



29 March 2023



Reference: OIA-2022/23-0524

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act request relating to [REDACTED] NEMA's emergency response practices

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request received on 31 January 2023. You requested:

“This is an Official Information Act request.

- 1. Could you please provide a copy of any requests from NEMA or the DPMC to ministries, government departments or agencies that relate to taking action to help minimise traffic movement on Auckland roads while vital infrastructure is urgently repaired. I understand the Secretary of Education's direction to schools to remain closed has come as a result of this request.*
- 2. Could you also please provide a copy of NEMA's climate strategy, policy, or guidelines. I am interested in how NEMA intends to bring our emergency responses up to best practice from a climate point of view. Whether there is a document as such or not, I would like to know details about:*
 - NEMA's advice or knowledge-base about the opportunities during emergencies for improving public understanding of the benefits of systems change, and how both communications and action during emergencies should be tailored to this task.*
 - NEMA's strategy for prioritising the emergency response on the basis of improving equity. In particular: intergenerational equity, priority to repairing walking and cycling networks before driving networks, and climate justice.*
 - NEMA's advice for 'building back better' rather than 'building back the same problem'.”*

The time frame for responding to your request was extended under section 15A of the Act by 40 working days because it necessitated consultations to be undertaken before a decision could be made on the request. Following this extension, I am now in a position to respond.

Relating to Part 1 of your request, while it was reported that the closure of schools was made at the request of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), this was inaccurate as no such advice was provided by NEMA or the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC). Accordingly, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA as this information does not exist.

In regard to Part 2 of your request, NEMA does not have specific strategies, policies or guidelines relating to climate change for emergency responses. Rather it views the impacts of climate change as something that exacerbates existing climate-related risks such as flooding, drought, wildfires, and storm surges.

The key document which sets out the Crown's Strategy for increasing resilience to disasters, including those exacerbated by climate change, is the National Disaster Resilience Strategy. A copy of the Strategy, along with supporting material is available at:

<https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/plans-and-strategies/national-disaster-resilience-strategy/>

More technical guidance on risk management, including planning for the impacts of climate change, is provided in the Director of Civil Defence Emergency Management's Guidelines "Risk assessment: Guidance for CDEM Group planning". This document and supporting material are available at:

<https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/guidelines/risk-assessment-guidance-for-cdem-group-planning/>

The guidance mentioned above is provided principally for Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Groups who are responsible for risk reduction, preparing for, responding to, and managing the recovery from emergencies at the local and regional level. More information on the role and functions of CDEM Groups, and the emergency management sector generally, is available at: <https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/>

You have also sought information on:

- *NEMA's advice or knowledge-base about the opportunities during emergencies for improving public understanding of the benefits of systems change, and how both communications and action during emergencies should be tailored to this task.*
- *NEMA's strategy for prioritising the emergency response on the basis of improving equity. In particular: intergenerational equity, priority to repairing walking and cycling networks before driving networks, and climate justice.*
- *NEMA's advice for 'building back better' rather than 'building back the same problem'*

During an emergency, NEMA's priority is to provide clear and practical communications about what people should do to stay safe; supporting any communications provided by CDEM Groups locally. In our more general communications and public information messaging we stress the importance of people being prepared in advance of emergencies. In this we recognise events such as floods are becoming more frequent and severe as a result of climate change, and so it's more important than ever to be prepared.

We also communicate the need for people to consider the full range of emergencies they may need to prepare for. While climate change is increasing the risk of weather-related events, it's important people also plan for other risks New Zealand faces, such as earthquakes and tsunami.

In respect of equity issues, the National Disaster Resilience Strategy acknowledges building resilience across all parts of society requires empowerment, and inclusive, accessible, and non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters. In this, understanding different vulnerabilities is important for reducing risk and ensuring particular needs are met in response and recovery. Further information on this can be found particularly in Part 4 of the National Disaster Resilience Strategy, but is a theme recognised throughout the Strategy.

In respect of priority being given to repairing one mode of transport ahead of another, these are decisions that need to be considered, on a case-by-case basis, as part of any recovery plan and as part of discussions with the affected communities.

In regard to building back better, the current funding provided by NEMA supports the reinstatement of eligible community assets at levels of services prior to the event. Funding to

enable building back better for increased resilience can be considered but is done on a case-by-case basis needing specific government approval.

More information on the financial support available to councils following an emergency can be found at section 33 of the Guide to the National Civil Defence Emergency Management Plan. This is available at:

<https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/plans-and-strategies/national-civil-defence-emergency-management-plan-and-guide/>

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the OIA.

This response may be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely



Anthony Richards
**Chief Advisor to the Deputy Chief Executive, Emergency Management
National Emergency Management Agency**