



Summary Report

June
2025



**SOUTH WAIRARAPA
DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Kia Reretahi Tātau



**MASTERTON
WHAKAORIORI**
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe o Taratahi
CARTERTON
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Mihi – acknowledgements



Tēnei te mihi nui ki a koutou katoa, ki te iwi whānui hoki mō tō koutou arahi i a mātou i roto i ngā āhuatanga maha kua pahure ake nei.

A big acknowledgement to you all – to iwi for their leadership and guidance across all aspects.

Me mihi kā tika hoki ki ngā mātāwaka, me ngā kaihautū o te hāpori i whakapau kaha ki te tautoko i tēnei kaupapa, mo te rohe te take!

And the many communities and the leaders of our region who have committed themselves to recovery and development of our rohe.

Kua tuituia ngā whakaaro maha hei waihanga i tērahi ara tika, ara haumarū hoki mō ngā mokopuna e heke mai nei.

Our ideas and strengths have been woven together to create a pathway ahead – one that is safe and future-focused for the generations to come.

Nei rā te manaakitanga o te tangata, me te ngākau aroha ki a koutou katoa.

Here stands the care of the people, and heartfelt appreciation to you all.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Greetings, greetings, greetings to you all.

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Introduction



Titiro whakamuri, kōkiri whakamua – we look back and reflect, so we can move forward.

The Wairarapa Recovery Office (WRO) was established following Cyclone Gabrielle to coordinate recovery activities across the three district councils in the region: Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa.

The office was set up in recognition of the scale of recovery activities required to assist in supporting individuals and communities impacted by the cyclone (and earlier Cyclone Hale), and due to the availability of North Island Weather Event (NIWE) funding from central government to resource it for a two-year period. The office formally opened on 17 July 2023.

Establishing recovery offices with dedicated resources following an emergency event is a reasonably recent approach in emergency management. The WRO was the first formalised standalone recovery office to be established after a natural hazard event in Wairarapa.

Similar to other regions that also set up recovery offices following NIWE, the WRO was required to develop new systems, processes and approaches to accessing and distributing central government funding and engaging with impacted individuals and communities.

This report provides a summary of the WRO's work programme during its operating period, including the initiatives the office coordinated with iwi, council teams, government departments, rural sector agencies, community support organisations, and emergency services. It also documents the lessons learnt along the way, and recommendations to inform future recovery efforts.

The WRO would like to acknowledge the contribution and support of the many individuals, groups and organisations who have assisted people, whānau, businesses and communities in our region on their recovery journey, and to those who provided input into this report.



About this report



Scope

The focus for this report is on the establishment and key activities for the WRO during its operating period of 17 July 2023 to 30 June 2025.

The report includes background information on the events and activities leading up to the office being set up including:

- the event – Cyclone Gabrielle and its impacts on the Wairarapa region
- the initial response to the cyclone in Wairarapa
- the transition from response to recovery stage
- the initial recovery period before the WRO was established.

Report development

This report was developed with input from a range of individuals, teams and organisations involved in the recovery process. This input was provided via a number of hui and workshops, feedback questionnaires and reports, and is reflected in this document.

This has included input from:

- members of the Wairarapa Recovery Governance Committee, including an additional hui with iwi representatives
- members of the Wairarapa Recovery Stakeholder Working Group
- members of the Wairarapa Recovery Office team
- district council recovery managers and emergency management leads
- district council roading and infrastructure teams
- district council communications teams
- Wellington Region Emergency Management Office teams, including Response, Recovery and communications
- Wairarapa Welfare Manager
- some funding recipients (via summary reports).

Related documents

This report should be read in conjunction with the After Action Review: Cyclone Gabrielle – Wairarapa Response.

Additional relevant documents include the Wairarapa Recovery Ongoing Needs Assessment Survey Report.

Executive summary



Cyclone Gabrielle has been described as one of the worst weather events in New Zealand's history, generating widespread damage to properties and businesses, and wider impacts on whānau and communities in affected areas.

The scale and impact of the cyclone, and other NIWE events, tested existing local government emergency response and post-event practices in regions throughout the country. In Wairarapa, issues associated with the initial emergency response flowed through to the follow on recovery programme, compounded by a lack of recovery staff in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), and limited capability and capacity to manage a recovery programme that was in line with the level of impact from the weather event.

Further challenges during the early stages of the Wairarapa recovery process was the lack of pre-existing recovery plans, dedicated recovery resources, processes and systems, a situation that was experienced in other regions. Additional issues included the lack of dedicated resources and staffing to support an ongoing recovery programme, limited engagement with key stakeholder agencies involved in the wider recovery effort, and a lack of reliable quantitative data to identify the scale and nature of the impact to support recovery activities and applications for available funding.

The contribution of stakeholder agencies, community groups and individual volunteers during the initial response and early recovery process needs to be acknowledged as filling some of the gaps in resourcing and having a coordinated recovery programme in place during this time.

The collaboration between district council recovery managers (RMs), support from the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO), and quick establishment of a governance committee that was active and effective in advocating for the region and securing of central government funding have been identified as success factors during the initial stages of the recovery process.

The availability of central government funding, and local councils' achievements in securing this, was a key enabler in the recovery programme that was subsequently developed. In particular, the funding secured to support the establishment of a dedicated office to coordinate recovery activities was a critical factor in the level and nature of recovery activities that were implemented.

Funding for the formal Wairarapa Recovery Office (WRO) was not available until the new government financial year in July 2023, some four months after Cyclone Gabrielle, leading to delays and other impacts on the recovery programme in the region.

Once fully established, the WRO coordinated and facilitated a range of recovery activities in partnership with district council teams, iwi, government departments, rural sector and support service agencies.

The recovery programme that was established and implemented in Wairarapa further highlighted the gaps in the existing recovery capability in the region, *and* also what can be accomplished with dedicated funding, resources and specialist expertise.

The significant learnings from the initial response and follow on recovery process after Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle have led to programmes of work to enhance emergency management approaches and practices in Wairarapa.

They have also helped inform and secure combined council support for the establishment of an ongoing regional emergency management office (EMO) that will span all aspects of emergency management including risk reduction, readiness, response and recovery.

Ongoing recovery activities relating to the cyclones will either transition to the new EMO or specific district council operational teams following the WRO winding up on 30 June 2025, when government funding for the office will end.



The new Wairarapa Emergency Management Office and the Wellington Region Emergency Office will continue to work with communities across the region on emergency readiness and resilience initiatives.

Background information



The events – Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle

In January 2023, Wairarapa was struck by Cyclone Hale, a significant weather event that impacted rural communities along the south and east coasts of the region.

This was followed in February 2023 by Cyclone Gabrielle, a tropical cyclone that caused widespread damage to regions across the North Island. A national state of emergency was declared, along with nine regional states of emergency. According to MetService Head of Weather Communications Lisa Murray: “Gabrielle [was] one of the worst storms to hit Aotearoa New Zealand in living history”. This was only the third time a national state of emergency had been declared in the country’s history.

Eastern and coastal communities in Wairarapa were hit by the cyclone, with some communities experiencing severe flooding and slips, damage to farm equipment, pastures and fencing, and stock losses. Several communities were cut off, and a number of families had to evacuate their homes. Along with damaging homes, businesses and farming properties, both Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle affected roading and drainage networks, bridges, culverts and other infrastructure in the region.

The impact of Cyclone Gabrielle was not as devastating as in other parts of the North Island, with no loss of life or widespread urban damage, however the effect on the rural communities that were hit by the severe weather event was still significant and estimated to require a long-term recovery effort.

While Wairarapa did not declare a state of emergency following Cyclone Gabrielle, it was included in the ‘national transition period’ due to the damage in the region. A national transition period supports the transition from the emergency response to the recovery stages. This inclusion enabled Wairarapa district councils and other agencies to access some (but not all) of the funding and other support that was available to regions that declared a state of emergency during the weather events.

The two cyclones along with extreme flooding in Auckland that occurred around the same time were subsequently grouped and named by the Government as the North Island Weather Events (NIWE).



Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle caused significant damage to residential and farm properties, businesses, roads, bridges and other infrastructure across the Wairarapa region.

The response

The Cyclone Gabrielle After Action Review Report, conducted by WREMO and publicly released on 15 November 2023, outlines major actions and events in the response to the cyclone by district councils and other key agencies, and an assessment of the way these were managed and implemented.

Among the learnings identified from the review was the fact that recovery staff were not present in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) from when it was activated on 14 February - the day the cyclone struck the region.

This meant they were not able to contribute to response decision-making and were not present as information about the impact of the cyclones was being received. A plan for the transition from response to recovery was only prepared on the last day that the EOC was in operation.

Following recommendations from the review, changes have been implemented to ensure a Recovery function is operational in the EOC from the start, with dedicated resource and supporting documentation and processes to assist in the transition from initial response to short, medium and long-term recovery efforts.

Further recommendations have started to see recovery aspects incorporated into training and roles for other function desks in the EOC.

For more details, refer to the After Action Review: Cyclone Gabrielle – Wairarapa Response.



Left to right: the Emergency Operations Centre in action; repairing cyclone damage has involved clearing tonnes of silt from roads and drainage systems across the region.

Transition: response to recovery

The transition from response to recovery covers the period from when the EOC is de-activated and recovery action plans are ready to be implemented.

A Response to Recovery Transition Report was prepared by the Planning function manager on the last day the EOC was operational. The report included a high-level assessment of the impact of the cyclone and outlined some key next steps for the Wairarapa Recovery Team, which was made up of the recovery managers (RMs) for the three district councils in the region.

An initial recovery action plan was developed to follow on from the transition report and provide early direction on recovery activities. This plan indicated that more work needed to be done to obtain a more complete insight into the nature and scale of damage and the level of disruption the event had caused.

The plan also highlighted a number of issues including:

- With the EOC closed there was limited capacity to maintain oversight across agencies of evolving developments.
- Opportunity to access central government recovery funding could be lost if project plans were not developed in a timely manner.
- Currently there is no single advocate or agency to represent recovery in the Wairarapa creating the potential for a disjointed, inefficient recovery approach.
- The high risk of increased economic, social and mental health issues if affected communities were not given sustained, coordinated support.

The plan advocated for a governance structure to be put in place to help lead and coordinate the collective multi-agency effort to support affected communities in Wairarapa, and for a recovery office to be established to work at an operational level on a collaborative recovery work programme across the range of agencies, organisations and community groups contributing to the recovery effort.

Summary overview from this stage

What worked well during this stage

- The RMs from each of the district councils worked collaboratively and well together.
- The Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO) regional recovery team were available to provide guidance, advice and support.

Identified issues and things that could have been done differently

- A key learning was the “need to organise recovery before response finishes” and to have a clear transition plan and resources in place to provide continuity, ensure key information is handed over, and allow the recovery process to get underway as quickly as possible.
- There was a lack of documented information from the response phase: “information was in people’s heads, so the impacts were not clear; without information, it’s hard to be effective”.
- There was a lack of clarity about what the RM role involved, and a lack of tested experience in leading and implementing recovery programmes.
- Iwi were not involved early during the response or transition periods.
- There were no clear guidelines on the roles of councils and other agencies in the recovery process.

Recommendations from this stage (note: some of these have or are being addressed)

- Ensure RMs are in the EOC from the start along with relevant support function members, including PIM (Public Information Management) and Planning to ensure recovery plans can start to be compiled during the response phase.
- Have a transition team of other EOC function staff involved during the transition process from response to recovery.
- Ensure iwi are involved from the start of the response process and through the subsequent stages of transition and ongoing recovery.
- Have scalable plan templates and supporting processes in place for use in developing initial recovery plans.
- Have a pre-disaster recovery plan in place from which tailored plans (utilising the templates in the point above) can be developed.
- Provide some financial delegation for RMs so they can establish a small initial core recovery office until external funding becomes available.
- Ensure operational teams are kept updated during a response so they are aware of how their work connects with response and recovery work; build an emergency operations role into their job descriptions.
- Where possible, ensure emergency services are local and know local areas, particularly from a geographical perspective.
- Continue to build awareness about the role and scope of recovery with other EOC teams, council staff, elected members and relevant partner agencies.
- Ensure ongoing EOC and CIMs plans, training and supporting activities incorporate recovery concepts, approaches and activities.



Left to right: Operational crews working on repairs to cyclone-damaged roads; volunteers helping with damaged fencing during the initial clean up following Cyclone Gabrielle.

Initial recovery programme



Initial recovery office

An initial recovery office was created, comprising the RMs, which was supported by members of WREMO's regional recovery team and council staff. The assistance and guidance of the WREMO staff has been widely acknowledged as providing essential support during this period.

While actively leading the recovery programme, RMs still had their own business-as-usual (BAU) roles to undertake. This was particularly challenging for the Carterton District Council (CDC) RM, whose BAU role was as Infrastructure Services Manager for that council.

The initial recovery action plan was used as a base to guide this work, with a more fulsome plan prepared in July 2023. This plan identified the need for additional resource to lead the recovery work programme, including a full-time Recovery Office Programme Manager, and support staff. The recovery office secured funding from central government to resource a stand-alone office with dedicated staffing in April 2023, however the funds for this were not available until the new government financial year starting in July.

In the interim, the RMs continued to lead the recovery work programme with direction from the Governance Committee once it was established, and the support of council teams and partner agencies.

Governance Committee

A Governance Committee was established in February 2023 with a Standing Committee comprised of:

- the three mayors for the region representing Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa
- representatives for local iwi: Kahungunu ki Wairarapa and Rangitāne o Wairarapa
- the Wairarapa Councillor for Greater Wellington Regional Council
- the Regional Public Service Commissioner (representing central government agencies)
- a local Wairarapa business representative.

The terms of reference for the Governance Committee indicated that other council and organisation representatives could be included in the group, such as council chief executives, other elected members, and representatives of key partner agencies. Governance Committee meetings regularly had these wider representatives in attendance.

In addition, local MP (and Minister for Emergency Management at the time), Kieran McNulty, attended the first Governance Committee meeting, and attended several meetings of the Stakeholder Working Group once this was established. This was recognised as being hugely beneficial in ensuring the needs of the Wairarapa were conveyed to central government at a time when the impact of the cyclone on other regions was attracting higher media, and general public, attention.

The quick establishment of the Governance Committee has been recognised as a key factor in Wairarapa securing several streams of funding available at the time, with the Committee providing a strong level of advocacy for the region, and the structure and governance required to gain the confidence from central government in providing this level of support.

The Committee also provided direction on recovery activities and was directly involved in assessing applications for funding sources such as the Mayoral and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Funds. The Committee worked well as a group to ensure funding was distributed relatively quickly to people in impacted areas, to assist in providing initial support.

Stakeholder & community engagement

Engagement with stakeholder agencies during the initial recovery period was ad hoc until semi-regular stakeholder meetings took place.

Feedback from stakeholder agencies indicate that there was a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities with the recovery office early on, a lack of resourcing for effective community engagement, and that agencies were often ‘filling the gap’ of what was considered to be councils’ roles during this time and going ‘above and beyond’ the scope of their work to support impacted individuals and communities.

This included providing information to people in affected areas. Recovery communications during this period were largely provided by one of the district council’s communications managers to support key activities, including major developments with recovery initiatives, availability of funding and access to support. This was supplemented by localised activities from other councils’ communications teams.

With communications teams also managing their busy BAU activities, council-led communications were limited to updates on significant developments and establishing some core plans and systems such as the Wairarapa Recovery website. It is widely recognised that dedicated communications support and resources were needed from the start of the recovery process, and there is acknowledgement for what council teams were able to achieve within existing resources.

Stakeholder agencies, such as the East Coast Rural Support Trust (RST) and Ministry of Primary Industries’ (MPI) OnFarm support team, assisted in providing information through their social media pages, e-newsletters, community and sector group meetings, and direct engagement with impacted whānau and communities. With existing relationships and as ‘familiar faces’ in these areas, this approach was effective as the information was considered to be coming from a known and trusted source.

Funding

Initial funding for impacted individuals, farming operations and businesses was available reasonably quickly following Cyclone Gabrielle. This included a Mayoral Fund, which distributed \$232,526 in grants, and \$250,000 of funding from the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) for business recovery grants.

While this was positive in providing immediate support, there was a lack of policies, systems and processes in place to assist in distributing grants to those in most need. Delays were experienced due to the need to establish a platform for accepting applications, and criteria for assessing and allocating grants.

There was a perceived pressure to get funding ‘out the door’, which resulted in people who put applications in after the initial period missing out, and the initial grants allocated being of a reasonably high monetary value.

There was also confusion about what funding was available and the criteria for this. This meant that people who had applied for some funding were then ineligible to apply for larger, and more relevant, grants.

The process of applying for funding from central government was also described as being confusing and somewhat chaotic, with no central contact point for information about what was available, and deadlines for funding applications often being very short. This put additional pressure on the RMs, the Governance Committee, and stakeholder agencies to compile business cases to support applications.

Adding to this was a lack of detailed quantitative data on the impact of the cyclones to support applications and confidently identify the areas of most need. This gap was often filled by stakeholder agencies such as RST and MPI providing anecdotal information from their needs assessment processes.

Additional issues included the terminology used with some funding criteria and applications processes impacting outcomes. For example, describing farm tracks as 'farm roads' led to a funding application being declined.

Not declaring a state of emergency also precluded the region from being eligible for some sources of funding, despite them being relevant to identified needs in the area.

Roading & infrastructure recovery initiatives

It is important to note that district council roading and infrastructure teams have their own processes following an emergency event. Responding to events that cause roading and infrastructure damage is part of their BAU operations. New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) have standard policies in place for funding repairs following events, which councils can apply for straight away. If councils can justify the event is out of the ordinary, they automatically qualify for additional funding reimbursement rates, with further funding being available after an extreme event.

According to council roading and infrastructure managers, applying for this funding via a recovery structure "would have slowed down the process".

Council operational teams responded quickly following the cyclones, with access to cut off communities restored, and funding secured for repairs to roads, bridges, culverts and other infrastructure. At the time of this report, the bulk of cyclone-related repairs had been completed, with outstanding work scheduled into ongoing maintenance programmes.



Before and after photos of repairs to cyclone-damaged roads.

Roading and infrastructure teams at an operational level do not participate directly in the EOC as they are busy overseeing repairs, applying for funding and organising contractors after an event. Roothing teams are part of the Regional Transport Response Team (RTRT), which coordinates roading issues during events and is connected to the EOC.

It is recognised that it would be beneficial for people in these teams to have a greater understanding of what happens in the EOC and during the recovery stage, so they are aware of the overall process and how they fit into this. This would also assist in operational staff understanding the context for information requests from the EOC and ongoing recovery teams.

Summary overview from this stage

What worked well during this stage

- Ongoing collaboration between the three councils' RMs: "We worked well together as a team right from the start" (one council RM).
- The support and involvement of WREMO's Group Recovery managers, the Wairarapa Community Resilience Advisor, and the Wairarapa Welfare Manager.
- Establishing a governance group with the right level of people to advocate for the region and assist in securing funding and support.
- Having strong iwi representation on the governance group.
- Having the Regional Public Service Commissioner on the governance group and actively involved; this assisted in sharing information about available funding and supporting applications.
- Having the local MP and Minister actively involved in meetings, discussions and advocating for the electorate.
- Having central government funding available to access to support local impacted communities.
- Securing funding – while not all funding applications were approved, the recovery office was successful in securing a considerable level of funding support, and distributing this to whānau, groups and communities in need.
- Securing funding for a formal recovery office with dedicated staffing and resources.
- Distributing funding relatively quickly (although this did have issues associated with it; see next part of this section).
- The support of other council teams/roles, including communications, to the extent they could provide assistance.
- Positive working relationships with key stakeholder and partner agencies.
- The contribution and support of rural sector and stakeholder agencies in providing support and information to impacted areas.

Identified issues and things that could have been done differently

- A recovery office with dedicated resources was required from the start of the recovery process.
- There were no existing recovery plans, processes or supporting resources or systems in place.
- The lack of recovery experience and existing systems meant that it took longer to get started, and there was general recognition that the approach and activities were often "being made up as we went along".
- RMs needed to continue with their BAU roles while actively leading the recovery process.

- There was a huge amount of work to do without adequate resources to do it.
- Funding was secured to resource a dedicated recovery office, however the funds were not available until the new government financial year, many months after the formal office and supporting resources were required.
- Engagement with stakeholder agencies was initially sporadic and it took time for a structured group and approach to be established.
- There were organisations missing from the stakeholder group, particularly during the initial stages, including iwi and health representation.
- Communication with impacted whānau and communities was at times limited, with stakeholder agencies often working to fill identified gaps in providing information.
- There was a gap in communications following the initial response and significant publicity about impacts in other regions. This led news media and the general public to consider that Wairarapa was not too badly affected, and for some impacted property owners to consider there were others that needed support more than them.
- There was a welfare gap for lifestyle property owners, with no clear sector or community group covering this demographic; MPI provides support for landowners who derive 50 percent or more of their income from their land.
- Not declaring a state of emergency meant the region was ineligible for some funding opportunities.
- Not having an appropriate or easily accessible region-wide platform in place for applying for and managing funding, or for receiving applications. CDC's SmartyGrants platform was utilised for this in the absence of an existing purpose-built platform.
- Observations that too much funding was distributed initially, meaning there were no available funds for people who applied later. Additional observations that not all recipients met the funding criteria and there were people who should have been eligible for support who missed out.
- There was no one central government repository of information about the funding that was available and no consistency in funding application processes; a lot of time was spent identifying what was available.
- Needs assessment activities were done too late.
- The lack of quality data on the impact of the cyclones, which would have assisted in funding applications, identifying areas of need, and ensuring funding and support was provided where it was most required.

Key recommendations *(note: some of these have been or are currently being addressed)*

- Establish a dedicated recovery office and supporting resources sooner, including for communications, stakeholder and iwi engagement, programme coordination, data and information gathering, and funding management.
- Acknowledge that budget as well as personnel resources need to be made available to support recovery activities and ensure this in place.
- Recognise the limitations on council RMs if they are required to continue with BAU roles during the recovery stage, particularly early on before dedicated resource is secured.
- Have scalable recovery plans, processes and systems in place that can be quickly activated.
- Ensure data collection processes include aerial footage of the impact to assist in identifying and assessing the size and scale of the damage and associated need.
- Have some form of ongoing emergency management office, which includes recovery, and can provide ongoing awareness, support and readiness for future emergency events.

- Have some pre-identified recovery indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) and a template dashboard that can be used to monitor the impact of an event and subsequent recovery activities.
- Develop training for operational staff so they are aware of how their work connects with response and recovery work.
- Consider and identify possible representatives from sector agencies that can represent impacted communities and provide input at a governance level.
- Establish a stakeholder working group earlier and ensure all key agencies and iwi are included on this.
- Consider having a representative(s) from impacted areas on the stakeholder group.
- If emergency events impact rural areas:
 - consider having a dedicated welfare arm for lifestylers
 - ensure animal welfare agencies and veterinarians are involved in recovery work programmes
 - consider having a dedicated on-farm coordinator.
- Identify clear roles and responsibilities for the agencies involved, including the recovery office, councils, WREMO, stakeholder agencies, and ensure there is awareness and agreement on these.
- Have a dedicated resource to manage funding applications; both applying for funding and overseeing the distribution of this.
- Have funding platforms and processes in place ahead of the next emergency event.
- Have a dedicated phone line for donations, and a resource allocated to oversee this process, and have identified donation criteria and processes in place.
- Ensure iwi, Pasifika and other interest groups have information about funding that would be relevant to them *and* have appropriate input into funding allocation decisions.
- Identify what resources and support marae can provide ahead of time, and what is available in each community, including those in remote locations. This includes RT communications.
- Leverage the likely high level of political and public interest to advocate for and secure available funding.
- Have template communications plans and channels in place.
- Leverage the likely high level of media and public interest to highlight the scale of the impact, what is being done, what support is available, and how the wider community can assist.



Left to right: Crews clear fallen trees from roads; donated materials and haulage to assist impacted property owners with fencing repairs.

Wairarapa Recovery Office



Establishment

Approval and central government funding to establish a dedicated standalone recovery office to coordinate activities across the three Wairarapa district councils and partner agencies was secured in April 2023, but was not able to be accessed until July 2023 when the new government financial year started. It is widely recognised that the formal recovery office needed to be in place and fully resourced much earlier, ideally immediately after the response stage.

The formal Wairarapa Recovery Office (WRO) was staffed with a fulltime programme manager (PM), who started in mid-July 2023. The need for additional staffing had been recognised but was paused to allow the new PM time to assess and confirm resourcing for the office. In addition, the PM was quickly immersed in managing immediate priorities with applying for and distributing funding to meet deadlines, and developing processes and plans associated with the recently announced government-council voluntary buy-out programme for severely affected properties.

A fulltime programme coordinator and 0.8 FTE communications advisor were recruited in late 2023 and started in their roles in January 2024. Both roles should ideally have been in place much earlier in the recovery process.

As outlined in earlier sections, the late establishment and staffing for the WRO impacted the overall recovery work programme. This included:

- limited opportunities to adequately plan and programme activities – WRO team members had to ‘hit the ground running’ and start working immediately on initiatives without the opportunity to properly map these out or develop processes to support these
- pressure to distribute some funding within tight timeframes to meet required funding deadlines
- at times, having to make decisions without the time to gather the required information for these in a more thorough manner
- delays in implementing some activities, including ongoing needs assessment surveys, the voluntary buy-out and relocation programme, and community resilience initiatives
- impacts on stakeholder and community engagement – gaps in providing information and regular updates in the period before the WRO was formally established had an impact on relationships with affected communities, and there were missed opportunities to develop communications channels that would have been more relevant early on in the recovery process but continued to have value as the recovery programme progressed
- missed opportunities to share more recovery stories to highlight developments and how funding had provided benefits to groups and communities, both during the year following the cyclones when there was limited available communications resource and, once this was in place, due to competing priorities for communications support.

Structure

The structure for the WRO is outlined below.



While these roles were appropriate for developing and implementing the ongoing recovery work programme within the available budget, it has been identified that the WRO could have benefited from being able to contract in additional specialist support. This includes:

- a business analyst to assist with developing systems and processes to support key activities, including the voluntary buy-out programme
- policy advice when developing key policies, particularly those to support the voluntary buy-out and relocation programme
- digital, web and other tactical support to assist the communications programme given the workload on the communications advisor, particularly coming into the WRO so late in the recovery process
- legal advice (prior to Masterton District Council's Legal Counsel being on board)
- support to develop appropriate finance and reporting systems.

Without the availability of this specialist support, WRO team members need to 'flex' and broaden the scope of their roles to cover some of these areas.

In July 2024, the WRO PM took on the additional roles of Wairarapa Controller and Emergency Management Lead for Masterton District Council. While this assisted in developing stronger connection between response and recovery initiatives and ensured recovery considerations were factored into the region's overall emergency management practices, it did affect the time the PM could allocate to leading the recovery programme. It is acknowledged that in future, dedicated roles need to be maintained throughout the recovery period.

Governance

Governance for the WRO continued to be provided by the Governance Committee, which met regularly during the first nine months of the office being in operation. At that point, it was agreed that the recovery programme was well into the implementation phase with limited opportunities for additional funding, and less overall need for active governance oversight.

A decision was made to transition to a Governance Sub-Committee comprised of:

- the three district council chief executives representing Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa, or their delegated representatives
- Pou Ahurea Māori – Masterton or Carterton or South Wairarapa (to assess impact on iwi and raise/engage as required)
- the three recovery managers representing Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa
- the Programme Manager, Wairarapa Recovery Office (non-voting).

The Governance Sub-Committee continued to meet monthly, with district council chief executives in time delegating their attendance and responsibilities to their respective RMs.

In addition to the updates provided at Sub-Committee meetings, WRO reports on progress with the recovery work programme were provided at quarterly council Audit & Risk Committee meetings. Updates to the full Governance Committee were also provided in conjunction with major milestones such as the start of the voluntary buy-out and relocation programme, sharing the findings of the ongoing needs assessment survey, and outlining plans for communications activities to mark the two-year anniversary of the cyclones in February 2024.

RMs were expected to keep their respective chief executives, mayors and other relevant council staff updated on developments following meetings. With RMs balancing their roles with BAU activities, it has been identified that a supplementary form of semi-regular update to the wider Governance Committee would have helped in keeping members of this group up to date with developments in the recovery programme.

Work programme

Coordinating & facilitating recovery activities

Across councils

A key role for the WRO was facilitating and coordinating activities across the three Wairarapa district councils of Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa.

Along with Governance Sub-Committee meetings, the WRO team met on a regular basis with RMs from each council to discuss recovery activities, share council and WRO updates, and make decisions relating to funding and other initiatives. Other relevant council teams, such as roading and infrastructure, provided updates about developments with operational recovery activities.

In addition, the WRO communications advisor regularly engaged with council communications teams to share updates on developments with the recovery programme, discuss opportunities for councils to 'front' events, media activities and share messaging, and to get input into communications plans for specific initiatives and supporting materials.

Monthly email updates on the communications work programme were shared with other council teams including community development, emergency management and each council's Pou Māori Iwi Partnership Manager.

These updates were recognised as being useful in making it easy for these council contacts to on-share to other council staff, include relevant updates in their reports, and as a way of identifying opportunities for teams to link into specific initiatives.

In addition to coordinating recovery efforts across the three district councils, the WRO also worked closely and collaboratively with relevant teams within Greater Wellington Regional Council.

With stakeholder agencies

The WRO took over facilitating and coordinating regular meetings and engagement with stakeholder agencies. This assisted in developing stronger working relationships with these organisations, ensuring there was input into the overall recovery work programme and specific initiatives from groups 'working on the ground', and providing a forum for agencies to identify opportunities to collaborate on activities.

Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) meetings were initially held fortnightly, moving to monthly from March 2024. Additional workshops and supplementary meetings and engagement were organised to support specific initiatives.

Meeting notes and email updates for key activities were used to assist in keeping SWG members updated outside of the meetings. Council RMs and key infrastructure staff were included in the distribution list for meeting invites, notes and other SWG updates, along with representatives from WREMO.

While there was good representation from many of the agencies involved in recovery activities across the region, there were organisations that were not represented, either at all or on a consistent basis. This had an impact on the ability of the wider group and WRO to get an overall picture of current issues, areas of particular need, and initiatives that were being implemented in the region.

In addition, restructuring within government departments and budgetary changes for participating organisations meant that the people representing agencies changed during the recovery process, or were in roles that were not replaced. This also occurred with wider sector and community organisations. This led to gaps at times in representation from sector groups and information about what was happening in impacted areas, and to the availability of communications channels for sharing updates and information.

The individuals and organisations involved on the SWG made a significant contribution to the recovery work programme coordinated by the WRO in the region and were actively involved in implementing and supporting activities in impacted areas.

With central government

The WRO had a major role in managing relationships with the Cyclone Recovery Unit (CRU) within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), National Infrastructure Funding and Financing Limited (NIFF – formerly Crown Infrastructure Partners), and other key government departments on behalf of Wairarapa councils for funding arrangements and contracts for major recovery initiatives.

Despite being less impacted by NIWE compared to other regions, and the relatively small size of Wairarapa councils, WRO was able to establish and maintain ready access to CRU and these other agencies. This was largely led by the WRO PM with support from the WRO programme coordinator.

This included attending weekly meetings between CRU and group recovery managers during the early stages of the recovery process. This and other relevant forums were useful for learning about central government's approach to recovery support and funding, and were an opportunity to provide input into selected policy development. It was also an opportunity to build a rapport with key officials and recovery managers in other councils.

Many of the central government contracts for funding were designed to support much larger scale recovery initiatives than what Wairarapa councils were involved in, and required significant levels of oversight, governance and reporting. This created challenges for smaller councils, such as those in Wairarapa.

The WRO was able to negotiate with CRU and NIFF to rescale contracts for funded activities to reflect the size of councils in the region, the level of funding being provided, and the appropriate level of resource and governance required to administer them.

Engagement with central government included a number of ministerial visits to support recovery activities and meet with organisations involved in local recovery efforts.

Monitoring & information gathering

A key aspect of facilitating and coordinating recovery efforts in Wairarapa, was monitoring progress with recovery activities, assessing areas of need, and linking available funding with organisations working in those areas.

The SWG, council teams and other groups and forums were a key source of information for informing and guiding recovery activities.

A needs assessment survey was run during May 2024 to assist in providing information on the ongoing areas of need with impacted people, groups and communities. Along with helping to inform the overall recovery work programme, stakeholder organisations wanted this information to support business cases for funding and resources, and to provide data and evidence to support the issues and needs they were seeing in their day-to-day work.

The online survey questionnaire was developed with input from SWG members and council teams and included the opportunity for people to register for inclusion in a fencing repair scheme that was funded by the WRO and coordinated by RST.

Information about the survey was distributed through a wide range of council, community, iwi, rural sector and social service organisations and communications channels.

The survey received over 130 responses, which was estimated to represent around 65-70 percent of properties in impacted areas. The survey responses also included a good representation of impacted locations, property sizes and demographic groups.

The findings of the survey provided useful information about the areas of ongoing need, the scale of outstanding cyclone damage that still required addressing and the financial implications of these, and the support that people in impacted areas most wanted.

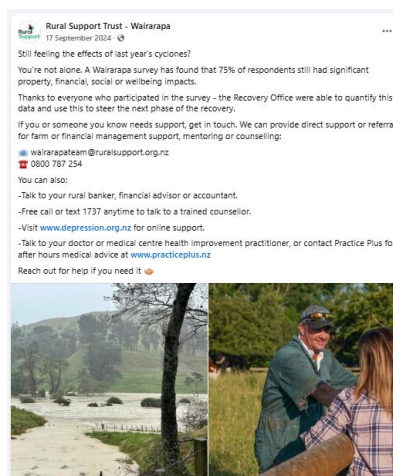
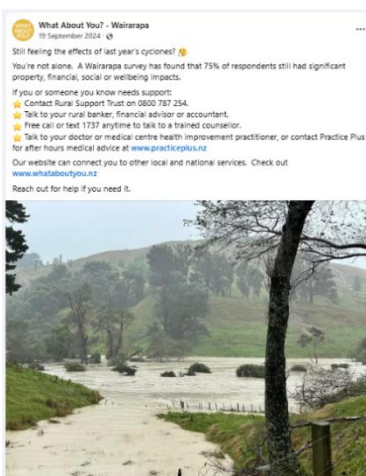
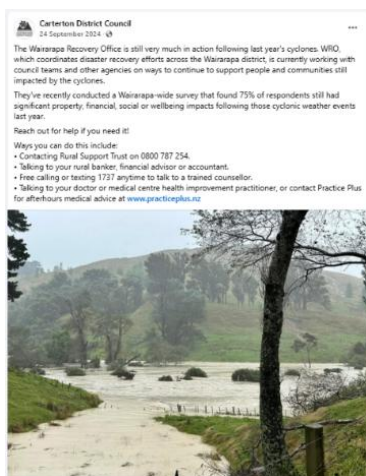
The main responses to the question: What does your community most need in the next 12 months? included wellbeing support, practical help, being prepared for future natural disasters, community events, and infrastructure repairs and investment in roading, drains and flood management.

Around 35 percent of survey respondents registered for the fencing repair scheme, which provided assistance with progressing repairs to cyclone-damaged fences.

The findings from the survey were shared with council teams, stakeholder agencies, sector organisations, support services, iwi, communities in impacted areas and the wider general public. Along with key results, information about the support services that were available to people still impacted by the cyclones was included in messaging about the survey. Communications to rural professionals, health and community support services also highlighted how they could assist in supporting people in impacted areas.

Communications activities to share the findings and highlight available support included media releases, social media posts, e-newsletter items, and panui at events and network meetings. Materials were provided to councils, stakeholder agencies and sector and support service organisations to share through their channels.

For more details, refer to the Wairarapa Recovery Ongoing Needs Assessment Survey Report.



Communications activities to support the ongoing needs assessment survey aimed to encourage people to respond, and to then share the findings and how people could access support.

Voluntary buy-out & relocation programme

A major initiative led by the WRO was Masterton District Council's (MDC) involvement in the voluntary buy-out and relocation programme.

On 1 June 2023, the Government announced a one-off funding programme for councils in cyclone and flood affected regions that would support regional and local councils to offer a voluntary buy-out for owners of residential properties assessed as no longer being safe to live on due to the risk to life from future flooding (deemed Category 3).

Under the Future of Severely Affected Locations (FOSAL) voluntary buy-out (VBO) funding programme, the Government contributes 50 per cent of the cost of buying out these properties with councils funding the other 50 per cent, after insurance, EQC and any other payments have been deducted. Subsequent funding was established to support landowners wanting to relocate dwellings on their Category 3 land to another part of their property that is not Category 3 land.

Flood experts from Greater Wellington Regional Council worked with MDC and the WRO to assess identified properties in the Tinui area. This assessment saw nine properties with a total of 12 dwellings categorised as having Category 3 land.

Following a public consultation process, MDC voted in mid-December 2023 to enter the FOSAL VBO and relocation programme for local properties severely impacted by NIWE.

While the VBO and relocation programmes were funded from two different grant processes, eligible landowners were provided with information about both programmes at the same time, so they had information about all of the options available for their property during the decision-making process.

The WRO developed the supporting policies for implementing these programmes with MDC and led negotiations with central government on funding agreements and arrangements. This was initially challenging due to the lack of clarity and details about what the programme would entail.

The WRO also coordinated engagement with eligible landowners throughout the VBO and relocation programme process. The Office was supported during the valuation, offer preparation and presentation, and initial settlement processes by The Property Group, an independent property advisory agency which had been involved in similar programmes in other regions.

All eligible landowners opted in to the VBO and relocation programme on the basis that they could withdraw at any point up until a buy-out and/or relocation agreement had been signed.

At the time of this report preparation, offers have been made to all eligible landowners. It is expected that all voluntary buy-out offers and relocation agreements will be completed by 30 June 2025.

The VBO and relocation programme was the first time this form of funded initiative had been implemented by central government and participating councils. As a result, there are a myriad of learnings and recommendations for any similar future initiative.

Major learnings include:

- the time taken to develop and implement the programme, which was lengthy and impactful on eligible landowners
- the time and resources required to negotiate and secure funding arrangements with central government, particularly given the lack of consistency in funding approaches between regions, and to develop supporting policy and processes within the participating council
- the work required to establish funding and payment processes within the participating council's finance system
- the need for specialist expertise early on in developing and implementing a programme of this nature (and for the first time)
- the time and resources involved in engaging with landowners, who were still recovering from a traumatic emergency event while needing to make major decisions about the future use of their property.



A house relocated under the Relocation Programme to another area of an eligible landowner's property that is not Category 3 land.

Managing funding

Managing a range of funding initiatives was a major part of the WRO's work programme.

This included:

- managing and distributing funding that had been secured prior to the WRO's establishment
- identifying opportunities for additional funding and submitting funding applications
- establishing policies and criteria for some funding, assessing funding applications, overseeing grant allocation processes
- communication with funding recipients
- financial processes associated with receiving and distributing funding grants
- reporting to funder organisations.

A brief outline of major funding grants is outlined below. A summary of funding received is attached as Appendix Two.

Recovery Fund

This fund was available for individuals and whānau still requiring support to recover from Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle, along with organisations providing support to people or communities who were still impacted.

Grant applications were made by referral from organisations working in impacted areas or directly by individuals and groups.

Run in two rounds (September 2023 and April 2024), the fund was not widely publicised due to the limited size of the overall fund (\$150,000), and to ensure the funding was distributed to areas of most need. The three district council RMs reviewed and approved applications that met the fund criteria.

A total of 22 grants were allocated from this fund to a mix of individuals and farming operations still severely impacted by the cyclones, and to agencies supporting those in affected areas. This included grants to provide additional emergency resources to marae, community groups and support services.

Examples of groups that received support include:

- The Tinui Playgroup – to assist with repairs to the roof of their facility.
- The Kitchen Fairies – to contribute to the cost of providing the meals and care packages the group prepares for rural families in need.
- Wairarapa Catchment Collective – for community planting and land management workshops in impacted areas.
- Whareama Pickleball Club – to provide equipment for the club to run sessions to give impacted landowners a break off their properties, and a chance to connect with others.
- Rural Support Trust – for emergency survival kits for Wairarapa team members, who often work in isolated areas, and to allow the team to continue working when an emergency event occurs.
- Tukurumuri Community Hall – to cover the cost of a water tank and pump system to provide a reliable source of potable water to the hall, which is a regularly used community facility and emergency hub.
- Ngai Tūmapūhia ā rangi Hapū Inc – for an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and emergency first aid kit for its marae, which is an isolated coastal location and is a key source of ongoing support for local people impacted by severe weather events.

Reports back from individual recipients indicate the grants made a significant contribution to their recovery journey. Groups that received support reported that the grant had made a big difference in them being able to support people in impacted areas, including in some cases, creating opportunities for people to have a break off their properties to have some respite and connect with others, which benefited individual and wider community wellbeing.

“Having access to funding like this is critical in helping rural communities to recover after adverse events such as Cyclone Gabrielle. We weren’t an established organisation when the cyclone hit, so trying to continue what we started that week has been made possible by the grant.”

- Amy Jones, The Kitchen Fairies

“The funding has enabled us and other organisations to assist more people and provided resources to support our ongoing work. It’s also helped to fund social and wellbeing events, which we know are hugely beneficial in providing respite opportunities, allowing people to get off their properties, socialise with others, and forget about the challenges facing them for a day or evening.”

- Sarah Donaldson, Area Coordinator, East Coast Rural Support Trust



Examples of Recovery Fund grant recipients. Left to right: Amy Jones and Rebecca O'Neale from The Kitchen Fairies, who coordinate and distribute care packages to rural families in need and provide catering at fundraising events for cyclone repairs; members of the Whareama Pickleball Club which was formed following the cyclones with grant-funded equipment.

Fencing support

Funding to assist impacted property owners to start, progress or finish repairs to cyclone-damaged fences was provided via two grants. The first supported the training and employment of fencing staff and provided their services for free, with the second contributing to the cost of a fencing contractor to do repair work. Both grants were facilitated by RST.

Damage to fencing was one of the top impacts reported by property owners in cyclone affected areas. Funding for these grants made a significant difference in WRO and RST being able to assist property owners with these vital repairs.

“The fencing repair scheme allowed a number of property owners to start, progress, or finish repairing cyclone-damaged fences that much faster, making the task a bit less daunting, and taking some of the workload and financial pressure off. It also boosted morale for those landowners to know that people were still thinking of them and aware of the ongoing effect of the cyclones on them and their livelihood.”

- Sarah Donaldson, Area Coordinator, East Coast Rural Support Trust



Funded fencing schemes helped impacted landowners to progress repairs to cyclone-damaged fences.

Rural health & welfare support

Two grants supported the provision of a rural health nurse contracted by RST to work in impacted areas, doing health checks at farming and community events and referrals to other services.

This made it easier for people in affected areas to easily access health care services. Access to health care can be challenging for those in rural areas during 'normal times' due to the need to travel to service providers and limited availability of after-hours services, let alone when they are recovering from a major emergency event.

"This role is continuing to evolve, and after reaching a wider area in the community and visiting a wide range of rural people, an important need is being met."

- Sarah Tatham, East Coast Rural Support Trust rural health nurse



Rural health nurse Sarah Tatham doing health checks at farming and community events.

Psychological First Aid courses

Funding was secured to provide a series of Psychological First Aid (PFA) courses that were delivered by Red Cross across the region.

PFA is the emotional and mental equivalent of medical first aid. PFA training courses equip people to provide emotional and practical support to individuals and whānau who have experienced a large-scale disaster or a personal traumatic incident.

The funded PFA courses were available to rural sector agencies, workplaces, council staff, and iwi, health and community organisations that support individuals and whānau following natural disasters and traumatic events.

Information about the courses was widely shared through a range of networks and channels. There was high interest in the courses, which were well subscribed and attended, and received universally positive feedback.

With over 200 people from a wide range of organisations attending the courses and obtaining skills they could use in their everyday work as well as following an emergency event, this training will provide ongoing benefits to individuals, whānau and communities in the region for some time to come.

“Out of all the training sessions we are 'made' to do at work, I attended this course as a choice. This has been by far the most relevant information/course I have been to in years.”

- PFA course participant



Funded Psychological First Aid courses were held in locations across the Wairarapa.

Community wellbeing events & workshops

Feedback from impacted individuals and communities and stakeholder agencies highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for people in affected areas to come together to connect, socialise and have some respite from the pressures they were facing.

Funding was provided to the Wairarapa Community Networks (WCN) to support a range of events and initiatives to meet this need and support individual and community wellbeing, including for people who may not have received support from other sources or services.

Funded events included a comedy night at a rural community hall, pounamu carving workshops in rural coastal communities, and a breakfast for rural people that featured prominent wellbeing and resilience expert, Lucy Hone, and was attended by more than 200 people.

These events received overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees, who indicated that attending had provided benefits to them and their wider whānau and/or communities.

“Well done to you and your teams for having the vision and determination to create such a fantastic event. One person told me it was ‘life changing’ and another described it as ‘the most useful morning’s learning I’ve ever had’. I think we all agree that this is a super effective formula for supporting rural people - and the all-female workshop lent a special vibe.”

- Dr Lucy Hone, Wellbeing and resilience expert

“I really appreciate the work that you guys put in to do this for us and hope that there are more things like this in the future. You are doing a fantastic job of lifting the spirit of the rural community when life out here can be hard.”

- Attendee at pounamu carving workshop



Funded community wellbeing events included the 'Bitches Box' comedy show and pounamu carving workshops in isolated rural locations.

Emergency resources for rural & isolated communities

While much of the focus of the funding administered by the WRO was for cyclone recovery activities, grants were also secured to support building community resilience for future emergency events.

These included grants to provide shipping containers with starter kits of emergency resources to isolated coastal communities to assist them immediately after a disaster, when roads may be cut off and they may not have access to emergency services. The WRO coordinated this initiative in conjunction with local councils, communities and WREMO, as part of a wider programme of emergency management and preparedness activities.

Once delivered, the containers were officially handed over for community ownership at gifting ceremonies attended by community members, council staff, elected officials and WREMO and WRO representatives. Communities to receive emergency resource containers include those at Mataikona, Riversdale Beach, Castlepoint, Flat Point, Tora, Ngawi and Lake Ferry.

The donation of these resources was done with the recognition that isolated and rural communities are used to being self-sufficient following an emergency event, with the donated equipment designed to supplement what is usually available within these communities and support their ongoing emergency management efforts.

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) were also donated and installed in seven isolated locations around the region, providing this life saving equipment to communities in these areas. A number of AEDs were installed at community halls, further equipping them as key facilities following a medical emergency or natural disaster, with others located outside recreational or emergency service buildings.

Other resources, such as water tanks and emergency first aid and survival kits, were donated to community facilities using grants from the Recovery Fund mentioned earlier in this section.

The donation of the AEDs and emergency resources recognises that the better equipped and prepared communities are before an emergency, the better they will be able to respond and the faster they will recover afterwards.

“The AEDs will provide an essential lifesaving device in communities that have limited immediate access to health services when a medical emergency happens. It’s been great to work with the Recovery Office on how we can support and equip these communities for their time of need.”

- Cheryl Watson, Wellington Free Ambulance Community Liaison

“Having community-based resources provides some peace of mind that we have essential supplies and equipment on hand for when the next disaster happens. The donated resources will help ensure we can respond as a community and support each other when these occur.”

- Marquerite Vierstraete-Williams, Riversdale Beach Community Association Chair



Left to right: A donated AED installed at Ruakokoputuna Hall, and a shipping container of emergency resources donated to Riversdale Beach community.



Left to right: The donation of a water tank at Tuturumuri Hall means the local community now have a reliable source of potable water following an emergency; donated emergency resources will further equip Ngai Tūmapūhia ā rangi Hapū’s marae to respond to medical emergencies and be a safe space for people to gather when a disaster happens.

Community Renewable Energy Fund grants

The WRO and Wairarapa district councils supported applications for Community Renewable Energy Fund (CREF) grants for three community facilities in Wairarapa. The Government allocated \$6.5 million nationally from the fund after the 2023 severe weather events to equip selected community buildings in impacted areas with solar energy and back-up systems to increase community resilience during crisis events.

CREF grants were provided for Hau Ariki Marae in South Wairarapa, Gladstone Sports and Social Complex in the Carterton district, and Whareama Hall in the Masterton district.

These buildings are all well used by groups and communities in the local areas, including as places where people can gather following an emergency event. The addition of the solar energy systems will mean they can continue to provide an essential refuge and gathering point if there are power outages.

“We are thrilled to see these solar panels in place, building resilience for emergencies, and we appreciate the funding enormously. We look forward to continuing work with the council to ensure Hau Ariki Marae is a safe and resilient emergency refuge when needed.”

- Kevin Haunui, Hau Ariki Marae Committee Chairperson

“The addition of a solar energy and battery system will provide reassurance that there’s a place where the community can gather during emergencies to support each other and coordinate response activities that won’t be affected by power outages. It’s also heartening to see investment of this nature in a small community. The hall is at the centre of many of Whareama’s activities and the new energy system will further equip it for our use.”

- Dick Tredwell, East Coast Rugby Club Vice President



Solar energy systems being installed at Hau Ariki Marae in South Wairarapa and Whareama Hall in the Masterton district.

Flood resilience initiatives

Funding totalling over \$2m was secured to support three flood resilience initiatives in the region:

- Cockburn Street Sewer Resilience – to address regular sewer overflows during heavy rain events.
- Riversdale Beach Reserve Protection – to mitigate extensive erosion from high water flows caused by Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle.

- Flat Point Flood Resilience – to address regularly occurring surface water flooding during high intensity rain events in residential areas at this location.

All three initiatives are due to be completed by the end of 30 June 2025, providing significant ongoing benefits for people and communities in these areas.



Left to right: Construction of the bund wall and concrete ford at Flat Point in the Carterton district.

In addition to these initiatives, the WRO supported funding applications totalling \$4.5m for Greater Wellington Regional Council for repairs and upgrades to the Eastern Hills flood warning system, and for river blockage clearance activities to remove cyclone debris from rivers and waterways in the region.



Greater Wellington Regional Council's river blockage clearance project has cleared many kilometres of river channels of debris from Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle.

Fund reporting & financial processes

Accompanying the range of funding provided by central government for recovery activities was the requirement to submit regular reports on how the funding had been allocated, details of funded activities, and identifiable benefits and other outcomes achieved from these initiatives.

Reporting on funding took a considerable amount of the WRO programme coordinator's time. Some of the challenges associated with reporting was the different processes and platforms associated with submitting reports, the different amount of supporting information required to accompany reports, and different reporting templates that needed to be used.

Along with preparing and submitting reports, the programme coordinator also needed to follow up with funding recipients and council teams to obtain and collate the information required to support the reports. This involved a reasonable amount of time and resource to do.

In addition, the programme coordinator worked with MDC's finance team to arrange financial transactions associated with the funding. This included arranging payments to funding recipients and invoices to central government for reimbursement for funded activities.

As part of funding arrangements with government, MDC was the central point for funding across the three councils, with some funding being on-distributed to Carterton and South Wairarapa District Councils.

Internal reporting processes included regular reports to district councils' Audit and Risk committees, and to the Governance Sub-Committee.

Communications

A programme of communications and engagement activities was developed and implemented to support the WRO's work programme.

This included activities to:

- provide updates on the recovery programme and developments, including at key milestones such as the two-year cyclone anniversary
- share information about community resilience building initiatives, such as the donated AEDs and emergency resource containers
- raise awareness about the availability of new funding, such as the Recovery Fund, or funded initiatives, such as the PFA courses
- encourage participation in recovery activities such as responding to the needs assessment survey and enrolling in PFA courses
- provide tailored information and materials to support major initiatives such as the VBO and relocation programme
- respond to media enquiries and provide tailored media information to support key recovery initiatives
- identify and mitigate potential communications-related issues relating to recovery activities.

Communications initiatives were targeted at a range of audiences including:

- Council mayors and elected officials: for major updates and participation in some activities.
- Recovery-related staff in councils: RMs, key infrastructure staff, emergency managers.
- Other council teams (for updates): community development, Pou Māori and wider council staff.
- Partner agencies and stakeholder organisations: including those on the SWG.
- Sector agencies: including rural sector organisations and groups.
- Community and support services: including those involved in health and community support.
- Whānau and communities in impacted areas.
- Eligible landowners (and associated whānau and advisors): for the VBO and relocation programme.
- Local electorate MP.
- Media: including regional and local township media and informal news sources.

A range of communications channels were utilised for communications activities including:

- Council channels such as social media, website and intranet pages, regular newspaper feature pages, all staff meetings, and email distribution groups for specific groups including communities in impacted areas and iwi partnership networks.
- Stakeholder organisations' channels such as e-newsletters and social media pages.
- Rural sector, health and community agency channels including e-newsletters, social media pages and network forums.
- Social media pages and e-newsletters for communities in impacted areas.
- Communications channels for funding recipients include newsletters and social media pages.
- Whakapuakitanga network channels including the weekly hui and email distribution list for panui.
- News media, including regional and township outlets.
- The Wairarapa Recovery website.

The main approach for distributing updates and information was through council and other organisation's channels. This was largely because providing information and messaging through existing, and known and trusted, sources of information was considered the most effective to engage and get the desired response from target audiences.

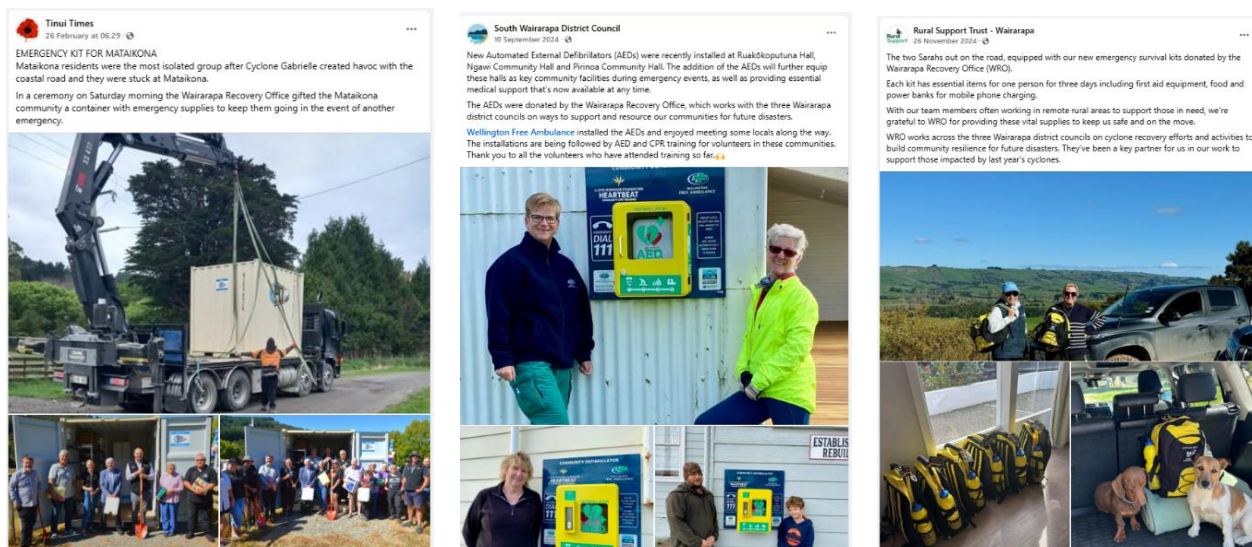
It was also recognised that the length of time between the cyclones and when a dedicated communications resource was in place meant that creating new channels and developing a following for these was likely to take additional time and considered to not be the best use of the available communications resource at that time.

Further, this approach allowed councils and other organisations to 'front' the messaging, to highlight their involvement in, and/or support for, recovery activities.

A wide range of materials were developed to support these activities. Core materials were often tailored to suit the range of target audiences for activities, to ensure these were relevant and appropriate for the intended audience. In addition, 'starter' materials were often provided to council communications teams and other agencies for them to tailor to ensure they were suitable for use via their channels and fitted with each organisations' communications style.

Local media were supportive in sharing recovery stories, with coverage resulting from all of the media information and updates provided to them. This included large photo stories for initiatives such as donations of emergency resources and the findings of the needs assessment survey, and features on the two-year anniversary of the cyclones.

The Wairarapa Recovery website that was initially created shortly after the cyclones was updated on a regular basis with information and news items. It is recognised that the website could have been more widely used as a communications channel and information source for recovery activities.



Communications initiatives included news media activities to provide updates on developments with the recovery programme and sharing information through a range of organisations' social media channels.

Relationship & information sharing with other councils (outside the region)

The WRO participated in forums with the recovery teams from district councils in other regions to share information and experiences, particularly relating to voluntary buy-out (VBO) programmes. These forums were particularly useful for recovery teams in smaller councils, which had less staffing and resources compared to larger councils, in leveraging off the knowledge and learnings that were shared by their larger counterparts.

It was also beneficial for regions such as Wairarapa whose councils had opted in to the government's VBO programme later than others, in being able to learn from the experiences of councils who were involved earlier, and in being able to seek advice and guidance for local programmes.

The WRO's involvement in these forums, including sharing experiences from this region, helped in building a rapport and effective relationships with other councils that can continue to be utilised in the future for emergency management and wider council initiatives.

The collective sharing from these forums has also contributed to the overall body of knowledge about recovery concepts, approaches, practices and activities, which can be accessed and used to inform future recovery initiatives at both a national and regional level.

Summary overview from this stage

What worked well during this stage (Note: some of these positive points also had issues associated with them; see next part of this section)

- Having a formal recovery office in place with dedicated staff and resources.
- Having staff with specialist skills and experience working in the recovery office.
- Reduced workload and pressure on RMs, allowing them to focus more on BAU activities.
- Having a regional Wairarapa-wide, not district-specific, approach for the recovery work programme.
- Being independent and having ring-fenced resources meant the WRO was not heavily influenced by council 'politics' or diverted by other priorities.
- The overall recovery work programme that was implemented during this period, and what was achieved with the available staffing and resources.
- Adapting the recovery programme as it progressed to be responsive to community needs and stakeholder organisation feedback.
- Ongoing governance from the full Governance Committee and then the Governance Sub-Committee.
- Ongoing support from relevant council teams, including communications, finance, building, and roading and infrastructure.
- Ongoing support from WREMO for some recovery activities.
- Having a better structured SWG in place, with regular meetings to provide a forum to share information, get input into recovery activities, and identify opportunities to link available funding to recovery efforts and for organisations to collaborate on specific initiatives.
- The active support and involvement of stakeholder organisations in recovery activities.
- Collaboration between stakeholder agencies on relevant and appropriate initiatives.
- The WRO providing a central point of contact for stakeholder agencies for information.

- Ongoing advocacy for the region at central government level, and the positive working relationships that were fostered with relevant government officials and departments.
- Keeping the local MP updated on developments.
- The additional funding that was secured from WRO applications and support from the WRO for other organisations' applications.
- Implementing funded initiatives.
- Meeting reporting deadlines and positive feedback from funders and internal council teams on the quality of reporting.
- Positive feedback from funding recipients on the benefits and the difference the grants had made for them and/or their organisation and wider community.
- Assisting severely impacted landowners through the VBO and relocation programme.
- Being able to provide PFA courses, which met an identifiable need in the region, and were well subscribed.
- The quality of the PFA courses delivered by Red Cross, which received universally positive feedback.
- The communications programme that was implemented to support recovery activities.
- The communications materials provided for councils, SWG members and other organisations to use.
- Opportunities for councils and other organisations to 'front' recovery activities, including providing information through their channels, and having elected officials and other council staff involved in events and initiatives.
- The regular communications updates that were provided to a range of council teams.
- The amount and range of communications channels that were utilised for sharing recovery-related information and messaging, to maximise the possible reach of activities to target audiences.
- Media coverage for recovery activities, which helped share updates on the recovery programme and helped to highlight the ongoing impacts and support needed for affected communities, and on initiatives to build community resilience ahead of future emergency events.
- Responses to media queries and potential media issues being effectively managed.
- Having a regional website with recovery information, which other organisations could include links to in their communications activities.

Identified issues and things that could have been done differently (Note: a number of issues relating to this period have been outlined in previous sections; the following are in addition to these)

- An overarching issue throughout the recovery process was the delays in establishing a dedicated office and having this fully staffed, and the associated flow-on implications from this. This also includes having programme management, coordination and communications roles in place from the start of the recovery process.
- The impact of the WRO PM taking on additional emergency management roles partway through the recovery programme.
- The lack of budget to utilise additional specialist support and provide extra resource at key stages.
- The need for greater clarity about roles and responsibilities between the WRO and WREMO, and the WRO and individual council teams, including for emergency management and communications. This could have led to some teams being involved earlier and to a greater extent during the early stages of the WRO being in operation. It would have also led to a greater understanding about the expected level of ongoing involvement and associated workloads for some teams in councils and WREMO.
- An initial lack of clarity about what the VBO programme would entail.

- Central government announcing the VBO programme and the Masterton district being included in it, without first advising MDC of this.
- The lack of consistency in VBO funding approaches across regions, leading to the need to negotiate specific funding arrangements for the Masterton district, and develop unique supporting policies and processes.
- The lack of thorough induction and planning processes for WRO staff when they came on board.
- Throughout the recovery process, having limited data available to quantify the impacts and measure the effectiveness of recovery progress and specific activities.
- The SWG not including some agencies that needed to be involved throughout the process.
- Restructuring within government departments and personnel changes for other organisations having an impact on the continuity of representation and creating sector group gaps on the SWG.
- Iwi not being involved consistently through the different recovery stages.
- A number of policies, processes and specific activities were being developed for the first time; this added to the time required to set up and implement some initiatives.
- There were delays in implementing some funded initiatives due to workloads and limited resources within the WRO team.
- A change and gap in personnel in WREMO's Wairarapa emergency resilience team led to delays in implementing some community resilience activities.
- At times, gaps in information and updates to Governance Committee members once the governance structure had changed to sub-committee level.
- The Wairarapa Recovery website could have been more fully utilised as a communications channel.
- There were other communications channels, including other council channels, which could have been used more widely with communications activities. This includes additional internal communications activities for council staff.
- Limited available images of some activities, which then limited opportunities for communications initiatives.
- The time and resources associated with reporting was considerable, and a number of reporting processes were quite onerous.
- The time and resources associated with managing the overall funding programme was also considerable, and not fully appreciated when planning the resources required to support the office.
- The WRO team having more time to spend in other district council offices.

Recommendations for the future

(Note: a number of these have been covered in earlier sections; the following summarise earlier recommendations and outline additional ones. Additional note: some of these recommendations have been or are being addressed)

Overarching:

- Ensure a recovery office with dedicated specialist resources is established earlier following an emergency event.
- Ensure the office is adequately resourced, including budget to contract additional specialist expertise and resources when required.
- Develop a template recovery office structure with core (and additional) functions and have job descriptions for these roles.

- Ensure there is a comprehensive induction process in place for any new staff working in the recovery office, including outlining all of the council teams and external agencies involved in the recovery process, including WREMO.
- Have Pou Māori linked to the recovery office from the start.
- Ensure the Wairarapa Welfare Manager is closely connected with the recovery office.
- Ensure starter plans and supporting systems, processes and materials are in place ahead of an emergency to allow recovery plans to be created more quickly, including for overall programme management, funding and communications.
- Establish some ongoing form of emergency management office across the three councils that incorporates all aspects of emergency management, including recovery.
- Build recovery capability and capacity into other relevant council roles, so recovery considerations are included in relevant BAU planning, and key staff can effectively support the recovery programme when required.
- Ensure there is a scalable element to recovery plans and processes, to reflect the different levels of impact (both in terms of severity and geographical area) across the region.
- Develop and more consistently use more robust planning tools.
- Establish more robust systems for collecting and analysing data to assist in identifying areas of need, and to support funding/resource requests.
- Collect 'before' data so there is a baseline from which to compare information gathered from needs assessment surveys.
- If possible, stagger funding availability and distribution across the recovery time period.
- Ensure there is continuity and consistency in recovery approaches, training and terminology between WREMO and Wairarapa district councils.
- Maintain relationships with stakeholder agencies that were forged or strengthened during the response and recovery stages following Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle. Identify existing forums that could potentially be utilised for this.

Additional

- Have pre-prepared terms of reference in place for the governance committee with clear roles, responsibilities and delegations.
- Undertake needs assessment surveys earlier.
- Develop ways to check how funding has been used.
- Identify other groups in communities (in addition to those already being engaged with) to connect with about emergency management. This includes community associations and greater connections with catchment collectives.
- Encourage leaders of relevant organisations to ensure appropriate people from their agency attend SWG forums and related activities; outline why it is important they are involved and how their role contributes to the wider recovery programme.
- Develop succession plans and processes for when key contacts leave an organisation to ensure there is ongoing representation on SWGs and other relevant forums, and to ensure knowledge is handed over and not lost.
- Identify how EOC-response communications will transition to recovery communications and develop an overarching framework that clearly articulates WREMO and recovery office roles and spans the overall post-emergency phases.

- Ensure template communications plans include checklists for potential target stakeholders, available channels, possible new channels and supporting materials to develop to support the recovery effort.
- Ensure communications plans identify how/when to transition from 'broadcast' communications to the wider public to targeted communications for impacted communities and the most appropriate communications approach to support this.
- Continue the approach of primarily delivering communications through existing and trusted channels to maximise engagement.
- Continue the approach of providing consistent messages and core materials for councils and stakeholder groups to use to provide information and updates to target audiences.
- Develop a plan for retaining the existing Wairarapa Recovery website, including updating the content for it to be a 'hold' site between emergency events, and identifying how it can be used during and after future disasters.
- Develop a plan for how the website could be utilised following emergency events, and how it will link with other relevant sites such as WREMO and individual council websites.
- Develop existing council websites to include more fulsome emergency management sections that could easily be updated following a localised emergency event.
- Identify more opportunities for 'storytelling' – sharing human interest stories on recovery efforts, particularly by community and sector groups, and how recovery funding had been used to provide benefits to impacted people and communities (particularly where these were ongoing benefits).
- Leverage the likely high level of media and public interest in the early stages of recovery to highlight the scale of the impact, what is being done, what support is available, and how the wider community can assist.
- Continue the approach of identifying opportunities for elected members, local MPs and relevant government ministers to 'front' recovery activities and do this to a greater extent.
- Identify greater opportunities for WREMO to share messaging and information through their channels.
- Identify more opportunities for internal communications activities within district councils in the region.
- Build more formal expectations about promotional activities into appropriate grant agreements to encourage and support funding recipients to undertake these in a more streamlined way.

Transition: WRO to BAU activities



“Every event highlights how important emergency management is; in peacetime, people forget this. Emergency management should be part of council BAU. When not in response, prepare for response; when in response, prepare for recovery; when in recovery, prepare to respond.”

- Council Recovery Manager

The WRO will officially finish up on 30 June 2025, when government funding for the operation will end, with recovery activities transitioning either to appropriate council operational teams, or into a new combined council ongoing emergency management office (EMO).

The EMO was established following a recent internal review of emergency management across the region. The office will work closely with WREMO and span the full range of emergency management approaches and practices: risk reduction, readiness, response and recovery.

It will support councils in their efforts to continually improve their emergency management capability to meet the increasing frequency and severity of emergency events affecting Wairarapa.

The office will be based in Masterton in close proximity to the regional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). Specific responsibilities include:

- working with councils to develop and enhance the emergency management strategy for the Wairarapa
- managing and supporting engagement between councils and WREMO
- providing council oversight and guidance to WREMO and WREMO-related resources operating in the region
- ongoing work to build emergency management capability and capacity within council operations
- embedding a dedicated, sustainable and resilient local controller capability across Wairarapa (controllers lead EOC operations and activities)
- strengthening relationships with external stakeholders, including emergency services, throughout the region.

An exit and transition plan will be developed to assist with the transfer of some cyclone recovery activities to the EMO.

The remaining roading and infrastructure repairs will continue to be managed by each council's relevant operational teams.

Once purchased, the ownership of properties and dwellings under the VBO and relocation programme transfers to MDC. MDC's Facilities and Open Spaces team will assess the potential options for each property and dwelling purchased under the scheme, including repurposing and relocating dwellings.

Summary of recommended activities



A summary of recommended activities from the different sections of this report is attached as Appendix One.

The recommendations, along with this report, will be shared within councils and with partner and stakeholder organisations at a local, regional and national level. The recommendations will also inform the development and some of the associated work programmes of the new Wairarapa Emergency Management Office.

A number of the recommendations, particularly from the initial response and transition from response to recovery periods, have been progressively addressed over the past 18 months as councils have been working to enhance emergency management practices, plans and processes following the cyclones.

WREMO's Group Recovery Office have also been developing recovery processes and supporting plans and guides at a regional level based on the learnings that have come out of the Wairarapa experience. These regional plans have in turn been incorporated into a number of plans and processes at a national level, with WREMO's Group Recovery Office team members being actively involved in work programmes at this level.



Continuing to build emergency management capability with communities across the region is an overarching recommendation that will be carried forward to the new Wairarapa Emergency Management Office.

Conclusion



“The Wairarapa Recovery Office has exceeded our expectations. Our council, our communities, volunteers and council management are very grateful for everything you have done for our cyclone recovery. I look forward with hope, knowing you have managed to help our communities put in place better plans to cope with whatever life throws at us.”

- Council chief executive

Despite the challenges and issues outlined in this report, the Wairarapa Recovery Office along with council teams, iwi, stakeholder agencies, and sector and community support organisations have collectively implemented a significant range of recovery initiatives to support impacted whānau, businesses and communities in the region.

The WRO, in partnership with WREMO and local communities, have also undertaken a range of activities to build community resilience and better equip community facilities, particularly in isolated locations, ahead of future emergency events.

Feedback gathered during the preparation of this report included the following comment: “Not only has WRO done what we expected, it has delivered recovery activities we hadn’t even thought of. It has shown what’s possible when funding and specialist expertise and resources are available”.

The combined efforts of WRO and others involved in recovery initiatives, along with the learnings and experience gained during this particular recovery programme, have contributed to the move by district councils in the region to establish an enduring recovery capability as part of the newly formed Wairarapa Emergency Management Office.

The scale and impact of Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle, along with the recovery activities that have been implemented, have also assisted in building public awareness about the length of time it takes to recover from an emergency event, and the need for individuals, whānau, businesses and communities to all play their part in greater readiness before the next disaster occurs.

The relationships with stakeholder agencies that were established or strengthened during the post-cyclone recovery process will continue to be an important aspect of continuing to develop an effective region-wide approach to recovery, and overall emergency management, approaches, plans and practices.

Appendix One: Summary of recommended activities

The following is a summary of the recommendations outlined in various sections of this report along with additional ones raised during the information gathering and feedback process.

REF	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS (at 30 May 2025)	COMMENT
	<i>Overarching/ongoing</i>		
ONG001	Have some form of ongoing combined-council emergency management office that includes all aspects of emergency management, including recovery, and can provide ongoing awareness, support and readiness for future emergency events.	Closed	A Wairarapa Emergency Management Office (EMO) is being established and will be responsible for these functions at a regional level.
ONG002	Build recovery capability and capacity into other relevant council roles, so recovery considerations are included in relevant BAU planning, and key staff can effectively support the recovery programme when required.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO work programme once established.
ONG003	Ensure budget for recovery activities is built into councils' plans, including long term plans, so post-emergency recovery efforts are not solely reliant on government funding (in addition to standard and ongoing roading/infrastructure funding policies).	Ongoing	To be addressed by EMO once established.
ONG004	Ensure there is continuity and consistency in recovery approaches, training and terminology between WREMO and Wairarapa district councils.	Open	To be addressed by EMO.
ONG005	Provide regular, brief updates at council meetings with additional information included in the council pack; plus, a quarterly more fulsome update.	Closed	This started in February 2025.
ONG006	Maintain relationships with stakeholder agencies that were forged or strengthened during the response and recovery stages following Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle. Identify existing forums that could potentially be utilised for this.	Ongoing	In progress. Maintaining these relationships will be part of the remit of the new EMO, along with relevant council teams.

REF	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS (at 30 May 2025)	COMMENT
	<i>Response & transition: response to recovery</i>		
RT001	Have a Recovery function in the EOC from the start along with relevant support function members, including PIM (Public Information Management) and Planning to ensure recovery plans can start to be compiled during the response phase.	Closed	Recovery function is now part of EOC. Additional recommendations to be addressed by EMO and WREMO.
RT002	Have a transition team of other EOC function staff involved during the transition process from response to recovery.	Ongoing	To be addressed by EMO and WREMO; ensure relevant staff are aware of transition requirements.
RT003	Recognise the limitations on council RMs if they are required to continue with BAU roles during the recovery stage, particularly early on before dedicated resource is secured.	Ongoing	To be addressed by EMO.
RT004	Foster greater collaboration between Controllers and RMs.	Ongoing	In progress; this approach is underway and will be ongoing.
RT005	Ensure iwi are involved in response from the start.	Ongoing	Tākahere function included in EOC. Ongoing engagement with iwi on emergency management approaches.
RT006	Have scalable plan templates and supporting processes in place for use in developing initial recovery plans, and allocate budget to support the development of these.	Open	In progress; to be advanced by WREMO and EMO.
RT007	Have a pre-disaster recovery plan in place from which tailored plans (utilising the templates in the point above) can be developed.	Open	To be addressed by EMO and WREMO.
RT008	Ensure RMs have some level of delegated financial authority to enable them to establish core recovery office functions during the transition phase.	Open	To be addressed by EMO and councils.
RT009	Continue to build awareness about the role and scope of recovery with other EOC teams, council staff, elected members and relevant partner agencies.	Ongoing	In progress; to be advanced by WREMO with input from EMO.
RT010	Ensure ongoing EOC and CIMs plans, training and supporting activities incorporate recovery concepts, approaches and activities, including for specific function desks.	Open	In progress; to be advanced by WREMO with input from EMO.

REF	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS (at 30 May 2025)	COMMENT
RT011	Develop training for operational staff so they are aware of how their work connects with response and recovery work; build emergency operations role into job descriptions.	Ongoing	All district councils have committed to EM training for all new and existing staff.
RT012	Ensure operational teams are kept updated on developments: what is happening, what is planned, overall scale of impact, so they are aware of this.	Ongoing	To be addressed by EMO and WREMO and councils.
RT013	Investigate developing links between EOC information systems and ARCView (GIS platform) and RAM (Roading Asset Management) for real time information gathering.	Closed	WREMO currently working on this.
RT014	Review and update contact lists for operational contractors to send updates to; ensure this is a consistent approach across councils.	Open	To be addressed by EMO and councils.
RT015	Consider what additional support needs to be provided to operational staff such as roading teams following a major event to address the impact on them (physically and mentally).	Open	To be addressed by EMO and councils.
RT016	Where possible, ensure emergency services are local and know local areas, particularly from a geographical perspective.	Ongoing	To be addressed by WREMO, EMO, councils and emergency services.
RT017	Identify other key contacts/roles in communities who could be involved in the initial response eg road wardens who could check on people, assess immediate needs, provide updates from 'on the ground'.	Open	To be addressed by EMO and councils' community development teams.
RT018	Ensure briefings to new elected members include a comprehensive overview of emergency management, including recovery, and their roles in it.	Ongoing	To be addressed by EMO and councils.
<i>Recovery office</i>			
REC001	Establish a dedicated recovery office and supporting resources sooner, including for communications, stakeholder and iwi engagement, programme coordination, data and information gathering, and funding management.	Ongoing	To be addressed by EMO and councils.
REC002	Develop a template recovery office structure with core (and additional) functions and have job descriptions in place for these roles.	Ongoing	Template developed by WREMO; to be reviewed and localised by EMO and councils.
REC003	Have budget as well as personnel resource available to support recovery activities.	Ongoing	To be addressed by EMO and councils.

REF	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS (at 30 May 2025)	COMMENT
REC004	Ensure there is a comprehensive induction process in place for any new staff working in the recovery office, including outlining all of the council teams and external agencies involved in the recovery process including WREMO.	Ongoing	To be addressed by EMO and councils.
REC005	Have pre-prepared terms of reference in place for the governance committee with clear roles, responsibilities and delegations.	Closed	In place; to be included in two-yearly review cycle by EMO.
REC006	Have Pou Māori linked to the recovery office from the start.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans.
REC007	Ensure the Wairarapa Welfare Manager is closely connected with the recovery office.	Closed	Under the new structure, Welfare Manager is part of new EMO.
REC008	Consider and identify possible representatives from sector agencies that can represent impacted communities and provide input at governance level.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans.
REC009	Develop and consistently utilise more robust planning tools.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans, policies and practices.
REC010	Establish more robust systems for collecting and analysing relevant data following an emergency event to assist in identifying and quantifying areas of need, and to support funding/resource requests. This includes aerial footage of impacted areas.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans, policies and practices.
REC011	Undertake needs assessment surveys earlier.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into recovery plan templates.
<i>Stakeholder engagement</i>			
STA001	Establish a stakeholder working group earlier following an emergency event and ensure all key agencies and iwi are included on this.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans.
STA002	Identify clear roles and responsibilities for the agencies involved, including the recovery office, councils, WREMO, stakeholder agencies, and ensure there is awareness and agreement on these.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans.
STA003	Consider having a representative(s) from impacted areas on the stakeholder group.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans.

REF	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS (at 30 May 2025)	COMMENT
STA004	If emergency events impact rural areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider having a dedicated welfare arm for lifestylers • ensure animal welfare agencies and veterinarians are involved in recovery work programmes • consider having a dedicated on-farm coordinator. 	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans.
STA005	Identify what resources and support marae can provide ahead of time, and what is available in each community, including those in remote locations. This includes RT communications.	Open	To be addressed by EMO and WREMO.
STA006	Identify other groups in communities (in addition to those already being engaged with) to connect with about emergency management. This includes community associations and greater connections with catchment collectives and rural advisory groups.	Open	To be addressed by EMO, WREMO and councils.
STA007	Develop succession plans and processes for when key contacts leave an organisation to ensure there is ongoing representation on SWGs and other relevant forums, and to ensure knowledge is handed over and not lost.	Open	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans, and arrangements with SWG member agencies.
STA008	Encourage leaders of relevant organisations to ensure appropriate people from their agency attend SWG forums and related activities; outline why it is important they are involved and how their role contributes to the wider recovery programme.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into EMO and council plans, and arrangements with SWG member agencies.
Funding			
FDG001	Have funding platforms, policies, criteria and processes in place ahead of the next emergency event.	Open	To be addressed by EMO.
FDG002	Have a dedicated resource to manage funding applications; both applying for funding and overseeing the distribution of this.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into relevant EMO plans.
FDG003	Have a dedicated phone line for donations, a resource allocated to oversee this process, and identified donation criteria and processes in place.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into relevant EMO plans.
FDG004	Ensure iwi, Pasifika and other interest groups have information about funding that would be relevant to them <i>and</i> have appropriate input into funding allocation decisions.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into relevant EMO plans.

REF	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS (at 30 May 2025)	COMMENT
FDG005	Leverage the likely high level of political and public interest to advocate for and secure available funding.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into relevant EMO plans.
FDG006	If possible, hold back some initial funding so it is available to meet ongoing needs during the recovery process.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into relevant EMO plans and policy approaches.
FDG007	Incorporate more formal promotional activities into relevant grant agreements so recipients are encouraged and supported to do this.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into relevant EMO plans.
FDG008	Build in ways of following up to check how funding has been used.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into relevant EMO plans.
FDG009	Share with government the suggestion of having funding channelled through one localised function such as a recovery office so the office and community agencies are aware of everything is available and can work collaboratively on the most effective ways of allocating and distributing it.	Open	To be addressed by WRO PM as part of exit and government review activities.
<i>Communications</i>			
COM001	Have a pre-disaster recovery communications plan in place from which tailored plans (and the templates in the point below) can be developed.	Open	To be developed by EMO and council communications teams, with input from WREMO.
COM002	Have scalable communications plan templates and supporting processes in place for use in developing initial recovery communications plans.	Open	To be developed by EMO and council communications teams, with input from WREMO.
COM003	Identify how EOC-response communications will transition to recovery communications and develop an overarching framework that clearly articulates WREMO and recovery office roles and spans the overall post-emergency phases.	Open	To be developed by EMO, WREMO and council communications teams.
COM004	Have a list of identified available communications channels that can potentially be utilised depending on the scale of the emergency and the geographical areas and demographic groups impacted by it, along with new channels and supporting materials that may need to be developed. This includes existing internal (council) and external channels.	Open	To be developed by EMO with input from council communications teams.

REF	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS (at 30 May 2025)	COMMENT
COM005	Utilise existing and trusted channels for communications activities wherever possible to assist with cut-through and fostering the desired response from target audiences.	Ongoing	Approach to be incorporated into communications plans.
COM006	Develop a checklist of potential stakeholders to include in communications plans and activities. This includes programme (governance, management, council RMs), internal (council) and external stakeholders.	Open	To be incorporated into communications plans.
COM007	Ensure communications plans identify how/when to transition from 'broadcast' communications to the wider public to targeted communications for impacted communities and the most appropriate communications approach to support this.	Ongoing	Approach to be incorporated into communications plans.
COM008	Identify opportunities for 'storytelling' – sharing human interest stories on recovery efforts, particularly by community and sector groups, and how recovery funding had been used to provide benefits to impacted people and communities (particularly where these were ongoing benefits).	Ongoing	Approach to be incorporated into communications plans.
COM009	Leverage the likely high level of media and public interest in the early stages of recovery to highlight the scale of the impact, what is being done, what support is available, and how the wider community can assist.	Ongoing	Approach to be incorporated into communications plans.
COM010	Retain the existing Wairarapa Recovery website for use during and after future emergency events; update the existing site to become a 'holding' site for future use.	Open	In progress; content to be updated by WRO ahead of transition to EMO responsibility.
COM011	Develop a plan for how the website could be utilised following emergency events, and how it will link with other relevant sites such as WREMO and individual council websites.	Open	To be incorporated into communications plans.
COM012	Develop existing council websites to include more fulsome emergency management sections that could easily be updated following a localised emergency event.	Open	To be advanced by EMO and council communications teams.
COM013	Provide consistent messages and core materials for councils and stakeholder groups to use to provide information and updates to target audiences.	Ongoing	To be incorporated into communications plans.

REF	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS (at 30 May 2025)	COMMENT
COM014	Identify greater opportunities for WREMO to share messaging and information through their channels.	Ongoing	Approach to be incorporated into communications plans.
COM015	Identify more opportunities for internal communications activities within district councils in the region.	Ongoing	Approach to be incorporated into communications plans.
COM016	Encourage operational teams, funding recipients and other agencies to take and provide images of recovery-related activities to use in communications initiatives.	Ongoing	Approach to be incorporated into communications plans.
COM017	Identify opportunities for elected members, local MPs and relevant government ministers to be involved and 'front' recovery activities and announcements.	Ongoing	Approach to be incorporated into communications plans.
	<i>Other</i>		
	<u>Emergency response exercises/training</u>		
OTH001	Involve iwi in emergency management exercises.	Open	To be addressed by WREMO and EMO.
OTH002	Consider holding exercises at random to more fully test emergency preparedness levels among councils, stakeholder agencies, iwi and communities.	Open	To be addressed by WREMO and EMO.
OTH003	Consider how to involve operational teams in emergency exercises so they understand the EOC structure and how the overall response works.	Open	To be addressed by WREMO and EMO.
OTH004	Continue to extend the number and range of district council staff involved in WREMO CIMs training, to further build emergency response and management capability and capacity in councils.	Closed	Councils have included training in onboarding and training plans developed for each staff member.
OTH005	Recognise the CIMs and other emergency management training that council staff do in training records and personal development plans.	Closed	Councils now include EM into training records. WREMO also hold training attendance records.
OTH006	Include marae in emergency management training so they are aware of the overall response process and systems and are aware of what wider support is available.	Open	To be addressed by WREMO and EMO.

REF	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS (at 30 May 2025)	COMMENT
	<u>Before an emergency event</u>		
OTH007	Develop a log of what resources are available in communities and key contacts for these.	Open	To be addressed by EMO, WREMO and councils.
OTH008	Collect 'before' data so there is a baseline from which to compare information gathered from needs assessment exercises.	Open	To be addressed by EMO.
OTH009	Continue to undertake regular ongoing preparedness campaigns to remind people of the need to prepare for future emergency events; ensure these campaigns set and manage expectations of what individuals, whānau and communities will need to manage following a disaster, and what/when other support will be available.	Closed	WREMO have a schedule of ongoing preparedness campaigns. Approach to be supported by EMO and councils.
	<u>Additional suggestions</u>		
OTH010	Develop a Wairarapa-specific recovery navigator service plan to improve coordination of wellbeing support to affected communities.	Open	To be considered by EMO.
OTH011	Develop a pre-event Wairarapa Specific Holistic Consequence Assessment.	Open	To be considered by EMO.

Appendix Two: Summary of funding received

The table below outlines funding administered by the Wairarapa Recovery Office.

It does not include funding which was distributed before the Office was established, such as the Mayoral and MBIE business recovery funds.

Project#	Project name	Last date (expiry)	Amount
0001.00	Recovery Office Committee (DIA)*Extended	30/06/2025	\$400,000.00
0002.14	Governance & Iwi Partnerships (DPMC 23/24)	30/06/2024	\$175,000.00
0002.15	Governance & Iwi Partnerships (DPMC 24/25)	30/06/2025	\$175,000.00
0002.24	Common Operating Model (DPMC 23/24)	30/06/2024	\$175,000.00
0002.25	Common Operating Model (DPMC 24/25)	30/06/2025	\$175,000.00
			\$1,100,000.00
0014.00	Recovery Fund (MSD)	30/06/2024	\$150,000.00
0019.00	Community Wellbeing initiatives (MSD)	30/06/2024	\$50,000.00
0038.00	Rural Health & Welfare Support (MSD)	30/06/2024	\$37,000.00
0039.00	Rural Fencing Training Initiative (MSD)	30/06/2024	\$38,000.00
0041.00	Rural Social Sector Funding (MSD)	30/06/2024	\$50,000.00
0042.00	Social Sector Funding (MSD)	30/01/2025	\$35,000.00
			\$360,000.00
0020.00	Community Hubs (MPI)	29/02/2024	\$250,000.00
0021.00	Rural Mental Health & Wellbeing (MPI)	29/02/2024	\$70,000.00
0040.00	Lions Foundation Resilience	30/10/2024	\$28,644.00
	Community Renewable Energy Fund – Whareama Hall (MBIE)	30/11/2024	\$98,960.00
			\$447,604.00
0028.00	Relocation Cat 3 (NIFF 30/6/25)*Extended	31/12/2025	\$800,000.00
0031.00	Riversdale Water Protection Wairarapa (NIFF 30/6/25)	30/06/2025	\$411,000.00
0032.00	Cockburn Street Sewer Resilience (NIFF 30/6/25)	30/06/2025	\$1,300,000.00
0033.00	Flood Resilience – Flat Point (NIFF 30/6/25)	30/06/2025	\$350,000.00
0037.01	Voluntary Buy-out Shared (NIFF 30/6/25)	30/06/2025	\$1,600,000.00
			\$4,461,000.00
	Total		\$6,368,604.00



**WAIRARAPA
RECOVERY**



**SOUTH WAIRARAPA
DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Kia Reretahi Tātau



**MASTERTON
WHAKAORIORI**
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe o Taratahi
CARTERTON
DISTRICT COUNCIL