

In Confidence

Office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment
Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

Supporting jobseekers and economic recovery in Tasman

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement for the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) to spend up to an additional \$300,000 (excluding GST) from MSD baselines on Enhanced Taskforce Green (ETFG) to support clean-up efforts from an adverse weather event in the Tasman district.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 This proposal supports Government Target 5—Fewer people on the Jobseeker Support benefit. Extending this programme will give jobseekers an opportunity to gain work experience and prepare for employment as part of the continued clean-up activities in the Tasman district. This supports the Government's commitment to help people enter and remain in employment.

Enhanced Taskforce Green enables jobseekers to respond following adverse weather events

- 3 ETFG is one of several supports across government for communities to recover and build resilience after a natural disaster, while also supporting jobseekers gain skills and work experience.
- 4 In 2006, following an emergency event in the South Island, ETFG was established to assist with clean-up activities and to support similar emergencies in the future. It was to be funded from within Vote Social Development baselines [CAB Min (06) 24/3E].
- 5 I am authorised to approve up to \$500,000 (excluding GST) of ETFG funding per event, from existing MSD baselines. The funding is to assist in clean-up activities where required, for a specified period (which will depend on the size and impact of the adverse event). Amounts in excess of \$500,000 require Cabinet approval.
- 6 The last activation for ETFG was for Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023. Through this funding many communities across the North Island received practical help with clearing fence lines and waterways and removing debris from affected properties. The programme ran from 6 March 2023 to 19 November 2023 with Cabinet approving the use of additional funding as part of a package of support in response to the North Island Weather Events.

The government has responded to significant weather events in Tasman and Marlborough

- 7 In June 2025, significant rainfall occurred in the Tasman and Marlborough areas, resulting in a State of Emergency being declared on 27 June 2025.

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- 8 On 5 July 2025, I authorised the activation of ETFG, enabling MSD to use up to \$500,000 to assist farmers and growers in recovering from this event. Funding was covered through the Multi-Category Appropriation - Improving Employment and Social Outcomes Support, using existing baseline funding. The authorisation of additional funding beyond this level requires Cabinet approval.
- 9 Work has commenced under the ETFG programme with 16 jobseekers and two supervisors starting work on 21 July 2025. To date 56 properties have registered for ETFG support with 16 properties rated as severely damaged and an additional 32 properties rated as having major damage.
- 10 ETFG is one of several supports across government to support communities recover and build resilience after a natural disaster. Government has already committed over \$1 million, with up to an additional \$2 million from the Ministry for the Environment being committed to support waste cleanup, waste and resource recovery infrastructure repairs, and the removal of silt from affected properties. An outline of this funding is reflected in the table below.

Table One: Overview of government funding for Tasman and Marlborough June 2025 weather event.

Agency	Reason
MSD - \$500,000	ETFG: Provides labour to support farmers and growers recover.
MPI - \$340,000	Tasman Mayors Relief Fund: The funding will support farmers, growers, foresters, and fishers in the Tasman district to recover from severe weather in mid-2025 and build resilience for the future. It will enable the completion of time-critical repairs.
MPI - \$40,000	Marlborough Mayoral Relief Fund: As above.
MPI - \$50,000	Fund with Farmers Adverse Events Trust for Nelson/Tasman region for Federated Farmers: To support the immediate recovery needs for the most impacted pastoral farmers in the Nelson Tasman region.
MPI - \$50,000	Fund with Horticulture NZ for Top of the South: Financial support is available to help pay for technical support, labour, machinery hire and other practical support.
MPI - \$20,000	Top of the South Rural Support Trust to provide psychosocial and peer-to-peer support to farmers, growers and fishers.
MSD - \$73,844	Civil Defence Payments.
MfE - \$2,000,000	Flood-related waste cleanup, waste and resource recovery infrastructure repairs, and the removal of silt.

I N C O N F I D E N C E

MYD - \$50,000	For Student Volunteer Army Nelson/Tasman to support the cleanup.
NEMA - \$150,000	Two contributions of \$100,000 and \$50,000 contributed to the Tasman Mayoral Relief Fund.

Additional funding is required to finish the clean-up

- 11 Due to the scale of this event, MSD officials have advised that there is the need for up to \$300,000 of additional funding. This would extend the programme to 5 December 2025, ensuring that the teams are able to continue work on the properties most significantly impacted and to provide additional support to help the economic recovery of the community.
- 12 To date, the programme has provided support of up to three days for each property, with a focus on those most significantly impacted to ensure urgent and essential work is completed. However, given the size, scale and area impacted, the need is far greater than what the initial \$500,000 can provide. Additional funding will enable teams to continue the clean-up and return to those properties that need more support. This will contribute to the district's economic recovery, particularly the farmer and grower community and support jobseekers in the district to gain work experience.
- 13 Extending the programme to 5 December 2025 will also provide the best opportunity for the people employed on the programme to transition to seasonal horticulture work without returning to benefit.
- 14 Without approval for additional spend, the programme will cease on 10 October 2025, with workers being let go from this date, significantly hindering the recovery work and impacting farmers and growers.

ETFG funding arrangements could be strengthened for better alignment

- 15 I am also seeking agreement to increase the amount allowed under ministerial delegation for future events to \$1 million before having to go to Cabinet.
- 16 In practise this would look like the Minister for Social Development and Employment being able to approve up to \$500,000 from MSD baselines for the use of ETFG twice (\$1 million in total), and anything over this amount requiring Cabinet approval for future emergency events. This will allow MSD the flexibility to make decisions around its use of the Multi-Category Appropriation and seek ministerial approval of the use of funds for how it can best support jobseekers and the economic recovery of affected communities, in a timely way after a severe weather event.
- 17 The current funding arrangements for ETFG are no longer fit for purpose with no changes to the \$500,000 payment approval threshold since it was established in 2006, following a weather event which required this amount of funding. This limit for ministerial delegation no longer reflects the cost of adequately responding to emergency events given inflation since 2006.
- 18 The process of seeking Cabinet approval to spend more than \$500,000 from MSD baselines does not align with the flexible approach of the Multi-Category Appropriation. ETFG sits within the Improving Employment and Social Outcomes

Support appropriation. Funding under this appropriation goes towards a range of employment supports and services, intended to improve client outcomes (employment and social) by moving them closer to independence, with a focus on those at risk of long-term benefit receipt.

- 19 Lifting the threshold would allow more flexibility following emergency events that cannot be planned or budgeted for and would allow MSD to respond in a more timely and efficient way.

Cost-of-living Implications

- 20 The proposals discussed in this paper will enable eligible jobseekers to continue in employment until December 2025 which will support them with the cost of living. It will also give jobseekers work experience which will improve their ability to attain a higher standard of living by supporting them off benefit and into employment.

Financial Implications

- 21 Funding of up to \$300,000 is required to continue ETFG until 5 December 2025. The funding will be from MSD's Multi-Category Appropriation - Improving Employment and Social Outcomes Support, and met through existing baselines.

Legislative Implications

- 22 There are no legislative changes required to implement the proposal in this paper.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement

- 23 There are no regulatory proposals in this paper, and therefore Cabinet's impact analysis requirements do not apply.

Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

- 24 A Climate Implications of Policy Assessment is not required for this paper.

Population Implications

- 25 The proposals in this paper will have a significant positive impact on rural communities in the Tasman district. It will benefit them by supporting them with the clean-up and supporting their economic recovery. Not extending funding would slow down the rate of recovery in a rural based community where there are limited employment opportunities.

Human Rights

- 26 The proposal in this paper is consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Use of external Resources

- 27 No external resources were used in the development of this paper.

Consultation

- 28 The following agencies have been consulted: Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry for the Environment and The Treasury. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the National Emergency Management Agency and Ministry for Regulation were advised.

Communications

- 29 I intend to announce the extension of ETFG funding during my visit to the affected Tasman district on 12 September 2025.

Proactive Release

- 30 I intend to proactively release this paper subject to the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that Enhance Taskforce Green was activated on 5 July 2025 which provided \$500,000 (excluding GST) from Ministry of Social Development baselines to assist farmers and growers in recovering from significant rainfall and flooding in the Tasman district
- 2 **note** that there is further clean-up work to be done in Tasman
- 3 **authorise** the continued use of Enhanced Taskforce Green up to a cost of \$300,000 (excluding GST), in addition to the \$500,000 (excluding GST) already authorised
- 4 **note** that if authorised by Cabinet, this spend will come from Vote Social Development Multi-Category Appropriation - Improving Employment and Social Outcomes Support baselines
- 5 **note** that if additional funding is not approved, Enhanced Taskforce Green will cease on 10 October 2025
- 6 **authorise** the Minister for Social Development and Employment to approve up to \$1 million for the use of Enhanced Taskforce Green to assist in the clean-up activities that may be required in future emergency responses from Ministry of Social Development baselines.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Louise Upston

Minister for Social Development and Employment