

Media Release

Residential land zoning complete

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Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee says today's green zoning of the final eight residential properties in the Port Hills marks the end of an unprecedented programme of Government assistance in natural disaster recovery.

"All 190,000 residential properties in greater Christchurch now have a zoning which gives their owners the ability to move on with their lives," Mr Brownlee says.

"When we started this process we knew it would not be easy and we knew the end results would not please everyone.

"But I'm pleased to say the vast majority of the over 7860 property owners in the residential red zone have already chosen a buyout option and are in the process of selling their property to the Crown; thousands of house repairs and rebuilds are underway right across greater Christchurch; and insurers are making good progress settling claims in Technical Category 3 (TC3)."

Mr Brownlee says the unique residential red zone offer scheme has allowed property owners to move on from the most damaged areas promptly, and the Government's assistance has progressed recovery much faster than if the usual private insurance process had been left to handle the situation.

"Some parts of residential Christchurch were so damaged by the quakes that if we hadn't acted decisively property owners would have been left in a state of quagmire, both physically and metaphorically," Mr Brownlee says.

Today the eight white zoned properties in Lucas Lane on the Port Hills have been zoned green. All eight properties are at risk of being inundated by landslip, and wet weather over winter and continuing seismic activity has exacerbated that risk.

A work programme will remove almost 40,000 cubic metres of unstable land above the properties to make the area safe.

"This has been identified as the most cost-effective and socially beneficial way to ensure the residents can move on with their lives," Mr Brownlee says.

"If this area was to become a red zone and the houses were subsequently removed, that would in turn create a landslip hazard for green zone residents further down the hill and disrupt more lives.

"Working with the owner of the unstable section of land, we will remove the slip hazard and remove the issue."

Mr Brownlee says the Lucas Lane option is not one that can be carried out individually by other homeowners, including those zoned red because of rock roll risk.

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"Lucas Lane is a large-scale land slip issue and is completely different to the life risk problems posed by rock roll in other parts of the Port Hills.

"This solution will be the most effective, the fastest to implement and not cause any additional effects on other residents."

The time spent zoning these eight properties was due to the monitoring how the land slip has behaved over time.

Most of the Lucas Lane properties are subject to Section 124 notices, issued by the Christchurch City Council under the Building Act 2004. Once the landslip hazard is removed, these notices can also be removed.

Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker says the council and CERA have worked hard to establish the best option for what is an unusual situation in the Lucas Lane area.

"By the end of May next year this hazard will have been removed and the owners of the homes directly threatened by it will be safe.

"This is a unique problem that we have not encountered in other parts of the Port Hills, so the unique solution we have arrived at is quite appropriate."

Mayor Parker says the cost of moving the unstable land will be shared between CERA and the council, with the details yet to be worked out.

Today's zoning decision means there are over 181,000 residential properties zoned green and 7860 zoned red. Of those zoned Red 4903 have settled with the Crown, and 6205 have signed a sale and purchase agreement.

Property owners in Lucas Lane also have the opportunity to take part in the Port Hills zoning review and have until 16 November to lodge an application through the CERA website.