

# Hon Mark Mitchell

Minister of Corrections  
Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery  
Minister of Police



26 March 2024

Gary Caffell, Mayor, Masterton District Council  
Martin Connelly, Mayor, South Wairarapa District Council  
Hon. Ron Mark, Mayor, Carterton District Council  
Daran Ponter, Chair, Greater Wellington Regional Council

Dear Mayors and Chair,

Since coming into office late last year, I have visited and spoken with the regions affected by the North Island Weather Events in early 2023 and have heard a range of issues and concerns that communities are facing. As I have spoken with affected homeowners, I have heard concerns about the uncertainty that some people are facing while they wait for categorisation of affected properties and potential property buyouts.

While I appreciate that not all regions were affected to the same degree, and not all councils are considering formal categorisation or buyouts, it is still vital that the most affected homeowners have certainty about their housing situations and are enabled to move on with their lives.

In September 2023, the then Minister for Cyclone Recovery wrote to you to extend an offer to share the cost of any voluntary Category 3 buyouts, should you choose to offer any. The terms of this offer were that the Crown would meet 50% of the buyout cost, less any insurance and EQC proceeds. This offer still stands.

There was no timeframe put on this offer when it was first made. However, now that we are more than a year on from the severe weather events, my expectation is that any cost-sharing and subsequent buyouts need to be completed as quickly as possible.

I would like to know your intentions and timeframes should you go down this path. If you intend to take up the Crown's offer, I request that you provide me with an indication of your plans and timeframes for categorisation and completing any buyouts, by the end of April.

I would invite you at the same time to identify any issues or barriers that may be preventing or delaying decisions that would provide resolution for affected homeowners, and any potential solutions. My expectation is that councils should be looking at every possible option to speed up these processes, and I would encourage you to discuss with me, or with my officials at the Cyclone Recovery Unit, any ideas or proposals that would help to provide resolution sooner and how we can work together to achieve these.

Finally, I would like to confirm that the scope of the categorisation framework and buyout process is unchanged. It is limited to properties impacted by three specific events – Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle, and the Auckland Anniversary floods. The government will not support any extension of this scope to damage caused, or exacerbated by, subsequent weather events.

We all share the same concerns about the impacts on your affected communities and understand the need to speed up the recovery. I look forward to working with you further to progress this.

Yours sincerely,



Hon Mark Mitchell  
Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery

cc Nigel Corry, Chief Executive, Greater Wellington District Council  
Kym Fell, Chief Executive, Masterton District Council  
Geoff Hamilton, Chief Executive, Carterton District Council  
Janice Smith, Chief Executive, South Wairarapa District Council  
Katrina Casey, Chief Executive, Cyclone Recovery