

MEDIA RELEASE

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MINISTER RELEASES REPORTS ON SCARRY OPEN LETTER

Commerce Minister Lianne Dalziel has released initial reports from the Building Industry Authority (BIA) and the Institution of Professional Engineers (IPENZ) which give an assessment of the structural engineering issues raised by structural engineer John Scarry.

The Minister says she is satisfied that Mr Scarry's concerns, outlined in an open letter and circulated widely to the building industry and the public, are being considered in an appropriately thorough manner.

The IPENZ interim report, conducted by its Structural Practice Review taskforce, notes an unacceptable variability in practice standards amongst engineers and offers seven recommendations for action, including more comprehensive standards and codes of practice.

A preliminary review of technical issues prepared for the BIA has identified some matters of concern about the way buildings might perform in a major earthquake. The BIA is taking further action on these issues, which relate to the performance of some pre-cast flooring systems, slender concrete walls and related details.

The BIA also hopes to support a request for funding from the Earthquake Commission for further research into these areas.

IPENZ notes that it has no power to identify any particular building that may pose a significant or immediate risk and nor has it been made aware of any such building. But it has reminded all its members of their ethical obligation to alert owners of any building should they consider it to be of such risk.

The Minister says the proposed changes to the Building Act will allow the BIA to address some of the issues that have been identified by these reports, by giving it stronger powers to guide those involved in the construction industry, including the territorial local authorities. Other changes proposed to the Building Act are designed to raise competency levels across the construction industry and toughen up provisions relating to earthquake-prone buildings.

For further inquiries: