



# WAIROA RECOVERY

TE WAIROA KA ORA TE WERO TE TAKI  
STRENGTH X UNITY X RESILIENCE



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22<sup>ND</sup> 2024 | NEWSLETTER 9



*Ka mua, ka muri - Walking backwards into the future.*

Together we walked back along the path from where the waters breached, so that we move forward to the glimmer of light, of hope on the horizon.

## HĪNĀTORE - CYCLONE GABRIELLE ANNIVERSARY A TIME TO REFLECT

The first anniversary of Cyclone Gabrielle is a time to reflect on the progress that has been made and the challenges still ahead, says Wairoa Recovery Manager Benita Tahuri.

"While we still have over 100 stickered houses, we are slowly achieving our goal of whānau returning to their homes. More than 120 placards have been removed from yellow and white placarded homes.

"There are still a series of challenges preventing progress in some areas. One of these is Wairoa properties being labelled Land Categorisation 2A. This is a category of uncertainty, and work is progressing to develop

flood protection for our town to enable properties to move to 2C and 1. For some houses, this shift would remove a rebuild barrier.

"For others, insurance is a challenge, with some insurers waiting for a Land Categorisation change, others going straight into managed rebuilds, and others offering payouts, and some negotiations still going on. And as we know, a high number of whānau are not insured.

"The Recovery Office continues to advocate on your behalf. If you are having a problem with your insurance, please contact us.

"The Recovery team is working with Wairoa District Council regarding building consents to ensure this process is as streamlined as possible. Plans are also being developed so there are clear guidelines around the priorities relating to rebuilding.

"Housing rebuilds remain the focus, and we are starting to see traction with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints planning to rebuild five homes, and perhaps more. Tātau Tātau o Te Wairoa, with funding through Te Puni Kokiri, is working towards essential rebuilds. This is mainly focused on plumbing and electrical work.

"We also remain grateful for the support received from the Red Cross to help people get back into their homes.

"It is encouraging to see whānau starting to take charge of their own recovery and making plans so they are better prepared for the future.

"The Wairoa Recovery Office was initially set up to run until the end of next month, and plans are being developed to transition away from a separate recovery office and the role being absorbed within Council.

"Support will still be available as we all work towards repairing our district and building back better."

If you would like to receive the Wairoa Recovery Newsletter, please send your email address to:  
[recovery@wairoadc.govt.nz](mailto:recovery@wairoadc.govt.nz)







## MAYORAL MESSAGE

The first anniversary of Cyclone Gabrielle was an emotional time. The dawn hikoī was a poignant occasion and a very real reminder of what still needs to be done to get our whānau back into their homes.

The commemorations were fantastic, organised by the Wairoa Recovery team, led by Manager Benita Tahuri. Events and activities seamlessly blended from the hikoī, breakfast and taonga presentations to inflatable fun for Wairoa children and a free whānau evening concert. I was so impressed with the organising, everything ran like clockwork, and it was a tribute to everyone involved.

One year on from the cyclone event, and it is frustrating that we still have more than 100 yellow stickered properties, our roading network to Wairoa from the north and the south remains fragile, we have no river protection and our lost services, such as Glengarry aged care and Idea Services, have not been replaced.

We must not forget that, per capita, Wairoa was the most impacted local authority of Cyclone Gabrielle affected areas and the most isolated, and we must not allow the focus to shift away from Wairoa while our people still suffer.

There is still a lot of work ahead of us, and we will continue to do everything we can to support our people and rebuild our district.

## TE REINGA BRIDGE OPENED

After nearly two years of disruption and isolation, the Ruakituri, Erepeti and Te Reinga communities were reconnected on February 19 with the opening of the temporary bridge.

The smiles were wide as local residents from either side of the bridge gathered on the new crossing to officially relink the rural communities.

Te Reinga Bridge was initially damaged in the March/April 2022 weather events. It was closed to traffic while a temporary repair took place, which saw the bridge reopen under traffic restrictions in May 2022. The bridge was then further damaged in Cyclone Gabrielle, forcing its closure and demolition.

The new temporary bridge has taken a year to design and build, with continued wet weather during 2022 plaguing progress.

The temporary bridge spans the 92-metre river with the Bailey Bridge 42 metres in length.

Wairoa Mayor Craig Little said it was fantastic to see affected communities

from either side of the river finally able to cross the bridge again to come together as one.

"We recognise how hard this has been on so many people, and again, we thank you for your patience. We appreciate your frustrations to have what was once a 20-minute drive to town turn into two hours and to look across the river and yet have no access."

The Bailey Bridge has been cleared for general access (i.e. up to 100% Class 1 HCV), with a 10km/hr speed limit and restriction of one heavy vehicle at a time. It will not be open for 50MAX or HPMV vehicles.

Minor works will continue on-site, including installing a surveillance system for the bridge to monitor for potential non-compliance and structural risk.

Due to safety requirements, people are asked to please not walk over the temporary bridge or jump off it as there is likely large debris under the water that is not visible from the surface.



There was a chain of vehicles waiting on the Ruakituri side of the river in readiness to cross the new Te Reinga temporary bridge.



Teresa Smith was first to officially drive her vehicle over the new temporary Te Reinga Bridge.



School children from each side of the river gathered to cut the ribbon officially marking the opening of the temporary Te Reinga Bridge.

# CRITICAL FLOOD MITIGATION OPTIONS BEING EXPLORED

Wairoa's Flood Protection Stakeholder Group is exploring a range of critical flood mitigation options, including spillways and stopbanks, to provide future flood protection for the township.

Following Cyclone Gabrielle, the Government earmarked \$70 million for Wairoa to develop flood mitigation to a 1:100-year level to shift Wairoa's 627 Category 2A properties to Category 2C and, in future, Category 1.

A Hawke's Bay Regional Council engineering team has developed and tested models based on community discussions, thoughts, and ideas, and river data with options based on science, hydrology, and computer-generated modelling.

The stakeholder group's task is to provide local knowledge and a grassroots Wairoa voice on the options being presented.

While the stakeholder group is an initial sounding board, options will be shared with the community for further engagement and feedback – hopefully as early as next month. Public presentations will include the range of options explored and the rationale behind the findings and recommendations.

Final stakeholder and community preferences will then go to the Tripartite Partners, comprising Hawke's Bay Regional Council, Tātau Tātau o Te Wairoa Trust and Wairoa District Council, with the final

decision resting with the Hawke's Bay Regional Council as the authority responsible for flood protection.

At a meeting earlier this month, stakeholders considered refined options based on additional work carried out in the field over the past weeks. Considerations include hydrological, property, ecological, cultural, geotechnical, and archaeological impacts and costings.

The stakeholder group stressed the importance of cultural impacts on intergenerational land, taonga such as marae, and challenges with whenua Māori under multiple ownership.

They also expressed concern that the longer it takes to find a solution, the longer some homeowners within Category 2A have to wait to be able to rebuild their flood-impacted homes.

Once confirmation is received that construction of flood protection for Wairoa will proceed, it is expected to take affected properties from Category 2A to 2C, and in future, Category 1. A flood protection scheme will assist in managing future severe weather events, providing certainty for homeowners and businesses. It will also allow whānau to stay in their communities and prevent properties from falling under Category 3 and the voluntary buy-out programme.

Independent group chairman Lawrence Yule said the longer it

takes to decide on an option, the longer Wairoa is unprotected, and people are in limbo.

He explained that, based on the decision-making timeframe, landowner negotiations, the consenting process, and construction timeframes, the completion of a flood protection scheme could still be years away.

"All the options have impacts, and none of them will be perfect. While the group has not selected a final option or options at this stage, we are starting to see an indication of some preferences."

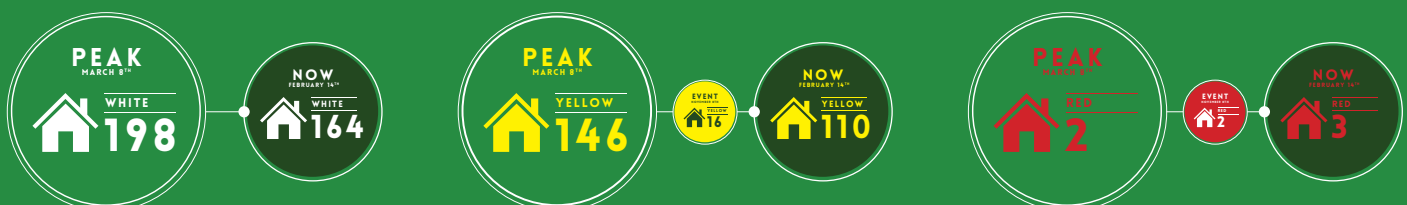
The stakeholder group has also requested whatever flood mitigation option is selected, the Wairoa River mouth's active management needs to be improved.

The group has also stressed the importance of an extensive peer review of any proposal to ensure it is the best solution for Wairoa.

Wairoa Deputy Mayor and stakeholder group member Denise Eaglesome-Karekare said there is no flood mitigation option that does not impact our community. "Doing nothing is not an option, we have to find the best solution for our future."

The group will meet again within the next fortnight and hopes to finalise its preferred options by the end of February and share these with the public in March.

## STATUS OF STICKERED HOMES



Peak numbers were reached around March 8<sup>th</sup> 2023 then on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2023 a significant rain/flood event in the Mahia/Nuhaka area resulted in a further 16 Residential Yellow Placards & 3 Red Residential Placards.



# NEIGHBOURLY LOVE

For Mackley Street neighbours and mum and daughter Helen and Lee Grace, recovery is about getting stuck in.

Helen and her husband, the late Willie Grace, had lived in their home for around 45 years. Cyclone Bola did lap the steps back in 1988 but didn't quite make it inside.

Helen says when she got up on the morning of February 14, 2023, she thought Wairoa had dodged a bullet until later, when she looked out the window, and saw the water coming down the street.

Helen and Lee's homes were yellow-stickered, with chest-high water flooding the properties.

Mum and daughter spent around five months living with family on

the 'south side' of town until their temporary and neighbouring pods were ready.

"We thought living in the pods would be good, and they have served their purpose, but we won't be keeping them. They are small, and we are pretty sick of them now - especially when the plumbing plays up."

Inside their homes, where once the water was knee-deep, they now have freshly painted walls and new flooring. They are just waiting for the plumbing work to be completed so they can move back in. Sadly, Helen's husband Willie, passed away last October, before he was able to see his home restored.

"It's taken a year to put it all back together, and we are still not there

yet," says Helen, who points out chest-high silt deposits in some of her garden trees.

The keen gardener was grateful for the help she received to get the silt off her property and was surprised by how much of her garden had survived.

Helen's attitude is pragmatic. "We need river protection, the river breached twice in the same place in Bola and Gabrielle, we are just lucky no one lost their lives."

Lee is a firm believer in getting on with the job. "We didn't wait for people to come and rescue us, we just did it ourselves and helped other people where we could."

"It will be awesome to be back in our homes."



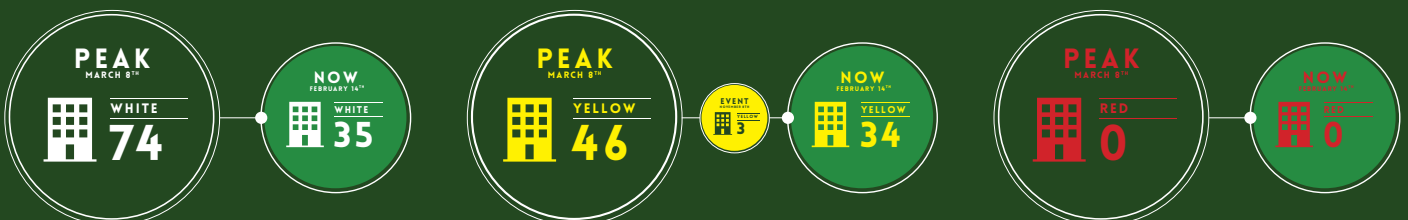
For Lee and Helen Grace, a bonus was receiving Red Cross Home Bundles of essential kitchenware, bedding and furniture, much needed as they get closer to moving into their repaired homes.



Lee and Helen Grace in Helen's garden which has made an incredible recovery from the chest-high water that engulfed it.

## STATUS OF STICKERED BUSINESSES

✓ PLACARDS REMOVED  
44



Peak numbers were reached around March 8th 2023 then on November 8th 2023 a significant rain/flood event in the Mahia/Nuhaka area resulted in a further 3 Commercial Yellow Placards.



# CYCLONE ANNIVERSARY TAONGA GIFTED

Three memorial pou, representing how the Cyclone Gabrielle flooding changed people's lives, were presented to the people of Wairoa as part of the one-year commemorations.

Created by Tama Clausen, the taonga were created out of flooding debris representing whānau, whenua, wairua and Wairoa.

Recovery Manager Benita Tahuri said the taonga symbolises the impact of the flooding on whānau and whare. "Through the use of materials affected by the flooding, Tama's work has captured the impact on the community. The work is raw and confronting and will become a visual reminder of Wairoa's history."

In receiving the taonga on behalf of the community, Wairoa Mayor Craig Little acknowledged the significance of the gift and what it represents. "The concept of using flood-affected materials to create the taonga and demonstrate what so many people have been through has captured our town, our challenges and most importantly, our people."

Artist Tama Clausen was significantly affected by the flooding himself. "When I was asked to create a taonga, I walked the streets of North Clyde to see how I could describe the Cyclone Gabrielle event. "There was so much flood-ravaged material it really became about putting a shape to it."

Tama has deliberately left the work in an authentic form, from silt and mud to cat footprints, to depict the damage that occurred. From a log dragged off the beach to bits of flooring and walls, and even stain and paint from rusted tins, caught up in the flood but still useable, the taonga have captured a vital piece of Wairoa's history.



Cyclone Gabrielle remembrance taonga with, from left, Wairoa District Council Chief Executive Kitea Tipuna, Community Services and Development Group Manager Juanita Savage, local kaumātua Hine Kohn, MP for Ikaroa-Rāwhiti Cushla Tangaere-Manuel, Wairoa Mayor Craig Little, Deputy Mayor Denise Eaglesome-Karekare, artist Tama Clausen, Wairoa Recovery Manager Benita Tahuri and Napier/Wairoa MP Katie Nimon.



Artist Tama Clausen with the taonga he crafted as part of Wairoa's Cyclone Gabrielle one-year anniversary commemorations.



CYCLONE GABRIELLE

# FIRST ANNIVERSARY

## WHĀNAU WAS AT THE HEART OF WAIROA'S CYCLONE GABRIELLE FIRST ANNIVERSARY.

A dawn hikoi began from the end of Ruataniwha Road near where the river breached on Feb 14 2023.

The sombre walk drew crowds of people with the moving chain collecting whānau as it meandered through North Clyde to War Memorial Park/Tapuae Grounds.

Breakfast, entertainment and the presentation of taonga followed before the grounds were transformed into an inflatable world for Wairoa's schools.

A regional minute's silence was held at midday.

The afternoon again saw the park transformed, this time into a whānau concert featuring NRG Rising, with Wairoa's Recovery Manager Benita Tahuri, Luke Whaanga, Chad Chambers, along with the much loved Annie Crummer and House of Shem closing the evening.





CYCLONE GABRIELLE

# FIRST ANNIVERSARY





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## ADDITIONAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR SILT RECOVERY TASKFORCE

Central Government has announced a further \$40m in funding for the Silt Recovery Taskforce.

This funding will allow the task force to regain momentum and work to restore more of the region's productive land in the process.

\$3m of the \$40m has been ringfenced for dealing with further woody debris in Wairoa. Some of the funding will also be used for the disposal of accumulated waste and the restoration of all processing sites.

Prior to the announcement of additional funding, in the Wairoa district, key recreational areas and

traditional fishing zones had been mostly cleared of woody debris, with around 50,000m<sup>3</sup> of debris recovered from Wairoa's beaches and riverbanks.

The massive recovery effort to remove woody debris dumped on coastlines, river mouths and recreational areas due to Cyclone Gabrielle started in the middle of last year with a focus on providing safe recreational areas along the coastline, river mouths, beaches and bridges.

Stockpiles of woody debris have been mulched, carted away and in most locations the debris has been burnt.



# RED CROSS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Red Cross team members were in town this month to see for themselves on-the-ground progress in Wairoa.

The corporate team of Sean Stewart, Shane Chisholm and Jane Derbyshire have been supporting Wairoa's rebuild from afar and welcomed the opportunity to see how the Red Cross assistance was helping local people.

Following the devastating weather events of January and February 2023, the New Zealand Red Cross launched the New Zealand Disaster Fund to help people and communities affected by the disasters.

Through the donations it receives, the Red Cross has pledged over \$1 million to help repair flood-damaged homes in the Wairoa area.

Funding is delivered via plumbing and electrical packages for septic tank cleaning, reticulation plumbing, reinstatement of home heating and essential electrical and bathroom repairs and also Home Bundles, which include home essentials from kitchen appliances to bedding and furniture.

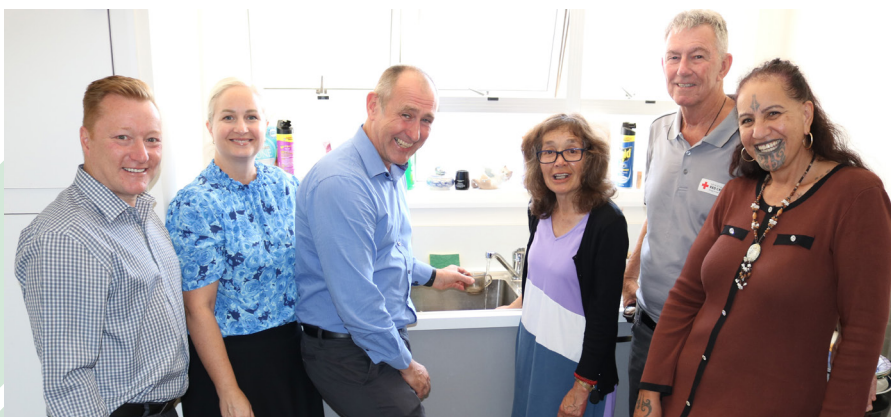
The visit, which included the familiar face of NZ Disaster Fund Project Manager for Tairāwhiti/Wairoa Phil Parker, gave the team an authentic insight into what was happening in Wairoa.

"It is great to see first-hand the difference that these bundles and packages have made to people's lives and also to see where additional help is needed," said the team.

Locally, there are 40 whānau registered to receive the Red Cross Home Bundles with deliveries rolling out as houses are nearing completion. For more information, contact the Recovery Office.



Red Cross team members visited the Tawhiti-a-Maru Marae and St Therese's Church on Ruataniwha Road. Looking out the wharekai window is where the flood waters breached, flooding the site. Pictured from left, Red Cross's Shane Chisholm and Phil Parker and Wairoa Recovery Manager Benita Tahuri, Red Cross's Sean Stewart and Jane Derbyshire and local woman Kelly Thompson.



Makere Jones's flood-damaged Ormond Road home has running water again thanks to Red Cross support. Pictured from left are Red Cross's Shane Chisholm, Jane Derbyshire, Sean Stewart, along with Makere Jones, NZ Disaster Fund Project Manager for Tairāwhiti/Wairoa Phil Parker and Wairoa Recovery Manager Benita Tahuri.



The team survey the damage in a gutted Mackley Street house.



# CYCLONE CLEAN-UP SUPPORT CONTINUES

Cyclone Gabrielle clean-up is still available, from collection of building materials to under-house silt removal.

Wairoa District Council Chief Executive Kitea Tipuna said the Council is continuing to meet the needs of the flood-affected community by collecting building materials from damaged housing and ongoing under-house silt removal.

"We know some homes still have silt underneath and that people are starting to rebuild, and as a result, there is an increase in building materials from flood-damaged homes.

"We are seeing a greater need for collecting and removing building materials and building-related debris, so we have shifted our focus to support this area of need. Council has collected thousands of tonnes of flood-affected property, which has been disposed of at no cost to individuals. We won't be able to

continue this free service indefinitely, but we want to help our community and ensure these materials are disposed of appropriately for as long as possible. A reminder also to anyone who needs silt cleared from under their homes, please get in touch. "Around 135 houses have had the silt removed from underneath them, and this free service is still available.

"Because we need to collate the collection of building materials and silt, we ask everyone who would like building materials collected or under house silt removed to please lodge a CSR (Customer Service Request) with the Council to arrange collection. This can be done by phoning the Council on 06 838 7309 or going online at [www.wairoadc.govt.nz/contact-us/customer-service-request/](http://www.wairoadc.govt.nz/contact-us/customer-service-request/) or call into the Council offices or in-person at the Recovery Team Office at the Wairoa airport Monday to Friday between 10am -2pm.

## WORK PROGRESSING

It is great to see recovery work progressing at the former Mobil Mart site.

The service station is a prominent North Clyde location sitting on the corner of Hunter-Brown and Bridge Streets. The businesses forecourt, food outlet and convenience store were all swamped by floodwaters, with restoration work underway.



WAIROA RECOVERY

## Upcoming Road Closure

Transport Rebuild East Coast



The Transport Rebuild East Coast (TREC) team would like to advise an upcoming road closure on State Highway 2 (SH2).

**Where?** SH2 Mangaturanga Bridge (near Raupunga).

**When?** From Monday 19 February to Friday 8 March 2024 the bridge will be under repair. During this time there will be a combination of full and one lane closures.

**Four full night closures:**  
Monday 26 February - Friday 1 March 2024, 9:00pm - 5:00am.

**One lane closure:** Stop/Go under traffic lights: Monday 19 February - Friday 8 March 2024 (at all times, 24/7, unless it is a full night closure).

**Why?** Safety repairs are needed to the bridge deck.

### What is being done?

During the four night closures, a portion of the existing bridge deck will be deconstructed, and a new one cast onsite from concrete.

The bridge remains structurally sound to use and this work will strengthen the resilience of the bridge.

### How will it affect me?

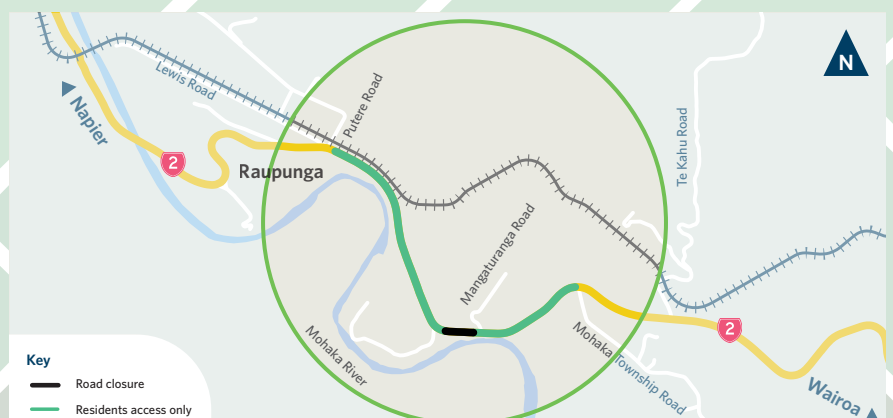
A **full road closure** at certain times is needed for our crews to complete the work as safely and efficiently as possible. Outside of the full

closure, the bridge will have one lane open controlled by traffic lights.

Please keep to the **temporary speed limit** so our crews and people driving can stay safe.

Please **plan to delay travel** during the full road closures as there is no viable detour. Visit [journeys.nzta.govt.nz](http://journeys.nzta.govt.nz) to plan your journey.

**Emergency services** will always be assisted through the site safely and promptly.



**Contact us:**  
• 0800 80 TREC  
(0800 80 8732)  
• [info@trec.nz](mailto:info@trec.nz)  
• [nzta.govt.nz/trec](http://nzta.govt.nz/trec)



Scan for more  
information

# OVER \$2M OF HEALTH FUNDING FOR HAWKE'S BAY

Te Whatu Ora Te Matau a Māui has launched a \$2m hauora and wellbeing package, including free counselling sessions and online doctor consults for Hawke's Bay residents affected by Cyclone Gabrielle.

Wairoa residents can access free GP and counselling (dependent on need) through the Queen St Practice, supported by Kahungunu Executive, Ngāti Pahauwera and Rongomawahine. The Wairoa hauora providers have also received funding to organise social hauora days for the elderly and to provide transport within Wairoa for the elderly visiting the GP.

Age Concern Wairoa can also help transport whānau to visit elderly living in residential homes out of the district and will be providing training to whānau carers who are looking after their elderly in their own homes.

Te Whatu Ora Cyclone Gabrielle Recovery Manager Pania Shingleton said the comprehensive package, alongside the counselling, includes online doctor consults, pharmacy

treatments, and the traditional Māori healing practice of rongoā, will support Hawke's Bay communities.

"Last year was challenging for many in our community, and we want to get 2024 off to a more positive start," says Shingleton.

Further healthcare help is being given to people displaced in category one, two, or three and all Wairoa residents: two free GP and nurse visits and a free after-hours emergency consultation.

"We want to ensure this package is effective in helping people where it is needed, with a wide range of options to ensure people are able to look after their health and wellbeing," says Shingleton.

Funding has also been allocated to five Māori Health providers, including Kahungunu Executive in Wairoa to facilitate people accessing Practice Plus, an online doctor service, giving people a place in the community to ask for help. These providers are helping people book appointments on the Practice Plus app, including people who are not enrolled with a doctor.

"We know accessing healthcare is a barrier to some people in our community. The sooner they see someone, the more positive their health outcomes are, which is why we worked this into our funding.

"We urge people to contact their GP if they need someone to talk to.

"Please don't be shy about reaching out to get help. We don't want anyone to miss out."

To access the free counselling sessions, you need to visit your GP. There is currently a four- to six-week wait for these across the region. Counselling is also available by calling or texting 1737.

People who have been displaced can get a letter from their council (if property owners) and provide proof of their category one to three address, such as a utility bill to that address. This will entitle their household to two free GP and nurse consultations and one after-hours consultation, alongside the 'Reach out for help' package.

The funding is open now and runs until 30 June 2024.



## WAIROA RECOVERY

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STRENGTH x UNITY x RESILIENCE

## FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT US

- Online form via WDC website: [www.wairoadc.govt.nz/contact-us/customer-service-request](http://www.wairoadc.govt.nz/contact-us/customer-service-request)
- Call free 0508 YROA4U or 0508 976248
- Email [recovery@wairoadc.govt.nz](mailto:recovery@wairoadc.govt.nz)
- In-person at the Recovery Team Office at the Wairoa Airport (end of Airport Road) our office hours are Monday to Friday 10am-2pm.
- Recovery Website [www.wairoarecovery.co.nz](http://www.wairoarecovery.co.nz)



WAIROA RECOVERY

Disclaimer: The Wairoa Recovery team has made every effort to ensure that this information is as up-to-date and accurate as possible. We acknowledge this is a rapidly changing environment and the information provided should be used for general purposes only. We encourage people to seek additional information before making any business, legal or other decisions. If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact us at [recovery@wairoadc.govt.nz](mailto:recovery@wairoadc.govt.nz).