



SUBMISSION ON THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BILL (NO 2)

Date: February 2026

Hauora Taiwhenua Rural Health Network is a national peak body representing rural health professionals and the health/wellbeing of rural communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. We represent a broad coalition of rural health professionals, communities, and organisations committed to improving health outcomes for people living in rural and remote Aotearoa.

Our members are often in the front line when an emergency occurs, often caring for those in the community that are most vulnerable.

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission on the Emergency Management Bill (No 2).

Summary Comments:

- 1) Hauora Taiwhenua supports the general intent of the Emergency Management Bill, but believes it needs to be more specific in ensuring that primary care providers in rural and remote communities are supported and enabled to provide strong community health and wellbeing services before, during and after emergencies of any kind.**
- 2) Hauora Taiwhenua supports the submission on this Bill made by General Practice New Zealand. However we would like to add particular additional comments that are reflective of the unique aspects of emergency care offered by primary care in rural and remote areas of New Zealand.**

Context:

As outlined above, Hauora Taiwhenua is a peak body representing health care workers from a wide interdisciplinary base; including rural doctors, nurses, midwives, allied health workers and more. We also have a strong membership from rural communities, including organisations such as Rural Women NZ, Fed Farmers, Rural Contractors NZ, and many more.

We also have Government contracts to provide locum doctor and nurse support to rural general practices, which includes sourcing international trained family medicine doctors from around the world to move to NZ and work in rural and remote communities.

During recent emergencies/disasters such as COVID, Cyclone Gabrielle and other rain events, we have been called upon to coordinate and supply emergency doctors, nurses and other health staff to provide workforce support to the practices serving rural New Zealand selflessly, while under extreme demands themselves.

During these emergencies, the rural communities are often isolated from larger hospitals and other health services because of roading failures, cut-off from essential services like power, water, electricity and internet, and often have limited support from air, land and water due to ongoing extreme weather. This leaves those rural communities relying completely on the infrastructure, medicines and supplies held by rural practices for temporary and medium-term management of health and injuries of those in the area.

As pointed out in the GPNZ Submission, rural general practices and rural pharmacies are critical components of the emergency response system and yet they are not recognised in the Bill as essential infrastructure. In order for them to be able to respond appropriately there needs to be a number of enabling policy settings in the Bill that would help ensure these rural health services are prepared in advance of an emergency, prioritised for reconnection of power, water, electricity and internet in the aftermath of major climate events, funded to upscale their activities during and event, and supported through workforce deployment programmes to enhance capacity during events until a 'return to normal' phase has been reached.

To achieve these outcomes, and to ensure that rural primary care is empowered to support the social, economic, cultural, and environmental well-being and safety of the public during emergencies, we propose the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

- 1) Recognise primary care (general practices, community pharmacists and others) as essential infrastructure providers through inclusion in Schedule 3 of the Bill.
- 2) Ensure that each Emergency Management Committee, and the Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Group, is required to have a member with thorough knowledge of local primary care.
- 3) Ensure that the costs incurred by primary care in connection with responding to the emergency, are covered for reimbursement.
- 4) Ensure that the powers of the Director-General of Emergency Management is explicit about the ability to over-ride the Medicines Act, and other health-related legislation, where emergency means are required to preserve the lives of rural patients. For example, remote dispensing/distribution of medicines.
- 5) Provide identified essential general practice infrastructure providers with grants or subsidies to strengthen disaster resilience upgrades in preparation for a disaster – e.g. to ensure post-disaster that general practice has emergency access to power, water, internet, etc., required to provide key medical services.
- 6) Ensure national and regional emergency management plans include planning for health workforce support and mobilisation/redeployment to critical sites and communities.
- 7) That disaster planning for primary care essential infrastructure at a national level include the development of helicopter transportable, self-contained, positive pressure, 'health pods', that would have independent electricity supply, refrigeration, satellite internet, water storage, equipment and medicines. These could be deployed when required to rural areas in times of need (e.g. pandemics, climate disasters) to provide critical infrastructure when any existing infrastructure is impaired, isolated, or destroyed. Regional Controllers would be able to request the deployment of these units into compromised rural areas/regions.

We are happy to discuss, and further explain, any part of this submission upon request.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Davidson', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Grant Davidson

Chief Executive Officer

Hauora Taiwhenua Rural Health Network

Incorporating NZLocums & NZMedjobs - experts in medical recruitment

Level 2, 88 The Terrace | PO Box 547 | Wellington 6140

www.htrhn.org.nz

Growing Healthy and Thriving Rural Communities