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‘Complete overhaul of civil defence needed’

A LACK of public warning and communication in the early stages of Cyclone Gabrielle were among the findings released from Hawke’s Bay Civil Defence Emergency Management’s (CDEM’s) Cyclone Gabrielle response on Monday afternoon.

The independent review was led by former police commissioner Mike Bush.

An online community survey across the region attracted 1030 responses, across six demographic groupings.

Key themes from that survey included:

- low community preparedness for natural disasters, particularly with regard to where to go for authoritative information, community planning for a flood event, and challenges in stockpiling and caching adequate resources for a prolonged event;
- heroic efforts by local communities, volunteers, marae, first responders, New Zealand Defence Force, contractors and some businesses;
- inadequate CDEM communications in the early stages of the event;
- lack of maintenance of river management, drainage schemes and flood protection systems;
- lack of public warning systems, such as sirens;
- poor leadership from the CDEM Group and GECC;
- issues with the 111 system;
- premature pivot to recovery.

Wairoa Mayor Craig Little said a complete overhaul of Civil Defence was needed.

“There is buggar all mentioned, with no silver bullet from the report.”

With Wairoa mentioned nine times in the 117-page report, Mr Little said the district’s isolation got lost in a regional report.

“I think we did pretty well with our own response. The biggest thing that most already know is that local knowledge is very important.

“Let iwi and council have a say. We have a more than capable controller who can be put in charge during these events.”

Mr Little said changes will only happen with Government support.

“If the Government resources and funds it, then we will see changes.”

Reduction, readiness, response and recovery are the four recommendation words an independent review panel have used in the review of the management’s Cyclone



HEADED INDEPENDENT REVIEW: Former police commissioner Mike Bush speaks in Napier ahead of the review’s findings. HB Today picture/Warren Buckland

Gabrielle response. Recommendations from the review include:

- developing, implementing and communicating a regional disaster reduction and readiness plan in partnership with local partners and communities;
- advocate to central Government for a principles-based overhaul of the current CDEM system;
- work with CDEM operational staff and partners to ensure needs and resources are considered and utilised;
- ensure a recovery lead is appointed early in the response phase to

ensure seamless and appropriate transition to recover.

The review panel found there were well-developed welfare relationships and strategies in Wairoa and Central Hawke’s Bay, which were well-supported by the relevant Ngāti Kahungunu taiwhenua groups, and which were also remarked upon as real positives by several respondents.

It also mentions Wairoa and Central Hawke’s Bay not having CDEM staff and relying on the Hawke’s Bay Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Emergency Coordination Centre (GECC) to provide support.

“The GECC is itself supplemented, during events, by council staff, trained in the Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) framework, who undertake these roles in addition to their full-time positions.”

The report stated that mayors have formal powers under the CDEM Act to issues states of local emergency for their respective districts and cities.

“These powers can only be delegated in the mayors’ absence. Additionally, the group appoints one of its members to be empowered to declare a state of local emergency for the group area (that is, the region). This appointment is held by the chairperson of the CDEM group, who is also the chairperson of the HBRC (Hinewai Ormsby).”

Local authorities estimate that in the Hawke’s Bay region, around 9000 people were displaced and that power was cut to over 40,000 properties. The report said the Wairoa River burst its banks, flooding 15 percent of Wairoa, containing about half the town’s population. “Access to Wairoa was cut off after damage on SH2 in the south, and landslides to the north.

“A number of bridges in the Wairoa district were also destroyed or damaged.”



Tiniroto hunt returns

WEEKEND hunters competing in the 20th Tiniroto Easter Game Hunt will have a new venue as well as a new rail system for hanging their wild boar and red stags on.

In the 2021 hunt, fine weather and good hunting saw red stags unable to fit on the old railing system.

Organiser and committee chair Rob Cameron said this year’s hunt would be a great event for the community.

Earlier this month, Mr Cameron told The Wairoa Star the event had grown and access would now be off Tiniroto Road on to Jackman Road, with all the activities around

the sports ground beneath the Tiniroto Community Hall.

■ Entries close tonight at 5pm and weigh-in is from 12 to 3pm on Easter Sunday.

■ Family fun includes bouncy castles, face painting and raffles, along with the Tiniroto School barbecue fundraiser.

■ There is a new, intermediate-aged section for keen hunters, who are 11- to 15-years-old.

FOR MORE ON EASTER WEEKEND’S EVENTS SEE PAGE 2

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