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## State of the nation

Welcome to the final Catalyst State of the Nation for 2013. Before I begin I'd like to apologise to all of you who got your November newsletter late last month; this was due to an unforeseen spell in hospital with a rather nasty acute appendix but more of that later! Wherever you are in the world it's fair to say that Christmas cheer is upon us with one and all looking forward to a break over the next few weeks. Unlike the UK the temperatures are soaring here in New Zealand with most of us dealing with temperatures in the mid 20's or above. Most companies will be shutting down for the holidays (bar a skeleton crew) on the 20th of December and returning on the 6th January and Catalyst is no exception though I'm sure there will be checking of emails during that period.

### Civil Sector

The civil sector is looking forward to a busy year in 2014 as a number of major projects get under way and others are awarded. The past few months have been filled with tendering for the majority of my clients and so many are looking forward to a busy order book for the foreseeable future. I met with one general manager 3 weeks ago and he openly admitted that if they win half of what they're tendering for they will need a significant number of new people to join their organisation throughout the country. He also went as far and to admit that much of the available applicants in New Zealand have been snapped up and that very soon they will need to look further afield to find talented individuals. Key personnel being mentioned at the moment include foremen/supervisors, engineers and project managers but it's fair to say that if you have a solid civil background then Phil wants to hear from you for potential roles in the New Year and 2014.

### Construction

In case – heaven forbid ☹ – you missed the last newsletter – we reported that clients are finally starting to look at international candidates more seriously. Rather than taking the easier hire they are looking at the best candidates. At this stage – you still need to be committing to coming over, but if you are coming – you will likely be interviewed before you arrive.

It has started with QS and professional project managers, but ass projects get under way, site staff will be next on the list. My advice will be stay ahead of the game – make contact and let us know your plans.

I still reckon that March next year will see a breaking point and with Christmas coming – that time is really not that far away. I seriously believe that you can start to make plans. As soon as we know you are coming, we can arrange meetings.

### Consultants

2013 has proven to have been a rather quiet year so roll on 2014. With the Christchurch delays behind us work will increase and with Australia starting to pick up there will be less Aussies being sent over to NZ to keep them busy. Add to this the general pick up across NZ and this should be a very busy year. A point which was proven only yesterday with a key client wishing to meet in the 3rd week of January to discuss their hiring needs for 2014 and how we can assist. A very positive indication in the last week of the business year before the Corporate Christmas shutdown period takes effect in a couple of days.

Once again it will be civil qualified Geotechnical Engineers, Structural Engineers with practical seismic design capabilities, specialist Fire Design Engineers, and specialist Storm Water Modellers are going to be first cabs of the ranks in terms of client demand, with other sectors to follow after.

If you are planning on making that life-style move in 2014 and want to be here next year, then I suggest you contact me as soon as possible. I will be checking my emails ([mverdon@catalystrecruitment.co.nz](mailto:mverdon@catalystrecruitment.co.nz)) regularly during the holiday period and more than happy to arrange a time to speak with you during this period to get you ready to make that move reality.

Remember keep in touch with us about your plans and if you're planning a visit or a move then give us plenty of notice and we'll do everything we can to assist you in securing the best role for you. Whatever your plans for the coming weeks the team here at Catalyst wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and we look forward to speaking and working with you in 2014.



## Auckland house consents soar in 2013

There has been a 28 per cent increase in the number of Auckland housing consents issued in the 12 months to October.



Photo / Herald on Sunday

Auckland house and apartment building is at a five-year high, with nearly 5700 dwelling consents issued in the year to October.

Geoff Cooper, Auckland Council chief economist, said this was the highest annual figure since 2008 and a 28 per cent increase over the year to October, 2012.

The 2013 Census showed Auckland had 469,500 households, up from 434,268 in the 2006 Census, he said.

In his first issue of the [Housing Matters newsletter](#) just out, Cooper cited the potential for the number of new houses built here to increase, after the Government and council's Special Housing Areas.

The first tranche of those has been identified and the second tranche was announced yesterday, Cooper said.

"Resource consent lodgements for land supply and subdivision have already grown strongly over the past 12 months, including for major greenfield developments.

This includes a pickup in resource consent applications for major apartment buildings and major subdivisions," Housing Matters said.

The Herald has also reported on eight giant tower cranes on Auckland's horizon, building many new commercial and residential buildings.

SugarTree between Union St and Nelson St in the CBD is the biggest block going up. It will have 615 units in three separate blocks, rising up to 11 levels.

Rachael Logie, the council's senior economist, said no data existed to quantify the city's housing shortage but it was likely to be between one and two years' worth of supply at the current levels of consent activity.

Source:

[Anne Gibson, New Zealand Herald, 17 December 2013](#)



**Auckland house consents soar in 2013**  
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See below the areas where the Ministry of Housing showing some of the new housing developments around Auckland:





## Government upbeat but surplus on knife edge

The economy is now expected to grow at 3.6 per cent in 2015, faster than many of New Zealand's major trading partners.

A roaring New Zealand economy will boost jobs and make debt levels fall sooner and further, Finance Minister Bill English says, as the Treasury delivered its most upbeat economic statement since National took office.

The half-year fiscal and economic update (HYEFU) released today showed the Government's key political target of returning to surplus by 2014-15 remains on a knife-edge, at just \$85 million.

However, it pointed to larger than expected surpluses in the future, along with lower unemployment and debt.

The economy is now expected to grow at 3.6 per cent in 2015, faster than many of New Zealand's major trading partners.

While the Treasury said interest rate increases were looming, English said households were now better placed than they had been for years.

"There'll be better job security, you've got more productive businesses, you've got an export sector and now a construction sector and a service sector who are more confident than they've been for 10 years," English said today.

"So, as we face the inevitability of rising interest rates in a well performing economy, for those households, it's not news. They've been reasonably, generally, been pretty careful about their debt levels, because of the likelihood that interest rates will go up, and alongside that they've got reasonable prospects for wage increases."

Treasury Secretary Gabriel Makhoul said growth "is becoming more embedded and broad-based".

The half-year economic and fiscal update made a series of upbeat forecasts including:

- Unemployment is expected to fall to below 6 per cent in 2014/15, and down to 4.7 per cent in 2018.
- While the surplus will not come any earlier, surpluses in the following years are expected to be substantially larger than previously forecast, by about \$900m in 2016 and \$500m in 2017.
- Debt will fall faster and further than previously expected, dropping to 22.3 per cent of economic output in 2018.
- Net debt is now expected to peak at \$65b, \$5b less than it was expected to just six months ago.
- Lower than expected debt means the Government will resume contributions to the New Zealand Superannuation Fund in 2019, a year earlier than had been expected.
- The total cost to the Crown of the Christchurch earthquake rebuild falls by about \$250m to \$14.9b.
- The New Zealand Debt Management Office announced that it was cutting its borrowing programme by about \$5b this year.

Despite the brighter picture, the Budget Policy Statement warned that there would be no return to a time when government spending rose with economic growth.

However, English confirmed that even with the current figures and projected surplus, there was expected to be room for \$1b of new spending in next May's Budget.

Part of the boost has come from stronger demand driven by the fast turnaround in the numbers moving to Australia, boosting net migration figures.

The boost comes despite slightly weaker demand from New Zealand's trading partners, mainly due to a falloff in mining investment in Australia.

The 2012 half-year update managed only to maintain that the Government was on track to reach its surplus target because of an 11th-hour announcement of petrol tax increases.

This year's release came with no unexpected surprises, although the decision not to reform the way ACC charges are made on vehicle licences, as proposed by the Crown entity was crucial to maintaining the forecast.

English maintained today that it expected to cut ACC levies by \$1b in 2015-16.

Labour Finance spokesman David Parker said with strong terms of trade and the Canterbury earthquake recovery underway, it was no surprise that the economy was growing, but it was not down to the Government.

Most Kiwis were missing out on the recovery, he said.

"National will just scrape into surplus next year primarily by overcharging New Zealanders for their ACC levies. Labour ran nine surpluses in a row and left zero net debt, and is committed to a return to surplus."

"National conveniently seems to have forgotten that the overwhelming majority of New Zealanders aren't better off than they were five years ago. Wages are stagnating and job growth is lagging behind economic growth," he said in a statement.



Source:

Hamish Rutherford, Stuff.co.nz, 17 December 2013



## Medical

One of the things we get asked about most is the health care system in New Zealand and how it stacks up compared to the UK. Interestingly enough both Phil and Andy have had first hand experience of the health system this month, some of it planned and some of it not, so we thought it might be useful to share our experiences.

### Phil's emergency procedure

My Wednesday started like any other apart from a mild stomach ache which by 11am forced a trip to Accident & Emergency at Auckland Hospital. Due to my pain I was quickly moved through the system to be examined by the doctors on call. Over the next few hours I was given my fair share of morphine and had an x-ray and CT scan which revealed an acute appendicitis. I was put on the ward and scheduled for an operation first thing in the morning which went famously; apparently I was second through the door. On waking up I was moved to another ward and spent the next 6 days recovering and being fussed over by a large team of nurses before finally being sent home to recuperate with a bag full of drugs!

I've never had an operation or had to stay in hospital before so I've nothing to compare my experience to. I was on a ward with only 4 beds and was never once kept waiting for advice or assistance. That said I would suggest that my care was second to none and apart from a small prescription fee (\$5 per script) the experience has cost me nothing. I was never asked about health insurance (although I do have it) and I won't be expecting a bill because the health system here is set up in a similar way to the NHS. If I were coming to New Zealand I would be very confident of the health system here for both me and my family.

### Andy's planned surgery

For a good couple of years no my back has been giving me gyp. It started becoming stiff the day after sport and then crept into the next day and slowly crept into every morning. This is a short description of the process and the costs.

Initially as I had injured it through Golf, I went to the Osteopath on ACC (Accident Compensation Corporation). Unique to New Zealand ACC pays for most treatment related to accidental injury. We all pay about 1% individually and companies pay a rate depending on number of staff, salaries and type of work (as a lot of injuries occur at work). ACC will also pay some sick pay for you if it meets their criteria. The Osteopath wasn't

free but around \$50 per hour (after government subsidy). English trained and brilliant, she identified other issues and sent me off to an x-ray (free on ACC) which identified compressed discs.

I was recuperating on a diet of Chiropractor and Acupuncture (on ACC plus \$25 per visit), but moving house didn't help – so it didn't get better and my GP (\$50) referred me to a Specialist (free on ACC). The Spine surgeon sent me for an MRI (free on ACC), identified some disc degeneration but recommended continued passive treatment and to come back in 6 months when I could consider a cortisone injection if no improvement.

6 months later and after solid recuperation through the Physio (on ACC, but still \$30 extra per session) I was getting stronger, but then moving the office didn't help. I went back to the specialist/surgeon (free on ACC) – who referred me to the Musculo-skeletal specialist (free on ACC). He decided that the cortisone would not be beneficial and recommended surgery – gulp!

Back to the surgeon who applied through ACC, but at his stage ACC declined my claim for surgery as the 'Modic 2' changes appeared to be degenerative rather than caused by accident (this was expected). My private insurance stepped in with Southern Cross and picked up the \$70,000 plus bill – with the exception of \$1500 excess (advances in techniques just a little ahead of the insurance company).

My operation occurred 2 weeks later. I went in on Monday 9th. Had 2 lower discs removed and the vertebrae fused with cages and bone graft. I was standing within 24 hours (promptly fainted) and walking within 48 hours. Private insurance allowed for a large private room with en-suite – like a hotel with a different bed and a fair few machines. 24 hour care with one nurse per 4 patients.

I have to say that I was blown away by the level of training and experience with nursing staff and my Specialist (not a man of many words) is a legend in my eyes. Can't wait to get fully fit again and get back on top of my 2.5 acres.



## The Catalyst Team



**Andy Hopkins**

ahopkins@catalystjobs.co.nz



**Phil Ponder**

pponder@catalystjobs.co.nz



**Mireille Verdonkschot**

mverdon@catalystjobs.co.nz

**Address:**

PO Box 17405  
Green Lane  
Auckland 1546

Level 2  
642 Great South Road  
Ellerslie  
Auckland 1051

**Phone:**  
+64 9 307 6111

**UK freephone:**  
0808 234 3587

**Fax:**  
+64 9 307 6110

**Website:**  
www.catalystjobs.co.nz

## Most Kiwis happy with their job - research

About three in four Kiwi workers are happy in their jobs, with those in Gisborne being the most content, new employment research shows.

Latest findings from Roy Morgan research show 77 per cent of Kiwi workers are either satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs – more than the number of Australians with the same opinions.

Those who worked in Gisborne, were most likely to be happy – with nearly 47 per cent of people in the region responding in a positive way about their jobs.

Workers in Nelson were likely to be the least content, with 5.5 per cent of respondents saying they were dissatisfied.

Pip Ellio, general manager of Roy Morgan Research NZ, said the country's job satisfaction on rate had increased in the past 10 years from 71.4 per cent.

“Overall, New Zealanders in paid employment are a contented bunch.

“Our findings indicate that an employee's job satisfaction is influenced by key certain factors.

As expected, a healthy pay packet is one of them, but recognition for one's work is the most important,” she said.

The research showed about 51 per cent of New Zealand workers rated their salary as good or very good, and almost all those people said they were satisfied with their job.

However, an even higher number of people were found to associate adequate recognition in the workplace with satisfaction in their job, the research noted.

Ms Ellio said a worker's sense of job security also affected how satisfied they were at work, particularly when many workplaces are struggling in the current economic climate.

The research was based on samples of 9,585 Australians in paid employment and 7,620 New Zealanders aged 14 or older carried out between October 2012 and September this year.

**Source:**  
Teuila Fuatai, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 December 2013

**Workplace feelings:**

- 1.8 per cent of Kiwis dissatisfied with their jobs
- 5 per cent very dissatisfied
- 60 per cent satisfied with their job recognition
- 52.3 per cent considered their job security to be good

**Source:** Roy Morgan

## Is the Kiwi an Aussie?

Kiwi's ancestor likely to have flown in from Australia

A palaeontologist from an Australian university says fossilised remains suggest the kiwi did not evolve from the giant moa.

Instead, he says, an ancestor of the kiwi was more closely related to the emu, which is still common in Australia.

The kiwi's ancestor and the emu are both likely to have evolved from a common ancestor which originated in Australia but also spread to New Zealand, it is suggested.

**Source:** *New Zealand Herald*, 18 December 2013

