

Strengthening disaster resilience and emergency management

Government response to the *Report of the
Government Inquiry into the Response to the
North Island Severe Weather Events*

NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT • OCTOBER 2024



**STRENGTHENING DISASTER RESILIENCE AND
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

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For more information on the work of the
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC),
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Minister's foreword

Kia ora koutou,

In early 2023, the North Island was hit by a number of severe weather events. Fifteen people lost their lives, one person remains missing and many more people were forever impacted. I extend my deepest sympathies to those who've lost loved ones and acknowledge the ongoing effects felt by these communities. I also want to acknowledge the phenomenal effort by our responders and thank everyone involved for pulling together selflessly, resiliently, and with courage in the face of such devastating events.

New Zealand is one of the riskiest countries on earth. Floods, earthquakes and other disasters are common occurrences. We can all expect to face at least one major emergency during our lifetimes. Over the last few years, we've seen the scale and frequency of these disaster events increase – and that trend will only continue. Recent events such as Cyclone Hale, the Auckland Anniversary heavy rainfall, and Cyclone Gabrielle (the North Island Severe Weather Events or NISWE) showed us the serious, long-term impacts these events have on our communities.

It is clear from the Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events (NISWE Inquiry) that our emergency management system is not fit for purpose. It does not have the capacity or capability to deal with significant, widespread events that impact multiple regions at once. I express my gratitude to the members of the Inquiry for their thorough findings and agree that work needs to be done to strengthen the system.

The issues raised are not new. They are the same issues we've heard from previous reviews and inquiries. It is time we ask ourselves 'how can we make sure it is different this time?'

I want New Zealand's emergency management system to be equipped for responding to future emergency events, especially events that are large-scale. To get there we need to shift into a state where the system is adaptive, simple, and builds backup capacity. In other words, our emergency management system must be able to become stronger over time. And we need a clear plan for how we get there.

Our communities and local bodies play a central role in the emergency management system. They need to be empowered to do that role, with the right tools and capabilities. We need a well-functioning, well-resourced National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) with clear and strengthened operational emergency management leadership responsibilities. And we also need to recognise we all have roles and responsibilities to play in effective emergency management, whether as individuals or as part of our communities.

Iwi and Māori organisations have an important role to play. The NISWE Inquiry and other recent reviews have paid special attention to the contributions iwi and Māori have made to extend care and protection to all in need during disaster response and recovery. The emergency management system needs to make room for more Māori participation in planning and decision-making to enable this contribution.

This document delivers a response to the NISWE Inquiry. But it is more than that. It outlines the Government's overall direction of travel for the emergency management system over the next five years. As an appendix you will find a response to the 14 overarching NISWE Inquiry recommendations.

While this document sets the pathway forward, there is more detail to come. Early next year, I will publish a public roadmap, giving clear direction and timelines for the next phase of this work so that you can hold us to account for delivery. I will also continue to have conversations with New Zealanders about how we deliver the change we seek, including through legislative change.

We have some clear actions for next steps, but this will not be a quick fix. We are operating in a tight fiscal environment and recognise the importance of continuing investment over time to make sustainable changes to the emergency management system. We are realistic we will not solve the issues overnight – but we are committed to getting it done and getting it done right.

Together we will build a stronger, more prepared, and more resilient nation.



Hon Mark Mitchell,
Minister for Emergency Management
and Recovery

Overview

The emergency management system is not fit for purpose for large events that impact multiple regions at once. We must now transform this system to one that consistently implements improvements over time, even as it comes under increasing pressure. To enable this, we will deliver a programme of change across five broad focus areas (subject to clarifying the scope, timing, and funding requirements).

FOCUS AREA 1: Give effect to the whole-of-society approach to emergency management

- 1.1 Develop and invest in a comprehensive and ongoing national public readiness programme to protect lives, prevent injuries and other trauma, and reduce the burden on response efforts.
- 1.2 Recognise and enable the significant contribution of iwi and Māori in emergency management to the benefit of all people in New Zealand.
- 1.3 Direct a greater share of emergency management investment in community resilience initiatives.
- 1.4 Improve how communities access funding after an emergency.
- 1.5 Expand the number and quality of formal agreements with businesses, community organisations, iwi and Māori to deliver assistance in times of emergencies.

FOCUS AREA 2: Support and enable local government to deliver a consistent minimum standard of emergency management across New Zealand

- 2.1 NEMA will increase its focus on the provision of resources that local authorities need.
- 2.2 NEMA will set standards for the delivery of emergency management and assure these standards are being met.
- 2.3 Clarify operational roles and responsibilities in an emergency response.
- 2.4 Strengthen the regional tier of emergency management.

FOCUS AREA 3: Professionalise and build the capability and capacity of the emergency management workforce

- 3.1 NEMA will build on existing work to deliver a significant uplift in capability development efforts.
- 3.2 Develop and invest in a model for a full time deployable incident management surge support.

FOCUS AREA 4: Enable the different parts of the system to work better together at the national level

- 4.1 Clarify national level roles and responsibilities and strengthen leadership in risk reduction, readiness, response, and recovery.
- 4.2 Progress work to enable interoperability.

FOCUS AREA 5: Drive a strategic focus on investment and implementation

- 5.1 Ensure a well-governed approach to delivery of *Strengthening disaster resilience and emergency management*.
- 5.2 Deliver a detailed investment and implementation roadmap to deliver the work programme set out in *Strengthening disaster resilience and emergency management* and to drive delivery.

**The emergency
management system
is not fit for purpose**
for large events
that impact multiple
regions at once like the
North Island Severe
Weather Events



New Zealand's emergency management arrangements are a complex system shaped by our history of emergencies. This system is under pressure due to our high and growing level of emergency risk. The Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events (NISWE Inquiry) identified shortcomings in New Zealand's emergency management arrangements, many of which were already well-known.

The origins of our emergency management system

The emergency management system has its roots in the Hawke's Bay Earthquake in 1931 and the subsequent Public Safety Conservation Act 1932 which created our first emergency powers. Arrangements for coordinated 'Civil Defence' were galvanised by the Second World War. By 1942, enrolment in the Emergency Defence Corps became compulsory for able bodied men not serving and encouraged for women.¹ The Ministry of Civil Defence was established in 1960 against the backdrop of the Cold War and the threat of nuclear attack.

From these beginnings, our emergency management arrangements have continued to evolve in response to shifting risks. The most recent significant review of emergency management prior to the current review came after the 2016 Kaikōura earthquake and 2017 Port Hills Fire. The then Government commissioned a Technical Advisory Group (known as the TAG) to identify improvements in our response to natural disasters and other emergencies. The TAG's 2017 report *Ministerial Review – Better Responses to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies* (the TAG Review) set in train reforms that led to the establishment of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in 2019.

Now in 2024 the emergency management system aspires to realise a set of principles, outlined below

The priority of human life

The protection and preservation of human life (both citizens and responders) takes priority over all considerations.

Communities are at the centre

Communities are at the centre of emergency management, recognising the importance of local knowledge and Māori knowledge (mātauranga Māori), participation, and resilience in reducing risk, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies.

The emergency management system builds capability and supports and enables communities to understand their role and actively participate in emergency management.

Whole-of-society and all-of-government approach

Responsibilities sit across individuals, families, whānau and households, community organisations, hapū, iwi, businesses, and all parts of local and central government.

We are comfortable giving up some individual agency independence where it matters, to work together to deliver better emergency management.

The emergency management system delivers equitable outcomes

New Zealand has wide socioeconomic and geographic variances between regions and within regions. Where you live should not dictate the outcomes you experience from the emergency management system's delivery.

Comprehensive and holistic emergency management

Emergency management is driven across four phases known as the 4 Rs of:

- **Reduction:** identifying and analysing risks to life and property from hazards, taking steps to eliminate those risks if practicable, and, if not, reducing the magnitude of their impact and the likelihood of their occurrence to an acceptable level.
- **Readiness:** developing operational systems and capabilities before an emergency happens, including self-help and response programmes for the general public and specific programmes for emergency services, lifeline utilities, and other agencies.
- **Response:** actions taken immediately before, during, or directly after an emergency to save lives and property, and to help communities recover.
- **Recovery:** the coordinated efforts and processes used to bring about the immediate, medium-term, and long-term holistic regeneration and enhancement of a community following an emergency.

The emergency management system enables holistic management across all 4-Rs and all types of risks.

The emergency management system is weighted towards risk reduction and preparedness to build resilience

The most effective way to preserve life and property is through risk reduction and preparedness. The emergency management system focusses on reducing the likelihood of emergencies where we can, and the consequences where we cannot. Resources are targeted where we know they will have greatest impact.

This system is under pressure due to our high and growing level of emergency risk

In the past 15 years, we have contended with a series of major emergencies at a scale unmatched in our recent experience: the Canterbury earthquake sequence, the Kaikoura earthquake and tsunami, the Whakaari / White Island eruption, severe flooding on the West Coast and Tasman, along with other major emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Christchurch mosque attacks. Since the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act came into force in 2002 (CDEM Act 2022), three states of national emergency have been declared, two of which have been in the last four years.

As noted by the NISWE Inquiry, Cyclone Hale, the Auckland Anniversary heavy rainfall, and Cyclone Gabrielle (together the 2023 North Island Severe Weather Events) and their impacts 'were the most serious [weather events] in recent history'.² It is increasingly clear large scale weather events should be considered the 'new normal'.

Recent scientific research shows that within the next 50 years there is a high likelihood of an earthquake of magnitude eight or more on the Alpine Fault (75 percent)³ or Hikurangi subduction zone (26 percent)⁴, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

We know the risks of emergencies are growing due to climate change, demographic shifts, globalisation and technological innovation. Climate change is driving more frequent, more intense, and longer running weather events and making the consequences more severe (for example through coastal erosion and sea level rise). Demographic shifts including a larger, older, and more urban population are increasing our vulnerability to the impacts of emergencies. Globalisation and technology are exposing us to risks such as power and cyber outages, and supply chain disruptions.

Growing risks mean growing costs. The costs to government of responding to and recovering from emergencies are growing faster than government revenue and are projected to increase by over 50 percent per decade – from \$0.7 billion in 2020 to \$3.3 billion in 2050.⁵ Most of New Zealand's regions face potential storm costs that are growing at a faster rate than their regional incomes.⁶

The NISWE Inquiry identified shortcomings in New Zealand's emergency management arrangements, many of which were already well-known

The NISWE led to the deaths of 15 people. One person remains missing. The events were devastating for the families and whānau of those people and the communities across the affected regions. Their impacts will continue to be felt for years to come.

The NISWE Inquiry was established to 'ensure that the design of New Zealand's emergency management system is appropriate to support readiness for, and responses to, future emergency events (such as landslides, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic activity, floods and storms) by identifying lessons from the 2023 North Island severe weather events.'⁷

The four members of the inquiry, Sir Jerry Mateparae GNZM QSO KStJ (Chair), John Ombler CNZM QSO, Rangimarie Hunia and Julie Greene, delivered their report to the Government in March 2024.

The NISWE Inquiry found that 'the events stretched the emergency management system beyond its limits. The Inquiry considers that, as a country, we are not adequately prepared for severe weather events or large-scale emergencies affecting multiple regions at once.'⁸

The NISWE Inquiry identified a range of issues and recommended a series of shifts in response

The NISWE Inquiry was just one of the investigations into the weather events. It sits alongside other reviews, including those commissioned by Hawke's Bay Regional Council, Auckland Council, NEMA, and other government agencies.

The findings of the NISWE Inquiry were neither new nor surprising. In many areas they echoed the TAG Review. Following the TAG Review, a four-year work programme (of which we are currently in year four of the funding received to deliver this programme) was established to deliver better responses to emergencies. Improvements included the establishment of NEMA, and a 24/7 monitoring, alerting, and reporting function to improve early warning. However, many agreed improvements have not yet been implemented due to a lack of investment, or decisions to redirect resources elsewhere, including to respond to major emergencies.

Issue identified: There was a major disconnect between communities and emergency management agencies. Community members felt their efforts to support their communities were made necessary due to a failure of the official emergency response. Emergency management agencies saw the community response as a key part of the official emergency response.

Shift recommended: Put people and their communities at the heart of emergency management.

Issue identified: Despite iwi and Māori⁹ capability and expertise, they do not have a formal legislated role in emergency management and there is distrust by some iwi and Māori towards emergency management agencies.

Shift recommended: Recognise the role of iwi and Māori throughout the system.

Issue identified: Councils face significant constraints in delivering their emergency management responsibilities.

Shift recommended: Local government is at the coalface of readiness and response.

Issue identified: Existing expertise is underutilised across the emergency management agency. Furthermore, NEMA is a small agency with a broad remit, meaning it cannot realistically deliver on aspects of its current roles and cannot make the most of its strengths. Its role should be refocussed and draw more on other government agencies.

Shift recommended: Make better use of national resources.

Issue identified: There is a need for an increased focus on readiness and an increased investment in risk reduction and readiness.

Shift recommended: Increase the focus on readiness and risk reduction.

The emergency management system **must be able to consistently implement improvements**



Some systems benefit from shocks, stressors, and uncertainty. In response to pressure, they become stronger. The human immune system is a good example.¹⁰ We need our emergency management system to work like this, consistently implementing improvements over time, even as it comes under increasing pressure.

There are examples of this already. For some regions, recent emergencies have driven improved performance by emergency management agencies, improved access to knowledge (including mātauranga Māori), and strengthened community cohesion. However, in others, emergencies have strained local government resources, fractured communities and reduced trust, and burned out the emergency management workforce.

To become the sort of system that gets stronger in response to shocks, stressors, and uncertainty, our emergency management system needs to be:



Adaptive

Adaptive systems learn from experience by implementing lessons. In emergency management, this means collecting, analysing, and sharing insights from emergencies and exercises and then implementing changes as a result. It also means building a culture of learning and continuous improvement.



Simple

The emergency management system is inherently complex. This complexity comes from its devolved locally delivered model, multiple operational layers and decision-making, and the breadth of actors and activities across reduction, readiness, response, and recovery. Complex systems can create overlapping, and confusing responsibilities and objectives. The emergency management system needs a common understanding of who does what at what level, a shared sense of direction and purpose, and legislation that enables this.



Build backup capacity

Many natural systems overcompensate in response to stressors and build in backup capacity. So too must the emergency management system. We must build in extra capacity and strength in anticipation of the next event, and we must build more than we think we need because we must expect the next challenge to be greater than the last one.

We will deliver a programme of changes to build **an emergency management system able to improve and strengthen over time**



We will deliver a programme of changes across five broad focus areas to build an emergency management system that can continuously improve and become stronger over time.

<p>FOCUS AREA:</p> <p>1</p> <p>Give effect to the whole-of-society approach to emergency management</p>	<p>FOCUS AREA:</p> <p>2</p> <p>Support and enable local government to deliver a consistent minimum standard of emergency management across New Zealand</p>	
<p>FOCUS AREA:</p> <p>3</p> <p>Professionalise and build the capability and capacity of the emergency management workforce</p>	<p>FOCUS AREA:</p> <p>4</p> <p>Enable the different parts of the system to work better together at the national level</p>	<p>FOCUS AREA:</p> <p>5</p> <p>Drive a strategic focus on investment and implementation</p>

Each focus area has a suite of high level actions to deliver on its intent over the next five years.

While the actions represent our intended approach to shifting this system, we note that many are contingent on new or reprioritised funding, and others will take time to deliver.

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) and NEMA are clarifying the scope, timing, and funding requirements to deliver the actions and will deliver an investment and implementation roadmap setting this out.

FOCUS AREA 1: Give effect to the whole-of-society approach to emergency management

New Zealanders have consistently responded to emergencies with courage and care. From the contributions of the Student Volunteer Army to the shared sacrifice of the 'team of five million' through COVID-19 and the manaakitanga¹¹ provided by iwi and Māori during Cyclone Gabrielle, everyday heroism can be seen in every event.

As a small country with significant experience in emergencies and strong social cohesion, New Zealand is well-placed to be a world leader in whole-of-society emergency management.

Whole-of-society emergency management means:

- drawing on the collective resources of all parts of the community to build resilience before, during, and after an emergency
- recognising and designing for the diversity of New Zealanders including understanding the special challenges emergencies present for population groups including for example, people with disabilities, those with English as a second language, and rural population groups
- supporting people to protect what matters most to them which often means considering providing for the welfare of their animals. Experience shows people can be reluctant to evacuate without their companion animals or where there are concerns about the safety of stock. An emergency management system which supports people to meet the needs of their animals in emergencies will lead to lower levels of human welfare needs, and ultimately reduce risk to life.

The *National Disaster Resilience Strategy* sets out a goal of what whole-of-society emergency management looks like in New Zealand.

*To strengthen the resilience of the nation by managing risks, being ready to respond to and recover from emergencies, and by enabling, empowering, and supporting individuals, organisations, and communities to act for themselves and others, for the safety and wellbeing of all.*¹²

As the NISWE Inquiry makes clear, we have not achieved this goal. The Inquiry found a major gap between how communities see their role, and how emergency management sector organisations see the role of communities.

We need to bridge this gap which includes talking honestly with New Zealanders about what local and central government agencies can and cannot do in an emergency, and what we expect people and communities to do to be ready and able to act for themselves and others. In a major emergency, limited resources are stretched or overwhelmed and focussed on the areas of the highest priority. This means some communities will not get the assistance they may expect. As an example, the NISWE Inquiry found that many people impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle had three days' worth of food and water, but this was not sufficient. Communities need to be ready to self-organise and use available resources to look after themselves and each other until support can get to them.

There is also an opportunity to shift investment towards community resilience. This is particularly crucial for rural communities who face significant consequences, and often for longer than those in urban centres. We have seen that investment in upgrading and provisioning marae and community halls through the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) supported community level response to Cyclone Gabrielle. This investment focus should continue and consider emergency management kit, internet connectivity, and generators.

There has already been significant investment in activities which contribute to improved resilience since the NISWE, including almost \$1.2 billion¹³ allocated to affected regions¹⁴ through the NISWE recovery. The Government has also made \$200 million available through the Regional Infrastructure Fund for flood resilience projects.

Through the whole-of-society approach, there is an opportunity to recognise and enable the contributions of businesses, and community organisations through partnering and planning for emergencies at all levels in the system. Government cannot do everything. We know that businesses and community organisations want to make a more substantial contribution, including in response, and government agencies need to make it easier for them to do so.

Iwi and Māori are making significant contributions to emergency management. The NISWE Inquiry observed that in some cases during the NISWE, iwi and Māori activated more quickly than local and regional authority responses and provided a range of valuable services to people in their areas. However, there were instances where iwi and Māori were obstructed from taking action to protect and look after those who live in their rohe (territory). The NISWE Inquiry has called for a formal legislated role in emergency management and for the system to support the significant capacity and capability of iwi and Māori to help communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from an emergency.

We need a national approach to enable the significant contributions of iwi and Māori in emergency management. Iwi and Māori will continue to step up in times of emergency, and manaakitanga alongside mātauranga Māori is an inherent strength which needs to be recognised, leveraged, and enabled through formal emergency management arrangements across the 4 Rs.

We need a unified emergency management system. However, we have come to a point where a separate system has evolved to fill gaps to meet communities' needs. Like he taura whiri (the braided rope), multiple strands braided together are stronger than the single strands alone. The role of iwi and Māori is a fundamental strand which, if embedded and recognised formally as part of the system, will deliver stronger emergency management to the benefit of all New Zealanders.

Actions to deliver whole-of-society emergency management

1.1 Develop and invest in a comprehensive and ongoing national public readiness programme to protect lives, prevent injuries and other trauma, and reduce the burden on response efforts. The programme will seek to highlight the role of communities in emergency management and open an honest conversation about government capacity and the role of communities. This will include clear guidance on the level of self-sufficiency people and communities should prepare for.

1.2 Recognise and enable the significant contribution of iwi and Māori in emergency management to the benefit of all people in New Zealand. The system needs to support the significant capacity and capability of iwi and Māori across emergency management. This is not only through investing and building their capacity and capability to respond in an emergency, but how mātauranga Māori, manaakitanga and deep relationships within their communities (including with Māori and non-Māori) can strengthen outcomes across reduction, readiness, and recovery activities. We will work closely with iwi and Māori to develop a flexible approach to enable participation at all levels (local, regional and national) in emergency management for those who have the capacity, capability, and desire to contribute. This will include consideration of how to formalise the role of iwi and Māori in emergency management settings, including through future legislation.

1.3 Direct a greater share of emergency management investment in community resilience initiatives. There is an opportunity to direct a greater proportion of our current investment towards community resilience initiatives. This starts with building a clear understanding of current levels of investment across the system.

1.4 Improve how communities access funding after an emergency. Communities must be able to efficiently navigate and access reimbursement and recovery funding following an emergency. The government has several funding mechanisms, and its goal is to provide financial support in a way that is fast, accessible and equitable, while providing value for money and maintaining transparency and accountability.

1.5 Expand the number and quality of formal agreements with businesses, community organisations, iwi and Māori to deliver assistance in times of emergencies. There is an opportunity to move from ad hoc relationships to strategic partnerships at all levels and across all 4 Rs in the emergency management system. Actors outside of government can provide access to technical capabilities, surge capacity for key roles in specific emergencies, and infrastructure and other non-person resources and can facilitate better connections to communities. We will look to ensure partnerships are in place before an emergency to enhance readiness. Building strategic partnerships is a responsibility for all agencies at all levels. At the centre, NEMA will lead and champion partnership building in the emergency management system.

Link to NISWE Inquiry recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** Put people and their communities at the heart of an integrated emergency management system.
- **Recommendation 3:** Optimise the effort of iwi Māori to benefit all people in an emergency.
- **Recommendation 10:** Amend the three-day self-sufficiency guidance.
- **Recommendation 13:** Prioritise strategic investment in reduction and readiness activities.
- **Recommendation 14:** Update the policy settings, criteria, and process for funding and distributing response costs.

FOCUS AREA 2: Support and enable local government to deliver a consistent minimum standard of emergency management across New Zealand

Locally led delivery of emergency management is a strength of our system. Local authorities across New Zealand are members of local communities and are well placed to understand and manage the risks communities face and partner with them to build resilience.

This model of emergency management is coordinated by 16 CDEM Groups¹⁵ around the country, through which local authorities come together with emergency services and others to enable regional-level planning, coordination, and delivery of emergency management at the local level. CDEM Groups are designed to enable local authorities to pool resources and access full time emergency management professionals.

We ask a lot of local government, and the sector is under considerable pressure. The challenges are more acute for local authorities with smaller ratepayer bases, and/or higher levels of emergency risk (often in rural areas) but all local authorities face challenges to some degree. These challenges include financial pressures, workforce challenges, and competing demands from the communities they serve. As emergencies have become more frequent, more intense, and longer running, some councils have fallen short of community expectations before, during and after emergencies. These challenges will continue to grow.

Many CDEM Groups also face challenges in their resourcing and business model which limit their effectiveness.

We have carefully considered alternatives to local government delivery and coordination of emergency management (including central government operational delivery) and conclude that our vision of a whole-of-society approach to emergency management is best realised through locally led delivery.

However, this does not mean continuing with the status quo. Local authorities need an uplift in support from the centre to deliver on their emergency management responsibilities. Our view is that for the most part, this support is most usefully delivered at the regional level.

We will implement changes to support and enable local government to deliver a consistent minimum standard of emergency management across New Zealand. This starts with ensuring NEMA is both enabling local authorities to deliver on their responsibilities and ensuring they do so. Over time it means investing in strengthening the regional tier of emergency management.

Actions to support and enable local government to deliver a consistent standard of emergency management across New Zealand

2.1 NEMA will increase its focus on the provision of resources that local authorities need. This will include enhanced opportunities to participate in training and exercising, and practical guidance (e.g. standard operating procedures) that can more efficiently be developed at the centre and shared.

2.2 NEMA will set standards for the delivery of emergency management and assure these standards are being met. NEMA has an Assurance Framework and intends to recruit a small team to establish an assurance function and implement the Framework.

2.3 Clarify operational roles and responsibilities in an emergency response. This includes how best to reflect clearer roles and responsibilities in updated legislation, plans and operational documents where relevant or appropriate.

2.4 Strengthen the regional tier of emergency management. We will work in partnership with CDEM Groups to consider options to strengthen the regional tier of emergency management

Link to NISWE Inquiry recommendations

- **Recommendation 5:** Clarify roles in emergency management.
- **Recommendation 6:** Increase capability and capacity in civil defence emergency management across New Zealand.

FOCUS AREA 3: Professionalise and build the capability and capacity of the emergency management workforce

Emergency management has become much more complex. Preparation for and management of more frequent, more intense, longer running emergencies and novel emergencies is an increasingly challenging task. Enabling whole-of-society emergency management requires a nuanced and sophisticated approach to community development that has not received sufficient attention and resources.

There is a clear need for a significant uplift in the capability and capacity of the emergency management workforce at all levels and in all parts of the system.

Controller¹⁶ roles are particularly important. We must ensure we have sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified controllers throughout the country. NEMA's Director Civil Defence Emergency Management has the power to set standards for controllers which is critical for ensuring controllers are appropriately qualified but has not used this lever to the greatest extent possible.

NEMA has already begun work on a nationalised approach to emergency management capability and capacity development. This work needs to be accelerated.

The NISWE Inquiry called for an expansion of the Emergency Management Assistance Team (EMAT) to provide three full time teams to support councils and CDEM Groups. We agree there is a clear need for some form of full time deployable incident management surge support across the country. The current EMAT has provided valuable incident management support in recent events but its members are volunteers, with roles elsewhere that they need to be released from. The model is not secure or reliable enough for current needs, let alone our future needs.

A full time deployable incident management resource would enable the government to provide more operational support throughout the country during events and build capability across the emergency management system between

events. While there is more work to do to confirm the right model for a permanent incident management resource, we know it needs to be available when required, able to respond to an emergency caused by any hazard or threat, able to enhance capability across the sector (rather than concentrate it in a small part of the system), and supported and used across the country.

Actions to build the capability and capacity of the emergency management workforce

3.1 NEMA will build on existing work to deliver a significant uplift in capability development efforts including:

- establish national standards that ensure people are suitably qualified and experienced for critical leadership roles in emergency management. This should begin with controllers and expand to other Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) roles
- implement a national annual response and recovery leadership training and exercise programme
- develop and implement a programme to increase community development capability and improve awareness of and integration with iwi and Māori-led emergency management in support of whole-of-society emergency management.

3.2 Develop and invest in a model for a full time deployable incident management surge support. A full time resource will provide incident management surge support during large-scale events that overwhelm local capacity. There is work to do to confirm the right model for a permanent incident management surge resource, but we agree that some form of permanent capacity is needed.

Link to NISWE Inquiry recommendations

- **Recommendation 5:** Clarify roles in emergency management.
- **Recommendation 6:** Increase capability and capacity in civil defence emergency management across New Zealand.
- **Recommendation 11:** Restore power and telecommunications early and improve electricity resilience.

FOCUS AREA 4: Enable the different parts of the system to work better together at the national level

At the national level a large number of agencies have formalised emergency management responsibilities. For example, the Ministry of Health is responsible for managing an emergency arising from a pandemic, and the Ministry for Primary Industries is responsible for managing emergencies relating to biosecurity, food safety and drought. Responsibilities across the system are complex and are not always clearly understood. We need to ensure good governance, clear roles and responsibilities, and effective joint working. This work has started. At a high level this looks like clarifying and strengthening:

- the lead agency model which gives agencies responsibility for the management of specific risks
- DPMC's role in leading and stewarding the national resilience system and delivering strategic all-of-government coordination
- NEMA's operational emergency management leadership role.

This work is important, and we need to get it right. DPMC will lead a programme of work over the coming months to clarify and strengthen arrangements at the national level.

The NISWE inquiry paid special attention to the role of NEMA. This is a reflection of both NEMA's integral operational leadership role in the emergency management system and its role as the lead agency for emergencies arising from geological and meteorological events (including the NISWE).

The NISWE Inquiry found during the severe weather events, the emergency management system including NEMA was overwhelmed and unable to respond as needed. The Inquiry heard from a range of organisations that NEMA lacked visible command, control and coordination of the national response during Cyclone Gabrielle. It describes NEMA as a small agency with a broad remit which cannot realistically deliver on aspects of its current roles, nor make the most of its strengths.¹⁷

The NISWE Inquiry agrees NEMA's lead roles in readiness and response are 'primarily operative'. It calls for investment to bolster these roles including through strengthening monitoring and assurance of the system. The NISWE Inquiry also identified a gap in strong directive leadership across reduction and recovery and states this should be done by an entity other than NEMA to avoid overstressing NEMA's limited resources.¹⁸

We agree with the need to invest in a refocused NEMA. There is a misalignment between what is expected of NEMA in the current emergency management system and what it is resourced to deliver. As a result, NEMA has had to make trade-offs to manage competing priorities and is stretched too thin.

Refocussing will support NEMA to perform as the system operational emergency management lead across readiness, response and recovery. While being an operational lead does not preclude NEMA holding strategic responsibilities, it does mean NEMA's value proposition is grounded in its core areas of strength and expertise, which are to:

- provide emergency management expertise across government across readiness, response and recovery
- coordinate effectively with agencies, and CDEM Groups
- provide 24/7 monitoring and stand-up quickly to provide situational awareness in response to an emergency.

The NISWE Inquiry recommends NEMA has system leadership for readiness and response only. However, we consider it is important NEMA has a strong operational leadership role in recovery. This recognises recovery is interwoven with the other Rs – recovery needs to begin on day one of a response and be planned for as part of readiness.

While NEMA is the operational lead for recovery, there may be the need to set up bespoke recovery arrangements to respond to a significant and/or multiregional emergency event. This is not a failure of the system but rather reflects a scalable and adaptable system which has built in flexibility and back up capacity to meet variable needs. Irrespective of the scale of the recovery, NEMA should form the core capability of any bespoke arrangements.

NEMA's operational leadership role in recovery is also important for simplicity and consistency of relationships with communities, including iwi and Māori. Having a single point of contact enables existing relationships to be activated for recovery, rather than relationships needing to be built with a new or different agency.

We agree with the NISWE Inquiry that stronger directive leadership is needed for (risk) reduction. The levers for reduction are dispersed across government including, for example, land use planning settings and building regulations. Reduction needs to be coordinated through a whole-of-government approach. Leadership roles for reduction will be addressed through work led by DPMC to clarify strategic responsibilities across all 4 Rs.

NEMA will still have a role in reduction, as reduction, like recovery, is interwoven with the other 4 Rs. For example, recovery provides a critical opportunity to reduce future risk by improving resilience through rebuilding and building new infrastructure, and land use decisions.

The NISWE Inquiry identified a need to make the most of national level capability and capacity across government.¹⁹ Effective emergency management requires an all-of-government approach – it is about agencies coming together around a common need and goals. An all-of-government approach is how we unlock and leverage the innate capability that already exists within government. Through working together, we can build the capacity of the emergency management system and free up NEMA to deliver its core services expertly.

An all-of-government approach will only get us so far towards effective emergency management. We also need to invest in infrastructure to enable joint working, or interoperability. We agree with the NISWE Inquiry, and numerous reviews before it, that there is a strong need for a common operating picture and platform to enable shared situational awareness across agencies at all levels. Situational awareness and fit-for-purpose data platforms are critical to effective decision making in response.

It is also critical that we have the physical spaces in which people can come together. The National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) is not fit for purpose and the Government has agreed to establish a new National Emergency Management Facility (NEMF). Work is underway on a new NEMF in Wellington and a backup NEMF in Auckland. The development of a new NEMF is a once in a lifetime opportunity to improve the interoperability of the system from central coordination to the operation of the CDEM Groups.

The NEMF must be able to link to regional level Emergency Coordination Centres (ECCs) which must also be fit for purpose to support effective regional level coordination during response.

Actions to enable a system that works together

4.1 Clarify national level roles and responsibilities and strengthen leadership in risk reduction, readiness, response, and recovery. This will include consideration of the roles of lead agencies, NEMA, and DPMC across the 4 Rs.

4.2 Progress work to enable interoperability by:

- delivering the new NEMF and backup NEMF in Auckland. Work has commenced on the new NEMF facility in Wellington with funding of \$10.5 million received in Budget 2024. Work is also underway by NEMA to make improvements at the alternative facility in Auckland to ensure it is ready to use if required
- progressing work underway on operational systems including a common operating picture to support improved situational awareness to the Monitoring, Alerting and Reporting Centre, NEMA staff and decision makers. NEMA is developing a business case for further investment in operational systems to support improved emergency responses at all levels by ensuring timely, accurate and relevant information to emergency managers, decision makers and the public during emergencies
- ensuring all regions have fit for purpose ECCs. NEMA will work with CDEM Groups to ensure fit for purpose ECCs.

Link to NISWE Inquiry recommendations

- **Recommendation 2:** Utilise the value of the wider government ecosystem.
- **Recommendation 4:** Invest in a refocussed National Emergency Management Agency.
- **Recommendation 5:** Clarify roles in emergency management.
- **Recommendation 7:** Build fit-for-purpose National Crisis Management Centres.

FOCUS AREA 5: **Drive a strategic focus on investment and implementation**

As noted, many of the recommendations made in the NISWE Inquiry have been made before.

We must ensure this time is different. A shift to an emergency management system which can continuously implement improvements requires a strategic focus on implementation and investment that makes accountabilities clear, well-planned delivery, and close monitoring of progress over time.

We want to be accountable to New Zealanders for delivery of the actions set out in this document. We will do this through a public facing roadmap with regular reporting on progress.

Investment is crucial to improving the system. Before we can invest more, we need to understand our current investment across the emergency management system. At present we do not have a comprehensive picture of what government is spending across the 4 Rs. This is complex – spending is dispersed and not always described as emergency management, and counterfactuals (what might have happened) are difficult to observe in emergency management, but having a picture of spending is critical.

We are in a constrained fiscal environment, and the Government is taking a disciplined approach to reducing spending as it delivers on key priorities. In this context, significant new investment is not expected in the short term. However, there is an opportunity to plan for a sustained, strategic programme of investment over the medium term to ensure we are ready to deliver improvements in emergency management.

There is good international evidence that investment in risk reduction reduces costs in response and recovery.²⁰ Understanding current spending will help us to make a compelling case for greater investment in risk reduction and readiness.

We know it is important to ensure there is accountability within this work if we want to see sustainable improvements in our emergency management system.

Actions to drive a strategic focus on investment and implementation

5.1 Ensure a well-governed approach to delivery of *Strengthening disaster resilience and emergency management*. The National Hazards Board, which provides governance and assurance of the national hazards system, will govern the delivery of the programme of work set out in this document. This includes ensuring the work programme avoids duplication and leverages other work across government such as climate adaptation.

5.2 Deliver a detailed investment and implementation roadmap to deliver the work programme set out in *Strengthening disaster resilience and emergency management* and to drive delivery. This will be published in the coming months and will set out agency responsibilities for the actions set out in this document. It will include public reporting every six months on progress towards delivery of the programme of work set out in this document.

Link to NISWE Inquiry recommendations

- **Recommendation 13:** Prioritise strategic investment in reduction and readiness activities.



Appendix 1:

Summary of the
NISWE Inquiry
recommendations
and actions

This appendix summarises the recommendations from the NISWE Inquiry and the Government's response.

We have focussed on the NISWE Inquiry's 14 headline recommendations and their overall intent. We have aimed to illustrate the Government's position and acknowledge some of the key pieces of work that are either already underway or planned.

As noted, many of the actions set out in this response are contingent on new or reprioritised funding, and others will take time to deliver.

Rec#	Response	Comment
1		Put people and their communities at the heart of an integrated emergency management system
2		Utilise the value of the wider government ecosystem
3		Optimise the effort of iwi Māori to benefit all people in an emergency
4		Invest in a refocussed National Emergency Management Agency
5		Clarify roles in emergency management
6		Increase capability and capacity in civil defence emergency management across New Zealand
7		Build fit-for-purpose National Crisis Management Centres
8		Improve real time situational awareness for authorities in emergency events
9		Develop a comprehensive warning system for the public
10		Amend the three-day self-sufficiency guidance
11		Restore power and telecommunications early and improve electricity resilience
12		Recognise a wider group of critical infrastructure entities
13		Prioritise strategic investment in reduction and readiness activities
14		Update the policy settings, criteria, and process for funding and distributing response costs

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Put people and their communities at the heart of an integrated emergency management system.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry calls for people and their communities to be considered 'an active, purposeful, and legislated fourth sphere of the system alongside local, regional, and central government'. It calls for legislating and investing in an inclusive, community-led emergency management system, ensuring community participation in planning and response, expanding training and accreditation of community leaders and volunteers, and an ongoing public awareness programme.

We agree with the intent of this recommendation. Everyone has a role to play in emergency management. As a small country with significant experience in emergencies and relatively strong social cohesion, New Zealand is well-placed to be a world leader in whole-of-society emergency management. We have been working towards this for some time as set out in the *National Disaster Resilience Strategy*. As the NISWE Inquiry makes clear, we are currently some way off achieving this goal.

Work is underway within NEMA, the Natural Hazards Commission, and CDEM Groups to deliver public education programmes and information resources in this area.

NEMA will continue to build upon the New Zealand Response Team accreditation programme, which trains and accredits volunteers across New Zealand to enable them to participate in emergency response.

As outlined in Focus Area 1 we will:

- 1.1 develop and invest in a comprehensive and ongoing national public readiness programme to protect lives, prevent injuries and other trauma, and reduce the burden on response efforts
- 1.2 recognise and enable the significant contribution of iwi and Māori in emergency management to the benefit of all people in New Zealand
- 1.3 direct a greater share of emergency management investment in community resilience initiatives
- 1.4 improve how communities access funding after an emergency
- 1.5 expand the number and quality of formal agreements with businesses, community organisations, and iwi and Māori to deliver assistance in times of emergencies.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Utilise the value of the wider government ecosystem.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry recognises the need to harness capability and capacity across government in emergency management. It cites the New Zealand Defence Force as an agency with a substantial contribution to make and endorses the work of the Weather Forecasting Review and DPMC's work on critical infrastructure resilience.

We agree with this recommendation. The emergency management system is an 'all agencies' system and it is critical that we can harness the capability and capacity of the wider government ecosystem.

As outlined in Focus Area 4 we will:

4.1 clarify national level roles and responsibilities and strengthen leadership in risk reduction, readiness, response, and recovery.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Optimise the effort of iwi Māori to benefit all people in an emergency.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry acknowledges the significant contribution of iwi and Māori during the weather events. It endorses the recommendations of the TAG Review to recognise and legislate to enable the contribution of iwi and Māori in emergency management. It recommends empowering iwi and Māori who have the knowledge, mātauranga Māori, capacity, capability, and desire to contribute to emergency management.

We agree with the intent of this recommendation. Iwi and Māori are already making a significant contribution to emergency management and this needs to be recognised and enabled.

Some work has already been delivered. NEMA has developed the Tākaihere CIMS function which brings iwi and Māori into the centre of response. Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK) are working with Toitū Tairāwhiti (a joint group of four Tairāwhiti iwi) to conduct risk-based planning, put in place emergency response equipment, and set up marae resilience and emergency preparedness projects. TPK has also provided three South Island marae with Solar Power Resiliency Systems and continues to invest in Marae Emergency Management Plans. The Natural Hazards Commission has provided funding for Te Toi Whakaruruhau o Aotearoa, a Mātauranga Māori Disaster Risk Reduction Centre based in Massey University, focussed on Māori disaster risk reduction interests and aspirations.

We have also seen the benefits of investment in marae and community halls through the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) to support community level response to Cyclone Gabrielle. This investment focus should continue.

We have begun working with the National Iwi Chairs Forum (NICF) to consider how to best enable the contribution of iwi and Māori to emergency management. Engagement with the NICF along with other Māori organisations will inform the development of the investment and implementation roadmap both in the details of actions to formalise the role of iwi and Māori in emergency management settings, including through future legislation, and also how we work together through implementation.

As outlined in Focus Area 1 we will:

- 1.2 recognise and enable the significant contribution of iwi and Māori in emergency management to the benefit of all people in New Zealand
- 1.3 direct a greater share of emergency management investment in community resilience initiatives
- 1.4 improve how communities access funding after an emergency
- 1.5 expand the number and quality of formal agreements with businesses, community organisations, and iwi and Māori to deliver assistance in times of emergencies.

RECOMMENDATION 4:
Invest in a refocussed National Emergency Management Agency.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry found that the emergency management system including NEMA was overwhelmed. The Inquiry calls for NEMA to have a narrower focus on readiness and response and not have responsibility for risk reduction and recovery.

We agree with the need to invest in a refocussed NEMA. However, it is important NEMA has a strong operational leadership role in recovery. This recognises recovery is interwoven with the other Rs – recovery needs to begin on day one of a response and be planned for as part of readiness. Bespoke arrangements for recovery may sometimes be needed for large-scale events. In these instances, NEMA can provide core capability to any bespoke recovery arrangements.

NEMA's operational leadership role in recovery is also important for simplicity and consistency of relationships with communities, including iwi and Māori. Having a single point of contact enables existing relationships to be activated for recovery, rather than relationships needing to be reforged with a new or different agency.

We agree with the NISWE Inquiry's call for a strengthening of NEMA's standard setting, monitoring, and assurance function.

The NISWE Inquiry also calls for the welfare function to be transferred from NEMA to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). NEMA and MSD are jointly working on options for how to strengthen the welfare leadership settings.

As outlined in Focus Area 4 we will:

- 4.1 Clarify national level roles and responsibilities and strengthen leadership in risk reduction, readiness, response, and recovery.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Clarify roles in emergency management.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry observes a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities and recommends that these be clarified through legislation, with a particular focus on local government roles and responsibilities.

We agree with the intent of this recommendation. Roles and responsibilities are not well understood across the emergency management system. Unclear legislation, plans, guidance and other doctrine has created complexity and confusion that must be resolved.

As outlined in Focus Areas 2, 3 and 4:

2.3 we will clarify operational roles and responsibilities in an emergency response

3.1 NEMA will build on existing work to deliver a significant uplift in capability development efforts including:

- establish national standards that ensure people are suitably qualified and experienced for critical leadership roles in emergency management. This should begin with controllers and expand to other Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) roles
- implement a national annual response and recovery leadership training and exercise programme
- develop and implement a programme to increase community development capability and improve awareness of and integration with iwi and Māori-led emergency management in support of whole-of-society emergency management

4.1 clarify national level roles and responsibilities and strengthen leadership in risk reduction, readiness, response, and recovery.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Increase capability and capacity in civil defence emergency management across New Zealand.



Accept

The NISWE inquiry identifies significant gaps in capability and capacity throughout all parts of the emergency management system, particularly at the local government level. It recommends initiatives to increase capability, especially for people in leadership roles in emergency management.

We agree with this recommendation. The emergency management system has not achieved the response and recovery workforce capability and capacity uplift identified as necessary in the TAG Review.

NEMA has established National Controller leadership competencies which will become the basis for other leadership response roles. Making further progress on this work is a priority.

As outlined in Focus Areas 2 and 3:

2.1 NEMA will increase its focus on the provision of resources that local authorities need

2.4 we will strengthen the regional tier of emergency management

3.1 NEMA will build on existing work to deliver a significant uplift in capability development efforts, including:

- establish national standards that ensure people are suitably qualified and experienced for critical leadership roles in emergency management. This should begin with controllers and expand to other CIMS roles
- implement a national annual response and recovery leadership training and exercise programme
- develop and implement a programme to increase community development capability in support of whole-of-society emergency management

3.2 we will develop and invest in a model for a full time deployable incident management surge support.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Build fit-for-purpose National Crisis Management Centres.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry finds that the current National Crisis Management Centre (NCCMC) is not fit for purpose and endorses a new National Emergency Management Facility (NEMF). It also calls for an appropriate back up arrangement for a NEMF to be stood up in Auckland if the Wellington venue is inoperable.

We agree with this recommendation. Work has commenced on the new NEMF facility in Wellington with new funding of \$10.5 million received in Budget 2024. Work is also being undertaken by NEMA to make improvements at the alternative facility in Auckland to ensure it is ready to use if required.

As outlined in Focus Area 4 we will:

4.2 progress work to enable interoperability by delivering the new NEMF and backup NEMF in Auckland.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Improve real time situational awareness for authorities in emergency events.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry finds that situational awareness was poor during the weather events and points to the need for greater situational awareness including a common operating platform and picture.

We agree with this recommendation. There is a clear and agreed need for a common operating picture and platform to enable shared situational awareness across the emergency management sector.

As outlined in Focus Area 4 we will:

4.2 Progress work to enable interoperability by:

- progressing work underway on operational systems that support a common operating picture and provide improved situational awareness to decision makers at all levels during emergency responses
- ensuring all regions have fit for purpose ECCs.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Develop a comprehensive warning system for the public.



Accept

The NSIWE Inquiry found that warnings were insufficient and ad hoc in places. It recommended the development of a comprehensive warning system.

We agree with this recommendation and improvements have been made since the NISWE.

There has been a long-standing multi-hazard National Warning System in place and, in 2019, the Emergency Mobile Alerting platform was established to further strengthen warning systems to the public. NEMA has continued to make system upgrades and improvements to enhance resilience and reduce redundancy of this system.

Since the NISWE, NEMA has taken steps to improve the accessibility and reliability of response communication for the public during emergencies through a new arrangement with Radio New Zealand to broadcast at set times each day in areas without power. It is also partnering with MetService to include CDEM preparedness information and advice on the MetService website when a severe weather warning is in force.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Amend the three-day self-sufficiency guidance.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry found that many people impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle had three days' worth of food and water but this was not sufficient. It recommended amending the guidance to ensure self-sufficiency for a longer period.

We agree with this recommendation. While we acknowledge that for many households this level of readiness will not be achievable, we see merit in amending the advice.

As outlined in Focus Area 1 we will:

1.1 develop and invest in a comprehensive and ongoing national public readiness programme to protect lives, prevent injuries and other trauma, and reduce the burden on response efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Restore power and telecommunications early and improve electricity resilience.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry found that controllers sometimes prioritised the provision of non-urgent supplies to communities over the timely restoration of power and communications and that the electricity network lacked resilience. It recommended that controllers prioritise restoration of power and communications and a strengthening of the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations.

We agree with this recommendation in principle. Those making on-the-ground decisions should clearly understand the criticality of restoring power and telecommunications, and the potential harm caused if they are not. We acknowledge that in any response, controllers need to make prioritisation decisions on a case-by-case basis using their professional judgement.

Work is underway to implement lessons from the NISWE. NEMA has established the National Controllers Working Group. Its work includes identifying and implementing actions from events. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is leading the review of the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations. This work is proceeding in two phases. Phase one involves amending the regulations to extend the so-called 'growth limit zone' to include the area above the current zone for high voltage lines. This policy has been agreed and regulations have been drafted. Phase two is a proposal to address high risk trees outside of the 'growth limit zone' at risk of falling on lines.

As outlined in Focus Area 3:

3.1 NEMA will build on existing work to deliver a significant uplift in capability development efforts including to implement a national annual response and recovery leadership training and exercise programme.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Recognise a wider group of critical infrastructure entities.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry found that critical infrastructure like roads, telecommunications and electricity are key components of a well-functioning emergency management response. It found that significant damage to infrastructure hampered coordination of the rescue effort, caused distress for isolated communities, and made it difficult for goods to be moved in and out of affected regions. It recommended recognising a wider group of critical infrastructure entities in addition to those recognised as lifeline utilities in the CDEM Act 2002.

We agree with the intent of this recommendation, which is to ensure continuity of essential services to the greatest extent possible during and after an emergency. Further work is needed to consider how to best achieve this, including (but not limited to) how critical infrastructure is defined, obligations which could apply to infrastructure owners and operators, and options to improve integrated planning and information sharing across and within critical infrastructure sectors for emergency management purposes.

DPMC is leading work on options to enhance the resilience of New Zealand's critical infrastructure system. Resilient critical infrastructure underpins an effective emergency management system – NEMA will continue to work with DPMC to ensure alignment on critical infrastructure policy, including in the development of any future legislation.

RECOMMENDATION 13:

Prioritise strategic investment in reduction and readiness activities.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry pointed to the need to shift investment towards risk reduction and readiness as part of a preventative model of funding emergency management. It proposes greater investment in community readiness and resilience funding and support for local government.

We agree with this recommendation. There is a significant opportunity to invest in risk reduction and readiness to drive better outcomes and reduce costs of response and recovery.

The Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF), established through Budget 2024 and administered by MBIE, will invest in infrastructure strengthening and maintaining regional infrastructure to support regions to absorb, adapt and/or respond to stresses and shocks such as extreme weather events and supply chain disruptions. Government has made \$200 million available through the RIF for flood resilience projects. Of this, up to \$101.1 million has been approved to support an initial 42 projects which have already been identified as construction ready.

Through the recovery from the NISWE, almost \$1.2 billion has been allocated to affected regions for activities which contribute to improved resilience. This includes \$540 million for Category 3²¹ property buyouts, \$593.5 million for Category 2 landslide and flood risk mitigation projects, and \$65.7 million through the Local Government Flood Resilience Co-investment Fund.

Provincial Growth Fund investment in marae and rural local community halls delivered benefits in the response to Cyclone Gabrielle and this investment focus should continue.

As outlined in Focus Areas 1 and 5 we will:

- 1.1 develop and invest in a comprehensive and ongoing national public readiness programme to protect lives, prevent injuries and other trauma, and reduce the burden on response efforts
- 1.3 direct a greater share of emergency management investment in community resilience initiatives
- 1.5 expand the number and quality of formal agreements with businesses, community organisations, iwi and Māori to deliver assistance in times of emergencies
- 5.2 deliver a detailed investment and implementation roadmap to deliver the work programme set out in *Strengthening disaster resilience and emergency management* and to drive delivery.

RECOMMENDATION 14:

Update the policy settings, criteria, and process for funding and distributing response costs.



Accept

The NISWE Inquiry calls for changes to the way funds for response activities are administered and a reappraisal of which costs are eligible.

We agree with this recommendation. There is a clear need to enable funding to be accessed quickly while ensuring probity.

NEMA has commenced a review of the funding criteria for the reimbursement of costs incurred by councils responding to emergency events, including for welfare support to displaced people.

As outlined in Focus Area 1 we will:

- 1.3 improve how communities access funding after an emergency
- 1.5 expand the number and quality of formal agreements with businesses, community organisations, iwi and Māori to deliver assistance in times of emergencies.

Endnotes

1. Ministry of Civil Defence. Civil Defence in New Zealand – A short history (1990)
2. Report of the Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events (2024) p.29.
3. Howarth, J.D., Barth, N.C., Fitzsimons, S.J. et al. Spatiotemporal clustering of great earthquakes on a transform fault controlled by geometry. *Nat. Geosci.* 14, 314–320 (2021).
4. Howarth, J.D., Barth, N.C., Fitzsimons, S.J. et al. Spatiotemporal clustering of great earthquakes on a transform fault controlled by geometry. *Nat. Geosci.* 14, 314–320 (2021).
5. NZIER 2020. Investment in natural hazards mitigation: Forecasts and findings about mitigation investment. NZIER report to Department of Internal Affairs.
6. Ibid.
7. Establishment of the Government Inquiry Into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events Terms of Reference.
8. Report of the Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events (2024) p.34
9. As described in the NISWE Inquiry paragraph 50 and for the purposes of this document, 'iwi and Māori' encompasses iwi, hapū, marae, taiwhenua, trusts, incorporations and whānau.
10. Taleb, N.N., *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disaster* (2012). p.3.
11. Defined as 'hospitality, kindness, generosity, support – the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others.'
12. Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management. National Disaster Resilience Strategy (2019) p.3.
13. This figure includes funding allocated for category 3 property buyouts, category 2 landslide and flood risk mitigation projects, and other flood risk mitigation activities through the Local Government Flood Resilience Co-investment Fund. It does not include funding allocated for local roading and repairs to the state highway network and is does not represent total funding from central government for recovery from the NISWE.
14. This includes \$12.3 million funding for category 3 buyouts and category 2 risk mitigation projects in the Nelson region. While not included in the regions affected by the NISWE, Nelson entered into a cost sharing agreement with the Crown to support their recovery from a severe weather event in August 2022.
15. CDEM Groups are a core component of emergency management delivery under the CDEM Act 2002. CDEM Groups are formed across New Zealand as committees of elected councillors from each council within regional boundaries. civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/cdem-groups
16. Controller roles exist at three levels in the emergency management system: National, Group and Local. The National Controller directs the national level response, coordinates the resources, and has access to emergency powers during a state of national emergency. Group Controllers direct the response, coordinate resources, and have access to emergency powers within their areas during a state of emergency (local or national). Group Controllers must follow the directions of the National Controller during a state of national emergency. CDEM Groups can also appoint Local Controllers to carry out some or all of the Group Controller's functions and powers. Local Controllers must follow the directions of the Group Controller.
17. Report of the Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events, p.50.
18. Report of the Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events, p.51.
19. Report of the Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events, p.50.
20. For example, the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) found that mitigation measures used overseas against floods, storm surges, winds, earthquakes, and wildfires produce benefit-cost-ratios between 3:1 and 12:1 NZIER (2020) Investment in natural hazards mitigation: Forecasts and findings about mitigation investment.
21. The categorisation framework was developed for local authorities to categorise residential properties affected by the NISWE: beehive.govt.nz/release/update-assessment-affected-properties-post-cyclone-and-flooding

Image credits

Page 1: Waikare Gorge Bailey bridge completion (NZME / Paul Taylor)

Page 7: Wairoa, Cyclone Gabrielle 2023 (Hawke's Bay Civil Defence Emergency Management Group)

Page 12: Firefighters use ropes to help rescue residents trapped by flooding Ulrich Dr, Ranui. (NZME Photo / Hayden Woodward)

Page 14: Cyclone Gabrielle 2023 (New Zealand Defence Force)



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
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