

Hon Carmel Sepuloni

MP for Kelston

Deputy Prime Minister

Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage

Minister for Auckland

Minister for Social Development and Employment

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Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs (Pacific Region)



AKL065

24 JUL 2023

Peter Johnson

fyi-request-22976-d734c124@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Peter

Thank you for your email of 1 June 2023, received via [FYI.org.nz](https://fyi.org.nz) requesting information on what is being done in Auckland by central and local government with regards to flood prone sites following the severe weather events earlier this year. I acknowledge what a challenging time this has been for those affected and appreciate your concerns. I hope the following information assists.

As you know, the severe weather events that hit the north and east of the North Island in January and early February 2023 caused widespread devastation to communities, land, and infrastructure.

Building more resilient infrastructure and moving people away from disaster prone areas through managed retreat are complex topics that span across local and central government, iwi, insurers and banks. I can confirm that these issues are a priority for me and are being actively considered by the Government.

In response to what is likely to be a long and complex recovery, Katrina Casey was appointed as Chief Executive, Cyclone Recovery, and the Cyclone Recovery Unit (the CRU) was stood up in March 2023 - hosted by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The purpose of the CRU is to coordinate cross-government work on cyclone recovery; to support locally led engagements with communities, iwi, business, and local government; coordinate planning and reporting; and ensure alignment with broader policy decisions on long-term resilience.

The CRU plays a critical role in supporting iwi and community resilience by working closely with local authorities to coordinate engagements on the future of severely affected locations. In addition, the CRU is leading a process to engage with Māori communities, iwi, and marae on the future for whenua Māori. The CRU also hosts the secretariat function for the Cyclone Recovery Taskforce (the Taskforce).

The Taskforce was established in March 2023 and is Chaired by Sir Brian Roche. The Taskforce provides an independent advisory function to the Minister for Cyclone Recovery, including advice on the prioritisation and sequencing of needs for each region and assurance that those needs are being met. The Taskforce engages with local authorities and

the private sector (insurance companies, banks, utilities, roading etc) with a focus is on bridging locally led recovery plans with the work of the government and the private sector.

Together, the CRU and the Taskforce ensure Ministers are receiving comprehensive advice across a complex policy and operational recovery landscape. This combined effort will, in turn, help support communities to recover as quickly as possible from the impacts of the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods and Cyclone Gabrielle.

In Auckland, the CRU and the Taskforce have been working directly with the Recovery Office in Auckland Council to progress the recovery from the North Island extreme weather events. Engagement has included:

- The Taskforce has been supporting Auckland Council to progress their risk categorisation, including facilitating access to data and providing guidance on recovery planning.
- Auckland Council have communicated their engagement plans to the CRU and sought feedback and clarification as required. To date Auckland Council has engaged directly with almost 7,000 property owners and begun detailed risk assessments which will lead to risk categories for these properties.
- Auckland Council have hosted community meetings with affected communities, and further meetings are happening in July and August, as well drop-in sessions for affected homeowners seeking more information or support.

The Government is committed to a locally led recovery, where local voices are central to Government decisions. This means that Auckland Council hold the responsibility for long-term hazard management and planning. They are taking steps to advance their flood management through the upcoming Making Space for Water programme and wider recovery plans. This programme is expected to be released for consultation in the coming month.

Further, the Government has entered into funding negotiations with councils to support a voluntary buyout for owners of Category 3 designated properties. Category 3 properties are those which cannot be sufficiently mitigated against a future, severe weather event risk.

The Government will also co-fund work needed to protect Category 2 designated properties, those where community or property-level interventions will manage future severe weather event risk, to help local authorities and property owners build flood protection and take other resilience measures. For more information about the different categories please see the Government's update on the assessment of affected properties at:

www.beehive.govt.nz/release/update-assessment-affected-properties-post-cyclone-and-flooding

The details of this support are still being worked through with councils. The Government has begun discussions regarding cost-sharing arrangements with Auckland Council which will include Category 2 and Category 3 properties. For more information please see:

www.beehive.govt.nz/release/govt-and-councils-working-together-buying-out-properties.

Auckland Council is leading next steps and has started to engage directly with property owners about land categorisation. This support process will involve communication on its categorisation work and directly gathering more information from impacted properties.

If you have not received an email or letter but believe you should have, you can register your property details with Auckland Council at: www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/recovery-extreme-

[weather-disasters/property-categorisation-resolution/Pages/risk-assessments-properties-storm-affected-areas.aspx](https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/recovery-extreme-weather-disasters/recovery-office/Pages/risk-assessments-properties-storm-affected-areas.aspx).

If you have any further enquiries on the categorisation and recovery process, please contact Auckland Council via email recoveryoffice@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or by phone on (09) 301 0101.

I also note that the whole Auckland region has been 'designated' under the Building Act 2004 to help manage ongoing risks to people from buildings affected by flooding and land instability as a result of the January 2023 storm event. The designation allows the council to take specific actions under the Building Act to manage buildings in an emergency and will be reviewed every 90 days by Auckland Council to confirm that the powers conferred by the designation are required to manage the response and recovery. The designation will remain in place until 1 February 2026, unless terminated earlier. For further information including maps of the suburbs and localities under designation please visit:

<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/recovery-extreme-weather-disasters/recovery-office/Pages/designation-response-january-2023-storm.aspx>.

Thank you again for writing. I hope this information is helpful.

Ngā mihi nui



Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister for Auckland