

## Counting the cost of Cyclone Gabrielle

Northland Transportation Alliance says it will cost between \$5 million and \$10 million to repair district roads in the Far North damaged by Cyclone Gabrielle but warns that total is likely to increase as detailed assessments of the work are finalised.

A total of 179 Far North roads were impacted by the February cyclone with 55 of those closed completely at some stage during the weather event. Many roads were affected by fallen trees and flooding, while others were more seriously damaged by slips. Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA) aims to have final estimates of repairs available by April.

Waka Kotahi has confirmed that the Far North's normal 69 per cent Financial Assist Rate contribution towards roading costs will be topped up through emergency works financial assistance to cover 100 per cent of the initial cyclone response. That will cover activities such as clearing debris, traffic control and so on. Financial assistance for longer term road repairs, such as to slips, is yet to be confirmed.

Other impacts to the Far North are still being assessed. The council has a team dedicated to the cyclone recovery. Its focus is on individual hardship, improving the resilience of vulnerable communities, and administering the Cyclone Gabrielle Mayoral Relief Fund.

This fund was established by Kahika (Mayor) Moko Tepania to provide one-off financial assistance to



The Royal New Zealand Air Force assisted with the emergency response, delivering essential supplies to remote Far North communities.

anyone in the Far North experiencing serious hardship resulting from the cyclone. The fund is financed through government contributions and donations from individuals and groups.

Thanks to generous donations from around the country, the total donated to the fund now sits at just over \$400,000. This includes fundraising from four New Zealand councils that signed up to an Adopt a Community initiative launched by Local Government New Zealand. Waitaki, Tasman, and Clutha district councils in the South Island, and Waipā District Council in the Waikato each pledged to fundraise for those affected by the cyclone in the Far North.

So far, the Mayoral relief fund has received more than 50 applications for assistance and has paid out \$36,792

to groups and individuals. Many of these initial payments have helped cover the cost of removing fallen trees, rubbish removal and skip hire, as well as roof and other minor house repairs not already covered by insurance.

The recovery team is now visiting those with more complex requests for financial assistance. All applications are being assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Mayoral relief fund panel and the Mayor's Office.

Anyone needing assistance can find out more and apply to the Mayoral relief fund via the council's website. Applications close on Friday 31 March 2023. The website also provides details on funding to assist businesses, reimburse community groups for emergency expenditure, and recovery grants for Māori communities.

### Kerikeri water treatment upgraded



State-of-the-art clarifiers now treat Kerikeri-Waipapa water supplies.

If you've travelled Kerikeri Road recently, you may have noticed two truck-sized metal containers now located next to the town's water reservoir.

Despite speculation on social media, these imposing-looking containers have nothing to do with fluoridation of the water supply. Instead, they are state-of-the-art clarifiers designed to remove suspended particles from the two raw water sources - Waingarua Reservoir and Puketotara Stream - that supply Kerikeri and Waipapa.

The units replace an existing concrete clarifier tank that was deteriorating and needed to be retired. Due to the limited size of the site and little available flat land, the council opted to install two lamella clarifying units. These contain a series of angled plates inside each container. Water flows between the plates and the solids settle onto these before eventually falling to the bottom of the clarifier. The accumulated solids are periodically removed. The angled plate system gives lamella clarifiers a footprint that is about 30 per cent less than other types of clarifier.

The two units at Kerikeri Road can produce 220 cubic metres of clarified water an hour. This is a significant increase in volume when compared to the previous system and will help the council achieve its goal of increasing the capacity of the water treatment plant to 4000 cubic metres a day within the next five years.

The units were commissioned over four weeks earlier this year when a range of water quality tests were undertaken. These showed that the clarifiers meet New Zealand water safety standards. They consistently reduce raw water turbidity by 70 per cent, achieving a turbidity of less than 1 NTU. The World Health Organisation recommends a turbidity level of less than 1 NTU (nephelometric turbidity units) for drinking water.

### Milestone footpath for community



The footpath symbolises a journey to recognition for the community.

Located between Moerewa and Kawakawa, Taumatamakuku is a community with a distinct history and identity, something contractors discovered when building a new footpath there.

The new 460-metre-long path traces Taumatamakuku Crescent, a loop road that effectively encircles the settlement. Ventia Contract Manager - FNDC South Maintenance Jamie Kitzen says this job was unlike any other because of how welcoming the locals were.

Roddy Pihema was born and raised in Taumatamakuku and is now a member of the Bay of Islands-Whangaroa Community Board. He says the settlement was rarely recognised as a distinct community by past councils. He explains: "This was more than just a footpath. It runs deeper than that. It's a big step for the community."

Those living in Taumatamakuku have a special pride in being kaitiaki (guardians) of this place. According to Roddy, when World War II ended, returned servicemen and people from across the district came for employment at the freezing works at the edge of Moerewa. With housing in short supply in Moerewa, workers lived in disused American army barracks and transit huts nearby. The moko (grandchildren) of those who first settled what has now become Taumatamakuku are fiercely proud of their history.

From 1947 until the late 1980s, Bay of Islands County Council administered the area. Roddy says that during that time, community infrastructure and social needs were often overlooked.

The footpath is the first of several placemaking projects now planned. The 93 cubic metres of concrete poured to create the path has begun a journey of recognition for the community.

You can read the full story on our website.