

Media Release

Discussion to begin on securing city land

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Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee says with the design of the new central Christchurch area set out in the Recovery Plan it's now time to start discussions about the transfer of land ownership.

Commercial sensitivities meant it was not possible for CERA's Christchurch Central Development Unit (CCDU) to start direct negotiations with land owners during its 100-day work programme.

"Now that the locations and scope of the anchor projects and precincts have been confirmed, it is clear some large parcels of land are required for very different uses than their present ones," Mr Brownlee says.

He says that while the Crown has the power to compulsorily acquire land under the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act 2011, the strong preference is for negotiations to now begin with the relevant parties in order to conclude purchases by the Crown on mutually agreed terms. However the tight timelines required if Christchurch's recovery is to be secured will mean the first steps of compulsory purchase will also start this year, but these will not preclude the ability to negotiate and reach agreement in the first instance.

The Government will also seek to facilitate land transfers and purchases for private sector investors in the CBD where it considers those projects will materially advance the recovery and other options are unlikely to succeed or be achievable within the time needed to commit those investments.

"Now that we have an exciting plan that reflects the people's vision for a new city we want to get the rebuild moving quickly," Mr Brownlee says.

"We want to work with land owners and business owners to progress the Recovery Plan's blueprint and supporting private investment in a rapid but orderly fashion."

Land required for the anchor projects, including the open space frame, will be designated by the end of next week in the Christchurch City Council's City Plan as a result of the direction in the Recovery Plan. One of the effects of the designation is that present owners will no longer be able to alter the way the land is used without the consent of the Minister as the requiring authority. Designations are used throughout New Zealand for roads, schools, and many other public works.

Prices for all land acquisitions in the central city (other than for central city red zone residential areas declared earlier this year) will be based on market values at the date the land is acquired. This reflects the highly variable nature of inner city land and improvements. Offers for land and improvements will therefore not be based on rateable valuations.