



YOU AND YOUR PROPERTY

BY RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY LAWYER
MICHAEL HOFMANN-BODY

I suspect I will not forget the date and time 12:02 am on November 14, 2016 for some time. Ordinarily, earthquakes do not concern me. Some even accuse me of having a flippancy attitude towards them. This quake was different.

The shake we experienced on that evening was the most significant shake I have ever felt. My children were very alarmed and spent the night sleeping on the floor of our room. It was difficult for my wife and I to go back to sleep as we read the reports on social media regarding the size of the earthquake and the damage caused. I live in Island Bay, Wellington. One of the iconic features of Island Bay is the blue tsunami line. Friends of mine live below the tsunami line and at 2:30am I received a phone call asking if they could stay the night at our house. Their children were petrified about the prospect of a tsunami.

That evening became a bit of a metaphor for the next two weeks of my life. It was uncertain, out of control and full of surprises. HomeLegal operates out of the Queensgate Tower in Central Lower Hutt. As all readers will be aware, the Queensgate complex was closed until Friday, November 25.

On the Monday morning, it was clear to our firm we would not be returning to

our offices in the short-term. We advised all our staff to take the day off and wait for further instructions. A significant part of our business is derived from residential conveyancing. I was naturally very concerned by the fact we had a significant number of settlements over the following fortnight. I was also concerned conveyancing might simply stop after the earthquake. Our ability to provide legal services to our clients was going to be seriously jeopardised by our inability to get into our offices. Thankfully, we had

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considered disaster preparedness some years ago and put in place some systems that would result in us establishing a war office in our Upper Hutt premises. Thankfully, those premises were undamaged and we were able to access them. As a result, we were able to complete 44 settlements in the fortnight following the earthquake.

I am surrounded and supported by an excellent team of lawyers, legal executives and administration staff. I am tremendously proud of them. They worked under difficult conditions with incomplete information and without the resources they are used to. Notwithstanding that, they focused on our client's needs and provided a fantastic service to everyone who had settlements during that period. Only one settlement failed to occur in the two weeks following the earthquake. That settlement could not be completed because of the insurance embargo which has been put in place.

Our team have become very familiar with insurance issues and we will no doubt be supporting our clients over the coming



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months with insurance solutions and advice until the insurance embargo is lifted. If you have any concerns in this regard please feel free to contact us for advice.

Our disaster preparedness was helpful but was not complete. We have learned a lot in those two weeks. We will be implementing changes to our IT infrastructure, better securing the furniture in our building and reviewing the way in which we communicate with staff following events of this type. I recommend every family and business take a look at their own disaster preparedness.

There were a number of issues with telecommunications following the earthquake and text messaging did not prove to be reliable. We found the best way to communicate with all our team was through Facebook. We established a closed group for our staff only and information was shared through that group. We will be keeping our Facebook group in place to assist with future communication with our staff.

I am grateful that despite being separated from our offices HomeLegal was not inconvenienced too greatly. However, I am aware many people are suffering as a result of the earthquake. One of my clients operates from the Queensgate mall. That client's trade has halved since the mall reopened. The client is concerned they may not be able to retain all their staff. Some businesses have closed completely and people have been made redundant. Individuals suffer anxiety regarding further earthquakes or their own financial futures. Based on the Christchurch experience, many people who will make insurance claims will find the process of dealing with insurance companies will be very frustrating. For the next few months some people will be very fragile.

It is my hope that in the months following the earthquake we will all be thoughtful, considerate and kind to each other. I urge readers to consider how they can make other people's lives easier in the coming weeks. I wish you all the very best for the Christmas and New Year period and may we all get some rest and recuperation during that time.

"If you would like a copy of previous articles on property written by Michael email him on michael@homelegal.co.nz."

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YOUR OFFICE MANAGER LEAVES – THEN WHAT?

BY TONY RICHARDSON OF CAPITAL ACCOUNTING ASSOCIATES LIMITED

How are you going to do the invoicing, keep track of who owes you money and who you need to pay? What about the PAYE and payroll? Even more important what about the cash flow and monthly reporting on progress?

ALL IS NOT LOST!

Like the aftermath of the Kaikoura earthquakes the world has changed. Technology means there are many more business processes handled by email or on the internet – the Cloud. The quality of online software like Xero has dramatically improved and made this part of the process more efficient with better and more update reporting. Using a Payroll system can make that process more reliable and accurate at much less cost than manual systems.

On the other side the cost of having an Office Manager has not gone down. When you factor in salary, Kiwisaver subsidy, holiday pay, sick pay, temp staff and other specific staff costs there will not be much change from \$60,000 per year.

Many small businesses do not have an Office Manager so the owner spends time usually at nights trying to catch up on the book work which many hate. This means less time to spend on the business or making money. Time pressures often mean that important stuff gets left behind.

“Wearing the Right Hat” is key – everyone should concentrate on what they are best at.

THE SOLUTION

Leave the office administration and



bookkeeping stuff to the people with the expertise.

We have recently launched a “YOUR BACK OFFICE” service to free up small business owners and improve bottom line profits.

This service includes:-

- Receivables and invoicing
- GST returns
- Payables
- Budget forecasts
- Keeping Xero up to date
- Monthly reporting
- Payroll management

You also get at no extra charge the bonus of:-

Service provided by experienced and qualified accountants.

Expertise in helping you grow your business, and in all aspects of tax.

THE COST

The cost is from \$300 per week which in most cases will be less than 33 per cent of the cost of the departing office manager. If you don't have an Office Manager then this will free you up to make money without all the dreaded paperwork. Call us for a chat. You will be pleased you did.



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