let the prisoners know that they were safe. Some of the North Island prisoners, imprisoned in Christchurch, got letters asking how they were after the February quake.

Cashel Street

April was at work in a standalone two storey building at 260 Cashel Street when enormous violent shaking simply hurtled her beside the Y Trade shop counter until the shaking stopped. She and her tutor colleagues gathered the students up outside the front door and everybody texted their relatives: "Then we looked up ... and watched St Paul's Trinity Pacific's roof collapse and saw the fire begin ... Then through the clouds of dust and smoke saw the CTV building was down and on fire".

April and her colleagues talked about helping as we had First Aid kits and training, but all decided the first priority was to get the students safely home. As a worshipping member of St John's Church on the corner of Hereford and Madras Streets, it was concerning not to see anything like a roof and April wondered about her friends who staffed the office.

A flood of people came down Cashel St from the CBD, some hurt, many distressed including 2 students who had visited shortly before. They were hysterical. The police came telling us to move along as it was unsafe. We got students into cars going in suitable directions but traffic was chaotic and jammed - can't turn this way-road blocked; can't turn that way - bridge out. Creeping along Cashel Street took ages and I was running up and down the line posting students into suitable cars for different destinations. I brought one student with me into Helen's car to take her to meet her Mum who was to collect her from the Palms Shopping Centre and take her home to Kaiapoi. Helen's car radio announced the epicentre was near Lyttelton. I was worried then because my older daughter worked in Ferrymead near the Lyttelton tunnel entrance. Although cell phones had been jammed I got messages from my younger daughter who was OK and coming home from Sydenham, and from my husband who confirmed we still had a house.

City

Anne was working in the city. She felt an enormous jolt, looked up and saw the old Provincial Council Chambers building collapse just as if someone had pulled down a curtain. She realised 'Oh no, we are in it once again!' Anne remembers hearing lots of screaming, including a colleague yelling at her to hold onto the doorframe, when all she really wanted to do was get out. Their offices were up on the first floor, and were a mess, with everything fallen over. Everyone in the group grabbed their handbags and exited, then stood outside holding each other. The sight outside, of broken glass and people running away bleeding, was shocking.

Myra Kunowski had been working at her computer:

... when the very sharp shaking began. I was quite stunned I think because I never moved under a table or doorway. Lamps were falling over, pictures

askew, and a decanter of brandy fell off the sideboard. I had been refraining from any alcohol in February, as part of a sponsored campaign for protection of children, but when the brandy started pouring out on the floor I thought I needed it. I picked it up and poured a large half glass and drank it neat!

Christine's Story

Christine had begun the working year back in at the Workplace Support offices in 64 Cashel Street, and has very vivid memories of where she was the moment the quake struck. She had finished lunch, and decided at 12.30 to go and do the banking, so walked up past the Bridge of Remembrance to the High Street Westpac branch. After finishing that errand, there was still part of the lunch hour left, and as Christine still felt hungry, she popped into Ballantynes to buy a snack.

Christine was in the 'gourmet food' section when the quake hit. The force of it threw her to the ground, and everything went dark. There was an awful lot of noise, banging, smashing, crashing, and Christine could also hear someone whimpering. Then she realised that it was she who was making the sound, curled up in a ball. She tried to get up but couldn't stand because of the ongoing shaking, and briefly wondered if she was going to die. Suddenly a light went on as one of the shop assistants located her torch. When Christine managed to stand up, she asked the assistant "What do we do now?" and was told that they needed to stay and wait where they were. The staff had all received training after the Boxing Day quake, and were advised to stand and wait for clearance.

Christine did not want to stay, as she felt very responsible for the staff at Workplace Support in the absence of the CEO (who was out of the office that day) and wanted to go and check on them. The assistant was adamant, and Christine had to accept that she could not, at that moment, do anything more than just stand and wait. She recalls it as a

hideous time, with people evacuating from upper floors and others crying around her. Eventually, a senior staffer arrived, the emergency lighting went on, and customers were ushered out the back entrance onto Lichfield Street, stepping carefully around the fallen glass door canopy, and passed a car buried in rubble, guided by an ashen-faced policeman. (Christine learned two days later that the person in that vehicle had been killed.) She remembers scores of people walking up Lichfield Street, with people comforting each other.

Upon reaching the Lichfield Street Bridge, she had to stop again because of the strong aftershocks, and found herself comforting a young mum with two kids, one in a pushchair, as they waited together on the grass. Christine offered to take her back to the Workplace Support offices, but the woman had already rung her husband to come and collect the family, so she wanted to wait where she was. (Christine often wonders what happened to her.) She then continued down Cambridge Terrace, past the crowds evacuating from Cashel Mall, covered in dust, some with blood on their faces. She found the Workplace Support staff all outside, but still went inside to check that every room was clear. Looking into her own office, she was grateful she had not been in there when the quake hit. The staff continued to wait where they were gathered on lower Cashel St, and were advised by passing Army personnel that they needed to evacuate to Hagley Park. Christine preferred to wait until she could get her car from its roadside park and drive home.

While waiting on the roadside, Christine and her workmates witnessed the bizarre sight of a man in the apartment building next to them, who did not evacuate, but rushed out onto his balcony every time there was an aftershock. Another neighbour simply paced up and down, not knowing what to do with the news that her husband was trapped in the Forsyth Barr building.

The traffic was gridlocked by now, and a man drew up in his car, and called out the window that he was heading up the Cashmere Hills and did anyone need a ride? To Christine's surprise, the receptionist agreed, and hopped in the car beside this random stranger. Christine gave him the

once-over through the window, decided he was most likely trustworthy, and waved her colleague off. She commented that it was just what was happening on this strange day! Christine waited longer until she felt it was safe to go, all the while hearing stories from passers-by, and comforting some of them, as they went to get their kids from the Hagley childcare centre before heading on to Hagley Park.

Christine knew the situation in town "was grim" and finally got to her car, to inch home on a journey that took hours. People were out directing traffic where things were broken. She got onto Ensor's Rd and up Aldwin's Rd, inches at a time (with a very full bladder!) Passing Linwood High School, she saw a taxi that had fallen into a big sink hole. She then headed up Pages Road "taking forever", but she just wanted to get as far as she could. There were lots of people standing out on the roadside, and lots of people walking.

On reflection, she thinks she may have been better to walk home, as she would have got there quicker. She got as far as Bexley Road, and figured that if she went any further, the water would flood her car, so she parked on the roadside, and set off with her shoes in her hand, thinking, 'Well I won't be wearing these pantyhose again, will I!' (She was still keen to get to a toilet, but as she was only one kilometre from home, she figured she could "hang on".) It was a case of wading slowly and carefully through the water and liquefaction, up Pages Road and into Bexley Road, where she walked down the centre of the street, looking at the broken houses, and heard a helicopter hover overhead.

She arrived home just before 7pm, much to the relief of her anxious husband. When the quake hit, he had been watching TV and having lunch, sitting on his electric-powered chair. When the power went out, he was pretty much stuck in his chair while the drawers emptied and furniture fell around him. Liquefaction had come up through the toilet, and as the levels rose outside, he was very concerned that it would come into the house. As it was, the silt rose to cover the three steps up to the house, stopping just centimetres below the threshold and the property was entirely flooded. The couple spent 'the most terrifying night

ever', in the safest middle bedroom, but got no rest as the aftershocks were absolutely hideous.

Christine was concerned about her daughter, and after a quick breakfast, wanted to go around to South Brighton to see how they were. However, her daughter beat them to it, having come over via the back neighbour's property, as she still could not enter Waitaki Street because of the flooding. They called out to neighbours, and between them, they were able to lift Christine's husband out of the house, and took him through a gap in the back fence, past the neighbour's house and along the river, in the wheel chair that Christine had managed to extract from the boot of the car and heave over the back fence.

They packed a few clothes and personal items, then the others left by car, and Christine walked to their daughter's house in South Brighton with the dog. A decision was made to go to Christine's sister's place in West Melton, which had not been affected this time. They managed to get there by driving along Marine Parade, and down Beach Rd, which was at that stage the only accessible route west from that part of town. She remembers that the road was still a mess, with cars in sinkholes, and that things did not really get any better until Marshlands Road.

Spreydon/Latimer Square

The next big aftershock came through and Jane, who lives in Spreydon, went inside and tried to get hold of family. That took a while and was the most terrifying time for her as she knew that her nephew was in town. He was Year 13 and the senior school kids were in town because there was a teachers' meeting. When Jane finally spoke to him, he was in Latimer Square. "I said to him, 'You stay there do what the people tell you and don't move unless they tell you to', and he said, right he'll do that". While she was on the phone Jane looked out the front window and could see her car out on the street which was not right because there was supposed to be a fence. The fence had gone. Jane went outside and saw a huge

pile of liquefaction on the driveway and streams of people coming down the street, walking from town.

Many of the office workers were instructed to go along to Latimer Square. Teruyo: "We started walking and saw windows that had fallen off and were broken; noises, screaming, someone lying down in the street bleeding, and the person from the café trapped. Someone was screaming, 'Someone is still there. They need help'".

Sharon Torstonson was left standing outside the doomed Community House clutching only a pad and a pen. Her keys had been lost in the meeting room and her bag and phone were locked in her fifth floor office. In the aftershocks, bits continued to fall from buildings and everyone was told to go down to Latimer Square.

Eastern Christchurch

Lianne Dalziel was in her office in New Brighton. The building shook a lot and she got under her desk. Bookshelves came down and a filing cabinet slammed over. The power went off.

Later on, Lianne heard that Bexley was flooded and decided to walk home. She went back in to the office and the staff retrieved their handbags and locked the door. Her worker stopped off and picked up her granddaughter at the school. "While we were walking down the road, her other granddaughter, who had been in town for an interview with Unlimited, sent a text through saying 'buildings are down, people are dead and dying'".

The university

Several of the participants were at the university when the earthquake struck. Rosemary du Plessis was in her office with a colleague and two children. Her experience was very frightening:

The floor seemed to lift and I had little control over my body. All I could do was scoop [a child] up and

pull her under me as I ducked into a turtle position in the middle of the floor. I had this horrible thought that I might crush the fragile little body beneath me, but it seemed better to have her under me than knocked by the moving objects in the room.

After leaving the office, Rosemary dashed back for her handbag, and then evacuated the building. She said that at that time she had no notion of the seriousness of the quake.

Rosemary Baird was in her office in the History Department. She had noticed that quakes felt worse at the university than at home. This one did not feel overly dangerous to her. On the way out she tried to go back to retrieve her wallet and laptop, but was stopped by a fire warden.

Letitia Meadows was in the Social Work Department:

We assembled outside the building with social work staff and students. Quite quickly cars began to stream out of the car park and security staff directed and evacuated people. We were told not to re-enter the building but several of us ran quickly inside to retrieve car keys, handbags, and laptops.

Dame Malvina was in her studio at University of Canterbury with some of her students and they were talking about the earthquakes. "They were laughing and saying that, there's going to be a cluster of quakes." Dame Malvina went to make herself a cup of tea, and sat down at her desk with her lunch to do some work on the computer; then the earthquake struck. "I tried to get to a bowl of flowers which was rolling around on my piano, but it never tipped over. The shaking went on for a whole hour. Three times I made an attempt to get to the flowers and finally I just sat watching them shaking".

She got a text saying that the cathedral had collapsed as the 22 February struck. She had friends who she knew were in the cathedral - her PA, the Dean, and others. "I knew that some of them were underneath the cathedral in the crypt and I couldn't find out if they were alive or dead".

Dame Malvina got into her car and drove towards the airport on her way to the home of Lady Isaac. There

were a series of quakes and then a big quake as she approached the airport. "There was a car in front of me and I thought it was an elderly lady and she'd obviously frozen at the wheel. I went to get out of my car to see if I could help her and she pulled back in front of me. It was a young girl, obviously a student from the university, and she was terrified".

It took Dame Malvina an hour and a half just to get from the university to Lady Isaac's home, just past the airport. "And then I got a message from my PA to say that they had got out. I got a message from Brian Law in the cathedral to say that they had got out and he was walking in liquefaction nearly up to his thighs. I couldn't understand what he was talking about at the time". She stayed with Lady Isaac a lot in the period after the 22 February quake and her house shook every time there was a quake, "it really thumped".

Waimairi Beach

Emma Butler thought that school would be closed as she had lost power and water. She hopped in the car, which was outside because she couldn't get the other one out of the garage. Emma got to the rise on Aston Drive and there was water everywhere. "It was a lake and nobody could get through". So then she went home to get her bike to go around the other way to the school. She ran into another mother who said you couldn't get through that way either. This woman was panicking, so Emma decided to walk to collect the children. She met another mother who had fallen into a big hole up to her waist.

Emma had grown up with earthquakes so felt sort of calm about it all. Everything around the neighbourhood was still standing so it seemed OK. However, as she got closer to her children's school, it was a huge shock to see all the liquefaction covering the roads and playing fields of the school. There were huge holes in the footpaths and roads and the cars were submerged in these holes. She got the kids and then went around to her mother's house because it's closer to

school. Emma's sister was also there with her child. Emma's husband got home very late that evening, quite shaken. The family stayed downstairs in the same room for the first night. Emma reflects, "I'm pleased we lost power so we saw no footage of the city."

When Emma got to her granny flat, which was situated under the main house she found that "the windows were busted out, they had just popped out and were leaning off. It looked really bad ... The cladding had all come off; it was a timber framed structure ... and it was just naked ... all the insides of it were all on the outside, the brick cladding had come off everywhere, insulation was hanging out, and drainpipes half off the building, my garage was an empty shell". Seeing this, she assumed that the couple and their two children who lived in the house above her had just fled. Being new to Christchurch, the family had not experienced the September earthquake and she knew that the aftershocks had made the mother incredibly nervous. She later found out they had escaped unhurt, gone to collect the children from school and never went back to the house. They moved away the following week.

Emma went into her flat and grabbed whatever she could find in the dark, and then left again. "It was incredibly distressing to see my home so broken". She had arranged to spend the night at the house she had just come from. "My friends were so amazing, so many people helped look after me. I ended up sleeping on different people's floors for the next few weeks". Her friends Jon and Sharyn helped her get three car loads of stuff from the flat, which Jon stored in his garage, where he already had several other people's belongings.

The teachers and a stopwork meeting

A number of participants in this project were secondary school teachers. At the time of the earthquake most were converging on the Christchurch Town Hall for a union stopwork meeting.

Lindsey James parked on the 10th level of the Lichfield Street car park. She was late, and hurried across Cashel Street and into a narrow brick alleyway. As she was walking through the alleyway, she had this feeling of not being quite safe and felt quite uneasy. She walked briskly on and came to Cathedral Square. Lindsey remembers she had 11 minutes left before the meeting started and was thinking about the quickest route from there to the Town Hall. The ground moved dramatically, and as she saw the Cathedral spire come down she ran into the middle of the Square, even though, with a recent hip replacement, she was not supposed to run. There was lots of dust, people were screaming, and the ground kept moving. Lindsey had two thoughts - "This is the end of Christchurch" and "Not everyone is going to get out of this alive".

Kirsten Rennie and some of her colleagues had just grabbed coffees at the Metro Café in Colombo Street. As they left for the Town Hall, the building collapsed behind them. A woman being pelted with bricks was screaming out. Prue, one of Kirsten's colleagues, whom she was with, acted instinctively and grabbed Kirsten's arm, pulling her away from falling debris. Kirsten's rationale for standing beside a solid wall seemed the right thing, except solidity was no longer a feature of these inner city buildings. She recalled a very nice car parked nearby being pierced by a falling steel pole.

Chris Wilson was already seated in the Town Hall, waiting for the meeting to start:

I recall the most horrendous noise; violent shaking, rumbling, and the breaking of glass. I tried to get down on the floor under my seat. I discovered to my alarm that there was no room under the seat so I was forced to squat between the rows of seats until it felt safe to walk out into the foyer. I can remember shouting above the noise, 'Get down, get down!' The foyer was a mass of shocked, white faced people, broken glass, and shattered lights.

She thought at first that it was a localised problem. But once outside, she saw the huge dust cloud rising from the Square

and shrouding the Cathedral. To the north along Colombo Street, whole shop frontages were down.

Susan Allen and her friend were in Avonside Drive, heading for the meeting. "I watched the truck in front of me moving out of control and there were waves in the Avon River. I guess one of my powerful images will always be waves, big waves coming down the Avon." They were just about to cross over Fitzgerald Ave when Susan said "No, turn around". They saw all the dust and her friend thought she could smell gas. They turned around and drove back to school. Susan was grateful to have been with someone.

Leanne Everingham had just found a park outside St Luke's Church in Manchester Street. She remembers: "thinking how lucky I was to find a park so close (to the Town Hall) and also what a beautiful old church it was...not long after I walked back and saw half the church had gone".

Leanne had made it to the Town Hall foyer when the quake struck. She was thrown to the ground and lost a shoe. She can't remember much about other people but "people were falling over each other, there was creaking, and breaking and smashing and everything falling down. It was all about me getting out of there".

Home and away

Marie Rean and her husband had just had lunch and were sitting with a cup of tea like "two old darlings" in their rockers when the terrific shake occurred. Initially, "their hands shot up in the air with the cups being thrown in the air and tea running down everywhere". Following this Marie saw two large messes on the floor where everything had fallen off her cabinet right in front of her: "the stuff was just smashing all around us". John and Marie then held on to each other. Marie was crying as "my home, my lovely home...just shattered". Many of Marie's "incredibly precious" items were "just gone".

Diana Madgin was home by herself. Her house suffered significant damage. She watched the walls moving in and out. Her partner and daughter were out in the car. Heading back home, the road opened up behind them as they travelled. The small car could easily have been swallowed up in the cavities, but they arrived home safely.

A number of participants were home alone or with children. Kirsty was with her five year old niece. Kirsty ran to her as the wee girl was shouting "I hate earthquakes" to which Kirsty shouted back "I do too!" It felt as if all the windows in the house were breaking (and when Kirsty re-entered the house later that day, she could not believe they were all still intact.) The chimney she had been told was "not-going-anywhere" came crashing down, through the decking and into the swimming pool.

Zara remembered that: "When it hit I was standing with my son and we were in the door frame. My daughter jumped straight under the table and held onto the table legs. [She] looked like an Amazonian princess and rocked around with it and looked really feisty and looked like she thought it was great. Neither one cried and were totally fine. We then went and sat on the grass with the neighbours. The house was submerged in liquefaction. It was like a rocket."

Shelley Harford recalls:

I had just got Leroy to sleep for his afternoon nap in his new room when the earthquake hit us. The noise was immense. I couldn't stand or crawl and felt helpless as Leroy screamed and I couldn't get to him. Once the initial shaking stopped I got into his room and picked him up, telling him it was OK. Once he calmed a little he kept pointing to the swinging light shades in a very perplexed way. I got a text from my partner that he was OK. I couldn't see the city because of all the dust. It felt terrifying being inside so I got out and walked down the steps of our broken house to the street. What a mess! Our neighbours' houses didn't have walls anymore; it looked really bad.

Rebecca Macfie was in her downstairs office talking on the phone to a publisher in Wellington on the 22 February when the quake started. Rebecca describes the quake as "just a gigantic, violent thump - all at once - there was no build-up". Rebecca recalls screaming and immediately, instinctively, diving under her desk and dropping the phone. The quake seemed to go on and on and when it finally stopped Rebecca saw that the phone was still dangling. Eventually she emerged from under the desk to discover everything was completely smashed and trashed in her office.

Carol Hides was: "...terrified and it was my worst-case scenario. I was by myself. I am claustrophobic I am terrified about being crushed alive ...I thought my house was falling down...I never thought to get under the desk.... I just wanted to get out". She was holding onto the cat and was screaming. The office door had shut with the shaking. At some point she fell, was on the floor, something hurting and she crawled into the hallway in the house where the "damn grandmother clock" had fallen again. Huddling in the bathroom doorway she could hear things falling around the house. She had been making tomato sauce for pasta. "It was all over the floor. Everywhere. I was so pissed off. All that effort...I didn't want to clean that mess up".

Ruth Todd was alone at home. "My whole house sort of blew up like a volcano because I was almost on the

epicentre of that one in Lyttelton...The chimneys of course, waiting to be fixed, came through the ceiling right beside me. Well, only one fortunately, the other one went in the other direction. And I just dived under my old oak table and that saved my life." The roof tiles all came off, "dancing all around and on to the deck". Ruth felt she was lucky that she only had herself to worry about. After about half an hour, Ruth decided she needed to get out. She then heard her neighbour banging on the door, so she screamed out she was OK. As she looked out from under her table Ruth could see that all her books had fallen off the shelves, and glass and crystal from her cabinet had all smashed. Ruth ran in bare feet over the books and glass, grabbed her car keys and (uncharged) cell phone, and went outside.

Christine and her partner had just returned home from grocery shopping. Christine was in the study. Everything fell around her and she was trapped in her wheelchair. A niece was at the mall because she had a half day off for the teacher's only day. She came over immediately to help prevent liquefaction getting into the house. She helped get Christine out of the study before she went home. The property was covered in liquefaction, and power and water went off. They had the phone until 7 p.m. and then they only had the cell phone.

Michelle was in her flat at New Brighton with her son, who was watching TV. "And the hardest thing for him was that the TV stopped! 'My movie, Mummy! My movie!' And we had to get into the door frame. 'My movie! 'Doorframe!'" Michelle thinks he coped better with it than she did. "It was hard to hold everything together. I thought if I broke down, then he would do the same. So I had to be strong for the both of us."

We were in the door frame as the house was violently shaking... I was holding on him and I also had a neighbour with me. He had only just returned his boys back to his ex-wife. The three of us were huddled in the door frame. We did have a door in that frame at the time, but now it's missing because the earthquake spat it out while we were standing

there. It fell in one direction and we were in the other direction.

Michelle could hear water and found that her hot water cylinder was disconnected and water was running down the walls. Michelle suddenly thought about the mains and dashed outside to get the mains turned off. And then she tried to put buckets down to get the water that was coming out of the ceiling. But it was impossible. So she went outside. "I thought, 'Well, the water is just going to drain from the cylinder, the house is going to be damp, but at least we are still alive!'"

Sina, who parents her two teenage grandsons, was having a good day. They were at school and she was at their rented home in Waltham. She had finished her chores, had a shower and was headed off to Housie in her car. At this point the quake began and it was "like pulling me up... I end up shaking, my feet is lifted up, I scream. I was crying, 'What about [my sons]? Lord.... please Lord, what about my kids?' ... I am their mother... I go on and on to God... It was like He picked me up and threw me down... and there is a big rock over there [in the garden]... and he banged me down... That is why my knee is hurt". Sina points to her left knee.

The liquefaction started coming up in the garden, and Sina was terrified of being buried alive. A friend rang her to say she had the boys. Sina set off to the school to pick them up, still very scared. "I was so scared we all sleep in the lounge". At night they left the sliding door open in case they needed a quick exit. "After a shock we say a prayer". Sina has a strong faith. "I always believe in God and His love for us and, because we were still there [still alive], maybe He wants us to do something".

Adele was at home in their home in Avonside when the shaking started. She described two movements, the up and down and the side to side shaking. She got up feeling frightened and cried out a loud "aaaahhhh" sound. She was quite frightened and wanted to run "even though I thought our house was safe, as it had not been red stickered". Her van had fallen down a sinkhole that had opened up. Trying to get it out, Adele's jeans became caked in mud. A relative

arrived and pulled the van out of the hole. It took Adele two and a half hours to get to her son's school.

There were a lot of sirens sounding. There were shops collapsed in Stanmore Road. "It looked awful". "Whenever there was an aftershock, people would just jump in the van because they were frightened". When Adele asked one lady who jumped in "where do you want to go?" she replied, "anywhere but here". They drove past people sitting in their cars crying. "It was really very scary".

Nellie and a friend were at home in Waltham cooking noodles for lunch... "The next thing the oven started jumping at me and I am looking at it thinking 'what is going on?' ...and then the floor started disappearing from my legs... 'What is this?' I said to myself, and then we clicked on that it was an earthquake, and my friend went back through the house to get outside".

Nellie turned the back of her stove off, in case something happened, and "we ran through the lounge, but my friend stopped... and I said, 'what are you doing? Just keep going'". Nellie had looked up and saw that the roof, which leaked in the rain, was collapsing. She pushed her friend out into the hallway, and by the time Nellie got under the door frame in the hall, the lounge ceiling had started to cave in. "I just could see all this dust coming from behind me. I had a wall unit in the hallway which was falling down as well... we just had to get out". "We stood on whatever had fallen down just to get outdoors".

After getting out of her damaged home in Waltham, Nellie kept thinking about her children and that she had to get to them, "but my mate kept trying to hold me, 'can you just wait until it stops shaking?' and she was digging her nails into me holding me so tight. We knew it was really bad". Once the shakes stopped, Nellie and her friend went to Waltham Community Cottage. There were quite a few people gathered there in a state of shock. Nellie ran to Waltham Primary School and grabbed her two younger children who were out on the field with all the others. "You guys OK?" and they replied 'Yeah, mum, freaky though'.

Nippy had just got home to Aranui, "I made some coffee and sat on the couch". Next thing her coffee went flying; everything went flying: "it was hell".

Her TV fell over and broke ("I have been through 3 TVs"). Nippy put her shoes on, grabbed her bag with "money and all good stuff" in, and went to leave. She couldn't get out, her door was stuck. Her dog was barking outside. In the end, she kicked the door in and went down the drive to see her neighbour. "She was in shock and her Mum was as white as a ghost, so I got them out of the house".

Nippy and her neighbour went to get their children from two schools. Nippy wanted to walk, but they took the car. Getting down Pages Road was chaotic. Nippy's street was pretty clear, but as soon as they turned into Pages Road there was "flooding and liquefaction everywhere. People were panicking; the cars were just bumper to bumper all the way through".

When she got home with her younger daughter, they went and sat outside. About the only thing not broken in the living area was a pack of beers on the bench, so Nippy took that outside and drank some. She was worried about her other daughter who was studying at the CPIT polytech in town:

You knew the city was had it before we really knew. We just knew. That there'd be death. That there was going to be death. I started pacing the front, up and down, "where's my daughter?" And my neighbour was there, at the front, "you seen her?" I'm panicking, panicking, come inside, come back out and there she was. She was muddled up and yucky but made it home.

Once her eldest daughter was home, Nippy thought they should set up camp. "We had lost power, water and sewage, but I knew, always knew that you could get water from the hot water cylinder, so we filled up the bath, filled up the container, then just got the long drop done and set up camp. And that was it."

Karen, a New Brighton resident, was not at work, but was helping a friend who had recently had a baby. As it started shaking, Karen "jumped on her friend" throwing herself over the top of her and the baby, to protect them. Her friend, who had been breast feeding at the time, said "Don't squash the baby!"

Karen agreed to drive her friend to the school. The concrete at the end of the driveway had lifted up and scraped the bottom off her car. "The roads were flooding, there was liquefaction everywhere. My friend was worried about car seats, but I told her, 'We are just going around the corner'". Karen had to ring her friend's partner as well because her friend was so distraught.

Emily was having her first baby visit from the well-child provider, and they were talking. "It was quite different to the September quake. The floor of the lounge was like waves and with it went lots of shuddering and the noise was horrendous". There were noises of things falling and breaking in the kitchen and, being a wooden house, everything was rattling. Her husband arrived home quickly and forced a door open. Emily sat outside with her daughter.

Many of the neighbours were coming out of their houses, all looking very shell-shocked and some were crying. They could see dust coming from the Port Hills, Sumner and dust clouds over the central city, so they knew that this time that "things were really bad". She found out that her good friend had picked up her son from school.

Michelle Whitaker was at home alone, and got thrown against the door, banging her head. She rushed outside and realised she had to get to her son. With the power off, she tried to manually open the garage door, got it open, but another shake closed it again and jammed it. She walked to her son's school and stayed there with him for a while. With the back field being so close to the Estuary, water kept seeping up through the ground, causing them to keep constantly on the move to be able to sit at drier spots. She eventually got picked up by her father.

Gina's home near the AMI stadium fared badly in the February earthquake. Her daughter had just walked in

from school, which had closed early due to the teacher stop work. "I heard this almighty rumble, and I looked at my daughter and it got worse, and I jumped on top of her to protect her."

Gina said it was odd that she didn't hear anything as it fell. It was only after the shaking stopped that she realised how much damage had been caused. The whole TV cabinet had toppled over; the microwave was on the floor. The contents of the fridge were all over the floor. At first, everything seemed alright outside. Gina and her daughter went to check on the neighbours. Then a powerful aftershock struck, throwing Gina into the side of a car. "Then the water came up. It took about ten minutes to get up to my knees." Some people were moving into a house on the corner, and a large truck was parked outside. The driver rushed to move the truck, shortly before the road just collapsed, causing a huge hole which then filled with water. Gina's mother arrived and nearly fell into the huge hole in the road.

Dee Turner was sitting down in her Sumner home to watch Emmerdale "as I do at lunch-time, and I have never...I can still feel it. It was like... I was sitting in that chair (Dee pointed to the particular chair) it was going like a see-saw". After things stopped rocking and Dee had heard all the things falling out of her kitchen cupboard, she then saw the mess on the floor. Dee had just filled up her freezer with meat and other supplies - "I had just bought it actually".

Later, the power was still off and there was only one neighbour left in the block of Christchurch City Council flats. Dee said to a friend: "will you come and spend the night with me?" Dee had tried to contact her daughter and her grandson and partner. However, soon after this, her daughter came up the drive. It was such a relief for Dee. It had taken her daughter a long time to get from the city to Sumner, and she took Dee back with her. Dee told her daughter: "look I am not going to go to bed tonight; I am just going to sit on the sofa". So her grandson and his partner dragged a mattress into the lounge "and slept at my feet".

Alia was visiting one of her daughters for lunch to see her baby. "It was very scary, very shaky, and when it

happened we couldn't stand. I took my daughter, and we hold each other. Then suddenly I told her, 'take the baby's stuff - we have to leave the house'. The bedroom door was stuck because of the earthquake. I couldn't close it or open it to take the baby out, but we pushed, and we opened the door. I took the baby and she just took the baby's stuff and we go outside".

Her husband arrived later, but he had not picked up their youngest son from school. So Alia and another son went to pick up her youngest son. "All the street was full of liquefaction. The street, it was all with water and it was very hard to drive to come to Chisnallwood School and take my youngest son". They then drove to Alia's house, but the street was full of water and "I couldn't reach my car". Alia's son said "Mum you stay here and I will go and get some clothes for you". Alia's son walked through the water while Alia stayed in the car with her youngest son. "We just shook". 92 year old Helen was at home alone in Avonhead. Like the September quakes, the February quake made her think of the bombing of London during the Second World War. She was sitting in her chair and grabbed the television. Her ornaments fell all around her. "We just hope we don't have any more".

Another older woman, Estelle, had finished lunch and was relaxing when the earthquake came. "It was dreadful wasn't it? Everything moved and things fell everywhere. My front room was a real mess with everything fallen down. I remember with that one, I actually went outside, because the young woman living next door was out there and she was a real cot case with the first one. And, she was really, really, bad with the second one. I stood with her and I said 'look, it will stop'. She was shaking. She lives with her father who is an invalid. He had a bad stroke a few years ago. She is a very nervy type. She didn't know what to do". Estelle felt "they were as safe standing there as anywhere". When she went back inside, she found "a dreadful mess".

Mary, whose adult children have left home, was getting ready to have lunch with a friend at her home in Woolston. She was about to have a shower:

Then wah-hoo! I was surfing in the lounge - yes, I was surfing the lounge - standing on one foot and going with waves and going 'Oh! My stuff is getting broken.'

She and her son checked that the neighbours were alright and then they went out to visit a friend. It took them two hours to go a short distance and they decided to return home. Later, they went for a walk and saw big holes, burst pipes and an "unreal" landscape.

Nicki was at home in New Brighton and her son was at school. She described the effects of the earthquake:

It was like a movie stunt, where everything was flying past me, and the bookshelf was rocking back and forth, then fell onto the table. Every single cupboard in my kitchen opened and I stood in the doorway. I didn't know what to do, whether to run outside, what to do! The fridge ended up a foot and a half away from the wall; the pantry opened and everything fell out and smashed. I couldn't believe it, I was really scared.

Kristy had EQC inspectors in her rental house in Woolston when the earthquake struck. "It was so bad I was screaming". Her uncle was thrown across the room onto the couch. Kristy, her partner and one of the EQC visitors sheltered in the door frame with arms around each other. The other EQC visitor stood in the kitchen holding onto the fridge which was toppling over. She was immediately very worried about her children. They left the EQC people to lock up the house and went to get the children. Once the children were retrieved, they returned home.

The roads were torn up and the bridge they had to cross was cracking as they drove over it. Fortunately her uncle had a jeep. He decided to leave the jeep at Kristy's place and bike home as he was not sure how the roads would be. He always keeps a bike in the back of the jeep. "Bucket loads of sewage was coming down our residential street... it was thick, it was disgusting".

On 22 February Tokanga and her husband were not working. They went to collect an item for their next container to Tonga, and had just arrived home when the quake hit.

"I think we were just sitting down ... and then the shake hits. It was, 'Oh, my gosh!' I was so surprised and thinking during the shakes... 'When is this gonna stop?' and we had a big flat screen 42 inch TV, but we placed it on top of our entrainment unit because it couldn't fit it... Lucky enough it was only the two of us at home... I was sitting there during this shake. I said 'Grab the TV'. So he stood up and hold on to the TV during this quake".

For Tokanga the shake felt like "travelling on a boat... this rocking sensation that carried you back and forth". She wasn't really scared - "in a way I was enjoying the rocking". But at the same time she wanted it to stop so she could find out how her kids were.

Ngairé believes she has been "extremely lucky that where I live here the land is very good. I have had no serious damage to my house. I am in a complex here of four town-houses. We have all got to know our neighbours better and we all check up on each other. If there is an earthquake we go out, 'Are you alright?'"

Ngairé has considered moving from her two-storied house "to something that is one-story". She still has cosmetic repairs to be done but thinks, "What area would I go to and how can you tell that the land is all right?" She knows the land where she lives is good. "This used to be a market garden here. It is good solid land and there has been no problem with the land, so at the moment I will stay here. It's probably about a good a thing as anything".

Irene was up in the other end of the long passage when the earthquake struck and it was hard to get to the doorway of her room and stand on her feet. "It seemed a long time - and it wasn't that long but it seemed a long time- and I was thinking of him. And the noise was so loud - he was yelling at the top of his lungs at the other end of the hall-for me. It frightened him." The noise of the quake was so loud that

Irene and her son couldn't hear each other. Irene looked down the hall as she stood in my bedroom doorway, and the house was going from east to west, east to west, rocking. She thought, "It's going to rock off its foundations, this old villa!"

Rosemary Bloxham had been very unwell in the months leading up to the quake and was in hospital for two months. She had lost her leg some time before the quake and had a very bad abscess on the other leg which was in a boot. The day of the February quake was supposed to be "a really happy day" as this was the day she came home from hospital. "The earthquake struck about an hour after I'd been home. We were in our living room at the bottom of the house which was built on three levels. The two levels above crashed down on us. The fireplace crashed inward and I went flying over the top of the fireplace which had come in about four feet. I can't remember very much of flying over the fireplace, but later I knew I had broken ribs and a very badly gashed head". Rosemary could see what happened to her 83 year old husband as the quake struck. "I actually witnessed him going up and his hands actually touched the roof. He was sitting in a very substantial leather chair and that went up too. We were told later that we were in the worst part to be".

Tufuga was at home on 22 February just getting up to have lunch. When the quake hit a delivery man had just arrived to drop of a new chair. Tufuga said to him "Oi, you must not drop my chair... Find somewhere you can stand so you can hold on to my chair". He did hold on to the chair and afterwards they both laughed that she had been more concerned about her chair than him. Being able to see the funny side of the quake made Tufuga think "OK, so there's a happy way of seeing and a happy way of enjoying the life even though I know there's the big earthquake again".

Although her new chair was undamaged, Tufuga's washing machine and microwave fell over and broke (these were later replaced by insurance). Her fridge freezer stopped working. Tufuga didn't want the hassle of taking the fridge freezer to a dump: "So what did I do? I went and stood and looked at the fridge freezer. I says, 'You better go for me because it cost me a lot of money to get you to put in my

house'. So I kicked it (laughs). And about a few seconds I think, or a minute or so, the fridge come on. It was OK ... I didn't kick it with a soft kick. I gave it a good whamp actually". She also lost a lot of dishes, which made her feel poor. She reflected that even though she could buy these items, she couldn't replace their sentimental value. "It's not about materialistic feelings. It's about the sentimental feelings that you have about the things that live with you all your life."

Freda was in the kitchen and had just finished her midday hot meal when the earthquake struck. She became aware of the shaking and hung on to the sink. The shaking got worse and she held on to the cupboard doors and managed to get to the door jamb and stood there. "It was absolutely dreadful this time. My pots went up and down and everything fell off in the porch outside. There was soil all over the porch... When I eventually tried to get out, I couldn't open the back door". Freda's main phone was fortunately functioning. "A friend phoned me and said, 'It is really bad, I've had my radio and the Cathedral [is] gone and there are a lot of people they think are missing'. I realised how bad it was then. My son wanted to me to go to their place, but I said no. However, the power didn't come on this time. He came back at 7.30 and said, 'You have no option Mum, I'm not leaving you here without power'... so I went out with him to West Melton".

Tommy was happily using her overlocker making cushion covers. She decided to have an early lunch and then go back to the job of sewing the covers; then at about 1 pm "all hell broke loose". She was lifted up by the quake and felt her finger tips touch the ceiling. She was then thrown backwards out of the room and ended up lying on the floor and was able to see out the front door. She had a huge lump on her head. The overlocker was thrown upwards and landed on her right foot crushing it. She tried to get it off, but couldn't and then attempted to push it with one hand as she had no power in her leg to move it. Only one sofa was sitting in its original position. While she lay on the floor, Tommy wanted to sleep, but helicopters were whirring overhead all the time.

It was 27 hours before an ambulance arrived. Meanwhile her neighbour came in to lie beside her. She pulled out a plastic chair from the bathroom (over the rubble) and got two duvets. She used one to protect Tommy's head injury and one to cover them both and keep them warm while they waited for help. During this time, Tommy drifted in and out of consciousness.

Out and about

Many of the women at home or work that day had frightening experiences. For those who were out shopping, having lunch or doing other tasks, the earthquake fear was possibly compounded by being in a strange place. Some spaces certainly did not feel safe.

Guine Newport and her sister were out having lunch at Northlands Mall. Guine was on crutches, having been released from hospital the previous day, having received treatment for an injury sustained in the September earthquakes. They felt the earthquake, and some students nearby were screaming and ran out. The shopping centre was to be evacuated.

Guine got up, but she was not used to using the crutches and her leg was in plaster. Two strong men who were passing by suddenly lifted her up and took her out of the Mall. Guine said, "No I am too heavy!", but they just carried her out. Her sister strung their bags over the crutches and put them on her shoulder and ran for her life.

Also at the shops was Judith McKenzie, having a cup of tea in the basement café at Ballantynes:

The tables shifted one way and then the other. I stayed at the table as did another person but some others jumped up and screamed. I remember that the lights went out and then back on again - I think that Ballantynes may have had a generator. I went up to the main doors but these were kept closed. I wasn't sure if this was intentional or not but I asked "do you mind if I eat my lunch?" Once the doors were opened I made my way down Cashel Street. A

blue post had fallen across the street and I helped people to get over this post. While my car was in the parking building, I did not attempt to access this but made my way down towards and through Hagley Park, I walked up to my knees in liquefaction/water as I headed in the direction of home.

June was at the hospital, waiting for her auntie's body to come out of the morgue. Arrangements were being made for a memorial service that very day. Apart from the death of her auntie, everything had been "going just fine". The earthquake happened "very unexpectedly." Exiting Christchurch Public Hospital they saw a lot of chaos - "it was just crazy... In Hagley Park the trees were just shaking like this [indicates] ... and we were all like 'what the hell?' It was like it didn't even feel like an earthquake; it was just this thing that happened straight away."

Her two children were at Wainoni Primary School on the other side of town. They made their way along Fitzgerald Avenue and Pages Road. June describes "power lines coming off and hanging in the water", and how she just had "to drive past them". The trip took "nearly two hours just because of the state of the traffic, there was water splashing everywhere and it was really, really crazy". They were unable to make it back over the other side of town for her aunt's memorial service.

"So my poor auntie, she was pretty much just left on her own really, even her own daughter couldn't make it". In fact "no one from Christchurch made it to the service". A burial had been arranged in the North Island for June's aunt with her side of the family. "She did end up getting picked up and taken up North, because she's Māori ... and having a service up there with her side of the family."

Tinks had been over at Hornby Mall, shopping.

I come out of the mall and got into the car, was driving home and I thought if I didn't know better I would say that was an earthquake. But I wasn't sure. I thought it could have been a truck going past or something. And I know I slowed down and put my head out of the window and I said to this couple 'is

that an earthquake?' - They said 'yeah'. So I drove home. That frightened me a bit because as I was driving down the road, the road was opening up and shutting. This was the main road coming home into Blenheim Road, and down into Brougham Street, and all I could think of was getting home to make sure my daughter was alright.

Helen Heddell was in the Telecom building near the airport to collect something. She was on the first floor when the building started to shake. She shouted to the staff to get under the door. Once the shaking stopped she said 'let's go!': "And we shot out, shot down the two flights. We got out and I just said to them 'Get away from all that concrete.'"

Helen McCaul was 11 days away from her wedding, and headed into town for some retail therapy and for a dress fitting. She was early, so popped into Briscoes. She tells the story:

I heard a rumbling noise which seemed to come from a long way off. Something fell from a shelf at the back of the store. A woman screamed from somewhere close by and I sensed a swaying movement under my feet. Then suddenly the floor really moved. It was like being on a ship in a rolling sea as I lurched from side to side, unable to keep my feet under control, and was thrown towards the shelves as stock tumbled to the floor. I became aware of people running past me. The noise was deafening as the rumbling grew louder; women screamed and pans and crockery crashed to the floor.

It all seemed surreal and I felt I was in the middle of a nightmare, watching what was happening around me from a distance and not being really part of it. Something inside me said "Get out" and I turned to look for the door. The floor of the shop was rolling around under my feet and I staggered in the direction of the doorway, swaying from side to side like a drunk. I couldn't reach the door as it also appeared to be swaying and moving. Noticing a

large structural pillar ahead of me I headed for it thinking that if I could hold onto it I would be able to stand still. But again, I couldn't reach the pillar as the floor was still rolling and I was staggering all over the place. It was like taking a step forward only to find I was three feet sideways as the floor rocked and rolled. And still the endless noise as more merchandise hit the floor and the rumbling continued. No one appeared to be helping anyone else and everyone who could was heading for the door. I finally made it to the door and felt the cool air on my face. I was aware that my heart was thumping in my chest and that my face was hot and very flushed. All of this had taken less than a minute.

Looking around I saw people running in all directions and cars driving erratically as everyone fled to the supposed safety of their homes. I reached for my mobile phone and tried to call home but the lines were down. I felt very alone. With my mind racing I drove home, back down the streets I had driven down only 15 or so minutes ago. I still didn't know what had really happened other than realising we had just had another severe earthquake.

Allie McMillan was in the 'glass box', the modern Christchurch South library:

I slid off the couch onto all fours while the building rattled and bucked for what seemed an eternity. When it was over I remembered how grateful I felt toward a gentleman who took the time to come and see if I was all right. Then I found I was leaving the building without returning my books to the shelves. I felt strangely guilty for this dereliction of duty. After a few minutes outside surrounded by crying people, I found my car. As I drove off along rippling roads, I looked along Colombo Street toward town. I saw the cloud of dust and hear the initial wail of sirens.

The building was opened only in 2003, but was later shut as inspections found parts of it were below the minimum building code. It has since re-opened.

Several people were in cars

Anna Mowat was in a taxi, and it felt as if they had hit potholes. As noted above, Susan Allen and her friend saw the truck in front go out of control, and waves on the Avon River. Melissa Parsons "felt the quake as a double tyre blow-out while slowing to turn left onto University Drive." Ange Davidson said she thought someone had rear-ended her car, and then that her engine was falling off its mount. Archana Tandon thought there was something wrong with her car as it wouldn't stop. She decided she'd have to jump out of it, so turned her ignition off and jumped.

Violet, a mother of two young children, worked full-time as a mental health provider and was living in Lyttelton with her de facto husband and her children at the time of the 22 February quake. She was in the car with a client when the quake struck. Suddenly "my car was in front of another car on the other side of the road and the approaching car was still driving towards me". At first, Violet "did not realise what was happening, my client started screaming, I held on to her arm and asked her to 'try to calm down, I can't help you if you keep screaming'". With her client screaming and mayhem on the road, Violet eventually made it to the nursery school. Violet found her son asleep in his cot. The staff had not wanted to wake him and so had left him sleeping. This infuriated Violet, thinking that the roof could have collapsed on her sleeping baby. "I was not happy... I was so angry". She put him in the car and drove back to work.

She describes the liquefaction coming up, the uncertainty about where to go, and the people: "everyone was so dazed it was like an apocalypse had happened". In particular, she and her client usually went into a particular cafe at that time of the day, but neither had any money this day and they had skipped that stop. The cafe collapsed.

Rana was on duty at the Tuam Street car park. She had just had lunch and chatted with her mother, and they had been saying they hoped there would not be another earthquake. "Well, lo and behold six minutes later at 12.51 p.m. the whole world turned upside down. We wondered what the hell was going on!"

It took a few seconds to realise it was another earthquake but this was so much more violent than Rana had previously experienced: "My coffee fell on me and I was holding onto a barrier arm as I was getting flung up and down. People were screaming, crying, alarms were going off, dust, dirt and bricks everywhere with an awful smell. The Tuam Street car park looked like a river had emerged all of a sudden with liquefaction and sewage streaming everywhere". Workers from the nearby Ford Motor company implored Rana to move away quickly from her spot as she was adjacent to a six foot brick wall. People congregated on the grass verge outside the car park until the water and sewage subsided.

Rana was dealing with people and was then overwhelmed with the need to check on her family; "My family, my family I need to get home to see my family. I went back to the car park pay booth to lock up. Because there was no power a few of the men had to break the barrier arm so the cars could get out. Drivers stopped at the booth wanting to pay - bless them - but I told them politely to just go".

Earthquake colours

Teruyo said: "When I stand up and look back from the window, the city was (I think you have seen the pictures) - like covered with dust, sort of like grey and it was covered like a cloud. My image of Christchurch just turned grey. Then the alarms started ringing and there was noise. We just kept saying, 'Are you okay? Are you okay?' and then everyone grabbed their computer or whatever they could take to escape from the building."

Many participants had descriptions of the earthquakes. One of the most novel was Peggy Kelly's short description: "Pink. I think it is because between us and the

city there was the Knox Church and it was coming down and the whole air was full of pink (red brick) dust, so for other people that earthquake was white and grey, but for me it was pink".

At school

Ella (aged 15) was at school at Avonside Girls' High School. The school was actually closed because of a teachers' meeting, but Ella had stayed on to do some work. When the quakes hit, "we were in the drama room, which is obviously a blacked out room with lights everywhere, hanging right above you. We had only just gotten in there with our coffees, lunch and stuff, and all of a sudden the light goes out, you hear this shaking, and you look at the lights rattling above you... So that was pretty scary but we all got out okay. As soon as we actually got outside, we noticed the damage. Because Avonside Girls' did have a lot of damage ... bricks fallen, everything..."

Ella was not allowed to go home alone, but in the end went with a friend. The roads were wet. "There were water lines bursting everywhere; it took like two hours to drive a ten minute drive". "It was bumpy, especially in Avonside area; it looked like people were driving through a pond or something...sewage...gross stuff...people stressing and honking. And some of the traffic lights were out... it was kind of scary". Ella still hadn't managed to get in contact with her mum. "My phone went out for like twelve hours. I managed to call her at one o'clock that morning. Of course, she was stressing because she had got my voice messages, but she had no idea where I was".

Fiona went to her son's school to pick him up before the quake, as the teacher stop work meeting was on and school was finishing early. She took him to work with her, and they were in the outside yard of their business when the earthquake hit. She was looking for her husband who was inside and then she saw him. "He's staggering like a drunk with the violence of the movement. I spun around to face the road to move further away from the building (which was

concrete block) and he didn't think I had moved far enough. He didn't realise I was about to move, and he actually tackled me and threw me to the ground." Fiona later found out she had broken her wrist, damaged her elbow and badly cut her chin from this fall.

I don't know whether being on the ground, or standing up is the best way to experience an earthquake. But at least when you're on your own two feet you feel like you can do something. It's a different sensation to being flat out, then you are feeling it through your whole body.

Fiona's journey home with her husband and son from close to the city to Avondale was long and scary. At one point they were stopped in Ottawa Road by a man who believed there was a crack in the road and he wasn't sure how deep it was. They watched an oncoming car cross it before continuing. They went to Fiona's mother's home past Porritt Park.

It had flooded, and you didn't know where the road was and you didn't know if there was road. So we drove up on to the river bank; Brent had had to do this to get Mum during the September earthquake, this time the bank was a bit more scary because there were huge cracks in it. So we were up on this bank and you had to dodge around trees and there was a guy that stopped us, he was on a bike, he was another good civilian who was standing there. He wanted to know if we wanted to go over the Avondale Bridge because that bridge was out and you couldn't get through. And that's what he did, just stood there telling people that you couldn't get through.

They continued along the bank "and I can remember looking through the window at the cracks, wondering if they were going to hold up in an aftershock."

The February quake: counting the cost

What to do next after a large earthquake? The women in this project sought to find their loved ones, return to their homes (or, if already home, start cleaning up the mess), assess the damage to their lives and start to put things right.

It had become obvious to many in the central city that people would be injured and killed as a result of the earthquakes. Many of the participants set out on determined or even frantic quests to find their loved ones, sometimes fearing the worst.

At the Town Hall, where the stopwork meeting was now aborted, the staff of each school gathered together. Leanne Everingham had lost her handbag, with car keys and phone, as well as her shoe. With two other teachers, Leanne began a difficult journey to collect two of her children from St Paul's primary school on the Catholic Cathedral site.

They started walking along Oxford Terrace then saw the PGC building had collapsed "It was terrible. We saw grown men covered in dust and crying. I didn't have any shoes on and it was scary with rocks and debris all over the road". They went back then plotted a better route, down Kilmore Street then Barbadoes Street.

As they reached the Fire Department, "I was told that I could not go on in bare feet. A young woman was passing by and said, 'Here, have my ugg boots'. She said she had socks and a car just around the corner. The ugg boots were such an amazing help because I had a lot more walking to do that day". As they continued the walk down Barbadoes Street to the Catholic Cathedral site, "people were trudging along silently; cars were stuck in the road, rubble everywhere, like a war zone. It was unbelievable. One man fell over behind me -a big man - he was very upset. I turned around and held his hand for a block or two, then he went his way and we carried on. People were very supportive of each other. I remember that very clearly".

Several family members converged at the school to pick up their children. They all started walking home. Once they got to Hills Road they struck too much liquefaction and

water to go much further. A man stopped and piled them all into his car, drove them through the water on Hills Road up to Marshlands Road by QEII Drive. Things seemed fine there. But after another ride got them to their street, their home was flooded with water and mud and they had to wade into their house. They grabbed their tent and went to Burwood, where they camped on Leanne's brother's lawn that night.

Allie McMillan rushed to her son's baby swim school and helped there, then went to Beckenham school to find her older grandson.

When we arrived at the school, the liquefaction and sewerage was bubbling up in the playground. Classes were sitting in rows, many children crying, while teachers clutched clip boards as they released children to their parents. My grandson rushed up to us, full of hugs, and we set off home.

It took Salma eight hours to find her son, who had recently started high school in the central city. They then headed for home through Hagley Park where Salma reported that she "couldn't deconstruct it, I couldn't make sense of it all. I saw this Somali woman who was quite pregnant and pushing a wheel chair". Salma helped this woman and despite her not be able to speak the same language; there was a sense of connection through their shared experience of having been through the quake.

Kirsten Rennie and her fellow teachers fled from the aborted Town Hall meeting. She thought it was interesting to see people who were attired in such a way that one would expect them to be in control, such as dark suited men, losing control. Most didn't have a grasp on what to do. A group of them made their way back to school. Her children were at school in Lyttleton, and she had heard that the whole of the town had come down over there. Someone drove her to the Bridle Path, but then they decided to drive over Dyers Pass Road. It took some time to get there. She found her children with their father. They were very traumatised, and she thinks they spent the night under the

table. With no power or water, the next few days were difficult.

Chris Wilson had also intended to go back to school from the Town Hall. Walking along Kilmore St on the Town Hall side a collapsing wall of bricks narrowly missed her. She became more alarmed and determined to get out of the city and back to her home at Ilam:

All thought of trudging towards the east and school was long forgotten. As we walked along Kilmore St we waded through a stream of silt and water with burst pipes spilling forth. I rolled my trousers up, took off my patent leather wedges, and walked in bare feet. By this stage people were rushing along and crying. We were cautioned not to continue walking along Kilmore St and past the Copthorne so we made our way up Victoria Street to Peterborough Street and walked alongside Hagley Park and along Harper Avenue.

Chris and her friend were offered a ride by a young man, who proved adept in using the road and footpath to make progress. She got home and "My husband and I fell into each other's arms; we were so relieved to see each other."

Chris decided she would have to find her handbag:

For some strange irrational reason I decided that my husband and I should set out for Avonside to retrieve my handbag from my car in the school car park. I could not be persuaded otherwise. Looking back I think I was so shocked that I needed to keep moving and do something, ridiculous though it was. I would not be persuaded otherwise. The trip there was slow and difficult. Hills Rd was a terrible mess and the Swanns Road Bridge over the Avon River was buckled. After retrieving my handbag we drove back to Ilam which took hours and hours

Laine Barker was with a large family group for a birthday lunch at Wendy's. Once they got outside, Laine surprised herself with her presence of mind. She now attributes this to her maternal instinct. Laine told everyone that they needed to walk together to the Avon River to keep away from the

buildings. Initially Laine's daughter refused to move. She wanted to return to the building to retrieve her cell phone so she could ring her partner. But then two big shop windows smashed in front of them and Sam "just started walking". It later turned out that Laine's other daughter had picked up all the family's phones, keys, presents and wallets off the table as they left. Laine's main memory of town is "very fine, very grey dust over everything". By the time the second big shock came, the family were all sitting on the river bank.

Sara Epperson and her workmates stayed outside while her boss tried to help at a collapsed building. People gave jackets to people who were cold or shared their phone if they'd been able to get a text through. "I have a clear memory of my boss taking out his phone and using the camera on it to film a volcano of liquefaction in the street saying, "The council will want to know about this"". It was another absurd action in retrospect, but the scope of what had happened hadn't really sunk in yet.

They set off to the boss's house in Riccarton, a difficult trip. Someone on Riccarton Road opened their home and had a sign inviting people to use their toilet.

The roads were in terrible condition in many areas, with liquefaction and flooding. Melissa Parsons took nearly three hours to get from Bryndwr to Spreydon, to pick up her two boys from daycare.

Lynne left the polytechnic area to retrieve her car in Tuam Street. She then drove home to Sumner, through growing liquefaction. She was low on petrol and anxious about her family. Eventually Lynne got all the way to the Countdown Supermarket in Ferrymead. She wondered why there were so many cars coming out of Sumner & Redcliffs. She soon discovered that the Ferrymead Bridge was out, Shag Rock had fallen, and the cliffs were down. She turned back. Later, she tried again to get to Sumner, this time through Lyttleton. They were turned back by an army tank. They eventually got home the next day, to find a dreadful mess in the suburb.

Raewyn Crowther's office was on the corner of Fitzgerald Avenue and Armagh Street. As they waited in the

car park, people started walking past away from town: "...ashen faced, some of them bleeding, people with towels around their shoulders, lots of foreigners, perhaps tourists from hotels. There was a mass of humanity sweeping past the gate, and she wondered where they were going. They just had to get out of the city."

Her partner was gridlocked in traffic when she eventually got hold of him. He told her to walk to a friend's place in Linwood. "I have rheumatoid arthritis and don't do walk[ing]". But there was no choice, so she walked the 3km through liquefaction. She knew what it was at this stage, and told people who were already starting to shovel that it was easier to wait until it was dry.

Anne didn't want to leave her car in the city, so she decided to take it home. What would normally be a 12 minute journey home took four hours. She left from work down Bealey Ave and encountered liquefaction at Hills Road. Whilst leaving town, she saw that the emergency response had begun. On the way, she picked up a young girl and took her part of her way home, talking with her as they drove along very slowly. At New Brighton Road, Anne could see from the state of the roads that her small non-4WD vehicle wasn't going to make it, as there was flooding and cars sunk into deep holes in the road. She drove up on the footpath at Locksley Ave and left her car at Avonview Rest Home. Others there helped her walk home, and navigate the knee deep liquefaction in the streets. Normally a 30 minute walk, this trek took almost an hour.

At first, Rosemary du Plessis, her visitor and the two children tried to drive from the University to Cashmere, but the traffic was so bad they abandoned the cars. They started walking towards the house of another friend, but the children were cold and hungry and Rosemary asked a total stranger to take them in and give the children some milk. The stranger was "very gracious". Eventually they went back to the cars and slowly drove home. Rosemary's house was damaged, had no power or water, but was liveable. They dug toilet holes and used up the stash of stored water, and over the next few days "we made forays on bumpy roads to fill the cars, draw

money, [and] buy paper nappies and bananas from dairies selling goods for cash on the pavement”.

The power eventually came on and they watched the news on a laptop. Sometimes there were rolling quakes and at other times it would feel as if a truck had hit the house. The children would stop in their tracks and call, "Quake!" We began to respond assertively, "Go away, quake!" And they did.

Judith Sutherland and her daughter Jane Sutherland-Norton both worked at the hospital and decided to walk home. Their cars were stuck in the hospital parking building. They set off south down Antigua Street. They saw cars trying to get through to the hospital with injured passengers, liquefaction and water in the streets, people in shock, people looking for people, and others trying to make their way home as well. When crossing Moorhouse Avenue, it was a case "of taking your life in your own hands" and Brougham Street was absolute chaos. At this stage Judith received a text from her son Andrew in Tauranga. "Are you okay?" he asked. The response to Andrew was the last text Judith was able to send for some time due to system over-load. She replied, "Sort of but it's really bad".

Things improved as they moved further south into Strickland Street. Jane's house had developed more cracks, and there were lots of breakages and items had fallen out of cupboards. Judith's house, however, had sustained significant damage and they had no power or water. Judith and her husband stayed with Jane's grandmother for nearly two weeks.

Billa Field comments that: "Earthquake talk definitely became part of the everyday conversations. It was very hard to feel that life had any normality to it. All living, work, and recreation activities had changed: children were off school, work place buildings were compromised, grocery shopping habits changed, our golf course had been munted, and there was no QE11 facility for swimming. Walking along broken footpaths and uneven ground brought home this new norm".

Mary Smyth's house was badly damaged. With her partner in Wellington, she was alone. She gathered a bag of torch, medications and a warm top, and listened to the radio on the back lawn, as far as possible from the house. "There was a big aftershock and I watched our house sway like it was made of cardboard."

Later she walked to a friend's house, which was undamaged. A small group of neighbours were gathered on the deck barbequing sausages and drinking wine:

I stayed at my friend's house that night, lying on the sofa fully dressed, shoes on, bag clutched to my chest, ready to run. My elderly neighbour occupied another sofa. Sleep was impossible. But I felt relatively safe in that house despite the aftershocks overnight.

Lianne Dalziel eventually got home after wading through the silt and water, and her partner also arrived from town. The place was a mess and they decided to stay home and clean up, putting all the broken things into a bin for later sorting. The barbeque had fallen over which meant they had no hot water again, even though they had filled the gas bottle.

Mary Hobbs and her husband arrived from Mount Cook with their volunteer firefighter uniforms to help. The commander said that at the moment there were people having double amputations at the CTV building just "to get them out". Mary explained that she was a registered nurse and asked if she could assist but was told "that they had enough people right now".

For the next few days Mary Hobbs went door to door helping people. She met an older man several days later who hadn't seen anyone since the earthquake. It was good to see how comforting a hug and some water for people like the elderly gentleman could be at the worst of times. From time to time they would go back to Latimer Square for a cuppa. There were wonderful women volunteers who had prepared sausages with bread and tomato sauce which "we felt was probably one of the best things we had ever tasted in our lives at that point!"

Mary spoke to one chap covered in tats who was probably around 20 stone. When this gentle giant from Southland saw the earthquake he asked his boss if he could take time off, as he was a digger driver and could effectively help. He drove through the night with a mate and was in the inner CBD working day and night.

A lot of the things that belonged to Marie Rean's eldest daughter, who had died a few years ago, smashed. Later that day Marie's son Anthony arrived with his partner Donna and they helped clean up the pantry and the broken china. The mess "had to be seen to be believed": "there was flour, pickle, and vinegar with everything in a great heap all over the floor". Marie was so upset she just sat "crying throughout the whole proceedings". She "kept on crying" while Anthony and Donna picked up items and did their best to keep her under control. "The whole thing was pretty horrible and very, very scary".

Irene thought about her daughter, Jessica. She had to fetch her from the Hohepa Centre in Barrington Street. She couldn't ring as the phones were out and there was no power. So she walked out and heard yelling from the back fence. It was Eric, saying, "Your chimney's come down! It survived September, but it's all come down, look, I heard it go." So Irene had a look. There was a bit of liquefaction that had come up in the middle of the lawn and there were some bricks in the middle of the lawn. Irene felt very lucky when she noticed that the chimney bricks had fallen all around the car but hadn't done any actual damage to the car. Irene could hear sirens and knew that she needed to get out soon to try and bring Jessica home.

When Irene got to Moorhouse Avenue it was gridlocked. She crawled along slowly. It seemed to take forever and Irene kept wondering how Hohepa had fared. The faces of the people coming back from town were white and drawn. "Some were just like stunned, there was no emotion. Others were crying, and some were in huddles or grouped with others on the street. It was just like a war-zone, you'll never forget that sort of thing because faces tell you everything". Irene crawled along and then got down to

around Coronation Street across Brougham Street and slowed down. As they headed down Barrington Street, the liquefaction became apparent. There was water and white sand coming up out of people's driveways and running down the footpaths from the houses. "You could start to see how it affected the neighbourhood".

It was another big trip to get home. Irene sent a text to a family friend who lives at the other end of the street. "He said 'I'm alright. Caught up in traffic. You all right?' and I said, 'Yes, I'm alright, we've been to get Jessica.'" Irene could still use her cell phone and she was very relieved that it didn't go down. When they returned home it was nearly half past four, maybe a quarter to five. Their journey home had taken three quarters of an hour to get home instead of 10 - 15 minutes. Irene found some candles, and a torch which she kept in a drawer in case of a power cut. Since her husband, Steve, died she has had to be the mainstay of the home who attends to these details. Fortunately it was daylight saving which gave Irene time to hunt for these items.

Their oven was not working, so they used the old log burner outside to cook marshmallows. They had a gas cooker but only a limited amount of gas, so Irene decided she should use the fire first and save the gas just in case. It was getting dark before they got themselves sorted but they had the warmth of the outside log burner and drew the outside chairs around it and talked.

Irene's niece turned up and she was quite shaken because she worked in Riccarton Mall upstairs at the Macpac shop. She said it wasn't a good place to be in at the time: people panicked, a lot of the structure fell down, there were a few light injuries, things were falling from the internal structure of the wall, and water and gas were also escaping. Irene's niece was upstairs and felt quite trapped. Irene's niece ended up staying the night as well.

During the subsequent aftershocks, Irene's son Rowan was quite panicky. He said "I'm sick of the aftershocks!" He seemed much younger with the uncertainty and loss of control. By contrast, Irene was able to act calmly without panicking because of her adrenaline, and reassure her

son. Irene tried to reassure her son as she needed his help with Jessica. Irene was worried Jessica might have a breakdown and manifest her schizophrenia. At every aftershock Jessica would yell out; it's her way to verbalise her feelings.

Irene took some sauce and visited the couple who had made a home in their (cold) garage. After making conversation, she felt that the lady was wanting company. Irene was glad she had "taken the bull by the horns" and visited. She came away glad that she had made new friends especially as networks of friends are very important in times of disaster. Irene has also found that, since the earthquakes, she has talked to neighbours who she never previously talked to. Just as in wartime, people are reaching out to each other, mucking in, and looking after each other.

Irene is now much better prepared. She has water stored in her garage and a Red Cross box of first aid kit with an earthquake container full of tinned food. She keeps it in the garage as she feels the garage is a lighter structure and strong. Irene also keeps extra blankets and a working battery radio with her earthquake kit. She wonders whether she should also put aside some extra petrol and cash. Irene also thinks people should plant fruit trees as well as natives, as these are useful.

Irene feels lucky to live in an old wooden villa. Although it's not warm or well insulated, it flexed around in the quakes. The ground has survived well. Irene recalls that the earliest settlers lived in her area. Although her house is built on what was originally all swamps, "the soil is wonderfully black to grow carrots and potatoes". Irene has a wonderful vegetable garden which has helped feed her when she couldn't get to the supermarket.

It was very difficult for Rosemary Bloxham as they had to leave their crushed house. She had damaged ribs and a gash on her head, but she was also very weak and was in a wheel chair. It was difficult for her to get around. Fortunately, some neighbours came and helped them out. Once they were out of the house, they had to climb up the hill to the road. "That was very awkward. I could not do it on my own."

Rosemary and her husband again had help from their neighbours.

Once they got up to the road, they saw that their garage had collapsed on their car. But neighbours helped them to lift up the garage door and get it off the car. With some difficulty they managed to remove the debris from the car and then they drove to their daughter's home in St Albans. It took 3 1/2 hours to travel a distance that would normally take about 30 minutes. "Boulders were all over the road and we thought we would never make it."

Emma's family hung up a camp shower on the jungle gym for showers and school was closed for weeks. On the walk to the beach there was no damage so they didn't feel like they suffered too much. Two households had generators so people could charge their phones. Emma had just done a huge shop, so they put the meat in the neighbour's freezer because they had a generator. There was a water pump set up in the first week from the water well next door.

After about a week the family went away in a campervan to Kaiteriteri where they stayed for around 5 days. They felt slightly guilty for all the generosity they received when in Nelson. Once they came back from Kaiteriteri, power had been restored via a couple of huge generators.

Annikie did need to get new glasses, so one day Annike and Lorraine set out for Rangiora. This was weird, as they suddenly realised that other parts of Christchurch and outlying areas were almost unaffected! The experience was so bizarre that Annike cried. They also went to get water from Halswell where Lorraine's son lives, until they discovered that there were wells near the beach. It was good to have a shower in Halswell, although they had managed well with buckets at home. Annike and Lorraine also often biked to a cell phone tower as reception was clearer there and their cell phone batteries were running low. They checked up on people by phone but stayed put most of the time.

She found checking tourist hotel rooms particularly surreal and humbling: "Sitting there on the desk would be their wallets with passports, or I remember going into one room and there was a

noise, and it was the texts going off on the cell phone. And I thought 'Oh you poor bastards'." But Janelle was not authorised to retrieve any of the tourists' items. She was left wondering what had happened to these tourists and hoping they were safe.

After a week or so, Janelle knew she needed to get back to her job as an emergency manager. The structure that was put in place in February was very different from September - there was no clear delineation between regional and national response in February. So some lessons learned in September couldn't be implemented because of different model of emergency management. Janelle can't comment on how it worked as she was working in city with Cairo.

Sharon Torstonson was offered a ride back to Waikuku, but didn't want to leave town until she knew if her husband and son were safe as she knew she wouldn't be able to get back into Christchurch without a car. Her friend had a nice bottle of wine so the four of them all sat in the garden having a drink and listening to the house creak in the aftershocks while they waited to hear about Sharon's family. At about 4pm Sharon finally got a call to say that her husband was at home and her son was safe.

For April, "It was nine days before we got any power back. Without news, we didn't know how bad things were. We were dealing with our own survival." As a woman, the business of getting food for the day occupied April's mind. "Oh someone has given us a loaf of bread, bananas." There was no mail for 11 days and fortunately no junk mail. "After another week we had the luxury of getting a wash at a friend's house in the west." True friends were those who remembered to offer showers, help with washing etc. It was 15 days before water came through the taps; until then the neighbourhood was dependent on the delivery of water by the farmers. Daily when they came up the street the shout went up "water, water, water" and everyone went out daily with their containers to collect some water.

Rebecca Gordon explained that there was a lot going on with the Maori Wardens who were checking on

people. An older couple who live near Rebecca told her that "out of everyone they had never had so much support. Yes, the Maori Wardens were just awesome". Other groups came around to see if everyone was okay too and so Rebecca does not think that many people were missed out.

Lois was keen to get to her car in the bottom floor car park because she knew she would need it for Refuge work and there was a woman in their safe house. When the second shock came some minutes later she was in the car park but managed to get her car out. She found the falling bricks, wailing sirens, and clouds of dust in the centre of the city particularly frightening. "I remember the shock on the faces of people and thinking that people do not always do the safest thing when confronted with disaster. I was pleased to be my age; having had my work experience I was able to make a quick assessment of where I needed to be that was safe. What was my highest priority? That is second nature to me but clearly was not for a lot of people". She particularly noticed young teenagers hanging around in shock and not knowing what to do because their cell-phones were not working. She took a couple of girls back to their school because that seemed the safest place for them to be.

It took 1.5 hours for Lois to travel home from Westfield Mall to Burnside. She could not get back across town to look after Refuge staff because she could hear on the car radio there was grid-lock and mayhem on the roads. She gave some people a ride home on the way to her place. At home she was confronted with "a lot of sticky mess and breakages but not major damage".

The rest of the afternoon she spent sitting outside on the lawn listening to the car radio, trying to make contact with Refuge staff, and worrying about their safe house because the woman there was particularly vulnerable to further stress. "Often with traumatised children away from their familiar home and school, women in safe houses are almost unable to cope with daily life, let alone more shock. Strained family relationships or no family network at all can mean that they have no other safe place to be. It is essential that Refuge workers get to these women as quickly as

possible after a disaster such as the earthquakes presented". The Refuge had lost its first safe house in the September quake and the three women had had to self-evacuate which had been a very bad experience for Lois contacted the National Refuge organisation by phone to alert the local police, who successfully evacuated the woman in the safe house and arranged for her to be cared for. The strong national network of Refuges was critical in making contact with other refuges in Christchurch, making connections with the police, and ensuring all the safe houses were emptied. During the afternoon Lois also established that staff working in the local Refuge office had got out of the building, but it took till nearly midnight to track down all the Refuge workers and know that they were safe.

Only having her reading glasses (not her far seeing ones) limited what Annike could see. Once outside, the Women's Centre staff first checked if everyone was OK. One client had a cut arm and was quite upset. Annike wanted to contact Lorraine, who worked in the IRD building just down the road, but she could not get hold of her. After the team went their separate ways, Annike walked towards the IRD building but she could not see much.

Meanwhile the shaking continued and buildings were falling down. Annike remembers taking shelter behind a police car at one point, with a whole group of others, which was a bizarre experience. Annike phoned her Dutch friend in Waiheke, as she thought that someone needed to know how big this was. She asked her friend to phone Holland to let her Mum know she was OK. People kept streaming outside. At one point she thought she saw Lorraine but it wasn't her. Annike walked on and saw an acquaintance who screamed "Look at that building". Annike realised it was the CTV building, where a good friend worked in Relationship Services. Rescuers were already pulling people out; the building was a total mess. She was relieved that her friend had got out.

Soon after, Annike saw a friend sitting on a street corner, with a tiny towel over her. Someone from the nearby garage was standing over B. wondering what to do. They

tried to help B to her car, but she could hardly walk. Then a CDHB nursing car came up and a woman got out and offered to take them somewhere. Annike still wanted to get to her car, but also knew she needed to stay with B.

They decided to go to where B's husband worked; Waipuna Trust on the corner of Pages Road and Woodham Road. B could not contact her husband because her phone was left behind in the CTV building which had crashed down 5 floors. As they started the long slow crawl towards Waipuna they heard on the radio that the earthquake's epicentre was in Lyttelton. This was hard for Anthea, the driver, as she lived in Lyttelton. Their progress was slow but also like the Red Sea opening when people saw how injured B was. When they got to Waipuna, B's husband was gone but lots of people were sitting outside with sleeping bags!

After the February quake Tokanga felt unsafe inside their house during the aftershocks, so for several weeks they slept outside in their vans. There were no significant breakages that they could see, but Tokanga wasn't sure about the foundations. "So we were camping in there, sleeping there with all the kids. So every night, with the aftershocks, we kind of like, 'Oh yeah, this is cool' because the van would be rocking. But we were so happy because ... there won't be any roof, ceiling falling down". They ran extension cords from their house to the van and had a TV and radio inside the van. In the evenings they always watched Campbell Live.

Tokanga reflected, "I think just for us and for our mind to be at ease and at rest, at peace, it was much better to be in the van, rather than being in the house because the house could fall inwards, and we don't want to be in there. Sleeping inside our seven seater van wasn't the first time. We used to go camping and stuff. So we were ready and it was not a new idea for us. Yeah, kids were OK. And we have two vans, and we had the boys sleep in one van and my husband and I and [our daughter] sleep in the other van. I think it was more like 'Oh look we're going camping again'".

Sue collected her sons and took some other kids home. She sat with a group of other parents who made each other cups of tea but didn't offer Sue one. The house was up

on the hill and Sue did not feel safe. Nigel had gone to pick up the father of one of the boys. A surgeon at Christchurch Hospital, he had gone down to A & E, but had been sent home as it was pretty quiet. Once the fathers returned they all went home. Their place in Halswell felt relatively calm and peaceful.

The home had lost power but this was not much of an issue. "We lose power all the time. So we already had a gas hob, a plug in phone, torches. We're already set up to lose power. And we've subsequently got a generator so that we do hot water. We've got our own well, our own gravity fed water supply. So in terms of the inconvenience post quakes, it wasn't such an issue".

The February quake affected Sue's work prospects. She had just started a role with the Advanced Video Conferencing Centre in the NZi3 building at the University of Canterbury. She had hoped her role would grow but the building was taken over in February as a response centre.

When Laurence arrived at school all the children were in the grounds and they were crying everywhere. It was chaotic. Laurence said, "Children crying everywhere, supporting each other". She looked everywhere for her children. She found her daughters who were happy to see her. There were still aftershocks so they stayed there and sat on the ground. The safest place was right in the middle of the large field at the back of the school. They play rugby and other games there.

Laurence was glad to hear no buildings had fallen down. She said, "I stayed there waiting for some of the parents to come and fetch some of the children, not knowing whether people were going to need us or not". Gradually there were fewer and fewer people. By that stage she felt quite depressed.

She met another woman whom she knew a little bit who helped her cope. The woman offered to take her back to her place so she went with her in her car. The traffic was terrible. The bridge in St Martins, Opawa, was damaged. This woman lived near the river. There was water spilling out onto the street. It covered the road so they had to drive

through the water. Cars were going very, very slowly. A lot of people were walking.

Freda found it hard to shower at her son's house as she had to climb into the shower. It had no hand holds. Freda had to wash down every day. But she did enjoy time with her three grandchildren; she especially enjoyed hearing them practising their music... I did stay there for four or five days. It was comforting to have someone with me... I couldn't have come home.

"When I came home, my neighbours had cleaned up for me. The water had slopped over from the cistern in the back toilet onto the floor and it was quite deep. There was a lot of water through there". Friends contacted Freda often. She also had great support from her neighbours, some of them had relatives who were in the CBD at the time of the quake and were very anxious about them on the day of the quake

Most of Freda's things fell onto matting or were secured with blue tack she had used after the Darfield earthquake. She only lost one liquor glass.

After the September earthquake, Freda had ensured that there was nothing on the edge of shelves in the pantry and so there was not a mess in her pantry after the 22 February quake. Freda also makes up a two litre flask every other night before she goes to bed. It keeps the water hot for two days. She has other containers full of water. "My torch and a radio are under my pillow and I have another torch where I can find it. I keep my keys in my pocket when I go to bed and I wear track suit pants to bed now every night". Freda knows her neighbours are next door or on the phone. They have her keys and can come in if they need to do so.

A number of participants were evacuated from Christchurch; Tommy's story is one such.

Her daughter broke through the cordon at about 7 pm and stayed with Tommy until the ambulance arrived. Many aftershocks occurred during this time. Tommy was eventually taken to hospital. She can't remember the journey, but looked over towards the park and saw lots of people with

hard hats on. She also saw a man carrying a limp body with long fair hair. It looked as if the person was dead.

When she arrived at the hospital, Tommy was given a bottle of water and told to hang on to it. Someone came in with a can of lemonade and he said, "give me your teeth". He took them away and cleaned them in lemonade. He had a pocketful of toothbrushes. After cleaning her teeth, he said, "Here, you might as well swig the rest!" A Japanese girl from C.T.V. building was being attended to by the Japanese trauma unit when she arrived at the hospital.

A man came in dressed in a suit and he said, "We are going to take you to Wellington Hospital". They ran her out on a stretcher to an ambulance waiting outside and then to a little plane waiting at the airport. It looked like a top dressing plane. A man from the Netherlands and his wife were the nurses accompanying her on the flight.

At Christchurch Airport Tommy saw nine stretchers being put on a plane. They were for the amputees, some travelling to Wellington and others to Napier. They had to clean a lot of stuff out of the planes before they could be used to transport injured people.

On arrival at Wellington Airport, Tommy was transferred to a Wellington Free Ambulance driven by a young Maori man. On arrival she was greeted by a cheerful greeting - "Welcome to Wellington. We will look after you!" This gave her some reassurance. She was taken upstairs to a beautiful room with an ensuite and two young surgeons came in and gave her some medication. She then had an epidural in the operating theatre where they removed the plaster and any other dressings and treated her for her injuries. As they were attending to her, she heard them discussing the operation of someone else.

It was a long time before April got to her home, driven by her daughter through dangerous roads. Her husband was freaking out as he had no way of communicating, and didn't know what was happening. Their other daughter, who had been staying since the September quake, took an inordinate length of time to get home. All the bridges were out, and there was a lot of flooding with this

part of the city cut off. She had to go all the way round the western city via the airport to get from Sydenham to Burwood - it took her about 3-4 hours to get home.

The house was in chaos - there were a lot of quite nasty cracks in the brickwork, some broken contents, things were all over the place, doors and windows not working and the power was out, no water, no sewerage, lots of liquefaction and the car stuck in a broken liquefied garage. But all family were safe and happy to be eating cold food in the dark. The telephones were playing up and not working so it was hard to connect with friends or authorities to find out what was happening until the next morning when a cousin from the UK rang. She had access to the world news and knew more than they did. The feeling of the enormity of the disaster only gradually dawned. Without electricity there was no TV news. The battery radio was soon flat, the cell phone was flat and any food had to be eaten cold.

After a couple of days her husband tried to get out to buy some food. He had to go a very long way in their daughter's car as the New Brighton supermarkets and shops were closed. After about two and a half days, family members came to the neighbours and brought flasks. It was wonderful to share a cup of tea - "to have a warm drink was wonderful!" "A pit loo was dug in the garden and we were coping. Things got better when my elder daughter brought a gas cooker and we could offer cups of tea to others and cook and save the food which was defrosting in the freezer and send the rest off to friends in Kaiapoi. After an enormous cook up we were feeling much better."

Life in those early days was just crazy, the silt, the dust - we wore scarves over our faces so that we looked like a pack of cowboys. We were dirty but didn't change our clothes for 3-4 days and slept in them. Helicopters were flying all over the place. Once one landed and Rangiora farmers distributed hot meals for our neighbourhood. We had an escape bag packed by the backdoor because of the continuing aftershocks. The garage door was stuck with the car inside, but the roads were treacherous.

Johanna's daughter had a text from her brother in Blenheim - "Go and get Mum". From her work she needed to go in her car to collect her little boy from school before coming to Kate Sheppard. The water around the site prevented any close parking, but we went with the car to her house and everything at her home was on the floor". The book cases spilt and food out of the cupboards all over the floor. It took hours and hours to make the place presentable/liveable again. As luck would have it, Johanna's daughter had a gas cooker to cook on. The next day by wading through the water at the Kate Sheppard villa food could be retrieved from the freezer. There was nothing wrong with Johanna's villa but she wasn't permitted to return.

Rebecca Macfie managed to climb out over the top of the debris and crept upstairs, knowing that whatever she would find would be bad. There was cold air blowing through the house, and from this Rebecca knew that the windows had been blown out. She saw that the chimney had completely exploded through the living-room and the entire contents of the kitchen seemed to be smashed on the floor.

No sooner had Rebecca taken in the damage around her than another quake started and so she ran back downstairs and dived under the bed. She stayed there for a long time. The cell phone network was overloaded. She couldn't phone or text anyone and no messages were coming in. The fact that Rebecca had been in the house on her own that day was important - "it was a saving for me knowing that our daughter Grace was on a school trip to Waipara". Rebecca remembers, very consciously, being just "incredibly grateful" because she didn't have to worry that her daughter was safe. She only had to worry about herself. Her husband was in Wellington, their son was in Dunedin at university, and a French exchange student (who had just arrived the day before) was in Hanmer. She stayed under the bed for some time. The quakes keep coming and "they were so violent".

When the first text came through to Rebecca Macfie it was from a friend who worked during the week in Wellington, but lived just two or three doors behind Rebecca's house. Her friend was concerned that she hadn't

heard from her husband or her son - "please could Rebecca check?" This message gave Rebecca purpose to get out from under the bed to check on her neighbour.

Sometime later, probably a couple of hours after the quake, Rebecca's instincts as a journalist asserted themselves (she says she sometimes feels ashamed it took this long), and she decided to go and look. She knew her daughter, Grace, was safe and so by about 4pm she ran back into the house through the broken glass and fallen bricks, to get her laptop, phone, camera, money, and a bike.

Eventually, Rebecca's sister came up from Wilson's Road nearby. Her place was fine, but Rebecca knew instantly they couldn't live in their house - it was not habitable. Lots of her neighbours were homeless that night. People just went where they could. Some stayed with friends the first night, others went out of town and stayed with relatives, others somehow made do. It was difficult to know after that afternoon where people went to.

It was ten days before Ngaire was able to return to work. The Child, Youth, and Family Service she works for "runs a 24 hour emergency service so that still had to continue and even though not at work we were rostered on for after-hours. We were probably limited in what we were able to do... We still needed to be available for emergencies". Fortunately it was relatively quiet "as a lot of people were dealing with other things". "Even in a major disaster like that we still have to function as a site and if there is an emergency we still have to be able to continue doing our normal work which is ensuring the children are safe".

As they couldn't return to their building in Papanui, they were placed out in Rangiora where Ngaire worked for about six months. She found the driving to Rangiora and back "very tiring", so often shared the journey with a work colleague. They were "hot-desking" and at first couldn't access their computer system until someone was able to "enter our old building and access our computer cards". A major change which has transpired from that time is "all our work for contact is now from cell phone. We don't have designated land lines now which we had before".

Around September 2011 they moved back into Christchurch to the Firestone Building on Langdon's Road where Ngaire now works from. Being based in Rangiora had caused difficulties as "our clients were still here in town so coming in to town to visit clients and going back could take up half a day. You couldn't just whip out down the road see a client and come back to the office". This made work "actually quite difficult, but we still had to deal with the normal day-to-day business of our job. You couldn't let it pile up. Notifications were still coming in that had to be dealt with; criticals were still happening that had to be dealt with. If a critical situation from a notification was made, our normal call work and everything still had to go on".

The role Ngaire performs requires a lot of work by phone. "Not so much with the children; it's their caregivers that I am involved with". Ngaire has spoken to people who said, "We don't know what's happening. It looks like we have lost our home." Ngaire would advise them, "When you move house, please let me know and give me your new address". Ngaire believes "people have been very stressed. They have been very stressed because they didn't know what was happening". Whilst she has not had too many people in her own area, "there have been a few that have lost their homes or had to move or in the process of having to move".

Family

The stories of family are, of course, integral to the whole earthquake picture. The problem of phones not working, overloaded cell phone networks, family members out of touch of hours, the fear that loved ones might be trapped in destroyed buildings, all turned minutes into hours for those waiting to hear. Once again the safety of families was to the forefront of people's minds, and again most had to wait a while to find their parents, siblings, partners or children safe and well.

Susan Hird stayed behind at school for ages to make sure the children were safe and to provide assistance. She got a text from her partner saying that his work was a mess. At

home she started the clean-up. Her partner had not made it home when her son arrived. At his flat in Riccarton they had power and all services. When he realized that it was quite late and Susan was still at home on her own, he told her to come over. "Have you seen the roof?" he asked. "The chimney's lying on it. I think you should come to our place". Susan happily agreed.

Her partner had not appeared by the next morning, so Susan reported him missing to the Red Cross. Late in the afternoon she got a call from the hospital – he was in there with spinal injuries. While he was checking on neighbours and friends, a big aftershock had hit and the road opened up and swallowed his bike. Some passers-by pulled him out and resuscitated him.

When she finally saw him, Susan just felt relief. By the time they located him, she had already begun to worry about the worst-case scenario - that he didn't survive. "Especially as I had only just started hearing about what was going on in town, and he had had to go through town to get home". Susan stayed at the hospital that night until eleven o'clock. Her partner couldn't move; he was "pretty banged up". It was to take months for him to get better.

Ange Davidson's mother's house looked terrible: the drive was under silt; paintings, books, and lamps were all over the floor. It looked like vandals had been through. "I started to worry for the first time about death and injury when I walked through their house and no one answered my calls. My mother was sitting amongst all the chaos eating a sandwich and saying that she was leaving it all as it was until my father came home".

Carol Hides described her reunion with her husband as "like in stupid movies, running like the gushing wife and he's ashen, looking like death". He had been in Cashel Mall trying to secure his jewellery shop and help rescue people from the rubble. He pulled out on person who had died.

Anna Mowat was in a taxi when the quake struck and had a nightmare ride down Papanui Road. She saw the large windows of buildings flexing in front of them, and things falling, especially the church on the corner of Rugby

Street. She left the taxi and ran down the road, which was splitting open. When she got back to her workplace, the Knox Church was partially down and a colleague of hers was badly injured. She felt powerless. They put a table over her to protect her from falling rubble. Anna ran down to the Southern Cross hospital to see if a nurse or doctor could come, but encountered a sea of injured people. Eventually, Anna found out that her family was safe, and were evacuating Lyttleton because their house was badly damaged.

Laine Barker has noticed lasting effects on her family. Her son lost a friend in town which was very difficult for him. Her other son worked on a triage centre in Sydenham in his role as a policeman which was traumatic. Her daughter and her family lost their chimney, however, fortunately EQC replaced it quickly as they had a young family. Another daughter and granddaughter had a holiday in Whangarei as they were very shaken from their experiences. They were blown away by the generosity of strangers who paid for their meals and looked after them once they found out they were from Christchurch.

For the women in this study, eventually all children were safely retrieved from school or other place, all elderly parents checked, and most family members returned safely to their homes, even where those homes were badly damaged or destroyed. For Raewyn Dawson, 2011 was remembered far more for her mother's 100th birthday than for the earthquakes:

Thirty-six of us gathered from all around the world to celebrate it at my younger brother's house. It was a healing, whole-family experience, with all of us sharing in the party, even our black-sheep brother. I have been a poet since childhood, winning some prizes for it, so I wrote a special poem for Mum, which for once (she was a very tough nut!) she appreciated. I include the last verse, which sums up her character:

I'm fine; box of birds, thanks.
So I celebrate my century;
Keeping down to earth and positive,

Despite earthquakes and pains.
Who cares about going to hospital?
I enjoy the different window view!
Because while I'm still breathing,
I know that everything's still fine!

Knowing that family members were safe and well provided for gave people the strength to begin once again on the task of cleaning up their properties. None of the women in this research lost a parent, partner or child in the February earthquakes, and many were profoundly grateful for that. However, many recounted stories of loss and grief arising from the events of that day.

Loss and grief

Petra van Asten said:

We have all lost something; either loved ones, friendships, houses, jobs, or future dreams. Everybody in Christchurch is dealing with loss. And I feel a big sadness at the moment when I'm thinking about the last year. The effect it has had on my family, and the need to defend the decision to still remain in Christchurch.

There are so many different kinds of stories told by the participants that reflect loss and grief. The first kind is the stories of loss sparked by the death of friends and colleagues. As Melissa Parson points out, "Christchurch is still small enough for most of us to know someone who lost someone; in my case, a brother-in-law's optometrist, my Dad's second cousin's nephew, a former work colleague's neighbour."

Kirsty has a friend who lost her husband; Allie McMillan's daughter-in-law lost a great friend in the PGC building; Myra Kunowski lost a good friend, crushed in the rubble of the CTV building. Allie McMillan ran into a friend that day who had gone searching for her lost father only to find him lying dead, crushed by a rock falling on a track. Lindsey James had been talking the previous week to the son of a friend, who was excited about his upcoming new job at

the Iconic Bar in town. His was one of the first bodies identified.

Christine's brother came over and told her that close extended family members were missing after the earthquake. Nothing was confirmed for another 3 weeks. Christine commented that she did not have "support from her own church pastors especially during the time of hearing about the death of extended family members, and felt very much alone at that time." She wanted pastoral care and to talk to someone from the church during the time of loss.

Raewyn Dawson said that her main memories of the February earthquake "are of attending my friend's funeral. She was a vibrant, noisy delight, who enjoyed Toastmasters with me, and died in the CTV building".

There were some near misses. Belinda Grant's boarder was unwell that day and did not go into the Kings College Language School based in the CTV building. All her classmates who were in the building perished. Susan Allen's husband worked in the collapsed PGC building but was out at another site. Most of his colleagues survived, as the lunch room was near the centre of the building which collapsed around the outside edges.

Isabel Jack remembers an early briefing at the Art Gallery (Civil Defence Headquarters), where a police officer said "we've got 18 confirmed dead". She had no idea that the fatalities were "going to get a lot worse". In fact, in those first few days, Isabel had very little idea of what was going on. The next day she borrowed a work car to go to a family member's house. On the way she passed the Durham Street Methodist Church and saw search and rescue bringing body bags out from the rubble. It was an awful sight.

Jenny May was also working in the Red Zone. Her work was to help with assessments of heritage buildings. At this stage of the disaster the first priority was to save lives: "it seems trite to talk about wanting to save buildings when there were people trapped and people dying. So the buildings to me at that point were a secondary consideration. It was about the knowledge of how buildings might have been built, where things were".

There were many other losses experienced by participants as well as death. These include material loss, loss of community, loss of the city, a loss of emotional well-being, and many such feelings. Myra Kunowski said:

The feeling of helplessness and dreadful sadness was terrible. My old school of Avonside Girls' had also suffered badly with liquefaction, broken pipes, and fractures in the buildings. The whole school had to be moved off site for the rest of the year. The big main brick block I had taught classes in for so many years had to be demolished.

Zara is still coming to terms with the losses to city life: "I have had my head in the sand about how much has been removed from the city and how long it will all take. But being the mother of two children, my life is in the suburbs and I can have my city trips elsewhere. Only two weeks ago I managed to go the ReStart Mall - I pushed my bike down it and cried. It made me sad that there were no markers of people that had died. It seemed like having a place to consume was more important than having a place to grieve and remember."

The loss of peace of mind is to the forefront of Chris Wilson's thinking:

I believe that disaster changes everybody and one realises one's grip on life is precarious. My husband and I knew two of the quake victims who died in the CTV building which has been quite a loss. On a personal level I am aware that my body is always on the alert, always looking for an escape exit when I am out. I wonder if I will ever be able to relax completely again. As a guidance counsellor in a school on the east side of town I cannot escape the quake stories as pupils and their families seek me out for advice, comfort, and support.

Dame Grace Hollander was interviewed for this project at her new home in Palmerston North. She was in Christchurch Hospital for the February earthquake, and her story of that day is told later in this document. An upbeat and intelligent 90 year old, she played down the fact that she never saw her

home again after the February earthquake. Her beautiful modern unit at the Kate Sheppard retirement village succumbed, with the rest of the complex, to massive liquefaction. At the time of writing this she, and all the other residents who had to leave, are still only liable to receive about less than half the value of their property. Along with this burden, Grace has had to leave her beloved Christchurch, probably never to return.

Anne acknowledges that a lot was lost in one day. Her house, her family as she knew it: one is soon to be demolished, the other now dispersed. The place where she thought she was going to live until she retired is gone. What has helped her is the fact that she made a decision to leave, that she has continued to move forward. She can see in hindsight that she went into survival mode and just had to think about herself and her younger son. She was happy to discover that she is a resilient person, and also credits her faith with helping to carry her through. But there is still a huge sense of loss and grief which sometimes overwhelms her. On those days, Anne knows that she just needs to pull back and ask for support and do what is necessary to get through that day.

Déjà vu all over again

By winter 2011, the summer February earthquake, the first September quake and thousands of earthquakes, small to rather large in between, seemed to have stretched on forever. People were living every day with the damage these earthquakes had caused, the cordoned off city, the lost lives and numerous changes. But the earth had not finished with Canterbury yet, not by a long way.

June – the midwinter quakes

The June quake was very hard. "You can't live like this, this is just so tough. It was the clean-up, the disruption to your life...It had just been going on for so long".

Over a forty minute period spanning the lunch hour on 13 June 2011, two large aftershocks once again rocked Christchurch. These were not unexpected. There had been a lot of talk after February about the probability of further large shakes, and earthquake activity had still not died down completely from the February earthquake. Just the previous week, a 5.5 aftershock had been felt across the city, and there had been similar earthquakes in April and May.

Kirsty's first thought was, "Oh, here we go again!" This time around, she had a toddler and a nearly three month old baby to care for, but her husband was also at home that day, having decided post-February to spend a bit less time at work and more at home.

At the time of the June 2011 quake, Michelle's son was at Kindergarten. "I was here pottering around and I had just finished the dishes. I had gone outside and I was just talking to my next door neighbour and the ground moved just a little bit, but I thought nothing of it. I came in to check the weather to see what it was going to do over the weekend, and then the house started violently shaking, and I thought, 'Oh, no!' I dived in the door frame again. And the next thing I thought is, 'Where is my son? Oh God, where is my son?'" Michelle remembered he was at kindy. She shot out of the

front door and didn't remember locking it. The neighbours' van was rocking violently in the drive way. Michelle just started running, she cut through the school, she was breathless and panicking, and she was the first parent there. "They had all the kids sitting outside, all accounted for with all their stuff. " The kindergarten staff encouraged her to calm down. "Your little man is OK, calm down; otherwise you are going to stress them out".

The staff was planning to go back into the building and resuming the kindergarten session and her son had a choice of staying or coming home. "Him, being him, decided he was going to come home with Mummy". They went home quietly. "I don't remember him hanging on to my hand so tightly in all of his life; it was like the fear of not having Mummy here again." They got home and then there was another more violent earthquake.

Adele did not feel the June quake, as she was on the bus, returning from a school swimming trip. Her uncle rang her cell phone to ask if she was safe. Adele had noticed all the children coming out of the school buildings, in a very orderly way, but did not know the reason. After her uncle alerted her, she told the teacher, and they stopped the children from dismounting from the bus. Adele feared for the class left at the swimming pool. They would have experienced the quake in the pool.

Once the school was closed, Adele drove her children back home. Driving down Retreat Road in Avonside "all of a sudden the van rocked, rocked, rocked and the road ripped open. It felt like it ripped open".

Adele applied the brakes and held on to the steering wheel. "My littlest boy was going 'Mum, Mum, Mum' and the van was shaking, shaking, shaking and all I could think about was the power lines". When the quake stopped Adele, made a U turn to drive back to Taine's school.

Returning home she knew that she would have liquefaction to dig out again "I was so tired and thinking I can't cope with this again, so tired of having to keep it together". Adele dreaded the liquefaction again. "It drives you

crazy; it gets in all your wash when you hang it out, it is all the mess".

While the power was off only for a day this time, the local streets were badly damaged. Adele describes one street, "Keller Street, it dipped down in the middle and it was like a lake. Those poor people down that street... having to clean up "you got tired and tired and tired of it.

"We had only just got over one and then it felt like there was something else trying to tear the house apart again." The second one felt more violent than the first. They had already lost power. They got under the door frame and then they went outside and put the deck chairs up and spent the rest of the day outside in the sun.

Lynne Smith was just heading out the door to see a client and was not holding on to anything. The impact knocked her over and she stayed down. "Being outside was a very different experience to being inside as I could feel so much more and felt quite vulnerable. I did not like it at all". It was "déjà vu all over again"! The toilets went again. They had had chemical toilets for the previous three months and just as the toilet system was coming right it had gone again. The other memorable fact was that very day she had just had a new heat pump installed. Lynne had had no heat since February so was quite excited; "fantastic, I have some heat". The installer left only ten minutes before the quake hit and her first thoughts were, "if that heat pump has gone I will go crazy". Fortunately it was still intact.

The June earthquakes were strong; the second one was the second-strongest of all the earthquakes in the sequence, and stronger than February. However, it was much less damaging to property and, of course, no-one was killed. Probably the main reasons for this were that most of the central city was still heavily cordoned off, much of the damage was to already-damaged buildings and people were getting resigned to clearing up messes.

On opening the front door, Lindsay James just screamed "No! Not again, I can't face this again". The large pot plant had escaped off its stand and made its way down the stairs to the lower level leaving a trail of leaves and dirt.

The damage in the house was not as bad as the February quake, but Lindsey felt completely defeated by the task ahead of her.

This was a big shake. Once again, Belaynesh Tegegen had liquefaction in the garden. This time she had some help digging out all the silt and taking it to the road. Someone from her church brought two or three men who took out the silt. But she was very upset. Belaynesh thought, "Very happy to be in New Zealand... But why does the problem follow me? ... In Ethiopia I had very hard life. We work very young. Living in another country, very hard. Muslim country very hard".

Nippy's comment was "Oh that was hell, wasn't it?" After the first shake, she went and got her daughter from school. They were outside when the second one struck:

I thought that was worse than February...thought that was it. I swore a lot. Same mess again inside, same again...but then I hadn't put a lot back. Stuff was packed in boxes. I didn't worry. A lot of things got broken again. The big stuff got wrecked again...

Gina King also thought the June quake was worse than February. She was at home (her mum's house) when the first one hit, and they raced down to the school: "the kids were all outside, they were fine." So they left the children at school and went to check on the neighbours. The second quake struck. Gina thought this was the worst one ever, much worse than February:

I was trying to get my neighbour out of the house. A pot fell off the stove and hot soup went everywhere. Outside I could see the driveway open and shut. I saw the water being to rise up and I started screaming. Just like I screamed in February too! It scared the shit out of me.

"This was actually the worst earthquake for me", recalls Karen. "I was at home on the computer". With the first shake she debated going to Central New Brighton School to pick up the children, however she with strained herself. "I did not want to be a possessive mother at the school every five minutes". When she saw liquefaction outside, Karen knew

that the quake must have been serious, so she headed down to the school to get her kids. "What took you so long?" asked a nervous Anna.

The big 6.3 quake hit when they had just got back to their house. "It is the first earthquake I have been with the children. Jack ran outside. I dragged Anna out with me. The wires on the lamppost on the street came down. We held on to a tree".

Karen and the children went to check on the children's great grandfather and then they went to a friend's house in Redwood. Anna had to get back out to her dad's farm. They waited for him to come and pick her up. They talked about being outside for the quake and why they did not drop, stop and cover like a 'turtle', as all the school children had been taught to, post September 2010. Jack did not like the noise of the house and things falling down; he felt as if the house was going to collapse.

At work

Isabel Jack was working out at Lincoln, and didn't want to go out to her house after the earthquakes, as it was near the epicentre again. That evening Isabel worked in the Christchurch Emergency Operations Centre for a few hours and then stayed the night with a friend in town. She went home the next morning and found "everything was exactly the same state as it was in February - there was just less of it to be broken".

Chris Wilson was at Avonside Girls, which had been relocated to Burnside High School:

I was walking down a corridor of a new, two-storey concrete slab school building. Again I relived all those moments in the Town Hall. The building shook and rattled for dear life. I found one of our students had fainted with shock. Along with other students we half carried her to the emergency waiting area outside, away from buildings. The second after-shock was worse than the first. It was

terrifying. Pupils were crying and desperately texting their parents to come and pick them up.

Amanda England was in the University library when the first shock hit. Everyone dived under the desks and the library was then evacuated. Amanda headed to car her and drove home, picking up her fiancé on the way:

When we got home there were ornaments everywhere and my mum had us all convening outside; my brother and sister arrived shortly after. We had just decided that it would be safe to go back inside the house to start tidying up when the second earthquake hit. My partner was in the toilet and my mum and I were in the lounge. My mum (who is absolutely petrified of earthquakes) lunged for the back door. I yelled at my partner, who had become stuck in the toilet (the door wouldn't open) to get outside.

Amanda commented that she had not really understood the power of earthquakes until that time, and she has become much more wary of them since.

Rosemary Du Plessis was also at the university, teaching, when the first earthquake struck, and she also drove home afterwards. She was therefore in her own house, high on the Port Hills, when the second quake struck:

After the second quake, I stood outside with a neighbour and her toddler as dust once again rose from the city. I knew that more buildings had come down.

After the June earthquakes there was a lot of liquefaction around the Hills Road Women's Centre house. One Board member came and helped shovel the liquefaction up.

Anne also felt terrified, but had the presence of mind to rush back into her building to retrieve her things. The second shock also produced a 'flight' response in her. However, when she returned to her temporary home in Redwood, she was delighted that there was no liquefaction to clean up!

Emily Nooapii was five months pregnant when the June quakes struck. After the first shock, about 40 children

remained at her school, and were watching a DVD. Emily was inside with them. When the second shock occurred, she had to try and fit under a school desk, which was hard. Emily noticed the baby's movement became "quite frenetic as if it could sense my reactions". For a while Emily was really worried that something was wrong with the baby because of this movement. It was not until the next day that she felt the baby and was reassured that it was fine.

Roman was at work at the rest home when the June quake occurred. She tells of the procedure for evacuating residents and getting them to assemble in the dining room. Each resident is taken from their room and a pillow is left in the doorway to signify the room has been evacuated - it is the earthquake drill.

"If you are in the rest home, you don't think about you. First you look after each other and then there are the residents...The head nurse makes sure we are ok. She says if you are not OK, then you can't look after anyone else. She always tells us to make sure we drink lots of water... It is an awesome place to work".

Town and home

Guine and her partner were out in the car, on their way to do some shopping, when the first quake struck. Her partner said, "It's an earthquake, we had better stop!" So they stopped and they saw the lampposts swaying. Guine said, "Look, look, look!" She could see everything swaying. Eventually they went on to do their shopping and then they stopped at Zeroes, a tearoom in Bishopdale. While they were having lunch, the next quake started. There were two ladies sitting nearby. They rushed to get under the table and their coffee was dripping down on their heads and their legs were all sprawled out. The women were too embarrassed to get out from under the table, but Guine helped them up.

When they got home the electric jug was on the floor and many of the pictures as well. The printer had also fallen down and was broken. Once again, Guine's books had fallen off the shelves in her bedroom. And the TV had been

turned around. Guine and her husband laughed. They were scared, but they laughed and Guine said, "There is another day coming!"

Marie Rean's house on the South Brighton spit had received significant damage in the February earthquake. If anything the June shake was worse. After the first quake Marie was looking at the mess and "what was left of my place". She felt "the house literally lift and drop" in the second shake.

Billa Field found the June earthquakes were more than an echo of February:

Then the June 13 earthquake happened. This was not nice; it was violent, loud, and damaging. Liquefaction on the road had crept closer to our property and our crescent was blocked off once again. The neighbourhood rallied around again to help each other; silt was cleared, chemical toilets came out of their boxes and earthquake talk became more intense. Our earthquake folder concerning land classifications and house insurance matters was becoming thicker. To me the June quake was more frightening than the February quake. There were so many unknowns with the house, remediation to the land...

While the June quakes were less damaging than February in most areas, there was just as much liquefaction at Leanne Everingham's home in Chimera Crescent as they had had in February. They pulled up the carpets and threw them into the garage but there was no time to clean up the liquefaction or really get over the latest quake because there was only a couple of days off school and work. At this point, they thought that they would never be back in their house again.

Diana Madgin's house was also surrounded by liquefaction, gushing up through the concrete apron. She describes this as an extraordinary experience working against seismic forces. Diana says the damage to River Road was similar to February, but not as severe. The river, however, had risen three feet, flooding over the river banks. Diana became even more keenly aware of the fragility of the earth.

She noted also that people by the time of this quake were more fragile.

Raewyn Crowther also faced her third lot of liquefaction in the June quakes, and felt they had had enough! They had been in limbo for 11 months when, in August 2011, their property was zoned red and they knew they had to move.

Sumner was hard hit by the June shakes, which were adjacent to the seaside suburb. Lynne was at home alone having a cup of tea when the first quake hit. A workman in a City Care van coming down the hill came roaring up the drive and yelled at her to get out as the house was wobbling like jelly. One of her workmates rang as she didn't want to be on her own, and then biked out to Sumner. Lynne and her workmate went to Coffee Culture in Sumner thinking "Phew, thank goodness that's over". They were sitting beside the front window of the cafe when the 6.4 quake hit. They were thrown from one side of the café to the other. Cups of coffee went everywhere. The owner yelled at them to stay inside.

When the shaking finally stopped, they all went outside and saw red dust from the cliffs everywhere. The owner of the café carried Lynne's workmate's bike out and they made their way home through the back of the movie theatre. The streets were in chaos with everything covered in red dust. Lots of Lynne's neighbours were out on the road. Her workmate was terrified at the thought that she may not get home. But after talking to a man in a car about the state of the roads, she went along the beach front and finally reached North Beach safely. This time they got power back on that night, so they stayed at home and just got on with it. They held more barbeques with neighbours and a fair bit of wine was consumed.

Michelle was due to have a root canal dental treatment, but had felt that it was not the morning to have this treatment. She was sitting at her desk at her parent's home when the quake struck. She drove immediately to Luka's school and collected him before heading to Merivale to check up on her mother and then home. Liquefaction and

flooding were occurring on the streets. "What an amazing process it was to watch the liquefaction bubble up".

A month before the June quake, Michelle had been finding where there were gaps in the community. Having worked with Healthy Cities for a number of years, she had a great network of skilled people to connect with. In her community she saw a need for youth and for cultural diversity. She had also introduced a Mental Health promoter to the ward meetings, who promoted the five strategies for Well Being. Evidence shows "that if you can do these five things you can be reasonably confident you will be looking after yourself".

Anxiety

A number of the participants reported that they were very nervous in June. Clare was at a family member's house after the first quake struck, on the north side of town, and saw no damage. At her own house, things were different, with everything broken again. In the second shake, a big bookcase in the hall fell down, and "there went all the Waterford crystal." She ran out of the house and into her car, but did not feel safe.

Mary Smyth felt:

...rattled.... We lost power for two hours and went back to boiling the water and using it sparingly for a couple of days. We had only minor breakages, though I took down the pictures, lamps and ornaments again. There was an upside, however. Some of the jammed doors and windows now opened. But it brought back the fear, and I spent that night downstairs on the sofa again, not really sleeping because of the aftershocks.

Marie Rean found it increasingly difficult to cope with the continuing quakes. Although she is a "pretty contained person" it became more difficult over time. Her sleeping was affected and she was beginning to have some pretty bad

nights. Someone told her about Rescue Remedy and Marie thought she "would buy half a gallon of it". But when Marie did buy a packet of Rescue Remedy she felt it didn't work and so she gave it to someone else. Marie has found she is "keeping more to myself, and just turning inwards on myself, just trying to look after myself which is not kind of, really my nature".

Raewyn Dawson remembered how she felt:

The June earthquake was the most frightening for me. I was at a women's Toastmasters Club meeting, in a support role. When the double shock hit all the women ran outside onto the tennis courts. But I couldn't get my balance, and stayed inside where I was. It was very sobering, and I realised that those even more elderly than I am would much more easily die. I cried, I think, for the first time. The women were clustered together in mutual support, away from me. I understood how those who live alone felt each time.

Nicky Wagner had the mid-winter blues in the June shakes. In the hard hit areas, there was a lot of water and liquefaction. She described a terrible feeling of "can we do this again?" She said they were quicker at getting back to normal after the June shake "but less enthusiastic about it". Optimism waned, but everyone turned up to help again. "It was June, the middle of winter. But fortunately not too cold".

Jasmine "vaguely remembers the June quake". She does not recall it being talked about a lot, compared with the September and February quakes. They were all in the prison lounge and "it kind of went on for a bit and we were watching the buildings outside, and kind of rolling, and then there was another one". Jasmine recalls a general feeling of anxiety that there could be more to follow. The two quakes "were decent sized ones". The procedure for after a quake in the prison was to "lock us down" for safety reasons. The 'girls' in prison would discuss the never ending nature of the aftershocks. "Some girls were almost counting the aftershocks". Because the prison is situated in Templeton, Jasmine thinks that some of the aftershocks were felt "quite

strongly", especially the ones that registered four or more. There is a sense of "when are they going to end? ... They are still having aftershocks years later".

For some the June quakes had little effect, but for others, and especially those areas badly hit by liquefaction, they were a frightening and damaging winter nightmare.

December 2011

Since the June earthquakes, the ground had settled down well. On December 23, there had not been an earthquake larger than 5 on the Richter scale since October 9. Melissa Parsons said:

We were all rattled by the December 23rd shakes, particularly as we were well into a run of 'good seismic weather', with tremors settling down to below 4.0. (Apparently, so I have heard, 'ninety days with nothing over a 4.0' is the formula which some insurers are waiting for before they will take on new policies.) We had all been 'talking up' 2012 as a different, better year, with the worst of the aftershocks behind us, only for this double whammy to bring us back down to earth with a shudder.

The following account of Jenny May's experience evokes all the feelings of that day: Christmas shopping, the normality of liquefaction in resident's lives, and the determination to get on with living despite the earthquakes:

Jenny was in Ballantynes, doing some last minute Christmas shopping before flying out to London that night. She was upstairs paying her account when the quake struck. Even though Jenny knew that the Ballantynes building is "perfectly safe", she was terrified by the way the ceiling moved. Ceiling tiles started to come down and a nearby shelf fell over. "People started to scream and run. And it was just really frightening". She was so petrified that she couldn't stand up. She just sat on the floor. Then another young woman rushed up to her and said "I need to hold on to you. You'll have to come with

me. I can't do this on my own". The Ballantynes staff were amazing, assisting the customers down the stairs. The young woman clung to her all the way down but recovered once outside.

Jenny walked out into the container-built ReStart Mall. "The Salvation Army Band was still playing and people were still having cups of coffee and the sun was shining". Jenny almost couldn't believe that the quake had even happened. So she returned to Ballantynes "like a salmon going upstream" and collected her bag of Christmas presents. Back outside she came across "the most ridiculous scene I've ever been in. I walked back along the river and people were sitting watching the liquefaction coming up in the Avon River and eating their lunch, like, 'this is normal'".

Jenny's story contains the three key themes evident in most of the accounts of the December quakes. The first theme was feelings of anger, fright, frustration and/or nonchalance over the quakes themselves. The second was the 'business as usual' attitude of most people, and the third was the efficient process of repair and renewal that went on.

Helen Heddell had had enough: "The house just jumped, and Sarah said I just went white. It was really too much for me, that quake. I got out there on the lawn and, yeah ... I'd had enough... I'd had enough. And I think a lot of people felt like that, didn't they, because we were all on that rising plane of being free of them and it just crowded back down."

Despite the shock, Helen decided to go ahead with a planned party, believing that people needed it and that they would come despite the quake. And they did. Again, people swapped earthquake stories. "One lady came and she said 'I was upstairs in Riccarton Mall, in one of those fancy shops, trying on a dress,' and she'd had to bolt with the dress on. The worst of it all was that it didn't really fit!" Helen laughs. On the 24th Helen was back in the East with food supplies, again supporting the student army. There was a feeling that not many students would turn up, but by Boxing Day there were 400 on the job.

Lindsey James also found the December earthquakes a shock. She was out playing golf, and "We were on the 17th fairway, and I did something I don't normally do - I hit into the rough into trees". The quake came as she was hunting for her ball and she remembers the others yelling at her to get away from the trees as they were swaying. "The ground was like a rolling sea". Once out in the middle of the fairway, she knew they were safe, but her immediate thoughts were for her mother and sisters. "I just couldn't believe it was happening again".

Peggy Kelly describes that day: "We were almost at the end of our tether. We had had enough cleaning up. I always say this house will never be clean again. You know we cleaned up after bricks had come through the ceiling, we cleaned up after two chimneys, and here we were again. We were just tired". Fortunately they received a visit by "four young people with shovels and they said, 'Can we help you?' And they came and they worked all day and we shared lunch. They had brought some lunch and we took whatever was in the fridge out and it was lovely. They were from Amberley and they used to come in here for their music lessons, and they just came in to check everybody was managing".

Raewyn Crowther was in a butcher shop buying Christmas meat during the first shake, along with "half of Christchurch". There was lots of screaming, falling things, and then everyone carried on wanting to be served. She was at her mother's house for the second shock and was able to support her mother at the kitchen bench by wrapping her arms around her. This time they left the fresh cover of liquefaction and just cleared a path from the house as they knew they were about to move out.

Although several of the big shopping malls were shut as a result of the earthquake, there was a sense among participants of the need just to carry on. The earthquake sequence continued to produce several 5+ earthquakes during January, and a couple mid-2012. But since then the earth has continued to calm down, with only the occasional felt earthquake by the end of 2013.

Damage

The September earthquake was damaging: some buildings were lost, many chimneys came down and many faced insurance claims for internal damage. The spate of aftershocks, including Boxing Day, caused further damage in some areas. Liquefaction, the process by which silt and water erupts from the earth as a result of the shaking, had been experienced in many Eastern areas. But all of this was mere rehearsal for the damage caused on 22 February 2011. Whether caused by the intense shaking of the ground, or the liquefaction that followed, many people ended up with their property badly damaged or destroyed.

Getting back home

Mary Hobbs worked long days in the CBD, then went to her home to Sumner which was without power, sewage, or water and made do with some very basic camping skills for the rest of the week. "After long days in the inner CBD we would come back and fire up the BBQ and we would dig holes for the toilet in the back yard. It was third world living in the city, but we counted ourselves as some of the very lucky ones."

Rebecca Gordon's family were without power, water and sewage for about two and a half weeks. Chemical toilets soon got dropped off but to overcome the power situation, Rebecca ended up buying her own generator. "I was over it after a week - I needed to do some washing". They managed to do most of the cooking on the barbecue. Being close to the school proved another advantage as the school became the drop off place for the water. Rebecca's boys went down every day and fetched the water, a job they really enjoyed.

Lynne Smith's house had quite a lot of damage. Doors were jammed and unable to be opened or closed. Other doors could not be secured, so a piece of wood had to be lodged in a sliding door at night for security. A neighbour got a back door open that Lynne could use in a hurry. The heat pump came off the wall, but fortunately the weather was quite warm for a while after the quake. Even without water

and power, the situation was manageable. Within 24 hours water was available at the local school.

Judith Sutherland found walking home stressful but on the way along with her daughter Jane called to check on her grand-daughters at St Peter's School, Beckenham. Soon after, her son arrived at the school and they all piled into his vehicle and drove (without seat belts!) to Caldwell Lane to find that all the tar seal had lifted and that the street lamps were on a lean:

My husband was outside talking to a neighbour and said 'Wait till you see inside'. Everything had fallen. In the kitchen things had chipped the new bench. The fridge door was wide open and there was wine and flour all over the floor. Glasses had fallen off the shelves in the dining area and splintered. Many ornaments in the main living room were smashed, but a prize possession, my grandmother's musical jug, was still intact. The bookshelves had all fallen down and collapsed. In the bedroom the bedside tables were upside down, the shelves were dented, and lampshades buckled. A water basin and jug were smashed. In the hall there were pictures off the walls, the hall table was inverted, and a candlestick smashed. The house was just a big mess! Later we realised that the water cylinder had come loose and had emptied into the ceiling causing water damage to the house. We did the best we could to shore this up before we left the house.

Lindsey James and her partner found chaos at their house. Everything had come off the walls. Bookcases had fallen down. The kitchen was the worst with the refrigerator and pantry having discharged most of their contents onto the floor. With no power or water, they cleaned up as best they could. It was an early barbecue dinner followed by an early night. They were able to keep up with current news via their transistor radio, which was helpful. By nightfall Lindsey had contacted her family who were still in their homes and safe.

The next day, they moved from room to room cleaning up. The first priority was water, and also filling her

partner's car with diesel. With Lindsey's car still in the Lichfield car park, it was important to keep their only car well supplied with fuel. It took two attempts to find a petrol station that could supply diesel, and then the supply was limited.

Mary Smith and her partner stayed back in their house for a couple of days, but with the huge chimney complex threatening to come down, they moved out and stayed with friends while urgent repairs were done. They were out of their house for three weeks:

There was so much work to do. The whole house had to be cleaned; every cupboard and dust-choked surface. All our belongings had to be sorted and brought back into the house. Much we just left in boxes in our damaged lounge. We threw a lot away. There were ongoing issues with the house: visits from builders, EQC and insurance assessors, and weeks of phone calls and agitating to get our log fire reconnected, which happened just days before the big July snowfall.

Access to Lyttelton was difficult with the tunnel closed, and a precarious ride over the Port Hills. There was significant damage there.

Anna Mowat had tried to get a bus home to Lyttelton but none were running. With her partner and child on their way into town because the house was badly damaged, she abandoned any attempts to get over there. But when she was reunited with her family at about 8pm, they had not brought any clothes or Anna's laptop, and had not boarded up the windows. So they drove back over Dyers Pass to Lyttelton. Dyers Pass felt very unsafe, with rocks evident. They went to investigate the collapsed retaining wall which was under their house. It wasn't too bad, but another large aftershock occurred while they were there. It was rumbling under the house. Rocks were falling. Lyttelton didn't feel safe. They left.

Allie McMillan got back to her home at Lyttelton on the third day: "my son and I crossed over Dyers Pass to Lyttelton, much against the wishes of my younger daughter.

In retrospect her fears were fully justified, as we noted the huge number of rocks hovering on the steep slopes of Rapaki". This is what she saw:

The frigate Canterbury loomed large right in the inner harbour and navy personnel were evident on the streets. Buildings were obviously damaged; every church and rock wall was in ruins. We headed up the hill to find my house standing without obvious damage apart from the widening gib board cracks. However, the overstuffed pantry had really taken its revenge, spilling its contents in an evil smelling brew. China was broken on the kitchen tiles and the microwave had hurled itself across the floor.

There are always little reminders about the quakes with the street being flooded again or a truck going past or something being dropped on the floor and it rolls. (Karen, New Brighton mother of school-aged children)

Moving out, ready or not

Six days after the February earthquake, Gina's street became accessible again. She went to start collecting her belongings, and borrowed a utility vehicle. She arrived back on day seven and the landlord was there: "He was such a sneaky bloke. He said right you need to sign this to get your bond back. Then he started cleaning the house out, and I said hey, that's my stuff - I'm still living here. The next day I was on the phone with the tenancy people. On 3 March I returned to find the house was absolutely empty".

All Gina's belongings, including the children's beds, a piano, a freezer and other stuff had been removed by the landlord. She now has up to seven years to pursue the landlord for her bond and damages. She says she will probably need it.

I haven't done anything yet. Mum bought the kids new beds, my sister's buying me a freezer... I just have to deal with anything else. That's my drama I

have to take him to court for my bond, and at least \$1500 for the other items.

Gina thought there was a lot of damage to that house near the AMI Stadium. She thought that if the earthquake had gone on for thirty more seconds, it would have fallen down. Gina knows that the landlord has been paid out for the property, but it has not been repaired. When she went past five months later, she saw that he had people living in the house again! She was concerned that they were not safe.

Since the February quakes she has been living with her mum in Bromley. At first they lived in the garage and came inside during the day, and cooked on the gas barbeque. Gina notes that Phillipstown was a forgotten suburb. "There were no toilets, not one, for three months. People were pissing and pooping in their yards."

The family now live in her mum's house and the garage is full of Gina's stuff. There were lots of beautiful things broken in her mother's house, such as glassware and other things. Gina cleaned it out and took photos for the insurance. They eventually paid up, but it took ages.

Rana was renting a house in Bexley Road, and arrived home to a shambles. Everything had come out of the cupboards, fridge-freezer and what was not bolted down had tipped over. A big rimu bookcase near the doorway had completed a 360° turn and landed on top of Rana's mother giving her bruises all down one side. Brick work on the house had come apart, the chimney had snapped in two and the house had tilted to the back warping the front door which would not close. A door chain was used to keep the house secure. "I was fully aware of the flooding and knew we would not be going anywhere, so proceeded to clean the house and put everything back in the hope of everything looking normal for the kids".

Rana had plenty of gas for the BBQ and had been stockpiling water since September. No portaloos were delivered immediately, so they adopted a regime of urine in the toilet bowl and solids in a plastic bag. The next day she talked to her letting agent, and received the first of many negative replies. On the Friday, six people arrived to inspect

the house and it was red-stickered. The family had one hour to get things out.

They packed what they could: irreplaceable photograph albums, some personal items, plus the cat, and went to stay with Rana's mother. "We, the five of us, were in Mum's one and half bedroom flat in Woolston. I cried and cried and cried". They were to be there until mid-April 2011. Rana was banned by her insurance company from returning to the rented house. In April, the house was looted. For two weeks she had been trying to get storage for her belongings. There was no assistance from her insurance company, although storage was part of her policy.

The insurance company paid her out the sum of \$6,547 for all the items taken. Rana takes up the story:

On 20 July 2011 the scenario took a dramatic twist. I received a text from the renting agency JR regarding my belongings still at Bexley Road. I emailed the insurance company and planned to get back to JR. But next thing they emailed to say they had spoken with the insurance company. Consequently JR advised that because I had been paid out they could do as they pleased with my possessions. JR did not have any right to my belongings - after all insurance only paid out on those items which had been stolen in April. How could they have given her the authority to dispose of the remaining contents when I was not allowed to go to get them? JR also stated that EQC had rung them and informed them they could dispose of my contents as they had also paid me out – NOT. Hello! I had not spoken with EQC at that point but they rang that afternoon and contradicted the letting agent's alleged conversation with EQC.

Rana's claim was still being processed by EQC. There is still no resolution to this matter in 2013. The net effect was the loss of most of Rana's furniture and furnishings, and only a tiny payout. Rana now lives in a close community of six units in Woolston. She is grateful for her lovely neighbours and the care they have for each other.

Dee's Christchurch City Council flats in Sumner had been sealed up, leaving Dee in a "sort of limbo". For one day residents were permitted access for about one hour to get clothes to wear. After six weeks, Dee was offered an upstairs flat in Papanui, close to the mall. She accepted the offer and moved in. The Council organised for the Salvation Army to shift Dee's furniture from the Sumner property. Dee insisted on giving them a donation as she was "just overwhelmed with what they did". It took her a long time to settle into the property, but she came to like it eventually.

Mary's house in Woolston "was quite munted" and she went to stay at a friend's place, putting her property into her garage. She moved between Christchurch and Picton, and her friend got another boarder. Mary moved into a sleep out for \$200 per week. She ended up applying to Housing New Zealand and was allocated her present home in Shirley.

Sina ended up essentially homeless after the landlord gave her notice. "I desperately wanted a place, I was looking for three weeks and I went to the Tenancy Tribunal for help and they gave me another 21 days". The Tribunal said that they could stay and look for another house, but the landlord wrote and said they had to move out. Sina phoned the 0800 help line and said, "We did not have a place to go to.... I was so frustrated, so stressed". She thought that if she was on her own she could go to the refuge, but she was not "going anywhere without my boys". The situation was serious. Sina lost her bond of \$900 for two weeks rent. She went to mediation, but did not get it back on the grounds that she had not removed all of the rubbish. She had paid for people to clean the house and take the rubbish, "but they can't have done it".

They moved into a home with another family in Opawa as they had nowhere to go. They had left the possessions that were not damaged in the garage of the house in Waltham. The family in Opawa offered to collect these things and bring them to their home. Over time items went missing and Sina became more and more distrustful of the family. It was a long six months that they boarded with them. She had known them beforehand as a volunteer who had

helped them in court. She paid her board and cooked meals for herself and the boys. She preferred her own food and style of cooking. She got into her own place eventually, but had to move out after the December quake as the house was due to be fixed and more damage was caused. It was a rented house and there had been a lot of uncertainty over its repairs and where Sina and the boys would live. "I am very poor", says Sina and this was very disturbing for her to cope with. When she talked with EQC, they told her that the landlord will pay for temporary accommodation, but the landlord told Sina he was going to fix the house and sell it (Sina's story is continued below)

Adele's family moved out of Avonside in November. She was the last one on the list to move from the Housing New Zealand Avonside area. She was offered a house in St Martins. Adele thought "a state house in St Martins!" she was thrilled. "I felt like crying I could not believe it". It was situated equally between Cashmere High School and Christchurch South Intermediate and Opawa Primary School. Adele is grateful that she has a Housing New Zealand home as the rents have become so exorbitant in Christchurch. "I could not afford to rent a private house. A friend is paying \$400 a week for a house in Wainoni and it is not flash".

Staying (with damage)

Once she got home to New Brighton after the February earthquake, Karen went immediately to check on their neighbour, who is elderly. "All she had happen was a cup and a lamp fall over and a big set of drawers". Karen thought, "Oh perhaps it is not as bad as we thought!" However, walking into their home, "It was as if a bomb had gone off. There was food out of the cupboards, there was stuff everywhere". There was a lot of flooding and liquefaction. The liquefaction started at the corner of the street and finished at their house; it included "us, neighbours, and the school".

The damage to the house did not "look too bad, but there were a lot of problems with the foundations, structural stuff... We could not open the back door, a slab of concrete had lifted up; all our pipes are cracked". The toilet malfunctioned and "it still does not work properly!"

Emily can see that in her neighbourhood close to Wainoni Park "they are pulling down the houses... this whole area is owned by Housing New Zealand and so they've already started pulling the houses down here and all these two storey ones are going... and the ones across the road, they're going... They are starting down the road here, but they haven't told us what's happening to us yet – nobody's been around for the last two years actually... They send us round newsletters to tell us which areas are being done right now and that they will get to the eastern suburbs eventually".

When they came back from Auckland after a brief stay there after the February quake, there was a notice on Emily's door from Housing New Zealand to say she couldn't enter her house. Her neighbour had received a similar notice, "but his whole back wall has fallen down and his windows... you could see right through them. In the wintertime he didn't have any heating or anything so me and my daughter would chase them up". In response, Housing New Zealand "brought him a heater; they didn't fix the windows or anything". Despite the 'Please don't enter' notice, Emily went back into her house.

Emily got tired of living in a damaged home. "Last Christmas I couldn't stand looking at anything anymore. I said, 'We are going to enjoy a Christmas... We are going to look like normal people'". So her partner, Victor, painted the living room for Emily's Christmas present. They paid for their own paint, because Housing New Zealand hadn't got round to fixing their house up. Nothing has been fixed in the house yet. "We can't put anything on the walls because when you go to put your hand on it, it crackles... So all the brickwork; or whatever is inside the walls; is cracked... We can't use the shower because ... water drips down from somewhere and floods it"

The very week of the earthquake, Julia had just paid a bond on a Housing New Zealand rental place in Aldershot Street. The move had to be deferred until March. It was a long six weeks. There were eight children and three adults living in the one home. "It was a real house full... how we did not kill each other I will never know. I think we have got a lot closer since then".

Roman gets a lot of comfort from her family. "It is good to have a family, a big sister and a younger brother... We cook and talk, having our coffee ceremony. We talk about our families, our mum and dad, we try to forget, we laugh. It makes you wonder would I want to bring a child into this world. Don't want anyone to suffer..."

She says that the earthquakes have made her start to think about so many things. "It makes me scared to get married and have children". At church Roman sees the young children crying and trembling with the aftershocks. "We see their faces, I wonder if I would be strong enough to have children and see them cry".

Christine's house in Bexley was damaged after the September earthquake, and was eventually red-zoned. She was eventually able to rent a property over the fence from her daughter. Her sick husband was able to return to Christchurch once his health improved, and they became much more settled.

Like many of the others, the overwhelming experience of Caroline was of uncertainty over their property and their future:

I feel like I have been trapped here because I could not now sell the place because of the uncertainty hanging over the property's future. I don't want to live here. I just want to get on with other things. I am very, very angry how the place is being run. I am concerned about a lack of leadership at present. There are people really suffering.

Whether living in rental accommodation or homes they owned, the people in this study have had multiple problems getting and keeping safe, secure and relatively undamaged roofs over their heads.

Damage in the community

Fiona, who lives in Avondale with her husband and teenage son, acutely feels the impact of the earthquake on this part of the city. "I've worked out actually that since I was five I've lived in four houses and three of them are about to be demolished – one has actually gone – so it's quite weird really. You sort of expect to move out of homes you know and then go back and see what's happened and what people have done with them ... and very shortly I won't have much to show for living in the east most of my life." She thinks that "grieving for the community has been one of the hardest things."

Along with two other neighbours, Dee went for a drive around Sumner to assess the extent of the damage. "It was dreadful. There were great rocks on the road around the area close to Truro Place" (where Dee's flat was located). Dee was in a block of four Christchurch City Council flats in Captain Thomas Courts set back from the road. "One of my friends who had a front flat had a rock fall through the roof, she was in the house at the time, she was so lucky." This friend now lives in Nelson. Dee lamented the loss of community she experienced at Captain Thomas Courts. "It has disconnected a lot of friends because they were older, a lot are in care now - all over the place - and we kept in touch for a while but....it gets too hard".

In the time after the February quakes, Michelle went to a number of funerals. "Dr Angus Binnie was my family doctor... He had been my doctor for a while and a couple of years before the quake we had ended up with another doctor, Dr Alan Sinclair. When the building went down, he went down and we lost him and a lot of his wonderful staff at The Clinic." The Clinic had only recently moved into the CTV building on 10 January because their premises in Gloucester Street became unsafe after the 2010 Boxing Day quake.

Michelle found it difficult to believe that a modern building like that could just fall down. "Every day there were more and more stories that just broke your heart and made you want to cry. I remember reading about this little five

month old and the TV had fallen on him... In the ensuing craziness of the quake he died en route to the hospital. It was not just what you were suffering; it was what everyone else was suffering. It was just crazy, it truly was."

Alia has seen the gradual destruction of her Bromley neighbourhood. The house next door was burned down by arsonists around four to five months after the February earthquake. The burned house sat there for about six weeks before the Council came to demolish it. Soon after, the house on the other side was demolished due to earthquake damage. Two households returned after the earthquake and Alia thinks around twenty households left the immediate area. Most of the houses are empty and are likely to be demolished. Living near the beach she continues to be terrified of tsunami and she also feels isolated from the Afghani community who mainly live in the north west of Christchurch.

Ellenor also finds the possibility of a tsunami frightening. "It was really bad in the east". A number of the earthquakes were centred "right here under the sea off shore". Ellenor said this concerned people in the New Brighton and Rocking Horse Road area. "The buses would not go down Rockinghorse Road "for months and months they stopped short at Caspian Street which must have made it difficult for those residents".

Across the road from Ellenor, the pub and the dairy closed and "the Bridge Street shops have all gone". Although Ellenor did not use these shops a lot, it was convenient having the dairy over the road. The nearest shops are now at New Brighton or Pak 'n Save at Wainoni.

She had been hoping her house would be zoned red, to give her a new start, but it went green and her house will be rebuilt, but not for several years. It is a long wait for someone in their seventies. "I may not live that long".

Nicki described what it was like living in a broken suburb, isolated from her family:

You just don't think of these sorts of things. There was no money in the eftpos machines because everyone had gone mental and taken money out. There was no petrol at the service stations and all

the road cones. Stores were closed because of damage - all supermarkets were closed. At Eastgate Mall, the wall fell down. New Brighton Countdown was a mess, someone died in there. And The Palms (shopping centre) was damaged and closed. There was nothing, we had nothing. It was like a war zone.

Overall, Nicki believes that her house in New Brighton is solid and takes comfort in that. It moves but, because it is wooden, it is safe. However, all the frames around her windows have cracked and everything rattles and shakes with wind and passing cars. Nicki's house has dropped in some places and risen in others. Her son has noticed the changes in the floor level in his bedroom and wanted to fix it. The house is bit like a boat and they feel every little jolt.

Violet and her family stayed in Rolleston for two weeks after the February earthquake. It was during this time that they were told that their Lyttelton house was red stickered. "That sucked. I did not sleep for five nights. I was living on adrenalin, cigarettes and coffee".

Violet kept in touch with Lyttelton neighbours and tried to keep life as normal as possible for the children. It took 18 months for the house to become white stickered. A lot of tests were carried out on the land as the engineers were not sure whether it would "roll down the hill". In July 2012 it became green stickered. However, the house was not habitable. "The roof had collapsed, the windows had caved in and there was no courtyard. It had snowed and rained on it throughout the winter". Eventually they replaced the roof, but the house was in need of fixing.

Violet could not go back to the house for a long time. Her husband "did all the clean up". Violet did not visit the house until the end of 2011. "It was really shocking; everything was wet, all the furniture, clothes, and bed linen. There was mould, it was stuffed, there were mushrooms growing in the clothes... everything that we had cared for". She is ambivalent about her home and says "part of me wants to go back and part of me doesn't... I fell in love with the house the way it was". However, she knows that they will return at some stage, to see how comfortable they feel living

in it, and living on the hills again. "If we don't like it, we will sell, and go and live on flat land somewhere".

The February earthquake produced a split from floor to ceiling in Tink's bedroom in Waltham, and from ceiling to floor in her daughter's bedroom. "There was a gap about five centimetres. I could see through into the guy's lounge next door, and she could see into the room next door to her. Yes, there was a hole, about that big, by the door to get into the unit, where liquefaction come through, and we were lucky really that was the only damage."

Aranui, where June lived, was a "blackout area; we were on this side of town so we didn't have power for a long time". June and her children went to live with her mother in Avonside. "I am a single mother ... and I was not going to be by myself". The Avonside house was right next to the red zone. June thought that the area "was even worse" and that her mother should have moved, but "she wasn't going to go anywhere!" June said her mother's Avonside home has "holes [and] she had bricks coming through the ceiling... but she's still there". At the time of the interview the house had "been looked at, but there's still a couple of holes there."

The constant earthquakes affected Adele. "I was so tired and thinking I can't cope with this again, so tired of having to keep it together". Adele dreaded the liquefaction. "It drives you crazy; it gets in all your wash when you hang it out, it is all a mess". In the June earthquakes, although the power was only off for one day, the local streets were badly damaged. By the end of 2011 hardly anyone was living in Adele's Avonside neighbourhood. It was declared a red zone so a lot of people had had to leave. "It was not ideal... All the pretty old houses around Avonside were ruined, our playground park was gone". It was tough.

Being in a Housing New Zealand rented house, Adele "felt in a better position" than those people who had owned their own home and lived in it a long time, as it was harder for them to move. Adele knew that she would have to move at some stage, but she had told HNZ she was not "in a rush, that priority has to go to others".

After staying with a friend for a few months, Nellie and her family decided to move back to their badly damaged rental accommodation in Waltham. "It wasn't too bad", Nellie says about returning home. The chimney was taken down so "that was cool". Mahara and the other children slept in the front of the house in her brother's room "because it was so close to the front door... so we could go straight out" and, as Nellie says, "it was a big door frame, so it was protecting us".

Nellie's daughter remembers that they packed a "whole lot of bags" that they left at the front door in case of a quick getaway. "We had bottles filled, a first aid kit, torches ... everything sat at the front door so that all we had to do is chuck everything out into the big yard" adds Nellie. "We were living like that for quite a long time". Her daughter, who was present at the interview, describes "sleeping with jerseys on, and shoes by the bed or sometimes we would sleep with shoes on just in case".

They lived in a tent in the garden for about three months. They all felt safer out in the tent. "I kept the tent a lot tidier than I kept the house" smiles Nellie. As winter approached "hard and fast", she knew that it was better for the children to move back into the house. However, the power bills were huge, one was nine hundred dollars. It was impossible to heat the house with so many gaps in it and it is not insulated. "The house is so big and tall, and the doors do not all shut, so it is impossible to heat it". The floor level is raised and doors will not close. One window does not close properly and there is a two inch gap at the bottom of it. Nellie was told to stuff the gap with a towel.

The landlord has never done any repairs to the property. In the recent high winds two of the roof panels came loose. Nellie's property managers told her to ring the fire brigade to repair them. They were shocked at the state of the house. "What are you living in? Has this house ever had repairs?" they asked. They could see the holes in the ceiling. Things remain difficult for Nellie in 2013:

But now my home is no longer safe, it is costing me too much and my kids no longer live with me. It is

not a situation I want to be in... All I want is a decent home... one without cracks; one that the ceiling is not going to cave in; one that is not going to cost the earth for power. After the children moved out, some of the ceiling came down. It is quite big chunks of plaster, I was so grateful they weren't there".

Going back to her home in Kaiapoi after the September quake, Treena was shocked to see all of the damage. She describes how "the street was just absolutely flooded, all brown and yuck. It was empty; the town was deserted like a ghost town". They parked the car on the street because they couldn't get up the driveway. The children stayed in the car while Treena went into the house. It was on a lean and the two back door steps had disappeared, with the driveway now level with the house. Inside the house, Treena was confronted with an awful smell which made her dry retch. Some of her belongings were wet and the kitchen was leaking. Its appearance was as if there had been a robbery.

Jacinta's pre-earthquake plan had been to do up her house in New Brighton, perhaps get a boarder in to help pay for the work, and then sell it off, as she only has a small mortgage on the house. But because of the quake, she doesn't want to spend any money on the house, even just for cosmetic repairs. She is in no hurry to take a boarder as her son is currently living with her, although not paying rent. The kitchen needs to be fixed and there is a tarpaulin over the roof which has started to leak. The weather and sun are eroding the house. Jacinta's ex-husband wanted to give her a birthday present, so Jacinta asked him to fix her roof in the kitchen. He hasn't been seen since she made the request!

While she was gardening, Jacinta discovered that the foundation of the house had crumbled, more than anticipated. Reading a newsletter from EQC, she found out that there is an option to be paid out, instead of repairing the house, as it is very old and EQC does not want to be responsible for ongoing leaks. She has been in limbo for the last three years, with a house that is structurally sound and performed well during the earthquakes but needs repairs. "I

am aware that the lean-to will collapse, and the artesian well and crumbling foundation does not bode well".

Gina's mother's house needed a huge amount of fixing. The piles needed redoing, the floors were uneven, there were many gaps, ceilings were broken and holes in the roof. Because Gina's mother has some mental health problems, Gina acted as the agent working with EQC and the insurance company. She found the whole process difficult: "The way they do it is so offensive. They tell you what damage your house has, instead of asking you...".

Community responses

The Christchurch earthquakes and the aftershocks triggered spontaneous responses and actions that drew people together. The women's stories reveal that although the physical destruction affected people differently depending on their geographical location, everyone was affected in some way by this catastrophe; Women and men gave support when they could and gratefully accepted help when it was offered. Reciprocity among the community was alive and well and was a defining feature of how communities grappled with what was happening around them.

The following stories give some insight into the community responses to this natural disaster; they show a common feature that can be described as the *Disaster Assistance Dynamic*, the give and take of offering support and receiving aid. Stories gathered from women living in the severely damaged areas with predominantly economically disadvantaged communities, demonstrate that the response to this calamity was not a 'one way street'. These women's voices echo loud and clear throughout the study with strength, resilience, and often revealing perceptive social analyses of "how the system worked" and how to advocate for their families and neighbours, often against great odds. Victims they were not; survivors they are!

Previous social and structural divisions of communities in Canterbury initially dissipated immediately following the 'quakes and Emma Content, one of the founders of Greening the Rubble⁷, described it this way:

People were vulnerable and had to trust each other and allow each other to help, which is amazingly cathartic for a society that is sometimes quite private and staunch. It was amazing to see strangers bonding, supporting each other; and to be the recipient of unconditional kindness. Just the fact

⁷ View this website for information about this group;
<http://greeningtherubble.org.nz/wp/>

that we are all experiencing this together is quite unifying.

However currently, in the fourth year on from the first earthquake, enduring effects are still being grappled with in many communities and the second group of women interviewed talk about how they coped with the seeming intransigence of these effects.

In the first instance though, people's lives changed dramatically following the first earthquake in September 2010; and the women's stories usually start with descriptions of their immediate experiences and responses; how they managed to care for their families, neighbours and even strangers in those first few days, weeks and months following each 'quake.

"Everyone just mucked in!"

Immediately following each earthquake people, often still in shock, sprang into action in their streets, neighbourhoods, communities and work places. This section outlines the spontaneous help that the women gave, and received and observed among others, even absolute strangers, in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes.

Among the first concerns that women talked about were their fears for family members; whether children at school, workers in the CBD or family living in other parts of the city. Attempts to contact family were often thwarted by overloaded phone lines/digital connections.

Many women felt the need and desire to help in some way and some felt guilty if they weren't actually digging liquefaction. Jayne Rattray, who lived in Rangiora, says that her priority post-February earthquake was finding different ways to help as she felt

... like we have got to do something, we are so close yet so distant, and everything was okay out here, so what can we do?" She said that it "was just a huge disaster really, that made everyone want to stop and get involved and help... everyone kind of dropped

tools for that time to be able to help, and reflect, and find out how everyone was.

Rosemary Baird talks about feeling guilty about not doing enough, saying "Over the next few days I did baking for the student volunteer army and shovelled liquefaction. I felt guilty about not doing more."

Wanting to help in some concrete way was also important for Melissa Parsons and she remarks that bringing two pre-schoolers along would have just added to the chaos, so she accepted that her role was to stay strong for the boys, to 'keep calm and carry on'.

On days following the earthquakes women explained how they coped with the realisation that the event had huge repercussions for how they carried on with their lives, cared for their families and helped one another.

Belaynesh Tegegen's eldest daughter and her family were once again not so badly affected. They had power and water. "They are very lucky. We don't have electricity; we don't have water, anything!" Belaynesh and her younger daughters went to stay with her eldest daughter and her family. They came back after a week and checked the house now and then and fetched some things. After a few weeks, the power was restored. But it took a long time before they had water and it was a year before they were able to flush the toilet. Belaynesh dug a hole in the garden for toileting. "Like back home ... What can I do? We have to use the garden..."

Estelle Laugesen, talking about cleaning up, said it wasn't too bad, although "it took a wee while".

Items had fallen all over the floor everywhere, cupboard doors opened, dishes had fallen out and it was quite a mess. But... I had help with it, as my son-in-law and daughter helped me. But... um... you could just do nothing about it. You just knew it had happened and we have to go on. Initially, there is that awful shock - what was happening? And the frightening (aspect) of it, but once it's over, you think well that's it. It's over - get on. But...it wasn't like that".

Those homes that were liveable, provided shelter for extended families and some, out of necessity, were full to bursting:

Anastasia states that their house was full. There were about ten more people than normal and they all slept in the lounge." And me and my cousins - we slept under the table on a stretcher bed". There was no power and Anastasia remembers that "we had to cook everything on the barbeque". During the day there was a lot of hard work to do:

It was a bit stressful because we had to dig up all their silt as well, to clear the driveway and clear the roads... so that we could go out and get food and stuff". The neighbourhood in east Christchurch "was very quiet a couple of days after because I think everyone had just left". However, there was still a sense of community. The people that were there "were really helpful and offered to give you a little bit of help" such as "to dig up your silt.

Many people were away on business at the time of the February earthquake and thoughts about family and desperate attempts to urgently return to the city were in the forefront of their minds: Others such as Jasmine, who was incarcerated at this time, described what it was like for those who were unable to personally check on their families. She also wanted more information about what was happening and suggested more use of the prison notice-boards with disaster drills spelt out, in case of another disaster. She was conscious that:

Other girls are from outside of Christchurch and have never been in an earthquake and so for them it would be quite terrifying". Some of them had to be moved into an acute ward in the prison because they could not cope and "all they wanted to do was get out and be with their family.

Many women described how neighbours pulled together and supported one another: Barbeques were in hot demand and kept neighbourhoods going.

Nippy ended up helping out a number of elderly neighbours. She knocked down the fence so that her elderly neighbour next door could come over. She was able to get

some milk and bread from the local dairy before it closed down. She also helped the "old boy" around the corner, and another neighbour in her nineties.

Generosity went both ways, and in the period after the earthquakes, neighbours and friends looked out for one another. As Gina King put it:

I saw community, everyone was helping everyone. I saw it that day and I didn't see it again until the June quake. So we were helping dig out liquefaction in the street, and in the car ferrying water and a gas cooker to a girlfriend in New Brighton. She has an autistic boy. She lit a fire in a bath outside to cook him his dinner and the fire brigade came and put it out. No offer of help, just put it out. We managed to get her sorted.

Many people used their barbeques to cook meals over the days following the February earthquake, when there was no power on in most eastern communities.

Fortuitously, and for no obvious reason, Rana Kuiti had purchased two canisters of gas from the Warehouse that day during her lunch time. She records that the gas cooker was deployed for the next three days to provide welcome cooked meals. Rana played touch rugby for New Brighton which meant her Thursday evenings were committed. This pursuit provided her with a highly prized social and friendship circle.

June Tiopira's family also used the barbeque, which became the main kitchen. They cooked up all the frozen food.

"We didn't have any power, so we had to use the food. We didn't have no electricity or nothing, so we ended up getting a gas bottle and using the barbeque. But we had to use the meat and whatever we had in the freezers at that time. It was just so much longer before the east side got the power going."

June and her mother cooked and shared food with the neighbours.

“We were doing the whole sharing thing, you know ‘join in, have a feed’. We’ve all been there for 25 years, so we all knew each other”. She explains how in some streets in Avonside they were putting up meals for everyone. “In Avonside, some of the streets were awesome... they were going outside and putting up for anyone that’s going past... meals on the barbie and stuff. You know it’s really lovely how the community’s got together... and actually helped each other... we really did have to get together and support each other”.

Nicki was also able to cook on the barbeque. She had people staying with her. She also helped some elderly neighbours. The Red Cross were visiting and a group of French nuns came around bringing food. "None of us had any money". Nevertheless, much of the food in her freezer – whatever they couldn’t eat in a few days – had to be thrown out.

Ella and her family were reliant on the barbeque, and they did some BBQ baking. They put muffin mix into circular frames for eggs and found that “it was actually quite good because like it cooked the muffin at the bottom but the top was like cookie-doughy”. She comments:

Mum was smart, as soon as the earthquake happened she put a plug in the big bath and left the tap running until it got to the top, and so we had a bathtub of water which we used for dishes and stuff like that – it was more for personal hygiene that was the issue.

Her mother had stored drinking water in huge Just Juice bottles in the garage. She was quite prepared “which was good”.

After making it home in February, Kristy Constable-Brown and the children "hung out" with their neighbours. They had a camp stove and were able to boil water. The camping chairs came out and cups of tea were made. They ate a barbeque provided by the neighbours. Her partner went to clear up the broken crockery and glasses at their house, whilst Kristy kept the children at the neighbours. They returned to their own home at around 6pm.

Access to clean water and sewage problems were two other major concerns for many neighbourhoods: Nicki's friend had an artesian well up the road that continued flowing. The neighbourhood was well served with water. Rana also had plenty of water, as she had stockpiled it after the September earthquake. Adele Kelly recalled: "Our lives became, where the day was spent getting water and that sort of thing, like the olden days".

Belaynesh was hopeful that the person who owned the property would take action to get something done about the sewerage and restore the flush toilet. But nothing happened. Belaynesh contacted the agent, but the owner did nothing. 'No-one comes here'. Her next-door neighbour, who owns the house in front of hers, helped her.

He said, 'just leave it to me'... He try, he try, he try". Then people came and dug between her house and his house. They found the broken sewerage pipe and fixed it. "He help me... but no one look, it is my problem. I like the house, but not the owner.

Gina's rental accommodation also appeared to have little damage, and she spent her time out helping neighbours. She did notice some signs of damage later: "We noticed bugs were coming up from under the house. And we noticed damp coming up the wall. I reckon the sewer main was cracked".

There was nowhere for Emily's family to shower. Everyone in the neighbourhood was in the same boat. "We all just had bottles". Emily filled a large bucket with bottled water which they used to clean themselves. "That was the only bucket that you were able to get water out of to have a wash in... it was easier to wash the kids like that... because they were little".

They had been finding it hard to get access to a port-a-loo "and we had been doing it in a bucket – we used the shed". They cut up one of the chairs, a plastic picnic chair, and had the bucket inside that with the plastic bag. They buried the waste, "even though they said we could put them in the bins". But the City Council were not collecting the bins regularly. Emily didn't feel that it was very hygienic to keep burying their waste "even though we were putting it

in bags”. Other streets had already got port-a-loos at this stage; there were no portaloos on their street at all. They kept ringing up to ask when they would be getting a port-a-loo “and then we thought we’ll drive around and see if the other streets were like our street. We saw that every house in some streets had a port-a-loo... And then we suddenly realised that we were going to be last on the list”. When they eventually got a port-a-loo, after “months and months”, it was at the far end of the street “around the corner” and it was for the whole street to use.

At this stage they were using chemical toilets which they had been given. Emily felt that this “was really stupid because you didn’t even have a container... They were giving out these chemical toilets”, but there was nowhere close by to dispose of them.

“You had to go all the way to Hampshire Street to empty them and then carry it all the way back again”. In the end they put the waste from the chemical toilet in the car and drove it round to the waste container. After a while they could partially use their toilet, “but you could only pee in there, no solids [were] allowed to go in there”. It was nearly a year before they had “a real good flush” again.

Emily was annoyed about how the Council kept leaving them out. “It was like we didn’t exist... the Council would say ‘what number do you live in?’” The Council put Emily and her neighbour’s units “down as one house”. Emily rang the Council to ask for a closer area to dispose of waste, but despite delivering a chemical toilet to her, they told her they didn’t have her address registered in their system.

Outside the golf club they pitched a tent in the end where you could go and have showers. And at the stadium on Pages Road you could go there and they had showers and somewhere to do your washing... and then some of the schools had water so you could go there... and then we had the Army who used to come and put on sausage sizzles and hand out bread in the park – which was lovely - and they were giving out OA bread and things like that.

Friends often came to the breach especially those who lived out of town and had minor damage. Ella had a friend who lived 45 minutes away, so she went over to her place quite a lot and used her shower and “hung out” with her.

We got our power put on pretty quickly, but water was more of an issue. We had maybe five or six days without power, but we had like two weeks without water.

A friend of Fiona’s had given them a large tanker of water. It had been used for chemicals so the water was used for washing things and flushing the toilet. After the first week they got a camping toilet, but [son] refused to use this. Fiona found it difficult too with her broken arm.

A friend's bus was parked in Nippy’s driveway and they slept in that at first. She didn't sleep much. Most of her neighbours were packing up and leaving, and there were "lots of young ones with backpacks around". Houses were getting looted. One evening they took a torch and three lanterns, went down to pub (closed now) and had a trivial pursuit night. The pub put on a big barbeque cook up to use everything in freezer. “It was great”.

After the earthquakes, relationships and connections often spontaneously developed among strangers, reflecting the unifying effect of their common experiences: The desire to help prompted many selfless acts such as one woman who wanted to be more useful so she filled her car with friends and spent a day delivering food parcels.

I wished I had just taken a shovel and done hard graft as it was pretty chaotic and it seemed we were not being that useful. Playing at doing good!

Caroline recalls that the Grace Vineyard Church helped remove the liquefaction. "A wonderful man from Wellington, who had driven down in his own van with his own money, hired a digger and with the help of two German backpackers removed the liquefaction onto the street". At the end of the day, he presented Caroline with a green mug with fudge, napkin and tea bag as a gift from his neighbour in Wellington who had parcelled up 200 of these gifts. One day a woman

drove down from Kaikoura with her husband with a load of fresh baking.

She was just giving out plastic plates full of home-made biscuits – things most of us hadn't seen for such a long time. The absolute kindness of strangers was the most amazing thing in the world. People that didn't know us from anywhere else, but they were prepared to give us the shirt off their back to make sure we were OK. It really was incredible... It had broken so many hearts and it had hurt so bad...

Susan Barnes talked about how her guide dog Sam, attracted attention in the mall – it is positive attention and Susan felt she had to give people an opportunity to interact with Sam. This is a way of giving people a chance to interact with a guide dog. When Sam is wearing the harness it means work and he cannot be distracted, but just focuses on Susan. But when the harness is off, Sam can interact with other people. Sometimes Susan has to take the harness on and off a lot when she and Sam visit the mall.

Some women describe how people often saw a need and just acted on it: Mary Hobbs recalls an amazing Daphne bush in the front of a house with a driveway covered with dirty and murky silt. They had no idea who the house belonged to. No one was home. They could see the owners were in trouble with the liquefaction, so they set to work. It wasn't long before they were joined by a number of like-minded Kiwis, which turned it into an amazing experience.

To Mary, this was very special. As a nurse she feels that it is always a duty to help where one can, when someone is in trouble, but here everyone was pitching in and it really did create a bond among those there. This was happening all over the city.

Many people living out of town helped and Liz Nichol says she personally wasn't too badly affected and she didn't really know how she could help. Then she suddenly felt that she "got a message from my mother – from up there – to ring around the neighbours." So she gathered all the neighbours and asked them to donate some home baking or anything – people in town needed blankets, cosmetics and

other things – and took two carloads into the community centre in Rolleston.

Liz's musician friends were wonderful too, just bringing everybody together and playing music. They ended up producing a CD which they'd actually recorded before the earthquake –'Merging Landscapes'– which was a compilation of a several very talented Canterbury musicians. "That was fantastic, very therapeutic."

The women also recount many instances of kindness that people extended. Jayne Rattray tells a moving story:

...a guy that came up to the helicopter, and he was in Aranui, obviously being a lower socio economic area, these are the people that don't have a lot of things, they don't have a pantry full of food, so two days on after the earthquake these were the people struggling for food, water...he had a five dollar note, he was trying to give it to us as 'koha' (gift/contribution) for the helicopter... the spirit and heart of those people, we were giving them help and they wanted to help back as well.

Water was a an essential need for many people and Marie Rean talks about a guy from Rangiora who came down to the end of Rockinghorse Road in South Shore with a water tanker at 12 o'clock every day. This "typical kiwi bloke" was marvellous. The "water-man was shattered when he saw what was happening down Rockinghorse Road and other parts of the city." For Marie this man "was kind of our lifeline with this lovely fresh water every day." His arrival became a focal point as everyone gathered at the big water tanker.

Some participants highlight the kindness of people as their groups went about their work. For example Emma Content recounts.

While we were building Victoria Green [the first site], lots of residents would come out and bring us tea and biscuits or passers-by would stop to chat ... saying things like, 'Oh it's great that you're doing it, such a positive thing, so nice to see things developing and watching you all working so hard, we really appreciate it'... Small things that make a place special really

matter. When we were deconstructing the first site the other week, a lady from Russia who lives over the road, came over, and she said, 'Oh I love the wildflowers you've planted, they remind me of my home', just little personal things like that makes it all really worthwhile.

Small acts of kindness were noticed by a number of participants, which Helen Heddell of Farmy Army thinks made a big difference to morale. She recalls how osteopaths came to the catering hub at the Showgrounds and gave free massages and "we had a fantastic guy in his double-decker bus from Governors Bay who turned up with that real chocolate drink, like those Belgian drinks. That was wonderful." And Hummingbird Coffee donated a coffee machine and real coffee, "just that little spoiling tactic that catered to people..." and helped keep them going.

Jade Rutherford from SVA also thought that small things could make a difference:

Gina and I spent a lot of time on the phone to old people who just wanted someone to talk to, and a lot of our teams when they went to people's houses, one of our volunteers would end up sitting inside, drinking tea and talking to the people inside, while everyone else did the work, but that's quite good, because that's part of the whole thing I think. We kind of just had a reputation for not really caring one way or the other; we kind of just weren't involved in society. So I think it's been really nice to show that young people do care, are willing to put their backs out for someone that they don't know, and I think it has restored a lot of older people, especially a lot of their faith in humanity and in young people

After the February quake Jade got a message from someone who said that one of the Christchurch schools had a 'dress up as your hero day' and there were a whole lot of five year olds who had dressed up as students volunteering in green t-shirts and shovels. She has ring binders filled with thank you notes.

Another participant Ellenor cannot recall the exact sequence but she does remember receiving food parcels from St Luke's, the church she was involved with. Ellenor's neighbour who she had not seen much of before, came over to see if she needed anything.

Michelle also remembers on one occasion, about ten days after the quake that a man stopped with a truck at the end of the drive way. He had a van full of water and asked her if they needed any. She said that they did and asked why he had not been there before. He said the street did not look as if there was a lot of damage, so he had not been there before. It was so good to get fresh water from him. He also provided some lollies to Michelle's little boy – he was very rapt.

Nippy remembered a van arriving in the street giving out bakery items. She was aware that further over lots of free food was being handed out, including hot meals, but "they never came to see us".

After the February quake, Emily Adcock and her family were without power, water and toilets. Emily explains how "it took ages for the power to come back on...and all we had were candles...torches...and I remember somebody at his [Victor's] job lived on a farm...and he was bringing in water – all we had to do was give him the containers and he would full them up and bring them home".

All these people, even primary schools, were sending love boxes – and we've still got them because we didn't want to use any of the stuff that they gave us... we've still got them today". The love boxes had "creams and toothpaste and tooth brushes in them." They didn't use them because they wanted to keep them as a memento. "The kids wrote to all these schools which sent love boxes and thanked them.

Alia Afzali spent the night of the February 22 earthquake at Burnside High School. On their arrival, around 10pm, they found that beds had been provided, like a mattress, everything and food". They spent one night in the emergency shelter but there was, "too much people around

the big hall - we slept all in the same place and I was very worried and uncomfortable".

They went the next afternoon to collect some "clothes, food and some stuff for the baby". Alia then contacted her husband, who had stayed at their home (there was no-one to look after their house. Alia's husband thought that she didn't "need to come home" because there was a lot of liquefaction around the streets and their house in their area, "lots of water". There was no power and no water and Alia's husband thought it would be very hard. He encouraged her to do her shopping at Burnside, as all the streets in the eastern suburbs were closed due to the flooding.

As a result, the second night Alia and some of the family went to some relatives who lived in Burnside. "They contacted us and they said because of the baby, you can come and spend one night here".

The women frequently comment that offers of support came not only from strangers within the local area but from all over New Zealand, some monetary, others actually sending items to Christchurch; there was "truckloads of stuff." Jayne Rattray talks about how their group provided an avenue for people's offers of help. "We provided a way for people to come and just harness the generosity of New Zealand, for people to be able to come and do something."

Mary Hobbs recalls how they set to work shovelling silt and that it wasn't long before they were joined by a number of like-minded Kiwis, which turned it into an amazing experience.

They came from Lincoln, Hornby, the West Coast or wherever, and they were all there for the common purpose to help. Mary also talks about a Fulton Hogan digger driver who had suffered devastating damage to his own home in Kaiapoi and who came over with a digger to lend a hand in Avonside on a Saturday morning. At one stage they needed a chainsaw to enable the digger to get in further. An overhanging tree hampered progress. Before it became a real problem, a man appeared out of nowhere with a chain saw.

Another participant Kathryn O'Connell Sutherland says her youngest brother came from Wellington to help;

Helen Heddell recalls that among those who volunteered were itinerants, some sleeping rough so they could help in the emergency, like a Canadian couple who had helped in February. "They rang from... I can't remember... Kaikoura or the Far North... and they said, 'We're coming back. Do you need a hand?'"

After the September earthquake, Mel Hillier's Guldren Harvest ministry "just absolutely multiplied." Her house became a gateway for outsiders to give aid to the Aranui/Avondale areas. In the weeks after the earthquake she received huge amounts of donated food, equipment and gifts. Someone rang up New Zealand talkback radio and described the work Mel's organisation was doing. This brought in further donations.

One lady drove from Blenheim with a van full of baking. Another lady from Ashburton donated a generator. Before the earthquake, Mel had been teaching the kids in her programmes about their treasure within. They made treasure boxes and lined them up in Mel's home. Now, after the earthquake, people sent hundreds of shoeboxes, wrapped up, full of new presents and loving notes. Someone in Adelaide posted over a big box full of handmade teddy bears, dolls, and blankets. Another person donated 1000 first aid kits. The treasure boxes were filled to overflowing.

Support from 'On High'

Mel felt there were times when their needs were provided for miraculously. She gave this example.

We got to a point where we had run out of meat one day and the helpers said 'What are we going to do?' and I said 'Oh just pray for some more.' So I'm sitting on the floor going 'Oh come on Lord, we need some more meat 'cos we've still got people to feed'. At that point we were still feeding a hundred people a day. And yeah, well the phone rings and this person goes 'Oh look I'm calling from Ashburton and we're just wondering would you like us to bring some meat up 'cos we have all this meat that we'd like to donate.'

And I was like, 'That would be great.' And then I was thinking 'Oh no, what are we going to put it in?' 'Cos they said they had quite a lot and our freezer space - we didn't have enough. So then someone else rang up a couple of hours later and said 'Oh is there anything you need?' And I said, 'Actually, bizarre, but we need a freezer, can you help out?' And they were like 'actually we can'".

To Mel's amazement, the freezer arrived by trailer and was plugged in just as the meat arrived.

Communities pulling together

In response to the ongoing shakes, a sense of community increased in many neighbourhoods and participants also saw many continuing acts of generosity; such as Nippy who explains that from the first moment when she stopped at a dairy after the February shake, the Chinese man just said 'look take what you want, help yourself ladies'. "So I grabbed some milk and grabbed a bottle of lemonade for the kids, thought it might help calm them down".

An example of a woman providing assistance to many in her community is given by Sina Lemana. Before the earthquake, Sina and her boys were living in Waltham in a rented house. They had created a large and productive garden, which Sina took delight in, offering produce to any visitor.

Sina says she worked with the Waltham Community Cottage helping needy families and providing mentoring and support. At the Telford Street Resource centre Sina established the Pacific Island programme. But the main volunteer centre remained:

...my home ... I bring people here and feed them and look after them as family because I love them". She frequently had people staying in her house whilst they got established or were able "to stand on their own two feet. I helped couples fix their papers to stay in NZ... a lot of the people I help I meet on the street, they have nowhere to go and I say,

'Come, I help you...' - Some people I met them on the bus.

Sina was also well known to the street kids as she would help them with bus money and food.

I see kids kicked out of the bus...so I pay the fare...'Don't worry'....When I go to town, kids come running... They ask, 'Do you have \$2?' I say, "'Of course...I help you' ... I say to the bus driver, 'Don't worry I pay their fare'. Sometimes, if I have enough money, I take them to the Kentucky...I fill them up".

Sina's generosity spilled over into supporting people in need in her own home. She says that where she was living she had plenty of room. She had a sitting room and "here comes elderly people... they don't want to leave...because of the energy of love...I treat them as my own. Whatever we have... you can eat, if you don't like it, you can fix your own food, that is OK... this Indian couple stayed for 6 months".

She was always involved in volunteer work and loved helping other people.

I used to help at the community centre helping elderly... the elderly who their own family abuse... I help them. I was feeding that old lady because I love her... just like my mother... I have no car... I used to take the elderly to the doctors on the bus... I would help them".

Another participant, Amelia, described how she responded to a community need that she identified. Amelia lived in Lyttelton and listened to people saying they didn't know what was happening around their suburb. That motivated her in May 2011 to start the *Lyttelton Review*, a newsletter which Amelia now edits. It is full of:

...what's going on and what you need to know. It is still produced weekly, and it now has 1,200 readers, which has been magic! It's a feel-good newsletter and people share their stories, so it really does inform and connect the community.

Some women talked about how they just fell into particular ways of helping: Following the February earthquakes Alex

explains how she was involved in the Christchurch Baking Army.

I spent a couple of weeks just baking, everyone felt that we just wanted to do something to help ... I've never been into baking much but I think 'cause suddenly you're stuck at home, I had no employment, our social life had been confined to just being at friends' houses and stuff, so I really got into cooking". Simultaneously she was developing a programme focused on crisis management for the local business community. "I guess I went into autopilot, and I was like I have to do something to help, I'm unemployed, what can I do? I'm so project focused, I was like 'OK, I'll develop a project, a programme for business leaders and how they can take the crisis and turn it into an opportunity rather than a negative'... I threw myself into that".

Lianne Dalziel, then Christchurch East MP, describes how she went to the local police station which had power; she had a coffee, and plugged in her phone and computer. Lianne explains:

Senior Sergeant SAINT Roy Appley just said 'Make yourself at home'. And I did, and I became part of the response team with the police and with a church called Grace Vineyard".

Community assistance received and given was critical for some families. Lois Herbert describes an incident that is emblazoned in her memory:

A woman arrived here (at the refuge) with her four children. She had managed to get \$10 petrol money from a neighbour and she knew we would help her because we had previously when she had to get out of a violent relationship. She had an 8 month old baby with her in absolutely saturated clothing. The baby had a dirty nappy on since the night before because the mother had no nappies left, her clothing was wet because she was teething and dribbling, her face was bright red and neck red raw because she had been without dry clothing for days. The

children (pre-schoolers) were very hungry and the mother herself was filthy".

Lois points out that this is still happening. Daily life is just so much more difficult for the women they are dealing with. Another notable factor that has occurred frequently after the earthquakes is that in the difficult circumstances relationships often reconvened. "Men would come back and say they needed to be there to help with the kids.

Schools were established communities that provided vital help and shelter for many families and communities. Margaret Paiti describes how the whole school community was invited to help the community.

We opened up the building and communicated to students and families that, if they wanted to come and help and donate goods and help out with any odd jobs that were available, we would love to have that. The other side to it was that we identified those families, very quickly, who were high need and high risk during that time, and so that was a flag for us in the school to sort of wrap around and put in systems.

The Linwood welfare centre communicated with families not associated with the school through Civil Defence's communication lines. Civil Defence and the Christchurch City Council let the community know that the school was open and it was one of the key locations to come to. At first Margaret talked to Civil Defence from Hamilton, and then as soon as possible flew back to Christchurch to continue working with the welfare centre.

It was very quick, expedient and well organised and it was liaising with key people. We had daily meetings, and we met in the mornings and in the afternoons to get progress around how things were going. The other rein behind that of course, was that was that we wanted to get back to normality for the school community as well, so we needed to get up and running. ...

Linwood College was very grateful for the community support it received during the difficult months of site-sharing.

It was really heartening, I think, what was demonstrated by the whole New Zealand community and global community in how closely we're connected and the generosity of spirit and heart that was there ... At that time it was really important for us as a school to know that people were thinking of us and wanted the best for us and wanted to take care of us.

In the stories recounted so far it is clear that cooking and food distribution was a common way that many women felt comfortable helping. Archana Tandon describes how she got involved with the cooking and food distribution for a few weeks in Brighton and Aranui, and did bits and pieces with the Salvation Army to help people.

There were days when I felt, no I don't want to do anything", but Archana would have to get up and do something about it. "Personally I feel much better if I'm involved and doing something because even if you can do a little bit to make a difference to help, you are doing your bit. When I used to stand at the food stall in Brighton, I worked with the Hare Krishna group for that one, it felt bad. It's not fair.

Hare Krishna's Wellington team came down and set up stalls for a community kitchen and gave out food. They cooked communally and had vans to transport it to a food caravan. They did this for four weeks in New Brighton and Aranui.

June Tiopira stayed at home with her children for the first few days until she gained confidence, and then she also went to the Linwood church and started to help, mainly with food parcels, and tidying up after the others had made up the parcels.... After the first week, a group of Australian Salvationists arrived to help. This was such a relief that, when they arrived and said, 'we're here', the rest of them burst into tears with relief." The pre-school music group and other programmes started up again, at Christmas time there was a bigger need for food parcels.

At Work

In the immediate aftermath of the February earthquake, many women talked about their experiences of being at work in the CBD and how they joined many people in the various parks around the city.

Roman was having lunch at the rest home where she worked when the earthquake struck.

It was so bad I peed, I cried. I was so frustrated." Her friend told her to stand at the table and to hold on. "I could not hold on to anything because it was too much". All the workers went to help the residents, who were very confused, as the liquefaction started to come up. "I was crying, but I did not know I was crying. After a while one of my friends told me to go and change... your trousers!", and then I cried. It is very sad, and I prayed, "Please God I came from that camp where there is no food, no shelter and now this!

Roman feels she no longer trusts the earth. "It takes time to heal". She got home and found very little damage.

Some participants talked about support that was offered to 'Christchurch refugees' as far away as Ashburton. After the first September quake, Diane Candy noticed an increase in the population in Ashburton.

I knew by the February quake that I could offer a wider service, with my Counselling skills. By April, I had, along with another woman, begun facilitating a Post-Traumatic Stress group, to assist understanding of that disorder and helping to build resilience and coping strategies. The folk attending enjoyed the experience and we kept the group to a positive framework, building on their skills. We had a few obstructions, but firmly kept our goal of 'recovery, resilience, adapt.'

Diane recounted how chuffed she was to discover that she had an ability to encourage some back to work, even though they remained terrified and lacked confidence. With a busier focus, it left less room for worry. We concentrated on

thought awareness and positive behaviour. Success and empowerment built strength.

Some women talked their workplaces giving them time to work in their communities. Dora Roimata Langsbury, a member of the Māori community, got a letter from Rehua Marae to enable her to return from Rehua later than 6 pm, after the curfew time, as she was often needed at work until later in the evening. The curfew was lifted each morning at 7 am.

I am so grateful that I was asked to work at Rehua and that my own work allowed me to". Dora felt that it gave her a purpose after the 22 February quake. "If I had had to stay stuck in my house with no electricity for 6 to 8 weeks, it would not have been fun.

Organised Community Responses

‘This huge jigsaw came together and it was perfect’

As well as individual women offering and receiving help with family, friends, neighbours and strangers, many become involved with others in the well organised group initiatives that developed. Some of these groups have been mentioned in the stories so far. However this section describes how these people came together and took action.

A significant feature of the responses to the earthquakes was the amazing networks and groups that emerged to provide for the community. After the February earthquake, a lot of help also came into Christchurch from established NGOs as well. The Red Cross, a large number of community initiatives, charities and communities got together to give needed assistance to communities.

Some neighbourhoods were able to support themselves for a time but it quickly became evident that organisation of essential items such as food water shelter and sanitation were needed on a grander scale.

Jayne Rattray (REE) spoke about how her group came together.

It was incredible the whole number of people that got in and brought their expertise and looking back it was kind of like the right hand, and the left hand, didn't really know what each other was doing, we just sort of connected, the left and right came together, and we all worked as one body... all little pieces of one big jigsaw ...everyone had a skill and contacts, and experience... [everyone was] important, the people packing and loading, the endless trailers and the helicopter, everyone played their part.

At this point, Jayne recalls the effort just blew them away, "It was so huge...This huge jigsaw came together and it was perfect."

Jayne goes on to explain how the Rangiora Earthquake Express (REE), a network of volunteers who

using a helicopter to start flying food and water into the city, came together. The pilot had already been in touch with Civil Defence who had turned him away, so he called Jayne because he knew 'if anyone could make it happen it was her'. Jayne describes how the co-pilot's seat in a helicopter became her office and base for the duration of the Rangiora Earthquake Express.

My friend landed and he basically grabbed me by the arm and said 'you're coming with me girl', and he shoved me in the passenger's seat and buckled me up..." Jayne remembers looking down at her family and friends thinking 'what have I got myself into'?

Michelle, a New Brighton resident, describes what it was like to be on the receiving end of all this help:

We had choppers coming in on a daily basis...The army was there and the fire department delivering food.... At the back of the school there is a hall called the Roy Stokes Hall. What they did, they opened their doors... and they gave the community everything they could... They gave out hand sanitizers and baby UHT milk so you did not have to worry about keeping it in the fridge... Every time we went down there for something, you would always come away with a box full of things. There was always someone there trying to give you something." Michelle felt guilty about getting more than she needed. "I felt that there were people who needed it more than we did.

Some particularly inspiring accounts came from women like Jayne Rattray of the Rangiora Earthquake Express and Helen Heddell of the Farmy Army, who spearheaded organisations that just grew day by day. Quick decision-making, using established networks and rapid and effective communication appeared to be key elements in setting up these initiatives.

“Flying stuff into the city” - the Rangiora Earthquake Express

Jayne explains she had been helping with boarding people and delivering goods to her church. “A her family friend, got in touch with me and said 'right we can start flying stuff into the city, let's get a plan to fly some food in, food and water.’”

Jayne discussed the proposal with a friend at St Joseph's School who was collecting water to take to Christchurch. Jayne thought that as the group at the school was already set up, had a good venue and had clearance to land; it would be easier to combine with them.

Her first call on Thursday morning was to the Chief Logistics Officer of Civil Defence in Waimakariri, who wished them all the best and told them they could do it but said that Civil Defence couldn't officially support them, but good luck! During the four hours of phone calls to and fro sorting things out Jayne drafted press releases and put the radio station on standby: "The next day it snowballed".

On Friday morning Jayne liaised with Senior Sergeant Roy Appley of the New Brighton Police Station. He came up with a plan to fly several loads into Wainoni Park and orchestrated the arrival of local MP Lianne Dalziel. To stop the helicopter getting swamped with people when they landed, they soon began loading food into a distribution centre at the Grace Vineyard Church.

Helen Heddell of the Farmy Army⁸ talks about the solidarity that developed at the group's home base, the Showgrounds in Addington. The cooking was led by a group of displaced chefs and caterers. Helen says there was a great sense of camaraderie and purpose among the helpers.

⁸ Federated farmers organised the rural community in response to Christchurch earthquakes. For more information see <http://www.fedfarm.org.nz/quake2011>

The power of digital technology

The speed with which these groups developed and established themselves was facilitated by digital technology. Cell phones, texting, emails, Facebook and tweeting all had a huge impact on the rapidity with which information was disseminated, requests were made and action taken. A number of women talk about the overwhelming response they had using digital technology. Helen Heddell (Farmy Army) comments on the response she received through texting:

We knew that we were dealing with a war zone, but to actually go into the suburbs and feed them, instead of just being there physically working with them to clean up their properties and their streets... I knew I needed a team of 4-wheel drivers and helpers and I also knew there were quite a few of us who, for age or disability, weren't able to shovel silt but really desperately wanted to do something. So I put out a text and well, I got flooded, I just couldn't cope with the texts, they were just going all the time.

An online neighbourhood group that Rebecca Macfie had previously been involved in, had not been that successful prior to the earthquakes. A few days after September 4, "when you couldn't sleep", Rebecca kept on thinking about the neighbourhood and where everyone had gone. Subsequently she put up a couple of postings asking what had happened and said "Where are you? [And] the replies just came pouring in." There were sixty household in their street and the little streets that go off it and they had around forty households in the online group. They had three events last year: a picnic, a pot-luck dinner, and a sports afternoon.

Jayne's story about her involvement with the Rangiora Earthquake Express reveals how heavily they relied on digital technology. She used her phone and her iPad to simultaneously coordinate drops from the helicopter and navigate where they were going with the iPad navigation app. This was made easier by the ground support from others who

were running logistics on stock they needed and consistently answering phones and updating Facebook.

At the same time as she was using her phone and iPad, Jayne Rattray was updating Facebook from the air with their locations and what they were doing, and speaking on her cell phone most of the time. The ground crews, police, her contacts and other people kept phoning in support and donations. "I actually lost my voice after four days of flying nonstop and yelling down a cell phone over the rotor noise... I went really croaky!"

In the early days Jayne also set up an online fundraising website where people could go and place credit card donations. This was advertised on both Facebook and by the media, and led to a lot of money being donated. At the same time, Jayne's email address book was firing out emails to all her contacts, and Jayne shared with all her friends on Facebook what was going on, who in turn shared it with their friends. "That's what made it - everyone just having their own contacts and spreading the word."

The Farmy Army

Helen Heddell also describes how the Farmy Army had two rules that everyone in their group agreed on. First, that all offers of help would be accepted and second that no food was ever left over:

I said 'we're not going back to base with anything; we'll get rid of it.' And so we had a whole lot of different places that we stopped, little hubs that we knew were going, or there'd be a BBQ going and you'd race in there and give them a few kilos of sausages.

Leanne Curtis of CanCERN⁹, a composite group of Residents Associations in the east of the city, explained that their group was formed because of residents' frustrations

⁹ Canterbury Communities' Earthquake Recovery Network is a network of Residents Association and Community Group representatives from the earthquake-affected neighbourhoods of Canterbury. See www.cancern.org.nz

after an unsuccessful rally that was organised in their neighbourhood. Leanne says:

I like to do things and I could see already Bexley was screaming for toilets and other places like Horseshoe Lake were needing toilets and all the rest of it. So we got together with Brendon Burns at that stage and it just happened that Phil Goff was down so I got this phone call to say 'I am bringing Phil around to talk' and I thought 'Oh my God, my house is a mess! I am going to have Phil Goff sitting in my broken silty house'.

Brendon, Phil and Leanne discussed what needed to happen. It was agreed they needed to join together with the other Residents Associations in communities which had been hard hit because they were all fighting against each other to get the resource that each community needed. According to Leanne each group was putting up their hands and saying,

We are the forgotten community. Who's coming to us? Because we felt very isolated and we hadn't seen anybody - so that was the beginning of CanCERN [and] we organised a meeting.

People's plight

The women who were involved in the larger community initiatives talked about the deplorable situation in which many people found themselves. Interspersed in participant's accounts were descriptions of people's struggles to cope with the ongoing impact of the earthquakes. Jayne Ratray recalls,

One lady came up and grabbed water from the helicopter, we landed in Wainoni Park, she was telling me she had family of five kids, and she's got two toddlers and a baby that needed formula for the bottle, and she had no water to make up formula for her baby...really sad at the time.

Mary Hobbs says they got a call to go to attend to a man who had been found crying on the street. They found him at his house.

They had liquefaction mixed with sewage up around the foundation as high as their ankles. Their carpets were completely sopping and had been ripped out of the house; liquefaction had come up through the floor and they hadn't been able to get any help. Their house was on a slant.

Another participant, Jenny May, who as a heritage expert had carried out contract work for the Christchurch City Council, had to leave her home after the 22 February quake and spent a night at one of the welfare centres:

Here was this stadium with clothing, with first aid people, with kindly people who hugged you when you came in the door, toilets all set up, portaloos. It was just like it sprang into action from nowhere. And there were quite a lot of Council staff - and I can't praise them highly enough - who I have worked with for years and didn't know were part of the Civil Defence team."

When Jenny first arrived, an old colleague rushed up to Jenny and asked "What are you doing here?" Jenny burst into tears as she realised

It all just struck me that this was what was happening." The welfare centre staff cared for homeless people, signed people in and out for the day to keep track of them and gave everyone bottled water. Jenny reflected "It was this society and this community at its best. For me it's an incredible experience to have had because it's something I probably would have never experienced and a whole side of life that I'd never seen.

Helen Heddell's Farmy Army team were shocked by the extent of the need. "The biggest shock we had was we were met with hordes of people and unfortunately we very quickly had to decide how we were going to handle this." Queues formed, with families ranked according to their size.

They were just blank faces. They were just so shell-shocked and time after time [said] "This is the first hot food we've had in nine days." We had one guy that we parked outside and he wouldn't eat. It's like leaving

food out for an animal to come home. I left him a hot meal at the door in the end, hoping the smell would do something... but he just turned right off. He hadn't eaten for days.

Christine and her partner have received support from other sources. Christine was given a Red Cross hardship grant along with the heating grant. Christine is involved in the NCW (National Council of Women). And both she and Philip are involved in the Christian Fellowship for the Disabled (CFD). These groups were a great support and rang them after the February quake to check on them. In February a group also came and removed the liquefaction from their property. Another way they helped was doing the washing for them and friends came to clean out the freezer. Mercury Energy helped by saying,

if anyone was without power, they could ring them and they took money off their accounts." There was also a rebate from Telstra Clear and they were also given free tickets for the Netball. Every little thing has helped. "I think now for me I feel very lucky as a Cantabrian to have had so much support from outside of Christchurch."

Large numbers of people arrived both from other parts of New Zealand and overseas to help with the clean-up. Volunteer groups such as the Farmy Army and the Student Army did sterling work around the city areas. This help continues.

Jane said, "I feel volunteers are really important and without those volunteers and other organisations we would have struggled in Christchurch. They have been a real asset and inspiration to future generations and to us."

Many organisations and people were involved in digging up the liquefaction that covered streets in the east. Rana's family benefitted from the strenuous efforts of the Student Volunteer Army which removed the liquefaction from their section onto Bexley Road.

Christine had two lots of assistance with liquefaction. The New Zealand Army came and helped with shovelling liquefaction and a passer-by saw that their front

gates had been buckled shut, so helped open them. She still remembers it as a trying time, stuck in their house looking after two large dogs, surrounded by liquefaction and her husband with his mobility issues. Then people from the local Grace Vineyard Church came and helped dig the liquefaction out of Christine's garage. Everything inside was absolutely wrecked, so they had to take photos of it all for insurance, and then there was the need to obtain valuations and submit claims.

Offers of help – “Everybody had something to bring to the table”

Participants had many stories about the offers of help that came pouring in from businesses and individuals. Jade Rutherford of the SVA gives a humorous account about the spontaneity with which a business responded to a particular need for wheelbarrows.

The SVA were very short of wheelbarrows, and in February, the ANZ not only donated \$10,000 to their cause, but also sent one of their employees to buy all the wheelbarrows at Mitre 10 on their behalf.

We had a chronic shortage of wheelbarrows all the time... He [Ben from ANZ] was like, 'I'll try and get you some more wheelbarrows' ... [I] got the Manager of the store, 'right we (SVA) need basically all the wheelbarrows that you have'. Ben was like 'well let's just buy them all'... 'Well actually we need contractor grade ones, the concrete ones'. I didn't know anything about wheelbarrows before, [but] because the silt was so heavy, it would snap the ends off the plastic wheelbarrows, and they were essentially useless. So the guy from ANZ was like 'I'm sure we could sort something out' ... it was \$30,000 worth of wheelbarrows.

The next day they were delivered in boxes, unbeknownst to Jade who had not thought it through, and instead thought they would be ready made. But coincidentally, Jade explains:

[That] illustrates the beauty of how the project worked, we then clearly had a need for a whole group

of people to make wheelbarrows, there were a whole group of people just hanging round at the (SVA) tent, I was like 'right, guys, make some wheelbarrows please'...When all the volunteers came back, this was ridiculous students getting excited over wheelbarrows, but they were all just so excited.

Jade also describes how a business owner rang her and told her he was sending his employees to her for the day, and he was paying them to volunteer with the SVA. Alongside that, there were "lots of families with their small children, with their little buckets and spades", hence all sorts of people really.

Offers of help came through word of mouth and Emma Content (GTR) mentions that their first site, Victoria Green, came to them through a local MP, who knew the "amazing" owner of the site; "not only was he out there digging with GTR at the end but he also helped fund the site and contributed some great ideas into the mix."

Helen Heddell (Farmy Army) talks about one butcher from Cheviot

...would jump to the call, because I know him well, he would jump to the call and he'd come down with his wife, in the truck, with a truckload of meat and the shovels, and they'd go out shovelling silt all day as well. And they did that several times.

She also pays tribute to the generosity of donors. Huge amounts of food were donated ("guys would appear up from Waimate with a tonne of potatoes"), freight and supplies offered free of charge, and "musterers' rations of beer" given for the workers. Helen says:

I don't think Canterbury has ever really given credence to the number of firms both large and small that simply opened their doors. I had two guys and one of our farm trucks working for a week picking up pallets of supplies that were offered by companies, and either bringing them to us or taking them to the Salvation Army warehouse in Hornby. They just worked non-stop all week.

Some women in Lyttelton women including Allie McMillan met when they could on the footpath in town and cut out hearts from old blankets, stitching and embellishing them. The HEART programme, as they were called, gave the hearts to many people in town: locals, the Navy, USAR workers, the Army, police, and even Prince William. This daily ritual was the healthiest and sanest experience of those days. Allie says poignantly, “We stitched as we watched beloved buildings being demolished, and somehow restored our own hearts.”

Brigid Buckenham joined a university group coordinating food for the emergency workers:

Friends and neighbours gathered in our kitchen preparing sandwiches and muffins for a week. We approached supermarkets for donations and delivered our goods each morning at 11am to be taken to the various volunteers as well as needy in the eastern suburbs.

For a week Brigid drove out to the eastern suburbs and helped take people to WINZ and the supermarket. “When in and around the city I used my bike as the streets were all changed and often cordoned off. It was, and still is, easier to negotiate the city by bike.”

Lianne Dalziel corroborates Jayne Rattray’s account of how quickly things came together and says,

Within 48 hours of the earthquake we had set up a full food distribution centre out of the Roy Stokes Hall, which is part of the Central Brighton School. That was the really big thing that we did. We started to advocate for the needs of the different groups. Roy Appley has got to be the real hero of the East. He was very aware that people were basically isolated in their homes and they needed food and water. There were a lot of people who had no access to transport. I mean the thing that was different about the east was all of the supermarkets were closed; all of the petrol stations were closed...

Alongside this, MPs such as Clayton Cosgrove, Kate Wilkinson, and Phil Goff gave the REE their full support,

and Clayton especially worked with Civil Defence to get the venture funded, which by the Sunday night Civil Defence had agreed to do.

Meeting the needs

Alongside meeting the physical and psychosocial needs of people following the earthquakes, many in the community realised that providing for the aesthetic needs of the community and the city environment were important. Becoming involved in Greening the Rubble (GTR), Emma Content describes how this new group initiative developed in response to the earthquakes.

It was interesting, we all had the same vision, to develop temporary initiatives in these spaces that were left after the earthquake, but with different focuses... the *Gap Filler* guys were more focussed on arts and performance-based installations and we were looking at actually designing little pocket parks... but we were all trying to create positive vibrant spaces that would encourage interaction and stimulate hope.

Emma explains that the underlying philosophy of GTR was community involvement, saying

"If people can create the spaces they want and actively get involved in doing the work, they will take ownership of those spaces as they are more valuable to them, instead of it just being something that they use, they are invested in it already, they are connected. It adds so much to a city..."

Karen Chadderton attributes a lot of the community positivity to the Grace Vineyard Centre and the resilience of people amazed her. "We are starting to really see the effects now on Brighton because we have lost so many houses - people have had to move out. You see a lot of smashed windows". They have put on a lot of events for children and families. Her own children attend meetings there and Jack is a leader at one of the youth groups there. They have weekend camps,

...all for \$25, it is amazing!" She does not see it as very "churchy". "There is always that Christian content, but it is not rammed down their throats and it is always at the end."

The Centre provides a lot of support for the school with mentors going to visit, helping out with transportation and helping at sports days. They provided welfare packages and a drop in centre as well as fun days at the school for the children when the school was closed because of the quake.

Pacific Island people in Christchurch were not well equipped after the quake. Tufuga reflected, "We take for granted that everybody else will do things for you because that's what our life is all about. They come, they do, they leave... they provide things; they tell you what to do. But through the earthquake no one tells us what to do". A committee was set up to deal with specifically Pacific Island issues and problems such as housing, food, and warmth. "Our job is to ensure that we have the right resources for our Pacific Island community. The Ministry of Pacific Island affairs set up a hub in Aranui, and there were workers there from the ministry, working together to help". Tufuga visited this hub and looked at ideas of how Pacific families could help themselves. She also went out with police and community leaders to "meet, push, challenge" families in the eastern suburbs. She reflected, "No one can empower anyone, because the power is within you. All we are doing is to get you to return that power in yourself and you can do things. And that's what we do, encouraging our people to help themselves".

Housing and repairs

Providing adequate shelter was a major concern for many women; and of course this issue has continued on and is still a critical issue for Christchurch at the time of writing this report in 2014. Stories abound about this issue, and it is the families in the east of Christchurch, where there is predominantly rental accommodation, that are most vulnerable.

At first, there seemed to be little help for Nippy. She signed up for some Red Cross support. Eventually some men from the army arrived and asked if they could help her. She asked them to fix the front door.

"The Kiwi boys couldn't fix it. The guys from the Philippines had it fixed in about five minutes".

The local church was offering breakfast and lunch, and Nippy and her neighbours popped over there for coffee sometimes. After a while she needed to go shopping, and they ventured over to the other side of town (she thinks it may have been the Bishopdale Mall). She remembers they had to queue up to get into the supermarket. The Red Cross sent a plumber who reconnected her pipes.

Loretta Rhodes describes how it has been difficult for her working at the Pacific Trust. Although she is well supported by the Trust, her work in the community has been heart-breaking.

This year I just about broke down each time I go and see our [Pacific] family. I thought I was worse, but they are really worse off because they're not homeowners. There are limited houses there for rent and not very good quality. The best ones are taken by people who are coming in to help with the work. And they can afford it because they get big money.

Loretta goes on to explain,

I know it's like a breaking record, that we are always high need Pacific Islanders, but I would love to take the mainstream people to see the conditions; how they live. It's not their fault.

Many Pacific Islanders lost their jobs after the quakes because their employers closed business or decreased their hours. The effects are disastrous.

After the quakes, the Pacific Trust went door knocking to offer help to Pacific families. They found some very crowded houses where up to five families were all living together. They directed them to the Pacific Hub in Aranui for food, water, blankets, and clothing. They also delivered a lot of workshops to churches.

Often participants recounted how they photographed the damage to their homes as proof for EQC, insurance companies and CERA.

Krystal videoed some of the damage to her house on her old camera. There was a gap by Krystal's windowsill that was so big that she could put her hand through it, and there were long cracks in various directions along the wall from there to her light bulb. The ceiling dipped down above the head of her son's bed.

In my son's room the ceiling had dropped that much [indicates] above his head, so I didn't want him sleeping in there". Out of the whole house, Krystal's "room was probably worst - except for my son's bedroom with the ceiling that had dropped". Krystal decided - "I had to move house".

There were earthquake repairs to be done on the house and there was no guarantee that Krystal would be able to move back in after the repairs. Krystal reasoned that it would be easier to find a new house.

Waiting for the house to be rebuilt has made Dora Roimata Langsbury feel as "if my life is on hold, even though I have been quite busy. A part of me feels that I am not moving forward". When Dora bought her home, she had plans for it, and was in the process of getting these underway. "The dream of taking the plans forward" is on hold and "you are no longer in control of that - it is quite a strange place to be in".

In early 2014, Danielle O'Halloran was living in her garage with her children while the EQC repairs have been done on her home.

After three years, it finally feels like we might be moving on and the colour is coming back again, literally, the walls of my home are now repainted in bright colours.

Having spent the first night back inside her home, things in Christchurch are feeling more hopeful, at least personally, for Danielle.

Lois Herbert talked about a specific issue that arises for women who go to safe houses and when ready to leave have nowhere to go. "We have encountered many dysfunctional families who have reunited for reasons of

security, or housing, or feeling lost". This has led to an upswing in violence and more stress.

The incidence of family violence is now higher, the seriousness is higher, and people are waiting longer to make referrals because they are petrified about housing. The reality is that if they leave the house they are in and go into a safe house there are no houses available to them later. They cannot afford to move, so they are staying where they are unsafe and making the best of it"....

An interesting phenomenon occurring is that "a different type of person is referring to the refuge now. Often it is a woman who says 'I'm OK, I have managed the earthquakes, I have managed the kids, I've managed my broken home. I can actually get out of this violent relationship now'".

Lois Herbert thinks there will be increased stress for women and children for another two years. It will depend on decisions around schooling, and housing, and getting some assurance around insurance and EQC claims. There will be a downstream effect for some time.

Women also had problems challenging repairs that weren't satisfactory, as Gina King explains. They came to repair her mother's house in 2013. The family got access to temporary housing, but while the insurance covered rent, it did not cover bond:

We were lucky. They applied to some place and got the bond for us. And at the end we were able to keep the bond - covered our power and other costs. They were told it would take five weeks but the house was finished in two weeks.

They were told the repair was finished but Gina saw huge problems. A friend came in and identified numerous areas that were not right. "Why wasn't this done, why wasn't that done?"

Nellie Hunt's house was a mess after the February earthquake. But "when I walked into my place it was clean, my neighbour Marty had cleaned it up". Nellie found him sitting over at the neighbours.

He had actually been in my place when the second shake hit. He had a gash on his head from tripping over, and I said to him, 'Did you clean up my house?' and he said, 'Yes' and I said, 'What did you do that for?' and he said, 'Do you want me to chuck it back on the floor?'

Nellie was not receiving much help from the property managers to make her place safe. So a social worker organised for the New Zealand Army to put some reinforcing in to hold the ceiling in place. "It is like held, but more is starting to come away now". Nellie has been through three washing machines since living in the house. "Washing machines do not like the house", she smiles. She does not like asking Work and Income for help, as "they do not make you feel very good when you walk in there". Nellie does not like reaching out for help. "For me I am the one who should be doing the hard work".

When the June quake hit, the tent was put up again and Nellie moved the household back out into it. "We had no choice; it was not safe under that ceiling". Even now Nellie is nervous when a truck goes past. "My room goes for gold! It shakes so much. The more the trucks go past, the more the ceiling seems to come apart. The holes are a hell of a lot bigger than they used to be!" There were no repairs done. The landlord is very difficult to contact and the property managers are not helpful, they, too, find the landlord hard to deal with.

But Nellie's story has a happy ending. The mother of a school friend of her daughter had helped Nellie by loaning her the money for a deposit on the house. "She is a good woman". Their daughters, Mahara and Chelsea, had been close friends ever since they were at Waltham Primary School. "So cool to have someone want to help us out and wanted nothing in return".

Nellie explains that she was delighted with her new accommodation. "The house that we are now in, that was pretty much my dream come true back then, as we now have a bedroom each". Nellie was pleased to have found a four

bedroom home to rent, where they could all have a room of their own:

We had a lounge, the simple thing of having a lounge, and not having all the bodies sitting in my bedroom, it was really cool... the kids were happy; we had a big front yard.

The **Garden City**?

The devastation to the landscape was patently obvious to all in the community. Three women interviewed, Emma Content, Diana Madgin and Peggy Kelly, spoke eloquently about the landscape of Christchurch and how some groups worked to heal and repair the landscape and waterways of the city, especially changing Christchurch's Avon River red zone from a place of despair and tragedy to a land of beauty and joy.

Peggy Kelly is currently involved with the Avon-Otakaro Network Project, working for the establishment of an Avon River Park. She doesn't consider the community work she is involved in as "work", but as something she enjoys doing.

We have to work where we are and amongst the people we live and for us our little venture up here is to create the Commemorative Chimney Pieces. We are inviting people to bring bricks to Packe Street Park so that we can do a whole series of raised gardens in a sort of architectural way to remember the earthquake and make something good out of it.

Help from the BNZ 'Closed for Good' Project, when the bank closed all their banks in the country for one day.... and we had six volunteers from them, and three Crusaders, and "Flatman", and cameras and everything, and we got a huge amount of work done that day, more that we could ever have done ourselves.

By that stage the community project was well on the way to getting four more circular beds built from fallen chimneys. Peggy has also been involved with "the whole city plan stuff."

Because of this and partly because of the broken infrastructure in her area, Peggy's group had a community meeting, called "Community Conversations" which was very well attended. She explains,

"We were trying to get an idea of what people feel really needs special attention." Recurring suggestions were made for a safe cycle way along Edgeware Road from Hills Road to Springfield Road; a pedestrian precinct within the Village, and a rebuilt open-air swimming pool.

"There's incredible value in even just a small seating area..." - Greening the Rubble

Emma Content (GTR) discussed her group's idea for temporary landscapes as they seemed to be the quickest and most efficient way for the group to get involved in helping the city get back on its feet. She also initiated discussions with the Ellerslie Flower Show, to try and harness their experience in putting together temporary landscapes.

The first site was a more 'designed' and planned experiment than others have been since. It was a whole park and was designed to be moved around, "deconstructed and used elsewhere" to save time and money. So that GTR provides "the framework, structure and support from a design perspective", and the community develops the vision, and constructs the landscape. GTR would also ensure that the temporary landscape is safe and functional. They are not interested in making things more complicated, rather just helping set up a temporary space that the community finds useful.

It is now understood that "there's incredible value in even just a small seating area, with a few plants around it. It is something that everyone feels that they can get involved with, a real community initiative". Emma sees Greening the Rubble as a really positive thing. "It's been challenging, but it's been great to be involved with such generous skilled people that are so passionate about their city and giving back to the community."

Diana Madgin organised a forum for the gardeners of the city with seven speakers. These included people involved with the history of the Garden City; Coralie Wynn from Gap Filler; and experts on the early flora and water systems of the city; the Botanical Gardens and children's playgrounds.

The Forum was packed with passionate gardeners concerned about the reputation of Christchurch as the Garden City, a title awarded in the early 1900s that became the brand name for the city. A group of three post-graduate students working with two landscape architects presented their research and plans to CERA, which was amazed at the depth of the work and the imaginative ideas the students presented, and the efforts of so many in a voluntary capacity. Interest was also expressed in a letter from Craig Pauling of Ngai Tahu, and Diana is excited at the prospect of working with him to document the stories of the river, and its future.

While these women were involved in activities directed public spaces on cleared building sites, the gardens in the Garden City, cycle ways and community gardens, the next section of this report focuses on the day-to-day realities of women's experiences of living in a city with a damaged power supply, liquefaction and often impassable roads.

Youth Contributions “Learning as you go”

Young people in Christchurch made a huge contribution to the recovery effort following the earthquakes. Jade Rutherford was a founding member of the Student Volunteer Army (SVA)¹⁰ explains how her groups’ organisational skills developed over the series of earthquakes: Alex, who played a pivotal role in setting up two youth forums sponsored by UNESCO, outlines the mechanisms and the process that took place to get grass roots ideas to the policy makers in a meaningful and effective way. These two stories reveal the passion and engagement by young adults in Christchurch as the community responded in different ways to the challenges of the quakes.

An important thread that runs through these two stories is how the successful use of digital and internet technology facilitated their groups’ activities. As Jade comments:

We are the Facebook, Social Networking generation. Our generation, our peer groups, we're all very electronic. You know computers, cell phones, social networking, that's what we know, and that's what the people we are trying to reach know.

SVA - “the whole thing just happened organically”

Jade outlined the formation of SVA. She explains that while Sam Johnson is the one who came up with the idea and started it, there were six main people involved: “Sam started it, but it's definitely a team effort. And alongside that... if volunteers didn't come, nobody would have heard of the Student Volunteer Army, so you couldn't have done it without all of the volunteers.”

Jade says that Sam always had an interest in encouraging young people to be involved in community work. After the September quake, the University shut down for a week and Sam set up a Facebook page that

¹⁰ For more information view: www.sva.org.nz

weekend, an event, called 'Student Volunteer Base for Earthquake Clean-up'. Jade relates that,

By Saturday night there were Facebook groups like 'I survived the Christchurch quake', and 'Quake party', and you know, another week of holidays, let's have a keg party... it was kind of like 'well we could do all that or we could do perhaps something useful....

Jade wasn't able to respond immediately to Sam's Facebook request as she had an essay to write but Sam rushed into her room on Monday morning saying,

'Get up, I need you to come with me, oh, my gosh, there are so many people'... I was the first volunteer ... We went out to Halswell and there was definitely no plan. We just met all the volunteers there... and then the media scrum, we just got out of the car, and it was like 'holy crap'. He [Sam] went and talked to the media people and I stood looking at these volunteers, 'Hi thanks for coming. We don't have a plan but maybe just knock on some people's doors and see if they need a hand'.

At first they did not have a clue as to what they would be helping people out with, whether cleaning up broken glass, putting things back on shelves, etc. In the end the SVA was most widely known for clearing silt and liquefaction in badly hit suburbs and streets post-earthquake. "The whole thing kind of just happened really organically. People have been like 'Oh we need this'... 'Alright well you're in charge, organise that for everyone.'" When the February earthquake shook Christchurch the six core members of the SVA and another three or four people spent the whole of the 23rd planning the SVA mobilisation:

Because we'd done it in September, we had an idea of, like it was kind of the same, but it was on a much, much bigger scale. We were like, 'right this is what we're going to need' and we sort of just divided it up... 'Right go and do it. You know

what you are in charge of, so just do whatever you need to do to get it done'.

Jade did all the Facebook stuff. "I oversaw all of the emails... this time everybody in New Zealand had my phone number. She was the person who undertook all the external communication, and internally kept tabs on the core SVA team.

"Everyman and his dog would ring me" - the Student Volunteer Army

Communication was a massive job, and for the first two days Jade had it all under control. Then the SVA email address was given out on Sunrise, and Breakfast (New Zealand morning TV shows) and incoming communication went through the roof. Jane said that,

I literally just watched and there was like a thousand emails or something in like five minutes. I sat there and went, oh...I don't know how, I don't know what to do...there's so many emails... and I mean that's just, I guess kind of testament to how the whole thing developed.

"We didn't know there would be a need for a team of people to answer emails until there was that need". Volunteers were needed to staff the call centre (still being set up), to answer emails from people wanting help, wanting to help, or wanting to donate money, goods, and/or equipment.

They had a standard format response, and Jade dealt with those that were unusual, unique, or difficult. The same was done with the Facebook page, as that had also become too big a job for just one person. The team replied to the obvious questions or statements, and Jade and Gina (another member of the core SVA) dealt with anything that was "a bit tricky". Jade would let volunteers know where to go, and then email Civil Defence to let them know how many volunteers to expect and where. She would check in with the food team and make sure they had enough supplies for lunch, knew where to go, and were generally on track. Jade would then begin to get ready for the next day.

Unlike September, however, this time the SVA also sent out a street team for the first week after the earthquake who delivered leaflets that contained all the necessary emergency information for the hardest hit areas. "We could say... 'All volunteers show up between eight and nine', we'd have, people lining up from seven just to make sure they got on the street team, so keen".

Jade would update Facebook with details on where the SVA was going the following day and she also made many phone calls, replied to and wrote many emails, managed and recorded the donations, retained all receipts of outgoing money and liaised with a church group who organised lunches for the volunteers daily. "My number as well was like the contact number, so every man and his dog would ring me".

Everyone was kind of just flying by the seat of our pants.... It was haphazard ... in the sense that we didn't have any grand plans before we started or any kind of processes. But, you know, after the first day, we learnt some things, and so on the second day we did those, and you know we learnt more on the second day, so then sort of by the end of the first week we had a pretty good idea of what was necessary... especially that students who are volunteering need to be fed, it needs to be easy, they don't want to have to think about what they are doing, they need to just show up, and then go and do.

UNESCO Youth forums - "the youth vision for the city"

Alex initially was involved in the Christchurch baking army but at the same time she developed a programme focused on crisis management for the local business community which involved workshop training for around thirty local business leaders. Alex then received a call from UNESCO to become their representative on the ground in Christchurch, to help coordinate UNESCO's

response to the 'Christchurch disaster.' "[I was] in the right place at the right time."

Alex's first job was to research the quake related responses already happening in Christchurch. While she knew that there were a few different events for youth happening, ones where they could share their vision, she couldn't see any mechanism for feeding these ideas to policy makers.

Sharing ideas about the future – the UNESCO Youth Forums

Working with UNESCO, Alex organised a forum of 30 key young people from across the city to document the youth response to the quakes and their hopes for the future of Christchurch. Aranui and Linwood were represented as well as people from Lyttelton, the University of Canterbury, CPIT, and some who were unemployed, and others from lower socio-economic communities. The goal was to put together a document that "incorporated the youth vision for the city and then also how they could be a part of implementing it". This was to be presented to the policy makers and VIPs for their response.

Several other forums were held on the same day at suburban centres around the city, which then fed back their ideas to the central forum. The UNESCO team also set up pages on Facebook and Twitter. Young people phoned into the local radio station with their ideas and comments on the developments at the forum. The radio station also interviewed young people and people at the forum collated all that information and fed that into the capability statements that were being developed. On Saturday the consolidated ideas were presented to VIPs, and fed live over the internet.

Alex then became involved in planning for an international youth forum in Christchurch titled 'Looking Beyond Disaster', the international version of the UNESCO youth forum, to be held at College House,

University of Canterbury in December 2011. The forum involved young people between the ages of 16 and 25 from around the world. Nineteen countries from the Asia Pacific region were represented with a total of 60 to 70 coming from overseas (Australia, Tonga, Samoa, Chile, Japan, etc.), and 30 to 40 from Christchurch.

Each morning five or six people would share their disaster stories. Throughout the forum a document was developed with youth recommendations on disaster recovery, resilience and rebuilding. This document was to be presented to the governments and NGOs of each country that was represented. "It] was really encouraging to see political leaders actually taking the suggestions on board and agreeing."

White Elephant Trust (WE)

Alice Ridley talked about the support that White Elephant (WE) offered to young people. "It has been around for ages, but it kind of re-started its events in 2011" and it "kind of exploded because of the earthquake. Alice's involvement with White Elephant (WE) continued through till 2012 when she became more involved with the Otautahi Youth Council (OYC) "which is a whole lot of, bucket load of other stuff".

The OYC was originally part of WE, but separated because they wanted to be independent and focus on specific things outside of WE's main agenda. Alice's position as treasurer is therefore relatively new. "We want to represent the young people of Christchurch - this is us. We are kind of in the stages of becoming an incorporated society, voluntarily ran so it's kind of cool".

Through OYC Alice has become more knowledgeable about active citizenship and getting more involved with the community. Alice finds her involvement with OYC "constructive" and "pretty exciting" because they get to be involved "with a whole lot of feedback on the rebuild". Before the earthquake, Alice had no idea what people on organisations like the City Council did. "Because of the earthquake, I've been wrangled into all these weird

things... and yeah, one day maybe I would want to work in the Council. That would be pretty cool".

Alice has felt that the rebuild has been good for "just young people as a whole". Alice also believes that through her experiences with White Elephant Trust and CYC that there has been a lot more adult recognition of youth voices,

They've given us a lot more...like, 'this is your city you should own it'. You have the opportunity right now to shape what kind of city you want to live in. I'm really amped about it. It's just a thing that not many young people get to experience". Alice wants other young people to experience it too 'yeah, I'm always like, you should get involved - it's really cool. Caring about something is actually really cool, it's not as nerdy as or dull as you think it is.

Alice explains how there seems to be a lot more youth organisations starting up, although she thinks that "it's so difficult to know what has been born because of the earthquake... I don't know what youth leaders would be like in Christchurch if there wasn't an earthquake...I'm sure we wouldn't have had such passion".

The children - "Is there going to be anything for the kids?"

Amber Henderson had just started an internship/scholarship with the Youth Alive Trust (YAT)¹¹ in New Brighton, which operates under the umbrella of the Grace Vineyard Church when the February quake struck. Grace Vineyard Church had opened up their support centre on the Wednesday following February 22nd and initially Amber helped out at the church and was aware that "there were some parents here that were wondering if anything was going to be put on for the kids." Amber describes how a mother said, 'Is there going to be anything for the kids?' ... our kids have no school... they have no water/power... What is something safe that they can do?

¹¹ For more information view www.youthalivetrust.org.nz

At this time, all schools in the area were closed until further notice and no one was allowed in the YAT building or any other buildings in the area. Grace Vineyard Church contacted the local police about using their generator for the programme, and also contacted Lianne Dalziel, the MP for Christchurch East. On Monday 28th February, Amber's boss started up a kids' holiday programme. "As soon as that got started I was there full-time helping out with that, and it went on for 15 days." They thought 20 children might turn up. In fact, they ended up with over 100 children on the first day and over the two-week period they ran the programme they had around 1500 children and their families participating.

"Clowns, hip hop and the Funky Monkeys"

Amber Henderson spoke about her involvement in the YAT New Brighton programme for children after the February quake.

We had teachers and preschool teachers that came along, that gave their time to do face painting, and arts and crafts stuff, and we had bouncy castles. This programme was free and was held over at Central New Brighton, We had Canterbury Sports volunteer their men... we had Tiddlers (a woman who does kids races)... We had magicians come, and we had Squirt the Clown from Australia. He came off his own back (he later flew back to help with the post-earthquake schools programme).

The police came and gave out drinks. The Funky Monkeys from Auckland came down to perform for the children. Zumba was being done in one area and a dance tutor from the North City Church was teaching the kids hip hop in another. The programme would run for about two and a half hours. During this time, Amber walked around, talking to people such as the leaders running the bouncy castles, games, etc. and the parents, and children participating in the holiday programme.

Following the success of the impromptu holiday programme YAT planned a number of other initiatives:

Schools fun afternoons, a Football festival, and an 'I Love New Brighton' day, Year seven and eight 'EPIC' dance party and Break the quake in Auckland.

The 'I Love New Brighton' day was also held at Rawhiti Domain. They had a live band, bouncy castles, Tiddlers, circus people, etc. Cheapskates brought along rollerblades and skateboards. ZM radio station came out, faces were painted, and sausages were given out for free. According to Amber, "it was a primo day for it." Over 1000 people came out that day. Amber describes it, "It was a really cool day; it was really nice. There were massive black t-shirts saying - 'I Love New Brighton'.

During the two-week holiday programme in February, Amber was working for YAT during the day, and also had a job at Coffee Culture.

I would leave here - New Brighton - and walk to Merivale because there were no buses ... It took two and a half to three hours to walk it. I was pretty exhausted by the end of it ... I'd get there and we could scratch the silt off my hands. You'd scratch it off my face and see the silt and then my face and the silt... It was really gross... I did it for however many days the programme was running.

While Amber began her time at YAT in "unfortunate circumstances", those circumstances contributed to it being one of the best years to get into youth work. "The need has always been there, but it's more in your face now, it's more at the top, people are more willing to ask for help now." Amber hopes that there will be faster responses to the post-earthquake needs of people in New Brighton. She says that a lot of people did feel cut off and they need to know that "they haven't been forgotten." She says that "there is really not much out here for the kids." There is a need for more things for young people to do and to belong to in this part of Christchurch.

“We weren’t just a novel thing” - The Guldrrn Harvest Ministry

Mel Hillier who runs the Guldrrn Harvest Ministry found that the earthquakes increased their public profile. She and two other registered teachers had set up a temporary school in Mel's lounge. Forty-five kids came in daily to continue their lessons. Mel also talked about what was motivating some to donate to her ministry and she reflected

Our whole resource base has increased out of the earthquake too. We got gifted \$5000 from Seattle... because all of a sudden it became the in-thing to give to kids in the east side. They were looking for people doing stuff with kids. And we weren't just a novel thing. We weren't someone who just started doing something. We had a long running history of doing stuff with kids.

Mel is passionate about her ministry's original aim. She wants the children in her area, many of whom are fourth generation beneficiaries, to break out of the benefit cycle. She tells all the children in the programs: "You have a destiny, you have treasures, and you have talents. All of this in you, it needs to come out." Mel will do anything to keep kids at school. She picks them up and drops them off at school, provides uniforms and lunches, and tries to educate the mothers that education has the power to change their children's lives. Currently Mel has 100 kids in her ministry's programmes, but she hopes with time that these numbers will grow.

Changing communities - will the support keep coming?

The women in this study have seen a remarkable amount of change around them during and since the earthquakes. Some of the change related to physical damage or the struggle for survival. Other points were about the necessity to change the way lives were lived. Others still are about taking on bureaucracy, finding good housing or meeting the needs of the children. Some of the participants became involved in activities to improve their communities. This section outlines changes in communities and how they affected the people living in them.

Kristy found it harder to get help. She had to organise and pay for her move herself. She went to Work and Income and found the paperwork and queues very stressful. She turned to the Salvation Army Hope Centre for help. They loaned her money to pay a bond for the Linwood Park Village temporary accommodation. Kristy paid with her own money for the trailers and storage for their possessions.

The closure of QE11 has affected Ellenor as she is not able to walk very far although she tries to keep fit. The cost and distance of travelling to the other side of town to a public pool is prohibitive and so now she goes to Wainoni to a 'sit and be fit' exercise club several times a week. She has also found an exercise class behind where QE11 used to be. "It is harder walking and so I need to do something".

Christine had the support of family, the input from the local recovery Hub and also found it good to belong to the Court Theatre Supporters group. The original theatre was damaged, but it was great to see the new theatre take shape, and to reconnect with the eight people in her 'usher group' again. On the day of announcing the new venue and building project plans, the supporters group were all invited to a special afternoon tea. The theatre has now been built inside an old granary shed, and it is absolutely flourishing. Christine is also part of a neighbourhood group, a couple of which were red zoned but have relocated to North Shore. Pretty

much everyone from this group is in a state of relocation or rebuild.

Michelle Whitaker was involved with recovery advocates, resident associations and a CERA community team. Here the anniversary celebrations for the February quake were discussed. They realised that not all people would want to go to a formal function and service in Hagley Park. Michelle was given the task of organising an alternative symbolic happening and the River of Flowers was created. The idea was to float flowers down the river at different points where local communities or families could get together.

It could also be a time for people to go back and meet up with their local community, especially those who had been in the worse affected areas. There would be support from others if needed. At a point close to the time of the earthquake, Michelle planned that people would honour this by holding a time for silence. The flowers would gradually join together and symbolise support for each other as they floated out to sea. This River of Flowers is still an important anniversary event.

For the first anniversary Michelle's dad, brother and his family came to meet up with her and Luka at the Avondale area of the river. Michelle had taken Luka out of school for the afternoon as she wanted to share something that she had achieved, and it was also a way of showing him that:

...even though I had not been able to get the spade out and help clean up liquefaction, I had different skills which were just as important. There is always something you can do'. It also made her reflect that Avondale was the appropriate place for her to be for the main part of the day.

Abandoned communities and looting

...the oldies who were by themselves and were too scared to go anywhere.

After the February earthquake, Nippy found that many of her neighbours were packing up and leaving. Those who didn't leave often stayed because they had to. Some were quite vulnerable:

And that's who I felt for - the oldies who were by themselves and were too scared to go anywhere. They were the ones that needed help, not some of the ones I knew. As a matter of fact some of them were not even seen, and one's in her seventies and the other's in her nineties. I was looking after them every day. They were shaking, terrified.

Water deliveries came to the local church, "which was all very well for me, but not so good for the oldies, those in a walking frame". Again, Nippy had to make sure they were looked after.

The empty houses in the area attracted "lots of young ones with backpacks around". Houses were getting looted.

Not everything in the community was negative. A few days after the February quake, her family took a torch and three lanterns, went down to pub (closed now) and joined others in a trivial pursuit night. The pub put on a big barbeque cook up to use everything in the freezer. "It was great".

Being in a Housing New Zealand house, Adele "felt in a better position" than people who had owned their own home and lived in it a long time, as it was harder for them to move. Adele knew that she would have to move at some stage, but she had told HNZ she was not "in a rush, that priority has to go to others".

Leaving Christchurch and coming back

For Christine, 2012 began by getting back to Christchurch, slotting back into work, and waiting for insurance resolutions. The 2012 year was "just take it one day at a time", and Christine thinks the quakes have highlighted that we really only have the day we are living in, and that issues that need sorting need to be tackled, even if it is exhausting. The

constant shaking of her work building (which has a hung floor, and many demolitions not far from them) also takes its toll, along with the road works and the passing trucks. It all led to a huge tiredness with adrenalin rushes all the time.

Since Emily was now five months pregnant, she needed to establish herself with a midwife, and wanted to be involved with the Home Birth Group again. Coming back into familiar territory was a welcome relief in many respects, but their immediate area had changed in the few months they had been away. Some of the local shops had closed, roads were being dug up and some repaired. Fortunately, throughout this time, the local dairy and petrol station had stayed open. Then there came another period of cleaning, unpacking, and re-sorting when they shifted from the family home into her own smaller house while maintaining as much stability for her children as she could. She set up counselling at Mairehau High School for her son, should it be required.

June Tiopira spent much of 2011 in her rental house in Picton. But then the lady who owned the property decided to leave the country, and June was homeless again. She told the woman: "It's just ridiculous; I have left everything, I have nothing and yet you are telling me I have to leave?" And she was like 'well I'm going to England', so she went to England, and she didn't even give my bond back. So she still has my money, I think she owes me \$1,300. I think she took my money and left for England with it because she didn't even lodge it".

So the family came back to Christchurch and stayed with June's mother. "We were pretty much stuck with no bond to come back with. So we came back, and slept in a tiny lounge, me and my three kids, my new-born and my two boys, on one mattress". But June and her children were uncomfortable in that house.

To me it was already like I was broken, half broken and it was just ...hard getting back there and not feeling welcome". June and the children ended up going to a refuge. "And my poor kids, they just had to go through hell. But at least they got to come back to their old school which they had left.

With the help of a social worker, she was able to get furnishings for her own property, and was eventually allocated her current home by Housing New Zealand. They now have furniture - "we've got stuff, I mean it's not stuff like I'd like to have, but it's still a table and a couch and beds".

The Picton experience "was a good excuse to get away really, but it still didn't work out...I didn't want to come back - ever."

The state of the east ...it was so shocking!

Estelle Laugesen's walking group decided in 2012 to do a bus trip to the eastern suburbs. Most of the members are over 70 years, and Estelle thinks there are at least three, who are over 80 years. The group caught a bus to Sumner. Estelle was horrified at the considerable damage there stating "I don't mind if I don't come back, it was so shocking". The walking group decided to go to Brighton.

Six weeks later they embarked on a trip there on the bus. "Again, when you see everything looking so down and out it hits you very, very hard. I think it was the roads to Sumner that got me the worst. The poor old bus, it shook and rattled. It was dreadful. The roads around Avonhead are good in comparison but still not as good as they were but certainly a lot better than that".

For Julia, Aranui has lost a lot. "We have lost the swimming pool, QE11. That was a big thing. We now have to travel so far to take the children swimming. We don't get to go swimming that much". But Julia says the children like to go to the beach which is nearby.

Julia has found some good neighbours who "keep an eye out for her and the children". Her house is described as a 'safe house' by the police. They know to follow up if there is a complaint, so that Julia and the children are protected from their father. She likes the community and notices that people are a lot friendlier since the quakes. "It is really good... especially the school; I have got to know a lot of

parents through the time of the quakes". In her experience people rallied around and helped each other out.

Mary Hobbs reflected: "It's horrible; we will never get over it. I never thought in my lifetime that I would ever see this. This sort of thing only happened overseas. I think Christchurch will be a very modern, beautiful city when it's done, but it won't be in my lifetime. Not in my lifetime and I am only 52 - I am not old!"

Ellenor is having to travel into the city to attend her pottery classes, in Peterborough Street. She says it is the only reason she goes into the city. Before the earthquakes, the Risingholme Community Centre provided a wide range of courses to people in the eastern suburbs. It was closed after the February earthquake, although is currently re-establishing on a new site.

Fiona thinks that other people are often making plans for the eastern suburbs without really consulting those who live there. She cites the example of plans for wetlands close to where she lives.

Someone was telling me how I wanted to live, and what I wanted on the borders of my property... the loss of control has been the hardest... It is like we have been left and people don't recognise unless you have lost your community, how much you are tied to it... Having to go further afield for things and just not having the people around that you knew.

Fragmented communities

Christine knows that some of her neighbours are in Rangiora, some out in Redwood, and some round the corner in South Brighton. The folk who lived over the road are now in Waimate. Sometimes, she bumps into old neighbours in unexpected places. The people who went to Waimate had been out of their house since September 2010, and had come up to see their former home being demolished when Christine caught up with them. She is glad to know that now they would have a person to call in on if they were ever to visit Waimate.

The bakery at the Wainoni shops was where Fiona would take her son for a treat when he was a pre-schooler.

We would go down to the bakery and buy something for lunch and maybe sit on the river bank..." At the time of the quake it was owned by a Cambodian family and Fiona got quite involved with them because she was teaching the woman's younger sister English for a time. Fiona does not know where that family are now. "... After the quake I don't know where they went. And yeah, it's those lost connections, wondering where people ended up.

The quake has meant that Fiona has lost contact as well with others in her neighbourhood, including people she knew for a number of years. She and her husband kept in touch with the neighbour after he moved to Avonside Drive, but lost contact after the quake because their home was damaged. "We would go down and see Tony and give him a wave... and now they live in Nelson because they were red zoned".

Fiona and her husband have lost contact with former neighbours who were red-zoned and are now living in other places. She thinks they are still a close knit family, but that they have been become more isolated since the quakes. Their closest friends are now living in Kaiapoi, and they have lost contact with former clients who were friends. Some of their friends are now better off since the quakes. They have jobs and they are living in new homes that are better than the

ones they lived in before the quakes. Fiona and Brent have to be careful about how they spend money now; they don't easily say, "Hey, let's go out... Sometimes we feel like the poor relations."

Relentless uncertainty

With ongoing earthquakes that seemed to show no sign of abating, the need for a state of preparedness was clear. Although tiredness and exhaustion affected many, the ongoing work of helping where they could, maintaining their families and communities and trying to get a little time for themselves was a struggle for most. Women gave varying accounts about their particular ongoing concerns following the quakes and how they managed their lives.

The disaster assistance dynamic of ensuing reciprocity continued as more earthquakes and their effects were realised. As the women's words have shown, some women in this study were, in theory at least, the targets of assistance, but they also reveal that they acted as helpers themselves.

Emily does some volunteer work at the shop at the Salvation Army hall. Last year Emily worked there every day, but "I just go there now when they need me". She used to do a lot of other things there, but she decided "that I would just calm down". Emily had a strong interest in being involved in the community before the earthquakes, and the quakes have reinforced the importance of her involvement.

"You've got to give back", she explains. "Well, I thought, if it was to happen again, everyone would know what to do... We've gone through it, so we should be able to cope again". Emily thinks that it will be easier for people to deal any future earthquakes, although she acknowledges that they might have different effects like, "I might not have a house to stand in next time".

Many participants related how their communities drew closer together following the earthquakes; however Alice Ridley articulated quite a different account of her neighbourhood.

Alice says she would have loved it if the earthquake had brought her immediate community more together,

But I don't know anyone at all" ... "To be honest I didn't talk to any neighbours - I don't talk to any neighbours that live around me. This is a really crappy neighbourhood to have disaster in because everyone is so... in their little bubble. I found that, probably because of the earthquake, that there is no... I want to call it culture... in Merivale (or community).

I think there was probably quite a lot in the churches up there but no real community in Merivale at all. There was no uplifting 'oh, the community all came together and we did all these amazing things!' Nope - rich people just carried on being snobby rich people.

An increase in community connection was following the earthquakes was described by Rebecca. An online neighbourhood group that Rebecca Macfie had previously been involved in, had not been that successful prior to the earthquakes. A few days after September 4, "when you couldn't sleep", Rebecca kept on thinking about the neighbourhood and where everyone had gone.

Subsequently she put up a couple of postings asking what had happened and said "Where are you? [And] the replies just came pouring in." There were sixty household in their street and the little streets that go off it and they had around forty households in the online group. They had three events last year: a picnic, a pot-luck dinner, and a sports afternoon.

Estelle Laugesen is an active member of the Anglican parish and she received "wonderful support". "Several groups came out and spoke to our church groups and that's where I gained my most support. I also belong to a couple of walking groups and we kept walking". The group changed their programme which meant they didn't walk around the Eastern suburbs.

"We kept right away to give them the privacy - because they were asking for this. All the walking is done around the northern/western area".

The group travels by car to a particular area and then walks from there. While Estelle still belongs to the group she is not able to walk so well now.

Mary Holmes encouraged her daughter, along with her grandchildren, to take advantage of the offer to move people out of the city. They moved to Auckland and are still there.

I wish they would come back, but I am thinking about going, though. I haven't many friends here anymore. It's quite a depressing place. There is nothing to do, just garden, the people aren't happy. The thing is, that if I drive around I get quite angry because I think, well... nothing has been done here, nothing has been rebuilt; people are still living in sheds. Look at the place!

Living in Brighton Caroline has experienced a great sense of community support. "People were amazing... Brighton was amazing". People have asked her how she got on living in Brighton during the quakes and because of the community spirit Caroline says that she "would rather be out here than anywhere else". However she did come and go between Brighton and Amberley and Blenheim.

I would not let things limit me... I was of the thinking, that, if it is going to happen, it is going to happen. I try and think rationally because I have been taught to.

Being realistic and positive is something that Adele Kelly discusses in her story. She says that if the children ask if she is worried that something might fall on her, she answers with a "well it could fall the other way!" Adele does not want to be limited by anxiety. She has suffered from bad anxiety for "all my life" and has sought help to deal with it. She feels people are more understanding now of the problem, as they too, have experienced it. "A lot of people are very tearful, biting off their nails, irritable" since the quakes. Adele knows of people who could not sleep "who almost became different people as a result of the quakes".

Nellie talks about her attempts to keep her young daughter safe following the quakes. She explains that after the

quakes, when Mahara was thirteen she started staying away from home. "It was quite bad for a while there". Mother and daughter clashed. Mahara would spend time with other teenagers in the streets of Linwood. Sometimes Nellie would go and get her back, as well as the other teenagers, and make them stay with her as she did not like them drifting around homeless.

I was taking care of all her mates in the abandoned houses... I knew there would be adults staying there as well. I knew if adults got their hands on those kids it would not be good... There were 12 and 13 year olds at risk. I made them come back here. I fed them. Mahara's brother and sister missed her when she stayed away as they adore her. "The quake has caused some problems; feels like it ripped us apart at times".

The damage to churches also had an impact on these communities. Salilo and her family were members of St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, which was in Bryndwr and was damaged by the quake. "The quake affected a lot of people emotionally". Salilo also describes the difficulties faced by people in the community.

In Christchurch it is really, really hard to get a place to live and some of them are still waiting for the EQC to come up with answers.

As she was very much involved with the Pacific Island Community, Salilo attended meetings in New Brighton with Pacific Island policemen who are based at the New Brighton office to discuss the distribution of goods, such as food and blankets, to the community. She also organised a street barbeque whereby neighbours were able to "come and have something to drink and eat".

Nellie likes to visit Waltham Community Cottage when she is down. "Even when I have my darkest thoughts I like to see them. I know they can pull me out of it, get me thinking straight again... My daughter got me to the Waltham Cottage. She came home one day wearing a new jacket. I asked her where she got it from, and she told me about the cottage".

The resilience of people amazes Karen Chadderton. "We are starting to really see the effects now on Brighton because we have lost so many houses - people have had to move out. You see a lot of smashed windows". She attributes a lot of the community positivity to the Grace Vineyard Centre. They have put on a lot of events for children and families. Her own children attend meetings there and Jack is a leader at one of the youth groups there. They have weekend camps, "all for \$25, it is amazing!" She does not see it as very "churchy". "There is always that Christian content, but it is not rammed down their throats and it is always at the end".

The Centre provides a lot of support for the school with mentors going to visit, helping out with transportation and helping at sports days. They provided welfare packages and a drop in centre as well as fun days at the school for the children when the school was closed because of the quake. Since the earthquake, the Grace Street Vineyard Centre has received grants to build a preschool and a drop in centre. "There is going to be an upgrade and it will be made a lot bigger".

Caroline did not have a lot of contact with her near neighbours, but she started to attend the St Faiths drop in centre "which was amazing". She bought a second hand stove and had a chemical loo installed. In the early days she was not keen on the port-a-loos and preferred to use the back yard or toilets in Brighton. She was not working at that time. Caroline is a trained nurse and had been working in a nursing home. "To be honest I did not feel much like working then".

Michelle recalls the community spirit in the days after the February earthquake. About four days after the quake, the leader of the opposition, Phil Goff, came out to New Brighton and delivered hot meals. This was really appreciated, as having a hot meal was a treat at that time. Lianne Dalziel was also a great source of support.

But she spent more time over in the Bexley area, as it had been totally destroyed... I remember we used to turn the TV for a few hours at night (so that we did have enough power) and she would be on the TV, and she was absolutely incredible."

The generator was very important at that time. It was used for three hours a day to keep the freezer cold and to have two hours of TV at night. "Other than that we were relying on candles, torches... We were without power for 19 days. It was a very, very long time." When the power came back on Michelle and her neighbours went and fiddled with every power switch. "It was the most novel thing in the world."

It was ten months before they could flush their toilets properly. After the February quake they made their own makeshift toilet in the garage for the set of flats with a pail and lined it with a black bin sack and put the stuff out in the bin. "If the door was down, it meant it was occupied. No air freshener – it was not pretty!"

A month after the quake, camp toilets [chemical toilets] were delivered – "the most horrible things in the world!" You had to be on the spot when the NZ Army came with the chemical toilets. "You needed to fill out a consent form for a toilet and sign for it. It felt like you were signing your life away for a toilet! "They had to carry the contents of the toilets to the "little outlet at the end of the road" to empty them. However, they were still much better to sit on than a bucket.

Just living was very, very hard work. They had no local supermarket because the water main had a blow in the floor and it had destroyed Countdown – just down the road. They build a desalination plant in New Brighton itself, right down on the waterfront and John Key came to open it. But Michelle did not think that the water tasted nice. "It just tasted different... We were able to get it down at the Roy Stokes Hall in skins. There were also lots of brands of mineral water".

Mixed blessings - frustrations and some surprising benefits

A number of participants could see many negatives and some positive outcomes for themselves, their families and their communities.

Treena felt a huge dilemma when viewing the earthquake damage. She found it hard to know whether to prioritise family first, or just to help out anyone that "you saw or knew might be in trouble". After viewing her aunt's house after the September earthquake, Treena remembers confronting her brother for not believing her about the damage to her own property. However she could understand his disbelief after viewing many properties which had not been damaged at all. She described how "some parts you just go around the corners and some houses are tipped upside down, across the road some houses fine".

After the earthquake, Treena started feeling more connected to other places in the world which had had natural disasters. She felt like she had more of a sense of empathy for the people affected, and was just more aware of what was going on in world, although she also has a sense of helplessness.

Fiona did not visit the central city much before the quakes and she does not go there often now. She has been to see the Restart Mall and things like that, but she cannot see that "once it is rebuilt it will have much impact on my life in particular. It is the loss of my community that has been the hardest thing".

Emily knew about "a list of places you could go where they were handing out meat and things like that". However, she thought that handing out "basic things" like cans and bread would have been more useful. "We didn't have refrigeration or power, so there was no point getting bulk meat or anything like that". Emily would "just buy things once and that would last us". She purchased "mainly bread, tea and milk", but she also made sure they had enough fruit.

Alia Afzali's husband then travelled to Auckland to persuade Alia to return to their Rowses Road home. Although their home in Christchurch was a new property, it's location in Bexley was of considerable concern for Alia, as she was isolated from her Afghani community. Prior to February, there were some Afghani families who lived in New Brighton, but after the February earthquakes they had moved

to Auckland. Alia and her children are now the only Afghani family around the Bexley/Brighton area. Prior to the earthquakes she had connected with her neighbours living on the right side of her house.

We tried to meet with them. In Afghanistan, in our culture, we really respect our neighbours because we think neighbour is part of our family, especially the close neighbour. If I cooked some delicious food I share it with them, and I asked them about three times, to come to dinner here and we ask them for tea sometime. We are a big family and they are just three or four children. The lady was from Kiwi people and her husband was from Maori - she was quite a nice lady".

Unfortunately this family left before the first earthquake, and then a Samoan family arrived, but Alia felt they were good neighbours too: "we said 'hello, good-morning'. Post the February earthquake this family left as well". The house was left empty and subsequently "was burned by some naughty boys". Now the house is demolished.

Emily started to make contacts with her workmates. Very few records and resource material had been able to be rescued from the building after the Boxing Day shake. Emily and the team made an inventory of what they had, but could make little progress as to where they could relocate too and resume operating again. The sad decision to dissolve the Women's Health Centre, which had been operating for 25 years, was eventually made.

And then, Emily described how the Salvation Army closed all their doors, and there was nothing wrong with the building:

They closed all their doors and yet they could have left it [the building] open... so that people could go in there and sit in there and feel a bit safer. And nobody could get into the hall... There were families - the whole place was just covered with people.

On a positive note, I got to know my neighbours so well... I guess that sense of community was quite nice...It also gave me time - because I didn't have

anything to do, no internet. I got out my old film camera and went for a walk with my friend... you know those little things that you never really get a chance to do.

Ella and her friend took pictures of holes and cracks and they also ended up "doing these stupid teenage-like pose[s] with the earthquake damage". Ella thinks that the quakes have increased people's sense of community. "I was never into the whole community thing before the quake...but it's been good to see people coming together - which is great."

Gina King rang up Work and Income. She said they were "brilliant", and gave her \$500 that was used for petrol, buying essential items and food. Sourcing water was important. There was no power, water or sewage at her mother's house. Gina found an artesian water source. Water was being delivered in trucks but Gina preferred not to stand in queues and listen to all the stories. The Māori wardens came knocking and gave out a box of water. There was a food box from the church, food from Ruth Dyson plus dog food and Easter eggs. Apart from that:

No one offered us food. We were told we lived in the wrong neighbourhood to get free food. We got told to go to Aranui to get food and when we got there we got told to f... off. By the people who live there... a lot of people who live in the area. They had seven boxes of food, we had nothing. What the hell?

Gina recalls it was like the survival of the fittest. Aranui, New Brighton and Wainoni were getting food for 6-8 months after the earthquake. Trucks would come out and people would give them food all the time, including fruit and vegetables. When they were handing out the free heaters, Bromley and Linwood got nothing, the others got it all. "It was quite disheartening, sitting in Bromley, the area fairly munted, and no help."

Nikita didn't go "back to school for a long time". Emily thinks that the school was closed for about two months. Nothing was run in the neighbourhood to keep the kids occupied.

We couldn't do anything in our hall because that was where the Red Cross had set themselves up... you could go there every day and get all these sandwiches made up... You could get toothbrushes to clean your teeth (that already had the toothpaste in them)... The Red Cross station served as a good community hub, but Emily was disappointed that the Salvation Army had closed its doors, despite the fact that "they had all these food parcels and everything sent to them... and none of it got used. It was just put up in the attic". Emily felt that there was an expectation in the community that they would be involved in helping out. "People were looking for bedding and blankets and stuff and they had it all there.

Losing her job after the February quake changed everything for Nicki as she has only been able to get the odd cleaning job since then. Her house is draughty and cracked. Nicki's son contracted pneumonia in winter of 2012 because of the damp and cold in her house. Nicki also noticed that other people contracted pneumonia following the earthquakes, which she attributes to cold draughty houses and the dust from liquefaction. Nicki was disgusted with Work and Income who would give with one hand and take away with the other.

I won't even go to Work and Income. I feel like such a loser, a beggar, when I go there and I've never ever gone there for help. Then I had to go there for power bills consecutively, like all the time, and they wouldn't give me money in the end. So I said, 'well give me a food grant and I'll use my food money to pay my power' ... or else you'd have to use all your money and then go there... they didn't want to help really. Like it was all about, 'well you should be organising your finances better...' It was costing me a fortune in petrol and then I'd have to queue up for petrol - things like that.

The financial outlay from the earthquakes has been huge for Nicki, and at the time of her interview, she is only starting to

get out of debt. Her increased expenses included damage to her car from the state of the roads. Since the September 2010 quake, Nicki has had to replace five tyres and the car suspension needed repair. Heating costs were up as the house was draughty and cold. Nicki has had five \$700 power bills and Red Cross helped by contributing \$100 towards each bill. Nicki also gets upset when she sees on the news, stories about people who have severe damage who haven't had anything done. Nicki also feels sad for people like her mother in her seventies, who will never see the city fixed, and those in their eighties who are still waiting for their houses to be fixed. She wonders what is going to happen to all the open land on the east side of the city.

"We see more of our neighbours... the children go and hang out at their place and we have cups of coffee together". One set of neighbours moved out to Oxford for a while and would return regularly with water for her family and neighbours.

Kristy Constable-Brown has met some good mates at St John's and they regularly enjoy coffees together: "we all look forward to it". They all felt safe and always had a good laugh on Thursday nights while their children attend the group. The immediate neighbourhood has become a tighter knit group with neighbours enjoying coffees together. Nearby is the new Woolston Tannery, a smart retail and restaurant complex which Kristy thinks is good for the area.

"It just became life really. If someone was to ask you what life was like during an earthquake you would probably be like 'it was pretty normal' - you just kind of adapt to it".

The quake had an impact on where the young people congregated. Alice Ridley and her friends would often meet up and hang around the bus exchange and sit on the river bank. "Man, I spent a lot of time there". It was a pretty mixed group - "a lot of different ages and some pretty dodgy people... I think hanging out in town and being a town kid is pretty dodgy really", Alice laughs.

On Colombo Street there was an area called 'The Crossing' and "people would sit either side of it - all day... So as soon as town was cut off from us, we didn't see everyone

for a while... probably the only way we could see each other more was to go to parties... which is probably not the most constructive way to hang out... As soon as town closed, there was just this massive shift to Riccarton", Alice describes how "everyone kind of congregated at Riccarton Mall... there is a lot more young people at Riccarton Mall now". "I see people who used to hang out in town still hanging out in Riccarton Mall and I'm like 'oh my God, grow up! Do you have nothing better to do then dwell on the past?'"

Amid the generous work of many private citizens, businesses and politicians, some women talk about the 'red tape' that frustrated some of their initiatives and others felt fortunate when authorities turned a blind eye.

"So we go and sit with this one, and then we sit with that one..." - CanCERN

Leanne Curtis identifies ongoing difficulties for community organisations. She talks about the how her group members were organised and that they had clear objectives.

We knew that what we wanted was full engagement, we wanted clear two-way communication, and an example of that was 'the toilets'. We wanted community leaders to be able to ring in and say these streets need this, they have no sewer; these streets have no water; these are our elderly; these are our vulnerable. And for somebody to organise this and be able to put that information where it needed to go.

CanCERN were up against institutional processes that were often not flexible enough in a crisis and Leanne clearly explains her frustration about this.

... [It] is still the same and we are nearly two years down the track. We are still in that same place where the communities have the intelligence; they know exactly what is happening and the state of play, and yet there is nowhere for them to put it in an organised and collective form. It is institutionalised.

Intuitively we knew there were going to be winners and losers and there would be gaps vulnerable people

would fall through; the loud squawky people would get what they needed and the people that were quietly waiting, and often they were elderly, saying 'Oh there are far worse people than me' would fall through the gaps... So we had very, very intuitive understanding of how this needed to happen and to have it happen well. We have these amazing opportunities to do things well, collaboratively, co-ordinated, innovative, stop thinking in silos. Bring things together so that we make communities stronger, families stronger.

Leanne points to another issue that is hindering progress and action; she explains, "There is power and control and testosterone and patch protection. There are some terrible personalities, the real alpha male, in positions of power that is getting in the way of making collaborative progress." She sees the only way to make efficient effective progress is to work together.

...And yet, they don't. So we go and sit with this one, and then we sit with that one, and then they sit with this one and they are all so busy throwing stones at the other one and pointing fingers at the other one... That should be the slogan in Canterbury; Add Value! Or bugger off! Because we need leaders that add value; we need organisations that add value; we need communities that add value and adding value is actually about being proactive and being responsible.

Dora believes that people in Christchurch "have lost our voice". Prior to the quakes, Environment Canterbury, the Canterbury Regional Council, had lost control [the government appointed commissioners to manage the Council in May 2010 and dismissed the 14 elected councillors] and there was a "loss of democratic voice". After the quakes, a government body, CERA, was given the mandate to determine the way forward for the Christchurch rebuild.

This is a big challenge for people in Christchurch, having a powerlessness over their own properties, but also a lack of power in the future rebuild of Christchurch.

The public consultation meetings brought a lot of people together to contribute to the future city rebuild, however Dora believes the recommendations arising out of these meetings have been ignored.

Dora is now involved in six community groups compared with two groups in pre-quake days. She is very involved with some community based post-quake rebuild groups. As a result, there are some nights that she has two meetings a night.

My life has become very, very hectic. In some ways this is great, as it has given me the opportunity to participate in things, but I do get tired... It is a mixed bag really... my diet has been affected, as I sometimes grab easy food, which I am not meant to.

Lyttelton market

Amelia from Lyttelton comments on trying to negotiate with CERA and the City Council about the possibility of closing London Street to make a better venue for their market. "It would be fabulous to have a market in London Street each week." She says that working with the City Council has shown her how some bureaucracy works:

There are rules and regulations you never dreamed about. You trip over them. You think that they would be on your side, but they are more on the side of what the black and white paperwork says ... They are incredibly frustrating and unsupportive.

Reflecting on the governmental response, Lianne Dalziel comments;

The Minister thinks that if you have to consult with the community in a meaningful way that holds up decision making. But the reality is that all the international experience says that there is a lot of knowledge in the community about those communities that is not known by officials and by those out of town, so by engaging with the community you get better decisions because you learn a lot as you go.

Some barriers were originally hampering the SVA after the September quake, but Jade Rutherford explains that these barriers had completely evaporated by the time of the February quake. She paints an illuminating picture about the change:

In September the Council just wanted us (SVA) to go away... largely they were like 'whoa lots of students on the loose, don't have time to deal with this'...we just proved them wrong I guess." Also an ex-teacher, and Civil Defence employee, Allan, put up his hand, as did someone else from Civil Defence, both of them vouched for the SVA and worked as a liaison between them and Civil Defence. Then come February, we'd proved our worth, so it was suddenly more of a ...'Oh great, these guys are back up and running' as opposed to 'Oh, not the students again'.

Grief - Spiritual support – “grieving for the community has been one of the hardest things”

A Dunedin Māori colleague contacted Dora Roimata Langsbury to say that she was bringing up a container of donated goods to Christchurch and invited her to meet up at the Rehua Marae for a communal dinner. Dora walked out of the red zone for the first time since the quake and into a job! The front of house manager at Rehua had been working nonstop for five days and had not been back to her own home. Dora filled in for her and managed the front of house activities at the marae. Once the front of house manager returned to work, Dora started working for Ngai Tahu's Recovery hub as their coordinator. "It was great as it provided me with three meals a day and somewhere to have a hot shower. In a way Rehua became like my welfare centre, as well as giving me the opportunity to be active in the recovery".

Dora recalls that a very special service was provided at Rehua Marae for the families of loved ones who had died in the city. Once the bodies were starting to be recovered,

visiting overseas families were coming to Christchurch. Rehua Marae gave them a Māori welcome, kai and a powhiri. Often forensic scientists accompanied the families from the different countries. "I think it was very important that these families were able to have the Māori process be part of their grieving".

Dora is proud of the way Ngai Tahu got things up and running at Rehua Marae after the February quake. She thinks that "this was a great example to the rest of the city but also to the rest of the country... They did not do it exclusively for Ngai Tahu and they did not do it just for Te Runanga o Ngā Maata Waka. When they were out working in the East, they were not just focusing on Māori people in need".

Many of the international emergency workers who came to Christchurch commented positively on the way the Māori process helped families through their grieving after the February quake. The welcome at Rehua Marae for the families who had lost loved ones in the February quake, and the practice of accompanying them to Burnham Military Camp for the forensics, was considered very caring and quite unique. "They never had had that experience before where the indigenous people were able to bring in that level of spirituality".

Jasmine talked about how a community spirit developed in the prison whereby women spoke with others who they had hitherto not had conversations with. "This has lasted. I am talking to people more than I used to". The number of staff at the prison was reduced as a result of the quake, while officers stayed at home to look after their families. Others were part of the emergency volunteer team who went into the city. Some women prisoners volunteered to go to Rolleston and clean it up after the quake damage. They got to see damage first hand and came back and reported on what they had seen.

Psychosocial support

Sue has noticed some trends in gender issues post-quake. She feels that not many women are involved in the rebuild. In her own house she has had

...so many men strut in here and say 'Oh we can fix that. Oh you can glue that together; you can do this, you can do that'. And then the engineer says 'Yes, but in the event of a future earthquake, it would split asunder and could not be guaranteed to be safe'. She feels that there are a lot of "men posturing about who knows best".

Salilo first started with PACIFICA after the earthquakes. She praises the work of the local Pacific Island support groups. She mentions the seminars, meetings, and programmes organised for Pacific Islanders in Christchurch whose lives were affected by the earthquakes. "That is all what our Pacific Island people would like, someone who could listen and or lend a hand to help, that was really great".

The church groups and ongoing prayers and songs helped to bring up the "spirit of those who were badly affected by the earthquake". Salilo is very grateful that there is a group in Christchurch who can help push the government to help rebuild, the lives of people in Christchurch"

Life is good, God is good, life is gradually coming back". Salilo's family have all "gone back to work living life as usual". Her daughter is back at her studies and the boys are back at work. "So the family here is doing ok, rebuilding our lives, not the house but our lives in general". Salilo sees the rebuilding as a "coming together for her and her family.

Ella is involved in Re-Gen - a group of change-makers from around NZ who get together once a year and have a camp and "jam on different things" such as Animal Welfare, Climate Change and Social Welfare". Ella originally got involved because she and a friend did a walk in year ten to Akaroa to raise money for Hector's Dolphins. You don't have to be invited to go, "but it's kind of the way people find out about it".

The White Elephant Trust has a strengths based approach to youth development; "but pretty much we are a DJ school, we are an events company and we used to run the OYC (Otautahi Youth Council), although not anymore". Ella used to tag along to other youth organisations with her friends, but "they never really felt right". "Free DJ classes - that's awesome - but if the people teaching you are going to be like 40 years old then you're not really going to want to learn". White Elephant is really different to most youth organisations. In most youth organisations, youth workers are usually 25 or older. But at White Elephant they are younger.

I'm 18 and half the other people are older than me. And it's awesome because I'm at their level; I'm technically their friend, not the youth worker. Even though I get paid to be there and teach and run parties... there's a sense of equality which I love".

Ella particularly likes White Elephant for what she calls its "grassroots connections".

Impressions and Expectations

As varying community groups spontaneously formed, many conjured up catchy titles to name their group such as Gap Filler, Greening the Rubble and so on. One participant, Sue, felt that she:

...didn't like the way that everything got couched in terms of the army - the Farmy Army, the Student Army - because it made the quakes the enemy. And they weren't. It was just the earth doing magnificent things really. And we all had to go with that. And this couching of it in military terms, and the organisation of it in military terms I thought was very unfortunate.

Sue also felt that there were unfair expectations placed on mothers and sons. She felt guilty when her boys didn't help shovel liquefaction after the quakes: "there was a lot of 'could you get your boys to go or if your boys didn't want to volunteer would you make them' ... we did some baking and took it down to Pioneer Stadium".

An interesting observation was expressed by Susan Barnes who is blind, when her mother turned up and said she would cook Susan tea. Susan did not think this was necessary. Her mother had no power and Susan had power and offered her a cup of tea. Her mother was trying to be helpful, but Susan did not need help. Susan reflected that after the quakes people often thought, "How will she (Susan) manage?" But she did not really need any special help. She managed as well as most people did in September and February.

Sometimes it seems as if I am letting the side down if I am not as needy as I should be so that others can help the poor helpless blind girl - who I don't really know.

The cases of Susan, and Jasmine who was in prison at the time of the February earthquake, highlighted how some woman were dependent on others to relay to them what the city was like following the quakes. Susan's friend, Jo, was working in the CBD at the time of the February earthquake and Susan rang her:

... and she painted such a vivid picture for me. She worked at ACC in the city and had been out to lunch when the quake struck. She was wearing her poncy work shoes and she left her cell phone in the office... She ended up borrowing some sports shoes from someone that were way too big for her so she could walk home from the city to Kendal Avenue.

Susan's friend described things that happened in the centre of the city much more vividly than anything Susan heard when she listened to the TV.

Jasmine, in prison at the time, also talked about having to hear second-hand what was happening and said that whilst they were not able to talk about the quakes in the same way as Christchurch people who were living outside of the prison, they did talk amongst themselves about their families, and who they had been in contact with, and they shared any news that they had learnt from them. Uppermost for all of them was making contact with their own families: "so that they knew that we were OK. We were more affected by not knowing what was happening than by the quake". As

Jasmine describes it, "we were safe, but the rest of Christchurch was not safe".

One participant who was a newcomer to New Zealand talked about differing attitudes to work than she was used to following the earthquakes. Loretta Rhodes half expected to return to work immediately or at least to work from home on her laptop.

This is due to my American background; in America there is an expectation that people rarely take sick days or holidays. However in Christchurch, I found that my co-workers did not share this expectation. Work was not a priority as they were in survival mode. Even once back at work I expected people to eagerly resume their projects, but this was not the case. Generally, however, I feel that the shared earthquake experience did make me closer to my colleagues.

Marie Rean, who was working with Afghani refugees, was "incredibly impressed" with the attitudes to work of both families she has worked with. Marie has never met a refugee family that hasn't wanted to come to New Zealand. Most refugees refer to New Zealand as 'paradise'. Marie has not yet met a refugee family that haven't wanted to work hard, educate their children, get themselves jobs, and just have a good life with their family.

Marie finds it difficult when people feel we have "too many refugees". As she explained, New Zealand only takes 750 refugees a year plus some for reunification with family. Marie related how many refugees didn't cope well with the earthquakes because at first they thought it was a war due to the roaring sound and shaking houses.

Building on their "experiences of war, they thought Christchurch was under attack". Once they realized that an earthquake had occurred "they were scared like the rest of us". Some refugees have relocated to the North Island. Others are staying with some difficulty but doing their best to cope.

Ella worries that the city is not a good place for young people. "I'm quite disappointed that the central city took so long. I think the only thing I'm really angry about is the alcohol policy. I'm quite worried that...unless they change their mind Christchurch is going to become a retirement village". She is not that keen on going out until the early hours," but a lot of people I know are, and a lot of people would leave because of it".

Ella has spent quite a bit of time in the central city,

I get to see a lot of stuff happening... It's cool, but it's not really interesting enough... A lot of things haven't really changed... Over the past two years the city hasn't really changed that much... Restart popped up, cool, a couple of bars have popped up, awesome, but nothing really that big, unfortunately.

Seulata Fui gave her view that the quake was a time of equality and shared humanity. On the 22nd of February she observed,

I think in a crisis and disasters like that, humanity had equality. Because on the park that day everyone was equal: We even saw Jason Gunn that day. But on that day everyone was equal. No one was above the other".

She learned that "humanity stands together at the time of crisis. And that's when I said, humanity has equality. And they help each other; that human instinct comes out".

Better communities

A number of participants saw positive outcomes that came out of the disaster, for example, Lindsay James comments that she knows her neighbours a lot better and has a real sense of community now. She feels people will look after each other more than ever now, having experienced these frightening times. "It made me realise that it is people that are important - not possessions."

Roman is grateful to the people "who drive around and give toothbrushes and oranges and give you a hug, it is

good". She is very glad to be in a cul de sac with elderly neighbours, "I can do for them". After the quakes, when she had no water, the neighbours brought her water and milk. One of the elderly women, who is not able to get out to the shops "comes over to talk with me, which is awesome".

Karen Chadderton said that neighbours really looked after each other. "We had strangers knocking on the door asking if there was anything that we needed. You don't realise how much other people care when they are in the same situation. It is quite surreal".

Another project in the planning stage in the community is Creating Places of Tranquillity. These are garden areas which will represent the culturally diverse communities that make up Christchurch. Some of these communities which were vulnerable before the quakes are even more vulnerable now. Michelle sees the Places of Tranquillity as a way we can reach out to these vulnerable communities and support them by raising visibility. The gardens will create cultural awareness and will provide spaces where individuals can find comfort and support in a familiar setting. The problem at this stage of the project is finding temporary accommodation for two years for the gardens. There needs to be an establishment phase to make the gardens look stable and firm before they are relocated to their permanent homes. It is hoped that these permanent homes will be along the Avon River banks. The aim is to have a couple of the gardens created by Autumn 2014, if suitable sites can be found.

Jacinta O'Reilly intends to stay in her area and rebuild on her section. A number of Jacinta's friends live in the area, so her support networks are in place. She is also involved in a number of community activities. The choir is still going during the day for older people and Jacinta has been fielding calls from elderly people who are interested in joining. The choir performs in different languages besides English. The Trust's aim is for "the participants to sing properly". They practice one evening a week. She is very involved with the Green party in her electorate. Gardening takes up her time, plus "of course, listening to my children".

Ella thinks that the quakes have increased people's sense of community. "I was never into the whole community thing before the quake...but it's been good to see people coming together - which is great." She is critical of the Christchurch City Council and thinks that it took them a long time "to get up and running". On the other hand she understands that the rebuild is going to be "a lengthy process" She thinks that "the elections couldn't have come at a better time. I'm stoked to see so many new faces on the Council".

Ella has lots of younger siblings she hopes that

by the time they get to my age they'll get to experience the central city, like the central city nightlife... I got to taste it, but I was only 15. So I got to go into town and see people walking around and see everyone...I got the taste of it, but I never really experienced it. So I hope my siblings have that experience that I didn't get at my age...at 18 you're meant to go out, to club, to party, it's like... a rite of passage kind of thing.

To be honest, I've heard so much about Christchurch nightlife before the earthquake, I would love to see Sol Square open up...Poplar Lane...I've heard so much about these places and bars, like Double Happy... just awesome places that I never got to experience. So I'd just love to see the nightlife scene jump back up and come back into action - cause if we have a nightlife we'll get people in.

Ella thinks that a lot of young people don't have anywhere to go. If the White Elephant Trust got a youth venue they could "give young people stuff to do in the city". She would also like to see some cycle lanes pop up as they were mapped out in the city plan.

Ella is really positive about life in Christchurch. "I love Christchurch. I love the convenience of Christchurch. I love how everyone knows someone that knows someone. I love the feeling you get from (most) of the people here...'

The powers that be: insurance woes

While the earthquakes and their aftermath might have been seen as the ‘end of the story’, in reality for many residents they were only the beginning. Many of the women in this study were about to learn a whole new vocabulary, the skills of advanced negotiation, new vistas of confusion and obfuscation and apparently unending frustration. Dealing with the insurance industry required the mastery of discourses of doublespeak, where terms came to mean anything except their original definitions.

The insurance context was particularly complex because of the Earthquake Commission, or EQC. This organisation was set up by the New Zealand Government after the 1931 Napier earthquake to provide a fund for future natural disasters, by collecting a levy on household insurance. With no major pay-outs since its inception, the fund was healthy when the Christchurch earthquakes commenced in 2010. Under the rules, the EQC would pay the first \$100,000 of any claim, known as the ‘cap’, with the insurance companies meeting additional costs.

After so many years without major claims, the focus of the organisation was on the levies, investment and reinsurance side, and its insurance claims side was heavily under-developed. Late in 2013, an Ombudsman’s report revealed huge problems with the EQC’s response to Official Information requests, which reflected a number of fundamental problems in the organisation.¹² Those high-level problems within the organisation were reflected on the ground. In a hugely complex situation, EQC’s systems appeared inadequate to deal with claims, assessments,

12 On 19 December 2013 The Chief Ombudsman released a joint report with the Privacy Commissioner on EQC’s compliance with its obligations under the Official Information Act and the Privacy Act when responding to requests for information from its Canterbury customers. See Information Faultlines: Assessing EQC Information in Canterbury http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/ckeditor_assets/attachments/300/information_fault_lines_-_accessing_eqc_information_in_canterbury.pdf?1387406458

multiple earthquakes, negotiations with other insurance companies and the provision of good information to clients. Insurance companies, too, often did not seem up to their job. The AMI insurance group, whose logo looked out over the whole of Christchurch from the largest stand of the crippled Lancaster Park, collapsed and its claims were taken over by the Government, through a new company called Southern Response (often called Southern No Response¹³).

The insurance issues unfurled over an extended period of time, and became more, not less, complex. From the point of view of this project, the interviews completed in 2012 often reflected a different view than those undertaken in 2013. Unfortunately, while some people had settled their claims, in general there was little improvement and some deterioration in the complexity of the process. It is difficult to know whether this was the result of an overall worsening of the situation, or whether it was because our second group of participants, the 'unheard voices', were in a worse general situation.

Further complicating factors include the housing situation in Christchurch. Many have had to move house on multiple occasions, adding to their stress. Some have lived with their families in garages and sleep outs. Some have lived in severely damaged rental accommodation, and are concerned that landlords are 'pocketing the cash' from EQC pay outs and continuing to lease out substandard accommodation.

With so many aggravating factors, it is not surprising that many of the women in this study feel themselves to be at war with EQC and their insurance providers. As Adele put it: "Insurance is so difficult and confusing... it makes me feel for people".

It's just stuff

There are many points at which relationships between the women in this study and EQC became difficult. Nippy's

13 <https://www.facebook.com/SouthernNoResponse>

story provides an illustration of the multiple problems, relating to the small house she owns in Aranui. While the house received little damage in the September quake, in subsequent quakes, commencing with Boxing Day, there was significant damage. The February quake caused huge damage inside the house, which she cleaned up using Janola. She got the yard broom and just shovelled everything, food, broken bits, up together and threw it all away. She didn't think about insurance, and later some of her claim was denied because she did not have evidence of what had been broken. "Insurance was just the furthest thing from my mind, at the end of the day, it's just stuff". Several other participants had the same problem.

Her second issue with EQC was about broken services. Her approach can be summarised in the following comment:

Insurance was just a waste of time. I didn't get to see anyone and half the time they didn't know what they were talking about anyway - it was too big for them so you just called your mates in. If we had waited for them, we would have been floating off down the street!

The Red Cross sent plumbers in to fix broken water pipes under Nippy's house. Later ("things happened gradually", she notes), she began to have a bad sewage problem, waking up one day to find her house "surrounded by poo". She rang the emergency number and was told there was a two week wait for urgent repairs. Unable to wait, she called in a company called 'Mr Pooman', who fixed the problem. She had to pay cash and was eventually reimbursed by EQC.

She had more problems, which remained unfixed, and in the end she got a friend to come and have a look, who diagnosed that the connection between the house and the main sewer in the road was broken. Eventually (after much swearing, Nippy recalls), the problem was fixed.

Her third issue related to her house. The house had fallen off its foundations, and is now only partially habitable. One side is being held up by a brace. Her house is going to be rebuilt, which essentially means a new house on her own

land, but she may have to wait until 2016 or beyond until that happens. In the meantime, she and her daughter sleep in the lounge, as two bedrooms are unable to be occupied due to mould and damp.

Nippy's house is a 'rebuild'; it will be built new from the ground up. She can redesign her house and garage (both have to come down), which is exciting. She wondered about trying to build a flat on her section also. She is worried that something may prevent the rebuild. "It is five or six years after the fact. They said 2015/16 a good couple of years ago. I am trusting them it's going to happen. I mean if we have another disaster.... "

The red zone

It became evident early on that parts of Christchurch and Kaiapoi were built on ground that could not sustain housing, especially since the earthquakes had caused parts of the area to sink below sea level. Paramount was the suburb of Bexley, where modern properties were built on and abutting swampland. In the red zoned areas, the government required owners to sell their houses at the 2007 valuation.

In 2012, Lianne Dalziel still lived in red-zoned Bexley. The whole suburb was in the red-zone:

The whole of Bexley is in that situation because the ground has settled so much - I mean the spread into the Wetlands was 1.3 metres - across the suburb on our side of Pages Rd it has dropped by 1.3 metres. We are probably below sea level. We were always a flood risk. Not that I knew that when we moved in. I know a lot more now than I did then.

Her insurance situation was complex. The insurance company were happy to repair the house, but it had to be vacated. She explained it like this:

We're not being offered a rebuild. Our insurers say they are prepared to rebuild our house, but we're in the red zone so we're not allowed to rebuild our house. So that means they are only prepared to offer us \$240,000 for the house, which combined

with the land valuation of \$87,200 is less than the total RV which is 392,000. We cannot buy a two storey townhouse on 500 square metres for \$392,000. We will have to borrow \$50,000 to \$100,000 to get what we've got now. So we're not going to be in a position to rebuild unless our insurer say we're a rebuild, at which point \$87,200 from the government for the land is not enough to buy half of a section. That's the problem that we face, along with many other red zone residents, but the public have no idea that this is an issue because the government have convinced them that they have made a very extremely fair offer that no other country in the world would do and that they are not required to do. But actually they've sold out a whole stack of people to the insurance industry by telling this insurance industry that they don't have to honour replacement insurance policies.

At the time of the interview in 2012, Annie was stuck in her red-zoned house: "My house's floor is all leaked, so damp and fungus is everywhere....Everyday my job is (to) spin the washing machine and then I dry all my towels and then cleaning every day".

The family wanted to move after the February quake and Annie spent weeks trying to find a rental property. But none would take their dog. The dog was a beloved pet and, Annie realised, important in helping her daughter cope with the impact of the quakes. "(The) dog is my daughter's beautiful, intimate (companion). Actually my dog comforted her". So they decided to stay in the red-zoned house, with the dog, despite the intolerable conditions.

Raewyn Crowther and family have come out of the situation better than they expected. Red zoned, they expected the insurance company to class them as repair, putting them in the same situation as Lianne Dalziel. They found a house that was under construction and had only been on the market for a day, and bought it off a woman who was under a contract with the building company. As a result they "have a brand new house without any of the hassles of having to

actually build it." When they got home, they found they had a letter from the insurance company saying they had rebuild status, plus they could sell their land to CERA, and could now afford the new house. It was a far better deal than before! They have now moved into a new house on a bigger section in a new subdivision where they don't feel the earthquakes as much. "We've come out of this whole thing really quite well ... but I've still got family battling insurance companies."

Raewyn didn't realize how depressing and unhealthy living in their red zone house was until they moved out of it. Normally their property was well maintained, but they had done nothing on the house because there was no point if it was to be pulled down. Kaiapoi had become a ghost town, as most people moved out once the red zone was announced. They were delighted with the normality and noise of their new neighbourhood. They go back to their Kaiapoi home to check the letter box. It is "incredible how quickly mother nature has taken over". It's very sad to see as the last thing they did in the house before they left was have their daughter's 21 birthday party in December. "The place looked fantastic."

Leanne Everingham's home and land had, by 2012, been zoned red. Her current rental property was also zoned red. The owners have moved to Auckland, so want their money out and will sell to the Government. It will then have to be vacated and within two months of that, it will be demolished. Leanne and her husband realise the property is uneconomic to repair, but would have liked the Government, as the new owners, to rent it to them for another year or so until they can relocate or rebuild. "It is difficult at the moment when rental accommodation is so difficult to find. The rules seem so rigid". Leanne's father's rest home was damaged in the February earthquake and he has been permanently moved to a rest home in Rangiora. This puts immense strain on Leanne's mother, who is in her 70s and who also lives in a red-zoned house. The level of uncertainty for all members of this family is enormous.

Diana Madgin and her partner had to abandon her riverside house and heritage garden. It was a big issue for them at 65 and 80 years of age. Every now and then one of them falls into a deep hole of depression, and they help each other through this. Diana's hope is to retain the garden as a heritage area at the back and a community garden at the front, with the café next door. Diana is concerned that if this is unsuccessful, there could be resale of the land in the future to be redeveloped. Already there is increasing vandalism on cleared sections by 'larrikins' and there is the ever-present worry about fire in the long grass, which is now up to the windowsills. She wonders also about just how much green space the city can maintain in the red zone, "should we manage to convince CERA to preserve it".

In 2012, there was still significant uncertainty facing people in the city, as Deborah Williams commented:

There has been a great deal of confusion about the zone colours. Some house owners are still in limbo waiting to know if they are forced to leave their homes or can stay. Others have structurally sound homes or even new homes but are being told to leave them because they live in the red zone. Even if they have left because they cannot live in their homes, they have to pay insurance and rates so many have financial problems. Everyone has to deal with the EQC, their insurance company, or CERA who sometimes give different assessments.

By 2013, most of the red zone settlements had been completed. Christine's house in Bexley was red-zoned after the February earthquakes. She explained that she and her disabled husband endured four moves before eventually finding a house to purchase in September 2012. In retrospect, she is clear that their land was under-valued in the payout, but that was true of the whole area.

Near the red zone

Those living on the boundaries of or close to the red zones were facing a waiting game in 2012. Christine and her

husband have disabilities. Their house is also on the boundary of the red zone. EQC are "keeping an eye on them" and advised them both that they wouldn't do anything more regarding repairs until the quakes have subsided, maybe in two years' time. They are still to "test the ground". In the meantime, they live in a damaged property with huge uncertainty about their future.

Letitia Meadows thinks she is one of the "lucky ones", being zoned yellow/green. But she says it has taken a long time to feel 'normal' and safe post-quake:

My partner and I are living in the same house which thankfully is relatively unscathed. We have been advised by EQC that repairs are likely to be completed by 2014... seven houses away is a large red zone area around Avonside/Dallington. We hope to sell the house and are unsure whether we want to stay in Christchurch.

Some of those interviewed for this study are being left behind as neighbours move on. Two of Wendy Hawkes' good friends have been zoned red. They were people they were going to retire with and walk round the river together.

And all my community, people I've just waved out to over a long time, or peered over their garden, my neighbourhood, they are all just going. I see them going with their trailers and their removal vans, and they are all just pulling out and their houses have grass growing around them. So I was happy for a week that we went green and then after that I pitched into a sort of a depression, not a clinical depression, but a grief, a sadness that the neighbourhood could die. And that's going to get worse as houses start coming down. So it is hard work just being here and I do have almost like panic flashes when I think I can't stay here anymore...

It has got to the point where I have even thought, I'll just have to get a one bed-roomed flat somewhere and just go away for two years and then come back when all the houses have been taken off. I've got over that now, but it does sort of come and

go... it is just because it is dying and looks so terrible."

Ellenor, who lives alone at Southshore, commented that she found the insurance process "anxiety making... and she is glad that it is settled". This took until 2013. The house next door to her is bordered by red zone properties, and all along the Estuary is zoned red. The insurance people and EQC have been "fighting over who owned my claim" for a lengthy time. "The EQC people came and walked around and off they went but the insurance people came and did a really thorough check".

She has been told by the insurance company that it would be \$273,000 and a rebuild but EQC had a different costing. In the last few weeks it has finally been confirmed a rebuild. "This has been anxiety making, and 2015 is a long time to wait so my doctor has written to them explaining my age and heart condition" says Ellenor. Ellenor wants to rebuild in Southshore. She likes the area by the sea and the Estuary.

Lynne Smith was not immediately aware of the full extent of the damage to her house. About a week later, she realised the floors were warped as well as the doors as she could feel cracks under the floor. Assessments have revealed that it is badly damaged and will have to be rebuilt. It is categorised blue/green which means that nothing can happen until after further geotechnical assessment of the land. A decision will then have to be made about what sort of foundations might be required for a rebuild. Lynne still feels she is in a safe place. "The house has stood up to something phenomenal - it is damaged and warped and still has no proper sewerage. We still can't use the toilets properly 12 months later - there are still blockages and sewage coming up in the car-park". However: "I am philosophical about the fact that I cannot change it, I feel lucky that I can still live here. Now I'm trying not to think about what will be. I don't know what will be, it could be 10 years before they make a decision about whether there can be rebuilding".

Jacqueline's property is zoned blue/green, which means a rebuild at the moment. "Piles [need] to be put in and

the house lifted. The garage has to come off. All the bricks need to come down. All depends on the insurance; if this is the most affordable. It could also mean a new house on the same land if that is cheaper or having to relocate. Hopefully I'll be able to afford a home". Jacqueline thinks she doesn't need as big a house as the one she has now, so hopefully she will be able to afford a house. "It is all unknown, and it is all about waiting to see what happens".

Jenny Harris is also living in limbo and wants everything to be finalised with EQC so she can move on. Like many others in Christchurch, she is facing the prospect of losing major equity in her property:

The reason we wait and we don't go [is] because [of] the equity we have in the house. So you know if it was a choice I would take the payout for the house [and] the payout for the land and leave Christchurch. That is not even going to be on the table for people outside the red zone. Even my land, which is blue/green TC3, we will not be paid out for the land, if it is not able to be fixed. We will get a payment and then we have to go and talk to our insurance company who don't insure the land of course! So we could well end up with a bit of land that can't be built on, that we still have to pay rates for and no way forward without huge loss.

Belinda Grant's family are in their fourth temporary home in six months. They have received confirmation that their home is unliveable, and the insurance company are paying their rental. Their land is zoned blue/green and they still do not know if the house is to be repaired or rebuilt. They still pay the mortgage and rates.

Issues around repair

Caroline lived out a town for a period but returned to Christchurch to oversee her house repairs. She received conflicting advice from EQC and her insurer over whether the house was safe to live in. "I was so confused, but then the insurer agreed it was not safe".

Since the quakes Caroline has stayed in fifteen different places. Her negotiations with the insurers and EQC and Fletchers have been frustrating with wildly differing estimates of the extent of the damage to her New Brighton home. "I am disgusted with the EQC; they would drive you up the twist... I went to see a lawyer to try and get some sense as I was told it was under cap... Three years later I have just received notice that I am over cap ... waiting for a decision has been awful". As soon as Caroline was told she was over the \$100,000 cap for repairs, her mood lifted, and she felt she could make plans. Currently she is waiting for AA Insurance to advise her of her options.

Violet, her husband and her young children have also lived in several houses. Her family lived in one house for two years, but had to move out as it was being repaired. They have found another property to rent, and have been assured that they can stay until their own place in Lyttelton is repaired, although there is likely to be a rent increase.

Nellie has now organised all her official papers so that when she has to deal with Work and Income, Inland Revenue or other agencies she is properly prepared. The rent on her property in Waltham has not been lowered, despite the state of disrepair, and there have been no EQC repairs done. The house is in a "mess... I have let it go... there is so much to do there... there are so many problems with it... Most of the time, we try to get out of the house. We don't like being there". Once the children go to school, Nellie leaves and goes to the Waltham Community Cottage.

Gina King says that the people of Canterbury have had to deal with being told one thing when the other thing is true. Gina explained that, while her mother's house (where she lives) has been fixed, it still has numerous problems:

I am going through the ombudsman. Since it has been fixed I have toxic black mould growing up in my room and in my daughter's room... we have to bear the cost... Our back wall needs replacing. It will cost a bomb. The earthquake made the bath unsteady, so water has been slopping on the floor, and that now needs replacing....

There were many quality problems with the repairs to the house. Gina was told the repairs only included one coat of paint and a choice of 8 wallpapers, all of them very cheap. The water pressure in the house, which was quite good, is now 'stuffed'. EQC sent a person to look at these issues three months ago. It turned out he was an interior designer. Gina "asked him why has my door moved, the wall moved, why are there gaps, why still cracks... he couldn't answer. In the end ... they are not going to do anything."

So Gina is now beginning to go through an appeals process to get the house properly fixed. She has some advice for others: "If you're fighting EQC - and we learned this the hard way - you've got to have a paper trail, and photographic evidence. Don't let them walk all over you".

Dealing with insurance companies

Jenny May is currently living in limbo and wants everything to be finalised with EQC so she can move on. But without this, nothing can happen. Jenny, like many others in Christchurch, is facing the prospect of losing major equity from her property: "The reason we wait and we don't go [is] because [of] the equity we have in the house. So you know if it was a choice I would take the payout for the house [and] the payout for the land and leave Christchurch. That is not even going to be on the table for people outside the red zone. Even my land, which is blue/green TC3, we will not be paid out for the land, if it is not able to be fixed. We will get a payment and then we have to go and talk to our insurance company who don't insure the land of course! So we could well end up with a bit of land that can't be built on, that we still have to pay rates for and no way forward without huge loss. If you remember Gerry Brownlee, before Christmas, said 'no one will lose equity' [huge pause]. It's all lies. We are going to lose equity [and] major amounts".

Mary Hobbs felt that one of the greatest tragedies in the aftermath is the insurance companies who have left people on hold for so long. Mary knew of one couple whose property was destroyed in September and were due to be paid

on 22/2/11. The earthquake happened and the people were then told that the insurance company would have to come back and re-check the house. "“Were they expecting it to improve after 22/2?’ the stressed owner exclaimed”.

Mary thinks that insurance corporations are unnecessarily increasing the stress on residents, by delaying the pay-outs. "People have paid these companies for years in good faith. They expect the insurance companies to honour their obligations promptly." Another couple she knows had their house destroyed in September 2010 and the man's wife had just had one of three operations for an aneurysm. "This couple are living on a boat because they have still not been paid out. He is a fire-fighter. He still goes to work each day. These companies should not get away with this sort of malpractice. People should be paid out immediately. It's possibly a balancing act for the government as they don't want the insurance companies to pull out altogether."

Melissa Parsons notes that her cousin on the hill has her own frustrating story of receiving conflicting reports from the various parties involved in their rebuild. At the time of writing, they have not received a payout, nor have any repairs started. The one year of accommodation cover in their insurance policy has run out, leaving them paying both rent and a mortgage on an unliveable house. They are by no means alone in this predicament. But even for those on 'safe' TC1 land, real estate transactions are now complicated by the transfer of insurance and EQC claim.

Annikie has also had huge hassles with the insurance company. She has wasted many hours trying to work out the inventory at the Women's Centre as the insurance company told her conflicting things. One woman said Annike needed receipts for all the things in the Manchester Street premises, not realising that the receipts were lost now that the building was gone. Eventually, after Annike spent three days compiling a 3-inch thick file of invoices and receipts, the insurance suddenly paid the Women's Centre out three days later! Annike strongly doubts that the insurance company went through the file. However, there was also huge generosity shown to the Women's Centre. People sent

books, vouchers and money. And the centre received grants from various trusts and Recovery funds.

Violet says that dealing with an insurance company has not been easy. Firstly the insurance company lost their contents claim and denied it. It took until 2012 to be paid out for their contents, and they were able to replace a few things. At the moment, there is a "squabble going on over the damage to the house". The insurance assessor has "been very judgemental. It is as if he thinks that our house was a dump before we moved in and that we did not take care of it". Violet's partner has had to do a lot of work to make it possible to go into the house. All the carpet was so wet that black mould was growing under it and it was hard to breathe inside. He and a neighbour have removed the carpet.

They have had many meetings with the insurance assessors, but they do not feel they have "come a long way, the scope of works has been ongoing for three years, and nothing is concrete yet". They have been told it will cost more than half a million dollars to repair it, as the whole house will have to be lifted, and there is debris and sink holes all over the section to deal with. At one stage, it was intimated it might be a rebuild, but now they are being told that they "could not afford the house if it was a rebuild... even though it would cost less than the \$635,000 to repair". They have been told that they "should not expect betterment".

Violet became very angry when the assessor told her "you are so lucky you will have a nice new house" and "I felt like slapping him because there was nothing wrong with our house before the quake, it was a beautiful house".

Annie's family was still living in their damaged house at the time of the June quakes. By this stage, they were trying to get their insurance company to pay out for the value of their house, so they could move on. But their dealings with their insurance company were to prove difficult and frustrating. It is clear that Annie believes that because she was not a fluent English speaker, the insurance company manager avoided her, always being "unavailable" when she phoned and not responding to inquiries. "During that time, (the) insurance company was not good ... It was hard ... I tried to

contact insurance company: no answer... no answer. Actually my house is in (un)inhabitable condition, they knew, because they assessed my house and they saw (the) damp in (the) floor. However, they insisted: Your house is habitable".

It was only when someone in an official capacity tasked with housing issues visited the house, saw the family's plight and intervened on their behalf that the insurance company began to respond.

One day I received the phone call from her, offering to help, so I accepted her help and she visited me and then she was acting on my behalf, and then she rang to my insurance company and then the insurance company's attitude a little bit changed.... When I ring to my insurance company, my manager avoided my phone call. However, the coordinator rang to them. After that, whenever I called to my manager, immediately he received my phone call.

However, by this time, Annie had decided that rather than trying to negotiate a settlement on their house with the insurance company, she would prefer to take the Government's package, even if it meant a financial loss. "I don't want to argue with my insurance company. I felt kind of disadvantaged with my lack of English skills, so my family decided the easy option ... we accept (the) Government's offer, Option 1". "I don't have the confidence with the language, so I gave up".

Rosie Laing sees herself as a resilient person, but expresses frustration in dealing with what she terms "compassionless bureaucracy" and "inconsistency and untruthfulness and manipulation by the likes of insurance companies". She likens it to "climbing a sandhill - you can see the top and then suddenly you are back at the bottom again, and we have done that so often that hoping actually feels like a dangerous activity. But then what do you do when you don't have hope?"

Rosie has "decided to get off the whole earthquake merry-go-round". She feels they have both "had enough" and need to find somewhere to settle again. They had held out for a rebuild of "our dream and we were quite excited

about it as we had had a funny old house and rebuilding a proper house with proper insulation and double-glazing, built-for-purpose and the way we wanted it, was pretty attractive". About eight weeks ago Rosie learned that the retaining wall above the house, which holds up the road, is in a scheme of works that is over five years away, therefore it was likely that a rebuild on the site of her house would be three or four years away. She felt they had been through so much; "defeated hope and changed parameters and shifting goalposts and chaos and the same things that so many people have been in."

Rosie feels frustrated with the insurance company "who started out being extremely helpful and generous... changed a lot of the things they were going to do for us; the timelines changed, what was available changed, the amount of help changed; it was just so many things, 'Don't worry about this, we will sort this' to 'Oh no, we are not going to do this, we are not going to do anything with that. It is now your problem. You go back and sort it with EQC'".

The EQC

Right from the beginning, Jacqueline always had good experiences with the EQC people. Everyone got back to her and she was given all the financial help she needed. Insurance came and photographed the changes in the house after the quakes. EQC told her repairs would cost over \$100,000. She has a "wee notebook and notes down who she contacted and when and what for". "When the money arrived from EQC, I couldn't work it out as it was more than \$100,000 but I rung someone at EQC and she explained to me what it was for. They have been really lovely. People came and braced the house and they were lovely".

Jacqueline rang the builder, who did the bracing before and told him she had more cracks after February. He needed to get permission to fix these; it just so happened his supervisor was in the district and he was able to come and check on the place and said everything was OK. Jacqueline feels reassured that she is safe.

Ruth Todd had a difficult time with EQC in the months after February 2011. Every time she rang she talked to someone different so there was no continuity. Nothing seemed to be happening: "I understood that you had to be patient but I couldn't get any answers". EQC then boarded up the house even when it was obvious the house couldn't be repaired. Kate, who was helping Ruth with the claim, eventually got cross and rang up EQC saying "You realize my mother could be dead before you make any decisions. She's nearly 80 for goodness sake". In about October, AMI took over the negotiations. It was a relief for Ruth to talk to a "real person" about options. Ruth is still waiting for her "contents claim which is quite huge". She has had to spend her own money to replace basic household items and would prefer the money to "be in my bank getting interest".

But deciding what to do with her insurance payout for her house has been difficult for Ruth. She was given the choice of rebuilding, taking \$600,000 and buying something else, or taking some money and keeping the section. Ruth's family were "keen for me to get out of there, to get off the hill". Ruth did look around for several weekends at open homes, but couldn't find anything that suited her. She also found it frustrating how "you couldn't buy something for \$500,000 and use the other \$100,000... to bring that up to a reasonable standard."

Susan Allen said that EQC has been a pain. They were meant to actually sign off on severely damaged houses. Once they did that, you could talk to your insurance company and then move on. But EQC just didn't come. They actually sent out a publication saying that they had been around to all of the severely damaged houses and everything was fine, but it wasn't. It was frustrating to hear that they had gone to other people's houses and yet their house needed only twenty minutes of inspection time. But EQC didn't visit the house to see how severely damaged and unliveable it was. It was very frustrating dealing with them and over time tolerance wears thin. In the end Susan's husband went down to their hub in South City and said "come and have a look at our house." And then they did.

After February, Belinda Grant rang EQC repeatedly, but three to four months passed before EQC and the insurance company gave any indication as to whether their home was a repair, a rebuild, or in the yet to be determined red-zone. Initially Fletcher Construction fixed the doors so they would open and close followed by three drain repairs, but the drains were so severely damaged under the house that they were not financially feasible to repair.

Commenting on her status, Letitia Meadows said: "Although I am one of the 'lucky ones', it has taken a long time to feel 'normal' and safe post-quake. My partner and I are living in the same house which thankfully is relatively unscathed. We have been advised by EQC that repairs are likely to be completed by 2014. We are zoned green and seven houses away is a large red zone area around Avonside/Dallington. We hope to sell the house and are unsure whether we want to stay in Christchurch".

Rebecca Gordon had had a lot of difficulty with EQC. Rebecca was in contact with them. What they heard one day from an official was not necessarily what they were told later by someone else. The result has been utter frustration. Their insurance company has been more helpful and is currently working on their behalf to access correct information. This has given them new hope.

Criticism of EQC

Nicki has had many interim problems dealing with EQC. She cites problems with sewage since February 2011 which were only satisfactorily resolved in 2013. The lights in her house have been flickering and working intermittently since February 2011. An urgent request was put in and nothing happened. She received a payout for the September quake, and used it to get some damaged windows fixed. The windows were then damaged again in February. Now she has just received a letter from EQC requesting that she provide proof that the September 2011 payout work was done or return the money (\$4000) paid out, before EQC will go ahead

to start the current repairs. Nicki has no receipts for work done and does not have \$4000.

Nicki is very critical of EQC. She believes that their claims systems and processes are open to graft and corruption, "people who had connections or money were having extra repair work done, and people were claiming damage as earthquake damage that was obviously not earthquake related". She says she has seen examples of this kind of behaviour in her work as a cleaner.

She also believed that a large amount of time and money was being wasted on the assessment processes, and describes her own experience as an example:

I thought, yeah, they're here, they're big guys you know and for about half an hour I sat in here waiting, waiting, waiting, and they finally came in and they walked round like they've as much time in the world and I think, tick, tick, tick, you know, money, money, money. There's no structure, they're not tough on these people, but they're tough on the people who need the work done... I see the dollars ticking up... Nobody's keeping a check on these people. They're getting paid ridiculous hourly rates. It doesn't sit right with me"

Karen has found the uncertainty in dealing with EQC and her insurance company to be the main issue. Karen has spent many hours on the phone with EQC "pushing for what I believe is right. We do not care who fixes our house, we just want it done properly".

There are ongoing problems with her house in New Brighton and with EQC and a lot of uncertainty. Her partner would like to leave Christchurch, however Karen does not want to. The house has been put into TC 3 Category 9. This is an indication of the sort of foundations that will be needed. In late 2013 she said: "It is getting too close to Christmas to stress about all this". All of the house issues have been a problem for Karen as she has been dealing with them as her partner, Peter, has had his own work issues to sort out as a result of fewer employees since the quakes. Recently EQC

have settled on the over cap payment for the house. However, there is a hold up with the land decision.

There have been other frustrations for Karen and her family. At one stage they were told by EQC that they could not replace their oven that was damaged in the quake until Fletchers had seen it. They went out and bought a new oven with their own money, "What were we meant to do? Not cook?"

Emily Adcock is living in a house she owns in New Brighton and feels that EQC has been rather inconsistent with the information it has provided, but she has tried to keep them informed about her movements. The next stage could be a cash settlement, as the damage to her little house has been estimated as under the \$15,000 threshold. Fortunately she has the support of a builder friend to help her through this assessment process.

Jacinta, another New Brighton resident, is reasonably content to let EQC take its time, but a leak in the roof might force her to take action. She wants to rebuild on her damaged section and stay in the area, as she feels it is very safe and she has friends there. She is hoping for action soon. She received a call from the Christchurch City Council research unit and they asked what would improve her life. She answered "a call from EQC would make it better" - that would make the biggest change in her life.

Under attack: Rana's story

Prior to the earthquakes, Rana was a City Council employee in the Tuam Street car park and living in rental accommodation. She has lost her job, her home, her income and, she fears, her reputation. In September 2011 Rana answered a call from an EQC assessor who wished to see her. She relayed her story about her belongings being sold by those managing the rental property which she had been forced to leave. As a result, she was investigated by staff from Corporate Risk:

I had to get a signed declaration from a Justice of the Peace stating that what I had told the agencies

was true. Not once has my story changed as I was there but EQC, JR (property company) and Vero have all come back with different statements and sequence of events. I am now being told I abandoned everything. Vero have more or less stated I have stolen everything and according to Vero, JR and EQC plus the Corporate Risk investigator I am unstable. If I am unstable it is with all that I have been through - what they have created.

She found out she was considered unstable via a Privacy Act request she made to see her documentation. Ironically her EQC assessor was the subject of a media driven enquiry as to her suitability as an employee, as a member of a family group from Hamilton questionably employed by EQC.

As a Christchurch City Council staff member, Rana continued to be paid until April 2011 when work resumed, albeit a different duty. After the quake the children became stressed which in turn created distress for Rana. This necessitated her taking sick leave until May 2011. "It was so hard the children seeing me crying but what brought me to my senses was the Japanese earthquake. I had to pull myself together". Rana initially started back at work four hours a day but lost her job in September 2011.

I am actually emotionally wrought after all this given the blatant lies that all these companies have stated. I cry all the time, have attended counselling, started all over again setting up home and have financial stress. I still have to pay insurance for \$50,000 worth of contents I no longer have. I keep trying to change insurance companies but keep getting knocked back as I am close to the centre of town. How do they work that out? I am in the process of taking JR to the Tenancy Tribunal, with the assistance of the Community Law Office, but really feel it is a waste of time.

Rana did what she was ordered to do and that was not to go into her rented home at Bexley Road, even though many others did go in. What was she left with? "I have not been

able to go out to work as I am 'unstable' which may be true now but that is for the mere fact that what EQC, Vero, JR and Corporate Risk have done and said about me".

Rana believes other people are getting on with their lives but she is in a bind. "I feel there is little progress with everything on the back burner and no one cares about us any more although there are others worse off. I am crying, have weight gain and hot flushes. What I miss the most is my (former) lifestyle and holidays".

Moving on

A number of things stand out from the insurance stories. The first is unevenness. There were winners, losers and some who were non-starters at the time of interview in terms of property location, value and settlement. The second theme is the way that many families had to constantly fight to have their reality validated. Nippy's story, as a single mother living in a small house, albeit her own house, in Aranui, shows how hard it was for some people to be heard. We suggest that there are almost certainly both class and gender elements operating here, although as this was not a comparative study, it is not possible to tell. Finally, the institutions failed any tests of consistency and communication they were set by our participants. As the Ombudsman's report on EQC in 2013 made clear, this was an organisation that was not up to the task.

“Being strong for the children”

When each of the major quakes struck, the first thought of many women was for the children, whether they were babies, primary school children, teenagers, adult children or grandchildren. Sometimes their children were with them, often they were at school or preschool. What had happened to them? Were they safe? Were they being cared for? How soon could you get to them?

Immediate responses

Some mothers were in the city when the 22 February quake struck, caring the injured, while they desperately wanted to know that their children were safe. Genevieve Togiaso, a New Zealand born Samoan nurse and practice manager of the Pacific Trust Clinic, was part of the informal response team in Latimer Square. But her thoughts were with her three sons. “My mind was thinking... as much as I knew how devastating and how hard things were, my heart of hearts was ‘where’s my babies?’ Genevieve told the other staff at the centre to go to their children. “And for me, it was like ‘I want to go too’. But I knew that I had to stay there and help because we were seeing people around us that were dying... in my mind I just gave it to God and said, ‘OK Lord, if this is where you want me I will focus, I will do this and then when I’m finished I will go home’. Fortunately other family members cared for her children.

Other women were with their babies. Clare was at home in Bromley with a six month old baby and a toddler on 22 February 2011. Just like Genevieve, her first thoughts were for her children. She was in the toilet and was in the process of changing her sanitary pad, when the quake hit. She first thought it was a small aftershock, but then she started to get thrown from side to side. It was very noisy and “I screamed, and then I thought I shouldn’t scream because of the girls. I couldn’t stand, I couldn’t move, the lid of cistern flew off and I was covered with toilet water. I pulled up my pants - that was the least of my worries – I had to get to my girls”.

Clare found her two year old sitting in a “catatonic state” on a chair in the trashed living room surrounded by broken furniture and fixtures and objects that had crashed from the walls – it felt like “a miracle” that she was OK. Then she ran to get her baby. Clare forced open the bedroom door. The cot had moved across it. Plastic bags and bedding had fallen on her baby. She was velcroed in to the cot to prevent cot death, which had stopped her being thrown around. “So my girls were OK. I’m OK. Their room was OK”. An elderly neighbour called in and Clare remembers standing holding her daughter and talking with him through a non-existent window. “All I could think about was – ‘my pants aren’t done up. I’m not in a fit state to receive visitors’. But I said, “Yes, we’re fine.”

Trapped in a room in their Housing New Zealand home in Aranui with a door that did not open while the house shook and everything was falling and breaking in the living room, Emily was very scared, but she had to be strong for her granddaughter. “I didn’t want her to think I was going to be weak... so I pulled myself together and I said, ‘Just hang on to me, we’re going to be alright!’” .

It was not only those with young children whose thoughts went to their sons or daughters. Irene Cleary’s first thought after the February quake struck was how to get from Addington to her adult daughter with special mental health needs who was at the Hohepa Centre in Barrington Street. After checking on an elderly neighbour, she and her teenage son, who had a half-day home from school, leapt into the car, but they encountered gridlocked traffic on Moorhouse Avenue and it was a long time before they reached the Hohepa Centre where everyone was calm and her daughter was waiting for her to arrive. The trip home, normally about ten minutes, took over an hour.

Family life after the quake

For many people with children, the period after each major quake was a very difficult time, particularly after the February quake. Adele Kelly, a sole parent with three children in a

Housing New Zealand home in Avonside, considered leaving Christchurch after 22 February and going to stay elsewhere. Jack, her eldest son, went to Timaru to stay with her sister's family for a week. Adele and the boys went to stay for a while with a friend in Woolston who had electricity. It was not an easy time, as her friend had three children, and one of her friends had died in the CTV building. Adele had also lost a friend in the CTV building, although she did not find out about this for a month or so afterwards. It was very upsetting. Adele thought about what it would have been like for her friend's young daughter, whose mum never came to get her from school.

Adele did not take the children near town as she felt there was enough media coverage for them to take in. "It is traumatic enough for an adult to deal with this, hearing about the teenage boy who died on the bus and the little kiddies... This was in our own city... It was a lot of people to die... It could have happened to one of us if we happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time".

Gina King, who moved from Waltham into her mother's garage in Bromley after the 22 February quake with her partner and her children, noticed lots of overcrowding in that area after the quakes. "I had foster kids here - you just had to deal with the crowding really. The lady across road had 20 people staying with her, with no water, no power." Gina has four children, an older son who has severe Attention Deficient and Hyperactivity Disorder, a younger son with multiple health problems and two daughters, one in high school and another at primary school. She has also needed to support her mother who is emotionally frail during the post-earthquake period.

The major focus for Kristy Constable-Brown, who lives with her partner and three children in a rental home in Woolston, was on how her children were coping. Her sleep has been very disrupted. "I am so tired by 4pm, I am dead on my feet each day... but still I have got to run around after the children's sport". Her daughter still comes into her bed every night for a hug and then goes back to her own room. Her son said he would never sleep in a bunk again. They have given

their bunks away, and he now has “a cool double bed”. Every day the family makes a point of knowing where each other is and discuss a plan should they need to get to each other quickly. All the children slept in the family bed for months after the quakes. Kristy says, “that is what parents are for!” She slept on a camp stretcher to allow room for everyone in the family bed and, when she moved the children back into their own beds, she slept with them for the first few nights to get them settled.

Some mothers became more determined after the quakes to do what they could to improve the lives of their children. With her youngest child at pre-school, June Tiopira, a sole parent with three children in Aranui, was keen to get some work to provide extra income for the family. At the time of the interview in late 2013, she was sorting out her CV with the help of Work and Income. “We just need extra money really instead of having to scrape on what we have which just buys our food and power”. All of her children are at school or preschool now from nine until 3 p.m. This gives June “time to make a little extra cash”.

June’s ideal job is to work at the hospital taking food around to people. She had previously worked for OCS Limited (a commercial cleaning company), cleaning wards and has done some factory work too; but wants to try something different. She wants to work in the hospital delivering food to patients because she wants to do “something that would cheer up someone and just socially talking to people as well. I think I would really enjoy that”.

In the long term, she would like to go to Australia. She has been there before but she wants to take the kids there and “take them to Water World”. She hopes to save money after getting a job. “A goal would be to get over there and get some passports going – that’s why we need the money... I’d love to live over there. I’ve been there a few times – my kids haven’t – but we’ve got family there as well.”

Family/whanau connections have often become more important since the quakes and distance from extended family is more acutely felt. Josephine was initially quite isolated from family when she first came to Christchurch and

lived as a solo parent in Aranui with her two sons. "Life wasn't the best for me at the time, I was all alone, I didn't have any support for me and my two sons". She now has five children and, since those early years when she felt very alone, she has built up contact with relatives in Christchurch and her parents in the North Island who have met her children, but do not see them often. Josephine thinks it is difficult for her children "who never had a nana and koro... I guess they are still trying to get to know them".

Some women are just happy that they did not lose family members in the quakes.

Christine has learned to appreciate each day as it comes. She retains a sense of gratitude that, although their lives were majorly disrupted by the quakes, they did not lose a family member on 22 February 2011, and had each other throughout it all. She notices herself saying often, "Look, it is what it is." She recognises that we are just living in a time when the earth's crusts are shifting, and that this affects the whole of New Zealand, including some of her family members in the small Marlborough settlement of Seddon and who experienced 6.5 magnitude quakes in July and August 2013.

Family difficulties

Some families encountered particular challenges over the time of the quakes. The quakes were just one of many things they had to deal with over the last three years.

Just before the September earthquakes, Gina's stepdad was sent to prison for paedophilia, and the family was still dealing with the aftermath of that when the earthquakes hit. With one severely autistic son, another son with major health problems, and a mother with a mental health issues, Gina said:

I've been fighting all my life. The mental health people, if I'm not fighting them I'm fighting the Education Department. If I'm not fighting them it's CYFS.... It's an ongoing battle. My mum is very

lucky because who would do this for her if I was not here?

The earthquakes have made all Gina's struggles more complicated, especially in relation to dealing with the Earthquake Commission regarding her mother's house. She now thinks her priorities have changed. Her focus is on her family and loved ones, whereas before it was on her house and car.

Not only did the February quake damage Mary Hamilton's property at Shire Lane, it proved to be difficult for Mary at a personal level as well. "I had been seeing a person who lived in Christchurch. They actually got really hurt in the CBD. He was actually lying by dead bodies for hours. We lost contact for about a week and I didn't find out that he had been in hospital until after he got out, and made contact with me. Yeah, yeah, it was hard".

In early October 2012, Christine's husband who had Parkinson's disease, became very ill with double pneumonia and a urinary tract infection, and was taken into hospital again. They had lost their Bromley home in the 22 February quake and had recently moved into their new home in South Brighton, so it hadn't really become their "home" yet. Sadly, he never came back to it, as he was so unwell that he needed to go into rehabilitation at Princess Margaret Hospital and in December 2012 he was transferred back to Christchurch Public Hospital for a procedure to drain fluid from his lungs. They took Christmas to him on the afternoon of the 25th December, as he did not have the strength or energy to come home even for a day. They celebrated as much as they could the fact that he was still with them.

His health deteriorated even further, and "he passed on to heaven on February 15th 2013". Christine speculates that the stress of the last two years must surely have exacerbated his health conditions and hastened his death.

Violet, her partner and her two children had to move out of their Lyttelton home because it was so damaged, but finding somewhere to rent in Christchurch, was very difficult. Eventually they got a cottage in Duvauchelles on Banks Peninsular. Violet found this a very trying time; it was

very testing of her relationship with her partner. He had a lot of anger and that was difficult to live with and the children were stressed. Then they were offered a home in Cashmere as a house sit. "It had all its chattels in it, the people had just left everything as is". This proved to be a very good move and they settled well into the house. But the stress of the moves and the uncertainty about their Lyttelton home began to affect the family. Violet had panic attacks, and her children have both had eczema. Violet recalls starting to have a glass of bourbon in the evenings, "just one, but I had to have the one drink - that became our routine. We would come home from work and got into a hibernating mode. After the kids were in bed, we would sit on the porch and talk about our worries".

The quakes also disrupted their plans to get married. The Harbour Light Café in Lyttelton where Violet and her partner planned to marry has been demolished, and they cannot think about a wedding and all it entails at the moment. Paying rates, a mortgage and rent "is crippling us". The uncertainty has been difficult. "It has been so long since we could plan for the future, we are still in limbo, the hardest thing is we can't plan, we have to pay our mortgage, can't do any of the things we were planning on doing, we are just waiting". Violet stresses that she is not ungrateful and wants to be positive...." I can't afford to let myself get down or angry".

Emily Adcock's relationship with her partner was tested in the period after the quake, and they were having financial difficulties. They went to live in Auckland, but things did not work out and she decided to move back to her house in South Brighton with her two children. She was pregnant with a new baby at the time. Living on the DPB is not easy, but they are now living in their own house rather than renting, and with good management they have not "fallen into a hole". There are times when Emily wishes she did not have to be so frugal, but she knows she has the strength to keep her family together and provide for them. "The Brighton beach has been a great rock to me. I have been able to go there, have a good stomp or just do some

deep breathing. Plus it brings back many happy childhood memories for me".

Julia's partner had become increasingly controlling and abusive. "It was not until after the earthquake that I did acknowledge what he was really like... and he has not changed". Julia separated from her partner and then returned to the relationship for a time in 2012, but he "quit after the money ran out and now we are in the middle of a custody battle". Julia feels stronger and is able to see the "cycle" she got into in her relationship. She found Housing New Zealand were really helpful in trying to get her a new home to live in. They worked in with Child and Youth Protection Services as it was important that her partner did not know where she was living. "We were actually in hiding from my partner".

Her son has Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and, much as she loves him, she finds parenting him is difficult. In addition to this, her eldest daughter has dyspraxia and is being treated by a dietician because she is under weight. Her other daughter seems to have come through their family challenges and the quakes really well, and Julia sent her to live with her father for a while. But then her daughter experienced verbal abuse from her father and Julia uplifted her from that situation. This is the focus of the current custody dispute. Julia is often depressed, but she wants her children to have a positive outlook and to take any further earthquakes in their stride.

People with elderly parents have seen their health needs increase, and many have lost older parents since the earthquakes. One person noted that her elderly mother had become noticeably frailer and now needed a stick to get around. Some children, too, have suffered from anxiety and especially nightmares.

Sometimes mothers relied heavily on their teenage children to care for other children in the family after the quakes. When she was interviewed in later 2013, Nellie Hunt's teenage daughter, Mahara, was at Te Kaupapa Whakaora in Papanui High where she was taking an alternative education course. The younger children were at Wharenuī Primary School and lived most of the week with

Nellie's cousin as Nellie's rental house is so badly damaged that it is not suitable for the children.

Mahara was not only travelling some distance to school, but also assuming a lot of responsibility for the younger children while they stayed at Nellie's cousin's home. Nellie paid for her children's food and gave any extra money to her cousin for the children. She was very grateful to her cousin, but cousin was expecting a new baby and she knew that her children could not continue to stay there. She visited them regularly and helped with the meals and bedtime, but Mahara was the one who had responsibility when Nellie was not there.

Effects on children

Through her work with Pacific Trust Health Clinic, Seulata has noticed that there was a lot of post-traumatic stress, particularly amongst children. "We found out that a lot of children had been affected.... There was a lot of uncertainty. And with the children it frightened them a lot, to the point where I've seen children vomiting when an aftershock hit". On the other hand, Seulata says that in some families, it was the adults instead of the children who panicked. Many Pacific families moved away from Christchurch because they could not cope.

Nippy's daughter has become insecure since the earthquakes. "I just have to be there for her, until she gets more secure. But how long that will take I don't know. She just wants to know that I can be down at the school in ten minutes. 'What are you doing today, how far are you going to be?'". Nippy's daughter sleep in the lounge with her mother each night.

Her mother says she just has to accept that there is "not much you can do about it. I talk to her. She's just scared, basically". On the day Nippy was interviewed for the Women's Voices project, her daughter was home sick from school. When Nippy took the interviewer outside to show her the house damage, the daughter followed them out – she will not even stay in the house by herself.

Recently, however, Work and Income has been pressuring Nippy to take on part time work, in line with recent legislative changes. At this point Nippy feels that her daughter needs her to be available at all times, as her only security lies in knowing that Nippy is always available. In short, there is a tension between her benefit obligations and her parenting role.

Belinda Grant's daughter, Lily, who was 8 when Belinda was interviewed in April 2012, was badly affected by the ongoing quakes, but a counsellor at the Harakeke Centre proved to be invaluable. She helped with strategies in response to Lily's nightly wakefulness, which developed after the September 2010 quakes and her fears about being alone. Lily spent a lot of time sleeping in her parents' bed. At the time of the interview, a second bed had been placed in Lily's room in the hope she would remain in her own bed and Belinda or John would move into her room to sleep with her when she wakes. "It does not always work and is a constant battle with every natural remedy tried from rescue remedy, cherry ripe, to copious amounts of lavender on the pillow and in their bath". Belinda's son, on the other hand, "is a fabulous sleeper only waking if he is hungry!"

Lily was gradually getting better. Belinda says that, "I can slowly see little achievements BUT in the back of my mind I always have this reminder we might have another one and [that] will set us right back again, which is what happened in December 2011. It like a roller coaster ride really". But Belinda emphatically states, "We will get there! ... We are extremely lucky now as we have this rental (the family's fifth in less than 12 months) with a gate directly through to Westburn School which adds a sense of security for me that I am so close and I am sure makes Lily is more at ease. Lily can see the house from across the fields at school".

Lily was at St Paul's School that was sharing facilities with Catholic Cathedral College on the corner of Moorhouse Avenue and Barbadoes Street at the time of the February 2011 quake. She told Belinda that there "was lots of smoke Mum", when parts of the Basilica fell to ground in the quake.

A few of Estelle Laugesen's younger grandchildren "were really distressed; they found it very, very difficult and were terrified every time there was another aftershock, you know, they ran screaming looking for comfort". Most of Estelle's grandchildren are grown up and have children of their own, which makes Estelle a great-grandmother to thirteen children. Estelle's two youngest grandchildren are younger "than my first great-grandchildren and they were the ones who were more upset".

Christine has noticed that her granddaughter, who was at day-care at the time of the quake, was quite traumatised by it. She does not like being in a room where the door is shut and she always leaves the toilet door open. Her granddaughter needed to have a couple of sessions with a child psychologist after she developed some behaviours that were not normal for her. Christine thinks the effects will be around for a while, in spite of constant reassurances that the quakes are over. The moment a door bangs or a truck hits a pot hole; everyone is back on "meerkat alert"!

One of Kristy's sons was at Pioneer Stadium taking swimming lessons with his class at the time of the June 2011 earthquake. Since then, he has become very frightened of water, even showers were an issue, and he would not swim at the beach. He is still very clingy with Kristy and likes to know where she is and what time she is collecting him from school. A year later, he is at a new intermediate school and has started to swim in the pool again with encouragement from his teachers. Kristy said: "I feel very responsible for the family knowing that we have made the decision to stay living in Christchurch..."

Adele Kelly's younger two boys, and her eldest, were not too traumatised by the quakes. However her other son, who had "been quite nervy" since a house fire, remained upset after the quakes. He did not sleep well, and was quite anxious even with trucks passing by on the road. Adele tried to screen him from hearing the local news or looking at the internet. But this was difficult with adults and other school children, who would talk about "another big quake, which would feed into his anxiety". Adele says "I try to make the

children grateful for what we have. If little things trouble them, I say to them, 'do you remember when we did not have power or water?' And 'we are alive!'. Adele is glad that she lives in New Zealand - "it is a blessed country".

Nellie's daughter, Mahara (who was present when Nellie was interviewed) commented that many young people in her neighbourhood went off the rails a bit after the 22 February quake:

Before the earthquake we were all fine - we all went back to our own houses, but after the quake we started drifting, we all fell apart, kids would use red stickered houses to meet up in. There was one house in Ferry Road with a sleep out on it where the kids would gather.

After the quakes, Mahara started staying away from home. "It was quite bad for a while there". She would spend time with other teenagers in the streets of Linwood. Sometimes Nellie would go and get her back, as well as the other teenagers, and make them stay with her as she did not like them drifting around homeless. "I was taking care of all her mates in the abandoned houses... I knew there would be adults staying there as well. I knew if adults got their hands on those kids it would not be good... There were 12 and 13 year olds at risk. I made them come back here. I fed them".

Julia's young son had just got out of day nappies, but after the quake he "kept peeing himself and pooing himself. It put him right back, I think it was fright". Fortunately Julia could do their washing at her friend's house, where they lived for six weeks after the February quake. However, her son has since had further problems. He is currently receiving treatment at Whakatata House. A car is essential for getting him to the counselling centre as well as to the medical centre. He is a handful and, because of his problems, other people do not like to offer to have him to play. He is an "escape artist". Julia has to keep her front door locked, or else he will take off. He has recently started staying at school full time. At the moment he is under a psychologist, and a social worker and speech therapist also work with him.

Karen's daughter has had "wicked anxiety issues" and was diagnosed with earthquake anxiety by disassociation. For months she had a bed made up in Karen's room in their New Brighton home. She became fearful of strong winds and rain. The Australian floods upset her and she would believe that any flooding in Christchurch would lead to a disaster. They have had major flooding in the area. The high tide can flood their street twice a day, despite Christchurch City Council efforts to repair the roads. Karen has to make sure there are always gumboots in the car just in case.

"We have to turn power points off at the wall or else she worries we could have a fire". Around the time when Auckland had a small tornado, the wind picked up in New Brighton and Karen had to collect her daughter from school, she was "beside herself". Even now with strong wind, when the house creaks, the Karen's daughter becomes very anxious. Aftershocks unsettle her and she will go into Karen's bed for a reassuring cuddle, but she can now return to her own bedroom. Her asthma was exacerbated by the dampness of the house. With water lying under the house and the many gaps in the house, it is hard to keep their New Brighton home at an even temperature.

Central New Brighton School has put support in place for anxious children. There is a tapping technique whereby people who are anxious tap themselves on their arms by way of a distraction. "It is a calming thing". It works for some children. Karen talks about the difficulties they have had trying to work around her daughter and her anxieties. It has taken time and "she has done it in her own time. Really it has only been the last few months that she has been getting better". Her daughter spends time on her own in her bedroom now, and does not need to wear earplugs to avoid hearing the noise of road repairs.

After the September earthquake, a very pregnant Emily Adcock found that her son had become "like a little shadow to me, and needed lots of reassurance. I found this quite taxing as I was finding the pregnancy taxing enough". The baby was born early and Christmas was difficult, and her son reacted badly to the February earthquake. It was a very

emotional reunion when he and his mother could cuddle one another. "It was a very awkward group cuddle with the children crying and my friend and I trying to be brave". Emily was concerned that the messages of reassurance she and her friends had been giving after the September quakes were undermined by the continued earthquakes.

She recalls it took a long time for her son to become independent again and Emily needed to walk him to and from school. He was not the happy, bubbly, confident child he used to be. Emily was also feeling extremely tired. "I was full of grief and anger at not being able to be the new mum again that I had envisaged, plus I was lacking in energy for myself as well as for the family".

Michelle's son would not sleep in his room anymore. He didn't want to sleep far away from Michelle. She would crawl into bed and he would just be there. Michelle was also concerned about the possibility of a quake occurring when he started at Central New Brighton School in 2012. "I don't go far from home while he is still at school. I don't do the shopping or anything like that when he is at school. We go together when he is out of school. If he goes to a friend's place, I know exactly where he is and how I can get hold of him.' After what happened in Japan, Michelle knows that tsunamis can follow earthquakes and she is worried about this. "So I have to think about how to get my kids out of Brighton... It has left a really horrible feeling. I don't know if that will ever change.

Her grandchildren, who live close to her home in Aranui, are part of Emily's thinking about her future. "They've got big ideas. They want to get a good job and they want to stay at school and they want to travel - so good for them!" I say, 'Do it when you are young.' They are high achievers, but it all comes down to the parents, I think". Emily thinks that it is wonderful that "these kids are going to go somewhere... so we have to be there too. You look around here now and you think, 'what are these kids going to have, what's going to be here for them?'... If they want something then they are the only ones to go out and get it for themselves".

Katie Gilbertson also has hopes that things will be better for children, now that the earthquakes and aftershocks have stopped. She wants her children to enjoy their childhood. "It would be nice if our kids had the rest of their childhood to be kids and that they would not need to worry about earthquakes".

Family futures

What Emily most wants for her family is "a home". Emily had once thought that they could buy the Housing New Zealand house they rent in Aranui. But now it's not viable to buy - "it's out of our reach again". Knowing that the family is financially secure is important to Emily "and we have got this thing where we are getting the kids to save money. I take my hat off to my daughter. She gets involved with everything that they do... the girls play a lot of sports and it doesn't matter if it's raining, or if it's in Ashburton or somewhere, she'll take them... They do everything from boxing to rugby league, touch, volleyball anything they can play they'll do - they're not roamers...they don't go roaming around... they don't smoke either, which is good".

Emily wants to stay living in her Aranui neighbourhood, close to Wainoni Park. "I like this area, everything is so close. We've got our doctor's just around the corner; we've got transport just around the corner here... The high school is here; the intermediate school is just down here; primary schools are everywhere; the kindergarten is just around the corner... Everything is in walking distance... and the park and the library, so where else would you want to go?"

Nellie, who is currently in paid work, but living in a rental home that is damaged and damp and not suitable for her family, hopes that she will soon be able to get a Housing New Zealand house in the Waltham area. She has strong connections to the Waltham Community Cottage and wants to stay nearby. Her daughter has two more years left at high school, and in four more years Nellie will be 40 years old. She wants them to be in a better place by then. "I don't want to

be in a home I can't afford. At the time of the interview Nellie was hoping for a new start with her children in an affordable rental property, but it was taking some time to get there.

Pets

Pets were not forgotten as families evacuated their houses. One participant never found her three cats. Another lost all her fish as the tank exploded, while another saved theirs in a bucket when the tank was damaged.

Caroline, a New Brighton resident, organised for Rico, her dog, to have a few days in a kennel for a break. He had been with her right through the drama of the quakes, and, although he did not seem badly affected, Caroline felt he needed a holiday.

One of Kristy's family cats lost all its fur due to the quake stress, but she nursed it back to good health. All Julia's cats moved with her after she moved into a new home in Aranui after the quakes, but subsequently vanished. She was upset over her cats leaving. "I was quite gutted". She has since acquired a new family of cats.

Neighbours rescued Rosemary Bloxham and her elderly husband from their severely damaged home on Clifton Hill on 22 February. They lost one or their two dogs for a few days after this quake, and their cat disappeared for a month. Their daughter was up Clifton Hill about five weeks after the quake and someone who had found a cat asked if she knew who the cat might belong to. Her daughter was amazed as it was her parents' cat! The cat appeared to have had little to eat during that month. One paw had been caught under its collar and the cat had to be taken to the vet. Eventually it recovered, and Rosemary and her husband were really happy to be reunited with all their animals again.

Gina King had to go back to her Waltham rental property to get the dog and find her five cats after her family relocated to her mother's house in Bromley because of the extensive damage to her home. It took five days to find all her cats. Gina was most worried about "my pets and my

kids... I didn't care about my house". Her dog, which she describes as a "pure, manly dog" was "a sop after the earthquakes – it killed him. When we came here (to her mother's house) the first night, he spent the night under the table in the kitchen. Every time there was an aftershock – he would cry". The dog slept with the kids in one room of her mother's house. Gina and her partner slept in the hallway the first night after the February quake.

Life, stress and families

The women who told these earthquake stories lived in many different types of households: with partners or husbands; with parents in a variety of households; in nuclear families with their young children; in extended households; as sole parents; alone or with adult children, flatmates or boarders. They ranged in age from 18 to over 90 and were located all over Christchurch. One of the oldest participants had moved out of the city after the destruction of her retirement home in Christchurch. Some of the women with young children had moved several times and had children who were significantly affected by the stresses of these moves, school changes and ongoing aftershocks – each a reminder of the larger quakes.

Despite these disruptions, women cultivated their connections with others. Many had a renewed sense of the value of family relationships, including their pets. People's first concern after any major quake was for family members. Whether they lived with children or not, a core concern was for the youngest residents in the city, both immediately after the major quakes, and when the women interviewed looked towards the future. Their stories illustrate how the crises posed by natural disasters will always occur alongside other stresses in people's lives – the demands of children with special needs, the illness and death of long term partners, domestic violence, the insecurities of life on benefits as well as the inevitable changes in relationships with intimate partners. However, living in damaged homes in a damaged city intensifies the impact of these challenges.

“There was no blueprint to work from” - schools and churches

Schools, preschools and disruptions to education

The earthquakes severely disrupted education services in Christchurch. All schools were closed for some weeks after the 22 February 2011 quake. Many high schools shared facilities for up to six months after this quake and students experienced the disruption of split shifts at these schools. Three years on, some schools are still closed, others are closing. Both University of Canterbury and Lincoln University have lost large numbers of lucrative international students and many education buildings are still out of commission, about to be demolished or in the process of remediation. A few schools, largely private schools with good earthquake insurance, are starting to open new buildings and experience improved educational facilities.

Women spoke about the impact of these changes on their children, and some young women, who were high school students in 2011, talked about changes in their lives prompted by the quakes. Teachers and school principals, who were also often parents, told their stories of the effects of the quake on their work and the operation of their schools.

Teachers' stories

Emily Nooapii was teaching year 5 and 6 students at Bromley School in eastern Christchurch when the 22 February quake occurred. She was having lunch with a student teacher in the staff room. They could not leave the room until the shaking stopped. The children were outside on the netball courts and the two duty teachers had begun marshalling them into age groups when Emily joined them. Bromley has a large quota of Pacific Island students at the school and Emily found it very moving to see them form a circle, hold hands and say their prayers out loud, thanking God for their lives and praying

that their families were safe. Older pupils were looking after their siblings.

Emily was approached by a young girl who had fallen and cut herself during the quake. But Emily had no plasters and could not think of how to help her as she was so shocked herself. "I sent her to see the Principal... not the sort of issue he would want to be dealing with at the time" reflected Emily. Emily kept thinking of her husband, Ren, and wondering if he was safe as she knew he was at work in the Price Waterhouse high rise in Armagh Street. They had no cell phone contact. There was no building damage at school, so Bromley staff had no idea of the destruction in the city until parents started arriving with the news. "I was sick with worry but had to stay calm for the children... until the parents came I was the closest adult trust figure". Having to be a leader helped Emily stay calm and not cry. Some of the parents were so distressed when they arrived that Emily had to keep them at the school until they calmed down and were better prepared to return home with their children.

By 2.30 pm all the children had left the school, and Emily had still not had contact with Ren. She stayed at school busying herself with the special needs children in their classroom. Once they were all collected, Emily found the Deputy Principal and helped him lock up the school. He and his wife, who worked at the school, insisted it was time for Emily to return home. As they walked out on to the school footpath, Ren rode up on a bike. Emily was so relieved she began to cry. Ren had experienced the horrors of the city and, after being evacuated, had run home to check on the house. He took a neighbour's bike and packed a backpack of clothes and tinned food and set off to find Emily.

Susan Hird, who works as a teacher aide, was also impressed by students' responses to the 22 February quake. She said "they were absolutely amazing". They went from being scared, to supporting each other, to being worried about their parents. As parents started turning up, everyone learnt more and more about what was happening in town. There were things that brought a bit of reality to the situation, such as blood on a parent's legs. Susan stayed at school until

the last child got picked up at about five o'clock; the parent had had to dump the car in Linwood and walk four hours around the city to get to the school.

Two of Leanne Everingham's four children attended St Paul's School in Dallington, and the school and church were both destroyed in the September earthquake: "For us the hardest thing to come out of the September earthquake was the loss of St Paul's school and the loss of our church". St. Paul's school was relocated for a week or so to a derelict school in Champion Street, St Albans, and eventually to the Catholic Cathedral College site in Barbadoes Street.

In the February earthquake, with the Cathedral so damaged, the school had to relocate again, back to Champion Street. At the same time, Leanne's workplace, Avonside Girls' High School, was relocated to Burnside High School. The site was shared with Burnside students who had school in the morning and Avonside students started in the afternoon. This was closer to home for her, but transport issues arose when the children began back at school in St Albans. Leanne started teaching at 1pm, so she drove the youngest children across town for their 9am start. But the 3pm finish time was a problem. She was often reliant on her mother to pick the children up from school and bring them home. "The Ministry of Education did compensate us for transport costs, but everyone had to solve their transport problems themselves".

Her oldest son continued at his normal school, but her older daughter had to transfer from Marian College to St Bede's for afternoon classes. While buses went to the College from the east they did not travel from the Burnside area in the west. Her school day was in the afternoons, so sometimes her daughter biked, and on other days Leanne drove her there before starting her own teaching. Sometimes her mother picked Leanne's daughter up. "It took weeks of adjusting to all the transport arrangements, but we got there in the end".

The kind of logistical problems caused by the relocation of schools, and adjusted hours, often relied heavily

on extended family and friends to assist in moving children to and from school.

Kirsten Rennie's life as head of the Art Department at Avonside Girls' High School changed dramatically with the earthquakes and the move to Burnside High, around ten kilometres to the west. She was separated from her children's father and living in Sumner, about fifteen kilometres to the south-east. She shared the pick-up and drop-off of her children to a school in Lyttleton where their father lived, another diversion. Travelling across town over damaged roads made the journey a long one, not to mention hazardous. For her it was all too hurried and all too stressed. When she did have the children with her, she found she didn't have enough time with them, because classes finished very late and teaching staff were not home before 7pm. This meant that Kirsten would have just one hour with the children before bedtime. For her it was simply not enough.

The sharing of school facilities on a shift basis led to a range of difficulties. Susan Allen had attended Cashmere High School, but taught at Linwood College, so when Linwood operated for a couple of terms at the Cashmere campus, it felt comfortable. But a lot of people really struggled with the move of Linwood to Cashmere. About a quarter of the students left the school. Many of them went up north or to other schools. Many students lost their homes or had parents who lost their jobs.

Susan noticed a clash between two school cultures. Susan's students from Linwood College would stride in to the classroom, almost defiantly. Some of the Cashmere staff and pupils found it quite difficult to have them on site. When Susan left work, she had to walk quite a distance in the cold to her car which was parked on a grassed area. When she went to Cashmere High, that grassed area had been known as the 'sacred lawn'. "The principal at that time designated this area as one place that pupils were never allowed to walk. But now the first thing that happened was that trees were trimmed and two prefabs were put on the lawn. Susan reflected 'I don't think the significance of that was appreciated by the Linwood staff and pupils'".

There was a major concern that the students were not getting their teaching time, so they were only off from school for one day after the quake in June 2011. Susan thought that that probably wasn't enough. "I think the impact on people was starting to show through. So when the snows came in August... and the schools were closed, a lot of staff agreed that it was a blessing [because] staff and students needed to gather their strength a bit more".

Accelerated crisis leadership

Margaret Patai, the Principal of Linwood College, faced many challenges after the 22 February quake. One of these challenges was the death of one of the students at the school. Jayden was on one of the buses in the city that was crushed in the quake.

He was just an outstanding young man... We didn't have the answers and we couldn't solve it... I think that as a school community there was that connection that he was one of ours and that there was a huge deep loss. It was a loss of the future as well, and he was an only child as well within the family. So you can see how unbearable that would be. That was during the time the school was closed, so we did concentrate on the family and say, 'What can we do?'"

The school and community did their best to support Jayden's family. "As a school we set up food parcels for the family, we met with them and so forth. We found that their place was affected by [the quake] as well, so we found another location. We found a holiday home for them as well. What it was, was trying to give them some peace, or some respite from everything that they were feeling at the time and the deep sorrow and pain..."

Margaret said that this death was "a real tragedy" for Linwood College. "It wasn't the loss of buildings or anything, or the school closing; it was the heartache and the human loss". Since then, the College has tried to demonstrate care, manaakitanga, and aroha and impart "that he was part of us

and will always remain part of us as well". On the anniversary of the quake in February 2012, his family were invited to the memorial event. "It was about new beginnings, new growth as well, having a tree planted in his name, and then at prize giving, having a cup... I think part of that is that his story will be told again and again because he is part of prize giving."

Margaret said that loss of a student at the school also helped people to be thankful for what they had.

That was the other message that we wanted to get out to our community as well. When you're huddled in the night and in dark and everything around you is chaos, and you have to steel yourself for the next aftershock or the next uncertainties... even in the upheaval, [there's] that sense of perseverance, heart and courage that we want to display. The school, we needed to do that because as a school we needed to close down as well. So, from that loss of a student, the next effect was the loss of the school.

As a result of quake damage to its buildings, Linwood College did not reopen on its own site for many months. Students shared the Cashmere High School facilities and were transported from Linwood to Cashmere each day for afternoon classes. Managing all these complex issues called upon all of Margaret's skills, resources and resilience. Margaret reflected that it demanded what she called 'accelerated crisis leadership'. "There was no blueprint to work from. And what we had to do was manage with what skills and knowledge that we did have to ensure that we got the best outcomes for the students. So the heart of the matter was centred on our students, what were their needs and how were we going to ensure that they still had a high quality experience in their education".

The demands of her job meant limited time for her family as they responded to life in post-quake Christchurch. Her husband "ran an absolutely wonderful 'ship' at home and was there for our children for every minute of every day of every hour". Family in the North Island offered to care for her children, but they said they wanted to stay in

Christchurch. They had recently moved to Christchurch because Margaret had taken up the position at Linwood College, and they said, "We are settled".

Early Childhood Education

The early childhood sector was also affected by the quakes. Laine Barker came back into the Playcentre office about three days after the quake as she knew people would want to contact the Playcentre Association. The place was a mess, but lots of people came in to help clean up. The Association worked hard to get suburban Playcentres up and running as they knew they were a vital community resource. At the Playcentre offices they offered counselling to families and had morning and afternoon teas where people could drop in.

The Ministry of Education was "absolutely fantastic", providing support to the organisation. Playcentres around New Zealand sent offers of help, daffodil bulbs, soft toys, food hampers and donations. Even the Japan Playcentre Association sent paper cranes for good luck, a gesture Laine found very touching in the wake of their own earthquake and tsunami disaster. Several of Laine's co-workers had lost homes, and towards the end of the year she noticed people starting to crack, emotions were "welling up" and people were on a "short fuse". Laine attributed this to tiredness. She thought that Playcentre is full of "very strong women" who were exhausted from being strong for others.

Like a number of other teachers, Lindsay James was very concerned about her job when she was interviewed in 2012. "Before the September earthquake I felt very confident that I had a full time job till retirement. Now I don't think this is the case". She feels that there will be big changes to the way schools will operate due to diminishing student numbers, especially in eastern Christchurch.

Mothers' stories

Kristy had EQC assessors visiting her house when the 22 February quake struck. As soon as the quake stopped she screamed, "My babies!" and realised she had to get to them.

When Kristy got to Opawa School all she could hear was the screaming of the school children who were out on the playing field with the staff. Kristy can still hear the sound of the children's cries today. She went straight over to her children and sat down with them on the field. The aftershocks were carrying on. Kristy looks after someone else's child after school, and, knowing that the parents would be at work, she took it upon herself to liaise with the school principal about taking this child home with her. "It was a quick discussion, but dead serious as we realized he could not stay at school. His mum works in a retirement home and would have responsibility for the well-being of the residents and the father could have been anywhere as he is a painter".

Other stories about mothers collecting their children from school and their concerns about being parted from them during the quakes are included in the chapter on family life. Mothers not only experienced deep anxiety about their children when they were at school or preschool during the major quakes in February and June 2011, they were also at times concerned about how their children would adjust to returning to school after the February quakes. For some families, this involved some challenges getting children to and from school.

Adele Kelly returned home after staying with a friend after the February quake for four and a half weeks while they had no power or water in their Housing New Zealand home in Avonside. And the children returned to school "which was a lot harder that time". The school held a welcome the day before they went back, to try and help the pupils feel safe. After all this was "the last place that the boys had been when it had happened". However, Adele was reassured as she knew "the school is very organised about safety".

Before the quakes, Emily Adcock had decided to enrol her son at Richmond Primary School when he started school. This school is now going to close, but it was a wonderful school which was very inclusive of all children regardless of their socio-economic circumstances or ethnicity. After the quakes it was quite an adventure getting to and

from school with two bus trips morning and afternoon. They met some great people and fantastic bus drivers.

Six weeks or so after the February quake, Violet realised that the children would have to return to school. Even though they had moved from their damaged home in Lyttelton to Cashmere, she and her partner decided to keep their daughter, Sophia, at Lyttelton Main Primary School as they liked it and wanted as little change as possible for her. "We tried to not let the children see that we were anxious. Sophia knew that we had lost our home, and everything was different, but we did not want her routines unsettled".

Lynne Smith's son moved from the Shirley Boys' High site to Papanui High School in the afternoons. The school put on buses, but the roads were a nightmare and they had to leave home an hour before school started and it took another hour to get home. This involved travelling in the dark in winter. "Not only did he have to bus to a different school site and travel for a long time, but classes were cut to the basics. There was no non-essential study at school, there were no after school activities, he could not visit friends after school, and biking and bussing was difficult. His world shrunk overnight". She said that the boys did not seem to sit around and chat about the earthquakes and their effects like adults might do in a supermarket queue or wherever. Her overwhelming impression was that young men did not talk about the impacts of the quakes.

After the February 2011 quake, Linwood College was closed and all the pupils were sent to Cashmere High School in Spreydon. Sina did not like her grandsons travelling to Cashmere High from Linwood College as the campus in Spreydon was a long way away from her. "It really stressed me; make me very worried about the boys (her grandchildren) moving away. When they were at Linwood they were closer", and Sina felt that she could at least get to them if there was a quake, but this was not possible if they were across town at Cashmere High School.

Alia Afzali's son was studying at Shirley Boys' High School and the school was closed for a long time. He changed schools to study at Hagley Community College

which involved catching two buses and a change of classmates.

Parents' involvement in their children's schools

A number of parents were very involved in the schools their children attended. Julia liked to help with the breakfast club at the school when it was funded at her children's school in Aranui. A group of parents are getting together to make this happen again, along with the Methodist Mission. Julia is helping with this initiative. "I like to help out with the school. They have done a lot for us giving us blankets and hot water bottles and such". She has initiated a breakfast of pancakes once a term and "it is good for my son, as well, as he has problems". He likes to help out with the dishes at school.

When Kristy took the children back to Opawa Primary School after the June quakes, she was determined to drop them off and not stay "hanging around the school gates like some of the other mums". She did not want her fears and insecurity to be passed on to the children. "That was really hard... I cried every time I left the school gates". The fear became worse as the children grew older and all went to different schools. Now there is one child at secondary school, one at intermediate and one at primary.

Kristy has returned to parent help at Opawa School and is being encouraged to look at doing formal training in teacher aide work. At the moment she is somewhat reluctant because of the cost and not sure that she wants to be too far away from home and the children. The children belong to a St John's Ambulance group which has given them all a wider social life. Kristy has made friends with other parents and they socialise together whilst the children are at the group.

When she was interviewed in 2013, Karen was on the Central New Brighton School Board of Trustees and she has been appointed to the board for the new merged school. "This is pretty much creating the new school, doing the vision, appointing the principal". Karen saw this as a great experience. "Not many people will be able to say they have

had the opportunity to create this new school". The new site will be on North New Brighton School grounds.

The fact that they are planning a new school means that a lot of discussion has been had on the quakes and how to make the school a safe place. "Quakes are discussed a lot, the whole earthquake thing is still very much in my head; it is still real". However, the Board of Trustees has been very aware that they need to give the families time to deal with their own quake issues before asking them to consult on a new school. There is a need to "give them time". Karen is not only on the Board of Trustees, but spends some hours working as a teacher aide for a special needs child at the school as well. "I like to keep myself busy as it keeps my mind off things".

Other women were responding to the closure of schools they had gone to as children and that their parents had attended. Burwood Primary School had invited Fiona to an event at the school before it closed at the end of the year. She is the fourth generation in her family to attend the school, but she could not attend the event. "It's interesting that none of us are going. And I couldn't - I had to think about it and I wanted to go - but I didn't want to go, and then I realised that I couldn't watch something else close. I've seen too much change and to go there and, to see that go, well, I think that would have been one of the last straws."

Students' experiences of high school education

Some of the women interviewed were high school students at the time of the 2010 and 2011 quakes. Many of them reflected positively on their experiences at school during this time. They were largely matter of fact about the challenges, and some of them saw them as opportunities rather than impediments to their development as young adults.

Treena's education at Karanga Mai at Kaiapoi (a school programme for teenage parents) continued through the earthquakes, but getting to school became a bit more complicated after the quakes as her Kaiapoi home was written off after the September quake and she was initially

living in temporary accommodation in the city. However, she appreciated the ways in which students at Karanga Mai had access to buses that took them to school each morning.

For Anastasia, a student from a Samoan family in eastern Christchurch, attending a different high school for six months after the quakes was a positive experience. "I thought it was better because it was afternoon school, because I didn't have to get up early. I liked it there... and I got to meet new people. We had buses that would come to each suburb for all the suburbs and we got to know all the students who got on the buses on the ride to school and back". She thought that the disruption caused by the quake and having to relocate for a while "brought our school (Avonside Girls' High) closer together in a way".

Alice Ridley was also positive about the experience of split shifts at Papanui High, which was not significantly damaged during the 22 February quake. "I remember we had quite a bit of time off... probably more than two weeks off because all the buildings had to get checked. My school was pretty much okay..." The change for students at her school was sharing the buildings with students from Shirley Boys' High School. "When we came back we had a rostered day. We would start at eight and they would start at one, so we would have to finish at 12". Alice didn't mind the early starts. There was an effort made to keep the two schools from interacting too much. When school finished each afternoon, "we were allocated certain gates to leave and they had to come in the front gates and we would have to go out all the side gates to get us to avoid contacting each other... It was all very exciting for the girls, and the guys were probably just like 'errgh'". However, some of the Papanui girls and Shirley boys did manage to interact. "I think there was a lot of Shirley Boys - Papanui High girls relationships".

After Shirley Boys' High returned to their own premises, there were some positive changes at Papanui High. The students were consulted on time table changes and they had a shorter lunch break and finished school earlier. There were less field trips and there were no more opportunities to go to the Estuary for biology field trips and trip out to

Lincoln University for study. When Alice got back to school changes were also made to NCEA examinations. Alice explains how normally in NCEA "you go in with your little plastic bags with your pens. But like after the earthquake, they wanted to have more measures of safety" so they changed it so everyone "could bring in like car keys, a metro card and some money. So if we are evacuated, we can't go back and grab our bags, we just grab our [little plastic] bags and just walk out". According to Alice this precaution has now been applied across the country so "everyone in New Zealand has to take their little emergency kit in... They probably just never thought about it before".

Ella was a student at Avonside Girls' High School whose education was disrupted by the quakes, however, when she was interviewed in early 2014, she thought that the changes prompted by the quakes had been beneficial. This is her story.

Changing schools – Ella's story

Ella was 15 years old when the February earthquake hit. "We were off school for like weeks, but then Mum shipped me off to Dunedin for month". Ella stayed with some family friends. "Our second family's down there". After trying out Otago Girls' for a few days, Ella decided "it wasn't really my jam", and she enrolled at Logan Park High School.

Because Ella knew she was only going to be there for a short while, she decided to do subjects that she wanted to do, "not subjects my parents expected to me to do". "Through high school I did Latin and French – you know, 'smart subjects', whereas I went to Logan Park and I did photography, easy maths instead of hard maths ...drama and art and painting and film studies".

"It was really interesting having a new start...no one knew me at that school...at Logan Park I didn't know a single person, no one had expectations of me... I guess it was a chance to reinvent myself... It was quite cool... I changed - a lot". During the five weeks Ella was at Logan Park she started dressing differently.

In some ways Ella reinvented herself. “Instead of wearing cute floral dresses with small heels, I got into my Doc Martins and oversized jumpers”. Ella described how her fashion changes were initially practical. The bus stop was quite far away “and I couldn’t walk that far in heels”. Ella went to the second hand stores and brought a whole lot of oversized jumpers. “I started wearing a lot of black, I don’t know why, I wasn’t depressed or anything, I just wanted to. And I changed from this really girly girl...and kind of got into the punky kind of scene, I guess. And because no one in Dunedin knew that wasn’t me, it just was me”.

Ella thinks that her personality changed quite a lot over this time. “I used to be quite shy and timid... I’d find it hard to talk to people I didn’t know...I wouldn’t be leader of anything”. At Logan Park she got to say what she wanted to say and became comfortable talking to strangers. Ella was in Dunedin for about five weeks and she decided that “I wasn’t going go back, I’d got to like what I’d become...All teenagers want to be perfect and it was like, ‘Nup, I’m just going to be who I am’, instead of what people wanted me to be”. When Ella got back to Christchurch, some of her friends were a bit shocked about the way she had changed. “They were like, ‘What have you done?’”.

At that stage Avonside Girls’ High had temporarily merged with Burnside High School and “everyone was stressed”. Burnside students were at school from 8am -1pm and Avonside Girls’ students from 1pm - 6pm. It took an hour to get to Burnside High on the bus, so Ella ended up buying a car. She found the afternoon classes very difficult - “everything I loved outside of school was either on in the afternoon...or had been cancelled because of the earthquake... I missed all my dancing; I missed all the things I really loved”. She found herself going to school and coming home and going to school again, “which was pretty tedious, because I didn’t really like school”.

Ella’s friends had difficulty adjusting to the way she had changed. “Lots of my friends were stressed of course; they had lost their homes, which was fair enough. Lots of them were angry for no real reason, but because their families

were angry". So she came back to a lot of stress and anger and sadness, "and I, of course, came back quite happy in myself. So there was a lot of tension."

The move to Hagley Community College at the beginning of 2012 was an important time for Ella. "So that was a really big time for me – getting into my own skin... I can almost guarantee that, if the earthquake didn't happen, I'd still be shy, timid, Ella who likes to dance and be in the background... not in your face, probably still be with the same group of friends".

The churches

Many churches, probably more than 50, were destroyed or severely damaged in the earthquakes. It seemed to some that, just at the time that the churches had a clear role to play in offering people solace and support, their buildings were often cordoned off or closed while their safety was being assessed. Lianne Dalziel commented: "I have met a lot of people for whom their faith has kept them going and been a source of what they have been doing, and giving, dealing with personal tragedy."

At the time this report was written, the Anglican Cathedral stands partially demolished in the Cathedral Square, the Catholic Basilica is gravely damaged and other churches have simply ceased to exist. The chapters on community responses to the quakes document some of the work done by churches and religious communities in the wake of the earthquakes. Women's views on future of Christ Church Cathedral (which continues to be hotly debated) and the Catholic Cathedral on Barbadoes Street are outlined in the final chapter on rebuilding Christchurch and hopes for the future.

Rebecca Macfie, Rapaki Road resident and journalist, thinks there has been less controversy around the future of the Catholic Cathedral on Barbadoes Street than the Anglican Cathedral in the Square because there has been no attempt to demolish it. She thinks it is the most beautiful building in town, but it is very wounded. These buildings are

two of the architectural pinnacles of a city that has lost so much. She asks: "Can't we at least stand in defence of those buildings that we always thought were important?"

Guine Eves-Newport's church, the multicultural St Paul's Trinity Pacific Presbyterian Church, was badly damaged in the quake and eventually had to be demolished. Before the quake it had been damaged by fire. The Samoan Seventh Day Adventists offered their church because they do not use it on Sundays. St Paul's needed the space as this church is one of the largest Pacific Island congregations in Christchurch.

Genevieve Togiaso, who is also a member of this congregation, was in Latimer Square when St Paul's collapsed. This is how she described seeing the church fall. "And I remember there was this one point where it was a massive shake, everyone dropped to the ground. I went down and then I stood up because I saw our church fall down. And our church is on corner of Cashel and Madras. So seeing that, my heart was, 'Oh my gosh, my sister's in there'. Because my sister worked in the office". Fortunately her sister was not harmed in the quake and met up with Genevieve in Latimer Square. They were so happy to find each other!

The church used the Samoan Seventh Day Adventist church for about five months. Since the earthquake, some people from their church have left Christchurch, but Guine says that, "they never leave the church". The hall was damaged, but it has been repaired and that is where the congregation now holds their church services.

Marie Rean was upset by the large amount of damage to all churches, and particularly by damage to the church that is most precious to her, the Catholic Basilica. After 22 February 2011, the Basilica was off limits. Marie's local church, St Mary's, had a lot of damage and was also unusable. With the subsequent aftershocks, the damage on the front of St Mary's worsened and slowly the stone work crumbled. It was declared unsafe and demolished. Marie went to the de-consecration of St Mary's, but she didn't want to see the bulldozers destroy the building.

Further heartache for Marie was caused by damage to St Joseph's Church in Lyttelton, where she used to live. It has also been demolished. Marie's late daughter and late husband are buried in Lyttelton. Marie visited to see if their headstones were intact in the graveyard, and thankfully they were. Their graves, however, were badly damaged. She has been promised action to repair them.

A number of participants in the New Brighton area mentioned the important work that the Grace Vineyard Church had done in that community. Women with children were pleased that the church had provided activities for children when schools were closed after the 22 February quakes. They also appreciated the targeting of activities to children of different age groups. They wanted their children to be doing things, rather than just watching television, playing computer games or out on the street hanging around. This family and community orientated church appeared to be responding to the needs of children in that community.

Churches and religious communities also provided help in other ways. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints came in to feed the students of Linwood College after the quake and when they were relocated to the Cashmere High School campus. According to Margaret Patai, Principal of Linwood College:

They fed [the students] for the whole six months and supplied lunch for the whole group. That, in itself, created organisation from the school because we had to organise absolutely everything; get the food, deliver it to the students in an orderly fashion... But we got lots of comments from families that that was one little thing in their life that they didn't have to think about. And that little thing was extremely important. Our students had lovely nourishing food, and we knew that they were well fed and well cared for. And it became actually very important during this time because there was a lot of turmoil going through the whole community and sacrifices; homes destroyed; losses of jobs. The Christchurch Buddhist Community also helped the Linwood College. Margaret Patai reported that "they spent about \$250,000 on free food going out to our community".

Hubs

Schools and churches were crucial hubs for individuals, families and communities during and after the major quakes in 2010 and 2011. Buildings were damaged, but what was most important was what happened to people and their connections with one another. After the quakes in February and June 2011 teachers responded resourcefully and cared for students until parents came to collect them. Students supported one another and were concerned about their parents as they rushed collect them through grid-locked streets, liquefaction and flooding. Students experienced disruption to their education, but like some adults, they also sometimes used the challenges of the quakes to explore new directions or craft different selves. Some schools generously shared their facilities with other schools whose buildings were severely damaged and unsafe.

Churches were severely damaged, but those that had functional buildings shared their facilities with other church communities. Religious communities looked at what they could do to assist families that were most affected by the quake, whether this was the provision of food, or activities for children and young people.

The stories told in this chapter illustrate the things that stretched individuals, households and communities. They also demonstrate the resources individuals, families and communities in Christchurch brought to surviving repeated crises in a city that rocked, rolled and rumbled for several years.

“It was a real nightmare” - the health impacts of the quakes

The quakes transformed the lives of everyone in the city. This chapter explores the stories women told about the impacts of the quakes in hospitals, health clinics and rest homes. It also highlights how the quakes affected the health of the women who told their earthquake stories. It is possibly predictable that many women had stories to tell about the effects of the quakes on their mental health.

“Rocking and shaking” - Christchurch Public Hospital

The buildings and staff at Christchurch Public Hospital came through the September earthquake largely unscathed. It appears that no evacuation took place, and there were relatively small numbers of injuries and no deaths. However, after the quake, the buildings felt very shaky, as Judith Sutherland, one of the interviewers, explains:

I returned to work in the hospital on Monday 7th September and responded to lots of emails from concerned friends. During the frequent aftershocks, the Riverside building moved quite a bit. It was like being on a rocking boat. I worked on the 5th level. At times I had to pluck up the courage to go back into the building and I was always pleased when it was lunch time or home time and I could escape. It was quite frightening really. We were told things would settle and we believed this.

Judith was at the hospital on 22 February 2011, and had just picked up her bag to go to lunch:

...when the building started rocking very violently. I tend to go into quiet mode in a crisis, so I didn't shout or scream. But other people did. I was near the lift and about to leave the building when the quake occurred, and I immediately went back into the office to check on the staff. The intercom system was bellowing out 'stations'. Although the office staff evacuated the building as quickly as

possible, it was not according to the plan we had previously discussed.

Grace Hollander was a patient in Christchurch Public Hospital, having recently arrived in a third floor ward after having had a three hour operation during the morning. Unlike the September quake, Grace said the February one was "the beginning of the worst nightmare of my whole life". She painted a graphic picture of not only her own fear, but also that of others in her ward:

One or two of the beds - they were not only shaking, they were moving up the floor... All of us in this ward - we were all absolutely terrified as I was - it was a real nightmare and we were all holding on to the sides of our beds... Every ten minutes or quarter of an hour there was another shake, there were people screaming... It still gives me nightmares - this terrible effect of all the shaking... Then when it got a little bit darker, a little bit later, in the afternoon we watched all the people moving into Hagley Park who'd lost their houses or who had been damaged and it was a continuation of the nightmare...and of course, the shaking went on and on and on and nobody got any sleep that night, that's for sure! We were all terribly upset and there were one or two very ill people there - at least I was recovering now that my pacemaker had been replaced... It doesn't bear thinking about it actually, it was a real nightmare.

Wendy Hawke was at work with Jane, a colleague in the Neurology Department, when the quake struck. They were having their lunch and dived under the desk. Everyone around them wanted to get out of the building, but Wendy had a patient she was responsible for and she felt that she needed to be with her. This patient was being assessed for epilepsy and was on equipment that was all wired up to the wall. "I just knew that it wasn't right to leave the patient there and leave it for the nurse to deal with, so I went and dismantled her, and I spoke to the nurses. I asked the patient if she wanted to go downstairs with me and she did. I felt

really responsible for her. That was my prime thing. I was very calm and I went downstairs with her and some of the other patients".

Deborah McCormack walked past the hospital on her way to safety. She noted that it was like a war zone with cars jam packed and driving on the wrong side of the road and on footpaths to get to the hospital. "This wasn't the Christchurch that I knew."

Judith, Wendy and Jane were all evacuated out to the river at the back of the hospital. One thing that struck Wendy was that no-one was in charge: "Nobody was in charge, nobody took control, and that was something that amazed me, there was no plan at the Riverside end of the hospital at all".

Wendy was with the patients on the lawn at the back of Christchurch Public Hospital where the lawn goes down to the river. Doctors, admin people, nurses, technicians were all there together. Wendy stayed with Ward 28 staff. "It was cold out there, so they started throwing blankets out of the top floor through the hospital windows. It looked quite bizarre with these blankets coming down; it looked like a total crisis situation."

After about two hours, a little fire engine turned up and the elderly firemen in the country volunteer fire brigade looked up at the building. "They obviously had no idea what to do, so they got back into the fire engine and just drove off again". That was the only sign of authority that they saw. Wendy found out later about the "mayhem" at the front of the hospital. But there was no sense of that at the back of the hospital below the Riverside building.

Judith described the scene:

The staff stood alongside the Riverside building next to the river. There was no-one there to tell us what to do and the building was still rocking and rolling around. I tried to use my cell phone, but there was no reception at that stage - the phones were down. Then the nursing staff started to bring the patients outside. Some patients were evacuated down the fire escape on mattresses. Some were on

beds or in chairs attached to drips. It was just like a warzone and to make matters worse, it started to rain. Suddenly a truck arrived outside the hospital with a load of white blankets and these were wrapped around patients.

Melissa Parsons heard from a friend's sister about what it was like at the front of the building: "[she] had been working in the basement level Blood Bank at the hospital on the day. She and the rest of her team were evacuated above ground to the forecourt by A&E, where she witnessed sights that only combat training could have prepared her for".

Many of those injured in the city found it difficult to get access the hospital, and once there, it was not always easy for hospital staff to get hold of family members. Susan Hird did not hear that her husband was in hospital until the following day. Messages had been left on her telephone from 6am but as she had no power, she could not access them until her sister sent down a corded phone.

It appears that the February earthquakes dealt severe blows to the hospital. Many patients were evacuated to other centres. But it is also remarkable how the hospital dealt with the crisis. It never 'went down', and Canterbury people were still able to rely on health services when they were needed.

There is an untold story also of the selflessness of staff. Grace Hollander, a patient on one of the wards, said that: "the nurses were wonderful... They actually worked two or three shifts - they didn't go home - they couldn't go home - they just stayed on duty and they would come in and talk to people and calm them down and everything." And when Nicky Wagner, MP for Christchurch Central, visited the hospital she was impressed that medical staff not were rostered for duty turned up for work.

"It is hard to make patients feel safe when you are petrified" - Princess Margaret Hospital

Rachael White, a registered nurse at Princess Margaret Hospital, is a sole parent with an adult son who lives in Aranui. She was on her lunch break and standing on the

second floor by the lifts when the quake hit on 22 February. At first she thought “it’s was just another shake. But then it went on for a bit longer and it was violent and people from the corporate offices were running out and running down the stairs”.

Someone yelled out to, “for God’s sake get downstairs.” So Rachael ran down the stairs and got outside. Then she realized that she needed to be up there for the patients. So fighting against the tide of people coming down the stairs, Rachael ran back up. This is her story of the impact of the quakes on her work at Princess Margaret Hospital.

“It was just bedlam”- Rachael’s story

When Rachael got back into the hospital, she found “it as just bedlam”. There were patients that were badly injured, some quite seriously. One woman in the toilet had sustained about twenty severe lacerations and Rachael attended to her amongst all the aftershocks as they kept coming. Rachael went to every ward and there were many patients injured. A number of frail elderly patients were injured, having been thrown out of bed.

Christchurch Public Hospital had a lot of damage and the emergency department was overwhelmed with injured people coming from the city. Consequently a triage unit was opened up at Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH). Rachael commented that they were not prepared for this eventuality at all. Senior staff at the hospital were in contact with St John’s Ambulance and it was agreed that it would be appropriate to bring stable patients to PMH.

There was a lot of panic and confusion initially, and people kept coming in. Injuries included young warehouse workers with queried spinal injuries because pallets had fallen on them, and elderly people coming in with fall injuries that resulted in fractured hips. Rachael said it felt like it was “a war zone” with the constant aftershocks “like bombing”. She stayed at work until midnight; and only went home when she realized that she needed to feed her animals. She was back at work at 7am and in the days after that quake did a lot of extra

hours plus her normal job. PMH had a lot of elderly admissions; people who were injured, people who had lost their homes, and elderly peoples who were not managing their diabetes. Some elderly people who needed care were not identified for several days, and some had no power, especially on the eastern side.

Rachael said that as a nurse or a doctor it is in your nature to do your job because you know that you have the ability to help, even though the rest of your family needs you. The impact of the earthquake was relentless. Two days after the earthquake Rachael heard that her best friend was declared missing; she was in the CTV building.

Rachael found 2011 a very challenging year, but it was the 23 December 2011 quake that brought her almost to breaking point. She was on the third floor of Princess Margaret Hospital with a patient when it struck. The quake was extremely violent. Rachael remembers dropping to her knees, grabbing the bed, and weeping. She remembers finishing what she was doing with that patient, and then running to the other wards to check how everyone was.

In May 2012, when Rachael was interviewed, work had become a lot busier because PMH had acquired three acute geriatric medical wards from Christchurch Public Hospital. Prior to the earthquakes, Rachael managed seven older persons' health rehab wards, which kept her pretty busy. Now she had an extra 75 beds and they were acute geriatric medical. She had some concerns about the PMH building as aftershocks continued. Nursing staff were told that the hospital was very safe, but "when it is violently shaking, and you are up on the fourth floor and there's nowhere to go, you get really anxious about another shake". Rachael said that it was hard to make patients feel safe when, as a nurse, "you are feeling petrified".

Health clinics and the quakes

A number of women interviewed worked in health clinics that were damaged or involved in frontline responses to the quakes.

Emily Adcock's workplace, the Women's Health Information Clinic, was in a brick building that was located on the second floor above Whitcoulls in Cashel Street. It suffered some damage in the 4 September quake, but engineers found it to be structurally sound, so the work of the clinic could continue. However, Emily felt a little bit of apprehension each time she entered the building. After the Boxing Day quake in December 2010, the Whitcoulls building was red-stickered. The Women's Health Information Clinic had been closed for the holiday break, so no one was in the clinic at the time. Emily's colleagues had a small window of opportunity to retrieve what they could from the office before parts of the building was demolished.

The Pacific Trust Health Clinic, where Genevieve Togiasso was practice manager, provides general health care and also particular services relating to child health and mental health for Pacific people. It was established in 2003 to support Pacific people to get the help that they needed in culturally appropriate ways. Much of the clinic's work is to take health care out of the clinic and into the homes of Pacific people and the environments where they come together. The clinic was located on Worcester Street, right in the heart of the Christchurch CBD. Health professionals, counsellors and health educators employed by the clinic were among the first people to respond to injuries in the CBD caused by the 22 February quake.

Front line response - Genevieve's story

When the 22 February 2011 quake struck it was lunchtime; the doctors and receptionist were out for lunch and the nurses were talking in their offices. Genevieve was covering reception over lunch for the receptionist. "I remember when it first began. I was like, 'Oh this is a big one'. And then, 'Oh no, this is very big'. I was in heels so I was surfing in the reception area... Two staff were behind in another room and they were watching me. And they were saying that I looked absolutely hilarious, as scary as it was, just how I was standing there trying to balance. But I remember trying to get down

and under the table was absolutely impossible because the ground came up and met my knee when I bent down”.

Genevieve then called out for everyone to evacuate the building. “As I got to the doorway which is all glass I turned around, I yelled at everyone, ‘Get out of the building’. So we all ran out of the building. I counted everyone that we knew was downstairs. And then the staff from upstairs came down. I was the only manager on site. So when we got out, lots of aftershocks were constantly still happening”. Genevieve gathered the staff, and they went down to Latimer Square. One doctor was still missing as he had been out for lunch. Genevieve started to panic, but relaxed when she saw him driving away in his car.

In Latimer Square, the Pacific Trust staff realized the severity of the situation: “We could just see lots – the noise, the sound, the smells, the screaming, people running in from roads. Every time there was a shake, as packed as it was in Latimer Square, everyone just dropped to the ground”. Genevieve then heard people saying that, if anyone was injured, they should make their way to the part of Latimer Square near Hereford Street where several doctors had set up an emergency first aid station. She realized that her staff would be able to help: “I stood up and I said, ‘OK people, now the plan is, we’re gonna go and help. Are you guys OK?’ I didn’t pressure anyone to come and help because we were realizing ‘this is really bad’”.

Genevieve, the clinic doctor, a practice nurse and several community workers offered their services. Also present were some doctors who had been attending a medical conference in town and nurses from other clinics in town “who had appeared from nowhere like angels”. Genevieve had been out of clinical practice time for a long time and she was thinking, “What am I going to do?” But then you just kind of quickly got into it and started to help”.

It soon became apparent that there was a lack of medical supplies, so Genevieve and two colleagues made a raid on their own Pacific Trust Clinic: “People [were] saying ‘Oh we really need IVs, we need liquids, IV fluid’. And I knew very well we had IV fluids in our clinic. So I said to two of

the guys, 'OK, we have to go back into the building and get the IV fluids and get as much of the emergency trolley that we grab'. And they said. 'OK let's go Gen' ... We got in there, constant shakes. We could see buildings falling around everywhere, debris and that. But I said, 'OK, we're gonna go in there, smash and grab whatever you can ... and then out'. I said 'I'm serious, be quick'. But when they made it into their building, the door to the treatment room was jammed as the roof had collapsed. Genevieve and her colleagues grabbed a whole lot of rubber gloves and facemasks (stored in case of an epidemic) and returned to distribute these to people in Latimer Square to protect them from the dust.

But back at Latimer Square, "seeing more bodies turning up and seeing how bad it was", Genevieve realised she really did need to salvage more medical supplies. Several fire engines turned up and they asked a fireman with an axe to come and help them break into the clinic. "We all headed over to the Trust, broke the door down, grabbed as much as we could. We had our phones as lights because we couldn't see. And I forgot there was a window, but the curtain was drawn".

Back at Latimer Square with the medical supplies, Genevieve recalls, "bodies being brought in boots in cars. The first body that came was from Stanmore Road... some fish shop... and then we just had to lay them there. I had two staff members that were given the responsibility to try and find some ID or whatever on them". Genevieve was a little concerned for these two staff members as they were community workers, not health professionals. She knew that her staff would probably suffer trauma in the aftermath of the quake.

Once the more official medical response arrived in Latimer Square, Genevieve was able to pack up and leave. While recovering medical supplies from the Pacific Trust Clinic earlier on, Genevieve had grabbed her car and parked it on Latimer Square near an entrance so that she had an escape plan. She crammed five or six of her staff into her two-door car and dropped them home as she felt responsible for their safety. She had to persuade one staff member to leave. "One

of my staff that was helping out with the deceased said, 'No I don't want to go Gen. I want to stay. You guys go'. And I said, 'I'm sorry. You came into work. I'm responsible for you. You need to leave. Go home, and if you feel the need to, come back. But you have to go'.

Challenges for carers/health professionals

Women working in rest homes spoke about the challenges of caring for others when they were experiencing fear and exhaustion because of the quakes.

Heny was working full-time in the hospital wing of a private aged care facility in Christchurch at the time of the 22 February quake. She had a home in Ashburton, but stayed at her mother's place in Christchurch when she was working at the rest home. She responded very calmly to the challenges of the quake when it occurred, but later experienced post-traumatic stress disorder.

"Some patients went flying" - Heny's story

When the 22 February quake occurred, Heny was in the dining room of the rest home. Cutlery, glasses, and even some patients went flying. The noise was horrific, not helped by some of the staff who began screaming. She managed to remain calm and helped other staff hang on to a door frame for support. When the motion stopped the staff regrouped, checked on all residents and staff, and had a quick meeting to organise further care. All the staff got their cell phones. The TVs were still attached to the wall and power was on so they were able to see what was unfolding in the city. Heny and the charge nurse took the dressing trolley around to start patching up those with superficial injuries. They also double lined all the toilets with plastic bags. Some residents, especially those in bed, were unaware of what had happened.

The staff at the rest home took all the residents into the lounge so they could keep an eye on them in a safe place. Heny asked the facility manager if she could pick up her car which was across the road at a garage. When she went outside

she was shocked at the liquefaction. The garage was all locked up, so Heny could not collect her car, and eventually walked home to her mother's house. Liquefaction was everywhere, and sometimes Heny's feet sunk a long way down into the mud. When she got home, found her mother safe in a back room, which was a huge relief. The kitchen floor was covered with broken glass and liquid. Her mother was very resilient and reassured Heny that she was "all right".

Later that night, Heny and her mother met up with other family members in Lincoln and Heny's son took her home to Ashburton. Heny found that she was unable stay in her home alone and spent the night with her son and his wife. She ended up staying there for six weeks and was not able to resume her job and care for other people. She couldn't stand being on her own. She constantly listened to the radio and read about others people's earthquake experiences.

Eventually, Heny got help from Presbyterian Support Services, where she had a wonderful counsellor who helped her through the "dark, bleak, hopeless" days. Later, her doctor diagnosed her with post-traumatic stress disorder. With the support of her counsellor, psychologist, and family, Heny gradually moved back to her own home. She has not returned to nursing work, as she feels she does not have the concentration, but she has found work as a carer in a rest home in Ashburton.

Damaged bodies – quake injuries

Guine Eves-Newport, who is in her 70s, injured her leg during the 4 September 2010 quake. It took about 6 months to work out what was actually wrong with her leg. She could not bend it and it was very sore. Finally, it was diagnosed as a badly torn Achilles tendon, and her leg was put in plaster. She was in the hospital for three days and they wanted her to stay another day. But Guine, a Samoan public health educator, said, "No, I am not going to stay any longer, I am not a patient!" She came home on 21 February 2011 just in time to experience the 22 February quake while she was having lunch with her sister, in Northlands Mall.

It took a whole year for Guine's leg to recover. She needed a home help, a toilet seat, and a bath seat and another seat in the kitchen. Guine said to her husband, "I would prefer to die rather than be in this situation... It was really agony... But now I feel much better." After the plaster came off, Guine had to wear a 'moon boot' for three months. She was told she either had to wear the moon boot or she needed an operation. Guine still has her disability card – a reminder of the time when her leg was so painful.

At the time her interview in September 2014, Sina Lemana, who now lives in Edgeware with her teenage grandsons, remains incapacitated by a knee injured during the February 2011 earthquake. She said it was as if God lifted her up and then threw her back down on the ground as she stood outside her garage. Her mobility has been badly affected and many of her activities are curtailed. She used to be very active supporting Pacific people through the Waltham Community Cottage and the Telford Street Resource Centre and she grew a lot of her own vegetables.

Sina spoke about wanting to establish a new garden in the school holidays at the end of 2013. "I always have a garden - we want to clean up all outside". She has to be careful she does not go outside whilst it is still cold as she is prone to asthma. Her mother died from asthma. But when the weather warms up, she wants to plant eggplants, strawberries and tomatoes with the help of her grandsons who she has cared for since they were very young.

Susan Hird, did not experience any injuries herself, but her husband, Ken, ended up in Burwood Hospital with a spinal injury after the 22 February quake. Ken had ridden home from work after the quake, checked on some neighbours, and had started to head off to where Susan works, when he remembered one more friend who lived on her own that he wanted to check up on. He was heading in that direction when a big aftershock hit and the road opened up. Ken's bike went into the crevice, and he flipped over and pole-drove his head into the road and broke his neck. Susan was very concerned when Ken did not respond to the messages she left on his cell phone after the quake, nor was

he at home when she got there. Eventually one of her sons came to fetch her and took her to his family's home.

They returned to Susan and Ken's house early the next morning, and there was still no news from Ken. Eventually, at 1 pm on 23 February, they registered Ken with the Red Cross as missing and found out from the neighbours that they had seen him after the quake. It was only when her sister sent a corded phone to the house, that Susan accessed a message from the hospital saying that Ken was in hospital with spinal injuries.

“He was pretty banged up” - Susan's story

Two days after the earthquake, Ken was transferred to Burwood. They learned that Ken was lucky to not be on a ventilator. “He had broken his vertebrae on C1, C2, C7, and compacted his spine in the T-zone; he could have been a quadriplegic - but he was alive, so... that was the main thing!” Amazingly, Ken slowly improved. Within days he could move a finger; then he could start moving his toes. He was in traction for four weeks, where he had weights on a halo, and Susan more or less lived at the hospital for three of those weeks.

After four weeks, Ken still had to stay in a halo, but got a vest that attached to it so he could get up and start to walk. He was in Burwood for another three months while he became more mobile. During that time, Susan and Ken grew very close to the people in the hospital. “They sort of became our family, really... the people in there because there were other earthquake victims... as well as other patients there. We still contact them regularly.”

While Ken was in hospital, they met some of the people who had assisted him after he went headfirst into the hole in the street. Two women in the neighbourhood had got him off the road and found someone who was nurse who treated him as a spinal injury victim and gave him mouth-to-mouth respiration. Someone else went to the Windsor rest home and got oxygen, which was very helpful. Finally, the special tactics unit from the NZ Police came, strapped him to

a door and took him off to the triage unit in the city. From there he was taken to Christchurch Public Hospital. This immediate treatment contributed to his recovery.

When Ken first came back home, they had to make some changes to the house to accommodate him. There were a lot of adjustments to make. Ken's short-term memory has been affected, he had to learn to walk and feed himself, and his stability was still questionable at times. His fatigue levels were also very high. At first they spent 100% of their time together, and then they started to have more of their own time. They eventually escaped the "patient bubble" got back to part-time employment, in Ken's case for 5 hours a week. ACC, physios, and ongoing hospital visits took up a lot of time. Susan also insisted that Ken see a psychologist, because she knew how driven he was, and that he wouldn't really know when to stop. When Susan was interviewed, Ken, who had always been very physically active, was going to the gym three days a week. Post the quake, they both try to "pay it forward" and help other people. "I think it's made us more aware of our neighbours and more aware of the people in the hospital and how they struggle".

Layers of challenge – health issues in a quake context

A number of the women who were interviewed had multiple health problems, but struggled on regardless. Tinks says her health could be better.

I have psoriasis which gives me arthritis - psoriatic arthritis, osteoarthritis which has come on over the years. I had got a catheter, and I have to drain that three times a day, and then they put a permanent one in there. I had to go to hospital and have an operation. It's a 'suprapubic' it's called, in my stomach. They come once a month and change that. Unless there is trouble, and then they come once a fortnight, but it's gone back to being once a month, now. Yes, so Nurse Maude comes and does that. What worries me most of all is the arthritis - it stops me doing...I tried to explain what's wrong with me, but you can't see it

... And I just give up trying to explain to people. It's not worth it.

In October 2011, while Christine's husband who has Parkinson's disease was in hospital, she had a slip at home and split her forehead, requiring seven staples. Be it stress, or rushing around, or whatever, Christine recognises that vulnerability at the time might have contributed to her fall. Another work move occurred around this time - from St Aidan's Church, into business premises in Halkett Street. Christine shifted house four times, so there were lots of disruptions post the quakes.

She recalls that at the time of her fall, everything seemed out of whack - the footpaths were broken, and the Estuary walks were broken, there were road works everywhere on her way to her daughter's home in Southshore, so the routine of coming home from work and going for walk just went out the window. The house was gone, the car was gone, and even their dog had to relocate to live in the country, as two large dogs at the daughter's place was too much.

Struggling to be normal – depression, anxiety and mental health issues

Many of the people interviewed had sought counselling for themselves, used natural remedies for stress, were aware of operating with increased anxiety, or went through hard times with their partners who have experienced depression. Some women talked about periods of dark depression or terrible panic attacks. As woman put it:

I definitely wouldn't say I was a depressed sort of person, but I did feel like I sort of had this kind of depression because all the things I liked doing to make myself feel good I couldn't do. Or I'd feel guilty about doing it because I'd think 'I can't go for a run if there's people sweeping liquefaction out of their houses'" and you tend to think its selfish to do things for yourself, but those things do keep us sane

especially when before the earthquakes they were very much part of everyday "normal" life.

Dame Malvina Major, who was teaching in the Music Department at University of Canterbury as well as pursuing her international singing career, became gradually aware that the earthquakes were having an impact on her. "I think it was several months before I realized how they had affected me. I really had not handled them very well and yet, on the surface, I seemed to be coping okay with the whole situation".

While she seemed to be managing things well, she began to cry really easily. "I could feel the tears welling up, and I would want to have a weep for no reason at all". Eventually she saw a counsellor. "But I very nearly didn't go. I didn't think anybody needed to go to a counsellor. Why would I go to a counsellor? I can talk to my family, I can talk to people. But when I went to her... I realized that this anxiety thing was related to a whole range of things that had happened earlier in my life and the earthquake tipped me over".

Dame Malvina went to four sessions with the counsellor. "I felt that I was coping... I also realized about this time that I wasn't very happy and I think that the earthquake had unsettled me enough to make me analyse my life and where I was at this stage in my life. I'd been travelling down a path at great speed, I was ignoring the signals that say number one, you're going too fast and, number two, you're not happy".

Over the Christmas break in 2011 Dame Malvina spent time on the beach in Auckland with her family. "It was ten days of an absolute amazing realization that I had actually missed the growing up of some of my grandchildren and I had missed the family life... I had always been a family person and Sundays down here in Christchurch I was alone and all of this was starting to have an effect on me." A desire to be closer to her family, and the opportunity to teach at Waikato University and become an international ambassador for the university, prompted Dame Malvina's relocation to Hamilton in 2012.

There were several reports of women experiencing panic attacks. Gina King said that, for a while, she had one

every day. She said that she realised she needed to push herself to get back out into the city, in order for her to do things. Her worst moment was having to go up to the sixth floor of the CERA building (HSBC Tower) to pick up a form, which was terrifying for her. She now has a cell phone with her all the time, so she's going to be alright. "Just took a long time to realise that."

Gina described how she went to some places but not others. For example, she will go to Northlands Mall but not Westfield Mall. She has stopped going into town, and gets everything she needs in the suburbs. She is "really, really scared that we are going to have another one and I am not going to be able to get to my family."

In May 2011, after they had moved from their damaged Lyttelton home to a rented house, Violet started to get anxiety attacks. She knew that she was feeling a strange sense of being displaced, and, although she was lucky to be alive and was very grateful, she became very anxious. She took stress leave and was looking forward to a mental health day with a good book, a warm drink and a day in bed when the first anxiety attack developed. "I did not recognise it at first; I thought I was having a heart attack".

She rang her partner and asked him to come home. At the same time, she called an ambulance. Violet could not move; she could not breathe; it was as if her body had shut down. "My legs and arms had gone numb with pins and needles; I could not get out of bed. It was terrifying. The ambo guys turned up and started doing all these tests and things. James stood in the corner of the room and watched. I became quite hysterical. My body went into hypothermia as my body temperature had dropped so much, all from anxiety!"

Eventually Violet went back to work, but she felt her "body was betraying me. I could be doing something completely normal and relaxing like making tea, and I would have a panic attack without any warning". Violet began to develop a fear of having a panic attack in public, so she could not go to a dairy or a shop or a mall. "There is no way I could go to a mall. I just tried to get through the working week

without anyone noticing. I always felt as if the ground was moving and I felt like I would pass out, but I kept trying to hide it at work; it was a horrible time".

Violet began to sleep in her clothes and always made sure there was a "go bag" beside the bed. Sleeping in her clothes lasted for about a year. When she was interviewed, the anxiety is still there, although Violet "is working on it".

In August 2011, Emily Adcock was preparing to move to Auckland. Most of the house was packed, and they were living and sleeping in the lounge. This was not an easy time for Emily, as she needed energy to keep herself going and not to have panic attacks, when another aftershock struck. She felt that she had regressed to being a little girl again, while still having to be a mum. While things improved later, the effects remained. Tiredness became a constant issue for Emily. If there was a way of summing up the last three years it would be "this horrible overwhelming feeling of tiredness and fatigue".

After the February earthquake Alia, an immigrant from Afghanistan, had a "seizure". She explains that she does not feel safe:

It happened after the after-shocks, I tried to keep away from my thinking, but still in my mind and heart I can't run away from what I am thinking. I feel sad. I feel disappointed when the aftershock has happened, and also, if I see the news I feel sorry for people if they are having an earthquake like Wellington. Earthquake is no problem it's just the nature, but if its tsunami, how should I do because in the past I have a very hard life? Just I want my next generation to be safe.

Health issues have plagued Alia since the earthquakes. She has been unable to sleep and the doctor referred her to some counsellors. "They were very helpful and I have been seven or eight times and they show me the way how to manage with the worry and how to manage with the situation". "How to breathe, how to do deep breathing, meditation techniques - it was helpful". Alia thinks the medical service is okay, "but my sleep is still affected, and I need to take sleeping pills, but I

am not happy in my inside because maybe I have a habit for medication. I am worried about my health. It has affected my body a lot, because I gain weight, and I feel more angry and eat more". Unfortunately, Alia has had two motor accidents after the earthquake and is now unable to drive a car. This further limits her mobility.

Roman is also anxious. She is conscious that her hair falls out a lot. She has cut it, so that it is shorter. She has also gained weight because she eats more. "My heart pumps a lot if I get a fright". Her doctor is encouraging her to look after herself, but she finds it hard not to anticipate the worst.

I hate the news now, after the quakes so many things have happened... You never know what is going to happen the next minute with an aftershock, or a big earthquake, you never know if it is going to hit you. Sometimes I don't want to listen, the more I listen, the more I am frightened. I hear that the water that comes out from the sea [tsunami] is worse... We have water all around us here.

Mary Hamilton's anxiety about safety affected her ability to live in some parts of the city. "The first area they tried to put me in was Hampshire Street (in Aranui). I went back to Housing New Zealand and basically said, 'I'm on my own, I suffer from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder from the earthquake, separation anxiety and here they were going to put me into this unit with fences, just little fences. I felt I would be fighting battle after battle there, you know, I am on my own'".

Following her GP's advice, Nicki, who lives with her disabled son in New Brighton, has been on antidepressants. The whole situation and the seismic events have been such a struggle. Coping with making claims, insurance companies and repairs to her house have been an added strain.

Caroline, another New Brighton resident, began to experience muscle tension, which was described by an osteopath as a new syndrome they had found in people who had had to escape the city a number of times. The body stays in fight and flight mode and forgets to relax. Car trips became

very difficult as Caroline's back was so painful. Caroline realized that after the quakes she had to take care of herself. "Following the earthquakes I realized I needed to take better care of myself, especially diet and exercise, because anyone who has been through so much could be vulnerable to more health issues".

The quakes and their aftermath had a major effect on June's life – it was the worst time. "I ended up on medication really as well. It just really got to me." She was pregnant at the time of the 22 February quake, and found a rental property in Picton, fully furnished. "I ended up selling everything that we had in our house, which wasn't much, but we had \$1000 to get the furnished house in Picton. We left everything else here; let the house go; and moved up to Picton". This arrangement did not work out, and eventually June returned to Christchurch.

The earthquakes took a toll on Nellie and her children. Nellie was depressed as a result of living in her damaged rental home in Waltham. She says that she "feels stuck... I can't do anything to that house... all I want is out ... I have been there for so long putting up with it... for four years". At times she just stayed in bed. The children used to send her youngest son to the bedroom to try and get her up when she is having a bad day. Her daughter said, "We know she won't get angry with my younger brother".

Nellie has also become a hoarder. "If I see something that is not wanted, I think to myself, 'we are going to need it', so I will grab it, but I have cluttered my place up so much that it unbearable for the kids".

Rana feel stuck as a consequence of the quakes and the financial impact they have had on her life. She believes that other people are getting on with their lives, but she is in a bind. "I feel there is little progress with everything on the back burner and no one care about us any more although there are others worse off. I am crying, have weight gain and hot flushes". Her only source of happiness is her daughter and grandson.

Julia, who has emerged from a relationship with a violent partner, has been referred through a mental health

agency for counselling. "The earthquake has probably affected me in more ways than I think". She finds herself more protective of the children now when it comes to allowing them to go and play with other families. "I don't let them go to the park on their own". Julia thinks that being overprotective is a result of the earthquakes.

The many faces of health

Women's stories as health professionals, care givers in rest homes, as those injured in the quakes, as people with family members who were injured, or as recipients of health care, capture just some of the impacts the Canterbury quakes had on people in Christchurch. Their stories illustrate the challenges of providing health care in a crisis, especially in buildings that are moving and shaking, and where those in hospitals to receive care are being injured while on the wards. These stories also highlight the inventiveness of people, the provision of care for others by those who were not trained professionals and the exercise of professional responsibility when those providing care are fearful, dazed and shaken up.

Whether women were health administrators, health professionals, caregivers or recipients of health care, their quake stories indicate both the necessity of immediate response in the context of disaster, and the need for ongoing provision of health care.

A significant finding of this study was the number of women who talked about the negative impact of the quakes on their mental health. Women who were interviewed in 2013 were more likely to talk about mental health issues than women interviewed in 2012. These women were mainly living in the eastern parts of the city that had been most affected by the quake and often struggling to meet their families' needs with limited financial resources.

“It’s such a strange time” - the effects of the quakes

Most of the women who told their earthquake stories insist that they are fine. From day to day, most cope very well and are on top of things. Many look after other people as a matter of course, whether family, friends or neighbours. However, they also spoke about how the earthquakes had affected their lives. These effects included financial problems, health problems, losses of various kinds, loneliness, depression, stress, the intersection between earthquake losses and family illness and death and constant battles against bureaucracy. There is almost a new normal – an acceptance among these participants that life is difficult and the problems they confront will not be resolved in the short term.

Everyone’s life was in some way affected by the quakes, but the location of the home had a major impact on what they meant for people and families. No analysis of the impacts of the quakes on women’s lives can avoid the differences between eastern and western Christchurch. Women in the less damaged west commented on these differences as well as women who lived in eastern Christchurch and experienced liquefaction, leaks, broken windows, flooding, longer periods without running water and power, as well as much more severe damage to their homes.

East and West - two cities

Belinda Grant, who lived in Dallington in eastern Christchurch at the time of the September and February quakes, but relocated to the west of the city in late 2011, had this to say about the relationship between the east and the west:

I do believe Christchurch is like two cities now. I know everyone in Christchurch experienced the same level of trauma with the earthquakes and everyone has their own story and experienced their own individual thing. But I do believe those on this (the west) side of

town are a lot luckier. If you are not over there and not amongst it, you do not realise how severe it is.

A number of participants commented on the differences in experiences between those living on the east side of town to those on the west. According to Lianne Dalziel, interviewed when she was MP for Christchurch East, "people on the west have no idea what it is like out here. And the thing is that people on this side of town don't want rubberneckers, but the people on that side of town need to know what it is like over here. There's a kind of a 'get over yourselves' attitude that we are finding a little bit... it's a bit difficult".

Zara describes what it was like living on the east side: "The whole area [around Slater Street] was really damaged and I began to hate the walk to school. I hated the machinery every day, everywhere, and the cones. I can still taste that silt in my mouth and the smell of the portaloos that were everywhere."

In the end, Zara and her family moved from the east to the south of the city in October 2011. "We could have just extracted them quickly to this suburb and house where it is 'What earthquake? No earthquake here'. But you only know that in hindsight. I'm glad we stayed over there though, I do like to feel the pain and go through it and experience the whole process."

Wendy Hawke, a Dallington resident, was upset when the Mayor of Christchurch, Bob Parker made comments like 'things are back to usual' and 'everything is OK'. "But things were not OK here. Houses were on an angle; people I knew had to move out. It was so not fine... There was rather a lot of suburb snobbery really. Because I would hear lots of things like, 'Well, of course, our land out here is good' or 'we live on the hill and it's all rock up here'. And people would say it because they were relieved. But when you are living in the middle of what is not OK, I think you are inclined to pick this up in a different way."

Some of the women interviewed were particularly aware of the different experiences of people in different parts of the city. Amber Henderson lived in Burwood, worked with children in New Brighton after the February 2011 quake and

also worked part-time at Coffee Culture in Merivale. "I think there's probably a bit of anger as well with it because of the other side of town, go over there and people would just stare at you because you hadn't showered in a couple of days because you don't have the water; ... They had no idea what was going on and what was happening... We went out to Styx Mill, and it was like a massive culture shock... We went straight after church one day... and the roads went from really stink to immaculate and these houses all in a row and they were all fine... It's as if nothing's happened out there... People didn't understand what people out here went through ... I think with the two different sides ... it really was divided. It was like two different worlds".

Rebecca Macfie, a Christchurch journalist, thinks that the decisions people on the east side of Christchurch have had to make are incredibly difficult and complicated. There was so much damage in her neighbourhood, on the hills close to the epicentre of the 22 February 2011 quake. Many of her neighbours lost their houses or were displaced. She was pretty sure at one point that close to half of the residents of her street had to leave their homes, and, when she was interviewed in April 2012, about thirty percent were still displaced. Other than make-safe repairs, no-one in the neighbourhood has had any repair or rebuild work done, even those whose homes have had to be demolished. This has caused some anxiety for Rebecca, not only for her neighbours, but that "this thing called community - this little village" would be no more. This situation has caused much more anxiety and fear for Rebecca "than she would ever have imagined".

As a reporter, Rebecca also went out around the streets of Bexley, in particular, Waitaki Street, which was one of the most devastated streets in the city. She knocked on doors and found the place almost abandoned. The few people still living there were in despair and in total fear of the financial impact of what they were presented with through the red zone package. She discovered a general sense of anger that "nothing was going anywhere".

Rebecca Gordon notes that there have been different effects for different people. She feels strongly, though, that even through all the misfortunes and all the tragedies, "you can only feel grateful and thankful that you are not one of the people that had family who were killed in the earthquake". She continued, "some people have experienced a broken property and loss of a job, but some people have come out quite nicely. They have a new paint job and life has just gone on while others have had their entire life wrecked". Rebecca says "I am just so thankful for so many things - the way things happened around me - but I am hopeful that an event like this will never happen again".

After the September earthquake, Diana Madgin, who lived with her husband in Dallington, stayed a few days with a friend on the west of the city. She was struck by the difference between the safety there, and the fragility around her home in Dallington, built on land which had once been under the sea. She and her husband moved to a rental home on the west side of the city, but missed their Dallington community. She thought the people in that area had little understanding of the problems encountered daily in the east of the city.

Melissa Parsons recalls the feelings of shock, surprise, loss, and sympathy for those out east dealing with liquefaction and flooding. "We all felt for the embattled folk out east, forced yet again to contend with liquefaction and disruption." Myra Kunowski, who lives on the western side of the city, found that participating in this Women's Voices project made her acutely aware that "others in eastern and central areas have had to deal with so much more. It has been humbling that women have been prepared to share with us the difficulties they and their families have faced over 18 months. Yet many of the feelings of loss for the city as it was are shared by us all".

Helen McCaul, another interviewer, reflected critically on "how upset and inconvenienced we were without power until the middle of the following day! ... Little did we know of the suffering elsewhere across the city. Living in the north-west of the city, our house suffered only minor

cracking and cosmetic damage and much of this was not evident until quite some time later”.

Life-changing experiences – the good and the bad

There is no doubt that the earthquake experiences of Cantabrians over the last three years can be considered ‘interesting’. In many cases, they have also been life-changing. For Lianne Dalziel, the earthquakes triggered a new phase in her role as the MP for Christchurch East. She was able to do some really worthwhile work as a representative of the people of that part of Christchurch, working with a range of others to meet the community's needs. She also made a lot of new friends. In her maiden speech in Parliament, she had said that she wanted was to be the face of the people who couldn't be seen and the voice of the people who couldn't be heard. “And for just one minute in my life I felt that I had done something that lived up to the expectation that I set myself when I became an MP in 1990, and that's pretty special”.

Not all the changes that people have faced have been good, and not all have been bad. There have been winners and losers. Grace Hollander had to relocate to Palmerston North because her beautiful retirement unit was destroyed, and she is facing enormous financial loss. Others are worse off than her, she says, but at 90 years of age it was hard to lose the community connections in Christchurch that were a core component of her very active public life.

Katherine Ewer, a lawyer in Christchurch, felt she was moving on. She was amazed at how people adapt. She thinks that “if you weren't involved in it, it is an amazing experiment in how well people can cope and adapt. And I've even been surprised in myself with how much you can take on board and keep going.” Interviewed in 2012 she felt a lot better than she had in 2011.

Embracing the positive

For some women the quakes provided a new focus for their lives. For Raewyn Dawson, one of the interviewers for this

project, the challenges posed by the quakes were primarily positive. "I'm glad to be alive and to be so useful to society. It's a delight to be part of this family, community, and city".

Ruth Todd, broadcaster and organiser of book festival events, was optimistic about the future of Christchurch. She thought that some of the buildings being deconstructed were ugly, including the apartments on the Estuary whose construction she had opposed – "they were hideous." She is glad that some buildings such as the Arts Centre are being restored. But Ruth also believes that we need to let go of the past and "look to San Francisco and to places that have rebuilt vibrantly and be a different Christchurch".

Beverley Price, one of the interviewers for the project and Salvation Army worker, thought that "the earthquake has made me stronger emotionally. The shakes still alarm me, but I am starting to live life more positively. Life continues in Christchurch and we keep believing that one day soon the quakes will diminish completely. Some we feel and some we don't. Buildings and houses are being demolished and roads and bridges are slowly being repaired"

Belinda Grant, whose home in Dallington became uninhabitable and who moved many times with her family in the year after the quake, has also noticed some positive outcomes from the quakes. "Christchurch people are a lot more sympathetic to other people". She and her husband have also strengthened their relationship: "I appreciate my life much better now than I did and, although it has taken a long time, I value the fact that we have grown a lot closer going through this together. We know of a lot of friends who have separated since the earthquake, and neither of us wants that to happen as it is so important to stick together and talk about what we feel and what has been happening. I have made some lovely friends and I have one friend in particular who motivates me to, for example, sort out our house issues and any salvageable items".

Her faith has helped Seulata to cope with the earthquakes and become more forgiving. When she went through a period of depression some years before the

Christchurch quakes, Seulata questioned her faith. But through her recovery, her church's teaching, and the earthquakes she has learnt a lot. "I'm more mature in how I look at life. Right now I have more faith. And I think it's the hope and the faith that actually got me going and actually strengthened me. So I have changed... Before the earthquake I used to be a very angry person. If I don't like this person in my family, I would not talk to them for about two years. I'm one of those people. But right now I've sort of learned to let go and to forgive. Because you don't know what's gonna happen. And especially with my children. Every time they talk to me before we finish, it's 'I love you Mum' and I say the same. It's more understanding the life that they live. So it has changed me from an angry person to a person that is willing to let go and move on". Her faith has also helped her stay calm. She now sees the quakes as a test, and knows that she was able to accept "If that was your time, that was your time".

The bad times

Some women, like Joy Brownie, struggled to remain positive. "I found I was struggling a bit, but managed as I just had to look on the positive side of things because I am lucky, very lucky, and there were others worse off than me. I have got to get on with life, but I am not motivated to go through the things still in my garage. There are a lot of broken things, but after all they are only things. I have to get the shortfall from EQC from my insurance company. You should see how the liquefaction has taken the varnish out of my furniture".

Fewer international students are in the city, but there are new immigrants who are taking their places in the homes of some of the women interviewed - those arriving from overseas with the skills for the Christchurch rebuild. Joy had two Irish boarders at the time she was interviewed in 2012.

Nicky Wagner, MP for Christchurch Central, prides herself on being an optimist, but the June 2011 earthquake tested her. It was "too cold, too wet, too hard, too long".

Nicky, who was interviewed in January 2012, considered that "we are at the angry, grumpy stage and I think that is being played out in local body politics. The head tells us 9,000 earthquakes, no-one's fault. The heart says - why can't this be finished? I'm sick of this. I want to be able to do the things I did before".

The sheer number of earthquakes has worn down others, too. Judith Sutherland thought that "our resolve may not have been so strong had we realised that we were to face more big earthquakes on 26 December 2010, 22 February 2011, 13 June 2011 and 23 December 2011".

Rebecca Macfie thought that the mood around the city was mixed in April 2012 when she was interviewed, and she "never quite settles on what she thinks the prevailing mood is - it very much depends on who I have been talking to and in which part of the city". Some of the participants were reluctant to discuss their feelings about what has happened. As Anna Mowat puts it, while this is her experience, it is not finished. There is still worry and concern. She still feels fear and worry, and that's hard.

Marie Rean has found herself not trusting buildings, and is careful where she parks her car. She avoids large shops and shopping malls when she can. The quakes also affected her participation in church services for a time.

Katie Gilbertson, who was interviewed in 2012, goes to some parts of Christchurch, but does not want to visit other parts of the CBD. "We haven't been to see the new shops and things, we'll get there. We don't want to yet. Although on Saturday, the girls and I went to the Botanical Gardens and we were looking at the trees and they asked 'what if the trees fall down?' and I said, 'No, they won't. That's as close to town as we got so far. It's incredible how it affects everything; the girls still have nightmares".

Jenny Harris noted that gardening used to be her Saturday morning de-stress, creating a beautiful garden area. "Now gardening consists of spraying weeds that are growing in the cracks of the foundation". It is about adjusting to the new set of circumstances that have become the norm. There is no release from stress by gardening now.

An example of how easy it is to be thrown back into 'quake fear' was told by Kirsten Rennie, a teacher who lived in Sumner. A group of teenage boys appeared and ran along by some containers brandishing sticks and making a terrible noise. For Kirsten, it brought a flashback of the preceding disastrous events. It aptly demonstrated the insensitivity of this group of young people and how quickly previous traumas resurface. She felt very much for elderly people. She felt that the whole cliff might come down with the din. She now labels that an irrational fear of the moment. For her, there is no normal any more. She dislikes the fact that she is no longer the positive, fun-loving person she used to be.

Rosie Laing, a GP, whose beloved 1870s Lyttelton home was destroyed during the 4 September 2010 quake, summed up what a lot of others seemed to be saying: "We are just much closer to the edge of emotion than other people, more fragile; we are more tired. We are more inclined to think that what can go wrong will. But I think we will all look back on this time and see it as doing lots of really good things, but it is such a strange time. We are much closer to other people. We value other people, the community, and the casual support of strangers".

Feeling unsafe

Kristy Constable-Brown still feels fear and does not like to be far from her Woolston home - she has only been into the city a couple of times since the February quakes. She would like to train as a teacher aide one day, but thinks she may not be quite ready as she feels safer at home at the moment. She does enjoy the parent help work she does each week. "With my mum gone, my main support has gone.... we don't have a washing machine at the moment [and] I can't take it around to Mum, so I have to go to a laundromat". But she does not like having to stay in the laundromat whilst the washing is being done. Kristy enjoys going out to do chores once a week, but she does not like to stay out too long. "I hang out at home a bit... I know it's because I want to be near my kids if something happened".

After the September earthquakes, Treena didn't enjoy living alone and felt nervous about being in the two storied house in Redwood which she moved to after leaving Kaiapoi. She moved her bed downstairs from the upstairs bedroom, because she felt the aftershocks less down there. Treena still avoids the inner city, as she is frightened "that I might be unlucky".

Belaynesh came to Christchurch from Ethiopia because she wanted to live in a safe place with her family. Her family have recovered from the impact of the quakes, but now she is a bit worried about flooding and especially about tsunamis. "I am really big scared about tsunami. I say each day to God, 'Please, help New Zealand... no more disasters that is all!'"

Recovering

Christine thinks we are all older and wiser for our experience, but also that the quakes have taken a toll on our energy - we are all more tired. Christine is looking forward to getting past that and regaining energy. (She commented that the Red Cross DVD by Dr Rob Gordon has been really helpful in understanding the "three year tiredness".) She found it helpful to talk about her earthquake experiences during her interview, because the three years had somehow "crunched together", and it was good to look back and think, "Did we really do all that?"

Like many others, Jacinta felt stressed and tired after the February earthquakes. "I can't tell if it felt harder because of the earthquake or it just was harder, it was exhausting". Things eased up a bit for her when the power and electricity was restored.

June is now 30. She still doesn't have much support. . "I mean I can't say it's any better, it's just gone back to normal. I'm just trying to take care of my kids". June is still on medication for depression and she is concerned about the recent aftershocks. "Since we've been having another couple of earthquakes lately, it's just like 'Oh no!'... Is it going to happen again?"".

Like many others, June has tried to move on. "I think a lot of people have just forgotten about it... They have just tried to move on, the ones that are around, and just hope that it won't happen again". She is thankful that she wasn't as badly affected as some people since the earthquakes. "I was the person who didn't lose anybody in the CTV building, so that was great".

She thinks about the places that she used to go to in the city. "I always used to go into the city, that's where all the shops were, the bars, the clubs on The Strip ... when I used to go out with my friends". She used to go into the city a lot more frequently than she does now. "I catch the buses into town; I don't mind going in there now":

Just look at our city... just look at Colombo Street, we don't have a Square, and we don't have a... anything. All these beautiful things that we did have in the city... like, you've just seen the city fall so bad, it was not funny.

Feelings about others

One key effect of the quakes was a sense of connection to others in the city, many of them people who had experienced more damage, more disruption and more financial loss. The women who told their own earthquake stories were often acutely aware of how others were responding to the stresses of the quakes. Mary Hobbs had never been so proud to be a Cantabrian.

Through all of these calamities the common thread running through was how stoic, brave and strong Cantabrians were. They were getting on with it. I have never been so proud to be a Cantabrian.

From the safety of Rangiora, Jayne has watched the devastation of Christchurch with sadness. "When we were doing our earthquake relief work... seeing the despair on people's faces as we were going in to deliver the food, etc. was just heart-breaking". Jayne spent the earlier part of her life in Aranui, and, while her old house was knocked over

when they extended Wainoni Park, her familiarity with the area made it sad for her to see the state of it.

As a reporter, Rebecca Macfie felt a sense of responsibility to represent the voice of the people of Christchurch by telling the story of this city in crisis. Rebecca thinks that there is a lot of depression and despair as well as a lot of stoicism, but she also thought that there is also a danger that people were far too patient. Rebecca believes everyone tends to be fighting a solitary fight regarding their properties, dealing with their insurance company, or waiting for decisions about their land that can only be made by the authorities. And, of course, everyone knows someone else who is worse off. For this reason, they don't like to make too much of a fuss because bad stuff is happening all over the city.

She thinks that "people are quite coy about their own struggle". She has found this attitude in her own neighbourhood. Two lots of neighbours directly behind her who have lost their homes; one has been told it will be five years, and one has been told it will be three years before they are rebuilt. Rebecca questioned "Are these people not a priority? ...Where is the system in this and where is the fairness?"

Kathryn O'Connell-Sutherland started to document my experiences of being out in the most affected areas visiting students. "I could see opportunities to write and share their stories of courage working alongside children and families. But my eyes were tired from the travel, sights, and constant manoeuvring around badly damaged roads and detours. I visited students in early childhood settings constantly for two terms. especially in eastern Christchurch."

Clare thinks about her children's future, and how it may be affected by the quakes. Her daughter told them, in response to a question about Christmas, that Jesus was going to come and "fix the house". Clare realised her daughter saw that her whole physical environment had been broken and had to be fixed. "That's her perception of the world - we're constantly talking about it. What will that mean for her as adult - will she be able to go into war zones and do amazing things for people? I don't know".

Others are worse off

When women spoke about the impact of the quakes on their own lives, they recognised their own losses, but often mentioned those who were worse off. Nicki, a sole parent with a disabled child, who lived in a damaged home in New Brighton, was constantly aware that others were in even more difficult circumstances. She spoke about getting upset when she sees on the news stories about people who have severe damage who haven't had anything done. Nicki also feels sad for people, like her mother in her seventies, who will never see the city fixed, and those in their eighties who are still waiting for their houses to be fixed.

Emily, who lives in a Housing New Zealand accommodation, recognises that there are people who are worse off than her and her family. "There are a lot of people out there who are worse off, a huge amount of people are worse off than we are... People that can't even live in their own houses; people that are still paying for houses that are long gone"... Emily doesn't understand "why people will have to keep paying for sections that their houses are no longer on. It's almost like the Council is milking everything they can get... They are meant to be there helping people...."

Feelings of guilt about her own family's good fortune were expressed by Raewyn Crowther. "I feel really, really fortunate that things went so smoothly for us. I feel a little guilty in fact that things worked out well for us... We are far better off than prior to 4 September... It seems odd that we should be OK, didn't lose anybody, just lost a cat, but we have actually been through something that a lot of people never get to experience." In some ways Raewyn has enjoyed the physical sensation of the quakes.

Financial impacts of the quakes

Tinks thought that the earthquakes did disrupt her life "quite a bit". It affected her financial situation and placed her under considerable financial strain. Tinks survives financially from week to week. "I haven't got a car. I haven't had a car for

over twelve months. Just couldn't afford the upkeep of it. The registration. It wasn't insured, but I couldn't afford the warrant and registration and things, it just got too much so it had to go. Which, believe you me was not nice".

A friend now comes and takes Tinks to different places, but she has obtained taxi vouchers "so I have to sort of plan what days to go where. I keep looking out for a car - don't know how I would pay for it - I haven't got any money! The only day I have any money is 'payday'."

Once she pays the rent and bills, there is only a tiny amount of money left over to cover other costs and food. The City Mission paid for her grandson's school uniform and they have helped a lot. She has had food grants and parcels. Another drain on her resources is purchasing items for a loved grandson, who is serving a long sentence in prison. Nicki didn't know about many of the services available to help people after the quakes, so she exhausted all her money, without realising that she could have got more help. She was forced to apply for a mortgage holiday on her New Brighton home from the bank, and she had to get it extended, because she could not survive on her current income. Nicki was not able to pay her rates and now is in debt.

It was the one thing that I wasn't getting pestered about; like I needed the power. I thought, 'well I can just fob the rates off a bit, I need the power, I need the water, I need the food, I need the gas, you know, I can't survive without these'. I put \$60 on my rates this week; it is the first bit I've put [anything] on since all this happened. They had to take something out of my mortgage account to pay my rates.

All the financial worry on top of coping with the earthquakes, and her son's total dependence on her, has been hugely stressful.

Budgeting is important for Dee Turner as she has no surplus funds. She manages to keep ahead with her power bill because "I pay them [Empower] so much every pay day. I am in credit there. That's quite a good way of saving really, because I can draw it out any time. I am coping". She owns

a car but can't afford to run it any more as she has to be very conscious of expenditure. "I am not complaining about that really, it's just the mental effect it has on me. I get very shaky. Even my sister said to me 'you haven't been the same since the earthquakes'. She couldn't get over when I was living with her, the fact that I was just shaking all the time. Even now, about the same time every afternoon I get the shakes". Dee appreciates her family and says "my family are really good to me, very supportive".

Due to her panic attacks, and her son's health problems, Violet moved from full-time to part-time work. "I was spread too thinly, I was not there for family, and I was not there for my clients". Now she is focussed on the kids and is feeling more positive about this. She loves her work and wants to keep on top of it as well as family life. She had been in her position of employment for seven years which is a big part of her life. "It is healthier for me to work than not work and to be thinking about other people than myself".

Mary Hamilton finds that meeting the running costs of her car difficult. "It's hard. It's hard. You walk when you haven't got the petrol. You gotta, you know, you have to keep petrol to get to your job or to get to wherever you are going. You know what I mean. A person on a benefit can't just jump in their car and use it every day and go wherever. It just doesn't work that way."

Others are worse off... or are they?

The quakes pushed many of the women who told their earthquake stories to their limits – emotionally and financially. At times some of them wanted to escape the city, and a few women did leave for periods of time. Others could not escape and felt 'trapped'. Combined with the stories of stress, pain, grief, exhaustion, and the strains of just coping day to day, were also stories of what people had learnt, about themselves and others and about the resources they had drawn on to live through these very difficult times.

'Resilience' is an overused term in the context of natural disasters. It can become an expectation that is used to

judge people, as well as a recognition that crises can stimulate personal resourcefulness and collective responses to problems that are extraordinary, unexpected and inspiring. These women's accounts of the impacts of the Christchurch quakes illustrate the complexity of 'resilience', while also highlighting how hard it was for many individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities to live through major quakes, thousands of aftershocks, damaged homes, disrupted sleep, school closures and relocations, endless road repairs, and still hold on to some sense that things will get better.

The constant mention that others were worse off indicates the strong sense of collectivity that imbued women's stories of their quake experiences. Many women were acutely aware that their experiences were not unique; that others were going through the same or worse experiences; that the people of this city were in this crisis together.

“A phoenix from the ashes” - Rebuilding Christchurch

Participants had very mixed feelings about the future of Christchurch, whether the focus was on the new central city, public facilities like parks, swimming pools and sports stadiums, or what happens to red-zoned land. Their views on the future of the city were recorded between late 2011 and early 2014, many of them before the unveiling of the official plan for the central city, but all of them after the ‘Share an Idea’ initiative by the Christchurch City Council, which most women thought was an excellent initiative. There was strong support for greater consultation with the people of city about rebuilding of the city centre, the future of red-zoned land, and about public facilities and their location. Jane Higgins, social scientist and children’s author, said that she had great hopes when we did the consulting phase that people might be listened to “because I know people have great ideas. Walking around the big stadium where people were writing on post-it notes; where people were writing on computers telling stories; such good stuff was coming out”.

Julia, who lives in Linwood, was pleased that “the rebuild is starting to happen”, but thought that town looked pretty empty in 2013. She took her children through the city when it was opened up for the first time and they were fascinated by what was happening. “The two younger ones did not understand it... ‘Look mum they are pulling that building down!’” But what would make a difference for Julia and her children are facilities in her neighbourhood. Julia would like to see more housing in and around Aranui, decent parks and a new pool in the area. A new library has been built and its helpful staff and the play area for children have “been a godsend”.

Recreational facilities for her children were also important for Emma Butler, who lives at Waimairi Beach. She did not “miss the city too much... as we didn’t go in there too much”. She wanted a new recreational facility built in eastern Christchurch. “We visited the Graeme Condon pool and couldn’t get in and they seem to be sitting on the

fence with QEII. It would be nice to get something similar, as it's hard to get to other places for swimming lessons. QEII had so much to offer; we need a recreation centre out here for the community”.

Karen, whose family lives in New Brighton, was positive about rebuilding the city and wants her children to have access to the city centre and all that it provides, but she most appreciates opportunities for them in her local area, such as the age appropriate activities organised by the Grace Vineyard Centre. She also values the Brighton Public Library and the organised volley ball sessions that take place on the beach in front of the library. New Brighton feels like a safe place for Karen and the family in a city without a CBD.

Some mothers had a long-term focus. Kathryn O'Connell Sutherland, one of the interviewers for this project, anticipated challenges when she provided her earthquake story in early 2012, but this was mixed with optimism: “I believe there is more to come; job losses with building and business closures. But I also recognise these are creative times with opportunities. I am prepared for more years of waiting and setbacks, and I am realistic about slow progress regarding our house. We are committed to Christchurch although each experience challenges that. We can't sell our home and our money is invested in it. The rebuild is for our children's future”.

Michelle Whitaker, who is involved community development work, recognised that big decisions must be made if Christchurch is to be a world class city, and she hoped that those making the key decisions have the vision to accomplish this. “And not a muddy version of a world class city, but the real thing”. She thinks that everyone can help to inspire these changes; by staying in the city; creating innovative new ways of doing things; and helping those in the decision-making areas make the right decisions for the city.

Jane Higgins also thought that involving the people of Christchurch in the decision-making process was crucial. “I think mainly the future is about a democratic consultative process and leadership. I think that leadership is not about controlling what's going on, it's about being inspirational and

open minded and seeing all the possibilities and being creative and imaginative”.

For Emily, a grandparent and community worker from Aranui, the key thing was that those making these decisions were in touch with people who are most affected by the quakes. In elections she voted for the people who “actually come here and come around and talk to you... I won’t vote for somebody that doesn’t even know you’re here, that won’t even come in their cars to see you, see how your houses are or see you how your street is, or even bother to go to the schools to see how the schools are coping... I’m only interested in people that actually come here”.

A disorientating city

While some women are positive about the future and keen to have their say about the rebuilding of the city, other women find Christchurch a distressing place to live and think the focus on rebuilding the CBD is inappropriate. If Rana did not feel responsible for her mother, she would have left the city. "I find the city very disorientating now". Getting about was a nightmare with terrible roads. She has had "the financial burden of eight weekly wheel-balance and alignment. Actually I think Brighton was forgotten and still is".

I had to use all my redundancy money from the Christchurch City Council to live on as I was not entitled to any support until I was down to my last \$30. I hate Christchurch. I am ashamed at what has happened in town, the mess and unfortunately, as I said to my daughter, the mess in town is through human incompetence, not the earthquake. I go to New Brighton every day and see that EQC, CCC, the insurance companies, the Government, CERA and SCIRT have turned our city into a war zone. Shame. Shame. Shame. Three years on I am still fighting. Fighting to get what is mine.

Michelle, who also lived in eastern Christchurch, thought that neither EQC nor the Christchurch City Council was doing enough. “They seem to focus only on the CBD, it’s like the

rest of us have been forgotten - that we are not part of Christchurch any more. I would never wish this upon anybody - the pain, the heartache, the feeling of dread. It is not something you will ever understand unless you go through it”.

Michelle accepted that Christchurch would never be the same again. “A lot of us have lost loved ones, either as a direct result of the quake or since. There are scars in Christchurch that will never be healed.”

Tinks, who is in her fifties, regretted the loss of all her familiar landmarks. “I am upset about the Cathedral. I get upset about the Catholic Cathedral. Now, I'm watching the Town Hall. It's hard. It's real hard because, you know, in my mind, that's Christchurch. It's my Christchurch. If they go, then my Christchurch has gone.”

She found, like many others, that when she went into the city, she could not remember what street she was in “because the landmarks have all gone. Silly things like the dairy that was on the corner of Cashel Street and Fitzgerald have gone. We were over Cashel Street before I realised it. Stupid things like that. You know, it's all gone.”

Roman, an Ethiopian immigrant, felt that she had lost the city she had come to love. “I miss the city, the people, the crowds. Cathedral Square, where you meet people from all the nations, I miss that”. Roman did not like to go to the city any more. “It makes me feel very angry and very sad”. As a student, her teacher and social worker took her to “every corner of the city to see what was what and what is new”. All that is gone and it saddens Roman.

“I have so many memories in a short time” of her new city. In Christchurch “every plant has a flower, even in the grass the weeds flower... I love that; that is exciting. I do not know the names of the plants, but I love them, every single plant”. For Roman there is still the fear that there will be more earthquakes. At the same time, she has some hope for the future. “I hope and pray for the next generation that this place will look awesome”.

What we have lost - heritage buildings

Women from all over the city commented on the loss of heritage buildings and their grief about the demolition of familiar landmarks. Jenny May, a heritage expert, spoke about the challenges of the first weeks after the quake when she entered the city to inspect damaged heritage buildings:

I remember the very first week I spent going in and out of the Red Zone and it was summer of course, and warm. I would come out of the Red Zone at night. And you don't realise that the centre of Christchurch is sort of lower than anywhere else, so you actually always walk uphill slightly when you leave. Somehow walking out at Gloucester Street where the entrance was, it seemed a bigger uphill over that bridge. And I felt I walked out of the dark into light. It was silent in there. That's something that will stay with me forever, was the silence. It was a city I worked in every day and it was silent, absolutely silent because there was no machinery in there in those first weeks... no birds, nothing. And it felt cold and it felt dark. And you would come up and you'd walk over the Gloucester Street Bridge and the sun would shine.

Jenny noted that, although many heritage buildings did have to go, in her opinion, some owners have taken the earthquakes as an excuse to get rid of their heritage buildings. Before the earthquakes, heritage building owners needed Christchurch City Council planning permission for any changes to their buildings. But in the aftermath of the quakes, with the new CERA Act, the Council lost that control over heritage buildings.

Some demolitions were not necessary and the result is the "destruction of anything that's going to be familiar." When she was visiting the Red Zoned city centre in 2012, Jenny found that she got lost even though she has spent months in there. "People who have never been in just won't recognise where things are". Jenny laments the loss of heritage buildings that were tangible evidence of the past. She

hopes that the community don't totally lose their memories of historic Christchurch.

It was announced in mid-2012 that around seventy percent of the buildings in the city centre would eventually be demolished. There was a great deal of concern among participants about what had been lost. Melissa Parsons, one of the interviewers for this project, was sad about buildings that were demolished before she could see them in their damaged state:

The biggest losses for me were the buildings that were gone before I had a chance to say goodbye. I found myself trying to remember 'when was the last time I had been in this or that building?' In a lucky quirk of fate, my last time in the Crowne Plaza Hotel was a Valentine's Day dinner, thanks to a voucher won by my husband. Then, several months later, I discovered that I had a memory of being inside the CTV building (once in 2007, to deliver documents to my husband's then accountant.) Given what we had lived through as a city, that almost felt like a 'brush with death'.

The old Christchurch was missed by Nicky Wagner MP. "I miss being able to walk into the city. I miss all the places I used to go. I miss the Arts Centre... I miss all that central city stuff. I miss the old buildings in Cranmer Square that have all gone. I miss Christchurch Girls' High School, and I miss the Cathedral because that was the church I went to... I'm sad about the places that are damaged. That's what I miss... That's what I miss."

Mary Hamilton, a Shirley resident in her fifties, was also sad about all the buildings that have gone. "They've gone. It's just empty. It's really hard to remember what was there and what wasn't. I just can't see anyone wanting to go back into the city. I don't like going there. It's horrible. It's just a big reminder of it and it's even worse because of all the gaps. You try and remember what was there and you get quite lost in town. I honestly can't see people wanting to work back in town".

The devastation to the city centre, the loss of heritage buildings and a familiar city landscape had a particular impact on Susan Barnes, who had visited the city from Cheviot as a child, worked in the CBD, and regularly visited it every Friday with her guide dog, Sam, before the 22 February 2011 quake. She had a memory of the city, its streets and its buildings from when she had been sighted. She used this memory to negotiate the city as someone with impaired sight and then as a blind person. She had taught several guide dogs how to assist her in finding her way around the city. This was crucial to her independence and her mobility. But the city she remembered was either in ruins or demolished.

When she was interviewed in 2012, Susan looked forward to reconnecting with the central city and with particular buildings that are important to her that had survived the quakes. "I hope that I will get to go back into the Town Hall again... I was 10 when I first was in the mass choir, Cheviot used to come down to it". The Town Hall was also significant as the place where she received her BA and BA (Hons) degrees. She accepted that the rebuilt city would be very different from the city she knew. But she hoped that some of the past would be preserved "and that they don't just build concrete slab monstrosities.... I can't quite get my head around the fact that I won't be able to see it, but I hope to feel the life and the spirit that comes back into the centre of town." Sadly Susan died on 12 March 2014, before the city centre could be rebuilt.

Adele Kelly was sad that a lot of the heritage buildings have gone. Whilst she likes some of the new places in Sydenham, "the older stuff in the city was always there; we took it for granted; it does feel like a new place". When she goes into Cashel Street Mall, Adele notices the change. She used to frequent the Bus Exchange a lot, as she did not drive until a few years ago. "We used to have such a busy city. It is amazing how quickly we have got used to having no city centre". She said, "it is hard to imagine the city is ever going to be there again!"

Anne felt a real sense of loss because she could no longer wander around the city. She didn't take advantage of the city walk, or the city bus trip, but has watched it on YouTube. At the time of the interview, she had not been back into the Botanical Gardens, and really misses the Arts Centre. Anne would like to go to the movies again, but keeps thinking that she should just wait a bit longer. She wanted to "wait until the earthquakes have settled more."

A Christchurch GP, Rosie Laing, found it "hard, very hard seeing what has happened to the city". At the time of the interview she worked in Bealey Avenue and travelled around the edges of the red zone. She spoke about how she "used to cry every day going to work as something would catch me - the Cathedral, or Smith's City, or somewhere that had memories, or no memories. The hardest thing is the gaps - what the hell was there?" However, she feels that "we have all adapted and put that grief somewhere. It's still there, but you can't live in a state of trauma all the time, it is too hard. There is just so little left of Christchurch, it is extraordinary."

Christine, now a South Brighton resident, thought that the earthquakes have led to "the loss of our whole city, and our identity really." Driving into work through town and looking at the back end of buildings that are falling down, she asks herself, "Did this really happen?" She is particularly concerned about the old Odeon Theatre on Tuam Street that backs onto St Asaph Street. Early on, the end wall had fallen away leaving the plush red velvet seats exposed to the elements, and now, as Christine drives to work along the same route, the building is still there in its broken state, but the seats are now an ugly grey, covered in dust. It makes her want to say, "Come on guys, it's been months now! When are we ever going to tidy this up?"

Michelle, a sole parent in New Brighton, did not go into the city any more. "The city itself scares me... I don't recognise the city any more... it is just not the same... The city I remember was full of lots of old buildings... It is now full of all these glass shoe boxes or containers. And I'm sorry, they are not attractive... I worry that by being in the city, something else is going to shake again."

For some women, the buildings in the CBD are less important than the location of the city and its natural environment. Jane Higgins and her husband are Christchurch born and bred and love the landscape of Canterbury. "For me who we are is a city between the sea and the mountains. When you go up on the Port Hills and you see the city at the base of those mountains... and those mountains are incredibly important for me". Jane was keen to see the red-zoned land in the east converted to wetlands that could be enjoyed by everyone, including those who had lost their homes and neighbourhoods and had to move elsewhere. It could be the biggest urban wetlands in the world and an amazing tourist attraction.

Christ Church Cathedral and the Basilica

From February 2011 onwards, with the Christ Church Anglican Cathedral increasingly damaged, there was lively public debate as to whether it could or should be restored to its old form, or rebuilt in some other form. The Anglican Church made the decision to partially demolish the Cathedral as a first step, and build a cardboard, temporary or 'transitional cathedral' as a place of worship for Anglicans and as a public facility.

Some women, like Jayne Rattray, wanted to "see the Cathedral back in its normal place in its normal state... I'd just like to see it back to how it was really." Nicky Wagner MP expected that people would have been very angry at the decision to demolish the Cathedral in the Square, but she thought the public response has instead been surprisingly muted.

Mary Hamilton was "dead against the Cardboard Cathedral" and thought that "they could have been helping people that needed help. It's only a church. You can pray anywhere to God. God is just wherever you want him to be. It's a big waste of money. What? Five million for cardboard that is not permanent and then the cardboard got wet? I am against it. It should have gone to the community to rebuild the roads. That's my present point of view". On the other

hand, Mary thought that "it would be a shame to lose the Cathedral in the Square... It's Cathedral Square. What are they going to call it if the Cathedral goes? I mean we have lost everything else; surely we can keep at least one building!"

Jasmine, a guest of Christchurch Women's Prison, was also critical of the Transitional or Cardboard Cathedral. She said, "I think it looks ridiculous". She has fond memories of the Cathedral in the Square and while she accepts that it must be demolished, she would like to see some parts of it, such as the stained glass windows, reused alongside something more modern. It would "create some new history" for the city. She thought that Cathedral Square should be people-friendly with places for meeting – a hub for the city.

Estelle Laugeson's connection to Christ Church Cathedral meant that she had spent a lot of time there. "St Michael's and the Cathedral were the special places for me in Christchurch. The Catholic Cathedral was a very beautiful building too. When the children were growing up, the family visited the [Canterbury] Museum, the library and all the facilities that were available, so it was sad for me with the earthquakes. I have hardly been back in (the city) since the quakes. I don't really like going in and seeing all the empty spaces. It's quite different".

Jenny May said that Christ Church Cathedral had become the "focus for venting all the heritage issues." Jenny, who knows the building well and has inspected it many times, considered that it is "very compromised." Although the building's earthquake strengthening saved lives, she argued that people don't realise that old stone buildings go into "sudden and instant full collapse because of the nature of the way they're built." While the eastern end of the Cathedral is pretty strong, repairs would still require a huge amount of money. She hopes that "we will be able to see a lot of the old kept or reinstated and blended maybe with some new", but admits "there's certainly a discussion to come." For Jenny, the whole affair was becoming stressful at the time she was interviewed in 2012.

Rebecca's views on Christ Church Cathedral were clear. She thought the site should be turned in to a walled

garden with seating in it so that it can become a place of reflection and memories. She draws the parallel to overseas countries that have lost similar buildings and how they have been retained 'as is'. This approach has worked well. If the walls of Christchurch Cathedral were left at about 2 metres high it would be totally appropriate. It could be a place of contemplation.

On the other hand, Rebecca Macfie, a Christchurch journalist, thought that the process has been rushed when there are other alternatives that ought to be explored more fully, and more openly. Initially Rebecca MacFie was not sure of her own opinion, but as time has gone on she has become more certain of her view. "We have lost so much that is familiar – the centre of the city is being flattened and is now a foreign and hostile place, which makes it all the more important that all efforts are made to retain this building which is such an important link with the past and which is a profoundly, familiar shape in the landscape."

Helen King, who is in her 90s, spoke about the impact on her about the loss of both Christ Church Cathedral and also the Basilica, the Catholic Cathedral.

I am very sorry about the Cathedral - I think it's going. And that was always lovely at Christmas time... It was just lovely to go into the Square in Christchurch and see the Cathedral, you know. It is something that I don't know that they will ever build another one the same. It will be more modern.

Helen mentioned that she had phoned the ZB radio station, Mike Yardley's talkback programme, to tell him she thought there was "too much fuss about the Anglican cathedral in the Square and what about the Catholic Cathedral which she thought was very beautiful". Helen does not believe that she will see Christchurch when it is rebuilt, but she thinks it needs to be rebuilt for the future generations. "It will never be the same, it will be modern and different".

Kristy Constable-Brown was reconciled to the loss of Christ Church Cathedral, but finds that whenever she goes into central Christchurch she gets disorientated as "all my landmarks have gone." She thought that the Cathedral in the

Square was a special building for Christchurch and now treasures the photos her family took from the bell tower one Kidsfest.

ReStart Mall and other CBD initiatives

A number of people commented on interim developments in the CBD and other locations like Victoria Street and Sydenham, and especially the ReStart Mall in Cashel Street. Some women spoke positively about the mix of unique shops and thought that it showed how you could design a low-rise city with lots of public spaces. On the other hand, Deborah Williams, one of the interviewers, was less positive and said that she would not go shopping in “the new, funky Cashel Shopping Mall...They excluded Trade Aid who had a shop in the old mall and allowed a new shop selling expensive shoes to come in.”

The pop-up city in town was praised by Susan Hird, even though she knows people who were at Cashel Street on the day of the earthquake and have been too uncomfortable to go back. She thinks the ReStart Mall is great. “It's new, there are lots of people out there, it's colourful - and something has to be there!” She spoke about how New Brighton could benefit from the same bursts of colour and newness. She wanted to see the main strip busy again - busy with families.

In relation to temporary buildings, Rebecca Macfie thought that at first it was difficult to grasp the notion of just how long the rebuild would take, but she now thinks it may be a good thing to quite consciously develop interim projects that create “pockets of life”. “The ReStart Mall, for example, has limitations, but in the end that will be seen as a worthwhile investment as a transitional project. It's a trial. It's an urban design trial and I think it is really successful”. She thought that it is giving some insight into the kind of shapes and structures people like to be around in an urban setting, and it reminds people that we need central gathering places.

When she visited the ReStart mall, a short time before she was interviewed in December 2011, Laine Barker was pleasantly surprised. She loved the open spaces and was hopeful that Christchurch will be built as a green, open space with lots of family areas. However, she was also very aware that people died in Cashel Street on 22 February. She hoped that the city would construct a memorial to recognise all "the people who didn't come home that day."

Ella, a young single woman, has spent quite a bit of time in the central city since the quakes. "I get to see a lot of stuff happening... It's cool, but it's not really interesting enough... A lot of things haven't really changed...Over the past two years the city hasn't really changed that much... ReStart popped up, cool, a couple of bars have popped up, awesome, but nothing really that big, unfortunately". She thinks that it is really important that the new CBD is a dynamic place for young people.

Treena, a young parent, went to the ReStart Mall for lunch for her birthday in 2013 and was amazed by what had done been with the space. She felt that this demonstrated how the city had come together creatively, and thought that the recycling and reusing of materials could be used elsewhere. She would like to see fragments of the Anglican Cathedral reused in a memorial, as in the fireman's memorial on Kilmore Street to the Twin Towers. This could be a more valuable way of using the crumbled building than just "chucking the fragments away".

She feels very strongly that the ReStart Mall is important to the city, and she knows some people who have started building sleep outs and houses out of shipping containers in response to the example of the container mall. She really hopes that Cashel Mall isn't replaced by "boring city buildings". She believes city development money would be better spent on new housing, or replacing suburbs, for people who are still living in camp grounds. Treena has also come to like the term 'Quake City' and sees the earthquakes as part of the future of Christchurch's identity. She doesn't believe that this is something we should cover up in the re-

building of the city. Instead she maintains that the value of creativity in the city should be seen and be allowed to evolve.

For Krystal, a young sole parent, the ReStart Mall was "pretty well done with the containers". She thinks that the Quake City Museum is also a good idea "I really want to go there and see if the earthquake simulator is like a real earthquake". She thinks that they should have a quake shop and sell earthquake souvenirs. The Strip – the bars and nightclubs along Oxford Street - is the part of Christchurch she most remembers. "It was awesome, you could go along and there were pubs at every corner... I looked the other day and there is nothing. It's all gone". She thinks that it is important for the city to include places that will attract young people, but joked that, if there were less bars in the city, then her son would not give her as much trouble as she had given her mother!

What we have gained – the bright spots

A number of women spoke about what lifted their spirits during the recovery and rebuild of Christchurch – the 'bright spots'. Rebecca Macfie did a series for *The Listener* that included some bright spots. One example was the man who built a temporary coffee kiosk in Colombo Street in Sydenham. It was on a vacant lot where a friend's office used to stand and she'd noticed one day this bright little coffee kiosk was being built. The vendor had worked with Greening the Rubble, and, on the next section, Gap Filler were building their tiny office from recycled materials. The kiosk and the work of Gap Filler and Greening the Rubble provided a sense of activity, colour, effort and energy, and for Rebecca it represented the power of small bits of creativity and the sense of possibility that this brings.

The possibility of a revitalised Christchurch was also a focus for Alice Ridley and part of her transition from childhood to adulthood. "I like the city better now. I like to see it evolve - kind of like grow into something. I feel a lot more connected to the city as well, probably because I'd never really explored the city that much before the

earthquakes 'cause I was quite young (and you don't really venture off)".

Coralie Wynn was working on a number of Gap Filler projects when she was interviewed in early 2012. She spoke about working on the project of a sculpture for Victoria Street. The Crowne Plaza came down, and things were looking very dire, so Coralie decided that the area needed some colour. She engaged sculptor Neil Dawson to create a sculpture that will go on a private piece of land for two years. The sculpture was privately funded so no one can complain about ratepayer money being wasted. Neil Dawson generously funded the sculpture and retains ownership of the temporary sculpture that consists of curved wooden beams in arch shapes on the old Crowne Plaza site.

Allie McMillan, a Lyttelton resident and one of the interviewers, celebrates "the innovative, 'can do' nature of some of the buildings that have rapidly appeared. Containers are so right for Lyttelton, and I do wish people could resist tarding them up".

It was helpful for Kristy Constable-Brown soon after the quakes to hear people like John Key and Bob Parker saying, "We will rebuild and it will be OK". Her family had a family outing to town to visit the pop-up mall, and found that positive. Seeing familiar things again felt good and the new things were OK too. The development of a 'new normal' began to feel possible.

Treena thought that the earthquake had some really positive effects and that it had brought out the best in human nature. She remembers all the people who helped her during the earthquakes. The effect of being in a disaster has made her incredibly thankful to agencies, like the Red Cross, and selfless individuals who provided care for people, like the random truck driver that gave her and her young child a ride out of Kaiapoi on the morning of 5 September 2010 when her home was uninhabitable. She thinks about how much help she has had from other people, particularly during the earthquake and feels she would like a job where she can help others and make a difference.

Other women also valued the new relationships between people that the quakes had facilitated. Diana Madgin, who had lived in Dallington for many years, thought that the earthquakes contributed to a change in how people related to one another. She said that: "We were a narcissistic, self-centred society". But the ground-shaking event meant that people spontaneously helped each other. She believes that it meant that people started to talk to others in the street, including strangers. She suggests that everyone needs to get alongside each other in "this funny, short walk of life. It's all we've got. We must keep this mindful experience alive."

A slow process

A constant theme in women's earthquake stories was how long everything took. How long it took to make decisions about zoning; how long it was taking to demolish the central city and start building again; how long it took for EQC and insurance companies to act. Most women were impatient for the rebuild. Many of the older women think that they will never see the new Christchurch 'rise from the ashes like a phoenix' – the aspiration of one of the younger participants. Some just want to ensure that their children and grandchildren get to live in a good city, one day.

Amanda England, one of the students who worked on the project, was realistic about how long it would take to rebuild the city. As she left for a new life in Brisbane, close to her partner's family, she thought a lot about her hopes for the city.

As for the future of Christchurch, I am looking forward to seeing the city when it is rebuilt. But, like a lot of other people, I wish that it were not going to take a decade to do. I am looking forward to bringing my children back to Christchurch for visits to show them our wonderful city and let them experience the city that I grew up in. Unfortunately it will never be the same, so I can only hope that it will be better than before.

For people like Ellenor, a woman in her seventies, with a badly damaged home, the wait has been too long. "We were orange for a long time... and after a long wait we had decided that we wanted to be red". Ellenor and her son, Seth, and his family had made the decision that they would like to move to Nelson, right away from Christchurch. A year before she was interviewed in 2013, she was told that t her property was zoned green. It is TC3 land and her house will eventually be rebuilt, but not for several years. This disrupts her plans to move. "I may not live that long. Christchurch has all gone with the earthquakes. All the houses are levelled on the other side of the river and all around Bexley houses are levelled".

Susan Allen doesn't think she will see the CBD rebuilt in her lifetime – it will be a constant process. She now has to drive through the city to get home, and she's always amazed by what has gone. She hopes that, when they do rebuild, they are imaginative because it is an opportunity to do "something amazing". Susan hopes this opportunity is grabbed and not lost.

Adele Kelly sometimes thinks, "why is everything not rebuilt?", but recognises that "it is going to take years". She thinks that the rebuilding of Christchurch is "a huge opportunity", but one which "is getting lost with the Council and Gerry Brownlee and all the problems. It is hard to imagine the city is ever going to be there again!"

Peggy Kelly responded positively to the words of Christchurch-born architect, Professor Mark Burry, who has worked on Gaudi's Sagrada Familia for the last 30 years. At a meeting she attended, he said that said "everything cannot be built in a generation and argued that "we should embrace our tall poppies, wherever they come from, and support them and take in as many new ideas as we can to make our new city, because what will be created is beyond what we can imagine".

From Rosie Laing's perspective, we will not know how the effects of the earthquakes have changed us for a long time. People who live elsewhere ask her, 'How is the rebuild going?' and 'Aren't you having a lovely time building a new city now?' She finds it very hard to respond to these questions as the demolitions will go on for years, "but

gradually the sound of hammers will drown out the sound of bulldozers”.

Nippy thought that “it’s the people that keep you here”, not the CBD or the quality of facilities in her part of the city – eastern Christchurch. She also had a sense that it would take a long time before progress was made on the rebuilding of Christchurch. “There’s not much here on this side of town for the kids now. I am excited about the rebuild, but will it happen in our lifetimes?”

Rebecca Gordon also thinks that repairs are taking a long time. She notices houses getting fixed across the road and wonders just when her house will get attention. The home she is living in has damage, but it is still liveable. She has had a couple of tradesmen put up a temporary fence for her, but they left all the rubble for her to remove.

Karen thought that she was adjusting to how long it took to put things right after the quakes. She said that her family are learning to live with it. “For example we have a little routine with the shower now, we know how long we have got before it floods, and how long before it starts coming up the bathroom sink”.

Estelle, a woman in her 80s, waited a long time for her claim to be settled. She began to wonder if they were waiting her out:

After a couple of years you start to think, ‘Oh well, perhaps they are waiting... waiting, hoping I won’t require it’. You really do, you just start to think, ‘Why do we wait so long?’

Not just the CBD – rebuilding homes

A number of participants intend to build new houses on their existing land. Ruth Todd’s house in Mt Pleasant had to be demolished and rebuilt, but her section was “perfect”, without any damage. However, Ruth had ongoing problems with the rebuilding of her new home. She planned a house that was very similar to her old home in layout. But the man doing the design was very slack so Ruth ended up paying her friend to do the plan. At the time of the interview in 2012,

she had a builder waiting to construct the house ("my glimmer of hope"), but the planning progress was slow. Under a third project manager, the house's foundation plans had been checked by an engineer and sent to the Christchurch City Council for consent. When she was interviewed, Ruth hoped that the building would start in July 2013 (which is much later than she originally anticipated). Ruth admitted that, if she had known how long the rebuild process was going to take, she would probably have just bought an existing house with an insurance payout and not tried to rebuild her home.

Fortunately, Susan Allen was able to avoid seeing her house demolished, as she was overseas at the time. She came back to an empty flat section and that was good. Susan is planning to rebuild her house because it's a lovely section and she really likes that part of Christchurch. In the flat she was living in at the time of the interview she was surrounded by trees, but she could not see the sky. She was used to seeing lots of birds flying by and enjoying views of the mountains and the sea. Susan liked her old neighbourhood; it suited her. She has always lived in Beckenham, Cashmere, or that part of Christchurch, so it is where she feels she belongs. She has a flat section on the hill, facing north.

Rosie Laing's house was red-zoned, but she wants to stay in Lyttelton and, at the time of the interview in 2012, she had found somewhere to live and has had an offer on a house accepted, subject to a builder's report as to whether it is a sound house and whether she can get insurance. She felt that "the omens are good". Rosie thought that people in Lyttelton had lived through an extraordinary time:

Lyttelton is so sad and we have lost almost all of our beautiful buildings. We don't have a pool, or recreation centre, no meeting place any more. And that was the hub of the community after the quake... [The] coming together with the community, people finding their feet and finding their sense of strength in each other and building optimism together - that's precious ... And the Gap Fillers, and the community spaces. It was always a great community. Although

there is so little left of the township, I don't intend to be one of those who move away.

Rosie thought that it was hard to be really optimistic about the rebuild in Lyttelton because there are so many damaged properties. It will cost more to demolish them than they were worth, or that anyone could get from insurance.

Jasmine is concerned that the focus of decision-makers often seems to be more on buildings than on people. She would like the residential needs of people and support agencies for them to be priorities, rather than the rebuilding of the CBD. "They are thinking about Christchurch, and the need to make money, but they are not thinking about the people who this is home for". Although she has been in prison since before the quakes, she is aware of the devastation experienced by many people whose homes have been damaged and have no money to move. She thinks there should be attention to housing shortages and exorbitant rents.

Businesses, jobs and the Christchurch economy

As Christchurch reporter for *The Listener*, Rebecca Macfie has written about the effects of the earthquakes on jobs and questioned where the many skilled people needed for the rebuild would come from. She biked around Bexley, Avonside, New Brighton, Wainoni, and other parts of the city and talked to people about what had happened. There were stories about the CBD: 'How would the rebuild happen in the city centre?' 'What was happening to property owners that were locked out - how they were handling it and what were the consequences for them?' She explored the land zone decisions and their implications.

During her travels around the city in 2011 Rebecca came across unemployment and she suspects that this is grossly under-reported in the data. Rebecca's sister who was a part-time casual worker for Whitcoulls in the city lost her job. She didn't go on the dole, but it was still a job lost. She thinks that the impact on household incomes of these job losses is probably a lot higher than has been reported.

Many of the participants in this study in small business have relocated their businesses to the suburbs. According to Katherine Ewer, "There is a fear that "businesses are becoming entrenched on the outskirts of the city, and that it will take significant incentives to get them back into the central city".

Work after the earthquake was a bit of a saviour for Rebecca. She had always enjoyed working prior to the February quake and had taken parental leave at the end of the 2011 school year. She returned to work part-time, earlier than she may have under different circumstances. Her mother cared for her son initially, and he has since enjoyed being in child-care. She enjoyed the balance that this gave to her life. She has felt well supported in her job and she is quick to acknowledge that a number of her colleagues are in substantially worse positions than she is. Some have lost their homes and she finds that is a good reality check for her; a timely reminder that she is better off than many. Job security is not what it used to be in Christchurch and at her place of work some staff have faced redundancies.

Optimism – looking forward

Women who told their earthquake stories often thought that they had much to look forward to, but recognised many personal and collective challenges. The urge to help and be useful at a time of crisis for the city permeated their stories.

Emma Content, who was actively involved in Greening the Rubble in 2011 and who worked at the coalface of the CBD demolition at that time, was cautious about the future. "Just seeing that side of the rebuild and the money that will have to go into it, it's just crazy, it's scary ... You get glimpses of how much has been impacted, and you start worrying about where they are going to get the money from to do this, and what is going to happen to the rest of the economy. It's easy to end up feeling negative about things, for the future of Christchurch and the pace of progress".

Jayne Rattray says the visionaries for Christchurch "are onto it" with respect to keeping the building heights

lower, since she thinks that tall buildings are questionable post-earthquakes. She would like suburbs like Redcliffs and Sumner "to restored back to how it was... but she accepts that Shag Rock will never be the same again... they can't glue that back together!"

Wendy Hawke's own views were quite neutral about "rebuilding the CBD and all that" when she was interviewed early in 2012. But when her son came round, she appreciated hearing a very positive view about the future of Christchurch. Although he had so much damage and has had to cope with so much, he feels really positive about living in Christchurch and being around "to watch all of this happening." Wendy loved hearing him talk in this positive way about the future. "I think if he can think like that, then maybe I can."

Peggy Kelly saw the recovering and rebuilding of Christchurch as "an interesting time. I think it is a privilege to have been through this experience". As she put it, "Not many human beings have come through this as unscathed as we have. I know there was loss of life, but really, considering all we have been through, it could have been much, much worse." At the same time, she thought that immediate financial concerns were contributing to the loss of heritage buildings. She thought, "it is our duty to try and preserve some of those buildings so that the next generation can make a decision about them, and we shouldn't be making all those decisions."

Optimism was expressed about a rebuilt CBD. Katherine Ewer, a Christchurch lawyer, hopes that the new Christchurch will be "a very different place", but believes that people will retain the same culture and mentality of strength and resilience they have already shown. She thinks the central city will "look very different. I think it will be a lot smaller and I think it would be really nice if there were more people living in the central city". She also hopes that the first focus will be to get people's homes and property issues sorted out, since once people are happy at home; they are more likely to stay in Christchurch. "Without any certainty, people just lose all sense of hope and they become quite down and quite negative".

Christine, who travels in and out of the city from Southshore for work, commented on the great new buildings in Victoria and New Regent Streets that were being built in late 2013, and the “amazing work” being done to restore the Theatre Royal, now that those “concrete-nibbling dinosaurs”, the deconstruction cranes, have done their work. She thinks that the rebuild that is starting to happen is pretty exciting and hopes that she will get to see the centre of the city restored.

Coralie Wynn’s vision, when she was interviewed in late 2011, was for a Christchurch that would “be known for its interesting, creative responses to the earthquake”, with pop up cinemas, community gardens, street arts, and a caravan bar. She thought that Christchurch could develop a “reputation for anything is possible” and be “known as a place of experimentation”. This capacity for innovation and embracing risk would make it attractive as a place to live. It would bring young adults to the city and keep young people here because it was exciting and edgy.

After many months of post-earthquake life, Brigid Buckenham, one of the interviewers for this project, focused on evidence of recovery and growth. These things made her positive about living in the city.

Libraries opened, new coffee shops popped up in different places and the mainstream cinemas started showing more art house movies. Hagley Park was and is a lifesaver. Walking and cycling around and through it is a joy. Some of the Port Hills have become more accessible for walking. Our tennis club, situated in the middle of Hagley Park, has been open all along. Our local Farmers’ Market has expanded and we are lucky to be within 5 minutes of the market, so fresh produce is always available. It is a nice place to meet up with friends and neighbours. We have done a lot more casual entertaining at home. Getting friends together to share a meal was easy and more comfortable for those friends who did not like to go into the cinemas or unfamiliar buildings.

Peggy Kelly was excited about future prospects for the city. "Having lost a lot of ugly buildings, new ugly buildings, buildings that should never have been put up in the first place in the city, we can start again with a different aesthetic awareness and understanding." She thinks that it is possible to create something that is nice to look at and something for people in Christchurch to be proud of in the future. "I would like to see buildings to be made so that they are very green, make use of passive energy, all that sort of stuff. I would like to see our river really, really cleaned up, and take the opportunity to make it a precious ribbon of life that goes through the city".

Belaynesh thought the rebuilding should include attention to flowers and trees and activities that filled the streets with people. She wanted "to see Christchurch again new, newer than before. I want to see flowers beside the road... also more trees... I like to see beautiful things... also more shopping. Before I see restaurants and coffee places. Now I don't see. We need more restaurants and coffee places. It makes me happy to see people in the road, coming in and out".

The city and its people

There was divided opinion on the need for a sports stadium in the centre of the CBD, particularly some concern about its location. Kristy Constable-Brown would love to see a stadium in Christchurch... "especially on this side of town (eastern Christchurch) ... I love rugby; it is a favourite sport of mine... I want that cover... I love to be right there with the action..." But she would not like to see high rise buildings in Christchurch. When she went to Dunedin for the holidays, she found herself "pumping rescue remedy as I was so fearful of the buildings and the Meridian Mall which sways..."

Helen King, an immigrant in her 90s who was born in Scotland, had a very definite a vision for the city centre she will probably never see:

I do hope they have a lovely cathedral in the square
and from then on department stores. There is

Ballantynes in town, but other than that they will have to put a few more big department stores, restaurants and hotels. They need to make some gardens if they can, make nice gardens in the Square, somewhere if they have got room to improve, you know. Make it lovely to look at. Everything green will be nice. Not too many high rise buildings. They are not necessary. They can make them just two or three stories, but they don't need monstrous high rises in Christchurch..."

Estelle Laugeson thinks that "we are going to have a wonderful city. I just wish I would be here long enough to see it". Estelle was delighted about the new Anglican Cardboard Cathedral ... it's a place where people can gather together and gain strength from each other. I think it's so important. I would like to see the new one when they build it, but I doubt I will. She thinks that "there is going to be a lovely new city here I am sure. It will be a delight to see. It will be a place to be proud of again".

Alana Harvey, a sole parent with two young children, hopes that future buildings in Christchurch will be built sensibly on solid ground. But at the end of the day "these buildings are not important. Making everything safe is important, safe for our kids and our families". She thinks that, in the grand scheme of things, Christchurch was actually very fortunate that more people did not die in February 2011. She would like people "to find time to get out of the city, relax, and get some perspective". The most important lesson is that what matters most is to have your family and your loved ones around you.

Her comments were echoed by Gina King who would love to see the city restored, but thinks that people are more important. "The people of Christchurch matter, not the buildings. We don't want the tourists in to see how we are living. I mean we are all still living it, dealing with the devastation. It has taken three years before people really only realised how much they have gone through.... and there are other people worse than me".

Fiona was most concerned about people she knew and her neighbourhood, and not about the rebuilding of the CBD. She said that "it is the people who are most important" and she was sceptical about the possibility of community input into the rebuild. "They will do what they want anyway and what I think doesn't count".

Some women see the quakes as "the shake-up that Christchurch needed" and a challenge that will lead to a different more dynamic city. Michelle Whitaker thought Christchurch was parochial and provincial as she was growing up, like a big small town. Before the quakes, she planned to move to Wellington when her son was older, where she had lived earlier and had many friends. But the quakes made her realize that her past is important, and that Christchurch is important to her. Since the quakes she has met some amazing people and seen "what amazing things communities have done", this makes her feel really hopeful.

Raewyn Iketau, who lived in rental accommodation with her partner and her dogs in the red-zoned central city at the time of the quakes, was immensely positive about the personal resources women had brought to the challenges of the quakes. She had this advice for other women:

Have faith in yourself. Don't listen to what other people say. If you think you can do it, or maybe you think you can't do it, at least try. If you succeed you know you have done it, but, if you don't succeed, pat yourself on the back for trying, because that's the most important thing that I have found out through all of this. If you don't try you will never ever know. You will never work it out. You have got a brain up here; it is what we were given. A lot of men don't allow their wives or partners to use a brain, but you use it on your own. And it's brilliant!

She found that the experience of the quakes had "given me the confidence to know that I can survive, and to say what I need to say... Just try. If you just put your mind to it you'll be surprised what you can accomplish".

Her approach to the personal and collective challenges posed by the quakes was echoed by Susan Barnes

who lived by herself with her guide dog, Sam, and was very independent, despite being blind and struggling with diabetes, cancer and kidney failure. She said that her motto in life was that it was better “to try and fail than to fail to try”. Resistant to the notion that she was particularly vulnerable during the quakes because she could not see, her major concern was that her opportunities to be useful to others were limited.

Jane Higgins thinks that Christchurch citizens have the opportunity to make create a city with an exciting, democratic, and equitable future. “We can do it; we’ve got the creative energy, the commitment, the passion, it’s all there but it needs good leadership”.

Emily Adcock was also optimistic about the future of Christchurch. She predicted that “Christchurch will be the phoenix from the ashes. There are a lot of positive community initiatives in our immediate area, with support groups, vegetable co-op, lunches and good networking at a grass root level”. She has seen a number of her friends sell their properties and move either out of town or to another area of Christchurch, resulting in new faces appearing around her home. It has been a long journey, but at this stage, she and her family would not want to live anywhere else.

Women’s voices

Women’s views on the future of their city were diverse and optimism was often mixed with concern about how decisions were made about rebuilding of the CBD, the neglect of parts of the city that were most damaged, and a lack of attention to the people who had suffered most since the major quakes in 2010 and 2011.

Many women wanted more say in decision-making about the city, its CBD, its public facilities, its infrastructure. They also wanted to contribute to the creativity and innovation that they thought the quakes had made possible. Others were more focused on their families, their damaged homes, making ends meet, their neighbourhoods and local facilities.

While the women interviewed had diverse views on the remaking of their city, they all had something to say and they wanted to be heard. The Women's Voices/ Ngā Reo O Ngā Wahine project was directed at making this possible.

Conclusion

This is, of course, not the end. At the time of completing this project, few of the women's stories were complete. The traditional term 'happily ever after' was rarely (if ever) found in these pages, although most of our participants were able to make the best of their situation. Some, though, with possessions lost and confidence shaken, were not so lucky.

Many of the women in these pages represent the voices that are rarely heard. They do not write to the newspapers about their situation, and many of them felt fobbed off by bureaucracy when trying to get their problems resolved. Some women, like Rana, are now in a dreadful situation. She is without work, out of pocket and with little resolution in sight. She used all her redundancy pay to live on, and was told she could not get government support until she was down to her last \$30. In addition, partly because she has contested what has happened to her, Rana has been labelled as 'unstable', a term applied to her by various agencies.

Yet the women who tell these earthquake stories are resilient. They frequently comment, while telling dire stories, that there are others worse off than they are. But the legacy of the earthquakes is, in many cases, years of poor quality housing, families still living in overcrowded conditions, often sleeping in living rooms together, poor health including unresolved injuries, anxiety and depression arising from the earthquakes and, for many, ongoing fear of another large quake.

A key finding from this research is the unevenness of the earthquake response. In an ideal world, the amount and nature of assistance provided to people would be proportionate to their need. These women's stories have clearly demonstrated that, in relation to the Christchurch earthquakes, this has not been the case. In the days immediately following the February quake, food was dropped in certain places, the portaloos clustered in certain areas (sometimes one per house, sometimes less than one per street), and water deliveries were haphazard rather than

systematic. In the same way, assistance from Work and Income, from the range of organisations involved in emergency responses, from EQC and insurance companies, often depends on who a person speaks to, rather than an assessment of their actual situation.

These women's stories highlight exceptional largesse in some parts of the city, the hoarding of food by some people, and, on the other hand, unmet needs in other streets and neighbourhoods. Perhaps this lumpy distribution of aid is inevitable after any large disaster, but it had material effects on some of the women in this study.

Enarson¹⁴ (1998 p. 159) notes that:

Gendered vulnerability does not derive from a single factor, such as household headship or poverty, but reflects historically and culturally specific patterns of relations in social institutions, culture and personal lives. Intersecting with economic, racial and other inequalities, these relationships create hazardous social conditions placing different groups of women differently at risk when disastrous events unfold.

This project clearly shows "different groups of women differently at risk". At times, it is also interesting how institutions respond when challenged. When Nippy finally lost her temper and used 'the F word', eight Council staff arrived to inspect her sewer, but patient hours spent on the phone trying to access entitlements (and being made to feel guilty about it) sometimes generate no response. These women's stories of interaction with a range of private businesses, local government officials, and state bureaucracies illustrate of the challenges that women on low incomes with few financial resources face as they attempt to put their homes and lives together after the quakes.

Many of the women interviewed have faced fundamental shake-ups of their lives. Sometimes this was the direct result of the earthquakes, such as workplaces being lost, houses becoming unsafe, or decisions to stay put in sub-

¹⁴ Enarson, E. (1998), "Through women's eyes: a gendered research agenda for disaster social science", *Disasters*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 157-173.

standard housing because they did not want to move out of familiar neighbourhoods. At other times, more fundamental factors have shaped their lives, such as the need to look after family members who were sick, fearful or suffering from anxiety. Occasionally the quakes generate a shift in values, or even a total change of outlook and style, as Ella, one of the youngest participants, experienced. She changed schools, clothing style, friends, interests; future career plans and became involved in community-based activities for youth in Christchurch.

Enarson (1998 p. 163) has stated that: “The complex intersection of class, race and gender power shaping organisational interaction between relief workers and disaster victims is not well documented, but seems likely to affect agency services as well as the work experiences of voluntary or paid female responders”.

This study demonstrates this complexity. Women in Christchurch, especially those in the areas most affected by the quakes, were both victims needing responses from agencies, and also supporters of others in their own communities, especially of the elderly and those with disabilities. Whether it was older people helping the young, or the younger women helping elderly neighbours, or initiatives to share resources, as people in Avonside went out into the streets to cook up the meat in their freezers for all-comers, a large amount of help was provided below the radar of official aid.

Many of the women who told these earthquake stories said that they enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on their experience, and tell their story as a whole. For some women, it clarified their current situation, helped them to recognize what had been achieved, and made them feel happier. Telling their stories made others cry – sometimes for the first time since 22 February 2011. Many of the women interviewed in the second stage of this project are now facing their fourth cold winter in damaged homes, sometimes sleeping together as a family in their living rooms. Things are less than ideal, but most are coping.

The final, final word

Many of the stories contained in this publication can be found in the NCWNZ Women's Voices archive on UC CEISMIC.¹⁵ This website contains text summaries of stories, audio recordings, and in some cases edited videos of interviews, as well as some photos of the participants. This is an enduring archive, a permanent history. The profiles on interviewers can be accessed as well as information about the project.

This report brings together fragments from the stories women told about their earthquake experiences and their post-quake lives. Further analysis of this interview material is planned, including attention to the policy implications of the experiences included in this report. And we hope to facilitate discussion between some of the women who told their stories and those involved in decision-making about the future of Christchurch. Most of the women interviewed are still working through the impacts of the quakes on their lives and the city is still in the process of recovery and rebuilding – the story continues...

¹⁵ <https://quakestudies.canterbury.ac.nz/store/collection/228>

Appendix 1

Recording women's experiences of the Christchurch earthquakes

Project overview

The first stage of this oral history project began in late 2011 and ended in December 2012. The second stage started in June 2013 and finished in April 2014. Each stage of the project concluded with the production of a research report and the archiving of women's earthquake stories on UC CEISMIC – a digital archive of information about the Canterbury earthquakes. Their stories, some audio recordings and some videos of interviews are available in the NCWNZ Women's Voices Archive.

The project was initiated with very limited funding. Small grants from the NCWNZ Christchurch Branch and other sources made it possible to start recruiting and training volunteer interviewers in October 2011. Grants from the Christchurch City Council and the UC CEISMIC Contestable Research Fund early in 2012 made it possible to record 100 women's stories about their experiences of the Christchurch, to store these stories on UC CEISMIC and to analyse key themes in these narratives. The donation of gift vouchers by Z Energy contributed to koha for participants and the petrol costs of volunteer interviewers.

The Lottery Community Sector Research Fund enabled the second stage of the project in 2014. Forty-five additional interviews were recorded. Most of the women interviewed had limited financial resources and lived in eastern Christchurch, particularly in the suburbs most affected by the quakes. They were often in rental accommodation (private, Christchurch City Council housing or Housing New Zealand homes), in dwellings that were awaiting repairs, and a number of them were responsible for children with special needs.

Identifying these women was often time consuming and involved extensive use of community, school and social service networks. The research team collaborated with the

Ōtautahi Māori Women's Welfare League and PACIFICA to record more Māori and Pacific women's earthquake stories. Funding was used to meet travel, koha and project management costs; to pay for research assistants and also to meet the costs of interviewer training, support and supervision of researchers, data analysis, and report writing.

The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the information sheets, interview guidelines and consent processes. Participants first consented to have their stories recorded, and only consented to the use of their stories after they had checked the written summaries of their interviews. They could decide whether to use their given names, their family names, or pseudonyms. They also made decisions about the archiving of audio and video recordings of the interviews.

Key goals

The Women's Voices project had the following goals:

1. **A digital archive of women's earthquake stories**

A key objective was the creation of an archive of women's earthquake stories to be used in different ways by members of the public (including school students), researchers, journalists, writers, and documentary makers. This archive of stories is available electronically on the UC CEISMIC QuakeStudies digital archive.

2. **Reports, articles, policy-focused submissions**

Analysis of key themes in the stories was an important goal. Three research reports have been produced. The final report integrates material from earlier reports.

Analysis of the interview material is being used in academic journal articles and submissions prepared by the National Council of Women in New Zealand. Work is planned on more policy-focused analysis of the interviews that can inform strategies directed at preparation for natural disasters, rebuilding the city and meeting people's post-earthquake needs.

3. Exhibitions, documentaries, publications

From the start it was expected that the stories recorded could be incorporated into exhibitions (e.g. at the Canterbury Museum or local libraries). All research participants had the opportunity to make choices about how their interview material could be used, including their inclusion in future digital or hardcopy publications. These decisions about the use of the records of their stories are indicated in the licenses for each item in the Women's Voices archive on UC CEISMIC.

4. Resources for future analysis

This project was directed at creating a digital archive that other researchers could use in the future. For this reason, information sheets, interview questions, consent forms, and confidentiality forms are available in the NCWNZ Women's Voices Archive, together with information about the research process.

Some participants consented to the archiving of their interview summaries and recordings of the interviews, but did not want them to be available for public viewing. These research materials may be available to bona-fide researchers on application to UC CEISMIC. Audio recordings of interviews available on the UC CEISMIC site are in MP3 format. However, many of the recordings are also available on request in higher quality WAV format.

Interviewer training – their earthquake stories

The interviews were mainly done by volunteer researchers who were trained in a series of workshops conducted in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Most interviewers conducted 2 – 3 interviews. As part of their training, the 37 interviewers told their own earthquake stories. These stories were written up by other interviewers and handed back to the narrator. This process of telling their stories and recording the stories of other interviewers was the basis for a set of first person interviewer

profiles that were included in the NCWNZ Women's Voices Archive on UC CEISMIC.

Interviewers are often invisible as people with stories to tell in many research reports. In this project, the experience of living through the quakes was shared by both interviewers and those interviewed. For this reason, interviewers' stories are incorporated in the analysis. The earthquake stories of interviewers were analysed alongside the much larger number of summaries of the interviews they conducted with other women.

Recruiting participants

Possible women to interview were identified through a variety of community networks, including the organisations affiliated to the NCWNZ Christchurch Branch. During the first stage of the project attempts were made to interview women in different parts of the city, of different ages, of different ethnicities, involved in different forms of paid work or community activity and crucially women who had played significant roles in immediate responses to the quakes and in ongoing earthquake recovery.

Information about the Women's Voices project was distributed widely through a variety of community networks. When some women heard about the project, they contacted the NCWNZ and offered to be interviewed. During the training workshops run for interviewers they also had the opportunity to identify people who had interesting stories to tell about the quakes.

The Women's Voices Research Committee generated a detailed list of potential participants with contact details and some basic information about where they lived, their family circumstances, their occupation, community connections, and housing circumstances post the quakes. Those approached to participate in the project in late 2011 and 2012 were located in parts of the city most affected by the quakes, of different ages, living in different sorts of family arrangements, working in different occupations, responding as small business owners to the quake, involved in different

religious and cultural communities, active in community responses to the quakes, and with a range of different responsibilities for others. There were new immigrants to Christchurch and New Zealand as well as a mixture of women who had been brought up in Christchurch or come to live in the city as adults.

After the first stage of the project was completed in December 2012, the project team decided that it was important to interview more women who were located in the eastern parts of the city most affected by the quake, especially women with limited financial resources, in difficult family circumstances, and in rental housing. The research team also wanted to record the stories of more Māori, Pasifika and new immigrant women.

At this stage a message was sent to all members of the Council of Social Services (COSS) – Te Kaunihera Kaupapa Oranga ki Otautahi - informing them about the research and requesting that they contribute to identifying women to interview. A detailed list of potential community contacts in eastern Christchurch was developed and contact established with primary school principals and community organisations that might refer women to be interviewed for this research. Members of the Research Committee conducted interviews in June with the first set of research participants to test the revised interview schedule and consent forms.

Interviewers usually approached possible participants via phone, text or email before meeting to conduct the interview. Sometimes research participants would meet face-to-face to discuss the project before they agreed to be interviewed. Potential participants were given an information sheet about the project, the interview schedule and a consent form before the interviews were conducted. Each interviewer was also asked to talk or write informally about the project when they approached potential narrators. Very few of the women contacted decided not to be interviewed. Most of the women approached were very positive about the opportunity to record their stories.

Consent and ethical protocols

A two stage consent process was used for this project and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. Research participants initially signed consent form indicating their agreement to be interviewed and have their earthquake stories recorded on a digital audio recorder and sometimes both audio and video recorders. After the recorded interviews had been transcribed and an interview summary was written (usually by the interviewer), this was checked by those who had been interviewed. Research participants could make corrections by marking up a hardcopy, digital editing, or through talking to the interviewer about their responses to the summary and the changes they wanted to make.

When the woman interviewed was satisfied with the corrections made to the interview summary, she was asked to sign further consent forms. These consent forms provided research participants with the opportunity to specify what could be archived (e.g. the interview summary, audio recording and video recording) and also the conditions under which these items could be used. Participants could decide that the record or records of their interview could be accessed only by researchers, or that they might be available publicly on the UC CEISMIC website.

Participants could choose a pseudonym and change the names of family members referred to in their stories. Some narrators chose to use their full names; others to be identified only by their first names. In this research report people are referred to by their full names if they have agreed, by only their first names or sometimes only by a pseudonym.

A similar consent process was used when some research participants were approached by photography students in the College of Arts Internship Programme at University of Canterbury about having portrait photographs taken for the NCWNZ Women's Voices digital archive. Participants initially agreed to have photos taken and then to the use of a particular photograph on the UC CEISMIC website. Edited videos of interviews were similarly approved by research participants before they were loaded on the website for public viewing.

Interview topics/questions

Interviews were directed at generating stories from each research participant on the following topics and questions:

- **Before the quakes** – family circumstances; housing; work (paid and unpaid); community involvement; sport/recreation/leisure; period of residence in Christchurch/New Zealand; life stage and life plans.
- **Quake experiences** – experiences of the major quakes and ongoing aftershocks; what narrators did, thought and felt; how contact was made with friends and family; the impact of the quakes on the lives of the narrators and those around them.
- **Post-quake life** – what has changed since the quakes – e.g. housing, work, family members, friends, travel, financial situation, interaction with bureaucracies, and involvement in community initiatives – especially those focused on responses to the quakes, the rebuilding Christchurch, and supporting those most affected by the quakes.
- **Current situation and the future** – an overview of current life circumstances and hopes and plans for the future, including the rebuilding of Christchurch.

Recording interviews

The interviews were mainly recorded on Olympus VN-6800PC digital voice recorders and Canon Legria FS46 digital camcorders. Choice of this equipment was determined by the financial resources available and the need to have a number of recorders, given that many interviewers were involved in the project. Occasionally interviewers used other equipment, sometimes because they owned their own audio recorders, or because the equipment purchased and circulated among the interviewer support groups was not available at the time an interview was scheduled.

Interview process

Interviews were usually conducted in the homes of the women who agreed to talk about their earthquake experiences, but some

interviews were done in the homes of interviewers, at the University of Canterbury, in rooms available for community use in different parts of the city, and, more rarely, at workplaces or in the rooms occupied by community organisations for which women worked or for which they were volunteers.

The interviews largely took the form of informal conversations. Often there was little need for the interviewers to ask specific questions as the women interviewed had read the interview questions and thought about the stories they wanted to tell. Some narrators wrote out what they wanted to say before their interview. Other participants needed more encouragement to talk about what had happened and what it meant for them. Stories about the physical experiences of the quakes were often shot through with reflections by participants on their emotional responses and their involvement in a range of activities directed at meeting the needs of others around them.

All interviews began with some talk about the personal background of the narrator. These stories about life before the quakes vary in length, but are important ways of providing a context to the specific experiences of the quakes and their aftermath. Participants talked in more or less detail about their experiences of each of the major quakes that occurred in Canterbury and Christchurch, starting with the 7.1 magnitude quake on 4th September 2010. Every interview also explored the narrator's circumstances at the time of the interview and their reflections on the rebuilding of Christchurch and the future of the city. Interviewers thanked participants at the end of the interview and discussed a process for the return of the interview summary and opportunities to check it for accuracy and decide on a final version before consent was obtained for the storage of interview material.

Interviewers carried out the first interviews in November 2011 before the quake on 24 December 2011, and the aftershocks that followed it. Most interviews for the first stage of the project were recorded in 2012. Interviews for the second stage of the project were recorded between June 2013 and February 2014. The timing of each interview has some impact on the stories that are told; however, all stories record the impacts on participants of the quakes of 4 September 2010, 22 February and 13 June 2011.

Participants talk in most detail about the quakes that affected them and those close to them, and sometimes their workplaces or community organisations. Interviews conducted in 2013 had a greater focus on the emotional impacts of the quakes on individuals and their whānau/families and the challenging financial circumstances of many of the participants.

Storage of research material

The Women's Voices Research Committee encouraged interviewers to download the audio and video recordings onto their own computers as soon as possible after the interviews were conducted. (These recordings were deleted once the interview summaries were completed, checked and sent to a member of the Women's Voices Research Committee). Interviewers were all issued with memory sticks on which to download copies of audio and sometimes video files of interviews. Audio and video files on these memory sticks were uploaded on a password protected folder on the University of Canterbury server.

Once interview summaries had been completed and second stage consent forms signed, these files were then transferred to the UC CEISMIC website with information about how this research material might be used. If research participants did not give consent to the storage of interview recordings, they were deleted from the password protected folder on the University of Canterbury server.

Interview summaries and analysis

Interviewers wrote most of the summaries of interviews. During the training workshops, interviewers were provided with models of how the content of interviews could be summarized. The models included a set of headings that roughly corresponded to the topics identified in the interview schedule. Interviewers were asked to write the stories in the third person with direct quotes from the interviews that captured some of the most compelling components of participants' stories and reflections. These summaries were checked by research participants before they became part of the Women's Voices archive. They were formatted, edited and finally, with the

permission of the research participants, stored on the UC CEISMIC website.

The interview summaries of those who consented to the use of their interview material in project reports and publications have been analysed in this research report. The software programme NVivo was used to produce the thematic analysis. Nodes identified in this way formed the basis of selections of stories and quotations from interviews that are used in particular sections of the report.

The separate analysis and report writing of findings from each stage of the project was completed by Liz Gordon. All members of the Women's Voices Research Committee were involved in writing various sections of the final report that brings together material from both stages of the project. The outcome is a lively, compelling and often inspiring record of what 150 women experienced during the Christchurch earthquakes and the impacts of these quakes on their lives.

**Women's Voices / Ngā Reo O Ngā Wahine - Recording
women's experiences of the Christchurch earthquakes**

Interviewers – Women's Voices - Stage 1

Judith Sutherland	Rosemary Du Plessis
Liz Gordon	Helen Gibson
Roberta Hill	Roelien de Jong
Allie McMillan	Diane Candy
Lia de Vocht	Myra Kunowski
Maureen Montgomery	Sara Epperson
Mary McGiven	Rosemary Baird
Linda Creed	Deborah McCormack
Melissa Parsons	Deborah Williams
Helene Mautner	Noreen Wright
Linda Telfer	Raewyn Dawson
Kathryn O'Connell Sutherland	Debs Parkinson
Shelley Harford	Petra van Asten
Letitia Meadows	Margaret Arnold
Chris Wilson	Brigid Buckenham
Ange Davidson	Judith McKenzie
Mary Smyth	Cassandra Mudway
Billa Field	Helen McCaul
Beverley Price	Sonya Leach

Interviewers – Women's Unheard Voices – Stage 2

Judith Sutherland	Rosemary Du Plessis
Liz Gordon	Helen Gibson
Brigid Buckenham	Elizabeth Ashby
Linda Telfer	Melissa Parsons
Rikke Betts	Billa Field
Helen McCaul	
Danielle O'Halloran (PACIFICA)	
Hikatea Bull and Dora Roimata Langsbury	
(Ōtautahi Māori Women's Welfare League)	

Women's Voices
Recording women's experiences of the Canterbury earthquakes

National Council of Women of New Zealand (ChCh Branch)

Information sheet – Stage 1

You are invited to participate in *Women's Voices* – a project that records women's stories about the Canterbury earthquakes. The National Council of Women (Christchurch Branch) is working with other women's organizations to interview women about their quake experiences. If you agree to be interviewed, your story could be stored in the University of Canterbury's CEISMIC Canterbury Earthquake Digital Archive. You will be able to check the transcript or interview summary of your story. You can then decide whether the summary and any recordings of the interview will be stored on the website and how your story might be used.

Your earthquake story, or quotes from it, could be included in the proposed Canterbury Earthquake Museum and/or used in exhibitions in public libraries, community centres, schools and other public places. The National Council of Women will produce a report based on the interviews and will also seek funding to make these stories accessible to different communities in Christchurch.

If you agree to be interviewed, an interviewer will ask you a few questions about yourself and your life before the quakes. The focus will then be on your earthquake experiences and your post-quake life – what happened, what changed, what stayed the same, what did you do, what are you doing, what about the future? You can talk about any aspect of the quakes and in any language.

You must formally consent to participate in this research before you tell your story. You can choose whether your voice is recorded or a video is made of the interview. After the interview you will be able to check a written version of the interview and make some decisions about how your story will be stored (e.g. only as a transcript/interview summary or as an audio recording), and how it can be used

(e.g. only available to researchers, publicly available on the CEISMIC website or used in a museum exhibition). You can at this point withdraw from the study. If you withdraw, all records of your story will be destroyed.

If you find the process of telling your story distressing, please talk to the interviewer about this. There are excellent sources of support available in Christchurch, and interviewers will have information about people who can talk with you about your experiences.

Associate Professor Rosemary Du Plessis and Dr Liz Grant are coordinating this project with the NCW *Women's Voices* Research Committee. They can be contacted at rosemary.duplessis@canterbury.ac.nz (03) 3642878 and lizgordon@paradise.net.nz (03) 03 980-5422.

You can also contact Judith Sutherland, the President of the National Council of Women (Christchurch Branch), brujude@xtra.co.nz (03) 332-5229.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

It is a joint University of Canterbury and National Council of Women project.

Women's Voices/Ngā Reo O Ngā Wahine
Recording women's experiences of the Canterbury earthquakes

National Council of Women of New Zealand (ChCh Branch)

Information Sheet – Stage 2

The Christchurch Branch of the National Council of Women is working with the Ōtautahi Māori Women's Welfare League, PACIFICA and other organisations, to record women's stories of the Canterbury earthquakes. We invite you to be interviewed about your quake experiences and the impact of the quakes on your life and the lives of your whānau/family.

The interviewer will first ask you some questions about yourself, your whānau/family, and your life before the quakes. They will then ask you about your earthquake experiences and your post-quake life – what happened, what changed, what stayed the same, what did you do, what are you doing, what about the future?

You will be asked to formally consent to be interviewed before your story is recorded. You can choose to have only your voice recorded, or also to have a video made of the interview. After the interview, you will be able to check the transcript/summary of your story. You can, if you choose, have a support person with you during the interview.

You will be able to decide whether the summary of your story and any recordings will be stored (e.g. only as an interview summary or also as an audio recording), and how it can be used (e.g. only available to researchers, publicly available on UC CEISMIC, University of Canterbury's QuakeStudies Digital Archive, and/or used in an exhibition, a report or a book). We hope to make these earthquake stories accessible to different communities in Christchurch/Ōtautahi.

You can at any time withdraw from the study. If you withdraw, all records of your story will be deleted. A koha/gift of a \$30.00 voucher will be available to all those who agree to be interviewed.

The UC CEISMIC QuakeStudies Digital Archive already includes other women's earthquake stories recorded in 2011/12.

<https://quakestudies.canterbury.ac.nz/store/collection/228>

The Lottery Community Sector Research Committee has provided funding for this new phase of the Women's Voices project. The goal is to record some of the voices of women that were unheard in the first phase of the project in 2011-2012.

Please contact Judith Sutherland, Project Manager, Women's Voices brujude@xtra.co.nz 021-0313705
or Rosemary Du Plessis, the Research Coordinator
rosemary.duplessis@canterbury.ac.nz (03) 364-2878 for more
information about this research.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of
Canterbury Human Ethics Committee human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

**Women's Voices – Recording women's experiences of
the Christchurch earthquakes**

Interview schedule - Stage 1

Before the quakes

**Please tell me a bit about yourself and your life before
the first earthquake**

*Who are you? Where did you live, what did you do? What was your life
like before the quakes?*

(e.g. born and brought up in ChCh; an immigrant; schooling/study,
paid work, family/community connections/involvement;
suburb/part of the city; political/religious beliefs and activities;
household situation (living alone, couple, family with children,
extended family); sports/recreation interests/coaching;
culture/arts/entertainment; key moments in your life and why they
were important)

Quake experiences

**Please tell me about your experiences of the Canterbury
earthquakes and their effect on your life**

*What happened? Where were you? Who was with you? What did you
do? What did others do? What were your concerns for members of your
family, workmates, neighbours, friends?*

**4 September quake? 22 February quake? 13 June quake?
23 December quake? And the aftershocks in between
and since?**

(e.g. being woken by the Sept quake; what it felt like; letting others
know you were OK and finding out about others; survival post-
quake – water, sewerage, power, coping with
liquefaction/cracks/sewerage; postquake/s community activism;
staying at home/putting people up/leaving your home; caring for
yourself/caring for others; the daytime/nighttime quakes; injury and
death of friends/family; sleep disruption; damage to
homes/possessions; impact on work/community
organisations/religious communities; getting around the city; dealing
with bureaucracies – EQC, CERA, Work and Income, insurance
companies; emotional and physical responses; what did you
miss/mourn/grieve; what made you feel positive/happy/hopeful?)

Post-quake life

Let's talk now about your life now, what you are doing and how you see the future

Where you are living, what you are doing, what has changed, what is the same, what are your hopes/concerns?

(e.g. doing 'normality' and/or living differently; specific post-quake activities/community actions/caring/work; new opportunities and things learned, people/activities/things that have been lost/missed/neglected; new connections/relationships, coping strategies; the 'black dog' of despair/hopelessness; thoughts about staying in ChCh or leaving ChCh; what could be better; what you want for your home/ street/ neighbourhood/ community/ city and what could be done to make this happen?)

The project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, PB 4800, Christchurch 8140.

human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Women's Voices – Ngā Reo O Ngā Wahine
Recording women's experiences of the Christchurch
earthquakes
Interview questions – Stage 2

1. Before the quakes

Please tell me a bit about yourself, your whānau/family, and your life before the earthquakes.

Where did you live, what did you do? What was your life like before the quakes?

2. Quake experiences

Please tell me about your experiences of the Canterbury earthquakes.

Talk about any of the quakes – 4 September 2010, 26 December 2010, 22 February 2011, 13 June 2011, 23 December 2011. What about the aftershocks?

Where were you? What happened? Who was with you? What did you do? What did others do? What were your concerns for members of your whānau/family, workmates, neighbours, friends, other people around you?

3. Impact of the quakes

How did the earthquakes affect you, your whānau/family and others who are close to you?

Did your life change after the quakes? How? What stayed the same?

4. Post-quake life

What is your life like now and what about the future?

Where you are living, what you are doing with your whānau/family or in your community, what are your hopes/concerns for yourself, your whānau/family, your neighbourhood, your suburb and Christchurch?

The project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, PB 4800, Christchurch 8140.

human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Glossary

4 September 2010

At 4.37a.m. a 7.1 magnitude earthquake took place on the Greendale fault, 35 km west of Christchurch. There was widespread damage in the central city and various suburbs, and some injuries, but no-one was killed.

Boxing Day quake 2010

The city was crammed with people shopping when a 5 magnitude shake erupted right under the central city. It was frightening for those who were there.

22 February 2011

The big earthquake, 6.3 magnitude, but shallow and aimed “like an arrow at the heart of the city”. Massive damage. 185 people died.

13 June 2011

Twin quakes around lunchtime, the first 5.8 the second 6.4. Depending on location, for some this was the strongest and most damaging earthquake. There were no deaths.

23 December 2011

Another 6.3 magnitude quake, but less damaging. Most participants can only vaguely recall this quake.

Earthquake Commission (EQC)

The government agency set up to collect earthquake levies, which they did competently for many years. However, they appeared largely unprepared for the scale of the Canterbury earthquakes.

Fletchers

Fletchers Construction Company, the private company contracted to handle repairs for the EQC that are over \$15,000 and under \$100,000. Fletchers usually contracts a range of builders who are registered with the company to complete the repairs.

Land categories

e.g. TC3 For land zoned 'green' and available for building homes, TC1, TC2 and TC3 are used to describe the need for foundations in any rebuilds on particular pieces of land.

Opt out

The ability to not use the Fletchers Construction Company to organise the repair of homes costed at under \$100,000 but over \$15,000, but to choose your own builder. An amount is agreed on, and a builder contracted by the owner.

Over cap

EQC insures up to \$100,000 of claims for the repair or rebuilding of property. Insurance companies have to meet the costs of repairs or rebuilding over that amount.

Red zone (central city)

The area closed off after the February earthquakes. Parts of the city remained closed for 1-2 years, and parts are still inaccessible.

Red zone (suburbs)

Areas which cannot be lived in or built upon, where householders got a payout from the government for their land and property (if they were insured) in compensation for having to move.

Southern Response

The AMI insurance company failed after the 22 February quake, and was taken over by another insurance company, IAG. A government-owned company was set up which took over AMI claims for Canterbury earthquake damage before 5 April 2012. The new temporary company was given the name 'Southern Response'.

Under cap

Houses assessed as repairable for less than \$100,000. In this case, the full costs of the repairs would be met by EQC.

White zone

A temporary zoning of residential land, mainly parts of the Port Hills, prior to final decisions on the status of this land.

Work and Income

The New Zealand government's benefits and employment agency. Many of the women in this study received their primary income as a state benefit (the Domestic Purposes Benefit or National Superannuation). Some of them were in low paid employment and had children in their households. They usually received additional income under the Working for Families programme.

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Du Plessis, R. (2013) Women's Voices – Recording women's experiences of the Canterbury earthquakes. UC CEISMIC Contestable Fund Mini Conference, 5 June, University of Canterbury.

Video of presentation:

<https://quakestudies.canterbury.ac.nz/store/object/12974>

PowerPoint slides and commentary:

<https://quakestudies.canterbury.ac.nz/store/part/87695>

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Jayne Rattray's story

The Circular No. 566 September /Hepetema, 2013, pp 9 -10.

Jade Rutherford's story

The Circular No. 567 October /Whiringa-ā-nuku, 2013, pp. 11-12.

Alia Afzali's story

The Circular No. 568 November /Whiringa-ā-rangi 2013, pp. 11-12.

Amber Henderson's story

The Circular No. 569 February /Hui-tanguru, 2014, p. 8.

Susan Mary Barnes' story

The Circular No. 572 May /Haratua, 2014, pp. 8-9.