

Wellington's journey to earthquake preparedness

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“It is imperative that the hard lessons learnt by Cantabrians are not lost to the history books. We are incredibly fortunate to be actively working with the Learning and Legacy Team and to understand how each personal story applies to the Wellington experience.” *Dan Neely, Manager of Community Resilience at Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO)*

Wellington has an opportunity to learn from the Canterbury earthquake sequence. It was a watershed experience for all New Zealanders and a stark reminder of how quickly lives can be permanently disrupted.

The Wellington region is working to better understand what can be done to prepare for earthquake recovery and how to enhance the region's resilience. There is an opportunity to take the learning from Canterbury to strengthen Wellington's preparedness.

Wellington's journey began in March 2015 with a half-day workshop where more than 50 leaders, including Mayors and Chief Executives from around the region learned about the importance of planning for a recovery event.

In September 2015, an agenda-setting workshop in Wellington brought together 180 stakeholders from a wide range of sectors to discuss the critical issues to be considered in preparing a resilience strategy for Wellington. Several key areas have been identified, and are currently being explored more deeply – including, of course, the impact of earthquakes.

[Read the summary report from the agenda-setting workshop¹](#)

Wellington was given a significant boost by being accepted into the 100 Resilient Cities Programme (100RC) – a prestigious international programme supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. 100 RC is dedicated to helping cities around the world become more resilient to the physical, social, and economic challenges that are a growing part of the 21st century.

[Read about 100RC²](#)

In December 2015, Mike Mendonca was appointed Wellington's first Chief Resilience Officer by the Wellington City Council. A unique role created to lead city-wide resilience building efforts to help Wellington be better prepared for the 'shocks' (e.g. earthquakes and flooding) and 'stresses' (e.g. water shortages and high unemployment).



Dan Neely and Mike Mendonca at the Bridge of Remembrance in Christchurch

¹ <http://wellington.govt.nz/about-wellington/resilient-wellington/about-resilient-wellington>

² <http://www.civildefence.govt.nz/about/news-and-events/events/>





“Resilience is more than simply having a civil defence kit and strong buildings—those things should be a given. A modern city like ours needs to survive, adapt and grow, no matter what shocks and stresses we might experience”, says Mike.

Next, Mike will oversee the development and implementation of a comprehensive Resilience Strategy for the city.

Learning from Canterbury’s experience is a critical ingredient, not least because it demonstrated just how challenging and important the recovery process is for everyone. Together, Wellington City Council, 100 RC, WREMO and Lifelines are working with the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Learning and Legacy Programme to learn from experience, prepare for the future, and put plans and initiatives into action.

