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Governance and Administration Committee
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Via email: ga@parliament.govt.nz

RURAL WOMEN NEW ZEALAND (INC) SUBMISSION

NATIONAL DISASTER RESILIENCE STRATEGY

Introduction

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) welcomes the opportunity to present this submission on the National Disaster Resilience Strategy.

RWNZ has been an active supporter of disaster resilience and recovery in New Zealand's rural communities since its inception in 1925 and is a member of the Ministry of Primary Industries' National Adverse Events Committee.

RWNZ also has its own Adverse Events Committee which distributes funds to rural families following any adverse event after considering applicable applications.

Our submission is prepared in relation to the three priorities as listed by the Select Committee:

Managing risks: what we can do to minimise the risks we face and limit the impacts to be managed if hazards occur;

Effective response to and recovery from emergencies: building our capability and capacity to manage emergencies when they do happen, and;

Enabling, empowering, and supporting community resilience: building a culture of resilience in New Zealand so that everyone can participate in and contribute to communities' - and the nations' – resilience

Specific Comments

1. Managing risks: what we can do to minimise the risks we face and limit the impacts to be managed if hazards occur;

- a. Risk information – collate and store information based on an understanding of hazard events collated from people’s living memories, oral and written histories.
- b. Local knowledge is important when understanding risk scenarios.
- c. Rural families often have extensive histories with the local environment through land use, living in the area and listening to stories from older generations.
- d. Many families have paper-based records in their family history files that could build an extensive picture of local land use since it was first settled, including previous major environmental issues or hazards.
- e. Also, within families, there will be histories from neighbouring communities brought in by marriage or travel that could be tagged and mapped across to the respective land/region.
- f. The evacuation procedures and location of important facilities from these histories could benefit future events, especially if they have been masked by modern processes or inventions and have been forgotten, or similar events have not occurred recently and there has been no need to implement them.
- g. Assess the vulnerability of people, groups and communities.
- h. Use local knowledge of where people live, how they communicate with each other, medical requirements, greater awareness of the more vulnerable groups in the community (young families, youth, older people, those with disabilities, carers etc), isolated people, those living on their own.
- i. Using local knowledge of where to seek assistance for medical facilities, Plunket, police, carers, stock or animal support and guidance – including how to contact these people if there is a power outage.
- j. Utilise local community hubs such as churches’ prayer chains and school networks which often have alternative ways to contact their community members. This type of network is used extensively across New Zealand.
- k. Rural communities understand, from experience, that once a link is broken, a point of contact should be notified and that person has responsibility to establish the wellbeing of notified individuals.
- l. RWNZ suggests that there could also be a register of organisations (and points of contact) in each locality which could be united to assist during and after events. This could also apply to any buildings (and points of contact for them) that could be utilised in event. The register could be held with the local central point of contact. There could also be a register of local volunteers with various skills who could be called upon to assist if needed such as those who offered to help during the Pigeon Valley fire with land, stabling, rooms, baby equipment, food etc. These offers of assistance appeared on Facebook pages during the event, provides a good example of what assistance could be offered during an emergency.
- m. Community representatives could liaise with the schools to educate local children and listen to their ideas, and liaise with local businesses, farms and employers, overseas workers and their families, run information meetings and have a presence at local events to raise awareness and find out more about their local communities, they could also provide information packs to new residents or flyers (with the main emergency advice for the local area) to visitors, travellers or workers from outside the area.
- n. The information gained from the community representatives would create an additional dimension to the information gleaned from local history.
- o. Together, the two sources of information would be useful to make more informed decisions about rural communities and the extent of their vulnerability or resilience.

- p. The local central point of contact (and/or community representatives) would need to be someone who could complete effective and efficient localised triage, possibly in the absence of Civil Defence team members, depending on location.
 - q. RWNZ suggests that a strategy be developed that would raise awareness of what funding is available and what individuals or communities may need to record (and how) for claims should that be necessary. Accessible and clear communication pathways to assist individuals and communities with claims are essential.
2. **Effective response to and recovery from emergencies: building our capability and capacity to manage emergencies when they do happen, and;**
- a. Some of the above relates to these objectives.
 - b. The important things for effective response are clarity of communication, standardisation of practise, training on processes and procedures, accessible resources and the ability to access communication tools.
 - c. RWNZ Members make very practical suggestions in this regard:
 - A red blanket that can be laid out on the lawn or paddock so helicopters can see where people are
 - If you have pets, make sure you have something to carry them in and food for them in your supplies
 - A Bucket with lid is good storage bin but can be used for many other purposes
 - Have water holding tanks connected to your down pipes on buildings which can catch water off rooves. If they have taps on the pipe bottoms, hoses can be connected and the stored water used in during fire, drought etc. This may also assist with lessening insurance premiums.
 - To have a radio with batteries so you can keep with developing news.
3. **Enabling, empowering, and supporting community resilience: building a culture of resilience in New Zealand so that everyone can participate in and contribute to communities' - and the nations' – resilience.**
- a. Some of the above relates to these objectives.
 - b. RWNZ suggests that an effective local community representative could be the key for community resilience, acting as an information hub and directing people to areas of support, assistance, comfort or comradeship.
 - c. Some rural communities may have a town community within it's environment, and activities connecting the town and the farm communities together will enhance rural resilience. Isolation exists within small towns and in more remote homes but shared interests may bring them together.
 - d. In rural areas with a transient or seasonal workforce, the local community representative could be proactive in reaching out to them and raising their awareness of what to do in an emergency.
 - e. A visible, approachable and objective local community representative should develop mutual respect and trust through their ethical behaviour and integrity.
 - f. Encourage community members to become involved with Civil Defence, Rural Support Trusts, Red Cross, and other groups who assist during, and, after disasters and also in peace time.
 - g. Encourage rural communities to have small groups of leaders who know where resources are located, where meeting points are situated and can work with out of area visitors to ensure they are accounted and cared for.
 - h. Encourage knowledge sharing within communities that includes the following practical points:

- an agreed, safe meeting place such as a local hall which can store reserves including well stocked first aid kits, a back-up generator which can run a fridge, cooking equipment etc.
 - A BBQ with enough supplied fuel
 - An emergency vehicle to be used for checking on local homes or helping evacuate people.
 - Identify suitable locations for helicopters to land, or for ambulances to reach.
 - Identify who holds heavy machinery and may be able move rubble or clear path ways.
 - A well maintained and up to date list of suitable people is essential in identifying who can be called upon to help, to pass on messages and who has extra fuel, machinery, generators, etc.
- i. Other required knowledge includes:
- how and where to source local knowledge
 - ensuring the collected data covers the relevant area
 - who the points of contact are for accessing local knowledge and collating it
 - who requires additional information to be able to assist in areas outside the local area and in what format that information is required
 - how local knowledge develops into a portfolio of information which can be used to understand and mitigate risk
 - in real time emergencies, how to access the information if there is no power
- j. RWNZ suggests standardising all processes, forms and systems to ensure best practice and generate the most efficient pathways during an event; connecting local, regional and national information effectively.
4. Rural proofing of any national disaster resilience strategy is vital and we note that there is little reference to rural communities in this document.
 5. Understanding the challenges rural communities face before a disaster and awareness that there should be no expectation of less challenges after an event. Examples include distance from emergency services and unreliable telecommunication in isolated areas.
 6. Understanding that farmers need to access livestock. After the Kaikoura earthquake frustrated farmers were banned from using their farm access roads to transport livestock to areas with a water supply and adequate fencing. Authorities closed the roads without inspection and without understanding knowledge or appreciation of the skills, common sense and experience of farmers and their concern for the well-being of livestock.
 7. It is vital that local, regional and government bodies take responsible attitudes to funding immediate recovery and some mitigation work such as floodbanks where there are flood risks to roads, farmland and businesses.
 8. RWNZ suggests a streamlined resource consent process for immediate recovery work by landowners in situations such as floods, slips etc.
 9. In case of a biosecurity incursion, such as Mbovis, it is imperative that all agencies and organisations managing the incursion give paramount consideration to the wellbeing of the people actually affected. To not do so adds to the already extreme stress levels.
 10. Where industry or business increases the risk of civil disasters it is the responsibility of those companies to mitigate this risk. For example, RWNZ's view is downstream residents should be protected in the case of hydro power schemes. For example, the Waitaki River has three dams: Waitaki, Aviemore, Benmore. There are no alarm warning systems along the Valley for downstream residents, including the Waitaki Valley School which is the local Civil Defence post. We note that *Meridian* has an alarm system for its staff.
 11. Risk management is reliant on communication systems that function during times of disaster. Rural areas are at greater risk of losing/not having access to a communication systems and therefore there is a need to retain land lines.

12. Rural districts can cover extremely large areas and it would be difficult to manage districts through a one-size-fits-all lens. Infrastructure, accessibility, isolation, altitude, coastal and mountain zones are things that could impact on individual communities.
13. RWNZ suggests that information for each district be built from the knowledge base of each, individual community, which in turn could integrate into a district wide analysis.
14. RWNZ requests that both a rural impact and gender impact analysis be carried out on this strategy to ensure that the needs of rural communities, in particular the intersectionality of rural living and gender, are included.

About Rural Women New Zealand

1. Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation that reaches into all rural communities and has an authoritative voice on rural environment, health, education, technology, business and social issues.
2. RWNZ strives to ensure that all rural residents, workers and families have equitable access to services, inequalities are addressed by Government, and the wellbeing of rural communities is considered from the beginning of all policy and legislative development.
3. RWNZ is affiliated to the Associated Country Women of the World and as such upholds all United Nations, ILO and WHO conventions and outcome statements as they relate to women and rural women in particular.
4. RWNZ would like to draw particular attention to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the outcome statement of the 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and the Sustainable Development Goals as they relate to the equal treatment of rural communities in disasters.

We wish to provide an oral submission to the Committee and look forward to hearing of a suitable time.

Your sincerely

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