



Kererū Community
Community-led Recovery Conversation
Cyclone Gabrielle – 14 February 2023

FINAL FEBRUARY 2024

**HERETAUNGA
HASTINGS** DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Sage | Planning

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1 Kererū Community

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to identify the context and key impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle in the Kererū based on the community conversations to better understand how they see recovery looking for their community. A snapshot of the conversation is included in this report along with a series of actions and priorities based on key themes for consideration by the community and Council.

The report is the beginning of conversations between the Kererū community and the Hastings District Council.

The Kererū community love their place – the landscape, the land capability, the community and the strong connection between the land and people who live there. They welcomed the opportunity to have a conversation about Cyclone Gabrielle – the impact, what they learnt during the response phase and the early stages of recovery.

This community had much to offer and were very keen to establish meaningful and ongoing relationships with the agencies that support them. This means being empowered and enabled to drive the outcomes which are best for this community and which reflect its uniqueness. There is a strong desire for the community to collaborate with the agencies and for the agencies to work together with a collective understanding of the community needs and ambitions.

This community acknowledge that the cyclone did not impact them to the same extent as others however they would welcome ongoing support.

1.2 Context and Key Impacts

Kererū is located approximately 40 minutes south-west of Hastings. It is bounded to the north by the Ngaruroro River, to the east by Maraekākaho, south towards the Gwavas Forest and in the west lies the Ruahine Ranges. Kererū is a farming community combined with clusters of lifestyle properties. It is centered around a small rural school and a community hall which includes a squash court, and which provides a home for the local kindy “Tots and Dots”.

The heavy and continuous rain brought by Cyclone Gabrielle had a widespread impact on the districts roading network and many local farms suffered considerable damage from landslides. Waterways changed course, depositing silt and destroying vegetation and farm infrastructure.

Communication was lost and parts of the community were isolated for short periods. Whilst most of the roading network was restored reasonably quickly the Kererū Gorge remains closed. Kererū Road, which crosses Kererū Gorge, is the most direct route into Hastings and the wider district and the loss of this access for an extended period has not only divided the community but it has also placed considerable pressure on other parts of the roading network. This issue has caused much angst for the community as they try to return to normal, working in town and running farming businesses which are heavily reliant on the roading network. The lack of connection across the gorge was also noted as impacting well-being with many being disconnected from friends and family who live on the town side of the gorge.

Kererū Hall was set up as a distribution hub and many agencies connected into the community throughout the response phase of the cyclone via key contacts.

Kererū has a strong sense of community made up of great people and those that live there value this very highly. The community love Kererū because it is a great place to farm and has wonderful views. The community expressed a strong sense of belonging, connected to both the land and people. People love that you can make lifestyle choices in Kererū.

There were no placarded buildings in Kererū and the area has not been impacted by the Land Categorisation process.

The Kererū community were able to carry on farming and stayed well connected in the aftermath of the cyclone. They were supported by key people including the Rural Delivery drivers. The community were grateful that they had resources (tractors, chainsaws, manpower etc) to clear roads and support each other. However, fatigue is now setting in and the community has expressed that “keeping going” has come at a cost – financial, physical, and emotional.

Figure 1 : Kererū



1.3 How Kererū Shared with Us

Pre-engagement was undertaken via the Kererū Hall AGM and this was followed up with a the drop-in evening which was well attended. The information that was shared at these meetings has been used to form the basis of this document noting that this is a record of the beginning of an ongoing conversation with the Kererū community.

- a. As part of the pre-engagement the Kererū Hall AGM on the 8th June 2023 was attended. There was an opportunity to discuss the purpose of Community-led recovery and to discuss what sort of engagement would best suit this community.
- b. Comprehensive engagement took place at a “drop-in” evening at the Kererū Hall on 10 July 2023. This was well attended (25 – 30) and was supported by a chat with David Todd (Toddy Talks).

1.4 Snapshot of what the Kererū Community Shared with Us

- It was widely recognised by the community that the area had not been impacted as significantly as other areas but there were still some challenges.
- The devastation from Cyclone Gabrielle and following uncertainty has had and continues to have a significant impact on the wellbeing of this community.
- Cyclone Gabrielle has been followed by a wet winter which is taking its toll.
- The fragility of the roading network was and continues to be a key issue. This is impacting on the people’s ability to run their farming businesses and safety for those who travel Salisbury Road is worrying locals. There is a sense that maintenance of Salisbury Road is not being treated with an appropriate level of urgency and further concern about what state Salisbury Road will be left in once Kererū Gorge reopens. *NOTE: Substantial work has been completed on Salisbury Road since the drop-in session.*
- A functional roading network is required to enable farming businesses to operate efficiently.
- The Kererū School host and check the Civil Defence radio.
- There is a desire for Kererū Hall to be better resourced to act as a “hub” not only in the case of emergency but also to provide ongoing opportunity for the community to connect. A “social agenda” was proposed.
- The community would have liked better communication throughout the response and early recovery phases of the event.
- As the recovery phase progresses, the community want regular communication from the Council which is specific to the issues that this community is facing. This is particularly important for work on the roading network.
- Cyclone Gabrielle highlighted the importance of the need to be prepared for such events as a community and individually. The community would like to focus on being prepared going forward. Resilience has been discussed previously by this community but was now at the forefront of peoples thinking.
- Kererū were grateful that they had resources (tractors, chainsaws, manpower etc) within the community to clear roads and support each other.

- This community was able to carry on farming. However, fatigue is now setting in and the community has expressed that “keeping going” has come at a cost – financial, physical, and emotional.
- There are lots of skills in our community and it would be great to be able to tap into these to build a more resilient community.
- Some in the community expressed concern about catchment management and noted that changing landuse patterns including forestry were having an impact on this.
- The destruction of the Kererū Gorge has split the community in two. People are now separated by distance from their family, friends, and neighbours and this is proving to be very difficult and negatively impacting on well-being.
- Community and individual well-being are an issue. There has been support and John Kirwan has been to this community, but this needs to be ongoing.
- There were lots of agencies contacting this community in the early stages and this needs to be better coordinated.



Figure 2: Snapshot of what Kererū Community Shared

2 Key themes for Kererū

Several key themes have emerged from the conversations with the Kererū community. Relative priority order for this community is shown below and reflects the emphasis that was given to each in the discussions. Under each a series of actions have been identified. Many of these are actions and solutions that the community proposed during the discussion. Ongoing conversations with the Kererū community are required to refine the actions and to determine when and how these can be supported.



2.1.1 Resilient Infrastructure

The importance of a fully recovered and restored roading network was noted in the conversations with this community. This would enable them to travel safely to work and activities in other parts of the district and enable them to run their businesses with a level of certainty and confidence.

Key Resilient Infrastructure actions are:

- i. Repair the Kererū Gorge and celebrate this milestone.
- ii. Ensure that Salisbury Road is fit for purpose now and bring it back to its previous standard once the Kererū Gorge is reopened.
- iii. Continue focusing on roading repairs - Duff Road, Poporangi Road, Mangleton Road and Big Hill Road
- iv. Give the community confidence that inspections for other damaged parts of the roading network are being undertaken and a proactive maintenance and repair programme is planned.

2.1.2 Sustainable Hubs

The importance of a community hub for both emergency response but also as a focus for a social agenda was identified as something that the community wished to progress. Currently the Kererū School and the Kererū Hall share this role with some aspects of emergency preparedness being the responsibility of the school i.e., RT radio checks and some being at the hall. The Kererū Hall is the focus for social activities.

Key Sustainable Hubs actions are:

- i. Clarify and document the roles of the school and the hall in relation to emergency preparedness.
- ii. Ensure that the hall is physically set up to provide an emergency hub i.e., provide Starlink and generator connections, ensure that emergency supplies are located at the hall.
- iii. Establish a community noticeboard at the hall (managed by the Hall Committee).
- iv. Clarify how a hub will operate i.e., the role of the Hall Committee, the role of Rural Fire Force.
- v. Develop a structure for the “people” part of the hub.
- vi. That the Kererū community develops a social agenda for the community. This should include a range of activities – sports, arts and cultural.

2.1.3 Community Well-being

The importance of community well-being was identified in the conversations. A well community is likely to be a prepared and happy community and vice versa. Cyclone Gabrielle has had a real impact on the well-being of this community and there is a strong desire for there to be a collective approach to community well-being going forward.

Key Community Well-being actions are:

- i. Ensure that the community-led proposed social agenda includes specific well-being events (noting that all events will contribute to connectedness within the community).
- ii. Maintain and develop the relationship with the Rural Support Trust and other well-being agencies.
- iii. Create a community system (such as a telephone tree) to ensure in an emergency everyone is connected, and information shared.
- iv. Develop a system for identifying and managing resources within the community .i.e., physical resources (diggers, generators etc), expertise (accounting, health etc)
- v. Ensure that resources that are available outside of the community including funding are widely known by the community.

2.1.4 Collective Wisdom

To become more self-reliant and empowered the Kererū community has expressed a desire to be well informed with strong links to the agencies that support them (HDC, HBRC, Rural Fire Force, Rural Support Trust etc). Lack of communication during the response phase had an impact on the well-being of the community.

The loss of communications during and immediately after the event created significant frustration and anxiety. The community would like an established public communication network supported by private networks in the community (in the event that there is no access to the hall).

Key Collective Wisdom actions are:

- i. Establish regular (two way) communication with Hastings District Council for day-to-day issues
- ii. Develop a clear communication framework for emergency communication
- iii. Provide Starlink at the Kererū Hall
- iv. Identify Starlink connections in the community (to be shared in the event of an emergency)
- v. HDC to provide regular updates on the works planned on the roading network in Kererū

2.1.5 Theme Being Prepared

The importance of the community (as a whole) being better prepared for future events was noted by the community. Kererū is some distance from town and as a result there is individuals are prepared. Individual preparation was not noted specifically in the conversations however it is acknowledged that it will be a combination of collective and individual preparation that will be required to ensure that potential future periods of isolation.

Key Being Prepared actions are:

- i. Undertake resilience planning in partnership with Hastings District Council and other key agencies including FENZ.
- ii. Implement the outcomes of the planning resilience process including Civil Defence training for the community.

3 Additional Resources

The following additional resources are also available:

- Hawke's Bay Regional Council Hazards Portal <https://gis.hbrc.govt.nz/Hazards/>
- HDC Cyclone Gabrielle before/after Imagery: <https://hdcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6ef8fe7c8ed643b2b9005bae7ca01162>

