

# Ruth Dyson speech given to Deaf Society of Canterbury AGM on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2011

## **Ruth Dyson**

Hello. Welcome to my electorate. This is a different venue than we are used to but we have a good turn out. I would like to acknowledge the outgoing and income office holders for their hard work over the past very difficult year and the difficulties you have faced being in the red zone.

I have 3 issues I would like to talk to you about today. Firstly the earthquakes. I wish to acknowledge the many people who have lost friends, jobs and homes in this disaster. It has been an extremely hard time for the people of Christchurch and Canterbury. Later I will talk more on this and Civil Defence, the CERA response and the Deaf community.

We have a zero Government budget which does not help people much. We need a strong plan for recovery. Recovery is not only buildings but people. We have had three significant events (including Boxing Day). How can we rebuild stronger and better lives? We need a strong government budget; we need money bringing into Christchurch. I have not seen the investment that Christchurch needs to rebuild itself. This is something I will be pushing for.

Some terrible things have happened but we must now look to the future. A positive aspect of the earthquakes was the way everyone all looked after each other. But people are still fragile and tense. If you compare our experience with similar experiences overseas, at first everyone feels the strong adrenalin, then tired, then frustrated and angry. We have all been through that range of emotions. We are living with so much uncertainty. Now it is more important that ever to look after one another. Information is important, it may not be good news but it is better to know.

The National governments budget has no investments for the future. The cuts to Kiwisaver are very disappointing. For many people it is the only chance they have to save money. This is a bad move by the government. The government wants to sell or part sell power companies in the future. If they are sold to private investors the cost of power will go up. Do you think power is cheap now? No, well it will rise if our companies are sold off. In colder parts of NZ people worry about how they will pay their power bill. If the government sells to investors they will want big profits. Essential services such as power should be owned by NZ. Max Bradford, Minister for Energy had a crazy idea to separate all the power companies. He said we would all get a better service and cheaper power. What we got was a fragmented service (in pieces) and the cost has gone up and up. If we sell off our power companies it will get worse the price will increase and increase. Government had a chance to invest and it missed the opportunity.

We all talk about the earthquake now, what did we talk about before?? Some really positive things came out of the earthquake for the Deaf community. All community briefings were interpreted. Jeremy Borland is now a star. At the EQ Memorial service the interpreter was present but they couldn't be seen by people watching TV, just glimpses of them. Not good for the Deaf community not at the Memorial. But good for everyone who attended and good for the hearing crowd to see. It all helps to increase the profile and awareness. A gold star to Christchurch City Council. I

asked the Mayors assistant before the memorial if interpreters had been organised and I was told, yes they're on the list, 10 years ago, interpreters would not be on the list. I think NZ has learnt from the Australian floods where Anna Bligh the Queensland Premier gave press conferences about the floods which included an Auslan interpreter. Information is empowering.

I am giving a big black mark to EQC (Earthquake Commission), insurance and the Christchurch City Council hotline. There was bad treatment of members of the Deaf community using Relay. Some Deaf people had a bad experience. They do not understand the Relay service. One Deaf person had EQC hang up on them! EQC has a Brisbane call centre. I am sorry that has happened.

I want to acknowledge that your Deaf Clubrooms have a green sticker. It is great that the earthquake has not destroyed the Club. If it wasn't green then maybe it would create an advantage to improve the building. Many building close by are seriously damaged, the TUC building on the corner of Madras and Armagh is on a serious lean. It will be sometime before the area is opened up. When you do have access I hope you will continue with your plans for improvement.

Close to lunch and I don't want to delay you. Main things I want to add.

November 26 NZ General Election. I encourage you to have a Deaf election forum with the different parties represented. Ask them what will they do for the community?? Keep Deaf issues on the agenda. As part of the election, there is a referendum on the voting system to ask the country if they support MMP. I am happy to take part and explain why I think you should vote yes to keep MMP. It's everyone duty to find out more. If MMP is thrown out this year we will be back to two party governments. With MMP now we are much richer and more representative of the diverse people of NZ. This gives us different views and a healthier debate and more women in government and Maori, Pacific, Asian. No Deaf yet but soon I hope. MMP gives minorities a better voice. If no MMP there will be a narrow list of parties. Not strong or diverse. Encourage the political parties to think about Deaf issues, ask relevant Deaf questions. Keep Deaf issues on the agenda. Also have good questions otherwise we will get forgotten. Invite someone in who opposes MMP – then we can have a good debate.

Questions from the floor

**Janet Stokes**

You talked before about civil defence and SERA and Deaf involvement, please explain.

**Ruth Dyson**

I acknowledge they had interpreters at the community briefings in the badly affected areas, Sumner, Mount Pleasant, Woolston, Bromley, Somerfield Brighton, etc. I acknowledge that Civil Defence and SERA have Deaf in mind. Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority is now called SERA. It is a new organisation set up after EQ in Feb. Lots of government departments in 1 building under 1 minister Brownlee. All departments work together. Not much has been set up yet; it's in the early stages. The New Chief executive is Roger Sutton, a great man. He will head ChCh recovery he will not start his new job until mid June. There is confusion now but it will improve. Decisions will be made about which land is safe to build on; in some area the land has dropped about 1m. In some areas landowners cannot build

again, this will be traumatic for some. On the hills and at the cliff edges, houses will need to be built further back and damaged houses will need to be demolished.

***Hugh Penman***

My personal opinion, in Sumner cliffs near the RSA they are building new buildings, flats; I don't think they should be permitted.

***Ruth Dyson***

That area on Wakefield Avenue, it's unlikely they can build on that area in the future. In the Port Hills area there has been so many areas of rock fall, Redcliffs, Heathcote, Morgan's Valley have had boulders though houses. One of the rocks was sold on Trade me – the owner of the house donated all the money from the sale to the EQ appeal. Owner says buyer must pick up! Mt Hutt Ski Field bought the boulder for a memorial. Avoca Valley had bad damage. There are 30 teams of Geotech on the hills measuring changes in the rocks after rain and after shocks, working out if the land is stable.

***Noeline Still***

Last week we went to CBS arena for the Share an Idea event. Who went from this room? (2 people).

***Ruth Dyson***

This is an important point. The event had speakers all day. I am keen to know what people thought about the day and why people did not go. They had good activities for the children – Lego activity. Your thoughts on improving the city could be videoed and written down. Another similar event will happen.

***Josje Lelijveld***

I wanted to make a point about Neonatal screening. An advisory group was set up with a midwife and audiologist and luckily two Deaf representatives Josje and Joyce Ferguson. But the meetings have got very technical and Josje and Joyce have stopped attending. There is not much info about NZSL etc for parents (all the information is about cochlear implants and is very technical). There should be early intervention with Deaf culture and language not only from a medical and hearing perspective. This should be a national issue for all advisory groups. Including Wellington and Auckland. It is very important to have early intervention in Deaf issues. There is always a risk that it becomes an issue of how stop children from being Deaf, it should not be viewed as bad or negative. Parents should meet Deaf people.

***Ruth Dyson***

I will write to Ministry of Health and Minister of Disability. Last year the funding ran out – last year the highest earners got a tax cut while Deaf resources got a funding cut.

***Sue Penman***

I missed the EQ meeting, I didn't know if was on. If there is a new one about developing the city it needs to be accessible near bus and train stations.

***Amy Hewgill***

I went to the TEXEX event which was another interesting event gathering ideas for the city's redevelopment. The CCC Website is a great way for the Deaf community to contribute their ideas. Called Share an idea.

***Ruth Dyson***

What else can we do to get our voice heard? Share an idea will have a future event. There are specific suburban events involving the community associations in Lyttelton, Sydenham, Sumner, and Woolston. The share an idea is only for the city within the 4 avenues. Think about planning people from SERA come to the Deaf community. But all community must attend. I will help to organise if we want.

***Joyce Ferguson***

I work for DANZ as a Community Relations Officer. If any ideas, concerns, barriers please contact me. I can refer on your comments or I can set up a day with a video camera and record people's comments on video. I can do on behalf of the community and put out in newsletter but people must respond and attend.

***Mary Reuben***

Auckland volcanoes, Wellington has risk of EQ. Dunedin snow, depressing news, sad for Christchurch.

***Ruth Dyson***

You can judge a community after a disaster and Christchurch did really well, we have best city in NZ and possibly the world!  
Don't sit back, stand up and be heard!

***Claire Liddicoat***

I was upset a lot last year, my husband passed away, the EQ damaged my house and I moved into my daughters, I wanted to mention that.

***Greg Pateman***

Huge thanks to Ruth Dyson  
Will Ruth be happy to stay on as Patron of DSC?

***Ruth Dyson***

Proud to continue as your Patron. Thank you and don't forget my offers of taking part in an Election/Referendum event.