

RURAL QUAKE RESPONSE 2010

Rural community reveals strength



*Neil Stott -
Federated Farmers North
Canterbury, Provincial President*

On September 4, 2010 farmers near Darfield, including myself, were rocked by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake.

After the second vibration had passed my immediate thoughts were; the power has gone, no battery radio, cell phone flat, but at least I still have a land line. I will need to hook up the generator to the generator plug I fitted to the house.

I quickly realised there was a wide range of damage to farmers' properties.

Early reports from Federated Farmers communications manager, David Broome, let me know what had happened in the area including, dairy shed rotary platforms falling off their rollers and grain silos toppling over, not to mention the damage to people's homes.



In the following weeks Federated Farmers undertook a number of initiatives to help farming families get back to normal as quickly as possible.

A meeting in Darfield, scheduled for the Thursday of the week became an information and respite evening for the community.

It was pleasing to see that people who had walked into the High School hall with grief stricken looks on their face left with smiles.

This was probably due to the sponsored BBQ, the important information from

national and local government and earthquake experts and the light relief provided by Jamie McKay, Dick Taylor and Richard Loe.

Almost three months after the 'big one' life for many farmers is back to normal now, with only the occasional shakes to remind them of what the earth under our feet is capable of. There are still on-going issues for those suffering from liquefaction and the issue of what to do with the sand.

There is also the concern about waterways which have shifted from their original channels and are now posing a risk to farmland.

There are a lot of Federated Farmers members and staff who put in a lot of hours to help with the recovery to the earthquake, too many to mention them all here. It humbled me to see our rural community pull together so quickly. I would like to thank everyone involved in the response to the earthquake.

It was greatly appreciated.

Working together saved the grain



*Murray Rowlands -
Federated Farmers North
Canterbury Grain & Seed
Chairperson*

When I took on the role as North Canterbury Grain & Seed chairperson in April 2010, I thought I would be dealing with issues around grain prices, biosecurity and future markets.

It didn't ever cross my mind that I would be facing an earthquake response and recovery effort – it was definitely trial by fire.



After assessing the damage to my own farm my thoughts turned to how other farmers were affected.

On that first day I came to the realisation that with a forecast for bad weather coming, we needed 4500 tonnes of grain storage immediately.

So we got Federated Farmers to send out a text message asking if farmers could make undamaged silo space available.

Half an hour later, we had to send another message saying that we had more than enough offers of silo space with 9000 tonnes available.

The first few days passed quickly, sleep was taken whenever there was a quiet moment, even if it meant taking a nap in my truck.

I met some interesting people along the way; John Key, Richard Loe and Jamie McKay, just to name a few.

Every morning I sat down with the field officers, Vicky O'Connor, Mark Burnside, Ken Algie and Julia Christie with a map of the area.

We helped identify the areas to be visited and there was a real focus of getting up people's driveways.



The information this generated was fed back into Federated Farmers and the appropriate response was taken where needed.

I would like to thank the many people involved in shifting the grain.

There were the farmers who provided storage, the guy who provided the grain vacs, the transport companies, the grain companies and my Mid-Canterbury counterpart, David Clark.

Also, a very big thanks to the Lions Club for the help they provided with tailing.

Because of everyone pulling together we managed to shift all the grain and avoid big losses.

Lessons learned



*Vicky O'Connor -
Federated Farmers Canterbury
Field Officer*

Farmers are a resilient and practical bunch but I am sure some were tested to the limit in the days and months following September's earthquake.

Everyone has their own story and unique experiences, which I am sure they will remember for the rest of their lives.

We have learned a lot from this unprecedented event and will have a lot more knowledge of what to do and what is needed should anything similar happen in the future.

The earthquake was a huge learning curve for me; I had only been Canterbury's field officer for 10 weeks when it happened and it was a rough way to learn about the area.

I immediately went to the epicentre and moved into Darfield's motels for the first six days following the quake and have been coming back every week since.

Being involved in the Rural Recovery group from an early stage and responding to emergency 0800 calls from around the area gave me a good appreciation of farmers' needs.

The farmers had a variety of problems including; fallen silos, water and diesel tanks,

un-usable cow sheds and paddocks with giant cracks running through them.

We and the rest of the community faced and overcame these and many other problems despite the fact that nobody was prepared for this event.



I wish to acknowledge and congratulate all those involved and especially the other field officers that came from far away to help cover as many people as possible.

The Federated Farmers meeting held during the first week attracted 600 people.

It was constructive and informative as well as a great way to get the community together for a stress relieving family evening.

During the initial response Federated Farmers helped members and non-members alike.

Now that the situation is stabilised we are again making our members our first priority.

It is in times such as these that the annual subscription fee is clearly shown to be a sensible investment.

The earthquake highlighted to me that as well as giving farmers a strong political voice, Federated Farmers helps out farmers in a very hands on and practical way.

This was put to the test and proven with both the earthquake and the terrible snows soon after in Southland.

We are continuing to support our members – the effects of the earthquake and its aftershocks are still unfolding as time goes on and I continue to visit affected areas south of the Waimakariri River to offer help and support.

I was very pleased to see in my last visit that many things are getting back to normal but those who had substantial damage to, or loss of, their homes as well as their farms will take longer to recover.

Members can still call the Federated Farmers 0800 number (0800 327 646) and there is also help available through the Selwyn District Council and other organisations.

I hope the festive season brings every one a bit of relief and relaxation and wish everyone a merry Christmas.

A problem shared is a problem halved

*Doug Archbold -
North Canterbury Rural Support Trust,
Chairman*

Coping with drought, an earthquake and a global recession can shake the staunchest farmer, making 2010 a busy year for the North Canterbury Rural Support Trust.

Our counsellors have been busy helping people deal with a myriad of problems, ranging from helping people deal with insurance claims for earthquake damaged farm equipment, to helping other farmers trying to recover their stock and finances after last summer's drought.



Lessons were learned from the aftermath of the earthquake; our work in the Selwyn area has strengthened our networks with a number of support agencies in that area.

Recently Barbara McLeod, Liz Ensor, Judy Meikle and I had an opportunity to share our experiences with representatives from the other 13 Rural Support Trusts around the country at the bi-annual conference in Wellington.

Subjects covered were preparing for adverse events, dealing with psycho-social problems, publicity, strategic planning and a look into the future of New Zealand's land based industries.

I also attended a meeting of the National Adverse Event Committee which I have just been elected to as the national Rural Support Trust representative.

Issues raised included; the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry response to the PSA outbreak in the Bay of Plenty, the Northland drought, snow in Southland, the

Canterbury earthquake and the low number of farm sales at the moment.

I am honoured to be representing Rural Support as the inclusion of our organisation on the Committee shows our work is recognised at the highest levels.

However, farmers also need to know that we are here to help and should feel comfortable calling us when things seem overwhelming.

We know this is a tough, even heart breaking, industry at times but the old adage of 'a problem shared is a problem halved'

is actually true. If things seem to be getting out of hand, do not hesitate to call us on our 0800 number (see advert).

We also want to note our founding chairperson Dorothy Oakley recently resigned due to ill-health.

Dorothy has been the foundation pillar of Rural Support for 20 years and we miss her valuable wisdom and input. Our best wishes to Dorothy and Graham, and their families.

On behalf of our team, I would like to wish everyone a happy Christmas and a bountiful New Year.

NORTH CANTERBURY RURAL SUPPORT TRUST

Challenging times on the farm?

When an adverse event leads to crisis be it financial, climatic (such as drought, flood, earthquake or heavy snow), or personal the North Canterbury Rural Support Trust is ready to assist. Services are free and confidential.

0800 277 845

www.northcanterbury.rural-support.org.nz

RuralSupport
NORTH CANTERBURY

Federated Farmers champions common sense solutions



*Anna MacKenzie -
Federated Farmers of New
Zealand, Regional Policy Advisor*

The response from Canterbury's councils after September's earthquake helped farmers facing major repair jobs on their farms.

Rather than being tied up in red tape, councils were open to Federated Farmers suggestions and worked to make recovery and rebuilding easier.

After September 4 it was clear that existing council plans and policies aimed at protecting the environment would delay those affected from fixing damage, which could itself cause environmental problems.

The Canterbury Earthquake Response and Recovery Act 2010 came into force on September 15, enabling, among other things, extensions to the time frames for processing resource consents. The act also set up the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Commission, to advise how resources could be prioritised and funding allocated to make sure the recovery started as soon as possible.

Environment Canterbury's (Ecan) primary concern was to ensure that people could fix problems quickly while avoiding, as much as possible, any environmental damage.

Potentially the most long term damage from the earthquake was to Canterbury's groundwater supplies.

Ecan asked people to contact them to seek



possible solutions to contamination points, and Federated Farmers met with Ecan staff to discuss how current policies and resource consent conditions were being monitored and enforced.

Ecan waived compliance monitoring while on farm damage was being cleaned up and repaired.

They publicised how damaged septic tank and other wastewater systems and domestic and stock water bores could be replaced as permitted activities and made sure staff were available, free of charge, to visit properties and advise landowners at short notice on any remediation works.

Compliance monitoring is now underway in Canterbury with specific leniency given to breaches of consent conditions as a result of earthquake damage.

District Councils also released information about the implementation of their plans, with key areas of earthwork provisions in areas identified as outstanding natural landscape, with the relaxation of consent requirements.

However, in most areas remediation by way of earthworks was permitted under district council plans.

Impressive response from all



*Kieran Stone -
Federated Farmers North
Canterbury Dairy Chairperson*

The Canterbury earthquake has provided us all with stories of people going above and beyond the call of duty; from the volunteer fire brigade using the jaws of life to free cows to Federated Farmers field officers delivering baking.

Even house movers were on hand to replace dairy shed platforms which had fallen off their rollers.

The event made everyone realize the help and support available in the rural sector when times are tough.

Fonterra and Dairy NZ did their part as did numerous other businesses.

Nairn Electrical called in all the staff they could muster and got them out on the road, the engineers in conjunction with milking machine fitters were on the case getting a majority of platforms up and running again in a matter of days.

Orion linesmen got a majority of power back on in 48 hours.

We all know these things happened but when I started making a list and filling in a few missing bits it became clear there had been an impressive response.

To the people who offered help from everywhere and were keen to do pretty well anything; a big "Thank You" for that help.

Thank you also to those whose offers we could not use.



While a majority of farms are back to normal we do have to keep in touch with those farmers who have on-going issues and help where we can.

There are a number of agencies in place to help them, including the Rural Recovery team out of Selwyn District Council and Rural Support.

It is important that anyone who needs help does not hesitate to contact them for help or advice. Lastly I want to thank everyone who helped from Federated Farmers, especially field officers Mark Burnside and Vicky O'Connor.

Rural Recovery Group



*Carly Sluys -
Federated Farmers Policy
Advisor*

Federated Farmers played a key communications role in the Rural Recovery Group which set up in the aftermath of the Canterbury earthquake.

The group was activated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MaF) on September 8 to coordinate the rural recovery as part of the Civil Defence response and included various organisations such as; Fonterra, DairyNZ, Beef+Lamb and Federated Farmers, the Insurance Council, various banks, Selwyn District Council, Environment Canterbury, North Canterbury Rural Support Trust and other rural sector organisations.



The group covered everything from welfare and social issues, to irrigation concerns, collapsed silos and damaged cowsheds.

As the Federated Farmers representatives, North Canterbury president Neil Stott and I, along with Shona Sluys and Vicky O'Connor, made sure the information reported to us from our members and field officers was passed on to the other organisations.

Federated Farmers had good communications already in play, so we were also able to get information from the group back out to farmers in a timely manner.

A good example of this was advice provided about managing damage to wells.

What was happening to the aquifers and how the wells had held up was unknown and potentially a big problem.

We were able to distribute information from the group on what should be done both immediately after the quake and later on as things settled down.

One of the most positive things I experienced was working side by side with so many different organisations.

We were all there for a single purpose – any differences were left at the door and the group worked really well together.

2010 policy work in brief

Anna MacKenzie -
Federated Farmers of New Zealand,
Regional Policy Advisor

Having been a policy advisor for North Canterbury for nearly two years, I have had the opportunity to be involved with a wide range of policy matters with the potential to impose greater regulation and cost to farming in Canterbury. Fortunately through Federated Farmers involvement, I have also seen some of the more ridiculous suggestions removed, replaced with robust policy that provide common sense solutions on the ground.

In Hurunui we have been helping the council develop policies and rules around subdivision in the rural zone, seeking a better solution to providing for limited development while reducing the "wasted space" often present on rural lifestyle blocks that are too big for their owners to manage.

In Selwyn we helped to shape the decision on the landscape protection provisions on the lowest slopes of the Port Hills, with a result that ensured farming could continue in a reasonable manner and planning for succession was not stifled. We also discussed how a plan change around significant natural areas might be incorporated into the district plan.

In Christchurch City we held discussions around the best way to have meaningful consultation between Banks Peninsula farmers and council in order to have good regulatory outcomes, following genuine concern over the open space strategy. We supported the Environment Canterbury Biosecurity team's application for resource consent to allow a less costly regulatory framework for the use of 1080 and pindone to manage rabbits on private land.

We also made a submission to the Pest Management Strategy seeking a more



coordinated approach to rabbit and wallaby management and to ensure gorse and broom rules were practical.

It can be costly enough to manage these weeds, particularly on marginal land. We also provided Ecan with ideas on how the Draft Canterbury Regional Policy Statement should look and what it needs to contain from a rural perspective.

Submissions were made to every council in North Canterbury on their rating system, commenting the amount of rates collected, from whom it was being collected and how the rates budget was being spent. The primary concern is the rating mechanisms placing a high burden on rural ratepayers as the largest landholders, despite receiving the least by way of council services. This on going argument with local government would certainly benefit from your assistance in the new year.

If you would like any further information on any of these issues please contact Anna on 03 3579452, or at amackenzie@fedfarm.org.nz

Farewell Ali



It is with regret that we say goodbye to Ali Undorf-Lay, the provincial communications co-ordinator from our Christchurch office after 14 years.

We will greatly miss her energy and enthusiasm and I will sorely miss her bright ideas.

We wish her all the best for her future endeavours.

Neil Stott -
Federated Farmers North Canterbury
Provincial President

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FEDERATED FARMERS NORTH CANTERBURY

WISHES EVERYONE A
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR

"Join the Federation today"

Vicky O'Connor represents the Federated Farmers Field Team in Canterbury.

To contact Vicky:
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