

Annual Report 2023

Canterbury Westland Branch Chair Report

Introduction

Despite the prevailing negative sentiment around inflation, the Canterbury/Westland Region has had a busy year, and it is noteworthy that the volume of work being delivered across the region has remained consistent.

Cable Price supported the Regional Excavator Operator Competition (REOC), held at Road Metals, where Daniel Pule of UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE NZ LIMITED emerged as the overall winner. We extend our thanks to Paul Curry of Higgins and the other committee members who organised and ran this fantastic event. Isaac Wrigley of Texco represented Canterbury Westland at the REOC event due to unavailability, and as a newcomer, he performed impressively, securing a 5th place finish overall.

Health of the Branch

The branch is in great shape with a lot of interest to join and support, and Eve has been successful in converting those who were previously on the fence. We believe this is a reflection of the increasing number of people who have established themselves in the last year. While we don't have concrete statistics, anecdotally, this seems to be the case.

Additionally, we have a strong committee that proactively works for the branch through our subcommittee, holding regular meetings, and engaging with the council and other local groups.

Local Market Conditions

The residential property market in the Canterbury/Westland region has experienced a slowdown, consistent with the national trend of negative property pricing. With significant investment in the past decade, the large available workforce developed, there appears not enough to sustain everyone. As a result, many local members have been forced to work out of the region, some even as far as the lower North Island.

We recently saw a resetting of the CCC Panel for three waters, with a significant focus on sustainability. Both the council and other local groups are predicting stable procurement for the next three years. We have submitted our feedback on the CCC annual plan, and Jeremy Dixon presented on our behalf in person. We encourage all members to do the same across the local government level to emphasise the importance of our industry as an employer.

There is limited workload coming from NZTA, with only a few projects planned in the next 2-3 years, mainly focusing on minor safety works. There is nothing comparable to the large scale work completed in the last 5 years.

Furthermore, Environment Canterbury seems to be pushing for consent requirements much harder without providing much in the way of brief. This will add costs to contractors moving forward.

Finances

The branch is in a good financial position, with a surplus for FY23, and a budget for the next financial year that will allow us to restart our scholarships program. We are actively seeking ways to spend our money to have a meaningful impact.

Over the last two years, we have faced some challenges, such as issues with the COTY event and a lack of finance expertise at the secretary level. However, we have recently addressed these problems by appointing a new secretary, and we believe that this will resolve these issues.

We would like to extend a special mention to Geeta Unka from national office, who has been instrumental in helping us understand and navigate these issues. Without her help, we may not have been able to overcome these challenges.

Major Achievements

The Contractor of the Year awards evening finally took place in person under "normal" conditions. We would like to extend our thanks to the Contractor of the Year organizing committee, especially Emily Peacock, who dedicated countless hours to pulling off the event. We received a good number of awards entries, reflecting the amazing work being delivered by our members across the region. We would also like to express our gratitude to all sponsors, including the major sponsors Hynd's and Hirepool, who supported us.

The branch is in a strong financial and membership position, with 79 contractor members, up from 69, and associate members, up from 34 to 40. Our branch finances remain stable, and we plan to invest our profits (once the accounts are finalized) back into our members over 2024. One of the plans is restarting the local Connexis Scholarships for members in FY24. Several members are connected with schools and are driving opportunities in our industry, which strengthens our connection with schools.

Major Challenges

The region is experiencing general concerns about staff and ever-increasing competition for limited resources. Unfortunately, pipeline visibility is limited, with no significant investment from NZTA planned and a quietening property development market. This lack of stability in the industry makes it difficult for businesses to make informed decisions and plan for the future.

As a result, there is a risk to the operation of businesses, with the potential for them to fold in the next 12-18 months. Unfortunately, there is very little visibility of how this will impact the industry, and it is likely to catch many off guard.

General Comments

We received feedback over the last year about the need for greater brand presence in the region, and we remain committed to exploring how we can achieve this locally and align with the national strategy.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to our committee for going above and beyond in their efforts to provide value to our members and associate members this year. Many members have committed considerable time to this cause, surpassing our expectations. We hold monthly meetings to offer support, raise concerns, act as advocates for our members, and organise events to inform and upskill the industry. I also extend my gratitude to our associates and sponsors for their continued support and to our members for their engagement in our efforts.

Lastly, we would like to give special recognition to Eve Copper, our new South Island Regional Manager at CCNZ, who wasted no time in finding ways to make our branch more impactful and improve processes. She has also graciously offered support for our COTY event, which is always a significant event to organize.

Sam Paterson – Branch Chair Canterbury Westland Branch