

## NEW INITIATIVE (S)

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### Project title: Earthquake Prone Assessments

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*Background: funding was granted for three years from 2006/07 for the implementation of the Earthquake Prone Policy. This initiative reflects the need to re-phase the earthquake prone assessment programme as the assessments process is more complex and taking longer than originally estimated to complete. There is also an issue of limited availability of structural engineers to undertake the work. Funding is also necessary for enforcement work that is currently unbudgeted.*

*The earthquake prone assessment project has been revised to reflect a realistic timeframe and to fund enforcement (inline with our policy).*

*It is recommended that the funding be included in the draft annual plan.*

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### 1. The Proposal

This proposal seeks to extend the project life and funding of the earthquake prone assessments. Council's Policy (as required by the Building Act) outlines the process to establish the earthquake-prone status of buildings in Wellington. Funding of \$333k was granted for three years from 2006/07 for the implementation of the Earthquake Prone Policy. This funding was based on the assessment of approximately 1,200 buildings per year for three years.

### 2. Proposal Costs

Project Component	Operating expenses \$000									
	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
<i>Initial Evaluation process</i>	30	225	225	225	225	225	-	-	-	-
<i>Review of assessments</i>	25	100	100	100	100	100	-	-	-	-
<i>Serving notices</i>	10	30	30	30	30	30	-	-	-	-
<i>Administrative Support</i>	-	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
<i>Enforcement Officer</i>	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
<i>Total</i>	130	465	465	465	465	465	110	110	110	110

### **3. Project Outline**

#### ***Initial Evaluation Process***

The original level of funding was for Council to review its files to identify potentially earthquake-prone buildings and then to undertake an Initial Evaluation Process (IEP) to determine the structural performance score of those buildings.

The implementation of the Earthquake Prone Policy began in 2006/07. At the time the new initiative paper was originally presented, the policy had not been finalised and the initial evaluation processes had also not been finalised by the NZ Society of Engineers. The process that was subsequently approved by that body was more involved than what was anticipated when setting the original budget.

At the time of setting the budget, it was anticipated that 3,600 buildings would be able to be assessed in a three year period (ie 1,200 per year). This equated to approximately 2 hours per assessment. Due to the complexity and specialist knowledge required to undertake the assessments, external structural engineering firms must be used (Wellington City Council has not got this resource in house) and the process to do an IEP is closer to 4 hours.

Based on the time taken to complete these assessments and the current budget allows for our structural engineers to complete only approximately 500 IEP assessments per annum. As a result the number of buildings that can be assessed is not being achieved at the level originally budgeted.

#### ***Review of Assessments***

When the IEP identifies a potentially earthquake prone building, the process involves notifying building owners that their building is potentially earthquake prone. Building owners then have the opportunity to respond to that initial assessment, providing information that supports their building not being earthquake prone. This new information must be reviewed by the structural engineers and either confirmed or rejected as insufficient to justify changing the initial assessment that the building is earthquake prone.

A further 1 – 2 hours of structural engineering time is involved in the review of assessment process.

#### ***Enforcement***

Although building owners have been notified that their buildings require demolition or strengthening, there has been a low response to the Council of their intended actions to fix their buildings. We are finding that in many cases, to ensure action is taken by the building owner, we have had to serve notice on them. Some building owners are difficult to track down or are overseas and this has necessitated the use of a process server to serve notices on these owners.

In addition, we will need to take some enforcement action. The Council has a number of enforcement options available including:

1. Do nothing
2. To put up a hoarding or fence (s124 1 (a))
3. To attach a notice that warns people not to approach (s124 1 (b))
4. To apply to the District Court for an order authorising us to carry out work, having given the owner 10 days notice prior
5. To issue an infringement notice, or
6. To take a prosecution

We do not see option 1 as feasible as it exposes Council to liability – once we have identified a major risk (ie that a building is earthquake prone), we have a responsibility to ensure it is addressed. Therefore, there is a need for an additional position to carry out the appropriate enforcement action.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This project was funded for three years, including the majority of funding needed for the 2008/09 financial year. Due to the timing of the original budget bid being before the finalisation of the IEP process by the New Zealand Society of Engineers, the budget is insufficient to cover the assessment process that is required and as a result, the number of assessments being carried out is significantly less than what was originally envisaged. In addition, we have identified the need for the Council to carry out enforcement of this policy.

This proposal seeks to extend the life of the project by 5 years to reflect the actual number of assessments able to be carried out, and the administration and enforcement requirements associated with the project.

Therefore, it is recommended that Council agree to fund:

- the initial evaluation assessment over an additional 5 years
- the additional enforcement activities required.