

**TARARUA DISTRICT**  
**CYCLONE GABRIELLE**  
**RECOVERY PROGRAMME**



# FINAL REPORT

June 2025





# He Waka Eke Noa

## We are all in this together

This report reflects the journey of the Tararua District over the past two years as we've worked together with community members, iwi and marae, local businesses, farmers, non-government organisations, and government agencies to recover from the widespread impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle.

While this marks the final report for the district's recovery programme, we know that recovery isn't complete for everyone. Our rural sector, including farmers and small businesses, continues to face challenges. And vital infrastructure, especially our roads will continue being looked at building their resilience for years to come.

Recovery in Tararua has never been just about returning to how things were. This journey has been about strengthening our people, places, and systems for the future. From flood protection projects to emergency readiness initiatives for marae and community halls, to helping whānau, farms, and businesses get better prepared. This work is setting the foundations for a safer, more resilient district.

We know we can't stop natural hazards. But we can reduce the harm they cause. That means learning from what's happened, recognising which parts of our community are most vulnerable, especially those isolated or with fewer resources, ensuring they're supported, connected, and better equipped for whatever comes next.

This report is a snapshot of the mahi, the progress, and the people behind Tararua's recover, a district-wide effort rooted in resilience, care, and forward thinking.

**Tracey Collis**  
Mayor Tararua District Council



## Thank you for your support



**Te Whare Taiao o Rangitāne**  
Cultural, Environmental & Education Services



*Please note: this is not a fully exhaustive list of organisations who provided funding, support or even time however they are major contributors.*

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# Cyclone Gabrielle

**Cyclone Gabrielle was a significant weather event impacting northern and central New Zealand resulting in a National State of Emergency on 14 February 2023. Tararua's coastal communities felt the full force of the cyclone with significant structural and environmental damage sustained.**

- Ākitio at Toi Flat – Rainfall intensities exceed a 1 in 50-year event over a 24-hour period, recording 223mm of rain
- Ākitio at Cadmus Bridge – Rainfall intensity exceeded a 1 in 20-year event over a 72-hour period, recording 328mm of rain
- Tamaki Reserve – Rainfall intensities exceed a 1 in 20-year event over a 24-hour period, recording 154.5mm of rain.
- 2 of our river catchments recorded higher levels than the major 2004 flood event
- Major damage to our roading network (4th largest roading network in NZ)
- 49 roads were closed with a further 14 that were open with restrictions.
- No road access to Ākitio, Herbertville and other surrounding rural areas for several days.
- Power loss to approximately 420 customers during the cyclone
- 40-50 people stayed overnight at the Dannevirke Civil Defence Centre
- Approximately over 200 farms impacted
- 3 properties red stickered, 16 properties yellow stickered.



Our farmers were hit hard. Over 200 farms in Tararua sustained damage, some major, and many are still working to recover from the physical, economic and psychological impacts of the disaster.



Our roading network sustained major impacts, and while good progress has been made, there is still ongoing work ahead as we know that our roading network remains vulnerable to slips, dropouts and falling trees.



Our natural environment has also sustained significant damage. Work is ongoing to build resilience where we can.



The health and wellbeing of our people has been tested and continues to be, as multiple other compounding issues, such as two years of COVID-19 lockdowns, beef and lamb commodity prices, the global recession, a drought and tight financial times are ongoing, taking it's toll on our valued and important farming community.

In addition, we know that the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle along with the compounding issues have made it tough for our local businesses. We know that there is still work to do to help our people and communities recover and to build resilience for future events that the Tararua District may face even after the recovery office closes.



Cyclone Gabrielle Impact Map for the affected farm area (ha) in the Tararua District

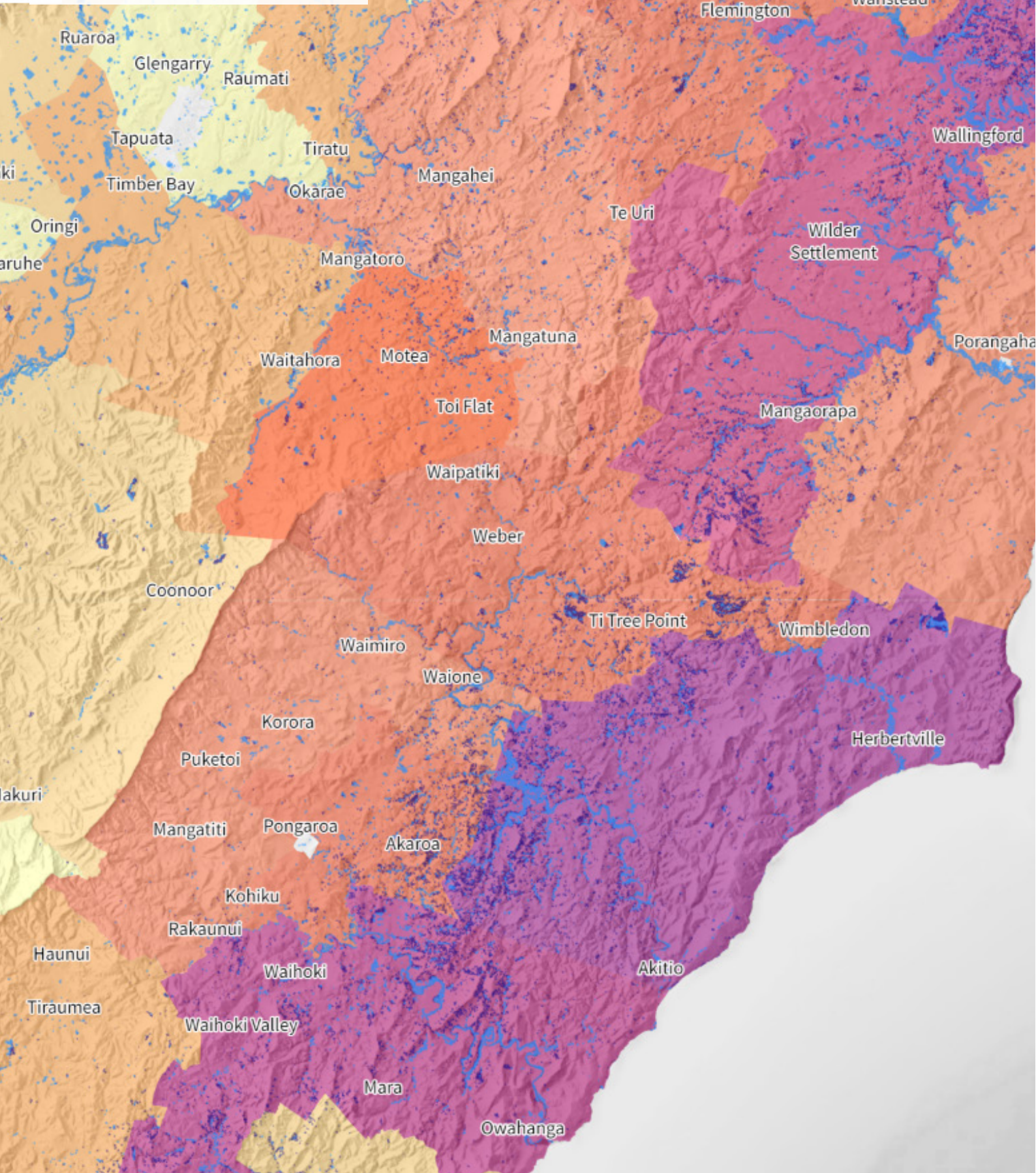


Source:

Farmed area impacted (ha)

ZERO

HIGH



# Recovery Team Structure

We have never seen a recovery of this scale in the Tararua District before, it will shape our district for many years to come.

Under the Civil Defence Emergency Act 2002 “recovery” means the coordinated efforts and processes used to bring about the immediate, medium and long-term holistic regeneration and enhancement of a community following an emergency.

Tararua District Council, the Government, Iwi, and other partners and stakeholders have worked together to develop solutions and have made significant investments to support impacted residents and communities, and to get the region back on track.

Tararua District Council has led the coordination of the recovery work programme with Rural Support Trust, the Tararua Alliance, Horizons Regional Council, Iwi, community groups and organisations, and Central Government agencies.

By working collaboratively we’ve been able to co-ordinate our efforts and work together cooperatively to leverage resources, skills and knowledge.

**The Tararua Recovery Programme was implemented through five interconnected work streams, which guided our work from February 2023 until 30 June 2025:**



**Rural Recovery**



**Built Recovery**



**Community and Social  
Recovery/Resilient  
Strong Communities**

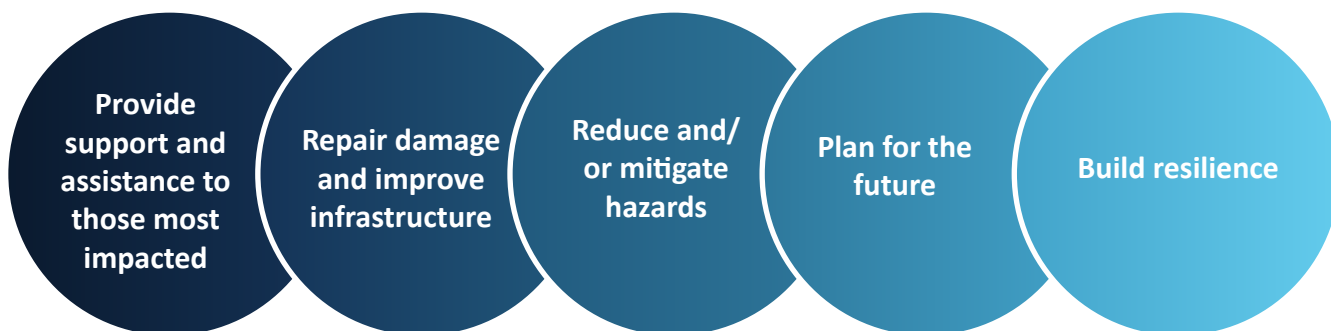


**Natural Recovery**



**Economic  
Recovery**

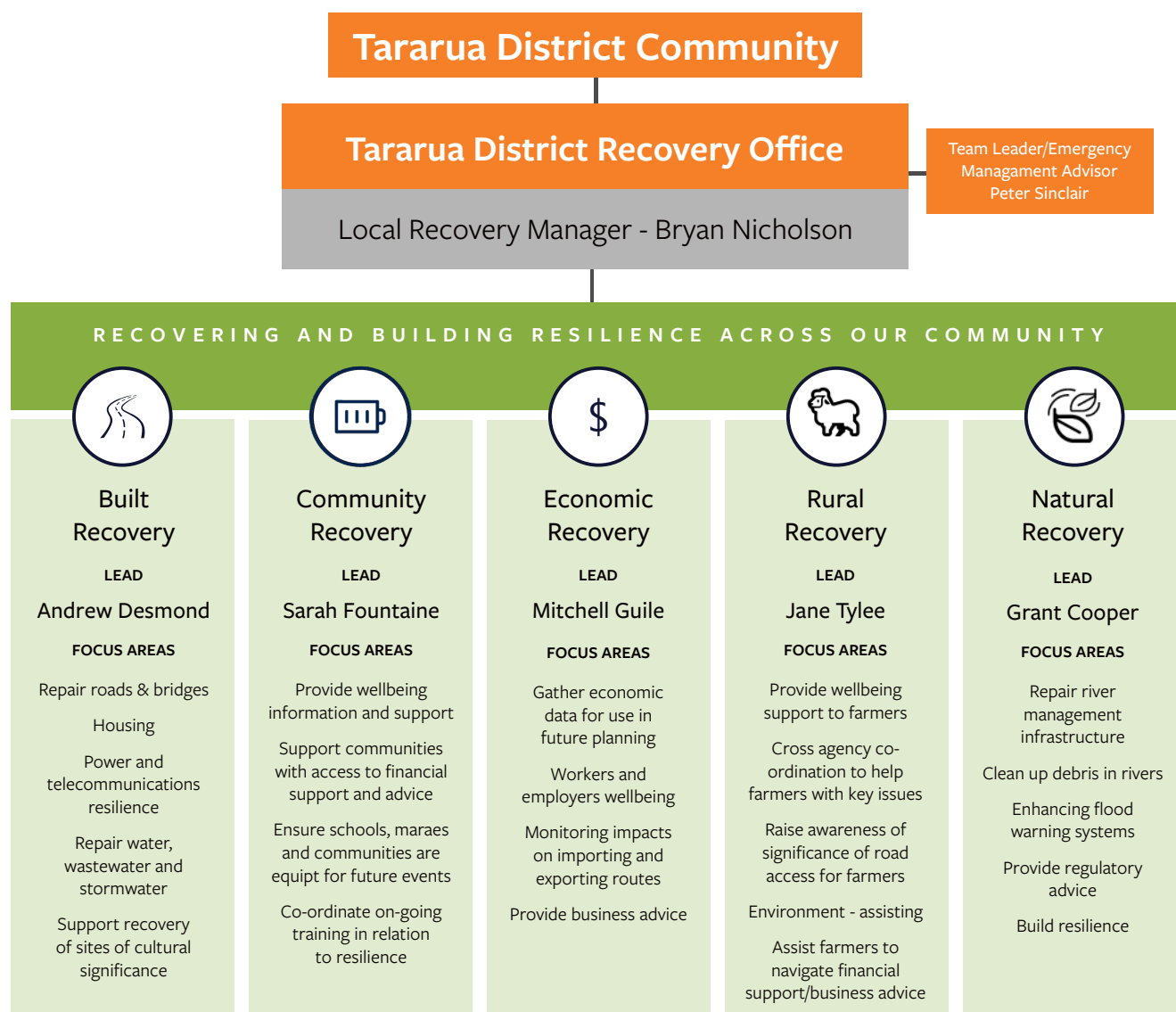
The projects and initiatives under these work streams were designed to work together to drive recovery across the Tararua District. While each work stream has a specific focus, they all collectively contribute to making progress to help our district recover from the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle.





We would like to specifically acknowledge the following people who have had an active role in the Tararua District Recovery Programme.

## Current Recovery Office



## Previous Officers

**Sandra James**  
Recovery Facilitator

**Don Cameron**  
Recovery Manager

**Anna Howell**  
Intelligence Lead

**Toni Chapman**  
Social Lead

**Trudy Hales**  
Communications Advisor

**Tina Love**  
Recovery Manager

**Mark Cunningham**  
Built Lead

**Mike Dunn**  
Built Lead

**Colin Yonge**  
Economic Lead

**Simon Hales**  
Rural Liason

**Lee Ransom**  
MPI Support

**Lorraine Stephenson**  
Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua

**James Kendrick**  
Ngāti Kahungunu ki Tāmaki-nui-a-Rua

**Paul Te Huki**

Ngāti Kahungunu ki Tāmaki-nui-a-Rua

**Lee Harris**  
Communications Advisor

## Total Funding Breakdown

Fund/funder	Purpose	Amount
DPMC	Recovery Office & Projects	\$900,000
DIA Recovery Structure funding	Recovery Office	\$500,000
Mayoral Relief Fund	Discretionary fund for affected residents	\$316,212.49
MSD	Land Stability Project - Labor	\$68,000
ECCT	Disability Ramp Hertbertville	\$16,707
MPI	Community Hubs	\$250,000
MPI	Critical Infrastructure fund for affected residents	\$1,000,000
DIA Lotteries Fund	Social Events	\$25,000
NZTA Emergency Fund	Roading repairs and Reinstatement	\$48,366,002
DPMC - Recovery Resilience Fund	Technical Expertise for built infrastructure recovery activities	\$220,000
DIA Lotteries Fund	Co-funding for Community Hub Trailer	\$75,000
DIA Lotteries Fund	Portable generators	\$30,600
MBIE	Business Grants	\$375,000
MSD	Whanau resilience/support	\$106,000
DIA	Akitio Cell Tower Generator	\$44,000
MSD	First Aid Training for Community	\$10,000
MSD	Trades day out - converted to Comedy night	\$5,000
DIA Lotteries Fund	Starlink Systems	\$8,196
MBIE Community Renewable Energy Grant	Solar batteries and systems for community facilities	\$150,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$52,475,717.49</b>



# Recovery Timeline

## TARARUA DISTRICT CYCLONE GABRIELLE RECOVERY PROGRAMME



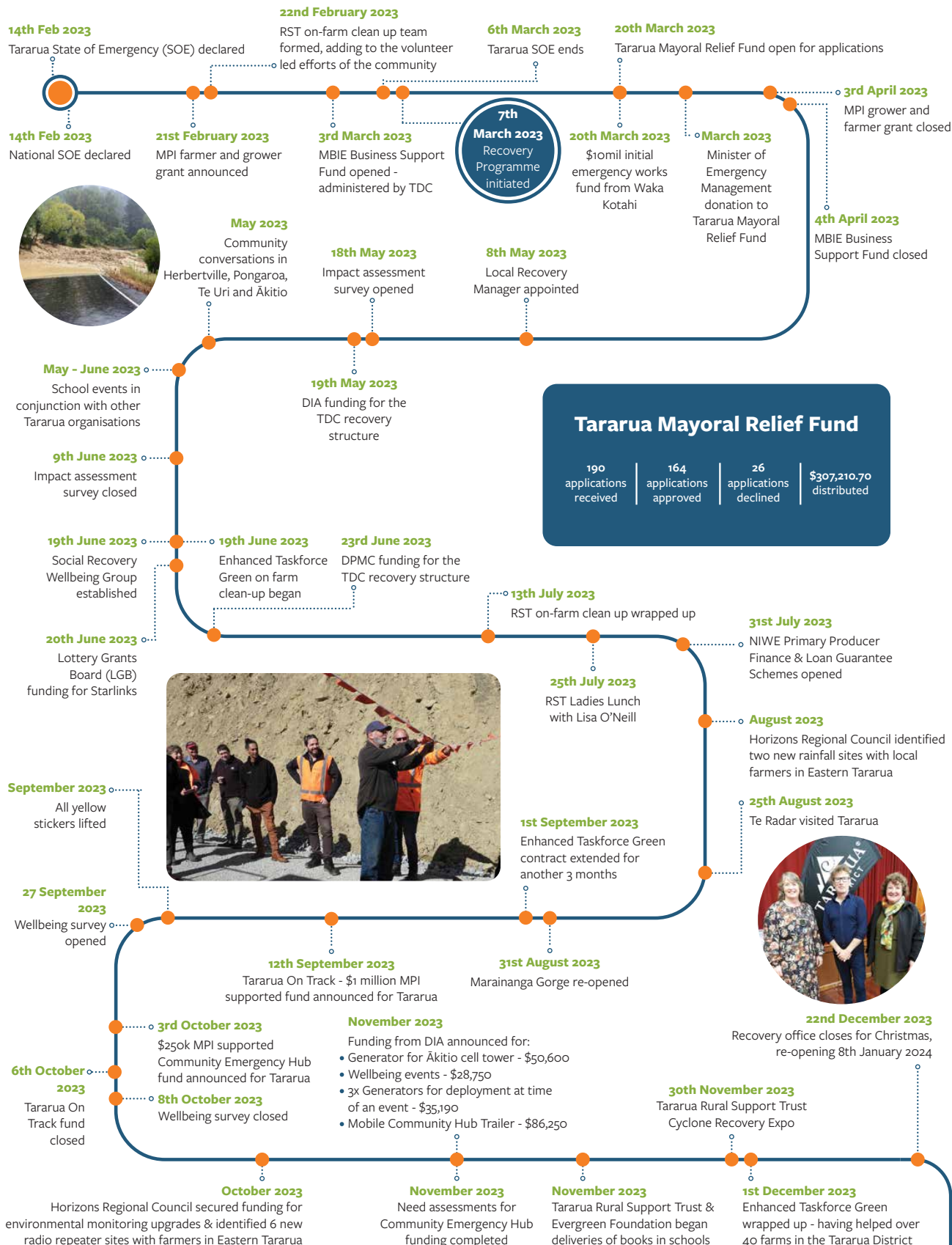
49 roads closed in total at the time of the event



3 properties red stickered  
16 properties yellow stickered

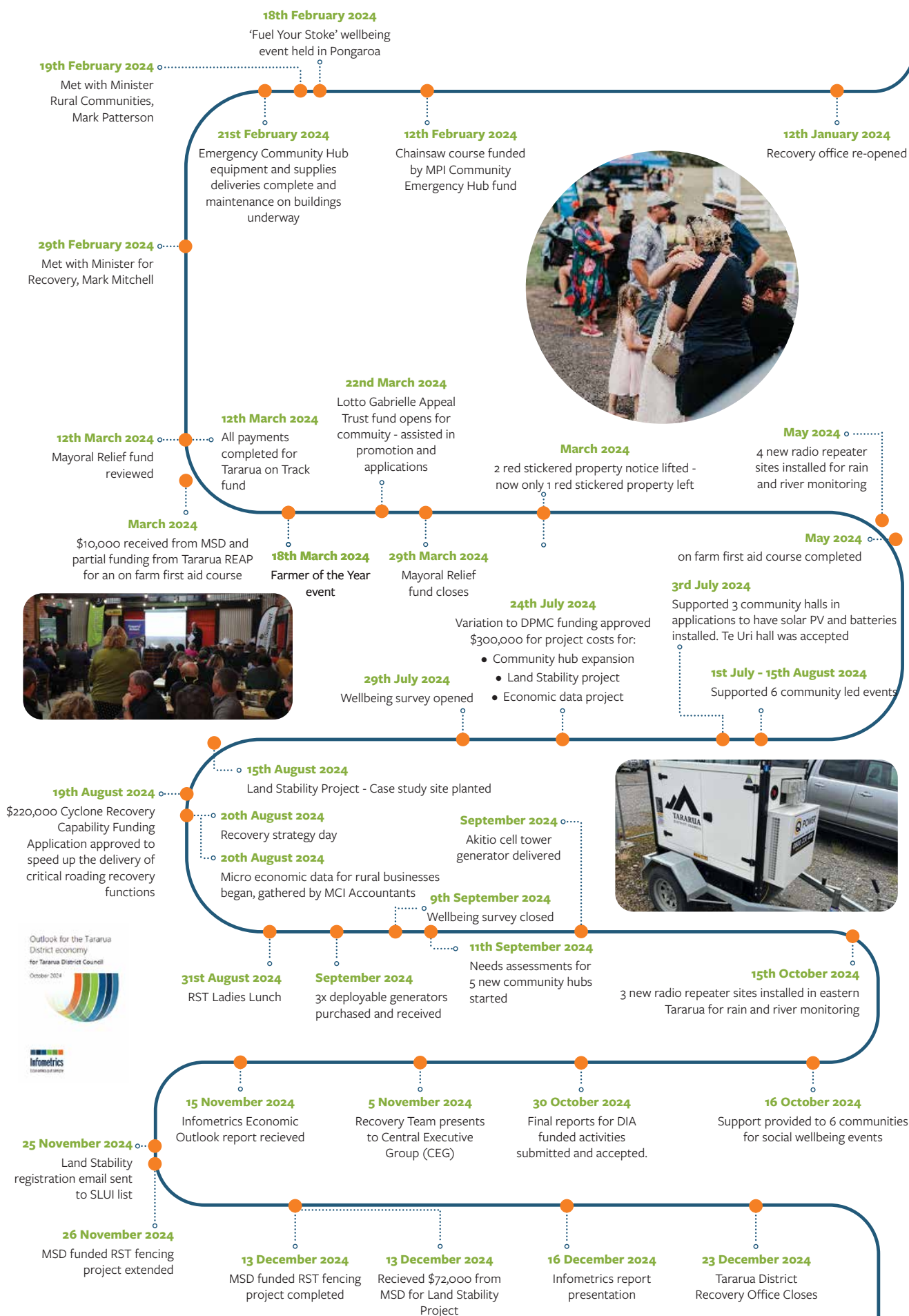


Approx 200 farms impacted



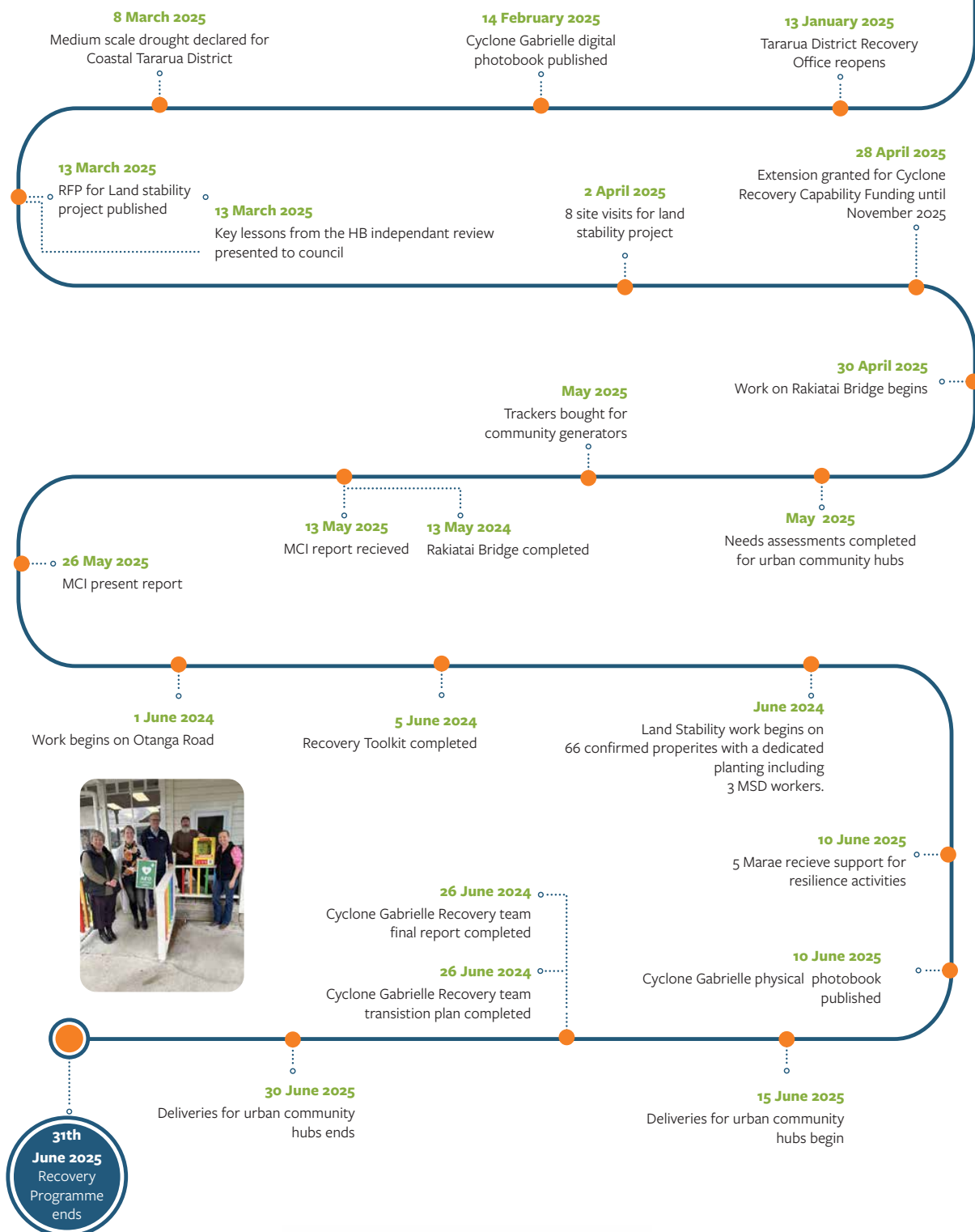
### Taranua Mayoral Relief Fund

190 applications received	164 applications approved	26 applications declined	\$307,210.70 distributed
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# TARARUA DISTRICT CYCLONE GABRIELLE RECOVERY PROGRAMME



TARARUA DISTRICT  
Cyclone Gabrielle 14 Feb 2023

HISTORICAL RECORD & PHOTO BOOK

# Cyclone Gabrielle Activities

Below we have elaborated on some of the key activities completed within each focus area. While these activities are located under focus areas, this work has been funded, organised, run by and attended by multiple individuals and organisations. The mahi put in by the recovery network is to be commended and the recovery team would have been unable to complete what we have without them all.

## Social Activities

### Te Radar

In a pivot of plans, \$5,000 initially earmarked for an MSD funded Economic Mates in Trades event was redirected to support a unique community engagement initiative — Back on Track Bingo with Te Radar.

Beloved Kiwi comedian and television personality Te Radar kicked off his visit with a stop at the Tararua Alliance depot, where he personally thanked crews for their tireless work in repairing and maintaining the district's roads — a critical part of the recovery effort following the Cyclone.

From there, Te Radar travelled east to Herbertville, where he met with local residents and farmers, taking the time to witness firsthand the enduring impacts of the Cyclone on the land and the livelihoods of those who call the coast home.

The visit culminated in a full house at the Pongaroa Hall on Friday evening, where Te Radar hosted a sold-out bingo night. The event blended entertainment and empathy, as locals were treated to hilarious stories and heartfelt reflections. More than just laughs, the night offered a sense of solidarity and shared strength — a much-needed boost for a community that continues to face the long tail of disaster recovery.

Back on Track Bingo proved not only a successful use of repurposed funding but also a powerful reminder of the healing role that laughter, storytelling, and community connection can play in times of hardship.







## DIA Funded Wellbeing Events

**MSFTS**



**RuralSupport**

To support remote Tararua communities still feeling the ongoing impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle, the Tararua District Recovery Team and the Tararua Rural Support Trust (RST) collaborated to deliver a special community event in Pongaroa. Held almost exactly one year after the cyclone, the event offered six hours of live music, family entertainment, food, refreshments, and a space for people to reconnect. It served as both a celebration of progress and a reminder that everyone's struggles whether big or small are valid in the wake of a disaster.

The event featured performances by local talent including Makuri farmer John Beech, with entertainment coordinated by Jack Jensen and the MSFT Productions team. Catering was generously provided by Mike and Simon from Silence of the Lambs, and the Napier Salvation Army supported the event with a strong community presence. The key message throughout the day encouraged people to keep talking, to stay connected, and to remember that it is okay to ask for help.

Attendees included farmers and families from across the rural and remote areas of the Tararua District many of which had been significantly affected by the cyclone and were continuing to face long-term recovery challenges. For some, it was the first time in months they had been able to step away from their property and connect socially.

The event created a strong sense of togetherness and gave the RST team an invaluable opportunity to engage with residents in a relaxed setting, enabling informal wellbeing check-ins and gauging current needs. Many attendees shared that the event provided a much-needed break and helped them realise they were not alone in their experiences.

Beyond the social benefits, the day strengthened community bonds and highlighted the importance of ongoing connection and support. Informational resources were made available, and casual conversations often turned to discussions about mental wellbeing and recovery progress. Families were also well catered for, with children enjoying bouncy castles, play trailers, and face painting—offering a moment of normalcy and joy for both kids and parents.

Importantly, the event revealed an ongoing, and perhaps underestimated, need for mental health and wellbeing support within the cyclone-affected community. For many, it was a first chance to express how they were truly coping, and the presence of support networks in a non-formal environment proved crucial in re-establishing those touchpoints.





## Tararua Farming in Excellence

The Tararua Excellence in Farming Awards 2023 was held at the Tui Brewery in Mangatainoka and provided an important opportunity for the rural community to come together following the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle. The event recognised the efforts and achievements of local farmers, growers, rural professionals, and long-serving contributors to the agricultural sector.

Thanks to support from the Tararua District Council and Cyclone Gabrielle recovery funding, the evening was made free to attend—removing a potential financial barrier and enabling greater participation from those most affected by the cyclone. Approximately 150 attendees were able to enjoy a relaxed evening off-farm, reconnecting with neighbours, colleagues, and others facing similar challenges.

The event centred on the theme of wellbeing, with speakers acknowledging the ongoing stress and disruption still being experienced in the rural sector. Attendees were encouraged to seek help through services such as the Rural Support Trust and their trusted professional networks, including banks, accountants, and rural advisors.

Beyond the awards, the evening played a valuable role in bringing people from across the district together, fostering connections, encouraging conversations, and reminding attendees they are not alone in their recovery journey. Celebrating positive stories of resilience and success helped reinforce a sense of pride and optimism within the Tararua farming community.



## 6 Community events

### Otope:

The Otope community organised a mid-winter Christmas event aimed at bringing residents together for a festive celebration. The event provided a much-needed break from the daily farming routine, encouraging community members to enjoy a light-hearted gathering. The funds were used to hire a bus that transported community members to Palmerston North for dinner and tenpin bowling. The event was filled with laughter and joy, as attendees embraced the holiday spirit and connected with one another while enjoying a friendly game and dinner.

### Alfredton:

The Alfredton Community Group organised a series of activities designed to enhance the wellbeing of local families. One of the key events was a trip to the Eketahuna Library followed by morning tea at the Eketahuna Café. This outing allowed parents and their preschoolers to spend quality time together away from the farm, with parents enjoying a coffee and engaging in meaningful conversations, fostering a sense of community and support. Another event organised by the group was a screening of the All-Blacks game on the big screen at the local hall. This offered families the chance to enjoy a night out together. Funds were used to provide morning tea for parents and pizza and non-alcoholic drinks for the rugby night, ensuring a fun and inclusive atmosphere for all attendees.

### Makuri:

The Makuri Social Committee successfully organised a community ball with the theme 'Woodstock '69.' The event attracted attendees from both within and outside the local area. The anticipation surrounding the event, including costume planning and the excitement of the evening, offered a much-needed mental break from the daily rigours of farming. The ball provided an excellent opportunity for community members to reconnect with friends, family, neighbours, and others from the area. The atmosphere was filled with joy and camaraderie as everyone dressed up and enjoyed a night of entertainment and relaxation. The funds helped cover part of the band for the evening.

### Herbertville:

The Herbertville Hall and Community Committee organised a community BBQ to bring people off the farm and down to the beach. This fantastic event was well-received by all in the community. Herbertville's residents are spread out across a vast area of farmland, making it challenging for them to connect. However, the committee does an outstanding job of organising events to keep the community together. The funding provided food and non-alcoholic drinks, ensuring the event was a success and a welcome break for local farmers.

### Waitahora:

The Waitahora community hosted a BBQ at the local clubrooms to bring the community together. This was especially important, as Waitahora had been somewhat forgotten in the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle. Despite being only 15 minutes from Dannevirke, over 90% of the farmers in the area had suffered damage to their properties from the cyclone. The event provided an opportunity for community members to enjoy a much needed break off the farm, surrounded by like-minded individuals. The funds helped provide food and non-alcoholic drinks for the evening. Community member and organiser of the event, Elle Joblin, noted that the community spirit was alive during the BBQ, with everyone enjoying a bite to eat, chatting with friends and neighbours, and reconnecting with the wider community.

### Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua:

The Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua Matariki Quiz Night aimed to bring the community together to celebrate Matariki, enhancing community wellbeing while building relationships in a fun and engaging way. The event provided an opportunity for attendees to learn about Matariki while enjoying each other's company. It was a night filled with laughter, learning, and the formation of new friendships, which helped strengthen the community. The funds were used to purchase spot prizes, which were distributed throughout the event.



## Community Hubs

### Rural Isolated Hubs

Tararua District Council secured \$250,000 in funding to strengthen resilience across eight of the district's most isolated communities: Weber, Herbertville, Akitio, Te Uri, Pongaroa, Kumeroa, Alfredton, and Makuri. The initiative focused on enhancing self-sufficiency by upgrading local halls and equipping them with essential resources to function as community hubs during emergencies or adverse weather events.

Each hub received tailored support in the form of Civil Defence equipment, generators, and critical hall repairs or upgrades to ensure the venues could serve as safe, functional gathering points in times of crisis. Deliveries of key items—including resilience boxes, chainsaws, and communication tools such as detailed local maps—were made to each community Civil Defence group, strengthening their ability to act quickly and independently if external support is delayed.

The project placed a strong emphasis on community involvement and local economic benefit. Where possible, materials and services were sourced locally, supporting district businesses and ensuring local familiarity with the equipment stationed in each community.

Recognising that equipment alone isn't enough, training and capability-building were integral to the project's success. In February, formal training sessions were delivered to each Civil Defence group. One representative from each of the eight communities completed a fully funded one-day chainsaw safety and usage course—a key priority identified during earlier needs assessments. The course covered both theory and practical application, with each participant receiving a new STIHL chainsaw and a full set of personal protective equipment (PPE) for use in their community. On-farm first aid courses were also provided to strengthen practical response capability.

These upgrades and training initiatives ensure isolated communities in the Tararua District are better positioned to manage future emergencies, maintain access routes, and support one another in times of need. By investing in both infrastructure and people, the project has made a meaningful and lasting contribution to local resilience and preparedness.

### Urban Hubs

As part of its ongoing commitment to building community resilience, Tararua District Council has established five urban community hubs across Eketāhuna, Pahiatua, Woodville, Ormondville, and Norsewood. Supported by a \$150,000 funding variation from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), the project equipped each site to operate as a Civil Defence welfare centre in the event of an emergency.

Each hub has been outfitted with critical infrastructure and supplies to support their community during a crisis. Generators have been installed at all five sites to ensure power continuity during outages. Complementary preparedness items—including cooking and heating equipment, fuel containers, AEDs, battery clamps, and portable aerials for Civil Defence radio communications—were also provided. To support effective coordination and welfare operations, administrative supplies and stationery were delivered to each hub, ensuring local responders and volunteers can operate efficiently when normal systems are disrupted.

This investment strengthens the district's ability to respond quickly and effectively in emergencies, reducing reliance on external assistance and empowering communities to care for themselves and each other. By embedding capability within each township, Council is ensuring people have access to power, communication, medical response tools, and coordinated support—right within their own communities. These hubs will play a critical role in future emergency responses, helping to keep people safe, informed, and connected when it matters most.

## Communications

### Photobook

On 14 February 2023, Cyclone Gabrielle brought record-breaking rainfall to the Tararua District, with some areas experiencing a 1-in-100-year event in just 72 hours. The devastation that followed was immense, roads washed out, homes and farms damaged, and entire communities left reeling.

The impacts were far-reaching, but so too was the response. In the face of unprecedented challenges, the people of Tararua showed extraordinary resilience, unity, and strength. Neighbours supported one another, volunteers mobilised, and the community came together in ways that will be remembered for years to come.

This photo book captures that story. It reflects both the damage caused by the cyclone and the unbreakable spirit of those who endured it.

### TARARUA DISTRICT

Cyclone Gabrielle 14 Feb 2023



### Wellbeing Surveys

Tararua District Council conducted two wellbeing surveys as part of a broader effort to understand and support the social needs of residents in isolated communities following the impact of Cyclone Gabrielle. The first survey was undertaken early in the recovery phase to gather data on community wellbeing, identify key areas of need, and inform the delivery of targeted support initiatives.

The initial survey results helped shape several community-led and Council-supported initiatives, including social events, mental health support outreach, and the distribution of resources aimed at strengthening social connectedness and resilience.

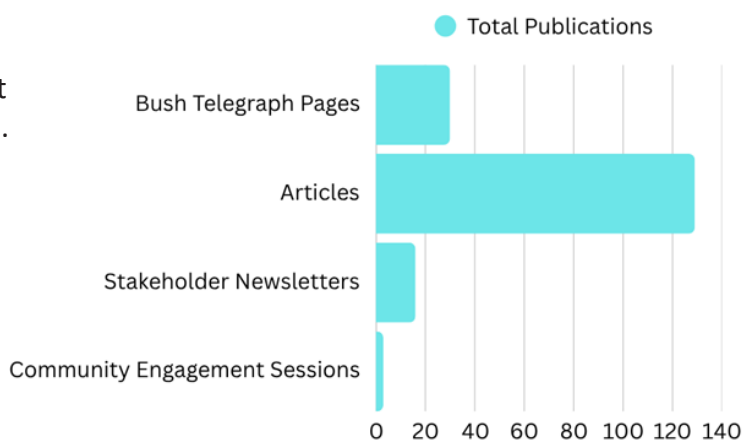
A follow-up survey was carried out post-implementation to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives and to better understand how community wellbeing had evolved over time. Insights gained from this second round of feedback were compiled into a comprehensive report, highlighting areas of success as well as ongoing challenges that require continued attention.

This two-step approach provided a clear before-and-after picture of wellbeing across the district, enabling the Council and its partners to refine support mechanisms and ensure that future resilience-building efforts are evidence-based and responsive to real community needs.

### Bush Telegraph – Fortnightly publications

The publications featured a range of recovery-focused content, including community updates, event promotions, repair statistics, and wellbeing messages. These communications played a key role in keeping residents informed, supported, and connected throughout the recovery period.

These publications were sent out via multiple channels physical, digital and in person and their totality can be seen to the right.



Cyclone Gabrielle left a devastating mark on Aotearoa, but in Tararua, the impacts were particularly rural. While the cyclone spared the district's larger towns, the eastern hill country bore the full force of the storm. This area—already vulnerable after 18 months of significant weather events—is largely remote, with isolated communities and challenging terrain.

More than 200 farms were affected, with impacts including widespread destruction to fencing, pasture, river crossings, farm tracks, water supply, culverts and bridges, and roading infrastructure. Communities were cut off for days, with prolonged power outages and limited connectivity compounding the stress and uncertainty.

Tararua's recovery wasn't just about restoring services—it was about reconnecting people, animals, businesses and livelihoods. This report outlines the rural response and recovery efforts led by Tararua Rural Support Trust (RST), the outcomes achieved, and the key lessons that continue to shape our support for rural communities.

## A Rural Event

The Cyclone's impacts on Tararua were not highly visible in urban areas, but many of our rural areas, particularly the eastern part of the district, sustained widespread damage. The high intensity of the storm fundamentally compromised the landscape, with slips, isolation, and road closures severely disrupting rural lifelines—creating both immediate and longer-term challenges for communities.

- Over 200 farms sustained damage, often extensive.
- Six rural schools were affected: Weber, Pongaroa, Norsewood, Makuri, Alfredton, and Kumeroa.
- Road access was heavily impacted - the sheer number of road faults made access difficult—at times, helicopters were the only way in.
- Widespread power outages
- Communication blackouts left many people without telephone and internet access for a prolonged period.

With damage scattered across such a vast and remote area, understanding the scale of the impact was incredibly difficult therefore it was essential to get boots on the ground early.

## Early Response: Recovery Begins Day One

Rural recovery began from day one. As a Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) - trained personnel, RST was integrated into the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) on the morning

of the event, ensuring a crucial rural voice was present at the decision-making table.

It was immediately clear that gathering accurate, on-the-ground data would be key to understanding where efforts were most needed. But with communication outages, widespread road closures and isolated communities, this meant going door to door.

The involvement of Tararua RST was vital—not just for welfare checks, but because we could speak the language of rural people. Farmers didn't need to explain the gravity of their access issues, major slips, compromised tracks or missing stock. We quickly mobilised a wider team of RST Facilitators, bringing together trusted rural people with the experience and empathy needed in such a crisis.

## Door-to-Door Welfare Checks (Feb 15–21)

In just six days following the cyclone:

- Over 500 rural homes were visited.
- Teams of six vehicles were deployed daily through a collaboration between Tararua District Council, Iwi and Tararua RST.
- Each team included at least one RST member to ensure rural needs were correctly interpreted and prioritised.

These early visits laid the foundation for everything that followed—connecting us with severely impacted people and businesses, guiding the allocation of resources, and establishing a trusted, consistent rural presence in the days and weeks ahead.



## Transition to Recovery: Establishing the Recovery Team

As part of the recovery structure, Jane Tylee transitioned into the role of Rural Recovery Lead, while continuing her vital work as RST Coordinator for the Tararua District. Her dual role helped ensure continuity of care and deep local rural knowledge remained embedded within the official recovery programme.

The programme aimed to ensure a coordinated approach to rebuilding rural resilience and well-being, with a clear plan focused on:

1. Farmers being assisted with remedial on-farm clean-up work.
2. Understanding the economic impacts on farming businesses from Cyclone Gabrielle.
3. Building resilience in the Rural Environment.
4. Information and support provided for farmer well-being.
5. Farmers assisted to navigate financial support and business advice.

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## 1. Farmers being assisted with remedial on-farm clean-up work.

### Immediate On-Farm Clean-Up: February–June 2023

Following initial welfare and needs assessment checks, it quickly became clear that farmers urgently needed help to re-establish basic on-farm management. This was critical for stock welfare, and equally important for providing farmers with a sense of support as they began to grasp the full extent of the damage.

At the time, many volunteers had already been deployed to Hawke's Bay, so we stepped in to coordinate two key outcomes:

- Clean-up crews deployed to farms where owners were isolated or overwhelmed
- Farmers were provided with connections to materials, equipment, and volunteer labour

The On-Farm Clean-Up became a crucial emergency initiative, bridging the gap between the initial response and the later rollout of the Enhanced Taskforce Green programme. While the focus was practical — clearing debris, replacing floodgates, and distributing donated materials for temporary stock-proofing, the benefits went far beyond this. The work brought structure, momentum, and a sense of connection to farmers during a time of huge uncertainty.

### Topline Stats: Tararua On-Farm Clean-Up (Feb–June 2023)

- 66 properties received materials
- 1,293 volunteer hours completed
- 2,369 posts distributed
- 49 working bees
- 110 floodgates built and distributed
- 5,300 metres of netting provided

### Enhanced Taskforce Green: June – 30 November 2023

***Research shows that one of the most effective ways to support farmer wellbeing during an adverse event is through timely practical assistance.***

Enhanced Taskforce Green is a government-funded initiative through the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) that provides paid labour to support communities following natural disasters. In the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle, Tararua RST, in partnership with MSD, delivered the programme to help farmers clear debris, repair fencing, and restore essential on-farm infrastructure.

Initially, it was a challenge to get the Enhanced Taskforce Green programme off the ground in Tararua, in part due to difficulty securing a training coordinator. However, once underway, its impact was far-reaching and hugely positive for the region's rural recovery.

### Key Outcomes:

- 5 month project.
- 42 landowners assisted across the following areas:

Te Uri, Ākitio, Waione, Owhanga, Pongaroa, Herbertville, Weber, Wimbledon, Motea, Ngapaeruru, Tiraumea, and Mangahei

- 6 job seekers gained employment and training through the programme

Enhanced Taskforce Green was a powerful example of how collaboration between government and local networks delivered meaningful, on-the-ground support during the early rural recovery.



## A Key Event: Tararua Rural Support Fencing Expo

Held on 30 November 2023 at the Dannevirke A&P Showgrounds, the Tararua RST Cyclone Recovery Expo was a flagship recovery event designed specifically for cyclone-affected landowners in our district.

In other regions fencing materials were being distributed at large one-off events however no such opportunity was available in Tararua District. Therefore with funds that had been donated to East Coast RST, we created our own locally-led solution—a hands-on, practical event that brought together farmers, fencing support, and wellbeing services in one place.

### The Expo offered:

- Free fencing bundles including posts, wire, staples, and permanent strainers.
- Connection to local support from rural professionals, contractors, and the Cyclone Recovery Office.
- Free food, coffee and a relaxed, supportive space to connect.

and a **wellbeing goodie bag** with:

- \$200 accommodation voucher (time away off-farm)
- New World grocery voucher
- Dannevirke Pharmacy voucher
- Extras like sunscreen, socks, books and thoughtful seasonal gifts

### Key Outcomes

- 168 cyclone-affected landowners supported on the day
- \$185,000 worth of fencing materials distributed including:
- 16,770 posts
- 160 x 20kg buckets of staples
- 173 coils of wire
- 160 boxes of permanent strainers
- \$71,000 worth of wellbeing support provided
- 12 rural support services represented onsite



**Image below:**

Free fencing bundles for attendees stacked at RST expo





## 2. Understand the economic impacts on farming businesses from Cyclone Gabrielle

Cyclone Gabrielle did not occur in isolation. When it hit, farmers in Taranaki were already facing a tough operating environment — with soaring interest rates, low commodity prices, and, not long after, a prolonged dry period. To fully understand the cyclone's economic impact on farming businesses, we needed to see the Cyclone's effect in the context of these compounding pressures.

An initial Infometrics report offered a useful overview, but it couldn't reflect the specific realities for farmers in our district. That's why the recovery team partnered with MCI & Associates — a local accountancy firm with strong connections to the rural sector — to undertake a detailed economic survey using four years of actual farm data from across Taranaki District.

Farm businesses experienced a significant financial hit, with gross farm revenue falling by \$147/ha, and earnings before interest and tax dropping nearly 50%. Limited insurance and lower stock revenue left farmers to cover their core debt and the costs of cyclone damage by diverting core operational funds such as fertiliser as well as nearly half of their maintenance budgets.

This survey has given us a clear, evidence-based picture of how local farms were tracking before the cyclone, and what changed in the months and year that followed. It reinforced what we were already hearing and seeing on the ground: that the financial pressure on farming businesses came not just from the cyclone, but from the convergence of factors. This work will continue, with further analysis of 2024/2025 results to understand longer-term impacts.

Having this kind of localised economic data is crucial for future rural adverse event planning.

Another critical factor influencing the financial recovery of farmers was the accessibility of government support. While a limited amount of Treasury support was provided for cyclone-affected businesses (through MPI and MBIE), the

economic analysis indicates that many farmers were either unable to or did not access the MBIE support. This was particularly the case for the North Island Weather Events Loan Guarantee Scheme and Primary Producer Finance Scheme, which were intended to provide reduced lending rates and concessionary loans to help cyclone affected farming businesses get through.

Anecdotal feedback suggests a lack of clear information flow from Treasury policy through to on-the-ground banking decisions, and confusion and inconsistencies across different banks and regions on how to apply the schemes. Access to more favourable lending terms often depended on individual relationships with bank managers, rather than consistent application of government support measures.

Normal business decisions that would typically help manage a farming downturn were constrained by the need to prioritise urgent repairs and maintenance, alongside high interest rates, having significant multi-year impacts on farming businesses.

For an overview of the findings of the Infometrics & MCI & Associates Economic Data projects see page 27,

## 3. Build resilience in the Rural Environment

See Resilience Activities for the collaborative work done with Rural Support. *See Page 31.*





## The Tararua Rural Support Cyclone Gabrielle Fencing Project Story - Rebuilding Rural Tararua: A Collaborative Effort

*By early 2024, one year after Cyclone Gabrielle devastated rural Tararua and much of the Eastern North Island, the region was still grappling with the aftermath. Farmers continued to face enormous challenges as they worked to rebuild their businesses and livelihoods. Much of their vital infrastructure—particularly fencing—remained damaged, making it difficult to manage livestock and restore productivity.*

*Following the cyclone, RST launched the ‘On-Farm Clean-Up’ programme to clear debris, provide temporary fencing materials, and replace floodgates—helping farmers begin recovery. With Ministry of Social Development support, the Enhanced Taskforce Green programme followed from June to November 2023, delivering fencing and remedial work to over 40 farms. In November, our Dannevirke Expo—made possible by public donations—provided free fencing supplies to more than 150 farmers, giving a vital boost to ongoing recovery efforts.*

*However, despite all these efforts, the sheer scale of the damage meant fencing remained a critical issue. What farmers desperately needed was labour. Without enough hands on the ground to carry out repairs, secure boundaries remained out of reach. Compounding this were ongoing financial pressures—low commodity prices, high farm expenses, high interest rates, and a regional*

*‘Extreme Dry’ declaration—which left many unable to afford the extra help they needed.*

*“Fencing is fundamental to farm operations,” says Jane Tylee, Coordinator of the Tararua Rural Support Trust (we). “Without it, managing stock or maintaining anything close to business as usual becomes nearly impossible. We knew we had to find a way to keep this kind of support available to farmers—because time and again, we’ve seen that practical help like this leads to better wellbeing outcomes after an adverse event.”*

*Determined to tackle the ongoing challenges members of the the Tararua Rural Support Team once again met with Tony Seanoa and MSD representatives to discuss solutions that would address immediate needs while, like Enhanced Taskforce Green, also create job opportunities for local people. The result was a new initiative designed to provide hands-on, on-the-job training for job seekers while tackling the critical fencing needs of cyclone-affected farmers.*

*“This program was about more than just rebuilding fences,” says Seanoa, Regional Manager Labour Market MSD. “It was about creating pathways for employment and equipping people with skills, habits, and confidence that would benefit their future careers.”*

*To bring the program to life, RST and MSD*



**Image :**  
A washed out river in the district



partnered with Taiao Ora Contracting, a family-run Dannevirke-based company committed to supporting rural communities and empowering people through meaningful work. Led by Arapera Paewai, Taiao Ora had already played a key role in the cyclone's early recovery, helping farmers clear debris.

*"With a strong community focus and a commitment to helping people into meaningful work, Taiao Ora was the perfect partner for this initiative," says Tylee.*

Together, Taranaki RST, MSD, and Taiao Ora launched a co-funded programme offering fencing labour to farmers, along with practical experience for job seekers. The programme's impact has been profound—providing much-needed help to farmers and valuable training for local job seekers in fencing, land management, and teamwork.

The mental health impact of this programme cannot

be overstated. From tearful 'thank-yous' to heartfelt written feedback, shared refreshments at the end of the day, and offers of 'meat for the freezer', the work provided relief to farmers who were feeling the weight of cyclone recovery.

Near the end of the programme, MSD granted an extension, allowing more farms to be included—a testament to its success. The extension shows how much confidence MSD had in the program and its outcomes.

#### **Key outcomes:**

- 33 landowners assisted
- 105-day project
- 13,000km travelled
- 5 staff employed and trained
- 7,702 metres of fencing repaired
- 5,015 metres of fencing replaced



**Image :**

Nopera Paewai, Jane Tylee, Arapera Paewai & Simon Hales.

## 4. Information and support provided for farmer well-being.

### Events that rebuild communities

In a district marked by isolation and widespread disruption, community connection became critical to rural recovery. RST created a range of tailored events that were curated specifically for Tararua District, reaching across the region and targeting diverse groups—from school communities to men’s mental health, fitness opportunities, to off-farm days for women and men.

These events created safe, supportive spaces for people to reconnect, share experiences, and link into further support. For some, it was the conversation sparked at a BBQ or comedy night that led to much-needed follow-up assistance — help that may not have otherwise been sought.

Well-attended, these events helped lift spirits, rebuild relationships, and strengthen the connection of Tararua’s rural communities:

- 2023 Ladies’ Lunch with Lisa O’Neill
- 2024 Ladies’ Lunch with Gemma McCaw, Bex Lintott & Shazz Dagg
- Kids Sports Days with Sport Manawātū at 6 rural schools
- Blokes Day Out – 4WD & Clays
- Community Catch-ups in Te Uri, Pongaroa & Weber
- Books in Schools initiative
- Rural Professionals Breakfast
- Local Comedy Nights in Kumeroa, Weber & Alfredton
- Lunch at Norsewood
- Farmer Fitness Sessions in Weber, Te Uri & Makuri
- Tararua on Track Bingo Night with Te Radar
- Bitches Box Comedy Night in Weber
- MSFT’s Concert at Pongaroa



**Image above:**  
Jane Tylee accepting rural professional of the year

### Further Rural Recovery Initiatives

Alongside practical recovery assistance and wellbeing events, RST hosted and supported a range of community-driven learning and support opportunities tailored to local needs. These initiatives combined hands-on knowledge with a focus on rural wellbeing, helping farmers build resilience in the aftermath of the cyclone:

- Good Yarn Workshops – raising awareness and fostering conversations around rural mental health.
- FeedSmart Workshops – delivered by Beef + Lamb NZ - practical training on feed budgeting to improve farm resilience and sustainability, with more in the future.
- Drench Resistance Project – Funded by the Ministry for Primary Industries, this vet-led initiative identified parasite challenges faced by farmers post-cyclone. RST then supported those farmers with additional help and management strategies.



## One-on-One Support

Requests for individual support spiked after the cyclone—and continued for many months as the long-tail impacts became more apparent.

1. Common issues included:
2. Burnout and exhaustion
3. Increased alcohol use
4. Relationship breakdowns
5. Financial stress

Throughout the recovery, The Tararua Rural Support Team grew from 2 to 6 and RST facilitators provided critical one-on-one support. This included not only emotional encouragement, but also practical help such as:

- Navigating funding processes (e.g. funding applications)
- Offering business advice and planning
- Providing tailored emotional and logistical support
- Critical farming decisions around stock movement and management, feed planning, animal health advice and more.
- Linking in with rural professionals - the likes of rural vets, bankers, accountants and industry bodies as required.

A key enabler of this sustained connection was the RST recovery database, built during the initial days of the cyclone response through welfare checks and needs assessments alongside solid local knowledge, and trusted relationships. This ensured we remained connected to the most impacted individuals and could continue providing timely, targeted support.

The need for one-on-one support has remained strong two and a half years after the cyclone — a trend reflected in the Economic Impact Survey, where 32% of respondents said they expect full recovery to take three to ten years or more. We anticipate this personalised support will remain essential as farmers continue their recovery journey.

## Dedicated Local Counsellor Support

Thanks to funding from MSD, RST was able to offer a dedicated local counsellor for a period of time to support cyclone-affected farmers. This service, accessed through referrals from RST, proved hugely valuable. It provided timely, professional mental health support at a moment when speed and accessibility mattered most. In a space where help is not always readily available, having a trusted, local counsellor on hand made it easier for facilitators to connect people with the support they needed—quickly and with care.

## 5. Farmers are assisted to navigate financial support and business advice.

### Targeted Communications to support recovery

RST created targeted newsletters to keep cyclone-affected communities informed and connected. These included key information on available funding—such as the Mayoral Relief Fund and the Kānoa Fund—alongside details on where to access advice, support services, and upcoming events.

Keeping information flow between rural professionals and affected communities was critical and this clear, timely communication helped ensure people knew what help was available and how to access it when they needed it most.



### What other support is available?

#### Clean up support

The Rural Support Trust continues to coordinate recovery and clean-up support across the region including Enhanced TaskForce Green. You can get in touch with us if you need help. This could include practical assistance in helping clear fences/yards, erecting temporary fencing and removal of silt. Whether you wish to help out or to find out what clean-up support is available, get in touch with the East Coast (Tararua) Rural Support team: 0800 787 254.

**Be safe. When checking stock, crops, driving or assessing damage, where possible avoid flooded areas and do not do anything that will put your safety at risk.**

#### Keeping livestock fed

MPI and Federated Farmers have restarted the national Feed Coordination Service. The service matches people with grazing or supplementary feed for sale to those who need it. For further information phone 0800 FARMING (0800 327 646) or visit [www.fedfarm.org.nz](http://www.fedfarm.org.nz)

#### Wellbeing & business support

Our Rural Support team are available 7 days a week. If you are not sure where to turn, or want to have a chat in confidence, give us a call (0800 RuralHelp). Support can be over the phone, or at a place and time that suits.

We can provide 1-to-1 support to help you map challenges and develop plans, link you with rural professionals and other support and services available.

Watch out for notices on our website and on our social media pages for updates and community events.

### Industry support

Rural Support Trust: 0800 787 254

Federated Farmers: 0800 327 646

Beef+Lamb New Zealand: 0800 233 352

Dairy NZ: 0800 4 324 7969

MPI On Farm Support: 0800 707 133

Dairy Women's Network: 0800 396 748

Rural Women NZ: 04 473 5524

HortNZ: 0508 467 869

Apiculture NZ: 04 471 6254

Deer NZ: 04 473 4500

IRD: 0800 227 774

Work and Income (flood line): 0800 400 10

Tararua District Council: 06 374 4080 (North)

or 06 376 0110 (South)

Horizons Regional Council: 0508 800 800

Farmstrong: 1737 (call or text for free 24/7)

### Events

#### Package

It is available for funded by the North Island 23. The package includes:

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information visit <http://rlnz.govt.nz>

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[www.rural-support.org.nz](http://www.rural-support.org.nz)

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Zealand - Adverse

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to individuals,

with a particular emphasis

on:

t/our-funds-and-grants/

### Farm Business Advice Fund

Qualifying farmers can receive up to \$6,000 to seek independent financial or business advice. Apply through the Rural Support Trust: <https://www.rural-support.org.nz/Help-Support/Financial-Pressure>

### Farm Debt Mediation Scheme

If you're under financial stress, the Farm Debt Mediation Scheme helps level the playing field in debt discussions with your creditor. Farmers can request mediation at any time. MPI can also assist with the costs of mediation and preparing for mediation through a hardship fund. For more information see: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/funding-rural-support/farming-funds-and-programmes/the-farm-debt-mediation-scheme-2/>

### Mayoral Relief Funds

Mayoral Relief Fund applications are open to Tararua residents, ratepayers or small business owners (including self-employed people and sole-traders) who have suffered financial hardship because of damages caused by Cyclone Gabrielle. For more details please go to the council's website at: <https://www.tararua.govt.nz/services/emergency-management/cyclone-gabrielle-support/support-for-all/mayoral-relief-fund>





## Getting the Feedback – Rural Support Survey

To better understand the real impact of our rural recovery efforts, RST conducted a final survey in May 2025. It was sent directly to those who had:

- Attended a rural recovery event
- Received on-farm clean-up or fencing support
- Participated in the Tararua RST Cyclone Recovery Expo

The survey asked respondents to rate how helpful the various support initiatives had been

### Key areas of focus included:

- Financial assistance
- Rural event attendance
- Fencing initiatives
- One-on-one support from RST

Participants rated each category on a scale from 0 to 5, and were also invited to share comments, stories, or messages about their recovery experiences. These reflections helped capture key lessons and will guide improvements to future response efforts.

A total of 61 cyclone-affected individuals responded—an impressive 20%+ response rate—offering both meaningful data and powerful stories from across Tararua’s recovery journey. Every “helpfulness” question averaged 4.3 / 5 or higher – which indicates excellence.

- Funding Opportunities: 4.64 / 5
- Fencing Initiatives: 4.44 / 5
- Events: 4.53 / 5

- One-on-One Support: 4.29 / 5

### Learnings from the Rural Support Survey.

Survey responses highlighted that ALL 4 aspects - Financial, Events, Fencing and 1:1 support scored equally, proving that all aspects were perceived to have a real value in aiding the farmers recovery.

Fencing assistance was seen as essential—not just for the materials provided, but for the time and labour saved, which eased both financial strain as well as improving physical and mental wellbeing.

Rural events were described as uplifting and practical, offering valuable information alongside emotional support.

One-on-one contact with RST facilitators was deeply appreciated, with many valuing the empathy and understanding shown.

Across the board, there was a strong sense of gratitude, with people describing the support as unforgettable. Above all, the work of Tararua RST in connecting people, reducing isolation, and strengthening community resilience stood out as a critical part of the region’s recovery.

*“We are truly grateful for the support... What was the biggest support was the initial help and then the fencers about a year later. When it takes so long to get through the workload this added support at this time was beneficial mentally as well as physically. We couldn’t be more grateful for your support. Thank you thank you.”*

## Key Learnings & Outcomes from the Rural Recovery Lead

### 1. Collaboration is Everything

Our work was made possible by strong partnerships—with Tararua District Council, Tararua Alliance, Iwi, Civil Defence, MPI, MSD, Sport Manawātū, NGOs, and local businesses. Trusted relationships built through past adverse events proved critical in enabling a coordinated response.

A special acknowledgement to Tararua District Council for their outstanding collaboration. Their leadership in bringing agencies together for the good of the community was a gold-standard example. By supporting our work within the Civil Defence Emergency Management recovery framework, they helped ensure the best possible outcomes for our rural communities.

### 2. Funding Matters

Without the support of donations to the RST, some of the most impactful initiatives—like the Fencing Expo—would not have been possible. These contributions enabled practical, on-the-ground support that directly benefited rural communities.

External funding through the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) was crucial in enabling the broader recovery programme, including the staffing and coordination framework behind it. This, alongside collaborative funding from agencies like MPI and MSD, made it possible to deliver a connected and effective response across the district.

## Key Learnings & Outcomes from the Rural Recovery Lead cont...

### 3. Rural Recovery Must Be Rurally-Led

Tararua's model worked because we were empowered to lead. RST was trusted to act, with local decision-making and community-led priorities from day one.

### 4. Ask, Don't Assume

We held multiple community meetings during response and recovery asking "What do you need now?" Every major initiative—Blokes Day Out, Fencing Expo, practical one-on-one support—was built out of the feedback people gave us at these meetings.

### 5. The Economic Story Matters

Any adverse event comes at a cost, but it doesn't happen in a vacuum—it sits within the context of wider economic pressures and external forces. In partnership with MCI & Associates and working with Infometrics, we set out to understand the true local economic impact of Cyclone Gabrielle—something national data alone couldn't fully reflect. This localised insight helped identify what people actually need moving forward, and underscored just how severely the cyclone struck—hitting Tararua at one of the worst possible times.

### 6. Surveying for Impact

To assess the effectiveness of our support, we surveyed farmers directly—starting from day one with welfare needs assessments during the Response phase. These early insights helped shape priorities and guide decision-making throughout the District's recovery plan, ensuring support aligned with what was truly needed on the ground.

As recovery progressed, the final impact survey reinforced these learnings. It confirmed the value of practical assistance, emotional support, community connection and help with navigating financial challenges. The reflections shared by respondents offer valuable lessons and will help ensure future adverse event funding reaches those most affected—supporting stronger, more targeted responses in the future.

### 7. Practical Help Goes a Long Way

Practical, hands-on support consistently proved to be one of the most effective tools during our rural recovery. From the early On-Farm Clean-Up crews to the Enhanced Taskforce Green programme and the final fencing project with Taiao Ora, each initiative delivered more than just physical labour. It gave farmers momentum, reduced stress, and offered a visible sign that help was at hand. These efforts eased both operational burdens and emotional strain—demonstrating that when it comes to rural resilience, practical help isn't just appreciated, it's essential.

### 8. Connection Keeps us Going

In an isolated, rural region like Tararua District, connection is everything. Recovery events—whether a school sports day, comedy night, or Expo—brought people together, lifted spirits, and created space for conversations that led to meaningful support. These moments built trust, reduced isolation, and reminded people they weren't alone—a reminder that social connection is as vital to recovery as any material support.

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## Conclusion

Tararua's rural recovery efforts demonstrated that local leadership, strong collaboration, and targeted support make a measurable difference. By listening first, acting locally, and working within a trusted framework, we were able to respond effectively to one of the most challenging events our region has faced.

The lessons we've learned—from the value of partnerships and funding to the importance of economic insight and direct community feedback—will not only guide future recovery efforts, but have also strengthened the foundation of rural resilience in Tararua for years to come.

- Jane Tylee - Rural Support Coordinator/Rural Lead





## Economic Activities

### MBIE Business Support Fund

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) provided \$50 million in recovery support to businesses across eight regions impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle and the January 2023 floods. As part of this initiative, the Tararua District was allocated \$355,000 to administer direct financial support to local businesses affected by the event. The funding aimed to help eligible businesses maintain cashflow and position themselves for a successful recovery.

Tararua District Council administered the fund locally and received a total of 55 applications. Of these, 28 were approved and funded, while 27 were declined. Declined applications included those that did not meet the funding criteria, duplicate submissions, or were flagged for attempted fraud. In total, \$351,500 in grants was distributed to support affected businesses, with only \$3,500 remaining by the end of the allocation period. Grants of up to \$40,000 were made available to individual applicants.

The initiative played a vital role in providing immediate financial relief to cyclone-affected enterprises and supported the district's broader economic recovery.

#### Image below:

Mobile community Hub set up at Feild Days



### Mobile Community Hub

Tararua District Council launched the Tararua DigitalSpaces Trailer – a fully equipped, purpose-built mobile hub designed to strengthen community connection, enhance civil defence capacity, and improve access to Council services across the district.

The trailer serves a dual purpose: first, as a mobile civil defence base that can be deployed to support isolated communities during emergency events and recovery efforts; and second, as a versatile community engagement unit that enables Council to deliver services and connect with residents at local events, markets, and gatherings – particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas.

The project was made possible through the generous support of the Department of Internal Affairs Lotteries Minister's Discretionary Fund and through an expanded DigitalSpaces contract with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). Importantly, the initiative was delivered without using ratepayer funding, demonstrating the Council's commitment to innovative, community-focused solutions supported through external partnerships.

The trailer was fitted out with a wide range of features to ensure it is functional and flexible for multiple uses. It is solar-powered and capable of operating off-grid, allowing deployment in areas without reliable infrastructure. It includes rural Wi-Fi capability, multiple screens, and a sound system to support information sharing and connectivity. The interior contains a small meeting room and cooking facilities, ensuring that it can operate independently during prolonged deployments or events.

This mobile hub not only supports community resilience during emergencies but also brings Council services closer to the people, particularly in areas that may otherwise be underserved. The Tararua DigitalSpaces Trailer reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to accessibility, preparedness, and community engagement throughout the district.

# Economic Data Project

## Macro Economic Report - Infometrics

Tararua is an agricultural-based economy populated by small towns that act as service centres to local farmers, other businesses, and residents. The year-to-year profitability of the farming sector has a broader effect through the whole local economy. To greater understand the effect Cyclone Gabrielle had on our economy the Recovery Team engaged Brad Olsen at Infometrics to undertake a Macro Data report focusing on the state of the Tararua Economy as of October 2024.

The report gave valuable insight into the Tararua District Economy and the compounding impacts of not only a cyclone but also high input costs, lower commodity prices, and intense debt servicing pressures. It provided context to what we were hearing out in the community.

### Key Findings:

- 40% drop in farm sales from 2022
- 3.8%pa fall in annual sheep meat graded
- Farm costs have stabilised however still 25% more expensive than 2020
- Fuel, Interest rates and fertiliser largest increase in costs for primary sector
- A 7% increase in non-performing and potentially stressed loans across agriculture (exc dairy).

## Micro Economic Data - MCI+A

During the Recovery period, Tararua's farming community faced an extraordinary convergence of pressures; not only Cyclone Gabrielle, but also prolonged drought during late 2023/2024, soaring interest rates, and record-low commodity prices. To effectively advocate for support, it was essential to capture local, farm-level economic data.

While national analysis (such as work by Brad Olsen) provided some insights, it lacked the local specificity required. The Tararua Recovery Team therefore partnered with MCI & Associates, a large rural accountancy firm with strong connections across the district. Together, a targeted survey was developed and used during end-of-financial-year meetings with cyclone-affected clients - gathering real-time, reliable insights directly from Tararua farmers.

### Key Learnings from the Economic Impact Survey

This localised study analysed data from 58 farms, covering around 46,536 effective hectares. It painted a clear picture of the financial toll Cyclone Gabrielle had on our farming sector in the Tararua District.

### Key Findings:

- Gross farm revenue declined from \$949/ha (2022) to \$802/ha (2024)
- EBIT (Earnings Before Interest & Tax) dropped from \$293/ha to \$157/ha
- Insurance and grant income was minimal: \$114K and \$62K across all farms
- 48% of maintenance budgets, 23% of fertiliser, and 13% of debt repayment funds were redirected to cyclone repairs
- 6 farms refinanced a total of \$1.48M in working capital to term debt
- Farmers applied 800–1,000 fewer tonnes of fertiliser in 2024
- 68% expect recovery within 1–2 years; 32% expect it will take 3–10+ years

This locally led analysis provides credible, evidence-based insights into the economic strain faced by Tararua's farmers and underscored the need for targeted ongoing recovery support.



# Built Activities

## Cyclone Gabrielle Roding Faults

As we conclude phase of the cyclone recovery programme, the roading fault data highlights the remarkable progress made in restoring critical infrastructure across the district. The combined efforts of the Tararua Alliance, council teams, and our wider supplier panel have resulted in significant momentum, with the vast majority of faults now resolved and essential connectivity restored to our communities.

Since initial damage assessments began, over 2,300 faults have been successfully completed. Most of these were low-complexity faults, allowing rapid mobilisation and efficient use of resources. This includes:

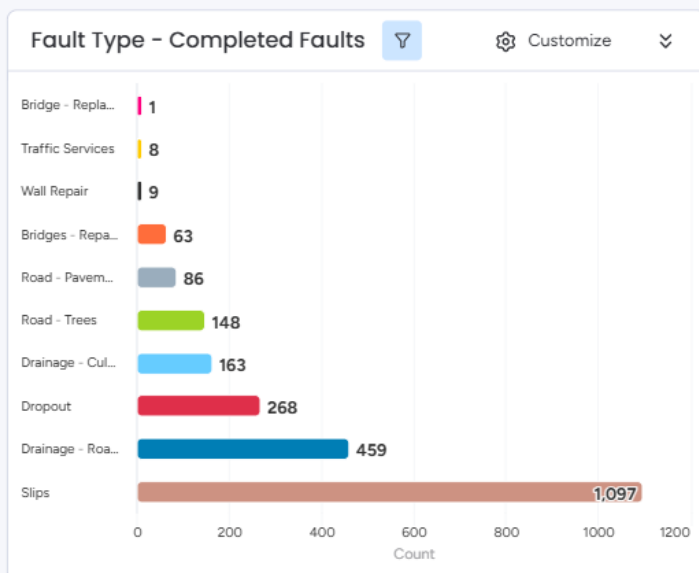
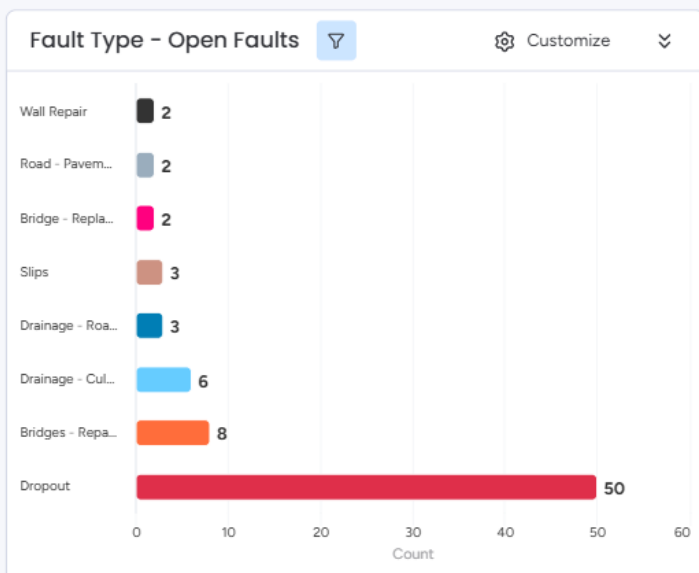
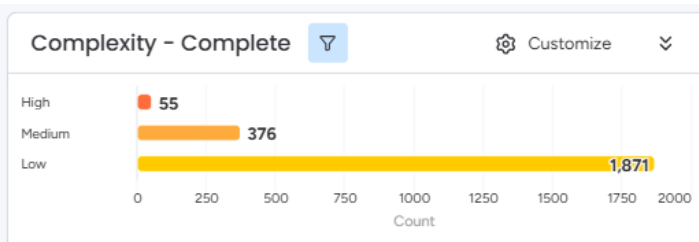
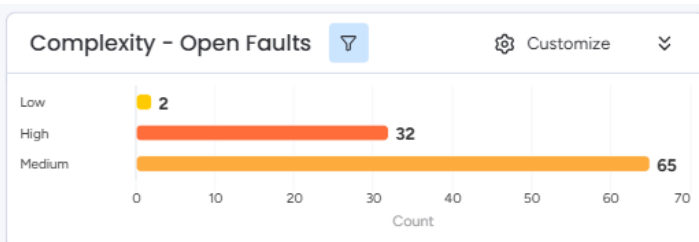
- 1,871 low-complexity faults, such as blocked culverts, slips, and pavement repairs.
- 376 medium-complexity faults.
- 55 high-complexity faults, reflecting good progress on more technical challenges requiring engineering oversight or full design solutions.

The minimal number of unresolved faults (99 open in total) is a clear indicator of the speed and scale of our collective response, especially given the scale of damage following Cyclone Gabrielle.

- Slips have been the single largest category addressed, with 1,097 cleared—a vital achievement in ensuring safety and access throughout the roading network.
- Drainage resilience has been significantly improved, with 459 roadside drainage issues and 163 culvert blockages resolved.
- Dropout repairs while complex and resource-intensive have seen 268 completions, and work continues on the remaining 50 open sites.
- Tree removal, pavement repairs, and wall reinstatements have all contributed to restoring safe passage and minimising disruption for rural residents.

This recovery programme has not only addressed damage but has also improved the resilience of our infrastructure. Many areas now have better drainage capacity and slope protection than pre-Gabrielle conditions, helping reduce future risk.

Importantly, the progress made has had a direct impact on the wellbeing of our communities, reconnecting isolated properties, reopening key transport routes, and supporting the return of economic activity, particularly in primary production zones.



## River Road

The primary access road to the Akitio Beach community suffered severe damage during the weather event, with over 300 metres of road completely washed out. This critical transport link was closed for approximately two months, significantly impacting residents, emergency access, and essential service delivery to the coastal settlement.

In response, the restoration of access became an immediate priority. A temporary route was established by reopening the old/original road alignment that passed through private property located above the failed section. This required close collaboration with landowners and contractors to ensure the route was made safe and functional for public use. The interim solution allowed for the re-establishment of connectivity while long-term repair and resilience options for the damaged road section were explored.

Reinstating access to Akitio was considered the highest priority at the time, ensuring the wellbeing of the community and supporting recovery efforts. Once a stable and reliable route was secured, attention and resources were redirected to address further damage in the surrounding area, including the Marainanga Gorge.



**Image on left:**  
Damage to River Road after  
Cyclone Gabrielle



**Image on right:**  
Post work condition of river road.



## Marainanga Gorge

The reopening of Marainanga Gorge Road marked a significant milestone in the district's recovery from Cyclone Gabrielle and stood as a powerful example of resilience, collaboration, and community determination.

During the cyclone, approximately 300 metres of the road were completely washed away into the Owahanga River, forcing its immediate closure. The scale of the damage made it clear that a full rebuild would be required. In a proactive step to reduce future vulnerability, the replacement road was constructed around 10 metres higher than the original alignment—an investment in long-term resilience.

Despite being delivered under challenging winter conditions and within a complex, sensitive river environment, the project progressed steadily. This was made possible through strong coordination between Tararua District Council, Horizons Regional Council, iwi partners, and experienced local contractors. Their collaborative approach enabled steady progress while maintaining environmental care and safety.

Early works focused on re-establishing access for residents, farmers, and rural businesses who had endured months of disruption, extended travel times, and difficulty accessing services. The reopening of the road brought not only practical relief but also a meaningful morale boost for the communities of Coast Road, Marainanga Road, Owahanga Road, and the surrounding area.

While traffic access was restored, further works continued to strengthen the formation and improve long-term resilience. Some lower sections of the road remained narrow, particularly where riverbank scour had impacted the stability beneath the surface, and motorists were advised to travel with care as these improvements were completed.

The successful completion of this project represented far more than just the reopening of a road. It was a clear demonstration of what can be achieved through local collaboration, strong leadership, and shared purpose. The Marainanga Gorge Road rebuild became a symbol of recovery in action, restoring lifeline infrastructure, reconnecting isolated communities, and building back stronger for the future.

**Image below:**

Marainanga Gorge post cyclone



**Image above:**  
Marainanga Gorge launch



## Rakaitai Bridge

Following the devastating impact of Cyclone Gabrielle, the Rakiatai Bridge on the Manawatū River, located at the end of Rakiatai Road was completely washed away, severing the only all-weather connection for residents. In the immediate aftermath, community members were relied upon to use dinghies for essential crossings, underscoring the urgent need for a temporary solution.

Tararua District Council quickly mobilised to restore safe passage by repurposing recycled beams salvaged from the original bridge. This cost-effective interim structure re-established pedestrian access within weeks, allowing residents to attend schools, medical appointments, and farm duties without risking river crossings.

Simultaneously, the procurement process for a permanent replacement was completed, and a design-and-build contractor was appointed. Detailed design work commenced in mid-2024, construction began in October 2024. The new bridge design incorporated raised abutments and reinforced foundations to withstand high-flow river events, improving resilience against future flooding.

In the lead-up to full construction, additional earthworks were carried out to enable 4x4 and tractor access to the river crossing point. These interim access routes ensured that farming operations and emergency services could continue with minimal disruption.

Throughout the recovery process, collaboration between Council engineers, ZPR contractors, and local farmers proved instrumental. Regular on-site meetings allowed technical teams to adapt plans based on ground conditions and community feedback, reinforcing a shared commitment to restoring this vital piece of infrastructure.

## Local Supplier Panel

The Tararua Alliance established an Emergency Work Supplier Panel to accelerate recovery ensuring our critical infrastructure was assessed and repaired. The panel brought together qualified local contractors to support vital roading and reticulation repairs, including capital improvements and general maintenance. Over three years, this collaborative approach enabled the completion of repairs to 20 damaged bridges, 551 dropouts, and 1,807 other faults across the network.

The panel model offered several benefits. It streamlined engagement with council, eliminating the need for new contracts for each job and allowing suppliers to mobilise quickly—particularly important as further weather events compounded existing damage. Panel membership also provided contractors with visibility of upcoming work, supporting better planning and investment in their operations. Most importantly, the initiative strengthened local capacity and made a direct contribution to the district's infrastructure recovery, reinforcing resilience in the face of future events.

### Images below:

Damage to Tararua Roading network





## Natural Activities

### New River and Rainfall Monitoring Sites

As part of the wider strategy to enhance resilience and emergency response capabilities across the district, Horizons Regional Council has successfully completed the installation of remote telemetry units at key rural sites. These installations deliver real-time environmental data, significantly improving situational awareness and response during adverse weather events.

The Owahanga site was completed on 19 May, with live data streaming immediately into monitoring systems. Pongaroa at Town followed on 22 May, while the remaining sites at Weber, Wimbledon, and Cadmus Bridge were on schedule in June 2024. All locations are now fully operational and actively transmitting live data.

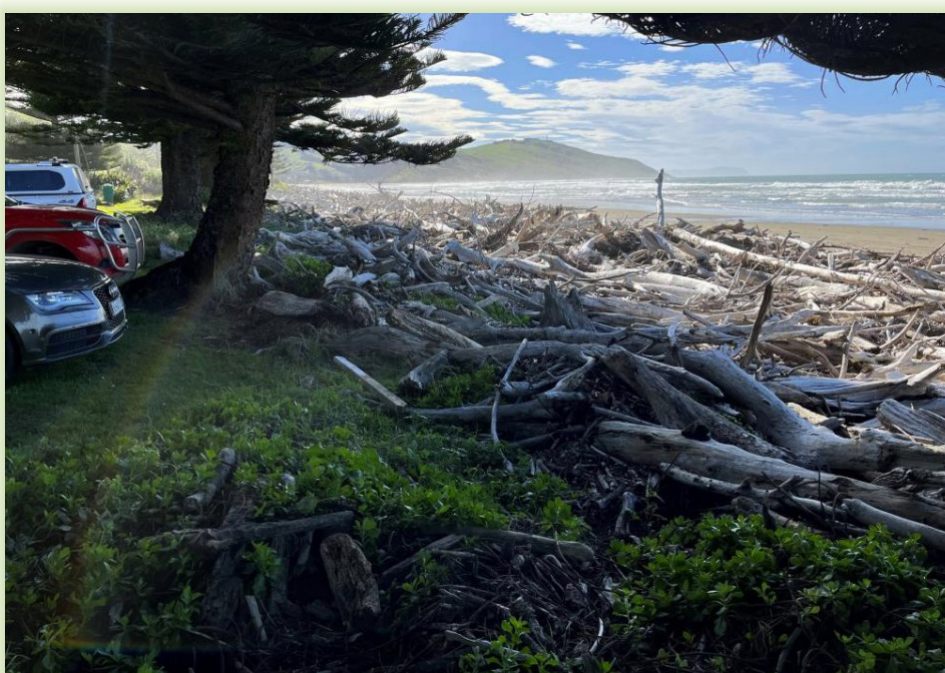
This work represents a significant investment in preparedness, particularly for isolated communities that are often first and most heavily impacted by weather events. The data collected supports more responsive and informed decision-making during emergencies, helping reduce risk to infrastructure and enhance public safety.

### Ākitio Beach Clean Up

Following Cyclone Gabrielle, significant debris impacted the Ākitio Beach area, prompting the need for a targeted clean-up effort. Horizons Regional Council played a key role by providing expert advice on identifying and prioritising the most affected sites along the coastline. Their local knowledge and environmental expertise ensured that attention was directed where it was most needed, balancing community needs with ecological considerations.

The Tararua District Council office then took the lead in coordinating the response—securing funding for the clean-up and managing its delivery. This included engaging contractors, liaising with local stakeholders, and ensuring that the work was carried out efficiently and safely.

The clean-up helped restore access and amenity at key beach locations, removed storm-related debris, and reduced environmental risk to the coastal ecosystem. The project was well received by the local community, who had been significantly affected by the storm's impact on their coastline. It also demonstrated the value of cross-agency collaboration in delivering timely, practical outcomes as part of the broader recovery effort.



**Image right:**  
Ākitio Beach  
covered in slash



## River Management

In response to Cyclone Gabrielle, Horizons Regional Council swiftly mobilised emergency reserves to repair flood protection infrastructure throughout the Tararua District—targeting stopbanks, spillways, and drainage systems to restore community resilience.

Following technical assessments, Horizons approved an extensive River Management Repair Programme, prioritising the 173 highest-risk sites across eight schemes—which included the Ākitio catchment.

Importantly, the programme incorporated ongoing engagement with affected landowners, iwi, and rural communities through field visits, scheme meetings, and individual consultations, ensuring repair priorities reflected on-the-ground concerns and were shaped by local knowledge.

This feedback mechanism helped refine technical strategy by identifying debris hotspots, optimal river channel locations, and the need to “build back better” for instance, widening corridors and using enhanced erosion materials to boost long-term flood resilience.

Horizons also deployed land-management advisors to assist rural landowners with landslip recovery, oversowing, and pole planting across eroded hillsides, supporting over 30,000 poles planted to stabilise catchments.

Through a coordinated, community-driven approach, this recovery effort balanced engineering robustness with local insight—ensuring repair works not only addressed immediate post-Gabrielle damage, but also aligned with community priorities and enhanced future flood resilience.





# Resilience Activities

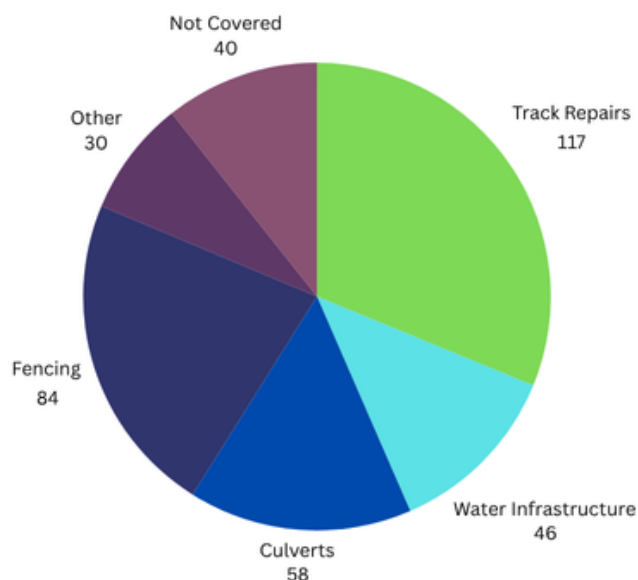
## Tararua On Track Fund

As part of the Ministry for Primary Industries' \$35.4 million recovery package to support rural communities impacted by North Island weather event Cyclone Gabrielle, the Tararua District was allocated \$1 million to directly assist our local primary industry producers. This funding focused on urgent maintenance and resilience work to help farms recover, stabilise operations, and prepare for future events.

Applications for the support fund were open from 12 September to 12 October 2023. In just one month, 127 applications were received, with farmers and growers across the district requesting approximately \$5.3 million in financial support—more than five times the available funding. This overwhelming demand reinforced what many already knew: the need on the ground was significant, and the scale of damage and disruption left by Cyclone Gabrielle was beyond what individual farms could absorb alone.

Funding was distributed to successful applicants from all corners of the district—from the hill country of Te Uri to the coastal lands of Aohanga, and many communities in between. The projects funded were varied but vital: repairing culverts and fences, stabilising slip-prone areas, restoring accessways, and reinstating critical infrastructure.

Applications for the Tararua on track fund covered track repairs, water infrastructure, culverts, and boundary fencing. With majority of applications applying for multiple workstreams.



While the support was warmly received and appreciated by those who benefited, it was clear from the volume and value of applications that \$1 million was just a start. The positive feedback from affected ratepayers was matched with a consistent message—this was a drop in the bucket compared to the long-term work required to build resilience across the rural sector.

Image:  
Huge slip in Pongaroa



## **Marae Preparedness**

As part of our district-wide commitment to community resilience and emergency readiness, targeted work has been undertaken to support marae across the Tararua District in strengthening their preparedness for natural disasters and emergency events. Recognised as vital cultural and spiritual hubs, marae also play a critical role as places of refuge and support during crises. Ensuring they are equipped to respond effectively is a key priority within our civil defence planning framework.

This initiative involved close engagement with local marae committees to identify specific readiness needs, assess infrastructure capabilities, and provide tailored guidance on emergency planning. Support provided has included basic emergency supplies and resources, alongside advice on essential areas such as generator access, water and food storage, and communications capabilities.

Funding of \$15,000 was allocated to six marae to carry out activities identified through needs assessments, enhancing their capacity to serve their communities when it matters most.

## **Land Stability**

Tararua District Council, Tararua Alliance and Rural Support initiated a collaborative project focused on addressing land stability risks adjacent to local roads, with the goal of strengthening the resilience of the roading network. In partnership with Horizons Regional Council, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) the initiative targeted privately owned land that posed a risk of dropouts or slips during future weather events.

Following the significant impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle—during which approximately 790 slips and 435 dropouts were recorded across the district—the need for a proactive solution became clear. Tararua's road network, particularly vulnerable to high-intensity rainfall, prompted the Alliance to explore options that could reduce future damage and minimise disruptions for local communities. This focus was primarily on identifying the high prone slip areas within the roading network and understanding what civil work may need to be done to improve its resilience (upgraded culverts, drainage on private land etc). In March 2025, Alliance was successful in receiving funding from NZTA for the Civil construction portion of the land stability project.

This project aligned with Horizons Regional Council's Sustainable Land Use Initiative, specifically through identifying high risk sites and applying appropriate erosion control measures. In this project most sites could be treated through planting of poplar and willow poles to control soil slip and gully erosion. Approximately 155 at risk sites were identified, with more in depth assessments now underway to determine the specific stabilisation measures required at each location.

Beyond the resilience outcomes, the project also delivers social and economic benefits. Through a grant from MSD, this initiative provided employment and skills development opportunities for 3 local people not currently engaged in employment. These individuals are being trained in planting and erosion mitigation work, contributing directly to both environmental and community resilience.

In August 2024, the recovery team contracted a local supplier to undertake a case study testing the framework and funding model for this project. After a successful case study, 80 high priority sites were identified and set to be addressed in Phase one of the project .

Phase one began in June 2025 after going through an open procurement process in which local supplier Tai Ora Contracting was successful. As of this report, only year one of the land stability is funded however Tararua Alliance is looking at funding opportunities for year 2 and beyond.



## MBIE Community Renewable Energy Fund

The Community Renewable Energy Fund (CREF), administered by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA), is a New Zealand government initiative aimed at enhancing energy resilience in communities, particularly those affected by severe weather events like Cyclone Gabrielle. The fund supports the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) and battery systems in community buildings such as halls, marae, and schools, which serve as critical hubs during emergencies.

In the Tararua District, community halls in Te Uri, Kumeroa, and Herbertville were selected to receive funding for solar PV and battery installations. These upgrades provide reliable, renewable energy sources, ensuring that these facilities can function effectively during power outages and contribute to the community's overall energy independence.

The Recovery Team played a pivotal role in supporting this initiative by identifying suitable sites, assisting community organisations with the preparation of necessary documentation, and guiding the shortlisted communities through the application process.

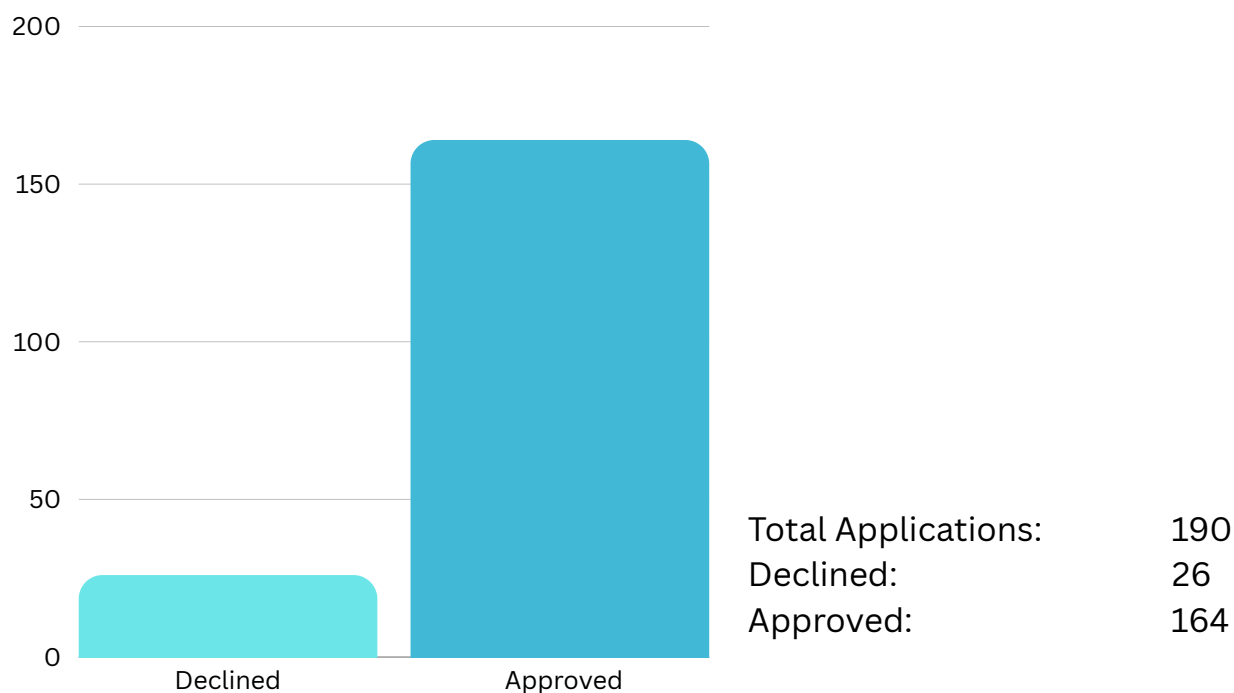
Overall, the CREF's investment in these community halls not only bolsters emergency preparedness but also promotes sustainable energy practices, leading to long-term benefits such as reduced energy costs.

## Mayoral Relief Fund

In the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle, the Tararua Mayoral Relief Fund provided vital, targeted support to individuals and families facing immediate and often complex challenges. With over \$316,000 distributed, the fund played a crucial role in meeting urgent needs that sat outside traditional funding channels—such as essential household items, temporary accommodation, farm repairs, or wellbeing-related costs.

Administered by the Tararua District Council, the fund was designed to be flexible, compassionate, and fast-moving, helping ensure that no one fell through the cracks during the early stages of recovery. Applications were assessed case-by-case, with a focus on fairness, need, and the ability to make a tangible difference in someone's recovery journey.

While not intended to replace insurance or government assistance, the Mayoral Relief Fund complemented broader recovery efforts and demonstrated the power of community-led support in times of crisis. It remains a valued example of how local leadership can respond swiftly and meaningfully when residents need it most.





## Exit Strategy

Outlined in the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 (CDEM Act) exiting the recovery phase of an emergency is governed specifically through section 94B and related provisions. This relates to when a Recovery Manager or authority determines that the recovery phase has concluded.

As per this process the recovery team has developed an exit strategy that outlines the status of all recovery actions, and the responsible agency of those still open once recovery closes. You can find this in Appendix B.

## Evaluation

Our team intends to undertake a full debrief of the activities undertaken during the Cyclone Gabrielle recovery period in FY 25/26.

## Conclusion

The Cyclone Gabrielle Recovery Programme stands as a testament to the strength, collaboration, and resilience of the Tararua District. Over the past two and a half years, communities, iwi, council teams, government agencies, NGOs, and local leaders have come together to not only respond to an unprecedented natural disaster but to lay the groundwork for a more connected and resilient future.

This final report highlights the immense effort undertaken across all sectors, from rural recovery and infrastructure repair to wellbeing support and economic revitalisation. While the formal recovery phase may be drawing to a close, the legacy of this mahi will continue. The relationships built, lessons learned, and community-led initiatives developed through this journey will strengthen our district's readiness for whatever challenges may come.

As we transition beyond the recovery phase, our commitment remains unchanged: to support our people, protect our places, and keep building a stronger, more resilient Tararua—together.



## **Appendices**

## Appendix A: Status of Tararua District Council recovery actions.

This section outlines the actions prepared in the October 2024 Recovery Plan and the progress made on them.

### RURAL RECOVERY

#### RECOVERY OUTCOME: (END RESULT/FOCUS AREA)

**That Cyclone Gabrielle affected farmers and their families in the Tararua District are supported to continue to work in their businesses, and they know what support and assistance is available to help them recover and be more resilient for future adverse events.**

**Priority and progress key:** 1 – 1-3 months (Oct-Dec 2024). 2 – 3-6 months (Jan-March 2024). 3 – +6 months (April & beyond). 4 – Ongoing

**Traffic light key:** **Green** – On track. **Orange** – Delayed. **Red** – Issues.

Objective/goal		Recovery actions	Lead	Stakeholders	Funding	How we will measure if we are successful	Priority & Progress	Comments
1.1	Farmers are assisted with remedial on farm clean-up work	Deliver Fencing initiative in partnership with MSD and Rural Support Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Support Trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSD</li> </ul>	MSD RST donations	20 farms assisted # of km of fencing replaced # Farmer feedback forms received	Complete	
		Record # of km of fencing replaced and evaluate if there is an ongoing need past December.  Continue fencing initiative if needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Support Trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSD</li> <li>Taio ora Contracting</li> </ul>	MSD	# of km of fencing replaced  Additional business case put forward and approved	Complete	



1.2	Understand the economic impacts on farming businesses from Cyclone Gabrielle	Collaborate with Tararua District Council and other recovery workstreams and MCI to analyse the data to allow decision making around support needed which will specifically target the rural community with a recovery focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery Team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Support Trust</li> <li>Rural Professionals</li> <li>Banks and Financial Services</li> </ul>	N/A	<p>Feedback provided on draft report</p> <p>Supporting/promoting the presentation to Rural Communities</p> <p>Support and/or deliver potential initiatives/funding</p>	Complete	
1.3	Explore resilience in the rural community	Work alongside the Tararua District recovery team and rural communities to build more emergency preparedness and resilience for future events via Community Hubs	Community Resilience Lead	<p>Rural Support Trust</p> <p>Tararua District Council – Emergency Management</p> <p>MPI</p>	N/A	# opportunities to support rural resilience initiatives e.g. facilitate Good Yarn Workshops	Complete	Community hubs provided the opportunity, conversations will continue post recovery.
1.4	Build resilience in the Rural environment	Work in partnership on the Land Stability Project	Rural Support Trust	<p>Tararua Alliance</p> <p>Horizons Regional Council</p> <p>Tararua District Council</p> <p>MSD</p> <p>Iwi</p>	N/A	# of land stability projects undertaken to build resilience	Complete	

1.5	Information and support will be provided for farmer wellbeing	<p>Collaborate with rural and government agencies, and community service providers to provide mental health and wellbeing support as funding and resourcing allows</p> <p>Work with MSD to continue to provide professional Counselling Support for the Rural community</p>	Rural Support Trust	Rural Professionals Wellbeing Agencies MSD	DPMC	<p>Farmers and rural communities are provided with information about support and services available</p> <p>An efficient referral process is in place to direct farmers to mental wellbeing and support</p> <p>Wellbeing events are held for rural communities in collaboration with other rural professionals</p>	4 (ongoing)	
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1.6		Refer farmers to other service providers or agencies for support and funding	Rural Support Trust	Rural Professionals Banks and Financial Services	N/A	# of referrals	4 (ongoing)	
1.7	Farmers are assisted to navigate financial support and business advice	Develop a Rural Support Trust newsletter to promote available financial support and advice	Rural Support Trust	Rural Professionals Banks and Financial Services	N/A	# of newsletter and information distributed through rural networks	4 (ongoing)	



1.8	Support river studies through Catchment Groups	Support the evaluation of river clean up needed to advocate/inform Horizons Regional Council about waterway issues in Tararua	Community and Social Recovery Lead	Rural Support Trust Catchment Groups Tararua District Recovery Office Horizons Regional Council	Mayor may need to advocate if required	Understanding of river clean up need  Advocate to Horizons Regional Council if need identified	Complete	
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## BUILT RECOVERY

### RECOVERY OUTCOME: (END RESULT/FOCUS AREA)

#### To repair and build resilience into the Tararua roading network

**Priority and progress key:** 1 – 1-3 months (Oct-Dec 2024). 2 – 3-6 months (Jan-March 2024). 3 – +6 months (April & beyond). 4 – Ongoing

**Traffic light key:** Green – On track. Orange – Delayed. Red – Issues.

Objective/goal		Recovery actions	Lead	Stakeholders	Funding	How we will measure the difference we're making	Priority & Progress	Reporting
2.1	Better GIS mapping of the roading network during an emergency response	Upgrade roading network GIS mapping systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery Team</li> </ul>	N/A	Road network GIS mapping systems upgraded	In Progress	Funding for project manager found through alternative funding
2.2	Improve Tararua District rural roading road use data to better understand road maintenance and emergency response priorities	Gather information on accessways, land use, generalised income, per capita etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery Team</li> </ul>	N/A	Detailed dataset of Tararua rural roading network usage created that is able to provide input into differential level of service action	In progress	Funding for project manager found through alternative funding
2.3	A suitable resolution has been found for	Continued communications with the Tararua District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waione community</li> </ul>	N/A	Tararua District Council have made a decision on the future of the hall	On hold	



	all stickered properties	Council Building and Facilities Teams						
2.4	Affected roading network returned back to appropriate level of service	Balance of 206 faults completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua Alliance</li> </ul>		NZTA Tararua District Council	206 faults returned to appropriate level of service	Ongoing	Remaining activities brought into BAU
2.5	Identify and agree appropriate levels of service for the roading network across the District	Investigate road usage to identify scenarios for levels of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Council</li> <li>Rural communities</li> <li>Affected community</li> </ul>	N/A	Proposing levels of service to Council for discussion, gauging the appetite, and starting discussion	Ongoing	Remaining activities brought into BAU
2.6	Resilience improvements across the rural network	Develop a business case for a work programme which will future proof the roading network to be presented to Council for consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua Alliance</li> </ul>		NZTA Tararua District Council	Business Case endorsed by Councillors and presented to NZTA	Complete	
2.7	Build resilience in the Rural environment	Land Stability Project Business case for road resilience improvement developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Support Trust</li> <li>Tararua Recovery Office</li> </ul>	MSD Horizons NZTA	Forward works programme for Land Stability project created and implemented  Business case submitted to NZTA for further funding	Complete	Both the planting and civil work funding approved
2.8	Provide education to residents of the Tararua District	Comms Plan regarding this messaging (specifically bridges, drainage and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Council</li> </ul>	BAU	Comms Plan created, # of comms put out	On hold	Brought into BAU

	on the issues, maintenance and responsibility of key infrastructure e.g bridges, drainage	maintenance) developed		(Comms Team)					
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# COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL RECOVERY

## RECOVERY OUTCOME: (END RESULT/FOCUS AREA)

**Affected communities are connected and resilient and have high levels of wellbeing**

**Priority and progress key:** 1 – 1-3 months (Oct-Dec 2024). 2 – 3-6 months (Jan-March 2024). 3 – +6 months (April & beyond). 4 – Ongoing

**Traffic light key:** **Green** – On track. **Orange** – Delayed. **Red** – Issues.

Objective/goal		Recovery actions	Lead	Stakeholders	Funding	How we will measure the difference we're making	Priority & Progress	Reporting
3.1	Communities are empowered to shape the future of their communities	Support Community-led events (8 in total each receiving a \$750 grant) for mana whenua and in target geographic locations that were impacted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ngāti Kahungunu ki Tāmaki nui-a-Rua</li> <li>- Rangitāne o Tamaki Nui-ā-Rua</li> <li>- Waitahora</li> <li>- Wimbeldon</li> <li>- Makuri</li> <li>- Alfredton</li> <li>- Ākitio</li> <li>- Otope</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community and Social Recovery lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> </ul>	DPMC	8 community-led events held and reported	Complete	
3.2	Understand the wellbeing/mental health of the impacted communities 12	Design and distribute a Wellbeing Survey through the Tararua District Council website and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community and Social Recovery lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> </ul>	N/A	Analysis of results  Final Report produced and shared with Tararua	Complete	

	months on from the last survey (September 2023)					District Recovery team to decide any action/initiatives  Shared with Tararua District Council and other stakeholders		
3.3	Affected communities are reconnected and resilient	Support a further 5 existing Civil Defence groups with upgrading their community hub. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pahiatua</li> <li>• Woodville</li> <li>• Eketahuna</li> <li>• Ormondville</li> <li>• Norsewood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and Social Recovery lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tararua District Council – Emergency Management</li> </ul>	DPMC	5 community hubs needs assessments completed  5 community hubs that have resilience/local recovery plans in place  5 community hubs have physical assets in place to build resilience for a future weather event	Complete	
3.4		Continue building relationships with the 13 Civil Defence community hub groups to ensure strong communication line are established <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pongaroa</li> <li>• Alfredton</li> <li>• Kumeroa</li> <li>• Te Uri</li> <li>• Herbertville</li> <li>• Ākitio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and Social Recovery lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tararua District Council – Emergency Management</li> </ul>	N/A	Key contacts are maintained in a spreadsheet and engaged with	4 (ongoing)	Will continue through the emergency management and community development roles

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Makuri</li><li>• Weber</li><li>• Pahiatua</li><li>• Woodville</li><li>• Eketahuna</li><li>• Ormondville</li><li>• Norsewood</li></ul>					
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3.5	Connect with community networks to share recovery information and needs	Attend appropriate community meetings to share information about recovery programmes and needs	Community and Social Recovery lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua REAP Welfare Networking Group</li> </ul>	N/A	10 networking events attended	Complete	
3.6	Maraes, Communities and schools who have been impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle will have knowledge of and access to support and funding	Understand and promote funding channels available from different government and local organisations for Iwi, community groups/schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community and Social Recovery lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iwi</li> <li>Community Groups</li> <li>Tararua REAP</li> <li>Tararua Schools</li> <li>MSD</li> <li>Tararua District Council</li> </ul>	N/A	# connections with marae, community groups, schools to provide support and information about funding	4 (ongoing)	This will be continued through the Community Development Role

3.8	Support Marae Resilience	<p>Work with the 6 Marae committees in Tararua to understand resilience needs and provide support for resilience building initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pāpāuma Marae – Owahanga</li> <li>• Te Ahu a Tūranga Marae – Woodville</li> <li>• Whiti te Ra Marae – Dannevirke</li> <li>• Mākirikiri Marae – Dannevirke</li> <li>• Kaitoki Marae – Dannevirke</li> <li>• Pahiatua Marae - Pahiatua</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and Social Recovery lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iwi</li> <li>• Tararua District Council – Emergency Management</li> </ul>		<p>Engage and support the 6 Marae in Tararua.</p> <p>Further build Civil Defence relationship with the Marae committees.</p>	Complete	
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## NATURAL RECOVERY

### RECOVERY OUTCOME: (END RESULT/FOCUS AREA)

**To have the community more prepared for adverse events through better data collection and warning systems in our rivers. To have the land and waterway in the eastern area in a more resilient state, better able to withstand damaging adverse events into the future**

**Priority and progress key:** 1 – 1-3 months (Oct-Dec 2024). 2 – 3-6 months (Jan-March 2024). 3 – +6 months (April & beyond). 4 – Ongoing

**Traffic light key:** **Green** – On track. **Orange** – Delayed. **Red** – Issues.

Objective/goal		Recovery actions	Lead	Stakeholders	Funding	How we will measure the difference we're making	Priority & Progress	Reporting
4.1	Waterways with potential for environmental and infrastructure degradation repaired	<p>Implement Tararua Debris Management Action Plan and respond to any requests for support, assistance and advice from the community</p> <p>Any further channel clearance found will be BAU. This includes areas within Tiraumea River</p> <p>Ongoing as funding permits past June 25. Horizons Regional Council operational budgets allocated to this work</p> <p>Public education campaign about water channel clearance in Tararua District</p>	Horizons Regional Council		Horizons Regional Council BAU	<p>Tararua Debris Management Action Plan completed June 2024 with all top priority sites actioned</p> <p>Less river blockages after flood events.</p> <p>Timely response to ratepayer request for assistance</p>	Complete	



4.2	Expand the Environmental monitoring network in the Eastern Coastal catchments	Stage 1 Update Horizons Regional Council Regional Council Regional Council radio network	Horizons Regional Council		Horizons Regional Council BAU	New radio repeater network up and running by end of August 2024.  Further work to upgrade to solar power supply in remote locations. To be completed June 2025.	Complete	
4.3		Stage 2 Update rainfall and river level sites at ~Ōwahanga, Pongaroa, Wimbledon, Weber and Cadmus Bridge	Horizons Regional Council		Horizons Regional Council BAU	Completed system online August 2024.	Complete	
4.4		Work with other partners to add flood warning sites	Horizons Regional Council	Tararua Emergency Management Group		Local residents aware of how river level and flood warning system operates in the Eastern Coastal catchments	Ongoing	Brought in as part of BAU
4.5	Erosion leading to continued sediment into watercourses and ongoing damage to on and off farm infrastructure is identified and treated	Provide long term advice to landowners around erosion mitigation and reducing sediment into waterways primarily through SLUI funding	Horizons Regional Council		Horizons Regional Council BAU	# people Horizons Regional Council have worked with in Tararua through this work programme  # new people that Horizons Regional Council have worked with	Ongoing	Brought in as part of BAU

4.6	Land Stability Project	Provide funding for long-term stabilisation projects	Horizons Regional Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tararua Alliance</li> <li>• Tararua District Recovery team</li> <li>• Tararua District Council</li> <li>• Rural Support Trust</li> <li>• MSD</li> </ul>	Horizons Regional Council BAU	Horizons Regional Council report km's of fencing, hectares of work, # of trees planted	Complete	Land Stability plants are coming from SLUI fund
4.7		Work with land owners and Tararua Alliance to identify sites on private land where work is required outside the roading corridor	Horizons Regional Council  Tararua Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tararua Alliance</li> <li>• Tararua District Recovery team</li> <li>• Tararua District Council</li> <li>• Rural Support Trust</li> <li>• MSD</li> </ul>	Horizons Regional Council BAU  funding available until 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2027	Identify priority sites by December 2024  # of sites where a joint programme is completed	Complete	

## ECONOMIC RECOVERY

### RECOVERY OUTCOME: (END RESULT/FOCUS AREA)

**Ensure the lingering economic impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle on the Tararua District are accurately recorded, reported, and shared with key stakeholders. This will provide decision-makers with a clear understanding of the current state of the district's rural economy.**

**Priority and progress key:** 1 – 1-3 months (Oct-Dec 2024). 2 – 3-6 months (Jan-March 2024). 3 – +6 months (April & beyond). 4 – Ongoing

**Traffic light key:** **Green** – On track. **Orange** – Delayed. **Red** – Issues.

Objective/goal		Recovery actions	Lead	Stakeholders	Funding	How we will measure the difference we're making	Priority & Progress	Reporting
5.1	'Outlook for Tararua District economy' report	Lead analysis and develop an action plan that outlines delegation of actions from the report  Create a Comms Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infometrics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Team</li> </ul>	DPMC	Report received  Analysis complete  Action plan developed	Complete	
5.2	'Outlook for Tararua District economy' report	Feedback report results to community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Team</li> <li>Infometrics</li> <li>Dannevirke Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>Pahiatua Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>CEDA</li> </ul>	DPMC	Report completed  Meeting held	Complete	



5.3	"Outlook for Tararua District economy" report	Report to Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	DPMC	Report to Council	Complete	
5.4	"Outlook for Tararua District economy" report	Lead any recovery related actions (in conjunction with other Recovery leads if relevant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	DPMC	Tararua District Recovery team meeting to discuss Action Plan developed	Complete	No recovery actions identified
5.5	Understand the effects of Cyclone Gabrielle, as well as other adverse events e.g. COVID, Drought, on farm businesses over the last 5 years	<p>Work with MCI &amp; Associates to gain a grassroots understanding of rural business cash flow and budget trends post-cyclone, covering the past five years and projecting into the 2025/26 financial year.</p> <p>Review and analysis (which includes comparing to the 'Outlook for Tararua District economy' report)</p> <p>Comms plan developed</p> <p>Action plan developed, if deemed appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> <li>Economic Development Team</li> <li>MCI &amp; Associates</li> <li>Tararua District Council Communications Team</li> </ul>	Co-funded by MCI & Associates s/ DPMC	<p>Report received from MCI &amp; Associates</p> <p>Analysis report produced</p> <p>Comms Plan developed</p> <p>Action plan developed, if deemed appropriate</p>	Complete	

5.6	Understand the current economic state of the Tararua District	Compare and analyse the two reports in conjunction with each other Final report produced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Council</li> </ul>	Tararua Recovery Team	Tararua District Council		3 (not started)	No capacity
5.7	Tararua District events are supported where recovery is benefited	Support Tararua District Council and business events as required	Tararua District Recovery team		N/A	# Events supported	4 (ongoing)	

## TARARUA DISTRICT COUNCIL RECOVERY OFFICE

### RECOVERY OUTCOME: (END RESULT/FOCUS AREA)

**Ensure the recovery team operates efficiently and effectively throughout the remaining duration of this plan, with a well-prepared exit strategy in place on completion. The exit plan will cover all remaining actions, assigning clear responsibilities to ensure a smooth transition and continued support for recovery activity into the future, if needed**

**Priority and progress key:** 1 – 1-3 months (Oct-Dec 2024). 2 – 3-6 months (Jan-March 2024). 3 – +6 months (April & beyond). 4 – Ongoing

**Traffic light key:** **Green** – On track. **Orange** – Delayed. **Red** – Issues.

Objective/goal		Recovery actions	Lead	Stakeholders	Funding	How we will measure the difference we're making	Priority & Progress	Comments
6.1	Facilitate a collaborative Land Stability Project with partner agencies and the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm funding arrangements with partners for the project</li> <li>Establish a sustainable project team to manage the project</li> <li>Create a project management template to support the process for the land stability project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua Alliance</li> <li>Horizons Regional Council</li> <li>Rural Support Trust</li> <li>MSD</li> <li>MPI</li> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> <li>Farmers/ Landowners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner Agencies using BAU funds to cover their respective areas.</li> <li><b>Horizons Regional Council:</b> Plants – SLUI Fund</li> <li><b>Tararua Alliance:</b> Civil Works – NZTA</li> <li><b>MSD:</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10+ worksites confirmed by project team for next planting season (August 2025)</li> <li>Collaborative framework approved and implemented</li> </ul>	Complete (Ongoing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contract signed for planting Labor FY 25/26.</li> <li>Work to begin on approx. 80 sites over July – September 2025</li> </ul>



					Planting Labour			
6.2	Record the Tararua District Recovery Programme visually	Recovery photo book developed  Create a Comms Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery Team</li> </ul>	N/A	Recovery photo book distributed to Tararua District Council, partners and stakeholders	Complete	Cyclone Gabrielle Photobook published in February 2025
6.3	Advocate for Rural Support Trust's continued support for those impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle, if needed	Development of briefing paper for the Mayor to advocate for Rural Support Trust assistance to continue in Tararua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Support Trust</li> <li>Mayor</li> </ul>	N/A	Briefing paper developed for Mayor if required	Complete	Communication between Council and RST will continue
6.4	Recovery Readiness planning	Recovery toolkit and EOC Recovery box developed  Recovery training and exercising plan in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency Management Officer</li> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> </ul>	N/A	Recovery Readiness toolkit developed  EOC Recovery box developed  Recovery training and exercising plan in place	Complete	
6.5	Ensure Recovery filing and projects are complete	Complete and file Recovery projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> </ul>	N/A	Recovery projects, initiatives and information filed correctly on the Tararua District Council system	Complete	

						and discoverable for future events, if needed		
6.6	Recovery Lessons Management incl Debrief	<p>Lead the Lessons Management process</p> <p>Develop a Lessons Identified report</p> <p>Develop an action plan to progress recommendations for lessons to be learned.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> <li>Iwi</li> <li>Partners</li> <li>Stakeholders</li> <li>NEMA</li> <li>CRU/DPMC</li> <li>Group Recovery Office</li> </ul>	N/A	<p>Lessons identified report finalised and circulated to partners/stakeholders</p> <p>Presentation to Council</p> <p>Action plan developed</p>	Complete	Booked in FY 25/26
6.7	Transition Plan	Work with Tararua District Recovery team and Tararua District Council to produce a Recovery Transition Plan that highlights how ongoing recovery issues will be managed going forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> <li>Tararua District Council</li> <li>CDEM Group Office</li> <li>NEMA</li> </ul>	N/A	Transition plan complete and reported to Council	Complete	Completed June 2025
6.8	Final Report	Produce a Tararua District Recovery Final Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> <li>CDEM Group Office</li> <li>NEMA</li> </ul>	N/A	Recovery Final Report produced and distributed to Tararua District Council and recovery partners/stakeholders	Complete	Completed June 2025



6.9	Recovery Team co-ordination	<p>Organisation of Recovery Team meetings (2 x month)</p> <p>Development of a reporting template to monitor plan</p> <p>Monitoring of Recovery Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> </ul>	N/A	<p>2 Tararua District Recovery team meetings held monthly</p> <p>Recovery plan progress monitored/roadblocks identified and escalated as needed</p>	Complete	
6.10	Continue to share information with the community and partners/stakeholders through the next phase of recovery	Develop a Comms Plan appropriate for this phase of Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> <li>Tararua District Council Comms Team</li> </ul>	N/A	<p>Comms Plan developed</p> <p># of Comms shared</p>	Complete	
6.11	Tararua District Recovery Website is permanently updated to record the impacts from Cyclone Gabrielle on the District	Create an evergreen static historic page about Cyclone Gabrielle and the Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery Project Co-ordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tararua District Recovery team</li> <li>Tararua District Council Comms Team</li> </ul>	N/A	Website updated	In progress	Working with communications team on evergreen content



6. 12	Reporting – CEG/JC/Council / DPMC	Complete the following reports monthly Council DPMC Mayor's Taskforce for Recovery Complete reports as requested for CEG/JC	Recovery Project Co-ordinator	Tararua District Recovery team	N/A	# reports completed  Feedback from Council/DPMC/ Mayors Taskforce for Recovery	Complete	Completed as required
6. 13	Advocate for support for lingering environmental impacts in the Tararua District	Work with the Catchment Groups to collect data that will inform local river management priorities (Horizons). i.e. Herbertville Bridge	Recovery Project Co-ordinator	Tararua District Recovery team Catchment Groups Horizons Regional Council Herbertville community	N/A	Collated information sent to Horizons Regional Council	Complete	

# Tararua District Council

## ~~DRAFT~~ Exit Strategy

Event:	Cyclone Gabrielle	
Districts and Regions affected:	Tararua District	
Prepared by:	Mitchell Guile	
Handover from:	Tararua Recovery Team	Signature: 
Handover to:	Tararua District Council	
	Bryan Nicholson	Signature: 
Date of handover from Recovery Manager to CE:	1 July 2025	
Status:	<del>Draft</del> Final	

## The Event, the Response and the Recovery

### The Event

Cyclone Gabrielle was a significant weather event impacting northern, central and eastern north island of New Zealand resulting in a National State of Emergency declared on 14 February 2023. Tararua's rural coastal communities felt the full force of the cyclone with significant structural and environmental damage sustained.

Over 2 years on from Cyclone Gabrielle, people and communities are still feeling the impacts.

Our farmers were hit hard. Over 200 farms in Tararua District sustained damage, some major, and many are still working to recover from the physical, economic and psychological impacts of the disaster.

Our roading network sustained major impacts, and while good progress has been made, there is still ongoing work ahead as we know that our roading network remains vulnerable to slips, dropouts and falling trees.

Our natural environment has also sustained significant damage. Work is ongoing to build resilience where we can.

The health and wellbeing of our people has been tested and continues to be, as multiple other compounding issues, such as two years of COVID-19 lockdowns, beef and lamb commodity prices, the global recession, a drought and tight financial times are ongoing, taking it's toll on our valued and important farming community.

In addition, we know that the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle along with the compounding issues have made it tough for our local businesses. We know that there is still work to do to help our people and communities recover and to build resilience for future events that the Tararua District may face.

## **Recovery**

The Cyclone Gabrielle Recovery Team was initiated by Sandra James – Consultant from Connecting People. She led the transition from response to recovery and helped establish the needs of the team. This was then handed over in May 2023 to Don Cameron who managed an internal recovery office. The TDC team was made up of 2 seconded staff, 3 new employees as well as key leads from Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua and Kahungunu ki Tāmaki-nui-a-Rua, Horizons Regional Council, Tararua Alliance and Rural Support Trust.

## **Assistance required in the long-term**

No long-term assistance is needed.

## **Transition to business as usual to manage long-term recovery**

Minimal requirements are needed to transition to outstanding activities into their relative organisations. This is due to the remaining actions lying firmly within responsible agencies BAU functions and having those agencies as leads during recovery.

## **Planning and reporting in the long-term**

Reporting for remaining activities will be incorporated into the relevant Tararua District committee.

- Land Stability project will be reported on through the TDC Infrastructure, Climate Change and Emergency Management Committee. Additionally, any remaining emergency works will also be reported through this forum.
- Ongoing rural issues will be reported through the Emergency Management Welfare Group

## **Management of public information and communications**

Communications and Public information will be taken over by Tararua District Council. A webpage is already available on the TDC website which houses information on the event.

## **Opportunities for communities to discuss unresolved issues and to continue to participate in their recovery**

Communities can raise ongoing issues in the following ways:

1. Through their local Civil Defence Group.
2. Through the quarterly CDEM Group meetings (operational and welfare).
3. Through the TDC CRM system.
  - a. Call - 06 374 4080 (North), 06 376 0110 (South)



b. Website: [Report It \(CRM\) | Tararua District Council](#)

c. Email: [Info@tararuadc.govt.nz](mailto:Info@tararuadc.govt.nz)

d. Antenno App: Report it function.

4. Through the Horizons CRM system

a. [Contact Us - Horizons Regional Council](#)

## **Changes to organisational arrangements**

Due to the structure of our recovery team there is no need for changes to organisational arrangements. However, it is important that the key stakeholders keep in touch with each other post transition, raising any issues through to the team for discussion.

## **Debrief and review**

### **Debrief**

A debrief is planned for FY 25/26 focusing on the success, failures and learnings from Cyclone Gabrielle Recovery. This will include Iwi, Council Staff, RST, Horizons, Tararua Alliance, key community members.

### **Review**

While we responded well to Cyclone Gabrielle, we are not prepared for an event including our urban towns. We have been fortunate to have funding for a recovery team event however this will most likely not be the norm. We need to start resourcing a recovery team whether it be via assessing roles with the ability to downscale and include the skills to undertake lead roles or/also by creating a financial strategy to ensure we can resource recovery. We additionally need to ensure we maintain our relationships with our communities, enabling them to support themselves.

## Appendix – ongoing and future issues

### Social environment

#### Lead Agency: Tararua District Council

#### Recovery Office outcomes achieved:

- Support for three hubs applying and receiving MBIE Renewable Energy Fund Solar PV panels and Batteries.
- Collaborated with Rural Lead to organize and support wellbeing events: MSFTs Fuel your Stoke Family Concert, Te Radar etc
- Established a Social Recovery Wellbeing Group
- Created a Psychosocial Welfare group
- Received \$25,000 from DIA Lotteries Grant to support 9 wellbeing events across the district, providing quality time off farm.
- 8 isolated communities received improvements to their community hubs inc preparedness equipment, upgrades to their facilities and training for their CD groups totalling \$250,000
- 5 urban communities received improvements to their community hubs inc preparedness equipment, upgrades to their facilities and training for their CD groups totalling \$150,000
- 6 Marae supported with resilience initiatives totalling \$90,000
- 164 residents received a total of \$307,210.70 from the mayoral relief fund.
- Conducted 2x Wellbeing surveys to understand the social impact of recovery initiatives.

### Ongoing and future issues for people and communities

Issue	Long term needs	Now to be managed by
Any outstanding actions in Recovery Action plan	Ongoing communication and support for Community civil Defence groups and community hubs.	TDC Emergency Management
People still displaced	No	-
Ongoing impact on children	No	-

Ongoing impact on older people	No	-
Ongoing impact on iwi and marae	No	-
Other current and future needs	No	-

## Built environment

### Lead Agency: Tararua Alliance

Recovery office outcomes achieved:

- 47 roads and 6 bridges repaired. Over \$43M of emergency repairs funding from NZTA
- Creation of a roading priority matrix to efficiently address the extensive number of roading faults.
- Marainanga Gorge Road reopened 5 months after Cyclone Gabrielle
- 3 deployable generators,
- 1 backup generator for Akitio Cell tower
- 8 Starlink systems purchased
- Support for 18 red and yellow stickered properties - 1 red sticker remaining (Council Owned)
- Land Stability Project case study completed with over 130 priority sites identified to participate in this project designed to increase resilience of the roading network. The purpose of the case study was to identify private land prone to slipping under or above the roadside causing roadside dropouts and slips. Tararua Alliance and Horizons Regional Council Yr 1 of this programme of work will begin in July 2025, funded by NZTA Resilience funding and Horizons Regional Council SLUI fund.

## Ongoing and future issues

Issues with	Long-term needs	Now to be managed by
Any outstanding actions in Recovery Action plan	Yes	Tararua Alliance
Residential buildings	One Council owned hall still red stickered	TDC



Commercial buildings	N/A	-
Community assets	N/A	-
Local roads	Emergency work is being incorporated into BAU roading work	Tararua Alliance
Private land stability	Continued program of work incorporated into Tararua Alliance and Horizons Regional Council's BAU programmes of work	Tararua Alliance and Horizons Regional Council
Roading Data	Collection of rural roading data	Tararua Alliance

## Natural environment

### Lead Agency: Horizons Regional Council

#### Recovery office outcomes achieved:

- New rainfall monitoring sites installed across the Tararua District for better environmental data collection Farmers worked with Horizons Regional Council by providing their individual records which helped identify these sites.
- Secured funding for environmental monitoring upgrades.
- Identified 6 new radio repeater sites with farmers in the Tararua District to provide enhanced coverage east of the Puketoi Range.
- Horizons Regional Council provided advice on priority sites for Akitio beach clean-up and the office coordinated the funding of the clean-up and the clean-up itself.
- Provided clean-up support across the Tararua District.
- Supported the built lead by providing a dedicated resource for processing resource consents in the Tararua District.

#### Ongoing and future issues

Issues with	Long-term needs	Now to be managed by
Any outstanding actions in Recovery Action plan	n/a	-
Rivers, coasts and national parks	Monitor rivers	Horizons Regional Council
Rural landscapes	Restoration still underway or needed	Horizons Regional Council

## Economic environment

### Lead Agency: Tararua District Council

#### Recovery outcomes achieved:

- 24 businesses received a total of \$333,500 through MBIE business support fund
- Community Hub Trailer built to provide training and emergency support during an event and in BAU
- Economic Data Project launched getting an understanding of impact of Cyclone Gabrielle on the Tararua District through report from Infometrics (Macroeconomic level). Phase 2 underway with MCI+A accountants providing insight into rural professional businesses in the affected areas (Microeconomic level).

Issues with	Long-term needs	Now to be managed by
Any outstanding actions in Recovery Action plan		
Economic Data	Need to monitor long term financial effects on our rural professionals, Tararua District and related businesses	TDC Economic Development

## Rural environment (primary production)

### Lead Agency: East Coast Rural Support Trust – Tararua

#### Rural Recovery Outcomes Achieved:

- The Rural Support Trust – Tararua area coordinator coordinated the on farm clean-up group as they had many requests for help with clean up. They were also able to distribute fencing materials to those in need.
- The East Coast Rural Support Trust – Tararua area coordinator coordinated and completed on-farm needs assessments to understand individual requirements of farmers and guide recovery efforts.
- The East Coast Rural Support Trust – Tararua area coordinator organised Psychosocial Welfare group alongside Social Lead.
- The East Coast Rural Support Trust – Tararua area coordinator organised rural

events in conjunction with other Tararua organisations for the purpose of improving rural wellbeing. Ladies Lunches, three comedy nights, three farmers fitness programmes, Mud Sweat and Cheers – Pongaroa, the Boggled in the swamp shout, blokes' day out and more.

- The East Coast Rural Support Trust – Tararua area coordinator worked closely with the Recovery Office's Social Lead on organisation and funding of social wellbeing events (See social lead).
- The MSD funded Enhanced Taskforce Green Programme visited a total of 42 rural properties between 19 June to 1 December doing remedial work and fencing repairs.
- Kids sports day with Sport Manawatu at 6 cyclone affected schools and then delivered rain anxiety picture books.
- Rural Support Trust – Tararua Cyclone Recovery Expo.
  - This event, created and run by The East Coast Rural Support Trust -Tararua Rural Support Trust, saw farmers receive a trailer load of free fencing gear which included a bundle of posts, wire, staples, and permanent strainers. Additionally, the 150 farmers in attendance received a \$200 accommodation voucher, \$50 New World voucher, \$30 pharmacy voucher and more in a wellbeing package.
  - This was attended by the East Coast Rural Support Trust – Tararua, Tararua District Council Recovery Team, Health Centres, Rural Professionals and more.
- MSD funded continuation of Fencing Initiative to support ongoing issues in affected areas.
- Vet collaboration project, headed by The East Coast Rural Support Trust -Tararua to support and provide technical information with drench resistance in the rural community affected by Cyclone Gabrielle.
- The East Coast Rural Support Trust –Tararua's continuous one on one wellbeing support for the affected rural community – Support with referrals, guidance etc.
- The East Coast Rural Support Trust -Tararua continuous one on one financial support for the affected rural community – Rural Assistance payments, Advocating etc.

## Ongoing and future issues

Issues with	Long-term needs	Now to be managed by
Damage to farmland/ Land resilience	Land retiring, planting advice	Horizons Regional Council (SLUI Programme)



Wellbeing needs	Continued need for advisory services (Support with referrals, guidance),	The East Coast Rural Support Trust -Tararua
Financial Support	Continued need for advisory services (Referring and advocating for clients to banks, MSD and other rural professionals)	The East Coast Rural Support Trust -Tararua

## Finance

All outstanding funds from DPMC have been returned as outlined in the DPMC funding agreement.

All other funding agreements from MSD, DIA, ECCT have been either spent in full or remaining funds returned as per their agreements as well.

There are no outstanding purchase orders, reimbursements, claims or ongoing costs expected in the future.

Future costs associated with remaining activities have been incorporated into BAU work programs of the identified responsible agency.

## Opportunities identified to reduce risk and strengthen resilience

### 1. Marae Support:

As part of our district-wide commitment to community resilience and emergency readiness, targeted work has been undertaken to support marae across the Tararua District in strengthening their preparedness for natural disasters and emergency events. Recognised as vital cultural and spiritual hubs, marae also play a critical role as places of refuge and support during crises. Ensuring they are equipped to respond effectively is a key priority within our civil defence planning framework.

This initiative involved close engagement with local marae committees to identify specific readiness needs, assess infrastructure capabilities, and provide tailored guidance on emergency planning. Support provided has included basic emergency supplies and resources, alongside advice on essential areas such as generator access, water and food storage, and communications capabilities.

Funding of \$15,000 was allocated to six marae to carry out activities identified through needs assessments, enhancing their capacity to serve their communities when it matters most.

### 2. Community Hubs/Civil Defence Groups:

Post-cyclone Gabrielle it was identified that our isolated communities lacked Civil Defence preparedness/maturity. A project was initiated to establish a Civil Defence group consisting of key community members keen on better preparedness for the next Civil Defence event.

8 isolated communities were identified and Civil Defence groups were created in Pongoroa, Wimbledon, Alfredton, Weber, Te Uri, Makuri, Akitio and Kumeroa.

These groups were then provided with funding to create or enhance their local Community Hubs.

This included but wasn't limited too:

- Generators,
- First Aid Training,
- Outdoor lighting,
- Sanitary products,
- First Aid Kits,
- Chainsaws and Training,
- Upgrades to Halls,
- Califonts.

### **1. Land Stability Project:**

Cyclone Gabrielle had a significant impact on our roading extensive rural roading network. It was identified that to prevent this level of damage happening again in the future we needed to collaborate with Horizons Regional Council, NZTA, RST, MSD and our ratepayers to build back better.

Through this we identified upslope and downslope slips on private land and road reserve that could benefit from remedial planting, drainage and civil work. A case study was carried out in August 2024 on one site to great success.

Over 130 sites were identified for year one of this work and work is underway to plant the upslope and downslope of priority 1 sites.

### **2. Addition of river monitoring and radio repeaters;**

Accurate and abundant data was a clear problem for monitoring and predicting flooding events across our isolated rural areas.

The Natural Lead (Horizons Regional Council) spearheaded a project to establish 6 new sites across our district along with gathering data from private land holders. This data is still in the process of building up until it has enough historical data to pull into regular reports.

### **3. Back Up generator for Akitio:**

Connectivity has been an issue across the district for years, and during Cyclone Gabrielle issues were identified with the Akitio Cell tower.

The recovery team secured \$44,000 for a backup generator for this cell tower ensuring that this vital communication link is secure.

### **4. Starlinks:**

Similarly to the Akitio cell tower there are various other isolated areas across our district. As not all of these have cell towers we can support, the recovery team instead bought 10 Starlinks which can be deployed to remote areas providing crucial access in times of crisis.

### **5. Solar Energy:**

The recovery team supported applications for 3 communities to receive solar panels and batteries for their community hubs. Specifically, Te Uri, Herbertville and Kumeroa received this support. This MBIE grant enabled these communities to have access to power in their community hubs regardless of the event.

## **6. Deployable Generators:**

While community hubs were provided generators, and some solar energy there is still other groups, communities and situations that may benefit from ready access to a reliable back up power source. Therefore, we decided we will manage and hold three generators for deploying in the community in times of emergency.

### **Information management**

All information gathered during the recovery period has been stored in the TDC Content Management System as per the public records act 2005.



**TARARUA DISTRICT**  
**CYCLONE GABRIELLE**  
**RECOVERY PROGRAMME**

