

Media Release

CERA hands building safety programme over to local councils

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A post-earthquake building assessment process, which identified and managed over 3500 high risk buildings in Greater Christchurch, has given the region's residents a huge amount of confidence, says Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) chief executive Roger Sutton.

The Detailed Engineering Evaluations (DEE) programme will be handed over by the end of the year from CERA to local authorities to manage under their respective earthquake prone building policies, as per the standard practice across New Zealand.

The DEE process was put in place following the coloured placard system Civil Defence used in the initial days after the earthquakes.

CERA used a risk-based process to classify 13,000 commercial and multi-unit, multi-storey buildings in Greater Christchurch as high, medium or low risk, and building owners were asked to carry out structural checks in the order of priority.

"We needed a way to systematically check and record the structural integrity of these buildings in Christchurch and its surrounding towns. This meant any safety issues found could be addressed as quickly as possible," Mr Sutton says.

"The DEE system made sure that building owners took responsibility for their properties and could get any necessary repairs underway. It also had the impact of giving the public confidence in the safety of buildings, and that has been a key part of our psychological recovery."

Mr Sutton says the owners who have not yet had a DEE for their buildings will now work with city or district councils through their earthquake prone building policies.

"Essentially we are back to a business-as-usual process now with the transition to the councils, and I think that is commendable given the level of destruction that the city sustained. CERA staff have worked very hard to ensure the high priority buildings are either checked and cleared, or that owners have got their repairs underway."

"This work means that greater Christchurch's building stock is actually now amongst the most seismically resilient in New Zealand and the councils' building policies will be some of the most advanced nationally."

Mr Sutton says the DEE process is a credit to New Zealand's engineering industry. More on the DEE process can be found at www.cera.govt.nz/structural-assessments.