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From the President . . .

Welcome to the May 2026 Newsletter, the third one for 2026. We endeavour to keep you informed on developments on the Society's front as well as in the earthquake engineering sector.

It has been an extremely busy period for the Society with the organising of the annual conference that happened in April, and the preparation for the Annual General Meeting on Monday, 25 May 2026, on top of dealing with the technical developments in the earthquake sector.



NZSEE Annual Conference 2026, 15-17 April 2026

We had a successful annual conference last month, and we appreciate all the positive feedback from the delegates, both from around New Zealand and the few delegates from overseas. More on this below. I would like to take this opportunity once again to sincerely thank the Conference Co-convenors, Nikoo Hazaveh and Julia Becker, who did a sterling job supported by the conference committee and our conference organising company, Conference & Events. Also, thanks to the Natural Hazards Commission and other sponsors who supported the conference in a big way and enabled us to run the conference at a modest registration fee. Also thank those consultants and contractors who facilitated the site visits on the day before the formal 3-day conference. The conference attracted some 400 delegates. The conference papers will be made publicly available 6 months after the conference, that is, in October 2026, with a view to disseminating the information widely.

The Society's Annual Awards and Conference Dinner was held on 16 April 2026, and I would like to congratulate all the award winners and the awardee of the NZSEE Research Scholarship, see later in the newsletter.

Professor Misko Cubrinovski was elected as a Life Member of the Society, for his outstanding contribution to earthquake engineering over his career, and in particular liquefaction and geotechnical engineering. We are proud to have Misko as a Life Member.

Professor Julia Becker and Dr Tim Sullivan were promoted to become Fellows of Society.

My congratulations to Misko, Julia and Tim, and sincere thanks for their ongoing contribution to the earthquake engineering sector.

Rapid Building Assessment (RBA) Training Session, 14 April 2026

We also facilitated the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment to run this rapid building assessment workshop on the day before the conference.





UPCOMING EVENTS

[NZSEE AGM 2026](#)

Online

25 May 2026

<https://www.nzsee.org.nz/event/nzsee-annual-general-meeting-2026/>

[NZSEE WEBINAR - WHY IS SEISMIC DESIGN IN NEW ZEALAND SO HARD?](#)

Online

4 June 2026

<https://www.nzsee.org.nz/event/nzsee-webinar-why-is-seismic-design-in-new-zealand-so-hard-online/>

[21ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOIL MECHANICS AND GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING](#)

Vienna, Austria

14-19 June 2026

<https://www.icsmge2026.org/en/>

[AWEC SYMPOSIUM](#)

Auckland

2 July 2026

<https://diversityagenda.org/awec/>

[13TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EARTHQUAKE ENGINEERING](#)

Portland Oregon

13-17 July 2026

<https://13ncee.eeri.org/>

[18TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON EARTHQUAKE ENGINEERING](#)

Berlin

14-18 September 2026

<https://ecee2026.eu/>

Technical Coordinating Groups (TCG)

Keeping our standards up to date is fundamental to enabling design and construction of our built environment, in a way that they are resilient to earthquakes (and other perils).

MBIE have initiated Technical Advisory Groups to be formed to advise Standards New Zealand on the need for standards to be updated, corrected, or new standards developed, and this is being supported by our sister society, SESOC, who have undertaken to overview this TCGs. It is envisaged that the TCGs will comprise a core group of seismic professionals both from academia and practice, and a wider corresponding group. This was discussed at the QuakeCore annual meeting in September 2025.

NZSEE have agreed and offered to MBIE that we will lead the Seismic TCG to advise and co-ordinate seismic related standards. We will keep you informed as the work develops.

Building Resilience in Design Guidance for Engineering (BRIDGE)

BRIDGE is an initiative to manage, co-ordinate and fund the development of design guidance. This is run under the auspices Engineering New Zealand, with part time staff, Paul Campbell (Director), Jennifer Critchley (Deputy Director) and Bede Crestani (Programme Manager) and Steve Bradshaw (Programme Advisor). The BRIDGE is currently funded by the three government agencies, MBIE, Natural Hazards Commission NHC and New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA). The BRIDGE came into operation in late 2025.

There is a steering committee comprising representatives from key technical societies and research organisations. NZSEE was invited to nominate 2 representatives, and we nominated Brabhakaran as the lead representative, and Dion Marriott as the supporting representative on the steering group. The representatives were chosen to bring a broad outlook on the built environment including buildings, infrastructure, structural and geotechnical engineering and resilience, given NZSEE's overarching expertise ranging from seismology and geology to multi-disciplinary engineering and social science.

Update of Guideline for the Design of Seismic Isolation Systems for Buildings

We are pleased to advise that NZSEE has been engaged and funded by BRIDGE to update and publish the Base Isolation Guidelines. A draft was developed led by NZSEE and was published in June 2019 ([here](#)), and it is time to take into consideration the learnings from its application and update and issue a final version. It is expected that the updated guidance will be published in mid-2027.

I would like to sincerely thank Dion Marriott for the initiative in getting this scoped, agreed and funded, and for taking on to lead the project on behalf of NZSEE.

Encouraging Voices on Earthquake Engineering

Michelle Grant presented a powerful speech on the need to simplify seismic design, particularly for low rise construction. We strongly encourage members to speak up when they consider improvements can be made to earthquake practice. We have therefore organised an online webinar for her to present, so that





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her thoughts can be shared with the wider profession and we would like to hear your thoughts following the webinar.

AWEC 2026 Symposium, 2 July 2026 – A Collective Voice for Change moving beyond the Barriers

We are delighted to be partnering to support the Advancing Women in Engineering and Construction symposium in July. Look out for the advertisement later in this newsletter and encourage women to register for this event. We strongly encourage diversity in our profession.

Pacific Conference on Earthquake Engineering PCEE 2027

It is our turn to host the Pacific Conference in 2027, as the owners of the conference brand. We have been considering the place and dates for the conference, and have decided to host the conference

Place: [Christchurch](#) Dates: [week beginning 15 February 2027](#)

Pop this in your calendar and share the news with your colleagues and friends in Pacific rim countries. We will advise further details soon.

Annual General Meeting, 25 May 2026

Please remember that the Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday, 25 May 2026. The first under our new constitution will be held at the WSP offices in Wellington and online, allowing a wide cross-section of members to participate. We have decided to detach the AGM from the conference and have online participation, so it is open to everyone, including those unable to attend the conference.

Look forward to seeing many of you on Monday.

Thank you

Following the AGM, I will be stepping away from my role as President, a role which I held for 2 years, and will take on a supporting role as Immediate Past-President. I wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported me in this role, including the committees over the past 2 years, as well as the wider membership, and stakeholders.

Kind regards

Brabhakaran





Preparing for the Big One Innovating for a New Era of Resilience

2026 NZSEE CONFERENCE

15–17 April 2026

Tākina Wellington Convention Centre



NZSEE 2026 Conference

The NZSEE Conference 2026 was an inspiring few days of connection, reflection, and forward-looking discussion. With around 400 delegates joining us in Wellington, the strong engagement across engineering, research, policy, industry, and government highlighted our collective commitment to *“Preparing for the Big One: Innovating for a New Era of Resilience.”* This year’s programme was enriched by five pre-conference site tours and the Rapid Building Assessment workshop, which provided valuable hands-on learning and set the tone for the discussions ahead.

We received approximately 120 paper submissions, and it was encouraging to see such depth of participation and excellence. We hope this momentum continues in the years ahead. Our sincere thanks go to keynote speakers Masayoshi Nakashima, JoAnn Browning, Reid Zimmerman, and Misko Cubrinovski, as well as all plenary presenters who shared updated insights across seismology, infrastructure, risk and resilience, lifelines, architecture, EPB changes, BRIDGE, the Seismic Risk Working Group, low-damage design, and the NSE Code of Practice.

We also extend our warm congratulations to all award winners. Your achievements are well-deserved and reflect the dedication, innovation, and leadership that continue to strengthen our field.

As Co-Convenors, we offer our heartfelt appreciation to all presenters, sponsors, exhibitors, and our dedicated Conference Committee—whose voluntary efforts made this event possible. It has been a privilege to gather with you all, to learn from one another, and to continue strengthening resilience across Aotearoa’s built environment.

Nikoo Hazaveh and Julia Becker, Conference co-convenors



NZSEE 2026 Awards

Distinguished members



Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President and Misko Cubrinovski

Professor Misko Cubrinovski

Life Member

[Citation](#)



Tim Sullivan, Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President, Rajesh Dhakal

Dr Tim Sullivan

Fellow

[Citation](#)



Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President, Julia Becker, Kenneth Elwood, Catalina Miranda

Professor Julia Becker

Fellow

[Citation](#)



NZSEE/QuakeCoRE Emerging Women Leaders in Earthquake Engineering Award 2026

Jordanka Chaneva

Jordanka Chaneva is recognised for her outstanding emerging leadership in earthquake engineering and her strong contribution to improving seismic resilience in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through her research and professional practice, she has advanced understanding of liquefaction behaviour in pumiceous soils and translated leading research into practical guidance for everyday engineering decisions. Jordanka is particularly noted for connecting research, practice, and people—strengthening collaboration across academia, industry, and policy. Looking ahead, she aspires to help shape the future of earthquake engineering in New Zealand by uniting academia, practice, and regulation, nurturing the next generation of engineers, and strengthening national seismic design guidance for volcanic and crushable soils. Her technical excellence, leadership, and commitment to resilient outcomes exemplify the spirit and purpose of this award.

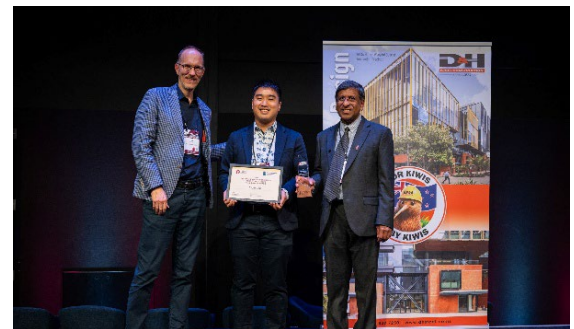


Santiago Pujol, QuakeCoRE Director, Jordanka Chaneva, Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake / NZSEE Ivan Skinner Award 2026

Robin Lee

Robin is recognised for outstanding contributions to earthquake engineering research, teaching, and practice, and for sustained excellence across research, hazard modelling, national standards development, and education.



Kenneth Elwood, NHC, Robin Lee, Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President



Harry Riley-Smith, Aurecon, Helen Ferner, NZSEE Past President, Tony Holden, Aurecon, Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President

John Hollings Seismic Resilience in Practice Award 2026

Aurecon (Structural & Geotechnical Engineer)

for

Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui | Central Library Seismic Strengthening and Refurbishment

Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui, Wellington's Central Library, is recognised for an outstanding demonstration of seismic resilience in practice. Through an innovative hybrid base-isolation retrofit, Aurecon has fundamentally transformed the seismic response of this important civic and heritage building—reducing earthquake demands by around ninety percent and achieving performance in excess of 100%NBS. The solution enables the library to protect life, limit damage, and remain operational following a major earthquake, all while preserving its cultural significance and architectural character. Delivered through exceptional engineering ingenuity and close collaboration across disciplines, Te Matapihi sets a new benchmark for the resilient strengthening of existing public buildings in Aotearoa New Zealand.



Research Scholarship 2026

Aaron Rampersad

This award recognises an outstanding doctoral candidate in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Canterbury, with a history of exceptional academic achievement, including graduating with distinction from Imperial College London and University of the West Indies.

The recipient's research addresses a fundamental and nationally important challenge in earthquake engineering: the accurate representation of spatially correlated earthquake ground motions and their implications for probabilistic seismic hazard and risk assessment. This work has direct relevance to infrastructure resilience, lifeline risk assessment, and emergency management planning in New Zealand.

Since the commencement of this research, the recipient has played a leading role in the development and interim update of the New Zealand Ground Motion Database, now being incorporated into the 2028 revision of the New Zealand National Seismic Hazard Model. These contributions represent a substantial enhancement of New Zealand's seismic hazard modelling capability and demonstrate an exceptional level of impact for a researcher at this career stage.

The Awards Committee recognises this individual as an outstanding emerging researcher and is pleased to support this research and acknowledge its significance for Aotearoa New Zealand.



Aaron Rampersad

Otto Glogau 2026

Brendon Bradley

for the paper

"Seismic hazard with deterministic maximum limits: Considerations in a New Zealand-specific context"

in NZSEE Bulletin Vol. 58 No. 1 (2025)

The paper "Seismic Hazard with Deterministic Maximum Limits: Considerations in a New Zealand-specific Context" examines whether it is scientifically defensible to cap probabilistically derived seismic hazard using deterministic maximum limits. Drawing on evidence from the 2010–2011 Canterbury earthquake sequence, the paper demonstrates that such caps can lead to design loads lower than those already experienced in New Zealand, potentially creating a false sense of safety.

The paper argues that accepting higher probabilistic hazard is both more scientifically rigorous and consistent with the performance-based philosophy of modern earthquake engineering, and this work has directly informed the recently released TS 1170.5.



Brendon Bradley



He Tohu Pūpū Seismic Design Competition

The Holmes team won the 2026 He Tohu Pūpū Seismic Design Competition, sponsored by NHC Toka Tū Ake. The team members representing Holmes were Tony Griffiths, Niamh Calder, Mohamed Mostafa and Sam Jewell.



Julian Rincon, NHC, Mohamed Mostafa, Holmes, Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President

Bulletin Service Award 2026

Brendon Bradley

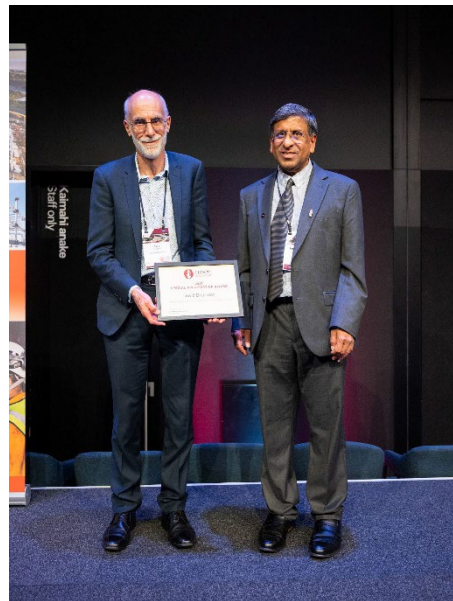


Brendon Bradley

Brendon was awarded for his ongoing significant contribution to the Bulletin, through peer reviews, publication of numerous papers and support to Rajesh Dhakal.

Special Appreciation Award 2026

David Brunsdon



David Brunsdon, Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President

David Brunsdon was specially appreciated for his contribution to a broad range of earthquake engineering that helps develop the sector including the Earthquake Prone Buildings, Seismic Risk Working Group and the National Lifelines Council.



Ken Elwood, Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President

President's Award

Professor Ken Elwood

Ken was selected by the President to thank him for his outstanding contribution to earthquake engineering on a wide range of initiatives as Chief Engineer of MBIE and NHC, and spearheading in particular the inputs to government review of Earthquake Risk to Buildings and the Seismic Risk Working Group.



NZSEE Best Student Paper 2026

Nima Shokrollahi

for the paper titled

“Shake Table Testing of Full Scale Cold-Formed Steel Pallet Rack in the Down-Aisle Direction”



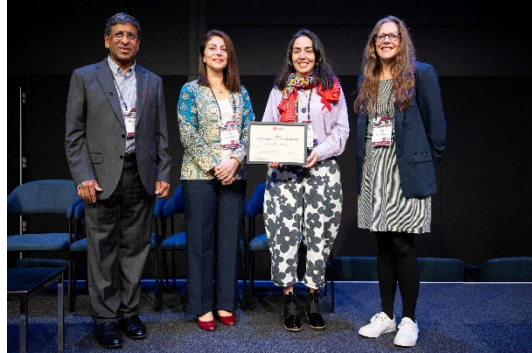
Nikoo Hazaveh, Conference Co-Convenor, Julia Becker, Conference Co-Convenor, Nima Shokrollahi, Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President

NZSEE Best Research Paper 2026

Catalina Miranda, Cameron Eade

for the paper titled

“Beyond %NBS: Understanding User Needs and International Approaches to Communicating Seismic Risk”



Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President, Nikoo Hazaveh, Conference Co-Convenor, Catalina Miranda, Julia Becker, Conference Co-Convenor

NZSEE Best Practice Paper 2026

Sean Gardiner

for the paper titled

“Seismic Strengthening of the Three-storey URM CApSc Building”



Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President, Sean Gardiner, Nikoo Hazaveh, Conference Co-Convenor, Julia Becker, Conference Co-Convenor

NZSEE Special Paper Award 2026

Michelle Grant

for the impactful paper titled

“Why is Seismic Design in New Zealand so Hard?”



Pathmanathan Brabhaharan, NZSEE President, Nikoo Hazaveh, Conference Co-Convenor, Michelle Grant, Julia Becker, Conference Co-Convenor



NZSEE Annual General Meeting – Save the date!

The 2026 Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineering Inc will take place on **Monday, 25 May at 12:00pm** at WSP, 100 Willis Street, Wellington and Online.

All members are encouraged to attend.

Meeting documents can be found below, members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the meeting documents.

- [Notice of Annual General Meeting and Agenda](#)
- [Draft Minutes of Annual General Meeting 8 April 2025](#)
- [Presidents Report 2026](#)
- [NZSEE Audited Performance Report 30/09/2025](#)

Any apologies or questions can be directed to the Executive Officer, Amy Samuelu at exec@nzsee.org.nz

Register your attendance In Wellington or Online [here](#).

Following the AGM, we are pleased to invite you to a special presentation by the winners of the Best Research Paper Award at the 2026 NZSEE Conference, Cameron Eade and Catalina Miranda.

Their presentation, *Beyond %NBS*, explores a topic of significant relevance to the industry.

Beyond %NBS Presentation Abstract

%NBS was designed as a narrow regulatory screening tool but has become the default metric for a range of seismic building decisions in New Zealand – from occupancy and leasing, to lending and insurance. This is largely because no alternative exists.

This research reimagined how seismic risk information is communicated, asking what end-users actually need to inform the decisions they make. Drawing on interviews and focus groups with diverse building owners and building system stakeholders, we found strong demand for multi-dimensional information covering safety, damage, and disruption – and clear preferences for how that information should be framed and presented across different user groups.

With current changes to the earthquake-prone building system underway, this research provides an evidence base for how seismic risk should be communicated going forward.

NZSEE Events

Upcoming Webinar – Why is Seismic Design in New Zealand so hard?

Speaker: Michelle Grant

When: Thursday, 4 June 2026

Time: 12:00pm

Where: Online

A recent plenary session at the NZSEE 2026 Conference, delivered by Michelle Grant, sparked discussion around the balance between first-principles design and prescriptive approaches in seismic standards. The session highlighted key tensions in current practice: while first-principles approaches can enable innovation, they may also introduce complexity and increase the risk of misinterpretation;



however, more prescriptive standards can support consistency and clarity but may constrain design flexibility.

Given the strong engagement generated during the session, this seminar aims to bring these discussions to the wider engineering community. Michelle will present key takeaways from her NZSEE conference paper, “Why is Seismic Design in New Zealand So Hard?” This presentation critically reflects on the challenges engineers face in day-to-day design processes, recognising that achieving good seismic design outcomes should be as simple and clear as possible for practicing engineers.

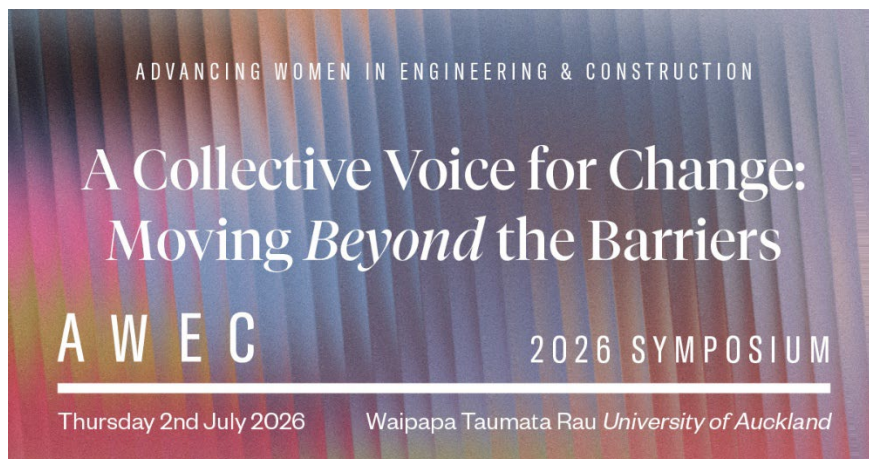
Focusing on the types of structures most commonly designed in New Zealand, the seminar will explore what a “best-fit” approach to seismic design might look like and invite discussion from attendees on how standards can better support engineering practice.

Find out more and register [here](#).

Past Webinar – Japanese building retrofit schemes using dampers for various seismically defective buildings

Presented by *Dr. Kazuhiko Kasai, Professor Emeritus, Institute of Science Tokyo*

If you missed the webinar, you can view the recording online [here](#).



Advancing Women in Engineering and Construction Symposium

AWEC (Advancing Women in Engineering and Construction) initiative is at its core is committed to championing equity for women in their professional careers and is primarily aimed at supporting the development and retention of women in the engineering sector and associated parts of the building & construction industry.

The symposium titled “A collective voice for change” was designed to provide something different – a chance for women to connect through shared experiences, but also provide a platform to drive change as a collective. The current structure within engineering promotes success for few – we need systemic change so that everyone can find their pathway to success and career fulfilment.

We now have the website live for AWEC 2026, and ticket sales are open so I hope you will join us, and please share with the wāhine in your circles.

<https://diversityagenda.org/awec/>



New Zealand Site Characterisation Database

This is the repository for the site characterisation database for the New Zealand National Seismic Hazard Model (NSHM). This repository includes current and previous versions of the site characterisation database (The Database), containing a summary of site characterisation metrics at each Geonet seismic monitoring site. The current version of the Database is v1.5.0

The Supporting Data is the invasive and non-invasive site investigation data that was used to inform the development of some of the site characterisation metrics.

Further information on the New Zealand NSHM can be found on the [NSHM website](#) and the [NSHM webapp](#).

For more information please [email the New Zealand NSHM](#).



13th National Conference on
EARTHQUAKE ENGINEERING
PORTLAND, OREGON | JULY 13-17, 2026

Resilience Through **Community Engagement** and **Technology**



**13NCEE Technical Program
Now Available!**

