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Government strategy/plan

Strengthening Disaster Resilience and Emergency Management

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In early 2023, the North Island was hit by a number of severe weather events. Fifteen people lost their lives, one person remains missing and many more people were forever impacted.

A Government Inquiry was established to ensure the design of New Zealand’s emergency management system was appropriate to support readiness for, and responses to, future emergency events by identifying lessons from the 2023 North Island severe weather events. The Inquiry found New Zealand’s emergency management system was not fit-for-purpose and made 14 recommendations.

In response to the [Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather Events \(https://www.dia.govt.nz/Government-Inquiry-into-the-Response-to-the-North-Island-Severe-Weather-Events\)](#) (NISWE Inquiry), the Government has released *Strengthening disaster resilience and emergency management*. This document not only delivers a response to the NISWE Inquiry but outlines the Government’s overall direction of travel for the emergency management system over the next five years.

▼ Formats

Strengthening disaster resilience and emergency management
(/sites/default/files/2024-10/Strengthening-disaster-resilience-and-emergency-management.pdf)
(PDF 1.32 MB)

Minister's foreword

Kia ora koutou,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hon Mark Mitchell,

Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery