

## **Letter to the Editor**

**by Geraldine Murphy, ICW Spokesperson on Seismic Matters**

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### **Law creates morass of uncertainty**

There is more uncertainty for building owners as yet more buildings are evacuated and deemed earthquake-prone officially or unofficially.

Structural engineer John Scarry (RNZ, 26/05/22), said the concerns about precast floors were known when large scale tests were undertaken in NZ around 2002, which ‘should have woken people up, but many people went into a state of slumber’.

In 2004, NZ moved from a policy that targeted buildings known to fail (unreinforced masonry and concrete) to a ‘one size fits all’ any building construction type being subject to the earthquake-prone provisions.

In 2017, we got a prescribed methodology to assess existing buildings and yet precast floors were apparently not covered by it. Instead, we have a Yellow Chapter v Red Book stalemate.

In 2023 MBIE will publish the updated Building Code clause B1 Structure to incorporate knowledge from the National Seismic Hazard Model revision as it ‘could raise questions about the earthquake-prone building system settings’.

Yes, it does raise questions.

Are owners on a continuous cycle of assessment and strengthening?

Where are the answers?

Apartment owners, and their homes, are also affected by the earthquake-prone legislation. How are these homeowners expected to navigate the morass of uncertainty this legislation has created?

Geraldine Murphy,  
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