

Media statement – for immediate release
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Electricity sector rallies for Christchurch earthquake response

More than 40 electricity sector companies from throughout New Zealand and Australia came to Orion's aid in a massive effort to restore stable power supply following the devastating Christchurch earthquake on February 22.

After the quake, Orion staff were faced with extensive damage to crucial high voltage underground cables that supplied power to the eastern suburbs and the central city. The company quickly realised it would need external resources to restore power and rebuild the network, and called on other lines companies, electrical contractors and suppliers from outside Christchurch to assist.

During the immediate response about 700 lines workers, specialist cable jointers, technicians, electricians, engineers, civil construction workers and supply partners rallied in Christchurch for the recovery effort, including staff from Orion, its wholly-owned subsidiary Connetics and local contracting companies.

Crews worked long hours in difficult conditions to get the power back on and help stabilise the electricity network.

"Without their quick response and expertise on the ground here in Christchurch, parts of our city could have been without power for weeks or even months longer than they were. The industry response to this event has been overwhelming, and we can't thank these guys enough," says departing Orion CEO Roger Sutton.

All four 66,000 volt underground cables supplying north-east Christchurch were damaged beyond repair during the quake. Earth movement stretched some cables up to a metre, causing more faults than Orion would usually see in a decade. Each of the 600+ faults took more than 12 hours to find and fix – a significant task for the cable repair crews.

The work to repair 11,000 volt cable faults is now complete – all the known faults that were able to be safely fixed have been repaired. Orion has now scaled back its resources, with cable jointing crews from around New Zealand and Australia returning home.

"We're incredibly grateful for the support we've received during what's been a really trying time for everyone. Workers from outside Christchurch left their homes and families to help out here while we were still experiencing aftershocks, and that says a lot about who we are as an industry and a country. Thanks to everyone who stepped up when Christchurch needed you," concludes Mr Sutton.

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About Orion New Zealand Ltd

Orion New Zealand Ltd owns and operates the electricity network in central Canterbury between the Waimakariri and Rakaia rivers and from the Canterbury coast to Arthur's Pass. The Orion network transports electricity from 10 Transpower grid exit points to more than 192,000 homes and businesses. We charge electricity retailers for this network delivery service and retailers, in turn, charge electricity consumers.

Orion is owned by the Christchurch City Council (89.3%) and the Selwyn District Council (10.7%).

For further information, please contact:

Roger Sutton
Chief Executive Officer
Orion New Zealand Limited
Phone 03 363 9846 or 027 4333 632