

Media Release

Recovery loses an inspirational leader

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A former senior leader at the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, Michelle Mitchell, passed away suddenly yesterday after an unexpected illness. She was away for the weekend with her husband in Queenstown.

Ms Mitchell was one of the original staff at CERA who worked with acting chief executive John Ombler to set the organisation up in 2011. She had recently begun a new role as director of the Greater Christchurch Group, which will be a new arm of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), with an on-going focus on the region's recovery.

Prior to that Ms Mitchell was a senior leader within the Ministry of Social Development in Canterbury.

John Ombler says the loss of Ms Mitchell is devastating for her family and for all those who knew her.

"From the first earthquake in September 2010, Michelle's role put her front and centre of the recovery work. She joined CERA as the organisation was being pulled together in 2011 and has continued to work tirelessly within the recovery."

"She recently moved into an exciting new stage of this work in setting up the Greater Christchurch Group. Our loss as an organisation is actually a loss for the entire community. The work Michelle and her team have done in the past five years has been a hugely significant part of Christchurch's recovery."

DPMC chief executive Andrew Kibblewhite says the loss will be felt right across the state sector, across which Ms Mitchell was a highly respected leader.

"We have been truly privileged to have had someone with Michelle's genuine empathy and ability leading this important area of work. She will be sorely missed."

Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee says he is shocked by the sudden loss, and his thoughts are with Ms Mitchell's family.

"The importance of Michelle's role in the recovery cannot be overstated. She was committed to helping this community get back on its feet, and she worked incredibly hard to make that happen."

"I personally enjoyed working with her, and I am greatly saddened today to hear this tragic news."