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(Parker, D. & Henare, P., 2023b)

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# Government takes action on East Coast land use report



HON DAVID PARKER(/MINISTER/HON-DAVID-PARKER)



HON PEENI HENARE(/MINISTER/HON-PEENI-HENARE)

Environment (/portfolio/labour-2020-2023/environment)

Forestry (/portfolio/labour-2020-2023/forestry)

- Clearing woody debris
  - Support for Gisborne District Council on land use management
  - Improved national guidance on forestry management, including on forestry slash
  - Work to strengthen regional partnerships

The Government is backing a comprehensive package of action around land use in Tairāwhiti/Gisborne and Wairoa, Environment Minister David Parker and Forestry Minister Peeni Henare announced today.

The package supports the findings of the Ministerial Inquiry into the devastating East Coast weather events of 2023.

“We’re committed to change based on this report,” David Parker said. “Each of the report’s recommendations was carefully considered, and we are firmly focussed on reducing risk and setting this region up for sustainable longer term change.

“Our response has two phases: immediate actions, then building resilience,” David Parker said.

Forestry Minister Peeni Henare said phase one includes action to remove woody debris, as well as work to understand how best to ramp up efforts to remove woody debris that’s at risk of further damaging downstream infrastructure for the longer term.

The Government has already made \$10.15 million in funding available to enable the clean-up of up to 70,000 tonnes of slash. An initial \$3.54 million of the fund has been distributed to councils across Tairāwhiti and the Hawke’s Bay to commence clean-up operations, with a further \$2 million being administered through Te Puni Kōkiri directly for whenua Māori.

“The \$10.15m is a start. But it’s clear more needs to be done to address the problem of woody debris and manage the risks to life, assets, and the environment.

“Other Government assistance for cyclone-related recovery in the region includes \$202 million for silt and debris removal in Hawke’s Bay and Tairāwhiti (see below for more details) and \$205 million for immediate roading repairs in Tairāwhiti and Wairoa announced this week.

“Communities want this prioritised. We need to reach a shared view of the size of the problem, actions to take and how the response should be paid for,” Peeni Henare said.

The Government will progress improvements around forestry management, responding to the Inquiry’s recommendations related to harvesting practices.

Responsibility for more active controls on forestry harvesting in the region rests with the Gisborne District Council, through specific measures in its resource management plan that it is now updating,” David Parker said.

“We are helping the Council by providing a statutory resource management advisor, so it can more quickly develop new resource management measures that are fit for purpose. This is not a reflection on the Council – rather, it recognises the scale of the task that it faces.

“Alongside the advisor, the Government will also appoint a facilitator to build partnerships, including with the forestry industry, landowners and Māori interests, to support an integrated approach to the recovery.”

“Further, the Government is updating forestry management standards at the national level. This will include national guidance on forestry slash risk management and addressing risks of slope failure and slash mobilisation. This will assist the Council in updating its plan.”

“We’ve met regularly with the forestry industry and Māori with an interest in forestry,” Peeni Henare said. “They are also committed to change and are actively working with central and local government to reduce known risks.

“Again, we recognise and thank the Ministerial Inquiry for their carefully considered report. We are committed to taking meaningful action in response,” David Parker said.

Ministers Parker and Henare will report to Cabinet by the end of the year on initial delivery of the response.

#### Notes for editors:

- The Government initiated the Ministerial Inquiry in March this year, in response to damage suffered by people and communities during Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle.
- The Inquiry panel, chaired by Hon Hekia Parata, presented its report and recommendations to Ministers on 12 May 2023.
- Alongside developing and confirming the two-phased approach, the Government has considered and responded to each of the Inquiry’s recommendations (see Appendix One of the Cabinet paper: *Government response to the Ministerial Inquiry into Land Use in Tairāwhiti/Gisborne and Wairoa*).
- Eight of the 49 recommendations are not being progressed for reasons including:
  - the recommendation has already been formally declined by Government (for example, fast-track consent of Te Araroa Kāhui Kupenga Marine Facility proposal)
  - it would set an unsustainable precedent (for example, shifting funding responsibility from local to central government for flood protection and control).
- Engagement with councils and hapū/iwi on terms of reference for the Ministerial appointees will take place over the next few weeks.
- The forestry industry continues to push for change: Statement from Eastland Wood Council and Hawke’s Bay Forestry Group (<https://eastlandwood.co.nz/ewc-020823/>)
- Support for clean-up and recovery already provided by the Government includes:
  - \$10.15 million to clean up and remove a minimum of 70,000 tonnes of woody debris, including forestry slash, from highest priority areas in river and catchment systems in Gisborne and Hawke’s Bay;
  - \$10.4 million woody biomass research fund over three years to build an evidence base for investing in biomass forestry, including research to promote woody residue and slash recovery;
  - Support for development of a bioenergy plant in Tairāwhiti, using slash and business models for continuous-cover forestry as a viable alternative to clear-felling;
  - \$202 million of support for sediment and debris clean up, although this is mainly focussed on sediment. Within this funding:
    - \$102 million is to help councils process and dispose of all the material coming from properties, and to deal with sediment and debris on council-land so it is available to the public again;
    - \$70 million is to help commercial properties – including farmers and growers – to clean up their land and return to profit; and
    - \$30 million is for clean-up of a broad range of whenua Māori, supporting Māori to decide how to manage sediment and debris on their whenua

#### Related Documents

Government response to the MILU in Tairāwhiti Gisborne and Wai (Redacted).pdf ( <a href="https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-09/Government%20response%20to%20the%20MILU%20in%20Tairāwhiti%20Gisborne%20and%20Wai%20%28Redacted%29.pdf">https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-09/Government%20response%20to%20the%20MILU%20in%20Tairāwhiti%20Gisborne%20and%20Wai%20%28Redacted%29.pdf</a> )	(844.31 KB)
Appendix One - response to individual Inquiry recommendations (Redacted).pdf ( <a href="https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-09/Appendix%20One%20-%20response%20to%20individual%20Inquiry%20recommendations%20%28Redacted%29.pdf">https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-09/Appendix%20One%20-%20response%20to%20individual%20Inquiry%20recommendations%20%28Redacted%29.pdf</a> )	(813.67 KB)