

Cyclone recovery MSD update Month of September 2023

Context

This report is an update on the Ministry of Social Development's key monitoring in response to the severe weather events in 2023 (Auckland Flooding in Jan 2023 and Cyclone Gabrielle in Feb 2023).

This includes key updates on how the Ministry is supporting affected regions through income support, employment, and community programmes.

What's been achieved?

- MSD in their lead role for the Social Sector Recovery Plan have been working with Regional Public Sector Commissioners (RPSCs) and Recovery Managers who have determined where investment is best allocated for priority areas and needs in their Regional Recovery Plans.
- Procurement and allocation of investment has been progressed for many of the regions to support implementation of their Regional Recovery Plans.
- The All of Government Funders' Forum (which includes the RPSCs) continues to meet regularly as a national cross-agency clearinghouse.

RPSC insights

Work is continuing in Tairāwhiti to develop a Collective Impact Approach across all cyclone recovery work. A further Talanoa will be held with public sector agencies to identify funding and support for the Tairāwhiti Pacifica Recovery Plan.

In Hawke's Bay, the Regional Public Sector (RPS) and MSD are supporting the Workforce Development Plan in development, led by the Regional Economic Development Agency (the REDA). This will help to provide a picture of workforce demand and supply around recovery work, and involves collaboration with MBIE and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

In Tāmaki Makaurau, the RPS, and MSD have been engaging with the Tamaki Mākaurau Recovery Office working through funding requests for Social Sector Recovery Funds. Proposals have been submitted for Iwi & Community Fund and FOSAL Support Fund. Conversations continue around the Mental Wellbeing Fund.

In Te Tai Tokerau, the trees and powerline clearing project funded by MPI, Ngā Manga Atawhai, was launched at Te Whakamaharatanga Marae with over 30 different government, community, and industry representatives in attendance. Te Roroa Commercial Development is transitioning from Enhanced Taskforce Green (ETFG) into this body of work with a goal to create a sustainable commercial entity and to provide services to the community, including supplying firewood from the removed trees.

This is a partnership with Iwi, Council, MPI, MSD and industry. An MOU has been created and signed with MSD.

In Tararua, the Regional Public Service have been planning a combined initiative to bring together school representatives involving two colleges, Police, Oranga Tamariki, Iwi, and Ministry of Education, to identify immediate small scale and quickly implemented initiatives to support youth in the area. The RPS are working with the recovery teams to progress initiatives for the community, especially regarding economic recovery.

In Waikato, the RPSC finalised NIWE funding allocation of \$1m for FY23/24 and focussed on initiating grants and contracts, with an emphasis on funding the retention of jobs across industry on the Coromandel Peninsula. Civil Defence Emergency Management, Thames-Coromandel District Council, Waikato District Council, and the RPSC met to finalise funding decisions, submitting them to MSD for Social Sector Recovery Fund allocations on 6 September 2023. A funding split of 75:25 to reflect the severity of damage to the respective regions has been agreed between the parties.

In Wairarapa, providers for Social Sector funding have been confirmed, and the regional public sector continue to engage with key stakeholders on resilience initiatives such as establishing a fencing school for ongoing resilience to weather events, and workforce needs.

The Bay of Plenty Collective Impact Group (BOPCIG) and Senior Regional Leadership Group agree on developing a Climate Change Resilience Wānanga series that is iwi led, and focussed on iwi preparedness, adaptation, and recovery.

Employment

10 Enhanced Taskforce Green (ETFG) teams, and a total of 66 people have been deployed across weather-affected regions as of the end of September. ETFG involves employing people in projects focussed on supporting recovery work such as removing debris from land, fences, and waterways as well as silt removal.

On 2-October, the new Tairāwhiti Jobs and Skills Hub opened. It has been established for the next 2 years as a “pop-up” hub to help with the rebuild after Cyclone Gabrielle. The already established Hawke’s Bay Jobs and Skills Hub is also supporting cyclone recovery opportunities. Our Jobs and Skills Hubs help to get people upskilled and into jobs in construction and infrastructure, making sure businesses have the people they need to deliver big projects.



Temporary Accommodation Assistance

The Government began work to establish a Temporary Accommodation Assistance payment in June 2023. This payment is to provide support to homeowners displaced by the North Island Weather Events who were living in private rental accommodation which was covered by insurance temporary accommodation cover, but that insurance cover was running out and they were facing two sets of accommodation costs. This payment became available to eligible homeowners displaced by the North Island Weather Events on 4 September 2023. The payment was then extended to support eligible homeowners displaced by the 2022 Nelson, Marlborough and Tasman floods on 25 September 2023.

Benefit numbers

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Table 1: Number of working-age people receiving main benefits in selected regions

Region	Month			Monthly change		Annual change	
	Sep 22	Aug 23	Sep 23	Number	%	Number	%
Tāmaki Makaurau	103,404	108,375	109,539	1,164	1.1%	6,135	5.9%
Bay of Plenty	28,020	28,482	28,935	453	1.6%	915	3.3%
Hawke's Bay	14,499	14,907	15,120	213	1.4%	621	4.3%
Manawatū-Whanganui	22,311	23,121	23,292	171	0.7%	981	4.4%
Te Tai Tokerau	19,983	20,535	20,733	198	1.0%	750	3.8%
Tairāwhiti	5,703	5,949	6,069	120	2.0%	366	6.4%
Waikato	38,982	40,605	41,031	426	1.0%	2,049	5.3%
Wellington	31,188	31,803	32,238	435	1.4%	1,050	3.4%
National	345,762	357,975	362,094	4,119	1.2%	16,332	4.7%

In the month of September, all regions impacted by the North Island weather events saw the number of main benefit recipients increase when compared to the previous month and year.

Comparatively, the largest month-on-month increases in benefit numbers were in:

Tairāwhiti saw an increase of 2.0 percent, and of 6.5 percent compared to the previous year. These increases were slightly higher than what was observed nationally.

Bay of Plenty saw an increase of 1.6 percent, and of 3.3 percent compared to the previous year. These increases were respectively slightly higher (monthly) or lower (yearly) than what was observed nationally.

Since May 2023, there has been a rising trend in benefit numbers across Aotearoa New Zealand, likely relating to multiple factors such as extreme weather events, and signs that the economy is weakening. Benefit number trends across the different regions are also likely to reflect external factors, and are expected to continue rising based on Treasury's expectation of a period of low economic growth, which will then affect the labour market.

Next steps

1. MSD will continue to work with Cyclone Response Unit, regional teams and other agencies to update and facilitate priority activities in the social area of the Regional Recovery Plans.
2. MSD will continue to work with regions on the remaining regional allocations for the Social Sector Recovery Plan, and NIWE Food Secure Communities Funds, for prioritised areas and needs, to enable the implementation of Regional Plans.