



The New Zealand Psychological Society

*Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa*

## Media Release

Thursday 16 February 2012

For immediate release

**Attention: Science, Health and Social Issues Reporters**

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPS) has released a Special Issue of the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* that presents sound research and a range of professional experiences related to the changing condition of the population of Canterbury in the aftermath of the last 10,000 shakes and 500 days.

The Special Issue will be of interest to a wide audience as it brings together information on preparation for, survival of, and recovery from an ongoing disaster affecting a tenth of New Zealand's population, and a quarter of its economy. Pictures and commentaries help bring out the reality of what is being reported in each area. Other disaster settings offer lessons and methods. Data and analysis look at aspects of difficult decisions, such as how to communicate the little that is known, and of encouraging what can be done in future.

A *Foreword* and *Editorial* give more information on the purpose and scope of this collection of peer-reviewed science, professional experience and impressions from the field in a wide range of psychological matters: the responses of communities to the experience their members have been having; care for those who cope sometimes and not other times; identifying those who need special care; provisions made in education, health and the services to maintain capability for as long as it takes, keeping organisations going in the long, dark aftermath.

**We draw your attention to three papers.**

- In "*How Communities in Christchurch Have Been Coping with Their Earthquake*" Libby Gawith of Christchurch focuses on what Christchurch people coped with on February 22, 2011 and how they were coping at the end of 2011. The changes and strains are reported frankly and with constructive suggestions for recovery from future disasters. This is a compilation how ordinary people in the community coped, how things have changed and what they have done to keep their communities functioning as the year has passed.
- In "*New Zealanders' Judgments of Earthquake Risk Before and After the Canterbury Earthquake*" John McClure and colleagues report on perceptions of risk and willingness to

prepare for disasters in Christchurch, Wellington and Palmerston North. Experience of disasters makes a difference to willingness to prepare for them. They report a change in people's views of the likelihood of the risk of major earthquakes that varied with their connection to people affected by the Canterbury shaking. Making preparations reduces distress during disasters, so there is some evidence to support learning through the experience of others. The publicising of the benefits of preparedness does not seem to have the same impact in motivating readiness.

- In "*The Communication of Uncertain Scientific Advice During Natural Hazard Events*", Emma Doyle and colleagues report research into the public understanding of different phrasings of the probability of an event. How probability is expressed can influence understanding, affecting the choices people make, and the actions they take. Interpretation differences differ between scientists and non-scientists, and there seems a tendency in some people to believe an adverse event happen towards the end of a period of likelihood, rather than at random across the period. These interpretation biases have implications for how technical material should be reported, so that people can act in accordance with the risk.

Our journal is distributed digitally. You can obtain a PDF copy from our web portal at [www.psychology.org.nz](http://www.psychology.org.nz). We have a very limited number of bound copies available at \$60+GST.

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## **Background to the New Zealand Psychological Society**

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand. It has over 1000 members and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, promoting and advancing the scientific discipline and practice of psychology. See [www.psychology.org.nz](http://www.psychology.org.nz) for more information about the Society.

## **Acknowledgement**

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