

Comprehensive Report: Emergency Management Unit

To recap

4 – 6 January, an ex-tropical storm, 330mm of rain caused widespread flooding, road closures, landslides, and isolation.

9 – 12 January, Cyclone Hale, gale force winds and 450mm of rain, caused further damage, flooding and closures across the Coromandel.

27 – 30 January, Anniversary Weekend storm, 350mm of rain fell, land instability became a major issue across the urban areas, especially along the Thames Coast and northern Coromandel, together with ongoing roading and isolation due to flooding.

31 January – 3 February, rains continued, land instability risks increase, the Coromandel reaches saturation point.

3 February, A local Civil Defence Emergency Declaration was made, additional resources were required to assist manage the response and evacuation of individuals and small communities. This declaration was extended to the 12 February.

12 February, A national Civil Defence Emergency Declaration was made as Cyclone Gabrielle made landfall.

12 – 15 February, Cyclone Gabrielle, severe and widespread damage, including beaches across the entire Coromandel, which rendered it totally isolated, without power in many places, and communications for 24 hours.

27 February, The Emergency Operations Centre closed, transition to Recovery commenced.

Summary of the impacts

The TCDC Emergency Operations Centre was fully activated for 7 weeks. Over 60 Council staff and 120 emergency partners and contractors manned the EOC, at times for 16-18 hours per day. As a result of the efforts by many staff during this time, their respective BAU work did get behind. It cannot be underestimated that many have continued to absorb the pressure of managing and catching up on BAU but also in personal recovery by still not being in a position to take sufficient time away from the office.

Rainfall during this period exceeded 2.380mm, 114 slips occurred on local roads, 210 slips occurred on the state highway network, including the complete failure of SH25A, 80 private properties were placarded, there was an immediate -47% hit to the Coromandel economy.

The cancellation of the National Emergency Declaration on the 27 February was followed by a Transition to Recovery period, again administered by NEMA (National Emergency Management Agency).

Daily reporting to NEMA included the impacts to people and property as well as the widespread and ongoing environmental and roading issues.

TCDC moved out of the Recovery Transition period to Recovery phase at the end of April 2023.

Debrief and feedback

The Emergency Management Unit sought feedback from staff and communities on the overall response to Cyclone Gabrielle.

As with all large-scale emergencies, the impacts, ability to cope, reactions, satisfying needs and perceptions by individuals, and groups differs greatly. The summaries that follow represent a cross section of individuals who had a role to play in supporting the response.

The TCDC response to Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle were also assessed by the National Emergency Management Agency and CDEM Group. Both reviewed the structure and overall effectiveness of the response management. While positive and complimentary, a final report is still to be completed.

Feedback Summary – Cyclone Gabrielle Activation and Response Feb 2023

Fifteen of thirty communities (those with active Community Response Groups) were invited to submit feedback on how TCDC Emergency Management managed the Cyclone Gabrielle activation and response.

15 communities responded

Whitianga
Whangamatā
Coromandel
Manaia
Kennedy Bay
Whangapoua
Koputauki
Opito Bay
Hahei
Tapu
Thornton & Ngārimu Bay
Pāuanui
Tairua
Colville
Kuaotunu

Community Response Groups: (Community Led Centres) Key themes in the feedback were:

What went well:

- Established Relationship between council, emergency services and community
- Established response plans
- Pre-deployment of resources and kai
- Communication with Iwi – reliable information sharing
- Inter-agency/community group support
- Resourceful communities
- Good media comms
- Local Groups WhatsApp communication set up.

- Pre event communication with Community Response Groups

Opportunities for improvement:

- Requirement for generators and regular generator maintenance and testing.
- Alternative communication options and comms plans.
- Training for CR group members and other volunteers.
- Comprehensive resilience kits for communities – Insured and maintenance schedule.
- Information sharing process – EOC / ICP/ CDC/ CLC and Community Response Groups (sitreps).
- Public & community education of personal preparedness.
- Set up generalised food supply network with Hauraki Maori Trust Board.
- Marae preparedness planning.
- Communication breakdown within iwi community.
- Solution for improved drinking water for all iwi communities.
- Radio Broadcasting to be more comprehensive during power cuts/ internet outages in order provide the same messaging on both platforms.

Area offices - Incident Control Point and Civil Defence Centre: Key themes in the feedback were:

Whitianga, Whangamata responses

What went well:

- Interoperability between council staff, emergency services, support agencies, volunteers, and security.
- Reliable up to date information sent out by Customer Services.
- Assigning local staff to external agencies.
- Combined agency briefs in ICP.
- Civil Defence Centre set up and management well, locations worked well as a central point for information.
- Reassurance that smaller communities have established plans and can look after themselves initially.
- Communities rallied to clean up.
- Established Community Response Plans and relationships.
- Cell sites have provision for generator input.
- Water Contractors ability to keep bore water pumps active – Standard Operating Procedure.

Opportunities for improvement:

- Clarification at the outset of the event, chain of command and role ICP and role of elected members.
- ICP and CDC- Comprehensive Toolkits (maps + extra to share, role cards, check list, setup instructions and resources including generators).
- ICP and CDC training for staff and volunteers.
- Requirement for generators and regular generator maintenance and testing.
- Information sharing process – EOC / ICP (sitreps).
- Alternative communication options and comms plans.
- Sandbags process and stock to be pre-defined.
- Review Sitrep distribution process and contacts.

Emergency Operating Centre staff –

56 staff responded.

What went well:

- Good communications within the organisation, media, and communities.
- Good support, working together as a team, camaraderie.
- Working under a clear, authoritative, and decisive structure.
- Calm leadership.
- Being able to take the initiative, make things work, making a difference.
- Regular briefings gave confidence.

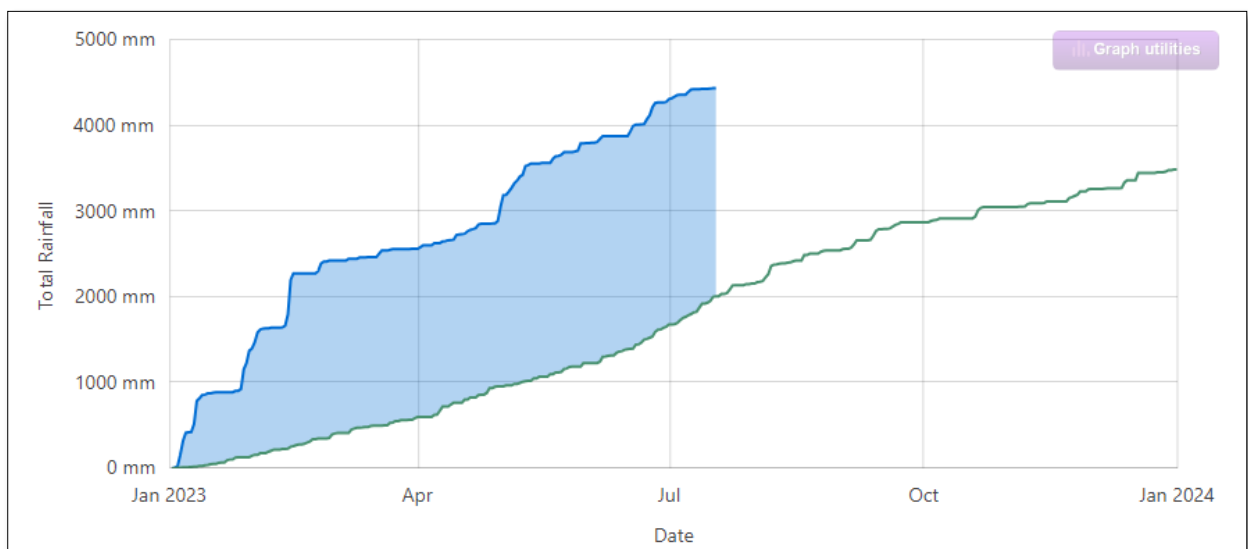
Opportunities for improvement:

- Train more senior staff as function managers.
- Formal decision-making lacking by function managers.
- Cohesiveness was lacking at times.
- Improve templates, processes, and systems.
- Some shifts were too long.
- More staff needed to cover and build capacity.
- More training.

2 Discussion

Current climatic, environmental, and economic situation

Since Cyclone Gabrielle a further two metres of rain has fallen across the Coromandel accumulating to 4.440 metres as of the 17 July, this is more than double the annual rainfall year to date, compounding saturation and land instability issues.



Under the Building Act 2004 Council is required every three months to confirm if a 'designation' of an area, in this case the entire Coromandel Peninsula, is to remain in place to protect people and property. This authority allows for Council building inspectors to issue placard notifications if such a risk is identified. A renewal of the designation authority has been signed for three months to the end of October 2023; however, advice must now be sought if continuation of the Designations is required.

The Building Act provides a system and powers for managing buildings after an emergency. These powers are set out in Subpart 6B of the Building Act and allow for the designation of an area for building emergency management following an emergency event. Once a designated area is in place, the Building Act provides several special powers that may be exercised in respect of all buildings within the designated area. These provide additional ways to manage risks to life and property from damaged buildings and land.

These powers can be activated by a person authorised by the regional Civil Defence Emergency Management Group, by designating an area for building emergency management. If no state of emergency or transition period is in force, the relevant territorial authority needs the Minister for Building and Construction's approval to designate an area – in this situation MBIE prepare a briefing to the Minister for her approval. The Minister for Building and Construction can also designate an area on their own initiative if there is no state of emergency/transition period in force.

The designated area must be a defined area and the designation must be in the public interest, as well as being necessary or desirable for the protection of one or more of the following:

- people, from injury or death
 - buildings, from damage or disruption to their use
 - public thoroughfares, from disruption
 - critical infrastructure, from damage or disruption to its operation or use
 - people or buildings, from the effects of insanitary conditions in the relevant area.
- Powers available in designated areas
Once an area has been designated, all building emergency management functions of the Building Act take precedence over the Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Act powers. There are exceptions, such as when it is necessary or desirable to exercise a power under the CDEM Act to remove or reduce risks posed by the building that cannot be removed or reduced by exercising a power under any sections of the Building Act.

Designating an area provides the responsible person with certain powers to:

- Enter to a building or land for evacuation, or to put in place:
 - measures to keep people at a safe distance and protect buildings.
 - placement of notices and signage on buildings.
 - works (urgent and non-urgent) to remove or reduce risks.
 - works for long-term use of the building.
- Carry out post-event assessments (rapid building assessments).
- Require the owner of a building to provide information.

- Carry out urgent works to remove or reduce risks.
- Require or carry out works to remove or reduce other risks.
- Require works for long-term use or occupation of a building.

These powers are confined to building management activity within the designated area.

Recovery

In May, the DPMC (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet) established the Cyclone Recovery Unit. The NEMA (National Emergency Management Agency) had up until this point been the lead agency for the cyclone response and transition phase of the recovery.

The Cyclone Recovery Unit is a centralised organisation established to coordinate the various stages of recovery from all affected areas, Coromandel, Waikato, Hawkes Bay, Tairāwhiti, Auckland & Northland.

Cabinet Ministers were appointed to represent the interests and support requests from local and regional councils, Council has hosted multiple Ministers including the Prime Minister.

Every week Council provide an update to the Cyclone Recovery Unit on progress, issues, initiatives, and requests for support.

Council established an internal 'Recovery Group' in March with a focus on operational recovery. Comprising the CE, Leadership Team, Recovery Lead, and senior staff the group meet weekly to progress the Recovery Plan and tackle issues.

Outside of Council a 'Recovery Forum' was established in April. Made up of senior managers from TCDC, WRC, DOC, MBIE, MPI, MSD, Waka Kotahi, and NZ Health the forum provides Council with an umbrella overview of each agency's recovery plans which in turn identifies where wider resourcing and support can best be utilised.

A Mayoral Disaster Relief Fund was established in February to receipt Government, NGO, private contributions, and grants. Within this structure a panel of three (3), two elected members and a community representative was established to consider and approve the distribution of funds to the wider Coromandel community.

As of the 17 July, grants and donations totalling \$1,117,926 have been received and \$437,000 distributed to a broad cross section within many communities, small business, tourism operators, schools, local groups, and individuals.

A further \$300,000 has been approved for distribution to community groups applying for a grant to the Social Recovery Fund through Community Waikato, \$40,000 was provided to Sport Waikato to co-fund sporting group initiatives, \$50,000 was approved for an Individual/Whānau Fund with a further \$50,000 approved for a Community Event Fund to support mental wellbeing and information forums.

A Council Recovery Plan (as attached to and referenced in the CE's report) has been produced as a 'live document' to identify the priority areas for Council based on the four 'environments' - *economic, built, social and natural*.

The Coromandel, with a high dependency on tourism to drive the economy has prioritised the restoration of and building more resilience into the transport networks.


To achieve this Council is working in a partnership with Waka Kotahi to develop and implement a medium-term plan (5-10 years) to build resilience into the state highway network with the appropriate workforce in place to deliver the milestones laid out within the plan.

Council has also partnered with Waka Kotahi to achieve similar goals across the local transport network and to utilise their technical expertise and resources. A plan has been developed in partnership with Waka Kotahi, and other agencies, which will eventually be considered by Cabinet.

The Recovery Plan also identifies the key needs of the four 'environments', all of which is now work in progress by staff.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT


- 
 Investment in a resilient state highway and **ROADING NETWORK**
- 
 Funding to help Council **PROTECT, AVOID, RETREAT AND ADAPT** to climate change
- 
EQC SUPPORT dealing with land instability where there are multiple land owners


SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- 
 Increase in access to flexible **MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT** products and services
- 
 Support for **COMMUNITY TRANSPORT** providers
- 
 Wider range of **HEALTH SERVICES** delivered locally

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Recognition that tracks and trails improve community health and wellbeing by providing **SPACE FOR RECREATION**

 Funding for Council and DOC to **REPAIR BUSH TRACKS, WALKWAYS, CYCLEWAYS**, and bridges

 Support with the **REHABILITATION OF DUNES** in the coastal environment

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

 Funding to conduct **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

 Support for businesses to **KEEP WORKERS EMPLOYED**

 **DESTINATION MARKETING**

Social Recovery

A ‘Community Partnerships’ team has been established as a new business unit within Council. The team includes a Community Relationships Co-ordinator and two Social Navigators, with a focus on strengthening connections between people and support services.

The Social Navigators have been supporting individuals and whānau to navigate their way through the wide range of social and economic issues being faced from recent weather events, by connecting them up to the right agencies and support networks. They are also working to support initiatives by local iwi and community organisations to build resilience and prepare for future events.

The Community Partnerships Coordinator has a focus on coordinating the Mayor’s Taskforce for Jobs programme, wellbeing events in the community, workforce planning and coordinating a Careers Roadshow at the end of August that will travel around the Peninsula.

The Social Navigator positions are funded by a Department of Internal Affairs Recovery Grant and are fixed term positions for 12 months from 19 June 2023.

Resilience project

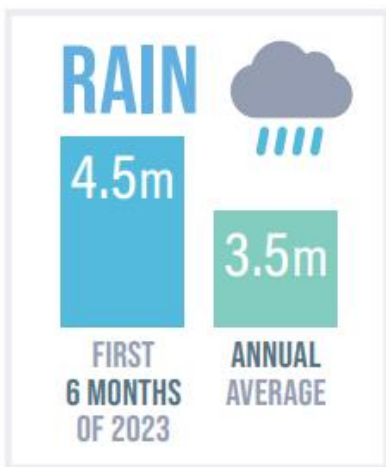
Feedback following Cyclone Gabrielle strongly supported building more resilience capability within communities.

The Emergency Management Unit secured a \$50,000 grant from the Lion Foundation in April to procure and install resilience kits into ten of the more vulnerable and isolated communities.

Each kit is stocked with items pertaining to the needs of each community such as a StarLink, generator, fuel, BBQ’s, radios, medical kits, blankets, towels etc.

Additional funding is being sought to roll the project out to another 20 communities and install a cache of larger items such as mattresses, tents, protective clothing etc. into the four larger communities to ensure there is easy access to transport options.

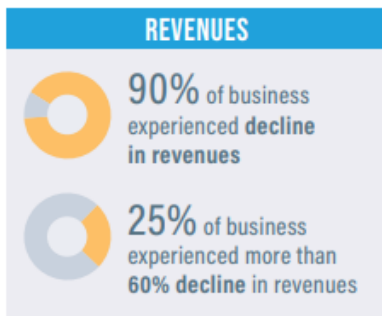
Economic



- Weather events and ongoing road closures causing:
-  Job losses and business failures
 -  Damage to tourism destination brand
 -  Supply chain disruption



BUSINESS IMPACT SURVEY



The local economies of the Coromandel have been disproportionately impacted by the storm events and road closures.

Card spending data from MarketView shows that Thames-Coromandel suffered the hardest and most prolonged hit to spending activity from the severe weather events of January/February.

Total card spending fell 11%pa, with nearly \$22m less spent in the area over the March 2023 quarter compared to last year.

Tourism accounts directly for 10% of GDP and 15% of our workforce is employed in the tourism sector, a further 15% of the workforce is employed in retail. A detailed analysis of tourism spending data suggests that Thames-Coromandel lost at least a third of usual domestic tourism spending.

Primary industries and the construction sector employ 22% of the workforce and have been impacted by disruption to supply chains, high-cost pressures, and continued labour market shortages.

House sales for the March quarter dropped 35%. Fewer houses were sold in the march quarter compared to the year prior and the number of new build consents declined by 20%

A Business Impact survey was conducted amongst 110 businesses across the Coromandel in June. Results are summarised below.

Revenues

90% of those surveyed have experienced decrease in revenues since the storm events.

1/3 of respondents had experienced a 40 – 60% decline in revenues.

¼ of respondents experienced greater than 60% decline in revenues.

Expenses

50% of respondents have seen cost of doing business increase by more than 20%.

Employment

20% of businesses surveyed have made staff redundant due to the impact from the storm events.

60% of businesses surveyed have reduced the number of hours their staff are working.

28% of businesses surveyed anticipate further job losses.

Business Outlook

43% of respondents facing a deteriorating business outlook.

9% of respondents not sure if their business will survive.

Most significant challenges facing businesses.

1. Road closures.
2. Cost of Freight and extended/ delayed delivery times.
3. Damage to tourism brand, market uncertainty.

How are business people feeling?

“Very low morale”.
“Hard to keep turning up every day”.
“Stress is huge, survival very difficult”.
“Tired and emotionally drained”.
“Stretched to the limits”.
“Staff are worried about their jobs”.
“Team is feeling isolated”.
“Constantly anxious”.
“Frustrated”.
“Worried”.

What support do businesspeople want?

The roads fixed.
Financial relief, Wage subsidy.
Mental health support.
Positive messages about the Coromandel in the media.
DOC parks and sites open.

Possible impacts on the Recovery Plan

In June NIWA produced a forecast for the 2023/2024 summer noting the emergence and affect an El Niño climate cycle might bring.

For the Coromandel, there is the possibility of unusually dry weather this summer. Should this eventuate there are additional impact factors that will need to be considered for inclusion in the Recovery Plan, especially for the peak summer period.

- *Higher than normal traffic volumes across the transport networks.*

Completing the work programme to ensure both local and state highway transport networks are open and safe to travel on.

- *Higher than normal demands on water, wastewater, and solid waste utilities.*

Ensuring that repairs and resilience capability to the utilities is sufficient to handle a possible record number of visitors.

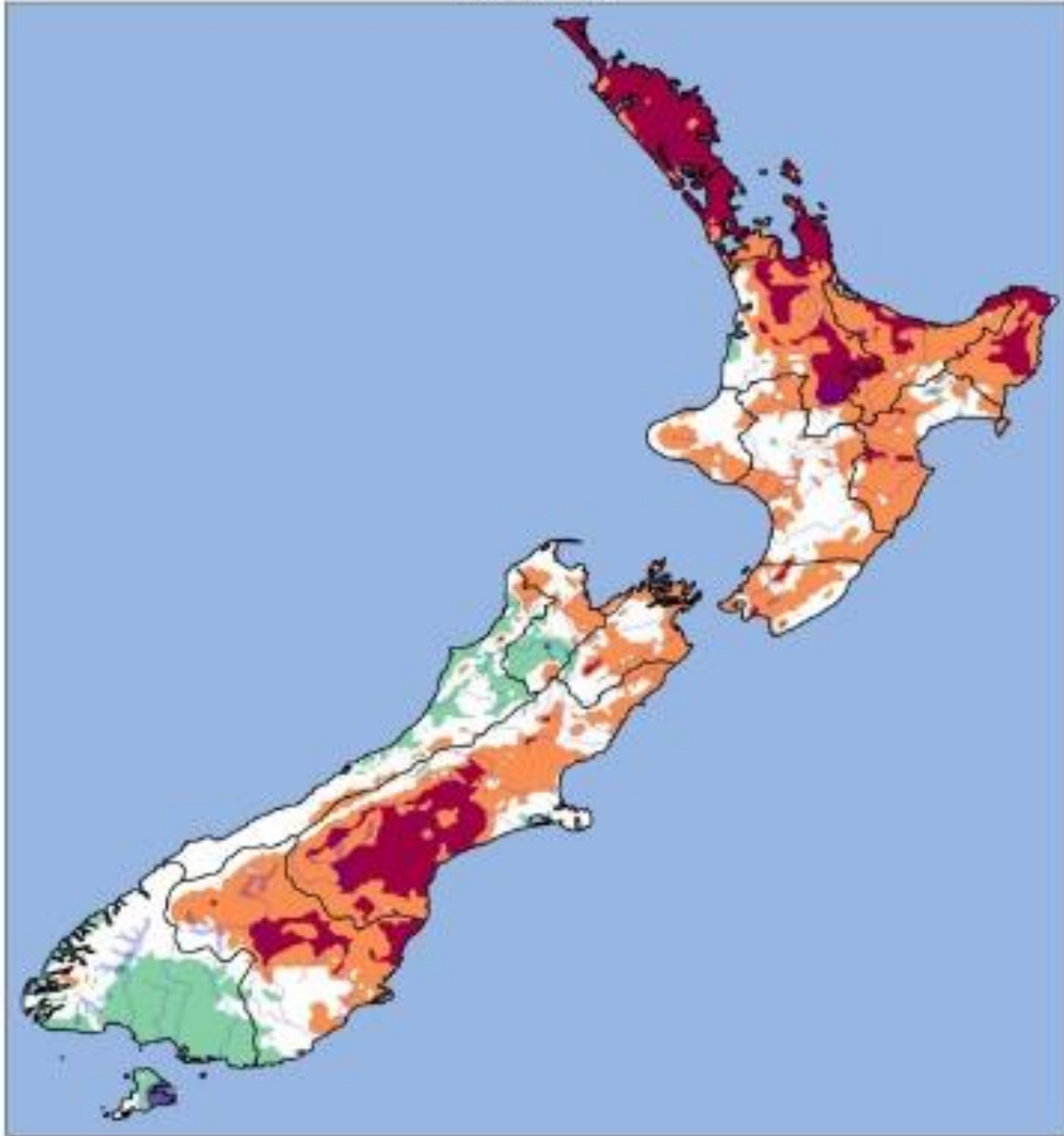
- *Higher than normal fire risk*

Work with FENZ to communicate the risks and impact of wildfire.

By possibly going from one weather extreme to the other, with little time to recover, presents additional risks across all sectors of the Coromandel. As highlighted in this report stresses remain everywhere, extended support demands through the Recovery Plan will likely remain high for at least another year.

NIWA

El Niño



Chance of above normal summer rainfall during El Niño

