

COVID-19 Insights Paper for publication: *Supporting wellbeing after a crisis.*

Date due to MO:	15/03/2023	Action required by:	22/03/2023
Security level:	UNCLASSIFIED	Briefing number:	BN2023-012
To:	Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Minister of Health		
Copy to:	Hon Peeni Henare, Associate Minister of Health (Māori Health) Hon Barbara Edmonds, Associate Minister of Health (Pacific Peoples)		

Contact for Telephone Discussion

Name	Position	
Karen Orsborn	Chief Executive	
Matthew Bloomer	Acting Director Wellbeing System Leadership	

Minister's Office to Complete

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs change | <input type="checkbox"/> Seen | <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's note | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn | |

Comment:

COVID-19 Insights Paper for publication: *Supporting wellbeing after a crisis*

Security level: UNCLASSIFIED **Date:** 15/03/2023

To: Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Minister of Health

Purpose

1. On 22 March, Te Hiringa Mahara intends to publish the attached paper outlining what we can learn from the COVID-19 pandemic to support wellbeing after other crises, such as major weather events.

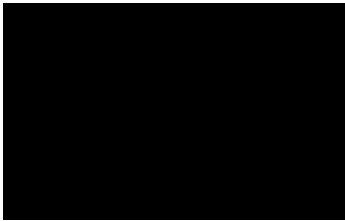
Executive Summary

2. On 22 March, we will publish *Supporting wellbeing after a crisis*, the fifth of eight COVID-19 insights reports. The paper provides insight into how the government and communities can support wellbeing in the wake of a crisis like cyclone Gabrielle – it does not evaluate the ongoing response.
3. In short, crises like the pandemic have shown us that supporting wellbeing requires re-establishing and strengthening local social infrastructure that supports connection and communities.
 - There will be immediate, increased, and ongoing mental health and addiction support needed, particularly for people who already experience disadvantage, including people and whānau with lived experience of distress or addiction.
 - Immediate support should be provided to community groups, especially marae, as these entities are integral to supporting wellbeing, as we have already seen their value in the immediate aftermath of cyclone Gabrielle.
 - It is crucial to re-establish infrastructure that supports connection and communities, ensuring local social hubs such as marae and libraries are up and running, putting face-to-face support in place such as carer and social worker visits, opening schools, and ensuring the community services and volunteers that are reaching into communities are supported.
 - Ongoing investment in and attention to local needs, the resilience of social infrastructure, and working with iwi and local community organisations will support wellbeing in impacted communities and reduce the negative impacts of future crises.
4. A media release and a LinkedIn post will be made alongside publication. Te Hiringa Mahara will respond to any media interest, but no specific media appearances are planned.
5. The paper and a high-level communications plan are attached, for your information. The media release, key messages, and a Q&A will be shared with your office before the publication date.

Recommendations

We recommend you:

- a) **note**, on 22 March, subject to minor editing changes, Te Hiringa Mahara will publish the attached report on *Supporting wellbeing after a crisis* **Yes / No**
 - b) **note** we intend to release this briefing under our proactive release policy **Yes / No**
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Karen Orsborn
Chief Executive
Date: 13/03/2022

Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall
Minister of Health
Date:

COVID-19 Insights Paper for publication: *Supporting wellbeing after a crisis.*

Background

6. As noted in previous briefings [BN2023-010, BN2023-001 and our Briefing to the Incoming Minister], we have so far published four of eight insights reports to be produced as part of our Covid-19 Impacts Insights Programme.
7. The programme provides short, accessible, focused reports in an agile way. It cannot provide a comprehensive view of the impacts of Covid-19; it provides key insights on wellbeing areas or populations of focus.
8. This fifth report in the series draws from our previous reports, and other available evidence, to identify what lessons we can learn from the COVID-19 pandemic, to support wellbeing after other crises, such as major weather events. The paper does not evaluate the ongoing response to cyclone Gabrielle.

Summary of findings

9. Our findings are concerned with the periods following the immediate disaster response, to support short- and long-term wellbeing for the people affected.
10. Mental health, addiction, and wellbeing challenges are complex during times of crisis. People are facing uncertainty, loss, and disruption. The services and supports available to them – whether from health and wellbeing systems, or from whānau and friends, are severely disrupted.
11. The challenges will vary: some people will feel isolated, some will be facing economic hardship, and some will be in unsafe situations and at risk of violence. There will likely be a new community of people facing trauma and displacement. Their experiences of this will vary: the effects will be felt for some time, and we can expect rates of distress and addiction to increase.
12. Government focus should be on those already disadvantaged. We know that they tend to bear the worst effects of crises, and face the greatest challenges as economic, environment and societal recovery occurs following natural disasters and crises.
13. In the immediate term, community groups, particularly marae, are integral to supporting wellbeing, through sharing information, resources and kai, and providing a sense of community and cultural wellbeing. Where government has been able to help these groups, be flexible with how support is provided, and trust, listen to, and act on local knowledge, this has been seen to provide fast and effective support.
14. In the medium-term, re-establishing the infrastructure that supports connection and community services is vital – especially in rural communities where options are few.
15. In the longer-term, work to build a sense of community and ensure that social infrastructure is resilient is essential to help prevent many of the worst mental health, addiction, and wellbeing effects of the next crisis.
16. It is important that the support, particularly mental health services, are not time limited

in their provision. There is a risk after any crisis that as the immediate need diminishes, attention and support will reduce. We know that the ongoing impacts will be long-lasting, and that experiencing multiple 'shocks' or crises compounds the impact and can contribute to cumulative and collective trauma.

17. Preparing for future crises will require ongoing support. It is important that this work is begun now, drawing and building on lessons learned from the many crises communities have endured in recent times, and maintained past the immediate crisis.
18. Based on the findings of our report, we recommend that:
 - Decision-making about responding to crises and supporting wellbeing more broadly, must be done in partnership with Māori and inclusive of Māori leadership.
 - Other communities who are directly affected be involved in decision-making, including children, young people, rangatahi Māori, whānau, tangata whaikaha, people with disabilities, and culturally and linguistically diverse peoples.
 - Accessible and responsive trauma and distress support be put in place without time limit on their provision.
 - Alongside the effort to re-establish physical infrastructure and core services, social infrastructure be prioritised.
 - Government support should help community organisations and marae now, and support their sustainability and resilience, so that they are well positioned to be both responsive during recovery, and ready for the next crisis.
 - Urgent action reinstates and also improves connectivity and digital infrastructure for rural communities and other groups who experience digital exclusion.
 - Invest in 'primary prevention' of violence so that communities are enabled to take a lead in changing those social attitudes, behaviours and norms that support violence, to reduce the risk of violence in the future.
 - Research into wellbeing is resourced, to understand the impacts of crises, like the floods and Cyclone Gabrielle, will help the ongoing response, help us prepare for future crises, and support greater wellbeing.

Communications Plan

19. A high-level communications plan is attached for your information. Key points are:
 - A media release will support publication of the reports, and a LinkedIn post will be made alongside publication.
 - Te Hiringa Mahara will front any media interest.
 - No media appearances are planned, but Karen Orsborn, Chief Executive, will be the Te Hiringa Mahara spokesperson for any media interest.

Next Steps

20. The media release, key messages, and a Q&A will be shared with your office before the publication date.
21. Subject to minor editorial changes, on 22 March, the report will be published to the Te

Hiringa Mahara website, the media release will be sent to news media, and an announcement posted to LinkedIn.

22. The paper's summary pages, including high-level recommendations, will also be translated into te reo Māori for publication as an accompanying document.

ENDS