

IR-01-23-10152

6 June 2023

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Tēnā koe Mike

Request for information

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request of 4 April 2023, in which you asked for information regarding police communication infrastructure during Cyclone Gabrielle.

My response to each of your questions can be found below.

Could the Police advise what issues with communications with the frontline staff they had in the Hawkes Bay and Gisborne regions relating to radio and cellular communications?

Cellular: 310 cell sites lost connectivity from both One NZ (previously Vodafone) and Rural Connectivity Group across the North Island. Cell phone reception in the Hawkes Bay was initially limited and there were no cellular communications in the Gisborne area.

Police deployed Starlink units to several stations in the Gisborne area which provided Wi-Fi calling while in range of the unit. One NZ deployed Starlink and Kordia microwave connectivity to Macro Cell (LTE) sites to restore coverage until fibre restoration was achieved.

Radio: The backhaul connectivity was lost to the Emergency Communication Centres impacting the Tairāwhiti area. The Gisborne, East Cape and Wairoa areas had local radio communications but could not be dispatched centrally. This service was restored via Starlink the evening of 15 February 2023.

What damage occurred to a police communication infrastructure (if any)?

Network equipment at Hawkes Bay Dog Base (router, media converter) was damaged beyond repair requiring decommission.

Are there any further reliance plans around emergency communications for public safety and extreme weather events?

Additional equipment that restored connectivity early such as Starlinks and additional satellite phones were purchased early in the Cyclone Gabrielle response and there will be a review of the current emergency equipment. Future use of Starlink for the purpose of business continuity planning is being explored.

Police National Headquarters

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Has Cyclone Gabriele changed the Public safety network LMR and Hourua priority cellular service plans as a result of learnings and reliance on communication during cyclone Gabriele?

In February 2023 the government stood-up the Cyclone Gabrielle Recovery Task Force to look at aspects of the Cyclone response and impacts, including communications. While there are no immediate changes planned for the Public Safety Network Te Kupenga Marutau, the Task Force findings - and those from any other relevant investigations - may result in changes in the future.

Are the NZ Police still the lead agency for the Next Generation Communications Network?

Next Generation Critical Communications Poutama Whai Tikanga Pāpāho is responsible for developing the [Public Safety Network](#) Te Kupenga Marutau on behalf of Fire and Emergency New Zealand, Police, Hato Hone St John and Wellington Free Ambulance. It has an independent Board and is hosted by Police.

Police apologises for the delay in releasing this response to you. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this delay. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602

I trust this information is of use to you.



Yours sincerely

Richard Chambers
Assistant Commissioner: Districts
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