



Christchurch

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State of the nation

Welcome to the Catalyst state of the nation for July 2013. It's not been the busiest month in New Zealand but it's often a slow period during the middle of the winter. In truth Auckland is having a pretty favorable winter so far and I'm looking out of the window on a sunny day with temperatures due to reach a steady 14 degrees. That said it's nothing on the weather we're hearing about in the UK with balmy temperatures and even some of the locals complaining it's too hot!

After suffering at the hands of the weather in May Wellington had another natural wake up in the past few weeks with numerous earthquakes striking the city. On Sunday 21st Wellington was hit by a 6.5 earthquake that centered below the Cook Strait, the expanse of water between the North & South Island. Nobody was injured and thanks to Wellington being the most earthquake prepared city in the country (a significant amount of strengthening work was done in the 80's and 90's) the majority of the damage was merely cosmetic. Since then there have been numerous after shocks with a 5.4 tremor hitting the region at around 1 this morning. New Zealand isn't known as the shaky isles for nothing!

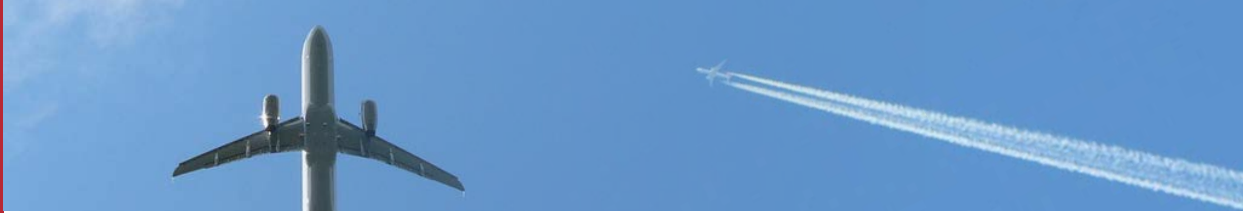
As ever, another round of earthquakes puts a focus on our construction sector as a whole and the state of our current buildings and the strength of the new ones under construction or due to be built. It's quite appropriate then that during the same week as the earthquakes in Wellington IPENZ, the Institute of Professional Engineers in New Zealand officially announced a shortage of structural engineers in New Zealand. This probably doesn't come as a great surprise to anyone but when the national body announces the fact it carries some weight. Mireille has written a more in depth piece later in the newsletter and if you are a structural engineer wanting to come to New Zealand then you should be talking to her! Elsewhere in the engineering sector the need continues for geotechnical specialists as ever so get in touch if you're interested in knowing more. The recent events in Wellington will likely mean an increased workload for engineers, putting pressure on current staff and potentially requiring additional staff. If you're interested in moving get in touch with Mireille to find out more about the requirements for your skills.

In the construction and project management sectors there is a significant focus on the work ahead. Many of our clients have stated they're almost able to taste

the upcoming work and are strategically looking at their teams and where they will need additional people when the time comes. That said in the world of contracting there is an ongoing need for carpenters and similar trades for the work already under way. Ideally clients are still looking for people on the ground but will look at the right candidates overseas as well. There is a constant need for good QS and PQS candidates so if you haven't already contacted Andy then get in touch as soon as possible to discuss opportunities. In the professional project management sector many companies are finding their workload increasing significantly outside of Christchurch and as such are seeing any of their surplus capability quickly allocated. It won't be long before they're looking to build their teams again so speak to Andy to discuss your options.

The civil sector continues to tick over during the winter months and although many of the more significant projects are yet to materialise there is a significant focus on requirements ahead. With the closure of the red zone in Christchurch last month there is a significant amount of focus on the cornerstone projects and the surrounding infrastructure. Over the next few months as the details of these projects become clearer there will be a further demand for additional staff. As ever there is an ongoing requirement for drain layers, operators etc on the ground so if you are making the move to NZ contact Phil in advance to discuss your options. Throughout the rest of the country there are a number of significant projects due to kick off in September and October so watch this space for ongoing requirements.

As ever keep in touch with us about your movements and keep a close eye on the job board for positions as they become available. If you're making a trip or a permanent move to New Zealand let us know in advance and we'll do all we can to assist and make that move a success.



The \$40 Billion question

When will the Christchurch Rebuild get into full swing?

1000 day rule

A few months ago, one of my clients – (a Senior Manager with one of the worlds leading Project Management companies) - was explaining to me the risk of capital flight from any city that suffers major damage through natural disasters. I hadn't thought about it before, but it made sense. Apparently – if major progress is not made in the first 1000 days after an event, then capital flight can occur, i.e. investors who receive pay outs from insurance – may well decide that as the rebuild is taking so long to gather momentum, they might as

well invest their money elsewhere in Auckland, Wellington, outside of property or even outside of New Zealand. It made sense to me – although I have not verified the science behind the 1000 day rule.

Then on May 31st 2013– there was major press coverage regarding 1000 days since the earthquakes. This has crept up on us rather swiftly and to be honest – the numbers around the progress were pretty low – see the 'speedometers' graphic below.

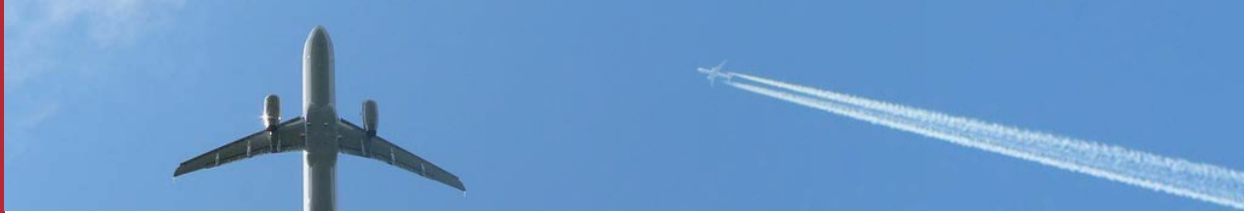


So – are we about to suffer incredulous amounts of capital flight? I started to panic a bit myself!

I guess, like this whole rebuild project – things are never as straightforward as that. YOU have to start at the beginning and understand how the damage came about. The damage occurred over 4 separate events. 4th Sep 2010, then 171 days later on 22nd Feb 2011, then 111 days later on 13th June 2011 and 193 days later on 23rd Dec 2011. Each was quite different.

Sep 2010 - The first earthquake occurred on 4th September 2010. Nobody was injured, but there was a fair bit of damage (approx \$2 - \$3 Billion rebuild project).

Feb 2011 – The massive earthquake of 22nd February 2011 caused the collapse of 2 key buildings and many stone facades and of course many deaths. Immediately it was recognised that we had moved from a repair situation to a rebuild five to ten times the size.



The \$40 Billion Question – article continued from page 2

June 2011 - Just as the country's response was starting to take shape, a big slow rumbling shake caused massive structural damage to already damaged buildings. This changed the scale of the demolition project and therefore the reopening of the CBD.

Dec 2011 - A big slow wave of an earthquake which left vast swathes of land higher or lower. The horizontal infrastructure response needed to change. The new plan is to replace the old underground infrastructure with shorter runs of steeper gradient pipe with significant numbers of smaller pump stations. This required a complete redesign.

So – assuming that the logic of the 1000 day capital flight is a recognised phenomena, when should we start counting? The last major event was some 584 days ago and the first 1059 days ago. – So I guess somewhere in between?

The 2014 General election

There is also another political matter. It is likely that on the last Saturday of November 2014 we will have our next General Election. You guessed it - the incumbent Government will not really want to write off 300,000 votes by having no visible progress on the Rebuild. It is my prediction that we will see massive progress over the next 12 months – there will need to be if John Key wants his National party voted back in.

My Prediction for the start of the rebuild

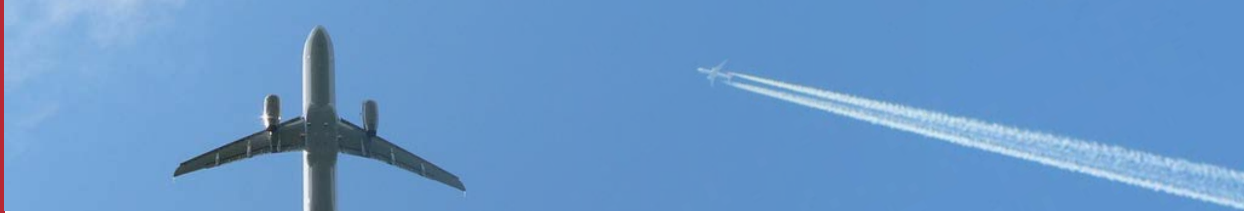
So – it is my belief that everything is aligning for a major change in the activity levels. Take 1000 days from the last earthquake on 23rd December 2011 and you have 18 September 2014 – around 10 weeks before the General Election. It might be coincidence, or just perfect timing...

Whatever happens – there are massive numbers of projects to get through. For a projected \$40Billion rebuild project – we have only just seen the first \$1Billion (or 2.5%) of resource consents granted in the first 3 years. Pace has to pick up.

As ever – if you are planning a visit – please do get in touch, we are seeing record numbers of people arriving and securing interviews. Unemployment rates in Christchurch are at record lows. Once again – not every sector is going full speed, but it will not be long. Call on our free phone number from the UK 0808 234 3587 after 8:30pm UK time Sunday to Thursday.

If you want to stay in touch with what is happening – sign up to “Your Catalyst” here on our website catalystrecruit.wordpress.com/ and click on ‘follow’ bottom right.





IPENZ structural engineers shortage



IPENZ “not enough seismic engineers in New Zealand”

Few engineers are sufficiently qualified to meet the need for seismic assessments in New Zealand, even if they are drawn from overseas, the engineering body IPENZ says.

Chief executive Andrew Cleland says engineers tend to go where the work is, and as the country strengthens its housing stock, more will arrive.

But he says not many will be able to work without initial training and supervision.

“The reality is that analysing an existing building is much, much harder than designing a new building. It’s the hardest job so it needs the best and most experienced people. The pool of people pre-Christchurch who were good at doing that was very small, so that pool is expanding as people gather experience and as we get the sharing through the earthquake society, but it is a small pool.”

Source: The Press, 25 July 2013

The article above which was featured in the Christchurch Press shortly after Wellington’s earthquake on Sunday 21st of July serves as a timely reminder that New Zealand’s vulnerability to a severe shortage of engineers remains – not just solely in the structural engineering sector but in engineering disciplines across the board.

It highlights the fact that no matter what Government funded investment and industry initiatives have been put in place over the past few years to try and combat this problem and attract more of New Zealand’s young people to study engineering and technology, the engineering skills shortage remains a problem that will be prevalent for many years to come and is indicative of a country with a relatively small head count. New Zealand has the lowest percentage of students choosing engineering (6%) than any other OECD country (average 13%).

Couple this with the fact that it takes so long to develop a competent engineer through post-graduation experience (on average 4 years before enough exposure and experience to proceed working towards Chartership), along with the Kiwi’s age-old love affair of “flying the coup” to gain life experience overseas once that post-graduation practical experience has been gained, it comes as no surprise that a small country such as ours has traditionally always struggled with producing (and keeping) adequate numbers of Engineers and why Engineers remain firmly on the Immigration New Zealand Long Term Skills shortage list.

In a recent study conducted by the New Zealand Herald more than 8700 students in their final year of study at one of New Zealand’s 8 universities were asked the following question: If you are seeking employment in the next two years what area or areas are you planning to seek employment in?”

Those that answered Engineering only made up 4.4% (roughly 381).

According to the Department of Labour’s Occupational Outlook in 2010 the total number of students completing professional engineering qualifications had risen 13.4% (3130) on the 2009 year (2760) which means the Government funded investment and industry initiatives are on the right path in terms of attracting more young people into engineering study, however, when comparing that to a 28% increase in job vacancies for civil engineers posted online for the calendar year of August 2011 to August 2012 again it comes as no surprise that demand far outweighs supply in the local market and as such why many consultants are looking further afield at the overseas market to secure the right levels of skills and expertise to balance their existing teams and ultimately the completion of projected forward work loads.

Going back to the IPENZ article from a recruiter specialising on the Consultant side it has certainly been my experience that post-Christchurch earthquakes, the demand for seismic capable Structural Engineers (among other engineering disciplines) have continually been on the increase, but skills and expertise are not the only considerations as to what makes a non-local candidate a good potential addition to the team in a client’s eyes. What is equally important is that candidate’s ability to demonstrate how their project experience is relevant to the types of projects worked on here, their research undertaken on what a move to New Zealand will entail for their family, alongside a genuine desire to want to move their career, family and life-style here.

As always if you are interested in making a move to New Zealand and you feel now is the right time for you, then please do get in contact with one of us in the team and we will do our very best to assist you through the process.





Phu Nguyen

Case study of moving to NZ

Current Employer: OTS – A Babbage Company

Phu a Structural Engineer from America visited New Zealand in April 2011 as part of his holiday “Down Under”. Being soon after the February 2011 earthquake disaster, Phu made a special detour to Christchurch to see for himself the devastation from the earthquakes. After visiting Christchurch Phu felt compelled to make use of his Seismic Structural Engineering skills while at the same time giving something back to society. Phu made contact with Mireille in October 2012 via another colleague Mireille had placed and was specifically interested in Christchurch based opportunities. Mireille arranged an interview with OTS and Phu commenced his new position in March 2013.

What inspired you to consider moving to New Zealand?

One of my goals in life is to seek an opportunity to work abroad for a couple years, particularly a place where I can use my career to help others less fortunate or in need. I originally was looking at Cape Town (South Africa), Mumbai (India), Rio (Brazil), before a former co-worker mentioned NZ due to the 2011 earthquakes. It definitely was not at the top of my list of preferred destinations, but after a couple days thinking it thru & discussing it with my former co-worker back home, Christchurch just made the most sense with regards to my career.

Has New Zealand lived up to your expectations?

So far so good, I would say my time here has been swell. I toured the city 2 months after the Feb. 2011 earthquakes during a vacation trip so I knew what I was getting myself into in terms of locations, weather, and in a away lifestyles.

How has your life changed since moving to New Zealand?

The one aspect of life which I had to alter living in NZ definitely has to be the financial part of things. I knew that it would be relatively more expensive with regards to cost of living here, but I didn't expect food prices to cost that much. Not that I don't get paid well, but it has definitely changed my spending habits compare to living in Los Angeles.

What one thing would you have done differently?

I might have rather came here at the start of summer than winter, since I've never lived in a cold climate before, but otherwise, I would not have done anything differently. I'm a big believer in being adaptive so even if something doesn't turn out well, rather than complain about it; just do something so it doesn't make you think about it so much.

What one thing do you wish you had known about before moving?

Not counting accommodation & transportation, the cost of foods & clothing is much more expensive here than back in LA.

What advice would you pass to someone commencing the process?

The two aspects thru out this process that was at the top of my list were reason relating to personal & career growth. Is this what someone out there is looking for when they're deciding to work abroad? Would coming here or anywhere else help you to achieve your personal & career development as you wanted or would it hold you back? For me, I saw a lot of positive to come out of this endeavour and while I don't plan to be in NZ long term, it's still a great opportunity to continue to grow in my career and at the same time working toward a good cause (rebuilding a city impacted by the earthquakes).

Looking back with hindsight, do think you have made the right move?

Definitely! I've always told myself whether I succeed or fail at something, at least 20 yrs from now I can look in the mirror and/or tell my children that I went out & accomplished the goals that I wanted in life even if it's for a brief period in time.

Useful Facts:

1st Contact to interview	64 days
1st Interview to offer	30 days
Offer to arrival	57 days
Time since arrival	147 days

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

Your Catalyst

Last month Phil's blog grew from 72 followers to 142, but a number of people found the instructions difficult to follow – my mistake.

So – here it is again

If you want to stay in touch with what is happening – sign up to "Your Catalyst" here on our website catalystrecruit.wordpress.com/ and click on 'follow' bottom right.

