



Paul Duggan with Stephanie Cerpa, co-chair of the Charter's Health and Safety Leaders Group.

CHARTER OPPORTUNITY

The Canterbury Safety Charter is celebrating its tenth anniversary. **PETER BATEMAN** talked to its general manager about the Charter's evolution and how the model could be applied elsewhere.

“IT’S INTERESTING HOW YOU CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE ABOUT SOMETHING **ONCE YOU GET INTO IT. YOU FIND IT’S NOT THAT WAY AT ALL.**”

When Paul Duggan joined the Canterbury Safety Charter in 2019 as general manager he knew little about health and safety. He taught high school physics for 20 years before becoming chief executive of the Canterbury Basketball Association, a role he held for five years.

“I was completely familiar with the world of basketball. I’d played it all my life, coached it, I knew all the people. So the Charter was stepping into a field I knew nothing about. The challenge was, could I learn and grow as part of this new position?”

Having grappled with the HSW Act in his basketball role, he’s happy to say that in his Charter role he’s done lots of ‘learning and growing’ about the meaning of health and safety.

“It’s interesting how you change your perspective about something once you get into it. You find it’s not that way at all.”

One thing he picked up early on is that health and safety isn’t just the responsibility of people with those words in their job title; that it is everyone’s responsibility, and that H&S specialists are there to advise, to facilitate problem solving.

Another is the passion H&S people bring to their roles. “Their passion is in dealing with people and improving their lives. That comes through very strongly.”

Putting these two things together, he says, means H&S is something of a common thread that an organisation like the Charter can use to connect people within its member companies across multiple levels.

EARTHQUAKE ORIGINS

Originally called the Canterbury Rebuild Safety Charter, the organisation was set up in the wake of the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes as the scale of the required rebuild became apparent. What was also clear was that if the construction sector applied a business as usual approach to the rebuild, modelling suggested there would be one fatality and many serious injuries each year.

The Charter was set up as a membership organisation with a clear mandate to improve H&S standards in construction in the region. After all, there had already been more than 180 lives lost in the earthquakes. Having construction workers killed during the rebuild was an unbearable prospect.

“More lives lost in the rebuild would have been more pain,” says Duggan. “It would have piled on more grief for the Canterbury community that was already suffering so much.”

The Charter enabled companies of all sizes in the broader construction sector to come together, take off their competitive hats, and talk cooperatively about their H&S challenges and how best to meet them.

This, says Duggan, includes people at all levels in organisations: chief executives, H&S specialists, and H&S reps. All coming together with a common goal.

“It creates those important vertical connections. People on the ground being able to communicate in a Charter networking forum with the people at the top.”

CHARTER COMMITMENTS

These days there are around 350

member organisations, ranging from, as Duggan puts it, large construction companies to “the man in a van”. Each organisation signs up to the Charter’s commitments, namely to improve H&S outcomes in ten key areas: Leadership, Engagement, Reporting, Overlapping duties, Critical risks, Site safety, Site induction, Training, Impairment, and Health & wellbeing.

Members get access to resources and tools developed over the years, including an online assessment tool which gives a traffic light response to how an organisation measures up to each of the ten commitment areas.

There’s a monthly newsletter and usually a monthly event. Recent events include Halo leadership training, airborne risks, and Work Should Not Hurt with CHASNZ. Members have had a tour of the Cathedral rebuild, and a briefing on risk management at the site of the new stadium. A conference on mentally healthy work is coming up at the end of June.

As well as Duggan there are two other staff: an administrator and a business development lead. There are also two volunteer committees, one for health and safety leaders, the other being a professional services working group for architects, designers and facilities management people.

TWO KEY SURPRISES

More than three years into the role, Duggan says many things have surprised him, but perhaps two stand out, the first being the overturning of his perception about what health and safety means. This came early on, when he came across the American human

“A HUB BASED IN AUCKLAND WITH FIELD OFFICERS IN NORTHLAND, COROMANDEL, BAY OF PLENTY, GISBORNE – THAT COULD WORK EFFECTIVELY.”

performance guru Todd Conklin. “You’re probably familiar with him,” he says.

Conklin’s story of investigating a fatal head-on collision between two trains resonated with him. In it, recalls Duggan, one train ran a red light. The driver was texting at around the same time. The company blamed driver error and said it was going to ban mobile phones in locomotive cabs.

At this point Conklin entered the scene and reviewed the company’s investigation, finding the texting issue was interesting but not vital. Instead, he found the problem was a system failure.

“That was a real wake-up call for me. I went, hang on, you can think about this differently.”

Now, whenever Duggan hears terms like operator error bandied about, he stops. “Is that truly the case, or is there something embedded in the system which enables those things to happen?”

The other thing that has surprised him is the number of health and safety practitioners who got into the role because an incident they were involved in or witnessed caused them to resolve to try to prevent such things happening again.

“It’s a common thread – that inherent desire to improve outcomes for their fellow workers. That’s a really great thing to be part of.”

CHANGE IN FUNDING

The role of the Charter hasn’t changed but its source of funding has. Originally government-funded, the organisation now has to be self-sustaining. Duggan says membership fees account for around 30% of its revenue, the rest coming from specific projects it carries out on behalf of agencies like ACC and WorkSafe.

An example is BIMSafe New Zealand, a \$1.7m project funded over three years to use Business Information Modelling technology as a tool to reduce construction injuries. It’s a collaborative

partnership between the Charter’s professional services working group and the Building Innovation Partnership at the University of Canterbury.

OPPORTUNITIES ELSEWHERE

The key question, of course, is this: could the Charter model, so successful in Canterbury, be usefully repeated elsewhere in the country? And if so, how would it happen?

Duggan is sure the model has legs, and has recently put forward a proposal for how it could work with the Cyclone Gabrielle Recovery Taskforce. The beauty of the model, he says, is that it is a bottom-up model driven by local people and organisations, not top-down.

“There’s opportunity in the North Island. There’s a huge amount of infrastructure work to be done with a big workforce, including lots of SMEs and migrant workers.

“It’s an opportunity to set up something like the Charter to try a different sort of intervention, because the reality is that the number of injuries in construction has remained relatively static.”

He suggests a hub-and-spoke model could work just as effectively as the Canterbury model, provided there were people on the ground at each spoke.

“The strength of the model is having people on the ground to help bring other people together to collaborate. But a hub based in Auckland with field officers in Northland, Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne – that could work effectively.”

He recalls the charter model was originally set up for the massive construction required in London for the city to host the 2012 Olympics. “They had no deaths in the construction of all their facilities. That was the reason the model came to the Christchurch rebuild. And it’s been shown to work again. So the opportunity is to leverage that

somewhere else.”

A crisis such as the earthquakes provides motivation to set up a Charter-like model, because any crisis creates opportunity for change. But Duggan reckons it also has sustainable value in the longer term. “The legacy can keep on. We are still operating and still doing good here.”

THE CHARTER EVOLVES

Meanwhile, back in Canterbury, Duggan says an ongoing challenge for the Charter is how to better engage with the plethora of small businesses involved in the wider construction sector. He acknowledges this group is always stretched for time and resources, but points to ACC data which shows a large proportion of construction injuries come from the SME sector.

“They won’t have a dedicated H&S person. The person doing H&S will also be involved in lots of other stuff. We’re trying to engage with them to give them the tools they need.”

Looking ahead, he recognises the need for the Charter to evolve to match the evolution he observes in health and safety. Using a football analogy, he says the need is to focus on where the ball will be, not where it is now.

“Where is the industry going? What future needs can we fulfil?”

Recent shifts he identifies include the emergence of Safety-II, the need to mitigate psychosocial risks, and the increasing use of new technologies, such as BIMSafe. The opportunity, as he sees it, is to encourage organisations to move away from bureaucracy and documentation and to focus more on verification that critical risks are under control.

“How do we know these things are actually working? And how can we tweak them to make them better? The industry is always going to evolve. It’s up to the Charter to evolve with it.” ■

We asked three people whose organisations are members of the Canterbury Safety Charter for their reflections.

COLLABORATIVE IMPROVEMENT

ROB SLOAN explains how his own business has benefited from the Charter and how he wants to see the model spread around the country.

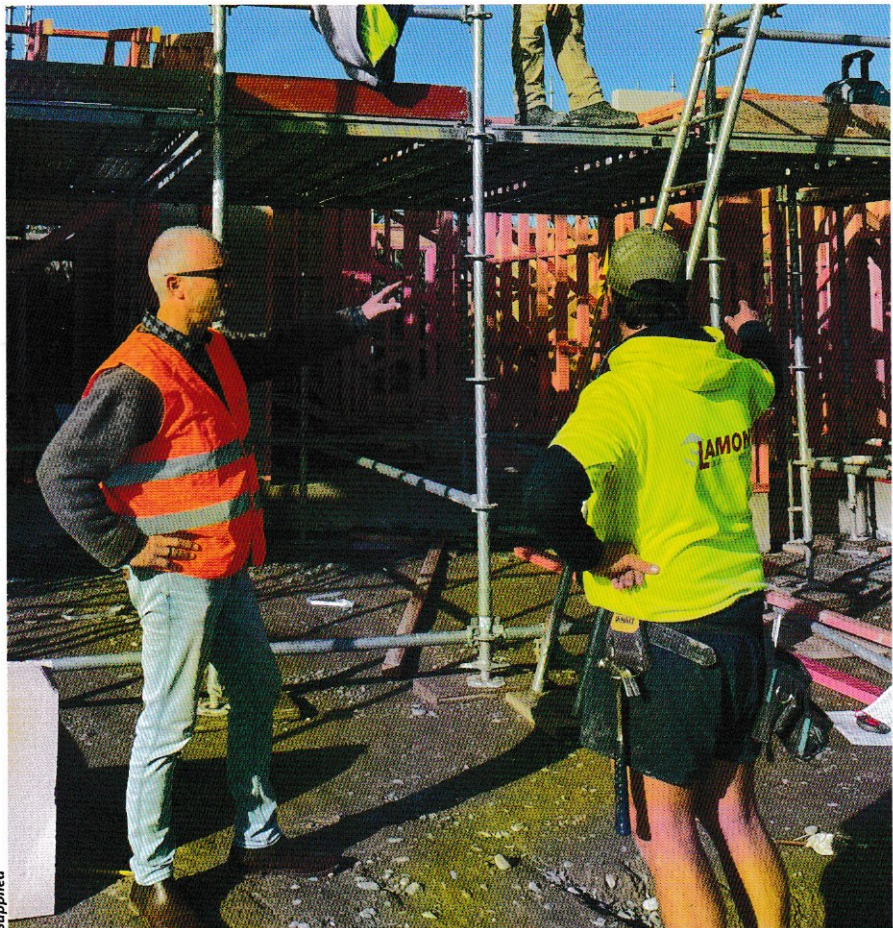
What Christchurch needed to get organised and safely rebuilding the city and environs was positive collaboration from everyone: Government, industry, unions, sector leaders – everyone, top to bottom.

The CSC was founded with a direct and clear requirement for leadership and collaboration between government, industry and trade-based unions to achieve safe sites and workplaces during the rebuild and beyond. Early on it was established that being involved with the Charter meant market competitiveness would be left at the door, as there was no place for it. This was respected along with the ideal, that if you were part of a Charter working group or project team, that you got involved and contributed. Sitting at meetings doing nothing wasn't acceptable. These ideals have been maintained throughout the Charter's longevity and have served it well.

The influence that this collaboration has had in Canterbury has been immense and is clear to see on building sites around the province today. We have had a generation of trades people, business owners and regulators here in Canterbury seeing the CSC being active and extremely visible for ten years. Consistent in its message and approach of constant improvement in performance, backed up by reliable systems that allow easy verification.

The communications and leadership delivered by the CSC to industry and its workforce has made a broad impact in Canterbury construction and has created a culture of inclusiveness and positive application to health and safety practice.

Our own business has benefited from



the Charter by having an increased awareness of others and what they are doing to improve their H&S practices and standards on their sites and within their business. It's easy to become myopic once you have your own systems and processes in place. Sharing ideas, outcomes, failures and success with other builders and practitioners helps refine the process and actions we implement and practice on a daily basis.

The collaborative approach the

Charter has taken has made its way into our own contracting base and strengthens communication, relationships and overall performance across all business operations.

It would be excellent to see the CSC model adopted by government, adapted where needed, and offered and implemented in other regions and industries right across New Zealand. ■

Rob Sloan is GM of Enterprise Homes.



THINKING SMALL

STEPHANIE CERPA applauds the Charter and urges more focus on the smaller players in the construction sector.

Contract Construction was one of the original companies that signed up to the Canterbury Safety Charter when it began ten years ago. Over the last decade, we have seen an evolution of what the CSC has brought to the table for our company as well as the Canterbury region, such as industry guidance to standardise H&S practices for the earthquake rebuild, understanding our responsibilities under the HSW Act 2015, and providing continual professional development and training around relevant industry hot topics.

The construction industry is a highly competitive sector that always seems to be short of time. However, the CSC has brought all corners of the industry together for networking events, workshops, and opportunities to work together in the Health and Safety Leadership group and through mentoring, while promoting a mindset

that we're all in this together. Having the opportunity to learn from each other on neutral ground – especially since we all are going through a lot of the same challenges – has been really valuable to help all of us level up.

Over the years there has been a lot of focus on getting the larger construction companies to operate at the expected H&S standard, which was a great starting point. However the majority of businesses are small scale. Perhaps it's time to make a shift and focus more on supporting the smaller businesses that may not have the resources, accessibility, and/or knowledge to keep their workers healthy and safe while at work.

I have heard it said that Canterbury is far ahead with its H&S practices and implementation in comparison to the rest of the country. Certainly, the earthquake rebuild was a huge motivator for us to get it right, and we have great

support systems in place such as the Canterbury Safety Charter that worked alongside the industry here to make it happen.

To bring the Charter model to other regions would provide a valuable resource in bringing each region together with their local businesses and communities to work alongside each other to make things better and upskill that pocket of the overall industry.

All you need is passionate, committed people in the industry who can be innovative and bring the community together, tap into local resources to provide guidance and insight, set up a health and safety leadership committee, and put on relevant events that meet the community's needs. Get it started, keep it going, and it will start growing. ■

Stephanie Cerpa is health and safety manager with Contract Construction.

SAFETY BY DESIGN

SIMON O'BRIEN has been involved in a Charter group focused on health and safety by design.



Supplied

Hampton Jones has been involved from the early stages of the Charter and I have personally been involved since July 2017 as a committee member of the professional services working group (PSWG).

The biggest benefit for Hampton Jones has been the ability to support an organisation that promotes health and safety. The Charter has driven change in the construction industry, as well as providing our teams with access to a range of health and safety-focused events and workshops.

The Charter made a big impact in Canterbury following its establishment

after the Christchurch Earthquakes. When I became involved, the charter had undertaken extensive work and industry engagement around health and safety on site and in the workplace. As part of the PSWG we identified that less was known about how risks/hazards could be mitigated earlier in a project phase, particularly through Health and Safety By Design.

During my time as co-chair we have focused on demystifying this process by developing resources for consultants/SMEs to collaborate with clients/contractors/end users at the design phase, enabling teams to create safer working environments through the

life of a building.

The Canterbury Safety Charter has done an incredible job collaborating with the industry and attracting new members. It is essential to encourage the continued membership of sole traders and SMEs to facilitate the sharing of valuable lessons and knowledge across the wider industry. Furthermore, it is my aspiration to see other regions embrace the Charter's model, building similar organisations that can capitalise on the knowledge and experiences gained in Canterbury, thus benefiting the industry as a whole. ■

Simon O'Brien is director of Hampton Jones.