

Wairarapa cyclone recovery ongoing needs assessment survey report

1. Executive summary

The Wairarapa Recovery Office (WRO) ran a survey during May 2024 to gather information on the ongoing impacts of Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle on people, whānau, businesses, farming operations and communities in the Wairarapa region.

The survey aimed to identify areas of most need to inform future recovery and support activities undertaken by WRO and partner organisations working to assist individuals, whānau and communities impacted by the extreme weather events. People were also able to register via the survey for help with fencing and dam repairs as part of an initiative being coordinated by Rural Support Trust (RST).

The online survey was promoted widely through council communications and community development teams, rural sector organisations, and iwi and community networks.

Over 130 responses were received for the survey. This is estimated as representing 65-70 per cent of properties impacted by the weather events. Responses were reasonably representative of impacted locations and property sizes, and included people from a range of demographic groups.

The survey findings will be shared with partner organisations involved in recovery work and with wider community organisations and district council teams. The findings will provide data to support applications for any relevant new funding that becomes available and will inform WRO's ongoing work programme.

Key findings include:

- The main ongoing impacts on property from the cyclones are on fencing (75 per cent of responses), slippage (73 per cent), silt/debris (53 per cent), damage to planting/erosion (53 per cent), river flooding (51 per cent) and damage to dams (41 per cent).
- Other major impacts are on health/wellbeing (41 per cent), relationship strain (28 per cent), staffing challenges (15 per cent) and educational/social impacts (10 per cent).
- A number of respondents provided data on the scale of the repairs that were still required to be done. This included a total of 202 kms of fencing and 266 dams.
- Some 47 requests for fencing and dam repair support were registered through the survey. These requests have been forwarded on to RST to coordinate as part of their scheme.
- Respondents also provided data on the approximate cost of the repairs to date along with estimates for the repairs still to be done. Almost 50 per cent of respondents that provided data had spent up to \$50K on repairs to date, and almost 20 per cent had spent more than \$200K.
- Respondents indicated the areas of most immediate are for: practical support, financial assistance, wellbeing support, business support and advice, and support for family members/employees.
- Respondents indicated the areas of most community need over the next 12 months as being for: wellbeing support, practical help, being prepared for future natural disasters, community events, and infrastructure repairs and investment in roading, drains and flood management.

2. Introduction and background

The Wairarapa Recovery Office (WRO) was established after the North Island Weather Events (NIWE) of early 2023. These events included Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle, which caused significant damage to coastal and eastern areas of Wairarapa.

WRO works across the three district councils in the region: Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa. The Office also works with community and stakeholder groups and rural sector agencies on recovery activities.

WRO coordinated an online survey to collect information on the ongoing impacts of the 2023 cyclones to help inform future recovery activities and ensure future support and resources were targeted at the areas of most need in the region. The survey questionnaire was developed with input from partner organisations and tested on a small number of potential respondents.

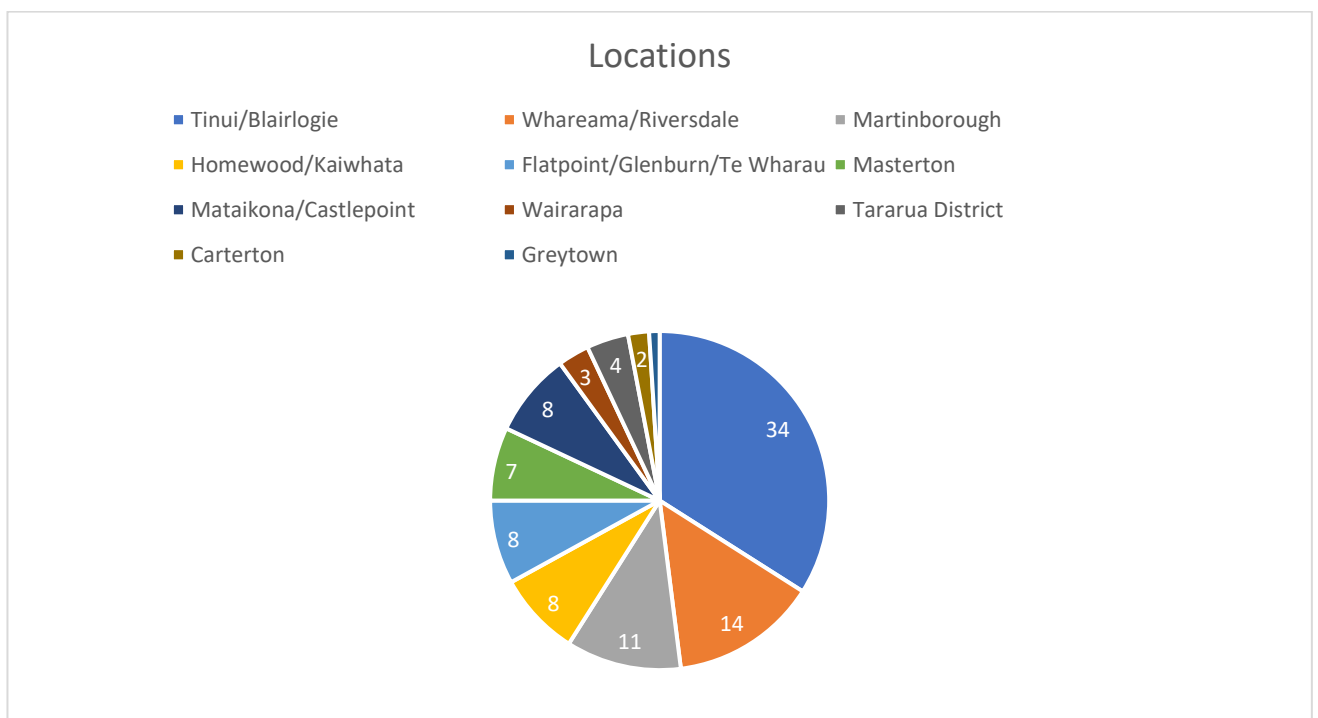
Information about the survey was distributed through a wide range of organisations, including council communications, community development and iwi partnership teams, rural sector organisations (eg Rural Support Trust, Beef and Lamb), iwi and community networks, and residents associations and Neighbourhood Watch groups in impacted communities.

Organisations included details in e-newsletters and on social media pages, and through panui at events.

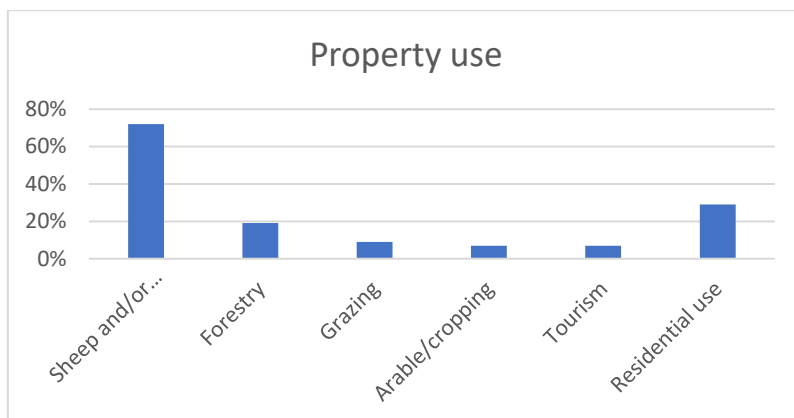
3. Survey findings

Responses

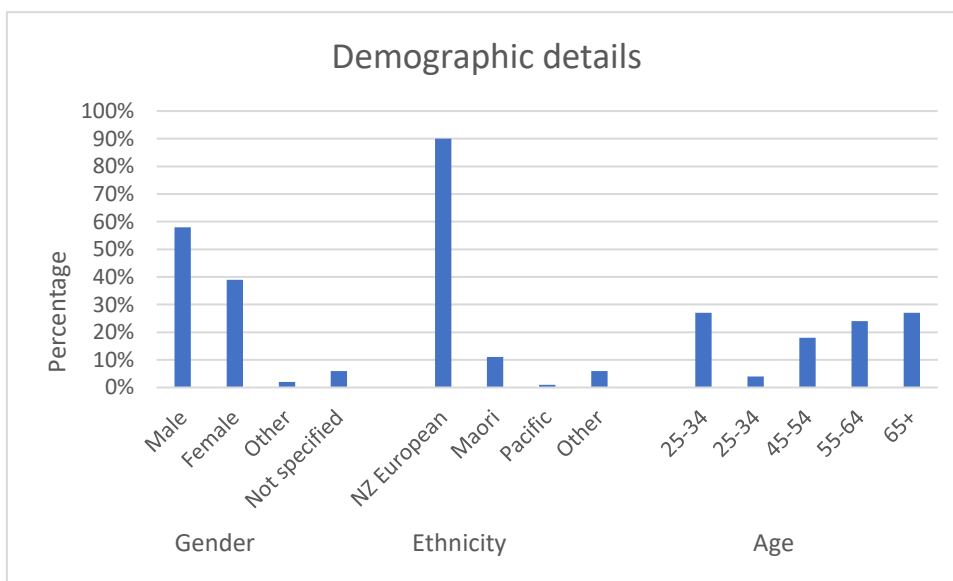
- A total of 134 survey responses were received. This has estimated to represent between 65-70 per cent of properties impacted by the cyclones (NB: this is an estimate given accurate figures are not available).
- Responses were reasonably representative of the impacted areas, with the most responses received from the following locations: Tinui (27 per cent), Whareama (9 per cent), Homewood (7 per cent), Flat Point (5 per cent), Mataikona, Martinborough area and Riversdale (each 4 per cent). Other responses were received from other locations in impacted areas. These have been grouped to nearby locations in the graph below.



- Respondents were largely farm/business owners (60 per cent), managers (13 per cent) and/or homeowners (30 per cent).
- Most respondents owned their property/business (86 per cent), with 5 per cent leasing, 1.5 per cent renting and 9 per cent listed as 'other', which included the property being in a trust.
- Responses came from people on four main property sizes: 251-1000 hectares (30 per cent), more than 1000 hectares (26 per cent), 1-20 hectares (17 per cent) and residential/small property holding (16 per cent).
- The main activities undertaken on respondents' properties were: sheep and/or beef farming (72 per cent), forestry (19 per cent), grazing (9 per cent), arable/cropping (7 per cent) and tourism (7 per cent), with 29 per cent used for residential use. (NB: respondents could select up to three main activities.)



- Demographic details from respondents (where provided) were:
 - Gender: Male (58 per cent), Female (39 per cent), Other (2 per cent), prefer not to specify (6 per cent).
 - Ethnicity: NZ European (90 per cent), Māori (11 per cent), Pacific (1 per cent), Other (6 per cent). (NB: Respondents could select more than one.)
 - Age: 25-34 years (27 per cent), over 65 years (27 per cent), 55-64 years (24 per cent), 45-54 years (18 per cent), 25-34 years (4 per cent).



Ongoing impacts

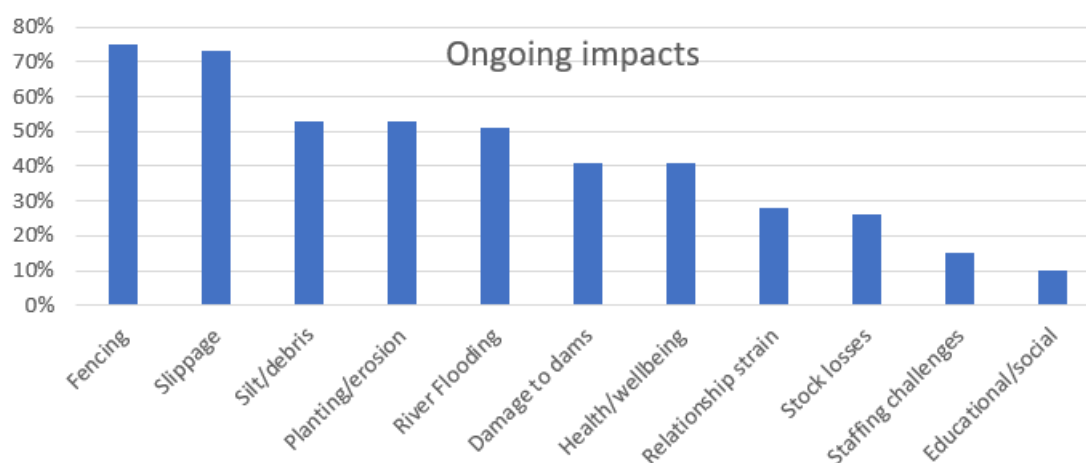
The main ongoing impacts from last year's weather events were in the following areas.

Property damage

- Fencing: 75 per cent.
- Slippage: 73 per cent.
- Silt/debris: 53 per cent.
- Damage to planting/erosion: 53 per cent.
- River flooding: 51 per cent.
- Damage to dams: 41 per cent.
- Stock losses: 26 per cent.

Other impacts

- Health/wellbeing impacts: 41 per cent.
- Relationship strain (family, partners, employees): 28 per cent.
- Staffing challenges: 15 per cent.
- Educational/social impacts: 10 per cent.



More details from the survey responses about damage to properties, infrastructure and equipment that still require repairs are outlined below.

- **Fencing:** A total of 202 kms of fencing damaged during the cyclones still needs to be repaired. Outstanding fencing repairs on individual properties ranged from 20m to 25 km.
- **Dams:** A total of 266 dams still require repairs. Most respondents had 1-2 dams that required repairs. The largest number of dams requiring repairs on a single property was 30.
- **Farm tracks:** Around 41 respondents listed that there had been damage to farm tracks from the cyclones. Just over a quarter of respondents reported that these had largely been repaired. Respondents with outstanding repairs indicated that these ranged from 400m to 20km.
- **Bridges:** Some 22 respondents reported that they either had bridges that still required repairs or had damaged bridges that have subsequently been repaired. Most respondents had 1 bridge to be repaired, or that had been repaired, with a few indicating they had 2.

- **Culverts:** Some 38 respondents reported that they either had culverts that still required repairs or had damaged culverts that have subsequently been repaired. Most respondents had 1-3 culverts to be repaired, or that had been repaired. The largest number of damaged culverts on an individual property was 50.
- **Silt and debris:** Some 31 respondents reported they had silt and debris that still required clearing or that had been cleared. Most respondents had 1-2 hectares of silt to be cleared, with some reporting as much as 10-25 hectares.
- **Crop/pasture re-grassing or renewal:** Some 31 respondents reported they had crop/pasture re-grassing or renewal that needed to be done or had been done. Areas requiring re-grassing/renewal ranged from 1-40 hectares.
- **Trees/planting:** Some 31 respondents indicated they had trees or riparian planting that either needed replacing or had been replaced. The area needing replanting ranged from 50m to 2 kms and 0.5 to 50 hectares.
- **Other farm property damage:** Other reported farm property impacts included damage to: sheds, floodgates, barns, water systems, yards and gates.
- **Other business/residential damage:** Other reported business/residential damage included: gardens, driveways, fences, slips, wall linings, plumbing and retaining walls.

Requests for fencing/dam repair support

Survey respondents that indicated they had outstanding fencing and dam repairs had the opportunity to apply for support through the Rural Support Trust (RST) Wairarapa fencing and dam initiative.

Some 47 respondents (35 per cent) registered for this support. Their details were provided to RST to make contact to discuss their requirements and options for support.

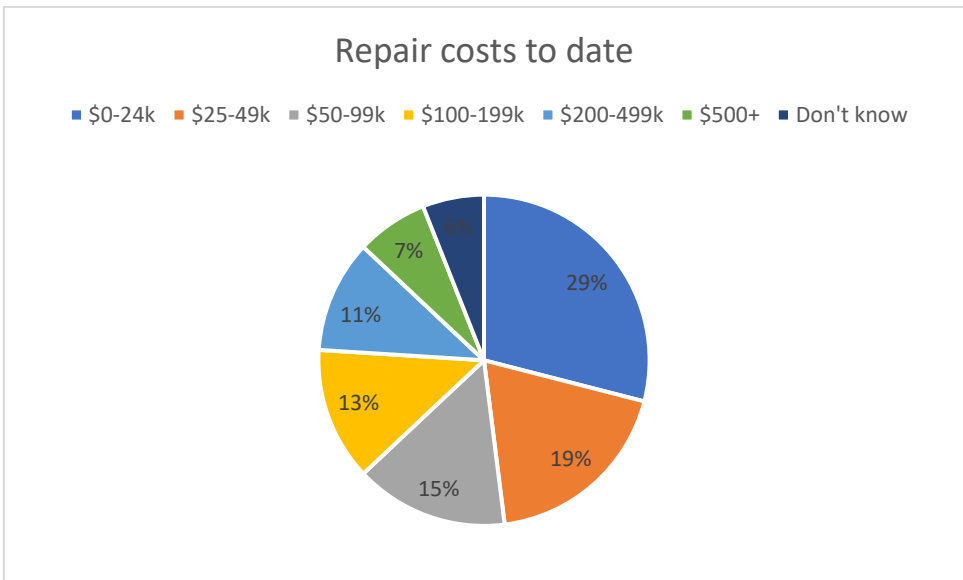
Cost of repairs

Repair costs to date

Respondents indicated they had spent between approximately \$1K and \$850K on repairs to address the impacts of cyclone damage.

The following is a high-level breakdown of approximate repair costs to date from the 85 respondents that provided these details:

- \$0-24K: 29 per cent
- \$25-49K: 19 per cent
- \$50-99K: 15 per cent
- \$100-199K: 13 per cent
- \$200-499K: 11 per cent
- More than \$500K: 7 per cent
- Don't know/can't provide figures: 6 per cent

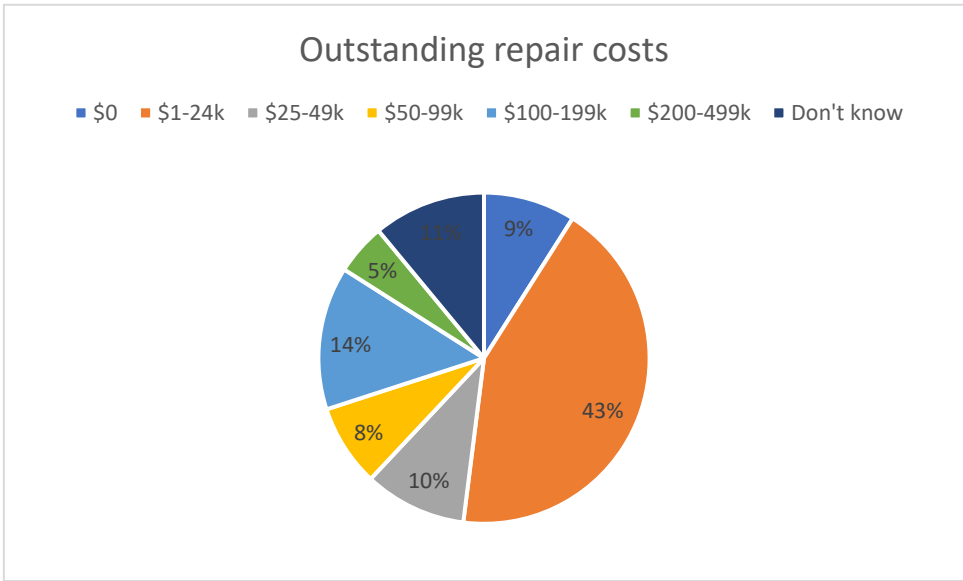


Approximate cost of outstanding repairs

Respondents estimated the approximate cost of repairs that still need to be done as being between \$1K and \$200K. A number of respondents indicated their repairs had been completed or required no additional cost.

The following is a high-level breakdown of approximate costs of the repairs that still need to be done from the 79 respondents that provided these details:

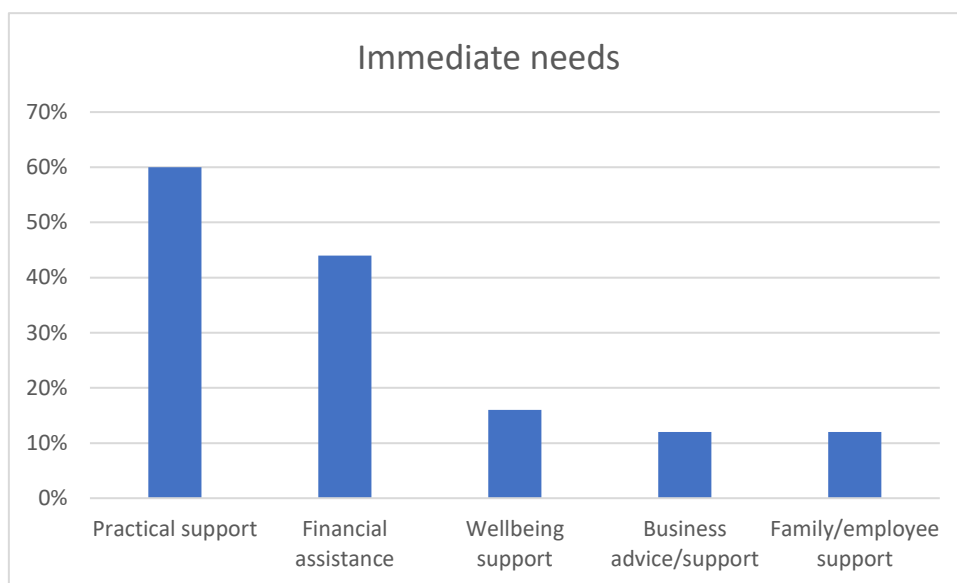
- \$0: 9 per cent
- \$1-24K: 43 per cent
- \$25-49K: 10 per cent
- \$50-99K: 8 per cent
- \$100-199K: 14 per cent
- \$200-499K: 5 per cent
- More than \$500K: 0 per cent
- Don't know/can't provide figures: 11 per cent



Immediate needs

Respondents provided the following responses to the question: In terms of recovery, what do you need right now? (Tick all that apply)

- Practical support: 60 per cent.
- Financial assistance: 44 per cent.
- Wellbeing support: 16 per cent.
- Business advice/support: 12 per cent.
- Support for family members and/or employees: 12 per cent.



Comments included:

“Business advice would be helpful to work out viability going forward... Financial or practical support to tackle the work still to be done on-farm. Wellbeing support to help with coping strategies and resilience, for us and staff.”

“It’d be great to receive financial assistance towards finishing the repair work to fences, tracks and silted areas.”

“Financial assistance – with interest rates high and farming income in a current lull, it is hard to find the income needed to support the family and farming business.”

Main long-term impacts

Respondents provided a range of responses to the question: What are the main/long term impacts that your family, staff or business operation are facing?

Most responses related to:

- Financial hardship and future financial viability.
- Protecting properties for the future, given severe weather events might happen again.
- Potential impact on property value if want to sell.
- Stock losses.
- Impact on wellbeing, with fatigue and stress being mentioned.

Comments included:

“Difficulty in carrying on day-to-day farming business – particularly stock management and oversight – due to damaged fencing, tracks, dams, culverts, floodgates, paddocks etc.”

“Support to be ready if we were to have another natural disaster.”

“Tough conditions which have been draining physically and mentally. Now with prolonged dry conditions, it’s been two extremes to content with.”

“Financial impact compounded by stress of trying to look after wellbeing of staff, stock. Huge is the only word used by farmer husband of 40 years when asked about his wellbeing impact. Compounding this with significant increases in insurance, farm labour running and compliance costs on top of decreased returns for stock sales.”

“Protecting the property for the future when of course this will happen again!”

“Potential impact on property value if I wanted to sell.”

“Stress and time trying to get things back to normal.”

“Loss of income and mental health challenges.”

“Ability to remain living on the property.”

Community needs over next 12 months

Respondents also provided a variety of responses to the question: What do you think are the most important things your wider community needs in the next 12 months?

Most responses related to:

- Wellbeing support – for individuals and wider community.
- Practical help with recovery.
- Being prepared for future natural disasters.
- Community events to help bring people together, give them a break off their property, and to support each other.
- Infrastructure repairs and investment in roading, storm water, flood management.

Comments included:

“Wellbeing support and farms that can function as business units once the infrastructure is fixed.”

“Practical help with getting our farming operations back to normal as soon as possible is important.”

“Support for social and community events which bring people together and away from the farm for even just a few hours is also very important.”

“Infrastructure maintenance and improvement.”

“The Rural Support Trust has done a fantastic job getting around all farms and helping people in need. Continuing to support them to support us is essential.”

“A robust updated current community emergency plan that is inclusive, transparent and devised by all community members. Ensuring whanau, hapu and Marae are integral to emergency plan and resources.”

“Just ongoing support. Keeping in regular touch with those most affected or impacted.”

“In bad weather, flooding and road access is a huge problem for the community. Repairs and drain maintenance within the settlement and surrounding area needs to be addressed.”

“To establish and support the community hubs that communities are expected to go to if another emergency was to happen. Especially the marae – they are not equipped to cater for thousands in case of emergency. Include marae in community WREMO events.”

“Repair of roading infrastructure, especially on minor roads that have missed out so far.”

“Targeted programs to build resilience especially for men. Community social/sporting events.”