



## Cyclone Gabrielle and Tai Tokerau Northland

Stories of community resilience  
and messages of support for the rest of  
Aotearoa New Zealand



NORTHLAND  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

GROUP



# Karakia

Tuia i runga

Tuia i raro

Tuia i roto

Tuia i waho

Tuia i te here tangata

Ka rongo te pō

Ka rongo te ao

Haumi ē, hui ē, taiki ē

# Tīmatanga kōrero

## Introduction

**Tēna koutou, tēna koutou, tēna koutou katoa. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou. Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou.**

This document collates voices from the community consultation/whakawhiti kōrero that took place in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle and the follow-on Mangawhai rain event in February 2023, the largest severe weather event to affect Northland in a generation.

This document contains some stories of heartbreak, hard work, heartfelt connections, and hopes and dreams for the future. In among the aftermath of flooding, high winds, downed trees, and damaged houses are also stories of community connection, humour, resolve, and ideas about how to be ready for future weather events.

These experiences and stories are taonga, treasures. We hold them carefully, and now you hold them too. If you participated in the community consultation/whakawhiti kōrero process that led to this document, we hope you find your words in here. We couldn't include everyone, but hopefully you'll see words that were similar to what you had to say.

While we chose the subtitle for this document to be 'Stories of community resilience and messages of support for the rest of Aotearoa New Zealand', contained in these pages are really testimonies – stories and images of what communities experienced, how they're getting through, and how they're looking ahead.

This booklet also contains messages of support, āwhina, and encouragement for people in other areas of Aotearoa New Zealand who were affected by the multiple weather events of early 2023. In the middle of the cyclone itself, most Northlanders couldn't travel, but many wished that they could go south to physically help other regions.

Northlanders are often aware that, comparatively, they're not as well-off as other areas of the country – but while we might not have much financially, we're a region of big heart. This document was therefore designed not only to capture the experiences of people across Tai Tokerau, but also send aroha nui (big love) to other areas of the country that were hard hit.

If history tells us anything, we know that while infrastructures ultimately fail and need to be re-built, cultures remain. Stories span centuries. Nature adapts. Earth abides. In time, the effects of Cyclone Gabrielle will pass.

And in time, what gets physically built back will reach the end of its working life. But the small stories of how people got through this event will merge with the other stories of the larger events of the past, and the larger events of the future, to be woven into the ongoing accounts of how people survive, provide mutual aid, and choose to live – or not – within the ecosystems they're dependent on.

**Mark Trüdinger**

**Group Recovery Manager**

**Northland Civil Defence Emergency Management**

# Cyclone Gabrielle

## – by the numbers

**While this document focusses on community members' experiences of Cyclone Gabrielle and the Mangawhai weather event, here's a quick summary of some facts and statistics relating to the event from Northland's Regional Recovery Plan for historical context.**

On 8 February 2023, Cyclone Gabrielle formed in the Coral Sea. MetService issued a severe weather warning for Tai Tokerau Northland, including both a red severe rain warning and severe wind warning.

The cyclone hit the northern parts of Northland, increased in rain intensity further south near Whangārei, and then lashed Northland's west coast in its wake. Dargaville was especially hit, with overtopping and flooding leading to evacuations over three days. Mangawhai was then hit by a severe weather event on 24 February.

These events had many significant features around Northland, some of them record-breaking:

- The Northland region as a whole received 342 mm of rain over seven days, with Glenbervie Forest recording 420 mm.
- One-in-100 year rainfall amounts over 48 hours were recorded at six sites; one site recorded a one-in-250 year rainfall.
- Wind speeds reached gusts of 165 km/hour.
- Rainfall of 63 mm/hour was recorded for a sustained period on the Pouto Peninsula.
- The cyclone brought large waves, storm surges, and coastal inundation. In the Bay of Islands, a wave buoy recorded a wave height of 10.9 metres.
- Four rivers exceeded heights from all previously recorded maximums on record.

On Sunday 12 February at 4:30 pm, Northland CDEM declared a Regional State of Emergency. At 8:43 am on Tuesday 14 February, a National State of Emergency was declared by the Prime Minister and Minister for Emergency Management. This was only the third time that a National State of Emergency had been declared in New Zealand.

## Impacts

Major impacts included damage to State Highway 1 between Northland and Auckland, with access to the region significantly restricted for some days. Other concerns and impacts included:

- access to food and fuel
- wind and tree damage causing widespread power outages across the region (peaking at about 46 000 customers at one time, and 64 000 total customers affected across the event)
- widespread communications outages (approximately 40 000 customers)
- approximately 60 grocery stores and supermarkets had interrupted delivery of food and other essential items
- a total of 86 Northland schools sustained damage of varying levels from minor to extensive.

During much of the event, many Northlanders were also without communications:

- more than 200 communications towers were non-functional for two days
- approximately 40 000 Spark customers did not have mobile/cell phone coverage
- 29 100 customers were without fibre connections.

This limited the ability of families and communities to know if others were safe and for other critical infrastructure providers, and emergency services, to be contacted.



Throughout Northland, 17 houses were red-stickered (entry prohibited/assessed as unsafe to inhabit), and 30 yellow-stickered (restricted access/assessed as significant damage and/or risk).

Seven vessels sunk at their mooring due to rain or waves and a further 17 ran aground. Three beacons were destroyed. All shipping was suspended in Northland's harbours.

Northland farms were significantly affected. Nearly 70% of the region's kūmara crop was destroyed, more than 250 dairy farms were without power during the event, and at least 150 dairy farmers had to dump milk. Some stock animals were killed, and fruit and vegetable crops damaged.

## What we've learned since

Since that summary, we've learned a bit more about the impacts:

- More than 2000 households filed insurance claims relating to building damage.

- 23 727 Civil Defence hardship grants were paid to Northlanders.
- More than 300 Disaster Relief Fund (sometimes called Mayoral Relief Fund) grants were paid to Northlanders, totaling more than \$1 million. Some are still being assessed.
- Economic impact to Northland during the event is estimated to have been hundreds of millions of dollars.
- Some coastal properties have had formal geotechnical assessments, which show they could fall into the ocean if we have a similar event in the future.
- The total rebuilding costs of public infrastructure, as well as building in some basic resilience for the future, would total about half a billion dollars.

While Northland was not as impacted as Auckland, Tairāwhiti, and Hawkes Bay, the above statistics are an important reminder of the extent of this event – and why it was the largest emergency in Northland for a generation.

# From community kōrero to a Regional Recovery Plan

This community consultation was designed to inform the *Regional Recovery Plan for Northland | Te Mahere Whakaoranga mō Te Tai Tokerau Cyclone Gabrielle 2023*. Put simply, a Recovery Plan asks ‘What just happened?’ and ‘What should happen next?’

Historically, Recovery plans in New Zealand have mainly featured lists of things that the government will do to rebuild infrastructure. Of course, this is important – and our plan included those kinds of lists too. But our Recovery Plan started with an additional question: ‘How can we keep the people who are at the heart of the work at the heart of the work?’ In other words, if communities are at the heart of Recovery, how might we demonstrate this? How might we hear from them?

Northland’s Regional Recovery Plan therefore included community voice throughout: the first words in almost every section of that document were the community’s words, which set the context for the content that followed. Most of the first third of the Plan comprised community voices, in their own words, grouped into different themes.

But that Plan only had space for one quote per theme, perhaps two at most. The document you’re now reading is the more fulsome collection of answers to the questions we asked. It’s a far more detailed, complex, diverse, and varied collection of voices than what was included in the Plan. In this way, the community consultation/whakawhiti kōrero had a far wider, and possibly more important, purpose: to be a piece of community work in itself, and to lead to this document, which will likely remain in communities long after the Recovery Plan.

Here’s how we summarised the process, and the questions we asked, in the Recovery Plan.

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## Community consultation | He whakawhiti kōrero tahi tātou ko ngā hapori o te rohe

To find out community visions for Recovery and community mahi already occurring, during March and April 2023, Northland CDEM ran a community consultation/whakawhiti kōrero project. We asked questions in community settings, face-to-face interviews, and in an online survey that was passed on to community members by community groups and social service providers, hapū and iwi, rural peak bodies, community leaders, and many others. The idea behind this community kōrero was to give people a chance to ‘take a step back’, and reflect not only on their own circumstances, but those of their wider area, networks, communities of concern, schools, workplaces, social groups, and so on.

Our approach was based on the idea that community consultation can itself be a site for relieving social suffering. Rather than extractive, or re-traumatising, it can be healing of people and their communities.

Community consultation can also bring to light solutions – not only for the current event, but also for Reduction and Readiness for future events – that might otherwise be lost. In this way, we can ‘rescue’ people’s lived experience, and turn it into actions that benefit wider communities and help increase future resilience.

To do this, we asked four simple sets of questions:

1. How were you and your community affected by Cyclone Gabrielle?
2. During the cyclone, and in the days that followed, what did you find most helpful? What were you thankful for? What examples did you see of people helping each other? What is helping your community get through this?
3. What are your hopes and dreams for your community in the coming months after Cyclone Gabrielle? What does 'Recovery' from Cyclone Gabrielle look like to you?
4. Some other areas of Aotearoa New Zealand were affected pretty badly. What message of support, āwhina, or encouragement might you have for them at this time?

The first question allowed people to answer about effects on themselves and their community, whether physical, mental, or otherwise.

The second question elicited stories of how people responded to these challenges, and how they're getting through, based on the idea that no-one is a passive recipient to tough times or major events.

Asking about 'hopes and dreams' is what provided both the ideas for the community-led visions for this Recovery, as well as practical ideas for actions and projects.

And the final question allowed us, as Northland, to collect messages of hope and support to share with the rest of the country as a taonga.

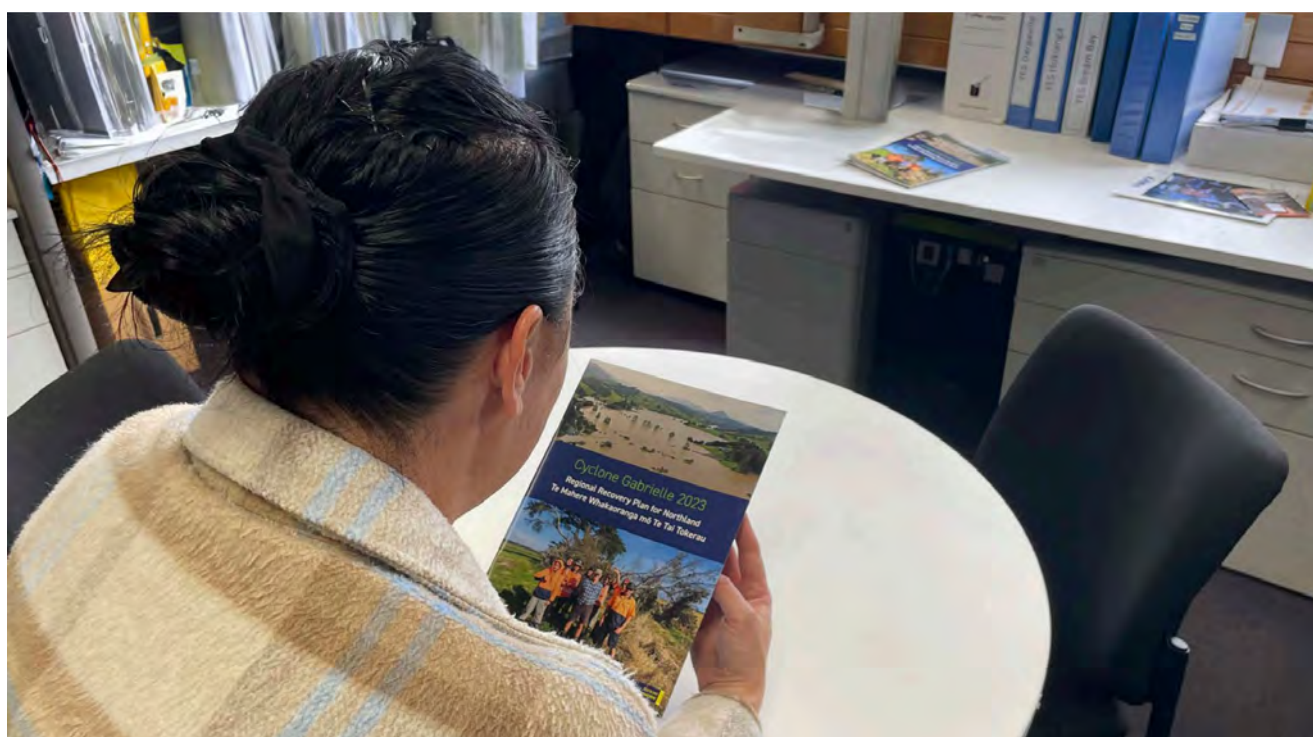
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Answers to the above questions comprise most of the rest of this document. The themes in this document aren't in any kind of priority order, just in the order in which the theme emerged.

In these replies, we heard from people who reflect the diversity of Northland communities: in their responses, people let us know that they were tangata whenua across the rohe, farmers, mums, business owners, people with disabilities, young people, retirees, deaf people (who faced an additional challenge to access information when text-based communication was not working), community groups, emergency services workers, people of different faith communities, and more.

'Recovery' means different things to different people. Beyond the 'facts' of the event, what constitutes 'Recovery' will depend on how people and communities *experience* the event and the *meaning* they attribute to these experiences. Recovery will then also depend on what people and communities think 'should come next', based on *what they give value to*.

So the stories that follow differ. Some people were not affected much. Some lost houses. Some lost stock animals, or income. Some people's communities pulled together, while others felt isolated. The visions for Recovery efforts, and wider visions for communities' futures, also differ. But these different strands create a tapestry; the whenu create the whāriki.



# How were you and your community affected by Cyclone Gabrielle?

## ***‘The intensity of the storm made it harder for neighbours to support one another’***

Our road and local access routes were closed a number of times (due to trees, slips, silt, flooding). Power went out five times – the longest stretch was 32 hours. Our landline was out for two weeks, and there were periods where cell phone connectivity was even more patchy than usual. School and kindy were closed which meant many adults in our community were trying to work from home, care for kids, and weather the storm and look out for one another all at the same time. The cyclone affected people differently. At my workplace, some colleagues and my worksite experienced little or no direct impact. This meant it took some time before

my workplace made it clear that we were not expected at work and that cyclone leave would be provided if it prevented us from working. High winds and significant rain meant livestock were exposed to driving rain and wind chill, which resulted in our household losing stock animals. We also had some damage to our home. The intensity of the storm made it harder for neighbours to support one another in practical ways, as it didn't feel safe to travel to one another (rural context). As a mum of young kids, I felt isolated. Especially as my partner is an essential worker and was away from home, and we had limited ability to communicate. – Anonymous





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## ***'The storm was ferocious'***

I live at Baylys Beach and the storm was ferocious. I was fortunate that I was able to get home after a tree fell across the road. – Liz

We experienced gale-force winds and abundant rain. – Lynn

We had about 20 trees damaged of various sizes. – John

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Mangawhai was literally cut off from the rest of the country. What I witnessed was disheartening. Low-lying houses and properties were flooded. Infrastructure was overwhelmed by the sheer amount of water. After working my shift at the Emergency Operations Centre, I assisted with evacuating a neighbour's friend from the estuary as she lived alone. – Sads

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## ***Damage to the natural environment***

Devastation of the foreshore – many cubic metres of sand washed away, with thousands of spinifex plants. – Heather

Our stream turned into a river. – Raewyn

The stream area on our land was devastated but will recover in a few years. – Howard

Beach sand embankments were massively eroded, revealing tūpuna kōiwi. – Jackie

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Tauranga Bay suffered very little damage to dwellings although there were a few trees and large branches downed. Half of the foreshore sand disappeared and the dotterel nesting zone was halved. A lot of the spinifex and pingao planted by the community has been uprooted and washed away. – Panchita

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## ***Physical Isolation***

We were flooded in. – 'Gardener Mangawhai'

Lots of trees down across our only road in and out of Tinopai, and no power for around six days. Some people's homes were damaged, some people were trapped in the residential road because huge trees and power lines were down across the road. With no phone or internet, it felt really isolated and we had no idea what was happening anywhere else in NZ. – Ruby

We had no exit due to tree down in powerlines. – Jul

Trees blown over blocking access from home; took a week before able to drive out. – Leslie

There was no ferry connecting North Hokianga to South Hokianga. – Patricia

We couldn't move and it was very difficult to travel. We were cut off completely for a day or two with no access to Stage Highway 1 and of course supply chains for food and essential items were all impacted. It was even worse when the next huge Mangawhai downpour came down and the whole road to Kaiwaka and Kaiwaka School was closed completely. Work closed down. We had no power or telephone coverage for quite a while. There was a lot of anxiety and fear across the community. There are still many machines, gates, and so on that don't work because they were all under water for a period at the height of Gabrielle due to flooding. – Mariana





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### ***Unable to communicate with others***

We had no electricity for 10 days and no cellphone coverage for five days. – Kelly

If any one of us were hurt, no one knew. – 'Handle bars', Kaipara

Our community was isolated for five days with no power or cellular communication. – Leona

We were unable to connect with others apart from direct contact. – 'Whangaruru Whanau'

Access roads to both Dargaville and Waimamaku were cut off from flooding, slips, and fallen trees. Power and phone lines including the cellular network were also cut off making some of the 10 northern communities in the district a black zone. – Virginia

We had no reception in the South Hokianga due to cell phone towers down for 12 days. – Renah

We had no power for a week and no internet or cell cover for almost two weeks. Although we prepared as best we could with water supplies and had a gas cooktop, it was difficult personally as I have a dependant 82-year-old husband. The loss of contact with no internet, cell cover, or landline meant we were quite isolated as we live in a rural community. It meant that if I had an emergency with my husband, there was no way for me to make contact with services. The nearest coverage for cell phone contact was close to the hospital! – Nolene

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### ***Lack of access to information***

Fallen trees, power cuts, no way of communication, no way to know updates, hazards, and so on. No way to access to money or gas to help others. – Jazz

We were mostly concerned about losing communication when we lost power. We couldn't know or be aware of any more potential threats. – Nikita

Power was off for two days, phone and internet both off for nine days. Residents here without transport had no way of knowing what was going on, and there was no way for worried loved ones in other parts of the country or overseas to find out if they were okay or not. There was a complete blackout of information to Bayllys Beach residents. The authorities were sending out

urgent texts and emails, not seeming to know that we had no way of getting them. – 'Stereo Nerd'

The worst was no internet for about five days and as we get all our information from the internet (we don't really use radio and have no TV anymore) we felt cut off from the world. – 'Hokianga resident'

I cannot describe the sense of panic when there was no news and no idea how long the outages would last. Even when the news came on and it was that we didn't know how long – it was still reassuring just to hear no news and 'we're working as fast as we can'. Hearing nothing was the worst. – Jenna

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## ***Loss of power***

Quite significantly. Many trees down in our valley, power outage for a week, flooded properties but thankfully minimal number of affected houses. Damage to farm sheds and other ancillary buildings. The power outage was probably the biggest issue as a lot of whānau do not have an alternative source of power. Marae were amazing and offered what they could but they also need access to alternative power supplies.

– Jacine

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## ***Loss of drinking water and sewerage***

Our community does rely on water tanks so the pumps are out of action without power. – 'J'

With power went water supplies/water pump, as Mangawhai is all on tank water. – Tracey

No power, which affects the septic system not being able to pump. – 'T'

I only just got my water back on today (pump was damaged by power surges). – Zak

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## ***Inability to travel to family and friends***

We were unable to get out of Mangawhai to Auckland to help rescue family flooded out of their home.

– 'Mangawhai missy'

It was hard having such an arduous journey to get to friends and family in Auckland. But we realise we were much less affected than a lot of Northland and elsewhere. – Lou

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## ***Damage to roads***

Roading damage, and road surface flooding affecting access to workplace. – Karen

Our main road was damaged like an earthquake had happened. I couldn't work for the week, as I had to wait for geotechs to check the road. – Stacey

I was not able to travel from Wellington up to Kaikohe for significant family (hapū) events, including a commemoration. My annual holiday plans were destroyed. – Terence

For us, the main thing is the roads ... the Bryndewyns have been closed now (pretty much) since January, which means the main highway goes past our home, and the trucks have destroyed the roads ... I don't actually know how they will recover? With more weather events like this, it is only going to get worse! The bypass roads are not suitable for trucks. It's very stressful not knowing if you can get back and forth to Auckland for appointments and so on. We no longer drive at night because the roads are too dangerous. – 'BMcD'



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## ***Wishing we were more prepared***

This was the first time a big event had happened for many. We were not prepared; some people were hit badly. – Lleia

The lack of power affected many as they were not really prepared for prolonged outages. – Lynne

My mother is medically dependent. Not knowing when or if the power would come on meant a trip to town to organise oxygen and try to get a generator with no luck. – Anonymous

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## ***Exacerbation of existing poverty***

As we are already a low socio-economic region, whānau, hapū, and hapori, suffer even more, over and over again. Mental health, further housing displacement, food and water shortage, loss of food, no alternative basic resources in the homes, environmental impacts, no plan in place at the

grassroots level, further infrastructure deficit, and no new resources in this region for many years. – Rahera

Many whānau were in direct harm's way due to sleeping in cars, or out in the environment.

– Shirleyanne

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## ***Supply chain disruption***

Petrol and food supplies in our area were low. – 'MP-diddy'

We were cut off from all forms of communication, with cell towers down, and no power for seven days. Not to mention our petrol stations not able to take Eftpos, so if you didn't have cash, you couldn't get petrol to go places, or buy food. Our Four Square was put in a position of whether to allow us to 'tick up' our supplies. – Anonymous

Now that the cyclone has passed (I live in the Far North), we have the constant worry about whether we can travel or not – what roads are open and what trucks can get up with our deliveries. Also, because crops have been destroyed, fresh veg is very limited and very expensive. – Kathryn

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## ***Damage to house and land***

Our daughter lost her house. – Hone

Our marae was flooded for the first time ever. Our home was okay but many homes weren't. Many of the district's kumara gardens were destroyed. Trees down and more road damage – in particular, roads that were already compromised. – Fay

Home evacuations and emergency accommodation/welfare support. – Alistair

I was out of my house for three weeks with a tree on my house in power wires. – Anonymous

Our power was cut, phone cut, road closed, school and work closed, driveway washed away, and a tree fell on our deck. – Molly



I hope and pray we never have to go through that again. Still waiting for our insurance to process our claim. – Sue

We had damage to our property: windows broken and leaking through the side of the house where rain and wind blew. – Tilly

Our power and internet were out for multiple days. We live rurally and all roads leading to and from our house were blocked for days, and we weren't able to leave our house. Trees came down on our property and smashed wooden fences and ripped up our driveway and blocked us in for a couple of days. We lost everything in our deep freeze. We lost wages because we couldn't work and now have to repair fences and fix damage. – Kat

## Loss of property

Our garage and home library were flooded. About 20 houses were red stickered with evacuations happening in three areas. All three rivers breached their banks. The beach communities were without power, internet, and phone. Flooding and high tides affected shops.

– Bee

Our property was completely flooded, with damage to fridges, freezer, furniture, and household contents.

– Sue

Our house and vehicle were damaged, clothing and bedding ruined, and our garden was destroyed.

– Reihana

The most common issue I have seen is the amount of people who have lost their freezers full of food due to no power (some are still without power) or they're staying in an old house that didn't stand up to the wind well; some whānau have lost the roof on their homes and are trying to repair damages. Lots of people are unable to do so due to financial reasons and workplace damages have left lots of people without work or an income for the time being. – Bri



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## ***Effects on farming and rural communities***

Our region experienced flooding, power outages, trees down, inaccessibility, dumped milk, extensive crop loss, and pasture loss. – Penny

We had trees down, no power for five days, basically no communications. People lost chest freezers of food – we would have except we borrowed a generator. Farmers milking found it particularly hard. – Jeremy

The farming community suffered considerable damage with flooding, trees falling over, and damage to fences, tracks, and pasture. – Rachelle

I lost most of my stock from Sharkys due to power being off for over 30 hours. – Tracey

The immediate effect was a few very long days trying to protect our crops. Then catching up on farm work. Our wider community will do it hard as kumara work is not going to be available; this could lead to more crime and poverty. – Marty

Except for dairying, the local economy is pretty much stuffed – up to 90% of some horticultural crops are gone – which is a massive employer (the biggest) in my

district. Packhouses are laying off ALL of their staff – in fact, most of those businesses will go into hibernation until next Feb/March. – Raymond

Raceways on dairy units washed away in some cases, a number making one-lane traffic, meaning that cows take longer to get to the sheds or paddocks. Any repairs from the cyclone are an unexpected financial burden, and having diggers come in for extensive repairs adds to the cost. Not everybody is equipped with generators – not just domestically, but for farm reticulation and dairy sheds. – Colin

Flooding in paddocks and on roads made it so some people could not go anywhere. Trees, roads, and affected driveways blocked vehicle access. Some people were without power for a week. No cell phone coverage; towers gone. Cowsheds flooded and no power, unable to send milk to Fonterra for over a week. Luckily, we had a generator at home to run freezers etc. and the tractor to get the cows milked once water was pumped out, but we had to get people to come pick up milk to feed to pigs. – Chelsea

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## ***Fear, anxiety, and stress***

We all just stayed in our houses. I was quite fearful and had anxiety about going outside. – 'B'

People haven't had time to ease back into life after a traumatic event, so are tired. Getting rid of damaged items has been stressful for people. – Stacey

The big ones were roading closures to Auckland and the threat of long-term power outages still hanging over our heads. – Wiremu

Mangawhai became an island for a number of days. We didn't travel at all to ease pressure on roads. Both events meant trauma for us and some time required to recover. – Tracey

Many of us at Baylys Beach felt we were forgotten – we had no Civil Defence contact nor did we have an evacuation area if we needed it. – Liz

Although we are in recovery from Cyclone Gabrielle, because of the terrible state of the roads, we as a community are forced to remain in a state of preparing for potential other problems like power outages, low food, and fuel supply. It is very draining. – 'MV'

Emotionally smashed up, as it feels like a pile-on after Covid. What's next, eh? – Martin

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## ***Affects on businesses***

Northland was cut off from Auckland, which affected sales and visitor numbers. – Julia

We had no staff, as they could not get in to work. – Anonymous

We lost income at our shop and holiday park. Roading access impacts delivery of goods to local business centres, business trading, and access by customers. Businesses are losing custom; that has a flow-on economic effect to the community. – Barry

The Mangawhai Museum suffered minor damage from the cyclone. We were also forced to close for a day as staff and volunteers could not get into town to open. Many of Mangawhai's tourist draws were affected, including the surf club, restaurants, and roads leading into town. This of course affects the museum and its community economically. – Tom



**During the cyclone, and in the days that followed, what did you find most helpful? What were you thankful for? What examples did you see of people helping each other? What is helping your community get through this?**

### ***Rural community spirit***

I really appreciated my rural community's Neighbourhood Watch group on Facebook. It was the fastest and most reliable way to know about local road closures, slips, and power outages. I was grateful for neighbours keeping in touch. As soon as the storm had eased enough for it to be safe to leave home, a neighbour came and looked after my kids so that I could check our property and animals while knowing my kids were safe and dry inside. Local contractors offered services to our community (for example, roofing repairs, arborists) and neighbours were quick to offer help. Our local marae showed swift leadership in providing shelter and support. School and kindy were quick to make decisions about closing, and communicated this in a timely way, which was helpful. – Anonymous

Our family is used to camping, or living in primitive conditions, so it wasn't difficult to adjust to these conditions. Everything just takes longer and needs some planning to achieve. I realised that once you have sorted your immediate household, then you can help others. Locals were very generous with their solar – charging cellphones, etc. We live in a small rural community, so having a 'rural' mindset helps you to cope with the conditions. People are aware of their neighbours' needs. – WRRRA





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## ***Community connection: 'Community is what gets a community through a disaster'***

It brought our little community together and we made new friends in the process. – Calvin

My disabled community kept in touch with each other. – Glen

We had damage to some of our outbuildings due to strong winds, but other than that we were in good enough shape to get on with it and check neighbours and elderly people in our valley. Witnessing my neighbours checking in on each other was great to see; it's brought us all closer together. What's helping us get through this is the constant staying in touch and checking in. Being a member of our community no longer ends at the front gate; we have all been to each other's houses to secure things and to share knowledge and plans for the future. – Maurice

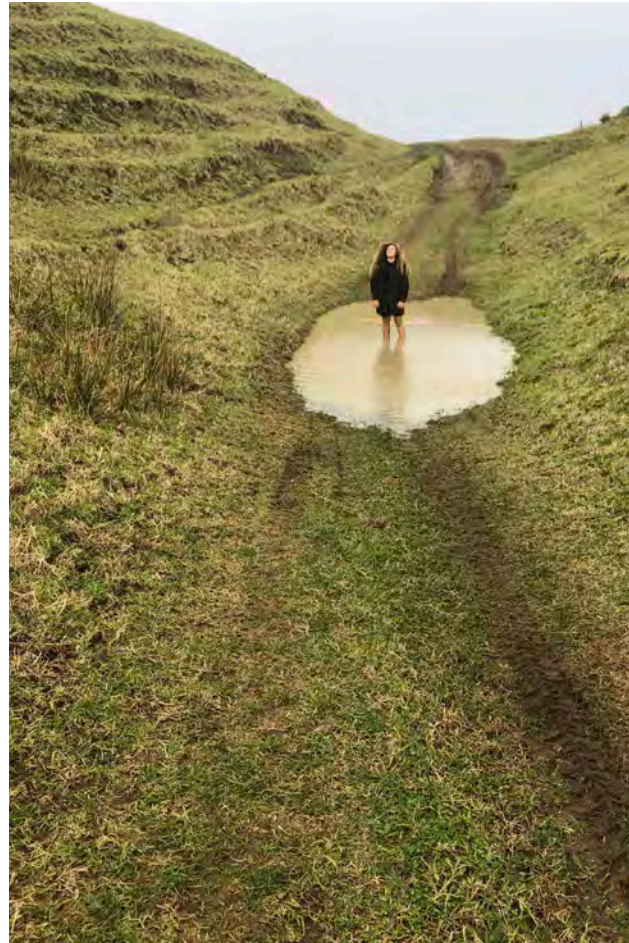
We have great neighbours and a community who looks after each other; I'm thankful for that. – 'BMcD'

As during Covid lockdowns, neighbours are more in touch. – Prue

Community is what gets a community through a disaster. – Bee

Our community pulled together and helped everyone in need. – Cath

What's helping our community is the whānau support and our local networks. – Patricia



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## ***Family, friends, and neighbours checking in***

Community checking on one another. – Misha

Family came from town to check and set up our BBQ. One neighbour checked in on us. – Heather

Texts checking to see how we were. Messenger chats with family. – Lynda

Thankful for neighbours checking in, helping to remove trees off access areas, propping up fences temporarily. – Arlene

Community-minded people coming to see if we needed help with the damage. – Lea

I checked on our elderly and worked with neighbours to clear roads, share kai, and awahi those most affected. – Anonymous

Friends in NZ and Aussie checking in that I was ok. – Howard

Our Neighbourhood Watch group were out and about checking whether people were okay. – Horiana

That we had a community that checked up on the vulnerable and the elderly in our community. – Margaret

Whānau and neighbours checking in on each other to ensure everyone was safe, had food, and didn't need any urgent assistance on their properties. Staying connected is helping our community get through this. – Jacine

Our neighbour came to check on us. Also, our daughter and her husband came around the next day to help remove damaged trees and repair the fence gate. We check on each other on text messages, and send photos of the effect of storms, our kids, and family. – Bini

The community coming together and checking in on each other. Sharing of supplies, helping each other with access such as using chainsaw to open up roads into remote areas. – 'Whangaruru Whānau'



## **Community sharing resources**

I stayed with my son on the flats and was grateful for the company. There was a lot of sharing of generators, showers, and whatever was needed in our community. – Beverley

People gave generously of their time and equipment to affected whānau. – John

I was thankful for friends who offered a hot meal and a shower as they had power. – 'Ex-Hawke Bay, Gissy and Wairoa Girl'

Pooling resource and sharing things like camping stove and a shower where some had power. – Fiona

When some people got power, they cooked for others. Freezer space offered, showers, etc. Marae opened for anyone in need. – Jim

I saw the community chipping in by offering shelter, food, and showers to those affected. – Hamske

Our local farmers offered diesel and petrol, as the shops were closed, due to the power outage, no Eftpos, and cash only. – Patricia

People offering their homes to for people to sleep in while they were cut off. – Shann

I live alone so single friends from the area stayed at my house and my home was open to people I know for laundry, showers, and charging phones. – Kathryn

In the Mangawhai Flood event, people offering beds to complete strangers who were passing through Mangawhai and were stranded – those stranded were so grateful. – Tracey

Thankful for people in our rural community who owned generators were willing to share them around to keep freezers frozen (think farmers with \$1000s in meat). – 'MP-diddy'

Neighbours who had power helped with long extension cables for power for fridge/freezers. – Gabi

There was a lot of reaching out and checking in with neighbours. Sharing of resources quickly surfaced, particularly generators shared for four hours at a time across multiple families mostly to keep freezers cold. Shared meals, and conversations. – Colin

The Mangawhai Museum was lucky to retain power and internet through the cyclone and its aftermath. As a result, we opened up our doors to people who needed to use Wi-Fi and running water. We saw similar help from KDC and the Christian Camps offering help. In the rainfall event, I saw lots of people stranded in cars overnight who were put up by people in Mangawhai for the night (including my wife and I). – Tom

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## **Community-led Civil Defence responses**

Road access blocked by trees was remedied by the locals asap. Trees fallen within the community – locals did a clean-up. – WRRRA

Community members helping clear roads and driveways, reinstate fences, return stock, report road closures and issues, etc. – 'LBW'

Volunteer fire brigade, community individuals (mostly farmers) that got out and about with their utes, tractors, drain diggers, and chainsaws to make the roads passable. – Raymond

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## **Community members helping with clean-up and repairs**

Out came the chainsaws and the tractors to clear roads. Offers of shelter and food. Checking in on neighbours, etc. Our resilient human spirit and sense of hope. – Martin

Working bee with neighbour sawing up his downed trees was good. – Howard

I was mostly thankful my parents were okay and we were able to help them fix up their house that was severely damaged in the cyclone. – Erini

My neighbour saw us struggling on our varandah in the heart of the cyclone late at night and gave that third pair of hands allowing me time to screw things down. We couldn't hold much longer – he came at just at the right time, for which I'm thankful. – Taane

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## **Household preparations**

Was great having a fireplace to cook on, stored food, and water tanks we could gravity feed to downstairs. – Jeremy

My generator. – Jack

Having two tanks of water helped. – Reece

I was thankful that my parents across the road had gravity fed water supply as I had no running water due to electric pump being inoperable. They also had their fire running to heat the wetback so had hot water. At my house, I was grateful for having gas to cook with and a woodburner that I could use for warmth and to also cook on top of. – Natalie

We were not badly affected which we are grateful for. What helped us the most was knowing that we were quite well prepared, not for an evacuation, but for being cut off. We had gas for cooking, candles, we have water tanks despite being on town supply, food stored, a generator in case the power is cut for a long time. – 'Hokianga resident'

Joined in providing kai parcels to the Hokianga. – Jenna

The Rapid Relief Teams did a great job providing food for responders and sandbagging in town. – Anonymous

That there was a Community Response Group who were able to assist. The local community came together to sort out fallen trees and debris on roads. – 'Feet still wet'



Thankful we had plenty of provisions stored away. – 'Adsg'

Had gas bottles, lights, batteries, water ready. – Jul

Our emergency preparedness pack (water, radio, cooking system). – Jim

Being rural and completely self-sufficient with off-grid power, water, and wastewater made the experience almost painless. We were able to provide refrigeration to our neighbours to preserve their cold and frozen foods as well as charging their devices to keep them in touch with the outside world. – Bob

Being prepared with basics like food, water, camp cooking, and flashlights was helpful during the storm. – Anonymous

You cannot do anything for anyone else until you and your household are sorted. We did basic things like checking on family and friends and neighbours in person if their phone was out, and giving time to volunteer groups. – Wiremu

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## **Whangaroa hapū rōpū**

This rōpū formed organically as a collective of Whangaroa hapū members in response to regular threats to the wellbeing and safety of Whangaroa whānau by critical events such as Covid-19 and weather events which had the potential to cause significant damage and harm to people and property. Our aim: To support and manaaki Whangaroa whānau whānui during times of critical events by:

- coordinating Whangaroa marae/hapū/iwi emergency response efforts
- identifying the greatest 'needs' in the Whangaroa rohe using real-time and genuine intel
- supporting the allocation and distribution of emergency resources amongst Whangaroa whānau, and
- providing assurance to and welfare checks on whānau in the community.

During Cyclone Gabrielle, the rōpū contributed to the coordination, preparation, and distribution of emergency aid and resources (kai, water, gas cookers, gas, petrol, generators, medication) as required to whānau. The 0800 GO KAE0 number was repurposed from Covid-19 and reactivated as a way for whānau to request aid and assistance as required. Immediate and follow up support was provided to whānau adversely affected by the cyclone – for example, if they were evacuated from damaged homes – and they were given shelter, kai, and social support. We helped to remove trees from homes. Temporary homes sourced and provided to whānau with damaged homes. Video-hui were had daily by the rōpū at 8:30 am and focused on identifying and resourcing the greatest immediate needs. We were lucky we did not lose anyone. – Jackie

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## **Marae manaakitanga**

Marae opened their doors for anyone that required temporary accommodation. – 'J'

A marae evacuation centre was the base for a safe haven, a hot drink, hot kai and deliveries, generator support. – Renah

There was no power, all internet was out (but landlines were working), roads blocked/flooded, no ferry between Kohukohu and Rawene, and power lines were down, so we opened an emergency hub at Tauteihiihi Marae for the Kohukohu area. – Emergency Hub Tauteihiihi Marae

Having a safe place to go to – the local marae. – Boots

The local community marae, Tauteihiihi in Kohukohu, opened its doors to support whānau in need, with water, kai, showers, and support. We were so supportive as whānau looked after each other. – Patricia

Took my elderly father up to marae which was an emergency centre – he had a great kōrero and warm kai; I was enabled to contact worried whānau and do some work online. Great community service. – Taane

We were thankful we had a team of volunteers who could think on the spot and respond to all the various needs. The fire brigade gave us a generator so we could safely feed our community/help people who turned up needing oxygen machines and to store their meds. Our people helped our community get through, out of their own pockets and hard work.

Various organisations delivered food packs later in the response. Te Roroa gave support for fuel and delivered our shopping. We provided 300 hot meals to our community most days, ran food stations, visited homes, dropped kai packs to whānau, provided a place for whānau to come and eat, have company, and share their anxieties. – 'Hokianga'

I was thankful that whānau informed me by door knocking that our marae was open for hot showers, hot kai, and internet to contact our loved ones to let them know we were safe. Te Roroa, along with Ngāpuhi Iwi Social Services were quick to jump into action and support our marae (Te Whakamaharatanga) to help with kai supplies, vehicles, and petrol to be able to get meals, kai and hygiene packs, and support out to the community. We also had a support hub at the marae to help the community find help and support with damage repairs to their homes and help with housing issues. Also, the whānau at this marae would go and check in on whānau if they received a post from whānau outside the area that were asking about the wellbeing of their whānau. Not to mention whānau going around with generators and helping those that needed their freezers topped up. I am thankful of the kaimahi at Te Whakamaharatanga for all that they did, the time they gave to volunteer, at the point of exhaustion, to ease the stresses of so many in our community.

– Anonymous



### **Support by iwi, rūnanga, Māori social services**

Most helpful were the locals who helped others out. Especially our local Marae, and Te Ha. We are helping ourselves. – Dianne

Thankful the iwi had the flexibility to provide some much-needed support. Thankful we have an emergency plan in place. – Manawaroa

Iwi health organisations such as Te Ha Oranga and the rūnanga were amazing in helping with hands on assistance such as food packs, Starlink, gas bottles etc. – 'KP'

I've been part of an iwi response to help our community and we have been assisting whānau with food, water, clothing, bedding, gas cookers, generators, and small tanks to hold water where water tanks have been damaged. – Bri

Great support from the iwi and marae in the first few days and support afterwards in terms of clean up, accommodation, food vouchers, etc. – 'Whangaruru Whānau'

### **Emergency services**

Amazing efforts by Civil Defence, power companies, roading, NZ Police, FENZ, and the community. Just getting it done! – Anonymous

The speed the volunteer fire brigade came to our aid. – Bee

The police, Civil Defence, FNDC, and the Mayor connecting with our whānau. – Patricia

The fire brigade was well supported by the local community who triaged their own jobs, such as tree

clearing from driveways. The brigade supported the community members without power by providing access to showers, washing machines, and power to charge phones, etc., as well as using the station generator at their homes and sharing it between these homes. Other community members ran power leads to these homes. – Karen

Awesome work by emergency workers on the ground in and around Dargaville and broader. – Penny



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## ***Support from Northland Civil Defence Emergency Management***

The response of the CDEM and the Council staff. – Paul  
Thankful for Civil Defence for offering payments for our lost food and my partner's lost wages. – Kat

Civil Defence compensation for the loss of food items.  
– Anonymous

I was grateful for the McKay Stadium facilities when I self-evacuated on Valentines Day with people who were in situations worse than mine and had others with them. I'm really grateful for the government grant to help with costs I can't meet in fixing the damage and for it being available quickly so I can make a start. – Dave

The MSD Civil Defence payment was a huge help for whānau as the majority of us lost freezers full of meat. To get some compensation to help rebuild the freezer was hugely appreciated by all I have spoken to. – Lizzie

I called the Whangārei Council to ask for help to evacuate my friend from her home which was in an evacuation zone. Managed to get her up to Kensington evacuation centre and the welfare team put her in accommodation. – Craig

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## ***Warnings and enough notice to prepare***

Most helpful was the amount of time we were given to prepare. – Leanne

The fact that we were told to stay inside. – Anonymous

Heeding the warnings. – Leanne

I was thankful for the preparation warnings so I could get my Mum and friend off Kawau Island and safely in home in Kerikeri. – Maree

The forecasts and advice given on TV was most helpful; the fact that they kept saying in the Northland region that it will get worse before it gets better, that kind of

forced us to get our A into G ... so to speak. What I was thankful for most was the heads-up about the cyclone, the constant updates about its tracking, and warning us to be careful. – Maurice

Having received a warning on my mobile phone was most helpful. I was able to make sure I got enough supplies to last for three days and would not have to go out on the roads when the cyclone hit Kaikohe. – 'Care Bear'



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### ***Communication from Northland CDEM and officials***

Once phone/power was restored, the absolute morale booster was the brilliant comms from Northland Civil Defence. Whoever was responsible for those informative and light-hearted comms deserves a medal!! – Prue

Civil Defence website. – Lisa

Good information from the Council and Civil Defence. – Lou

Comms was excellent from the team at Civil Defence Northland. – Leanne

Communication from Civil Defence and Council was key. – Cath

The regular updates from Civil Defence Northland were shared well. – Lana

I very much appreciated the CD Northland Facebook posts that allowed me to determine when it was safe to continue home. – Sharon

Good communications on Civil Defence and Northland Weather Updates social media pages showing the impact, what and when to watch out for further impacts. Good coverage from Northpower on what they were doing to help get everyone back on. – Kim

Transparent communication from Civil Defence and Council regarding the current state of affairs within the region. Power companies being clear about their issues and timeframes around resolution. Communication from our Mayor and Deputy Mayor was wonderful. I was thankful that the storm was over, that our community was safe and those most affected were provided for. My family helped me get through and were a great support. – 'Anon.'

Updates through social media from both Civil Defence and our Mayor in the Far North. – Lee

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## **Communication and media**

The most valuable thing I think we can agree on is the passage of information. Social media played a big part in getting information in and out to members of the public that needed it. – Tom

The messages that were being posted on Facebook, texts, emails. The media coverage kept us informed. – John

Updates online, mostly Facebook NIWA updates, Civil Defence. – Dee

Broadcasts on the radio. Facebook neighbours' group. – Lynda

Thankful for all the updates at the time. – Shan

Communication through TV and social media (when there was electricity and service). – Molly

Frequent updates by power companies. – Sarah

Most helpful was the regular updates from Northpower and Waka Kotahi. – Hamske

Constant flow of information and communication across social media platforms. – Martin

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## **Community connection through social media**

Facebook community groups were a great way to share information. – Hamske

Connections being made via social media when people needed help. – Anonymous

Saw a lot of Facebook posts around the local community of people helping each other. – Donna

We had a community Facebook messenger group which was really helpful. As a District Councillor, I was also

in touch with the Civil Defence Coordinator for the area and was able to pass on information from her to the group which contained several hundred people. – Scott

Posts on our community Facebook page coordinating help was good – people could ask for and offer help. We now have a community directory pinned to the top of the page for people who can help (e.g. those with heavy machinery, tools, tractors, chainsaws, and expertise to help with fallen trees, etc.). – Anonymous







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### ***Continuity of services during the event***

Thankful for power to keep our fridge on and to continue having hot water. – Haruru

It was extremely helpful to have internet connectivity to keep up to date with the progress of the storm.  
– Scott

Very thankful that power on our farm stayed on.  
– Penny

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### ***Support from District Councils***

The free green waste at dumping stations really helped people a lot. – Stacey

The free tipping of green waste was fantastic and much better than having to burn it all. – John

Whangārei District Council having free green waste disposal for a period. – Arlene

I worked on the CD Welfare phone line at KDC. I saw and heard of numerous community responses and

also saw the KDC staff (ignoring their own homes/ flood impacts and needs) serving the community for very long hours with little to no sleep – they are so committed. – Tracey

I saw many people coming into the library when the power was out with their children and enjoying the books and art activities. – Anonymous



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## Radio

Radio RNZ AM. – Bucko

I was thankful for the radio for updates on the status of the Dome Valley. – Kelly

Council and CD updates on social and radio. – Karen

Lots of info and updates available on local radio.  
– Leslie

Radio updates. – Jim

Communications on the radio, as my radio was all that worked. – Maree

Without power and phone communication you feel very isolated and vulnerable. A small transistor was the only link to the outside world and it was wonderful to know what was happening, especially as many of the companies such as telco and power were not yet experiencing the conditions we were experiencing in Northland and it was very frustrating to hear them telling us to go online for information and updates. It highlighted the role radio needs to play in situations like this. – Prue

We were completely isolated except for transistor radio. – Leona

That I had a transistor radio, and that radio coverage was excellent and weather forecast was spot on. – Gill



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## Having alternative forms of communication

Copper wire [phone line] saved us but considered old tech and we can't upgrade (turned out copper wire helped keep us remain connected). – Viv

Many people now have Starlink as a result of the storm. – Leona





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### **Restoration of services – general**

The utility, road, and arborists crews out in the storm.  
– Karen

Grateful for the fantastic work done by power companies and road workers to restore order. – Barb

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### **Power being restored**

Really helpful that Northpower got the power back on so soon. – Julian

Top energy getting power back on. – 'J'

Northpower were awesome getting power back on as soon as possible. – Jul

I am grateful that we only lost power for one day and no food was lost, compared to other communities in the North Island. I feel the power contractors have worked so hard under such difficult circumstances, along with the roading team trying to keep the main road open from Auckland to Kaikohe to send trucks up with supplies. – 'Care Bear'

Power companies made amazing effort to get power back on (and therefore cell towers). – Jim

I was thankful to only have power out for short periods of time (less than four hours each time). – Hamske

Top Energy went around checking power poles and isolating lines that would take longer to be restored, so they could get power back on to as many people as quickly as possible. – Chelsea

Northpower response was wonderful and a fantastic example of brilliant communication – keeping everyone informed. – Anonymous

Great work from Northpower to get power back on. – Penny

Top Energy was superhuman in getting power restored after several outages. – Panchita

Northpower did a pretty amazing job. – Ruby

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## ***Roads being opened***

Roading fantastic in getting roads reopened. – Jim

Appreciated the efforts of contractors in getting slips cleared really quickly. – Howard

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## ***Phone and internet connections restored***

We lost rural wireless broadband on at least two occasions but that was restored without causing too much disruption to communications and we were thankful for that. – Panchita

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## ***Trees being cleared away***

Good work at the fallen tree tidy up. – Paul

Trees being cut back as they fell on SH 1 so I was thankful I could get home from work reasonably safely. After the storm, a lot of people helped with tree clearing. – John

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## ***Farmers supporting each other***

Farmers rallied around to help each other sharing generators and milking sheds and helping each other to clear trees. The power companies did an impressive job to get power back to our affected farmers.

– Rachelle

We moved our neighbours' stock for them as they were stuck in Invercargill. – Bob

The best thing was having a great team on the farm that responded to the crisis in a very positive way. I was very thankful for that; also very thankful our power didn't go out. We saw how well the farmers without power worked together to share generators and cowsheds. Then Fonterra stepping up to have lost milk paid for. A sense of camaraderie and government financial help has been great. Still a lot of repercussions to come. – Marty

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## ***Support from local businesses***

The Waipu Hammer Hardware let people buy things 'on tick' and pay later; things like that were invaluable. – 'BMcD'

Our local dairy was amazing at providing generator power to charge phones etc and also helped out with food. – Sue

I was thankful to my employer for paying my wages even though I couldn't make it to work. – Kat

I was part of the council EOC and was grateful to be able to help and support the community. We had fantastic response and support from local businesses



Farmers calling each other to check in – Geoff

A friend of mine who owns a big portable generator was driving around with her husband to local farmers so they could milk their cows. – Natalie

As a Rural Support Trust AgFacilitator, I have been visiting farmers and seeing their devastation. But they have been so positive and grateful for the help they have received, and have told me amazing stories of how neighbours shared generators and cowsheds and tractors to open roads well before Councils could respond. Meeting people who have lots to grizzle about, but are being positive, has been uplifting. – Dave

The farming community rallied around each other with generators, etc. Food parcels distributed, neighbours helping neighbours with clearing property. – Fay

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and generous offers of food, drink, and other items for those affected. – 'MV'

Tree businesses giving to the community to clear the trees. – Glen

I'm thankful to the supermarkets in Mangawhai including New World and Hamish at the Heads for supplying water at short notice. They answered the call during both events. – 'Sads'

The local bakery, Four Square, and Caltex garage donated food and drink. – Barry

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## ***Solar power***

Our solar system sustained us and we shared power with neighbours. – Misha

We are lucky enough to have solar power panels and batteries – this means that we were not reliant on the power grid. – Kim

The fact that we had a solar system with battery back-up installed recently that kept our fridge, freezer, couple of power points, and a few lights working was a huge bonus. – Nolene

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## ***Grateful for not being too badly affected***

We were grateful we didn't have physical damages to our home, and our family was safe and well.  
– Anonymous

Thankful that the immediate surrounds were not badly hit. – Lynne

I am happy we still have our lives, which is more important and can't be replaced. Materials can be replaced but not lives. – Bini

Thankful for minor damage and everyone safe, including friends, whānau, and pets. – Martin

Thankful all my children and grandchildren were safe. Thankful the houses survived the storm. – Te Aratika

Thankful that none of our whānau were seriously hurt and survived with the support of each other coming together, sharing kai, and experiences. – Lizzie

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## ***Knowing it could have been worse***

We didn't suffer as much as other regions did. – John

We were pretty lucky compared to other areas. Seeing people worse off put my situation in perspective; grateful our health wasn't impacted and no major damage. – Zak



# What are your hopes and dreams for your community in the coming months after Cyclone Gabrielle? What does 'recovery' from Cyclone Gabrielle look like to you?

## ***What 'Recovery' means***

Recovery to me is not just getting back to how things were, but being better prepared for the future. – Erica

That people recover okay from the storm and stress it created physically and financially. – 'LBW'

All properties are repaired, displaced people are rehomed, and farmers are assisted. – Kim

Recovery means that communities are returned to their equilibrium that was in place prior to the event, with added resilience for when this type of event occurs in the future. – Sharon

My hope is that infrastructure, roading, and communication systems will improve in Northland to ensure the community can endure future catastrophes. Recovery means regaining a sense of positive

normalcy, access to support, and a community that is there for each other. – Gabi

Investing in the right company to assist with the damage that is simply unsafe to take on ourselves. Our shelter belt and property suffered extensive damage and has required months of felling, mulching and replanting. We hope our young children learn through this process, that as much as we love our trees, when they become unsafe during severe weather events, we need to go about removing them safely. They now get to be involved in the planting of new trees and one day pick the fruit from their efforts! – Hayleigh

## ***'Greater regional, community, and household self-reliance'***

Greater regional, community, and household self-reliance. In particular, a focus on our food security and energy needs. A thoughtful and creative response to the precarious nature of our roads. Let's not invest millions on existing roads that are not fit for purpose, and instead think creatively about transport and how our region can stay connected without massive rebuild projects on roads that will likely fail again. I'd like to see marae and hapū leadership acknowledged and resourced appropriately. We need to consider emergency alerts to cell phones for all those of us who have limited reception – I didn't receive the text about the regional state of emergency. Also, let's consider our soils and our waterways and how we can best support their health. I'd like to see households, communities, and workplaces that are educated, ready, and well prepared for future events. Affordable solar options would help. – Anonymous



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## **Community connectedness**

More connectedness. – Sarah

Our Lions group will complete our Information Pack with a Civil Defence update in it, so all households know where to go. There is more unity in the area.  
– Beverley

Improved social connectivity. – Ace

Hope to see the community spirit hang round. – Katrina

Hoping for continued neighbourliness. – Bee

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## **Community resilience**

That resilience is built into communities. – Jack

That everyone takes heed to start preparing for more extreme weather events. – Ash

That we don't forget, and start building resilience into our communities. – Roger

Recovery is about making sure our families have food and clothing and rooves, that the kids feel supported, and the old people have everything they need for cleaning up and fixing their places. We are doing pretty good here; the power has been stable, and Northpower did a pretty amazing job. We are lucky that our small community really cares about each other. – Ruby

Recovery will be hard and the memories of this will always be here. We can only hope we are more aware and prepared should it happen again. – 'Sads'

The community has voiced its opinion that a meeting is needed to discuss the affects to the wider community and what we could do going forward once things settle down. – Lynne

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## **Community self-reliance**

Everyone 'pitching in' with the clean up; people not sitting back and expecting the Government to fix everything. – Anonymous

I hope we have the ability to be completely self-sustainable and resilient going forward. – Manawaroa

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## **Caring for 'vulnerable' people**

We want to make ourselves more resilient by being more aware of needs within our community. We have realised that cellphones/landlines cannot be depended on. We are making a register of vulnerable people. We have learnt that we can effectively become an 'island'.  
– Eileen

More care around the elderly and better preparations for the next event. – Fay

Recovery is about checking up on each other during and after the Cyclone Gabrielle especially our elderly and friends and whānau who live alone. – John

I would like to see street/road neighbours getting to know each other better. As I get older and not completely mobile, I find that I do not know folk the way I used to. I was disappointed that neighbours with a baby did not know that I had gas cooking until the power came back on. – Anonymous

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## **Self-care**

I hope that people get a chance to reflect and take care of themselves. – Stacey





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### **Better household-level preparation**

A better firewood shed. My own generator. Stored, rotated petrol. Finishing re-tightening the roof. Pruning and staking the orchard. Fixing the chicken coop and fences damaged by storm-fall. Ideally being able to save up for a solar charger for laptop and phones. Better solar/crank radio to get information. – Jeremy

To have back up off-grid power as we live rural. – Tilly

Getting transistor radios and batteries ready if needed if there is no internet or way to stay connected to needed updates on the situation. Helping the community to be better prepared for when it strikes again, to make a better plan, and to be ready to go

myself, getting my go bag ready, and needed supplies ready. – Martine

People to be better prepared in emergency planning. Households knowing to prepare a 'get ready' plan. – Craig

Checklist on what to do in a similar scenario or other natural disasters: where to go if something like that was to happen, how do people connect with others if they have no power or no devices to connect or no radios, and so on. – Emma

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### **Improving basic infrastructure**

To prepare ourselves now in case of any future crisis. – Boots

The slips being stabilised and some return to normality. A more robust infrastructure so in a weather event of this category in the future, the fall-out is not so long. – Kelly

Consistent electricity and clearing of storm water drains which flooded roads. – Lynn

Repaired roads, better drainage, removal of trees near powerlines. – 'Gardener Mangawhai'

Getting the repairs finished on all the roads, strengthening resilience for telecom and power logistics. – Karen

Some assistance with damage to public walking paths in our area could do with technical and financial assistance from Whangārei District Council. – Julian

More resilient infrastructure – e.g. power lines underground, prioritising roads on routes that are not at risk of flood or coastal inundation, and improving resilience of infrastructure that has to be in flood plains and coastal areas – i.e. avoiding spend on repairs that will only last until the next cyclone. – Hemi

Need to lobby those organisations who provide services like Top Energy, Vodaphone, etc and ask them what they are going to do better next time. People lost food in freezers, couldn't contact doctors, or communicate with support services. – Leona



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## ***Flood resilience***

Would love to see our flood resilience improved. Higher and better stop banks. Increase of work on ditches, drains, stormwater. – Bee

Longer vision on sustainable resilience, such as utilizing ecosystem services for buffering extreme flows (flood and draught) – for example, by restoring more wetlands and floodplains. – Hemi

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## ***Housing security***

People in dry warm houses; roads open to two lanes. – ‘Adopted Northlander’

That everyone has power and has a safe, secure, healthy home to live in. – ‘Ex-Hawke Bay, Gissy and Wairoa Girl’

Displaced persons getting all the help they need to be comfortably housed. – ‘Adsg’

It would be nice to see everyone with safe and fit-for-purpose shelter, food on their tables, and warm dry bedding. – Bri

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## ***Increased resilience for critical utilities***

I want to see long-term investment in infrastructure – especially by companies who make profits in NZ; they should be investing into resilient infrastructure. I hope and dream that our roads will be built back better – and I hope that there are better systems put in place for emergency situations – particularly around communication so that we can find out if people are okay (we have family in Hawkes Bay and couldn’t find out if everyone was okay for nearly four days!). – ‘BMcD’

We should be making the infrastructure much more resilient and able to withstand these events. Undergrounding power and communications lines and

strengthening the roads should be a priority. Gabrielle demonstrated the extent to which we rely on the internet for SO much. – Scott

Redundancy in lifeline services that are essential. Communication and transportation are the highest in my opinion as they are the enablers for Police and FENZ and the other lifelines. I would also like to see a greater understanding of hydrology being incorporated into the recovery efforts. Our infrastructure needs significant investment so critical systems are built back with resilience and additional capability which will also fuel economic growth. – Anonymous



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## Improving roads

Weather-proof roads – major access to Northland that is not so vulnerable. Repair to major slips that have been closed for months. – Jim

State Highways are in need of major money spent to get them in better condition. The Brynderwyns being closed, and detour roads also closed for a day, show how vulnerable we are in the North. – Dee

Central Government coming to the party and fixing the roads, and not just patching them. – Vince

Mangmuka Gorge reopened would be great. – Reece  
More help, especially repairing our roads. That's what recovery looks like. – Dianne

We hope to see major upgrades to Northland roads as these problems will keep occurring if the solutions are not well planned and future-proof. – 'Bream Bay resident'

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## Marae preparedness

Recovery from the cyclone looks like preparing and resourcing our communities/marae to be the first responders as they have been over the last few years through cyclones, floods, drought, and Covid. My dream is that this event prompts investment into roading and infrastructure so sorely needed in our region.  
– 'Whangaruru Whānau'

Look for some funding to help with buying some generators, survival packs, and extra resources to help others in our communities. A community survival wānanga in support of events like this – marae-based in the North Hokianga. – Patricia

My hopes and dreams are to reward the key kaimahi of our local marae to show the appreciation of all their hard work. Also to talk with these key people and ask them what would help them in these times.  
– Anonymous

We now have time to plan and prepare and find resources so the marae can operate effectively. We are still helping our community to fix, find information, and submit claims for losses. Need to hold education hui to help whānau better prepare in their homes and learn about essential resources. – 'Hokianga'

We are preparing our marae to be fully self-sufficient in an emergency. – John

My hopes and dreams for our community is to form a Civil Defence squad who can act fast in these times



to awahi our whānau instantly. To have equipment like generators, gas burners, water containers, solar lights, 100 litre barrels that will enable whānau to capture water to be able to flush toilets, a califont so our kaumātua and kuia can have hot showers. Overall, I would really like to see our marae have an action plan for state of emergency times. How that may look is that once an alert has been raised there are plans in place for the marae to open for those who may need to evacuate or, in most cases, not have access to a generator, hot water, flushing toilets, and cooking facilities. – Lizzie

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## Reflections from Whangaroa

Seek investment to advance Whangaroa marae/hapu preparedness – for example, establish a minimum of two Iwi Emergency Response Resource hubs in Whangaroa, one north and one south of the Kaeo Bridge.

Resources to include (but not limited too) generators, fuel containers, gas cookers, dry non-persihable food items, water containers, water pumps, industrial fans, portable light kits, power-packs, Starlink

communications, chainsaw, portable grinder, trailer, first aid kits, defibrillators, and training.

Recovery will differ, but will look like continued wellbeing support, checking in, clearing of trees, support with insurance claims, support with whānau who do not have insurance, providing mobile cabins as temporary accommodation, mara kai gardens. – Jackie

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## **Community halls and evacuation centres**

Get the community hall equipped with things like a generator to help the community. Have future cyclone material all on hand. Candles, generator, fuel, gas, and so on. – Fiona

Recovery for me means further planning. Our community was not as badly affected as other areas, but there still things to look at such as a generator for our hall as it is listed as an evacuation centre. – Adrienne

I would like to see our local community hall equipped with solar panels so that it could act as a hub for people to come together. – Natalie

I would like to see Civil Defence evacuation areas have solar power and panels installed and Starlink so that there is still power to cook, and internet to be able to communicate. Communication and sharing of needs will ease peoples' stress levels if they know help is on the way, to be able to share their needs, and so on. – Kim

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## **Local plans and Community Response Groups**

The community are keen to have a meeting and gather momentum around supporting the Community Response Plan. – Karen

We will rebuild a new Civil Defence group and engage with newer community members to hopefully revive and reinvigorate the team as an opportunity to bring people together. Recovery for us will mean recognising that we need to be better prepared as our peninsula is one of the at-risk locations in the district. – Jane

There needs to be a debrief and someone who is a respected leader to be nominated to organize places to evacuate to and join up the people for Civil Defence in our area. – Trish

When the power gets cut off again, there will be a local response, every house will get checked on by a group led by their community. Every community will have their own emergency response plan and know who is vulnerable within their community. – Lynn

An evacuation centre to be allocated and perhaps a satellite phone provided there for the community. – 'Baylys Beach resident'

A better risk plan ... who to call, how to deploy offers of help, where people can go to get phones charged, a cup of hot tea, say hello to someone and get info. Community cohesion to continue building with all clubs and organisations and businesses and education facilities, all knowing there is a plan and how to be a part of it. – Mariana

I believe storm or Civil Defence preparedness is essential. Better comms. More generators. A response team within the community. An actual safe place to evacuate to if required. Access to resources such as battery-operated radios, satellite internet. Gravity-feed toilets and showers. – Te Aratika



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## ***Making houses cyclone-proof***

I would hope that communities are rebuilt and cyclone-proofed. Recovery from Cyclone Gabrielle for me would be that those who were displaced have relocated or were supported in repair costs and cyclone-proofing their property, all utilities are operating for all, lost income has been compensated and income is flowing again. – 'B'

We as a community are now looking at cyclone-proofing our homes to increase our ability to stay safe in the event of another devastating disaster. We are

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## ***Support for solar energy***

Possible advancement of solar energy in Tai Tokerau so less reliant on power lines. – Leanne

Ability to have reduced pricing on solar to create greater resilience. – Karirikura

We hope that more people get solar power installed. – Panchita

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## ***Rural recovery***

Food suppliers (orchards, agriculture) will need some help with all the crops that have been destroyed. – Tania

Continued conversations, Collaboration Dinners. – Colin

Funding for crop losses, specifically kumara. MSD assistance for kumara workers that no longer will have a harvesting job. Wellbeing and mental health

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## ***Businesses initiatives***

I run a chemist. We had some Uninterruptible Power Supply units and have now ordered a generator that's also an inverter. Chemists' prescriptions are emailed

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## ***Shared community assets***

I am raising money for a community tractor – I hope we reach the target to buy one. – Taane

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## ***Improved telecommunications infrastructure***

Back up cell tower generators (this is to allow for communication). – Karirikura

Recovery could be a more reliable internet service, i.e. the cell tower needs a backup that lasts longer than 6–8 hours. – Anonymous

I would like to see some good lessons learnt out of this – like the vulnerability of the telcos' infrastructure. When 4G went out and power was out, people had

also looking at our surroundings to see what kind of dangers our environment may be holding that could surprise us. We have a neighbour who has left-over debris from logging next to our papakāinga; we will be asking him what his intentions are for the slash that could well slide down the hill into our creek and block it, causing flooding upstream and also causing our bridge to get washed away, cutting us off from the rest of the community. – Maurice



assistance available to those in need. Businesses back up and running. No one left behind and not considered. – Penny

Recovery for our farming community is to help our farmers connect more regularly, to not work in isolation. – Rachelle

now, so we need to make sure we have cyclone emergency supplies like this. – Viv

no internet, and for many no connection to the news or outside world to know what was going on. That infrastructure urgently needs to be upgraded so that it can run for longer periods without a power source. – Scott

We need better cell phone coverage, which we didn't have for 10 days. How could those that needed help dial 111 if there was no coverage? Perhaps Civil Defence will be more important than ever now. – Trisha

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## ***Greater use of radio***

Most important – Civil Defence or government working on an emergency radio broadcast network. Being cut off from all news and info was the worst. I had a wind-up radio and couldn't find any news on it. Have a go-to radio channel reserved for these situations and make the frequency known in advance. Give rolling updates

that cover everywhere. It was frustrating when all news was Hawke's Bay – yet 10 days without anything in Hokianga and they needed to know too how long things would be like this and where to go for help.  
– Jenna

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## ***Dealing with trees near roads and powerlines***

Clearing of other trees that will come down in another storm preventing blocked roads. – Glen

Cut down tall trees all around powerlines. – Jazz

Plan for clean-up afterwards for those that don't have own resources like chainsaws, and collection of branches/trees blown over on property. – Leanne

In our area, it is mainly clearing trees that came down. It would be great if people replaced them with native trees and not just individual trees but bigger plantings as they are more resilient. No more pine trees!  
– 'Hokianga resident'

Recovery is better planning for any future event of the same calibre or greater. Ensuring that trees are felled that are near powerlines or may pose a danger to buildings/people. – 'Anon'

I love that we have rallied as a community – reinforcing our close rural community. I hope our infrastructure is not only repaired but then 'future-proofing' is thought about – for example, so much of the power outage was caused by exotic trees falling on powerlines. Should we be proactively chopping down these trees that still stand to below powerline level? – 'Anon'

Recovery for me is to see the fallen/cut up trees on the side of Cynthia Place removed and the overgrown area on the other side trimmed back on a regular basis and more particularly the drain(s) cleared. At the bottom of Cynthia Place, the trees need cutting back so as not to keep knocking the powerlines in high winds. If these matters were attended to before a cyclone/storm, considerable damage could be avoided. – Liz

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## ***Improving forestry management***

A lot of these trees and slash are known about. North Hokianga is another Hawkes Bay ticking; it's happened

before. Unless slash is dealt with, some communities will be wiped out. – Ngahau



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## ***Environmental recovery***

We hope that foreshore and sandspit will recover in the next few months so people can continue to enjoy the beach and launch boats in the estuary. – Panchita

The beaches clean of debris and the sea not full of large trees. – Maree

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## ***Increasing food security***

Food sufficiency and stability. – 'J'

Have local gardens available. – Jazz

Assess food security options moving forward due to supply chain issues with roads down between Auckland and Whangārei. Grow more local? – Leanne

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## ***More use of railways***

The railway network which does exist needs to be utilized to take the pressure off roads and ensure goods can be transported to the north. – Gabi

Much better safer roads, or even a proper weather-resistant rail link to Kaikohe. – Terence

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## ***Improved planning***

A more prepared society who uses this event as the baseline for the future and plans accordingly. Changes to housing codes, building codes, resource use, scaled-up drainage, more robust power and comms systems, and so on. – Martin

Better resilience planning, and good decisions being made for our infrastructure, particularly roading and telecommunications. The cyclone really highlighted how susceptible to damage and isolation Northland is with very few access routes. – Min

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## ***Preparing for climate change***

We have to work as a united country to deal with global warming. – Paul

A greater acceptance of climate change as a reality and the consequences in terms of extreme weather events would be nice. Climate resilience should be built into infrastructure. The Mangawhai community, including the Mangawhai Museum, is pulling together for the surf club. I believe that the recovery will be years in the making when all is accounted for. – Tom

Awareness of vulnerable areas and development in coastal and low-lying areas is now in front of us and Councils/communities cannot ignore the implications of climate warming. Often the people who live in areas know best and Councils and developers should not override that local knowledge. – Prue

I hope our community wakes up to the realisation that our future will include these weather events more frequently and that our decisions on how we live need to consider the picture of climate change. I hope we plan for this future and when building back we don't repeat the mistakes of the past and look to the solid advice we are getting from climate change experts on how we should move forward. I hope we factor reducing our carbon emissions into this picture so we don't end up with an even worse situation for future generations. I hope we learn from the brilliant support networks that worked together across Tai Tokerau to help everyone through and take action to reinforce these networks and ensure this resilience is built into all our communities. – Kim

We got off lightly. Now we need to put all our energy into changing our lifestyles to help improve our planet. – Kathryn

# How this community consultation is shaping Northland's Recovery

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) relies on both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches. When events are too large for just emergency services to handle, or require a greater level of resourcing and coordination, then CDEM provides this. At the same time, New Zealand's model of Civil Defence relies on people being prepared to shelter in place if possible, or evacuate if staying where they are is not safe.

First responders physically can't be in all places at once, so local-level responses are critical: whānau caring for each other at home, neighbours checking in on each other, and local marae, churches, sports clubs, and community halls opening as Community-Led Centres if needed. Northland is also fortunate to have a network of 60 Community Response Groups, led by local people around the region.

This rich mixture of government, emergency services, and community responses is reflected in the quotes in this document, and wonderfully summarised in the following quote from Tinopai:

Our local Civil Defence rep was fantastic – she drove around to people's houses, talked to people, and let them know to go to the local marae for hot showers, cup of tea, food parcels, and just any sort of mental/emotional support. In our area, lots of people helped each other out with tidying up after the storm and sharing generators to keep food from going rotten. The biggest thing of support really was our local marae; they were just amazing. And our local volunteer fire brigade, they were astounding in the assistance and support they provided. Additionally, we had a lot of the young fellas here in Tinopai who went out with their chainsaws and helped people cut up trees and move them, and to help clear the roads so people could get in and out. – Ruby

In the same way, Recovery from a major event occurs both top-down and bottom-up. Roads and critical infrastructure need to be repaired, government funding needs to be provided, and planning needs to be done for the future. At a community level, provisions are re-stocked, houses repaired, and new community initiatives emerge.

A more complete summary of Northland's Recovery will be published in 2024, but here's a short summary of just some of the Recovery work that has happened in the six months since Cyclone Gabrielle:

- The total costs for rebuilding roads and other infrastructure in Northland, and provide for important resilience for the future, is estimated at about half a billion dollars – most of this for repairs to our fragile road network. Northland CDEM and the District Councils are currently in negotiations with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet about funding for the region.
- The largest project to emerge from the Recovery so far is Ngā Manga Atawhai, which pulls together groups from across government, councils, iwi, and the private sector to enable the removal of dangerous trees near powerlines, roads, and rivers. This project is the single-biggest thing we can do to increasing Northland's electricity network resilience. Ngā Manga Atawhai will ensure that the wood doesn't go to waste, as it will be cut into firewood and given to low-income whānau to make their homes warmer and drier.
- Northland CDEM has so far received requests for assistance to help establish 12 new Community Response Groups – a 20% increase for the region. Of the existing groups, more than 40% have told us that they're wanting help to revise their Community Response Plans.
- Significant funding came into the region for hapū, iwi, and marae for reimbursement for costs from Cyclone Gabrielle and for providing for the future. This assistance has been provided by the Ministry for Primary Industries | Manatū Ahu Matua (MPI); the Ministry for Social Development | Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora (MSD); the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment | Hīkina Whakatutuki (MBIE); the National Emergency Management Agency | Te Rākau Whakamarumarū (NEMA); Red Cross | Rīpeka Whero Aotearoa; Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK); Te Tari Taiwhenua | Department of Internal Affairs (DIA); Waipuna aa rangi, and others. From solar power systems to satellite-based communication, from shipping container



emergency 'pods' to community wānanga, fantastic projects are happening across Tai Tokerau as a result of this support.

- Many conversations are happening about the best ways to prepare marae for future events, especially if they want to stand up as Community-Led Centres. Kōrero is also happening about tangata whenua-led and Te Ao Māori approaches to emergencies, and how that could both assist, and be assisted by, CDEM.
- Northland CDEM successfully applied for funding from MPI, which will provide small grants to Community Response Groups for small infrastructure and supplies.
- Three large themes in the community consultation were roads, power, and communications – both things that affected people, and what they were thankful was restored. But people also wanted to know what would be done to improve the resilience of these critical infrastructures. Northland CDEM put this question to the Northland Lifelines Group meeting in March 2023, and

the result was a list of 'Critical infrastructure commitments' in the Regional Recovery Plan – at least one concrete thing that the critical infrastructure providers would commit to in the short, medium, and long term, to build resilience and reduce systems failures in future events.

- Northland CDEM Emergency Management Specialists have attended many community-led debriefs of the event, and are providing ongoing advice, encouragement, and support to communities around the region.
- Northland Inc has received financial support for businesses and is facilitating conversations about business continuity planning.
- The Northland Adverse Events Team (NAET), made up of peak rural bodies, the Rural Support Trust, MPI, and Northland CDEM, prepared a list of primary industries issues and opportunities for the Regional Recovery Plan, which they are now working on.
- And much more ...



# Messages of support, āwhina, and encouragement for other areas of Aotearoa

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Kia kaha, the love of New Zealand is with you and our arms are wrapped around you. – Kelly

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You are not alone. – 'Mangawhai missy'

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The devastation in Napier, Gisborne, Coromandel, and parts of Auckland was so bad. I hope they realise they haven't been forgotten. – Lou

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As an 81 year-old retired ex-Police and Civil Defence officer with just on 50 years' experience, I offer my best wishes and sympathy for their situation. – Barry

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It'll take time and it's okay to still be feeling a lot of strong emotions. Check in with people and keep busy. – Erica

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I'm sending love to all those who have lost a loved one, a pet, your home, your livelihood, possessions, or a combination of these. My heart is heavy as I think of all those carrying grief while also attending to the practical work involved in clean up. I imagine it's dispiriting and exhausting and uncertain, and I know the challenges and impact will be long lasting. As a mum, I particularly send love and solidarity to all the mums who are holding their families together, caring for storm-affected kids and grandparents, and being the anchor holding everything and everyone together. In Aotearoa, regional communities can often feel like poor relations to the big cities. So, I'd like communities in the Hawkes Bay and Tairāwhiti to know that their cousins in the North see their realities. We understand what it means to respond to challenges while under-resourced. We'll learn from your experience and we will not forget. Lots of love to you all. – Anonymous

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Sending prayers of love for you all. – Boots

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You can get through this. The weather was strong, but we are stronger. – Kat

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Keep asking for help where it is required. Communicate your needs. Ask what you can do for others. Become involved where you can in making a strong robust community in the future. – Lynda

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We feel heartbroken for you all, this is such a hard thing to live through. As the weeks and months pass, do not give up, keep looking for a spot of joy – a smile, birdsong, a helping hand. Reach out to others, both for help and to help them. As we rebuild our communities, we can find strength to carry on. – Bee

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Kia kaha to you all. Engage in constructive dialogue with your Councils so that your communities cope with future disasters. – Horiana

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I have donated 1200 kgs of meat, and organized the transport of it, as well as organising the transport of other free chilled and frozen foods to Hawkes Bay. My contacts in the trucking industry have been brilliant (as well as all of our locals – we are in need, but what we have excess of, we share). – Raymond

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There's power in taking things day by day. – Bob

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We from Hokianga and our Bald Angels have sent down to them our aroha, prayers, and awhi. – Emergency Hub Tauteihiihi Marae

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Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi. With your basket and my basket, the people will live. – Kim

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We see the absolute devastation that some regions are still facing and we want those communities to know that we care so much about what they are having to deal with. Life is getting back to to normal for some of us, but that doesn't mean the other regions are forgotten to us. – 'Bream Bay resident'

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Kia kaha, kia maia, kia manawanui. Support one another as best you can in these times. – Tilly

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He mihi aroha to our whānau who have been affected and especially to those who have lost loved ones. Moe mai, moe mai ra. – 'Whangaruru Whanau'

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Sending you love and light through this rough period of time. – Emma

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Kia kaha e te iwi. Arohamai aroha atu nā Pipiwai.  
– Lizzie

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I wish them a fast and speedy recovery for the whānau and businesses. I hope your local marae can support you as much as ours supported us. – Anonymous

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Our hearts go out to you, as the mammoth clean-up continues and the rebuilding of lives and livelihoods. The sun WILL shine, and the skies WILL clear. Hang in there. – Lana

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We in the Far North feel so bad for those who were terribly affected. Yes, we were hit first and were receiving messages of support from friends, family, and even strangers. Of course, we could only reply with 'We're fine, we'll get through this' ... just to find out that those very people sending us best wishes were then the very people who were devastated and many becoming homeless, leaving us with a huge feeling of sadness and guilt that we dodged a bullet and they got the full impact. Our aroha goes out to all those who were affected by these catastrophic events. We were wanting to go to Dargaville, Hawkes Bay, and Tairāwhiti to help out, but were cut off from the rest of the country. After all you've been through, please know that we in the Far North are heartbroken to know that you are struggling from one day to the next, that many of you have lost everything. Our hearts and love go out to you all, we are thinking of you and praying that you will recover quickly from this. Ka nui te aroha, kia haumarū te noho. Until we can all be together again, kia kaha. – Maurice

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Kia kaha whānau. We grieve your loss and may we all build stronger infrastructure, but more importantly stronger relationships and connections. – Donna

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I just hope they get all the assistance they need, especially those who were displaced and/or those who didn't have insurance on their contents. I hope that they will all find their places back in their own communities. I would say to them, pull together in these hard times and look after each other. – Ruby

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I'm not sure words could accurately portray my thoughts for them. My heart goes out to them and what they are having to endure and will have to continue to endure for some time yet to rebuild their lives. – Donna

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Deeply feel for those to the east of the country; up here in Northland we were hit hard, but the images from there are unfathomable so we are all thinking of you there. – Scott

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Our thoughts and messages of support are well-intentioned and we are with you with all our heart, but really we just want to put on a pair of gumboots and grab a shovel to do the hard mahi to help you out!  
– Kim

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Even though some time has passed since the devastating events, and life has returned to normalcy for many of us, we had a *small* taste of what they went through. We can only hope that each day takes them one step away from the heartbreak and brings them one step closer to a brighter day. – Prue

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# Ideas that informed this document

This section contains some notes and sources of more information about the community work approach that informed this document. The following ideas guided the very practical and relatable questions that began this document – and that more than 300 people across Northland answered. The inclusion here is intended to show respect to those who created the way for this work, and to be transparent about ‘what lay behind’ the approach.

## Collective narrative practice

This project was inspired by what has come to be called collective narrative practice. Narrative practice is based on the idea that stories are profoundly shaping of people’s lives, and that people make sense of their experiences in broader cultural contexts.

Narrative practice is a profoundly non-pathologising approach. Rather than undertaking ‘needs assessments’, evaluation, and analysis, and then providing some kind of prescription for what others should do, narrative approaches instead ask questions about people’s own skills, knowledges, and preferences for living, linking these to what people give value to, their histories, cultural practices, and so on. Many of these ways of working were developed in partnership with, and by, Aboriginal colleagues and communities in Australia, as well as community workers and communities around the world who had experienced disasters, war, torture, profound loss, and other forms of social suffering.

Some collective narrative practices that informed this project include the following; rather than try to offer wholly-encapsulating summaries or definitions, the following questions convey some of the ideas behind them and invite reflection and collaborative meaning-making:

- a ‘de-centred, yet influential’ orientation: when working with people and communities, how might we keep those people at the centre of the work, yet still influence the outcome in a direction that they find helpful?
- ‘experience-near’ accounts: how might we elicit accounts of events in people’s own words, based on their own experiences (not just an external source’s facts, statistics, analysis, and so on)?
- ‘double-storied accounts’: how might we ask not only about what the real effects of an event were, but also how people responded? (this is based on the idea that people always respond to tough times, however small, even if that is only about how they make sense of those events)

- narratives are constitutive of life, and identity is formed, and renegotiated, through ‘landscapes of action and landscapes of consciousness’: how might people be invited to reflect not only on who they ‘are’ but how they might like life to be? For example, we could ask what else might they imagine themselves doing (landscape of action) and what that would mean to them (landscape of consciousness)?
- ‘enabling contribution’: how might the experiences of tough times experienced by some people (for example, a disaster, some kind of trauma, or injustice) contribute to relieve the social suffering of others?
- ‘unity in diversity’ (after Paulo Freire): how might we create documents, testimonies, and historical records that weave together individuals’ identifiable words into some kind of collective whole?

Narrative practice uses many other concepts and approaches; the above are just a few. The next section gives a brief summary of how some of these ideas were woven into the questions we asked. These questions were simple, but not simplistic. They are in everyday language such that people of various ages, cultural backgrounds, and so on, are able to find them relevant. But behind this simplicity, they are highly crafted, just as the collected answers are curated. The following provides a brief outline of some of the ideas that sat behind each question.

### **How were you and your community affected by Cyclone Gabrielle?**

This first question invited people to express their experiences of Cyclone Gabrielle in their own words – to provide ‘experience-near’ accounts. Rather than more ‘global’ accounts of statistics, impact analysis, and so on, these accounts were grounded in the particular – local experiences of the effects of the event at a household and community level.

By purposefully asking about 'you and your community', we were able to hear not only about personal experiences, but about those of people's wider circles – whānau, friends, neighbourhoods, hapū, workplaces, faith communities, villages. This both helped shift the stories about the event from being singular, individualised accounts, to ones that broaden out to concern *for* others and the concerns *of* others.

In turn, this meant that many people's responses were cast as who they were *in relation to* others. This both evoked 'embodied speech acts' (saying how something was from one's point of view, rather than a disembodied truth claim that something should be the case for all), as well as a *relational context for experience*. For example, people often used phrases such as 'As a mother I ...', 'We were in good enough shape to get on with it and check neighbours and elderly people in our valley', 'As a farmer I ...', 'I run a chemist ...', and so on.

**During the cyclone, and in the days that followed, what did you find most helpful? What were you thankful for? What examples did you see of people helping each other? What is helping your community get through this?**

This suite of questions is based on the practice of eliciting 'double-storied accounts' – not only accounts of hardship, loss, and tough times, but also how people *responded*. Again, these questions were designed to invoke both personal and collective or community responses.

Asking what people were thankful for helps orient people in relation to help that was received. In an emergency context, no formal emergency management response is perfect – transportation can be limited, communications links mean that the needs of some communities aren't immediately known, resources are stretched. Things fall through the cracks. But by asking about what people found helpful, we heard positive accounts of the efforts of police, fire, ambulance, civil defence, and local government – as well, of course, of the actions of community organisations, social service providers, neighbours, marae, sports clubs, and more.

This question also created a context of gratitude, which can be both a part of creating double-storied accounts and can itself provide re-connection. Giving thanks in itself can be a way of 'enabling contribution' to those who have helped, shared, risked their own lives, and reached out to others.

By asking 'What examples did you see of people helping each other?', we can create contexts for 'community witnessing': rather than just letting other community members' actions be casually noticed (or seemingly go unnoticed) at the time, we can afterwards 'rescue

the done from the doing of it', and build meaning-making on what happened. We've since heard that this single question – simple as it is – led to people making contact with neighbours, friends, family, and even strangers, and thanking them for the help they offered.

Finally, we were careful to ask 'What is helping your community get through this?' – not 'What *helped* you get through this?'. This community consultation occurred soon after the cyclone had passed. We didn't want to assume that people had 'got through' the event already, as that could have marginalised those who had not. And, for people who may have lost much, including loved ones in other regions, to 'get through' may not be a preferred end point. Asking about 'getting through' acknowledged that personal and community recovery after events can take time. To ask 'What is helping' also brought forth what was working, rather than just accounts of impacts and/or what hadn't worked.

**What are your hopes and dreams for your community in the coming months after Cyclone Gabrielle? What does 'Recovery' from Cyclone Gabrielle look like to you?**

Asking about people's hopes and dreams allows them to traffic in both the future 'landscape of action' and 'landscape of identity' – what are they hoping might happen next? What would that mean to them? This orientation can create a sense of possibility, hope, preferred direction, and ideas for both personal, community, and government action.

The quotes in the section of this booklet showed a wide array of steps that people wanted to take towards their own readiness for future events, as well as projects they wanted to do with their neighbours, whānau, or community. They also had some practical ideas for things that government could do – ideas that directly informed Northland's Regional Recovery Plan, and have led to region-wide projects that are already happening.

Finally, asking 'What does "Recovery" from Cyclone Gabrielle look like to you?' provided another invitation to invoke ideas of what the future might look like. But it also did something more profound – it handed over the very definition of 'Recovery' itself to community members. While there is a formal definition of Recovery under New Zealand legislation – and we included that in our Regional Recovery Plan – we prefaced it with community members' own definitions of Recovery. In this way, we were true to the formal Civil Defence Emergency Management Directors Guideline, which states that communities are at the centre of Recovery, while also allowing for multiple definitions of 'Recovery', in community members' own words.

### **Some other areas of Aotearoa New Zealand were affected pretty badly. What message of support, āwhina, or encouragement might you have for them at this time?**

This question is based on the narrative practice of 'enabling contribution' – creating messages from one community (or, as here, a collection of communities), and providing them to others as messages of support, acknowledgement, and encouragement.

Some of the quotes included in this document focus simply on sharing empathy, love, and compassion for others' experiences. Some move more into advice-giving. While giving advice can be hazardous, there's clearly a difference between that advice being offered by professionals, 'experts', government agencies, and so on, and community members who have experienced a similar event.

Given more time, we would have loved to have circulated these words to other regions of New Zealand, and received responses from those communities. This common narrative practice in itself can be profoundly healing for both communities. While we didn't get to do this before this publication went to print, it's a future project we look forward to.

For other examples of this work and the ideas behind them, see:

Arulampalam, S., Perera, L., de Mel, S., White, C., & Denborough, D. (2006). Avoiding psychological colonisation: Stories from Sri Lanka – responding to the tsunami. In D. Denborough (Ed.), *Trauma: Narrative*

*responses to traumatic experience* (pp. 87–102). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications

Bruner, E. M. (1986). Ethnography as narrative. In Turner, V. & Bruner, E. (Eds.), *The anthropology of experience* (pp. 139–155). Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Denborough, D. (2008). *Collective narrative practice: Responding to individuals, groups and communities who have experienced trauma*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Denborough, D. (2012). A storyline of collective narrative practice: A history of ideas, social projects, and partnerships. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, (1), 40–65.

Denborough, D. (2018). *Do you want to hear a story?: Adventures in collective narrative practice*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Geertz, C. (1983). *Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.

Trudgeon, H. (2022). Elevating children's voices and encouraging intergenerational collaboration in communities impacted by natural disasters. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, (2), 54–60.

White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

## **Other ideas that informed this work**

Collective narrative practice is both well-established, and forever exploring new ways of working and the ideas that might inform them. This community project and the resulting document draw on some ideas that are somewhat new to the field of narrative practice.

Most collective narrative documents combine different voices into a collective voice, where individual voices might still be recognised as distinct strands, but are woven together into a collective whole. While this can be done in separate conversations, the process usually occurs in group settings.

The project in this booklet is slightly different. To reach diverse communities across Northland – and in a short amount of time, right after a cyclone that impacted on both roads and communications – we mainly used an online survey, supplemented with many one-on-one conversations. We're aware of the limitations of the online component – being mediated via technology; trafficking initially in the written word, rather than in

the spoken word which is then rendered into written; and, especially in the context of Aotearoa, not hosting kanohi-ki-te-kanohi hui (face-to-face meetings). At the same time, we wanted to avoid the 'tried but found wanting' traditional approach of public meetings in town halls. In this context, we had to draw on a wider suite of ideas about how to work with distinctly individual voices.

While at first glance, this document may look like just a collection of 'random' quotes, it is far from such. Each was chosen for a reason, with consideration for being as representative as possible, and having each theme represent different aspects, and not just be univocal. This required thinking through how to collate, assemble, and represent a small amount of content from a much larger whole. Here is a brief explanation of how those ideas informed this document.

## Dissensus

In this community consultation, we heard from Māori and pākeha, Pasifika and manene. We heard from farmers on the land and government employees working on climate change. We heard voices from business owners and community workers. We heard from young people and old people, the well-off and those with very little.

Like any diverse communities, not everyone agrees with each other. This document purposefully contains many similar threads, but some completely different points of view. Stories of the past, and the hopes and dreams for the future, make something of a whole. But the purpose of this project was not to strive for some kind of consensus – in fact, the opposite, which Ewa Ziarek calls ‘dissensus’: a kaleidoscope of experiences, as well as jumping-off points of ideas about what re-grouping and re-building might look like – and even re-negotiating uncertain futures. Some of these ideas may not play out in the long run, but exploring multiple options can mean a higher chance that at least some will. The idea of dissensus therefore seems to have a lot to offer when thinking about future severe weather events, adaptation, and how societies might work, play, travel, farm, and live.

## Assemblage

The quotes in this booklet do not include every comment that people contributed – that would take hundreds of pages. Instead, the quotes were drawn from themes that emerged. The quotes are meant to be representative of the whole, so that even people who contributed to the community consultation who do not see their name in these pages should still ideally be able to read sentiments that are similar to what they offered.

This process was intentional, purposeful, and of course influenced the collection presented here. This collating of similar and different experiences was a process of sifting, of crafting, of arranging, so that the voices here, while not woven into a combined collective voice, still resonate with each other. This echoes Deleuze's notion of ‘assemblage’ – the experience of Northlanders have been arranged and juxtaposed so that they are seen as similar yet divergent, distinct yet interwoven.

## ‘Repetition for itself to bring forth difference in itself’

Because the quotes are collated as themes, some will have similar accounts, ideas, hopes – and even partially-same phraseology. This ‘sameness’ reflects the shared experience of many across the different communities of Tai Tokerau. But each are also divergent: as some quotes build on the ideas from previous quotes, they add in new shoots of ideas that branch off in different directions.

So there is not only a diversity of voices here, but also *difference*. While many of the themes are repeated, the repetition creates space for, and draws attention to, the differences. We might say that this project uses ‘repetition for itself to bring forth difference in itself’ Deleuze (1968/2004). The result is a varied, rich, and detailed whāriki of experience, hopes, and ideas for action – perhaps a different version of Friere's ‘unity in diversity’.

## Governmentality, ‘legibility’, and mētis

Finally, we were inspired by Foucault's tracing of the origins of emergency management, recently masterfully explored further by JC Gaillard, which raises questions about the intersections of governmentality and disasters. James C. Scott similarly traces histories of governments making populations ‘legible’ in order to enact top-down projects that often don't work, which provided a timely reminder about the dangers of hubris in doing emergency Recovery planning. He contrasts this, in part, with the idea of mētis, or practical local knowledge, which often contains far more nuanced, creative, and successful ideas about how to solve local problems.

For more about the broader ideas that informed the specific approach taken in this project, see:

Barrios, R. (2017). *Governing affect: Neoliberalism and disaster reconstruction*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Cretney, R.M. (2018). Beyond public meetings: Diverse forms of community led recovery following disaster. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 28, 122–130.

Cretney, R. (2019). “An opportunity to hope and dream”: Disaster politics and the emergence of possibility through community-led recovery. *Antipode*, 51 (2), 497–516.

Deleuze, G. (1968/2004). *Difference and repetition* (P. Patton, trans.). London: Continuum.

Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*. (G. Burchell, trans.). New York, NY: Picador.

Gaillard, JC (2022). *The invention of disaster: Power and knowledge in discourses on hazard and vulnerability*. London: Routledge.

Scott, J.C. (2020). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ziarek, E.P. (2001). *An ethics of dissensus*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

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