

28 February 2019

Governance and Administration Committee
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

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NATIONAL DISASTER RESILIENCE STRATEGY – SURVEY AND SPATIAL NEW ZEALAND SUBMISSION

Who are we?

Survey and Spatial New Zealand (S+SNZ, the trading name of the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors) represents surveyors and spatial professionals. We are a stakeholder across a wide range of government policy areas and the sector including housing development, land subdivision, construction, infrastructure, spatial information and resource management. Our members are the lead professionals enabling connections between the earth sciences, engineering and applied geography.

Why are we making a submission to the Governance and Administration Committee?

This submission has been informed by our members who were involved in responding to, and in rebuilding activities following the Christchurch and Kaikoura earthquakes. Surveyors and spatial professionals were actively monitoring building in support of the first responders. They are also involved in response and rebuild activities associated with floods, earth slips and other natural hazards. As a result of that span of involvement they have first-hand knowledge and practical insight on what can and needs to be improved in the three priority areas set out in the National Disaster Resilience Strategy (the Strategy).

S+SNZ was not among the organisations consulted on the Strategy and was unaware that it had been released for public consultation in October 2018. We have been unable to find information on the results of that public consultation on the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management's website.

Do we support the strategy?

Overall, S+SNZ supports the introduction of resilience into the national civil defence emergency management strategy for the decade ahead, and supports the three priority areas in the Strategy to improve resilience to disasters. Whilst there is considerable emphasis in the Strategy on empowering communities¹ to take action to look after themselves in times of crisis there is considerable scope to

¹ Co-creation may be the best model for sustainable and resilient designs.

provide increased capability at a national level to improve response to and recovery from emergencies.

What are our specific comments?

Objective 11 (build capability and capacity of the emergency management workforce for response and recovery)

Prior to the release of the Strategy, S+SNZ had already identified (as a result of involvement in the aftermath of the Christchurch and Kaikoura earthquakes) and commenced a disaster response initiative to develop networks of professional contacts for local and national response. When completed, this will assist with Objectives 11 and 15 (a whole of city/district/region approach to resilience).

Objective 12 (improve the information and intelligence system that supports decision-making in emergencies to enable informed, timely, and consistent decisions by stakeholders and the public)

“Good” decision-making is dependent on good information. That includes baseline information because that will enable first responders to understand and compare infrastructure with its pre-disaster status and assist in the categorisation and prioritisation of response. Data and information need good management systems. They need to be authoritative, maintained, current, comparable, nationally available in a timely manner through interoperable technologies to those requiring it in times of emergencies and disasters. Standards are critical along with good stewardship. Overall, this is a huge vital area requiring considerable further multi-agency, multi-skilled work involving the likes of NZ Statistics, Land Information New Zealand, transport, territorial authorities and others.

Allied to information, and critically absent after the Christchurch earthquake was a clear legal framework in relation to property boundaries and the impact of earth movement. Certainty as to property rights is fundamentally important to the economy and the nation as a whole should confidence in those rights be undermined. The law was unclear and required a legislative response which took time, exacerbated community stress and increased costs thus frustrating response and recovery. There remains a need to build resilience into the cadastre as the Canterbury Property Boundaries and Related Matters Act 2016 only dealt with that particular event. Should a similar disaster strike other urban areas the lack of a legal property boundary framework or, at the very least, emergency powers in the Surveyor-General’s tool kit will again delay recovery.

Real-time condition monitoring of critical structures, infrastructure and natural hazards is another aspect posing significant risk to the public. It is an area where New Zealand is not world-leading (with the exception of lahar monitoring) and needs to improve if we are to better manage our risks. For example, dynamic condition monitoring of dams above a certain risk threshold coupled with the assignment of public/corporate responsibility and adoption of recommended changes to the New Zealand Dam Safety Guidelines as proposed by the New Zealand Society on Large Dams.

What is our specific and unique contribution?

Surveyors and spatial professionals can add great value to the matters described above but there need to be enabling structures and processes to allow this, such as being involved in the next step of preparing of the road map setting out how the Strategy objectives will be achieved. S+SNZ, as the representative organisation for surveyors and spatial professionals, is able to harness that necessary representation at the table.

Other matters – consultation

S+SNZ is concerned that the time (eight days) for providing submissions on this Strategy to the Governance and Administration Committee has been unreasonably short. It does not allow national organisations sufficient time to canvass their members and for that input to be synthesized and collated into a submission. We understand that the Committee’s timeline for seeking public submissions on the Strategy is governed by Standing Order 394 which requires it to report to the House on a national civil defence emergency strategy no later than 12 sitting days after its referral to the Committee. This means that within that period, submissions have to be called for, received, oral submissions heard, and a report prepared. S+SNZ considers that this timeframe does not provide for informed public input on a matter of considerable national importance or the consideration that it deserves from the Committee.

Recommendations

S+SNZ recommends that the Governance and Administration Committee:

- 1 **note** that surveyors and spatial professionals have a long history of first responder and subsequent response and recovery roles following earthquakes, floods, slips and other natural hazards which inform this submission made by their representative organisation, S+SNZ
- 2 **note** that S+SNZ supports the high-level National Disaster Resilience Strategy and particularly the inclusion of resilience as a key pillar of the Strategy
- 3 **note** that the delivery of the Strategy objectives will depend critically on the roadmap of actions that has yet to be prepared
- 4 **note** the importance of a nationally consistent set of data, information and spatial standards and open data policies in underpinning risk identification and management, and effective response to and recovery from emergencies
- 5 **agree** that S+SNZ has an important and unique contribution to make, and needs to be involved in the planning and preparation of the roadmap of actions to best deliver the objectives of the Strategy
- 6 **note** that S+SNZ wishes to request an opportunity to speak to the Committee.

Mark Dyer
Chief Executive