

# Cyclone recovery MSD update

## Month of November 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 its lead coordination role for the Social Sector Recovery Plan has been working with Regional Public Sector Commissioners and Recovery Managers to support the decision making on where investment for priority areas and priority needs in their Regional Recovery Plans is best allocated.
- Final decisions on funding allocation have been reached in most regions. Procurement processes have been completed and funds have been distributed to agreed partners to progress the social outcomes indicated in the Regional Recovery Plans.
- The All of Government Funders' Forum (which includes the Regional Public Service Commissioners) continues to meet regularly as a national Cross-agency clearinghouse.

### Employment

#### Regional snapshots

East Coast are using the funding secured for employment opportunities by investing in our partners for work preparation and placement. They are supporting the upskilling of MSD clients in roles like traffic management and civil construction. This includes working with National Industry Partnerships like Downer or Fulton Hogan as well as working with smaller regionally based providers and iwi.

They continue to bolster MSD's core products like Flexiwave to attract people into employment and support them in jobs. Outside of MSD's core products like Flexiwave they are supporting approximately 25 initiatives across the East Coast. These include supporting employment outcomes but have also helped in the development of recovery planning especially in smaller areas like Wairoa who have felt the ongoing effects of adverse weather. MSD is also working with pastoral care services to support those in work to maintain sustainable employment through some of these contracts.

The success of pre-employment training and upskilling and the translation of those into sustainable employment opportunities will be somewhat dependent on the realization of the recovery workforce pipeline and recovery work on the East Coast.

In Auckland they have used Flexiwave to support MSD clients into employment opportunities arising from recovery. They are also investing in skills and industry training and development.

In the Waikato MSD continues to support businesses to retain their workforce, working with existing employers. A key focus has been the improvement of roading to better enable movement around the region and support tourism over the summer.

Enhanced Taskforce Green crews continue to support clean-up work.



## Employment – Enhanced Taskforce Green in focus

Enhanced Task Force Green (ETFG) is a disaster recovery employment support initiative that assists communities with recovering from the damage of weather events or natural disasters. Farmers and growers hit hard by the weather events earlier this year received help with removing silt, debris, and clearing fence lines, while job seekers gained the skills, experience, and knowledge they need to help them into permanent employment.

Wairoa was heavily impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle. The photos below showcase a Wairoa ETFG crew in action helping support a farmer with essential repairs and clean up after the event. Since ETFG commenced in May 2023, 30 properties have been completed in Wairoa.

Regarding the national picture, twenty-six people have already left the ETFG programme across the North Island because they secured permanent employment.

When the remaining clean-up work is complete, MSD will continue to work with employers in each location to support the remaining staff into jobs.



ETFG crew working in Wairoa, East Coast



Photo taken of ETFG crew members working on a Wairoa farm - late November 2023



Photo taken of ETFG crew members working on a Wairoa farm in late November 2023 visited by MSD's Wairoa Client Service Operations Manager, East Coast Regional Commissioner, and by TVNZ filming a news item



## Benefit numbers

### Benefit numbers

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

Region	Month			Monthly change		Annual change	
	Nov 22	Oct 23	Nov 23	Number	%	Number	%
Tāmaki Makaurau	103,908	110,418	112,809	2,391	2.2%	8,901	8.6%
Bay of Plenty	27,774	28,998	29,301	303	1.0%	1,527	5.5%
Hawke's Bay	14,235	15,036	14,964	-72	-0.5%	729	5.1%
Manawatū-Whanganui	22,299	23,148	23,349	201	0.9%	1,050	4.7%
Te Tai Tokerau	19,842	20,643	20,709	66	0.3%	867	4.4%
Tairāwhiti	5,676	6,018	6,036	18	0.3%	360	6.3%
Waikato	39,195	41,253	41,673	420	1.0%	2,478	6.3%
Wellington	31,428	32,418	33,321	903	2.8%	1,893	6.0%
<b>National</b>	<b>346,419</b>	<b>363,369</b>	<b>369,045</b>	<b>5,676</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>22,626</b>	<b>6.5%</b>

In the month of November, most regions impacted by the North Island weather events saw the number of main benefit recipients remain similar to the previous month, with changes of one percent or less. The exceptions were Wellington and Tāmaki Makaurau, where the number of main benefit recipients increased by 2.8 and 2.2 percent, respectively.

When compared to the previous year, all regions saw an increase in the number of main benefits recipients.

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.

## Community funding

- As at end of November 2023, we have committed \$11.5 million from the \$13.5 million tagged contingency for the Social Sector Recovery Plan.
- We continue to work with MEC, MPP, and Whaikaha to agree on the approach to distributing the \$0.5 million for short term communication and translation support. We've also engaged with the DPMC Cyclone Recovery Unit on how to best manage AOG communications and coordination response going forward.

## Next steps

1. Ministers will be meeting with communities impacted by the NIWE over the coming weeks. MSD will continue to facilitate coordination in the social sector via the Funders Forum and by supporting the role of the Regional Public Sector Commissioners in the development and implementation of the Regional Recovery Plans.
2. MSD will continue to work with regions on the remaining regional allocations for the Social Sector Recovery Plan, which includes the NIWE Food Secure Communities Funds, to enable the continued implementation of Regional Plans.