

In confidence

Office of the Minister of Climate Change

Cabinet Extreme Weather Recovery Committee

Advancing climate adaptation through the recovery

Proposal

- 1 This paper outlines how the Government can advance climate adaptation through the recovery.
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- 3 I also seek agreement from Cabinet to direct the Climate Change Chief Executives Board to include key milestones and delivery updates on actions in this paper relating to the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), in its next six-monthly report to the Prime Minister.

Relation to government priorities

- 4 On 27 February 2023, Cabinet noted the need for strong and coordinated action across all arms of government on the recovery from Cyclone Gabrielle and its impacts [CAB-23-MIN-0056 refers]. Cabinet also agreed that a core objective of the recovery is improving climate resilience and the avoidance of maladaptation.
- 5 Enabling a just transition to a low-emissions, climate resilient future is a government priority. Cabinet declared its intention to “put the climate at the centre of government decision-making” [CBC-20-MIN-0097 refers].
- 6 The Government declared a climate change emergency on 2 December 2020. Cabinet agreed that climate change “demands a sufficiently ambitious, urgent, and coordinated response across government to meet the scale and complexity of the challenge” [CBC20-MIN-0097 refers].

Executive Summary

- 7 On 27 February 2023, Cabinet invited the Minister of Climate Change, in consultation with the Minister for Cyclone Recovery, to report to the Extreme Weather Recovery Committee (EWR) by the end of March 2023 on how best to advance climate adaptation issues that are not directly covered by the Cyclone Recovery Taskforce (the Taskforce) [CAB-23-MIN-0056 refers].

- 8 The NAP sets out the Government's long-term adaptation strategy and action plan. Agencies have identified actions to advance to support the recovery, primarily through:

a. better information about hazards, exposure, and vulnerability

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- 10 Ministry for the Environment officials are working closely with other agencies supporting the Taskforce to ensure that, as far as possible, near-term decisions are consistent with existing and emerging long-term strategy for adaptation and managed retreat.

Cyclone Recovery Taskforce and other recovery governance structures

- 11 The Taskforce was established to pull together and align the economic and infrastructure recovery efforts and ensure local, iwi, and business voices have input into decision-making. Its initial focus is on the immediate recovery response. This includes whether or not some devastated areas should be rebuilt.
- 12 Planning for future resilience will become its greater focus over time. The Taskforce have indicated that they expect to have an understanding of high-risk areas in which rebuilding should be potentially avoided by mid-April.
- 13 Cabinet highlighted that the need to prevent future development from occurring in high risk/multi risk hazard areas was not directly covered by the Taskforce.
- 14 Other existing and new governance bodies across local, regional, and central government will also have a role in supporting the recovery.¹

Government work to build climate resilience

- 15 The impacts of our changing climate will accelerate in the coming decades, although the amount of change will depend on global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

¹ This includes the Chief Executive, Cyclone Recovery, supported by the Cyclone Recovery Unit at DPMC, Regional Public Service Commissioners, as well as Lead Ministers for each region. In advancing adaptation work outlined in this paper it will be important to ensure these various structures work together, the duplication of functions is avoided, and accountabilities are clear.

- 16 Climate change is already increasing the severity and frequency of natural hazards, including flooding and landslips. This is leading to a growing level of risk to life, property², infrastructure, the natural environment, and wellbeing.

National Adaptation Plan (NAP)

- 17 The NAP is a statutory requirement under the Climate Change Response Act 2002.³ It sets out a long-term strategy and work programme to address risks identified in six yearly National Climate Change Risk Assessments.
- 18 The first NAP was published in August 2022 and focuses on putting the foundations for adaptation action in place. The following four priorities underpin the plan:
- a. enabling better risk-informed decisions
 - b. driving climate-resilient development in the right places
 - c. laying the foundations for a range of adaptation options including managed retreat
 - d. embedding climate resilience across government policy.
- 19 Upholding the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a central aspect of the Government's long term adaptation strategy. The Government will develop adaptation responses in partnership with Māori – including elevating te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in adaptation processes to empower and enable Māori to undertake adaptation planning for themselves.

Resource management reform

- 20 The Government is transforming the resource management system through three new statutes, as set out in Appendix A.⁴ This legislation includes the Climate Change Adaptation Bill (CCAB) which will put in place the foundations for long-term adaptation. ^{s 9(2)(f)(iv)}
- 21 The Natural and Built Environment (NBE) Bill is the key vehicle for replacing the RMA. The Spatial Planning (SP) Bill provides for a strategic regional spatial planning function. These Bills are currently before Parliament's Environment Committee and include proposals to support adaptation to the effects of climate change.

² There are also concerns about the decreasing availability and affordability of insurance for property.

³ The NAP sits alongside the Emissions Reduction Plan. Together these documents lay out New Zealand's overall response to climate change and drive the government work programme to both mitigate (through reducing greenhouse gases) and adapt to the effects of climate change.

⁴ The following NAP actions relate to resource management reform: 4.1 Reform the resource management system; 4.2 Set national direction on natural hazard risk management and climate adaptation through the National Planning Framework; 5.1 pass legislation to support managed retreat.

Connecting near-term decisions to long-term strategy

- 22 Affected communities need certainty, quickly, about government actions to allow them to move forward with the recovery. At the same time, decisions made in the recovery could have implications for longer-term system settings and public expectations as to what these will be. Therefore the decisions should be considered in this context. As work progresses on actions in this paper, it will be important to take account of these needs.
- 23 Ministry for the Environment officials are working closely with other agencies supporting the Taskforce to ensure that, as far as possible, near-term decisions are consistent with existing and emerging long-term strategy for adaptation and managed retreat.
- 24 Key focus areas are: funding, strengthening natural hazard and climate change risk assessment, risk tolerance assessments, guidance/direction on infrastructure and future development, and matters which relate to managed retreat. The recovery will also provide an opportunity to build early foundations for the development of the future adaptation system.

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Potential role for interdepartmental executive boards in supporting the recovery effort

- 74 Cabinet has established two interdepartmental executive boards to support implementation of the long-term resource management and climate adaptation systems:
- a. the Strategic Planning Reform (SPR) Board leads the development of the new spatial planning legislation
 - b. the CCIEB provides oversight of the Government's response to climate change.
- 75 The membership and functions of the two boards are closely linked to the subject matter that the Taskforce will cover. There is potential for the boards to play a formal or informal role in the recovery effort. For example, the boards could help resolve conflicts between different national level priorities as they play out in recovery regions.
- 76 The boards will work with the Chief Executive, Cyclone Recovery, supported by the Cyclone Recovery Unit within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), and associated supporting agencies, including the Public Service Commission. A key consideration will be alignment with other arrangements, for example the role of Regional Public Service Commissioners.

Implementation and public participation

- 77 The successful implementation of these initiatives will require an all-of-government effort to build public understanding of and (where appropriate) involvement in these difficult decisions. Clear and easy to follow information about current and future risk is a necessary first step to enable people to understand their options for managing risks now and in the future.

- 78 It is worth noting the public sentiment continues to change:
- a. climate change has significantly risen as a top concern for New Zealanders, re-entering the country's top-5 issues in 2023 (IPSOS Issues Monitor, Feb 2023)
 - b. this is driving a greater call for action from the Government, and willingness from people to make personal changes to reduce New Zealand's impact on the environment. However, many people feel powerless and confused about what to do (EECA consumer monitor)
 - c. social media and access to information is driving expectations of more involvement in Government decision making. Responsive, community-centred communication is critical to keeping people involved in productive conversations and actions (UAC-19 experience)
 - d. trust is a significant factor in building public acceptance for significant projects, and successful delivery helps build trust
- 79 The significant disruption of this year's weather events provides an opportunity to start new conversations and broaden people's ideas about 'what is the best thing to do next?'. Building public understanding around upcoming decisions through the provision of clear, tailored information, tools and resources is critical. This will enable communities to navigate through the immediate crisis, and then to reimagine the future as they take steps towards recovery.

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Financial Implications

- 81 Some of the actions in this paper may have financial implications, but any funding gap will be addressed through existing processes (including Budget 23) or further advice to Ministers.

Legislative Implications

- 82 The recommendations in this paper do not require decisions on legislation.
- 83 However, certain actions highlighted in this paper (following future policy decisions) could require legislation and/or regulation to implement. This might be through bespoke climate adaptation legislation and/or through regulations under the current RMA and the NBE Bill once passed.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement

- 84 A Regulatory Impact Statement is not required for this paper.

Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

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

Population Implications

- 86 Those affected by the floods need confirmation of the Government's intentions now, to understand the choices they face to rebuild or relocate. In some locations, cultural sites of significance, such as marae and urupā, have been impacted. Actions taken by the Government to improve information planning processes and tools used to decide whether, how, and where to rebuild, can help to improve resilience and avoid maladaptation.
- 87 The proposals in this paper are generally intended to build the information base and provide guidance to support community-led decisions in the recovery. However, the proposal to restrict development in at risk areas will have specific population implications, including in relation to Māori land, and is the subject of further work.

Human Rights

- 88 Proposals in this paper are consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Consultation

- 89 The following agencies were consulted on this Cabinet paper: Department of Corrections; Department of Internal Affairs; Department of Conservation; Kainga Ora; Ministry of Housing and Urban Development; Land Information New Zealand; Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment; Ministry for Culture and Heritage; Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Primary Industries; National Emergency Management Agency; New Zealand Defence Force, Public Services Commission; Oranga Tamariki; Parliamentary Counsel; the Treasury; Te Puni Kokiri; Te Waihangā; Toka Tū Ake EQC; Waka Kotahi; and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (including the Cyclone Recovery Unit).

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Communications

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Proactive Release

92 This paper will be proactively released within 30 business days of decisions being confirmed by Cabinet.

Recommendations

The Minister of Climate Change, in consultation with the Minister for Cyclone Recovery, recommends Cabinet Extreme Weather Recovery Committee:

- 2 **note** that on 27 February 2023, Cabinet invited the Minister of Climate Change, in consultation with the Minister for Cyclone Recovery, to report to the Cabinet Extreme Weather Recovery Committee by the end of March 2023 on how best to advance climate adaptation issues that are not directly covered by the Cyclone Recovery Taskforce;
- 3 **note** that the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) is the Government's long-term adaptation strategy;
- 4 **note** that the Government is establishing foundations for the future adaptation system through the Climate Change Adaptation Bill;

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8 **note** providing better data, information and guidance sooner will help reduce the vulnerability of communities to the impacts of climate change faster;

9 **note** that the Climate Change Chief Executives Board (CCIEB) is responsible for overseeing the overall implementation of the National Adaptation Plan;

10 **invite** the CCIEB to include key milestones and delivery updates on the actions outlined in this paper in its six-monthly report to the Prime Minister on the NAP (next report due August 2023);

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Authorised for lodgement
Hon James Shaw
Minister of Climate Change

Proactively released under the Official Information Act 1982