

# Cyclone recovery MSD update Month of August 2023

## Context

This report is an update on the Ministry of Social Development's key monitoring in response to the severe weather events in 2023 (Auckland Flooding in Jan 2023 and Cyclone Gabrielle in Feb 2023).

This includes key updates on how the Ministry is supporting affected regions through income support, employment, and community programmes.

## What's been achieved?

- › MSD in their lead role for the Social Sector Recovery Plan have been working with the Cyclone Recovery Unit (CRU), Regional Public Sector Commissioners, Recovery Managers, Regional Commissioners and other Agencies to triage the Regional Recovery Plans.
- › We continue to work with regional teams to determine where investment is best allocated for prioritised areas and needs in their Regional Recovery Plans.
- › We are progressing procurement processes for regions where funding decisions have been made.
- › We have worked with MSD Regional Commissioners and Community Connection Service Providers to identify and confirm the allocation of the 65 Community Connectors in the impacted NIWE regions. This is in addition to the 100 Community Connectors allocated across the motu.
- › The All of Government Funders' Forum (which includes the Regional Public Service Commissioners) is well established and continues to meet regularly as a national cross-agency clearinghouse.

## Regional Public Sector Commissioner's (RPSC's) around the motu continue to collaborate and engage with communities and iwi about cyclone recovery priorities and social sector recovery.

- › The MSD Regional Commissioner for East Coast facilitated discussions with Council and roading contractors around planning for longer-term programmes of work and noting potential employment impacts, surges in roading repairs, short-term downturn in roading contracts, and the future of work.
- › In Hawke's Bay, the Regional Public Sector (RPS) helped support the Hastings community to identify 10 communities to be supported through recently secured funding and were a part of establishing a plan with community on how the funding will be spent to best fit community needs.
- › In Tairāwhiti, the RPSC supported the transition of social sector recovery leadership from the Recovery Co-ordination Centre to Manaaki Tairāwhiti and contributed to the draft strategy/plan.
- › The Auckland RPS team continue to be involved in a joint Auckland Regional Leadership Group (ARLG), and Auckland Policy Office (APO) Recovery Officials Coordination Team, and the Taitokerau Northland RC/RPS teams are continuing to have regular discussions with the Regional Recovery Manager and Resilience Project Lead around projects and funding for Taitokerau.
- › The Wairarapa RPSC met with Recovery Managers, and supported decision making around priorities and funding in relation to Cyclone Recovery.
- › The RPS in Tararua engaged with the Ministry of Education and Tararua stakeholders to align and incorporate regional leadership rangatahi priorities with Cyclone Recovery.
- › The Waikato RPSC is working with partners on finalising NIWE funding allocations, focussing on initiating grants and contracts, with an emphasis on funding the retention of jobs across industry on the Coromandel Peninsula.
- › The Bay of Plenty RPSC supported NZTA as a key point of contact for the Bay of Plenty Collective Impact Group when a slip occurred on State Highway 35 south of the Motu River Bridge (between Ōmāio and Hawaii) on 20th August 2023. There was a full road closure for 15 hours with no detour. Regional relationships and dedicated road workers meant that roadworks were completed quickly within 48 hours to reopen SH35.

## Employment

### Employment Cyclone recovery funding

Through Budget 2023 the Government is investing an additional \$35.2m over two years to deliver expanded and new employment programmes to affected regions. Of this:

- > \$7.850 million has been allocated to regional initiatives that are nationally supported i.e., initiatives such as Jobs and Skills Hub and Click to Enrol.
- > \$28.350 million has been allocated to a regional response fund for regions to respond as needs emerge.

The Infrastructure Commission has released its construction workforce projections, giving regional insights into potential labour demand for the recovery. This information has been distributed to affected regions to assist with their planning and coordinating their recovery efforts.

Under its multi-category appropriation, MSD has deployed several initiatives in response to the North Island Weather Events:

- > Regional employment teams are engaging with employers to explore opportunities for effective early involvement for people at risk of job displacement and focussing on supporting redeployment, work retention and retraining.
- > Using existing employment products i.e., such as Flexi-Wage to support those at risk of long-term benefit receipt or at disadvantage in the labour market to gain training and develop work skills that support them into lasting employment.

MSD's Industry Partnerships team continues to build strategic relationships within the civil sector that provide insights and intel relevant to recovery (including the Construction Sector Accord, Commissions, Government agencies and Workforce Development Councils, and large sector employers).

11 Enhanced Taskforce Green (ETFG) teams, and a total of 88 people have been deployed across weather-affected regions as of mid-September. ETFG involves employing people in projects focussed on supporting recovery work such as removing debris from land, fences, and waterways as well as silt removal.

A new Tairāwhiti Jobs and Skills Hub has an operational lead who will lead this hub for two years as a "pop-up" hub with a focus on cyclone recovery and clean up through construction and infrastructure. The Hawke's Bay Jobs and Skills Hub is also supporting cyclone recovery opportunities.

## Community Connectors

During the month of August, 65 Community Connectors have been confirmed along with the discretionary funding committed by region in Cyclone impacted areas. Contracts start from 1 October 2023 through to 30 June 2024. You can read about the Community Connection Services [here](#). No NIWE Food or SSRP Funds lead by MSD were committed during August.

## Benefit numbers

### Benefit numbers

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

Region	Month			Monthly change		Annual change	
	Aug 22	Jul 23	Aug 23	Number	%	Number	%
Tāmaki Makaurau	103,332	107,268	108,375	1,107	1.0%	5,043	4.9%
Bay of Plenty	27,939	28,155	28,482	327	1.2%	543	1.9%
Hawke's Bay	14,424	14,631	14,907	276	1.9%	483	3.4%
Manawatū-Whanganui	22,176	22,878	23,121	243	1.1%	945	4.3%
Te Tai Tokerau	19,917	20,466	20,535	69	0.3%	618	3.1%
Tairāwhiti	5,631	5,922	5,949	27	0.5%	318	5.7%
Waikato	38,901	40,278	40,605	327	0.8%	1,704	4.4%
Wellington	31,149	31,485	31,803	318	1.0%	654	2.1%
<b>National</b>	<b>345,156</b>	<b>354,633</b>	<b>357,975</b>	<b>3,342</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>12,819</b>	<b>3.7%</b>

In August 2023, the number of main benefit recipients in Hawke’s Bay increased by 1.9 percent when compared to the previous month. In comparison, main benefit numbers for Tairāwhiti and nationally remained relatively unchanged with a small increase of around one percent or less.

When compared to 2022, both Hawke’s Bay and Tairāwhiti saw increases of 3.4 percent and 5.7 percent respectively. In comparison there was a 3.7 percent increase in overall national numbers when compared to the same time last year.

Since January 2023, there has been a rising trend in benefit numbers across New Zealand, likely relating to multiple factors such as extreme weather events, and signs that the economy is weakening. Benefit number trends across the different regions are also likely to reflect external factors, and are expected to continue rising based on Treasury’s expectation of a period of low economic growth, which will then affect the labour market.

## Next steps

1. MSD will continue to work with CRU, regional teams and other Agencies to update and facilitate priority one activities in the social area of the Regional Recovery Plans.
2. MSD will continue to work with regions on regional allocations for the Social Sector Recovery Plan, and NIWE Food Secure Communities Funds, for prioritised areas and needs, to enable the implementation of Regional Plans.