Delivering faster and fairer disaster recovery
National to deliver faster and fairer disaster recovery

In the wake of a slower-than-expected government response to damage caused by Cyclone Gabrielle and recent major flooding events, National is committing to a faster and fairer recovery for regions hit by natural disasters.

Rebuilding from natural disasters is complex, but National recognises that when peoples’ lives have been shattered, they need certainty and support as they try to put the pieces back together.

National’s plan for a faster and fairer disaster recovery

1. Establish a Cyclone and Flood Recovery Ombudsman
2. Prioritise infrastructure projects that connect communities and regions
3. Expedite the consenting process and remove red tape
4. Unblock the EQC assessment pipeline

In the time since Cyclone Gabrielle wrought havoc across the North Island, households, businesses and communities have been asking for a recovery effort that will enable them to rebuild or relocate as quickly as possible – the longer this goes on the more negative the effects on communities and on mental health.

The key elements of our recovery effort include confirming as quickly as possible to displaced residents whether they will be able to remain living in the same community, giving them a voice where they feel decisions have been unfair, and fast-tracking essential infrastructure for rebuild or replacement.

Those affected need answers about whether land is categorised as being suitable or unsuitable for ongoing residential, commercial, or mixed residential-commercial use. They need answers about the level of buyouts offered, the timing of such buyouts, and the implications if they refuse. Crucially, they also need answers about their right to appeal against a property’s categorisation or the level of compensation offered.

They also need an impartial and independent voice to ensure government decisions are fair and equitable.

National is committed to enabling a fast and fair recovery process, working alongside local government and, most importantly, affected communities themselves. Because certainty and continuity are paramount, a National government will honour commitments made by the current government, but we will go further and faster.

A National government will deliver a faster, fairer, and more certain recovery for affected areas of New Zealand that have struggled in the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle and other recent serious flooding events.

Rebuilding from these natural disasters is part of National’s plan to rebuild the economy to get it working for all New Zealanders. A strong economy means an end to the cost of living crisis, higher incomes, lower mortgage rates, and it means New Zealand can also afford the quality public services we all rely on.
National's faster and fairer cyclone recovery plan

1. Establish a Cyclone and Flood Recovery Ombudsman

National will establish a Cyclone and Flood Recovery Ombudsman to ensure those affected by Cyclone Gabrielle and other recent major flooding events have an impartial and independent voice to protect their interests.

The Ombudsman will be charged with supporting Kiwis as they struggle through the trials of Cyclone Gabrielle and recent major floods. Where displaced households and businesses believe that their property has been wrongly categorised or that fair value is not being offered for a buyout of that property, they will be given a clear right of appeal to the new Cyclone and Flood Recovery Ombudsman, an independent office charged with ensuring government decisions are fair, transparent and just.

The new Cyclone and Flood Recovery Ombudsman will have the power to review government decisions, issue independent rulings on whether they are fair and transparent, and recommend decisions to be revisited where they believe property-owners have not been treated in a just manner.

With climate related weather events expected to increase, National expects this model to serve as a template for the future, to ensure people affected by natural disasters have somewhere they can turn to if they feel their voice is not being heard.

2. Prioritise infrastructure projects that connect communities and regions

National will give priority to the construction of infrastructure needed to connect communities and regions. This includes transport links such as roads and bridges but also other critical infrastructure, such as communications systems.

We will partner with local government and the private sector (including capital and project delivery, where needed) to ensure that rebuilding is undertaken to provide resilience.

National has already committed to prioritising four major roading projects for funding from the National Resilience Fund to enhance long-term resilience in flood-affected regions:

- Upgrading the Hawke's Bay Expressway from two lanes to four.
- A new bypass for the Brynderwyn Hills between Whangārei and Warkworth.
- Upgrading State Highway 5 from Napier to Taupō
- Restoring and upgrading State Highway 2 between Napier and Gisborne

3. Expedite the consenting process and remove red tape

Everything is taking too long. People need their homes, businesses and roading infrastructure fixed quickly. National will enable the fast tracking of consent procedures and substantially reduce the timeframes for private and community projects, therefore speeding up overall recovery efforts.

We will use Orders in Council – as enabled by emergency legislation supported by National – to expedite progress in a quick, pragmatic way.

This will ensure that roadblocks to rebuilding and repairing cyclone and flood affected areas are removed, and key infrastructure and transport links can be replaced quickly and efficiently.
4. Unblock the EQC assessment pipeline

Delays from the Earthquake Commission (EQC) in determining land value represents a major barrier to post-disaster recovery. Following a major natural disaster, creative solutions are needed to match the scale of the problems and speed up this process.

National will require EQC to prioritise these assessments and set performance targets to ensure they are focussed on delivering them faster and acquiring the skills they need to reduce the current backlog. Where necessary, the EQC will be empowered to bring in overseas-based geotechnical engineers temporarily to come to New Zealand to assist in completing this time-critical work.

Cost

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This new office will initially be established for two years, with funding of $7 million from the National Resilience Fund.
GET OUR COUNTRY
BACK ON TRACK

☑ PARTY VOTE
National

Authorised by J de Joux, 41 Pipitea St, Wgtn.