

# Foreword



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(Māori: Te Rākau  
Whakamarumarū)



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*Nāku te rourou nāu te rourou ka ora ai te iwi  
With your basket and my basket, we will sustain everyone.*

This foreword is a chance to introduce myself to the wider emergency management whānau/family in Australasia. I'm looking forward to working together to tackle the challenges ahead.

It's in this spirit that I chose to start with the whakataukī (proverb) above. In te ao Māori, or the Māori-world view, whakataukī are used to convey the wisdom, values and common sense of tangata whenua (people of the land). This whakataukī reminds us that, as emergency leaders and as communities, we are stronger when we work together.

I began my role at Aotearoa New Zealand's National Emergency Management Agency (Te Rākau Whakamarumarū) (NEMA) just after severe weather events in Auckland and Cyclone Gabrielle had ravaged large parts of the North Island, which had led to a declaration of a State of National Emergency. In my 36 years on emergency service, I have seen some extremes of what humankind and Mother Nature can do. Importantly, I have also seen the very best that human beings can do for one another.

In NEMA's public education materials, we highlight how important it is to check on neighbours during an emergency and to work together to make us all stronger. Being connected in the community is the key to readiness, response and recovery. As our nearest neighbour, Aotearoa New Zealand greatly values its close ties with Australia. This is why we are so thankful for Australia's support during the Canterbury Earthquakes and Cyclone Gabrielle (among many other events) and we were happy to assist during the 2022 floods in Queensland and New South Wales, and the fires earlier in 2023.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a wonderful country, but one with many hazards of nature such as earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, landslides, floods and severe weather events. A catastrophic event is not a matter of if, but when. So a major focus for NEMA is to plan for the worst and hope for the best.

Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia have a long history of serving and working together. The ANZAC spirit is something we value and will grow as we face the growing challenges that nature throws our way. Both countries are dealing with the effects of climate change as the frequency of severe weather

events increases at a seemingly bewildering rate. The phrase 'the new normal' is being used a lot.

In September 2022, Aotearoa New Zealand signed an emergency management Memorandum of Co-operation with Australia. The memorandum reflected the long-standing relationship, the similarity in structures and perhaps most importantly, the similar challenges the countries face. This strengthened relationship allows us to share insights and lessons as well as offer resource support and personnel when it's needed. And it will be needed.

During Cyclone Gabrielle, we welcomed an American delegation (under our Memorandum with FEMA completed in 2022) and a group of emergency managers from Fiji. The support meant so much and it emphasised that we're all part of the same whole; working with our communities to keep them safe in the face of sometimes awe-inspiring forces. In 'peacetime' we will continue to build relationships so we are stronger in response.

NEMA is undertaking a comprehensive after-action review, which will take in observations from our staff and from our partners and stakeholders across government and beyond. It has reinforced why operational readiness is crucial to NEMA. I am proud of our Cyclone Gabrielle response, but an event of this size has tested our thinking and processes in real time. This was a major event for Aotearoa New Zealand but it was also a long way off the type of catastrophic event that would cause thousands of fatalities and impact on our economy and the wellbeing of our country.

If we are living in a new normal, then the lessons we learn and the opportunities we identify together will shape the next response, the one after, and the one after that. But if we work together and share our 'baskets', we will indeed be stronger.

In emergency management, we are the few selected to serve the many. We belong to an honourable profession that is dedicated to community safety. We have a duty to serve and protect our fellow human beings together. The words 'kia kaha' mean stand strong. We must all stand strong together in the knowledge that we can and do make a difference in our communities every day.