



## Submission on the Emergency Management Bill To the Governance and Administration Committee

**Submitted by Social Service Providers Te Pai Ora o Aotearoa (Te Pai Ora SSPA)**  
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### Introduction & Background

1. Social Service Providers Te Pai Ora o Aotearoa (Te Pai Ora SSPA) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Emergency Management Bill.
2. Te Pai Ora SSPA supports the intent of the Bill and would like to see it amended to include:
  - increased provisions for tangata whenua partnership as a part of the strengthened community role;
  - a bolstered role for peak bodies;
  - greater detail around 'disproportionately affected communities' that explicitly includes children, disabled people and older people; and
  - assurances that emergency management information and communications are made available to everyone.
3. Our submission is informed by our work with member organisations. These are Non-Government Organisations working to provide community-based social services. Our submission brings a legislative, policy and practice perspective to this discussion.
4. Te Pai Ora SSPA is a member of the Community Constellation, a collaborative group of peak bodies and infrastructure organisations across Aotearoa. In addition to this submission, we have added our name in support of the submission that Community Constellation is making on behalf of its members.
5. We acknowledge and are grateful for the decision by the Governance and Administration Committee to extend the submission deadline for the Bill. We hope this will allow affected stakeholders to put together submissions.

## About Te Pai Ora SSPA

6. Te Pai Ora SSPA is a membership-based national organisation, comprising over 260 community-based social service organisations working alongside children, and whānau around Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> Our organisational membership includes local and national service providers, large national care providers, kaupapa Māori and Iwi social service organisations and Pacific providers.
7. Te Pai Ora SSPA works to strengthen the Aotearoa social sector through advocacy and engagement, learning and development, relationships and sector leadership.
8. We are grounded in a Te Tiriti o Waitangi-based model of governance, with equitable tangata whenua and tangata tiriti representation on our Board.
9. Emergency management is becoming more relevant to our sector every year. Many of our member organisations have been directly impacted by recent severe weather events including Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023 and the events across the North Island last month. Our members work alongside children, rangatahi and whānau in their communities and hapori to provide them with support and meet their needs.
10. Although the communities our members represent are incredibly resilient, the increased frequency and severity of these events make the need for further support urgent. Natural disasters exacerbate existing inequities around housing, mental health and wellbeing, access to basics and family harm.
11. A fit-for-purpose approach to emergency management needs to be one where these communities are empowered and adequately resourced, where tangata whenua authority is recognised and where human rights are upheld.

## Te Pai Ora SSPA's position on the Bill

*Further provisions are needed to strengthen the role of communities, especially tangata whenua*

12. Te Pai Ora SSPA supports the Bill's stated purposes of "strengthening role of iwi Māori" and "strengthening role of community," two objectives that we see as inextricably linked. However greater provisions are needed to ensure these roles are grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
13. As it stands, the Bill requires Emergency Management Committees to appoint one or more Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Group members from each of:
  - 'local Māori communities'; and
  - 'rural communities'.
14. The Bill does not make mention of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
15. Replacing Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups with an entity where Māori expertise is required, is a step in the right direction. However, that entity should be one built on a foundation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Having a single member "with knowledge of the interests and values of local Māori communities" does not sufficiently recognise tangata whenua authority. It treats Māori as one stakeholder among many rather than a partner.

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<sup>1</sup> Find out more about Te Pai Ora SSPA at [www.sspa.org.nz](http://www.sspa.org.nz). Our strategic plan 2023-2026 can be found [here](#)

16. Legislation needs to catch up with what is often already happening in practice: mana whenua taking the lead in responses to emergencies, as a part of their communities, not separate from them, and supported by a national network of community workers. We have seen this in recent weeks with marae opening their doors to provide shelter, food and care to people affected by January's severe weather. Effective regional efforts are collaborative, especially in situations where responses from central government are slow, ineffective, under-resourced and disconnected from community efforts.
17. Conversely, responses to past disasters have provided illustrative examples of instances where tangata whenua were not involved in decision-making. In [its report on Cyclone Gabrielle and the Auckland Anniversary floods](#), Environment Hubs Aotearoa emphasised the need for community involvement. The report points to the response to Cyclone Bola in 1988 as an instance where an approach that excluded tangata whenua disproportionately impacted Māori communities.
18. We are heartened by the Government's acknowledgement of role played by tangata whenua in emergency response with the recently announced Marae Emergency Response Fund. We would like to see additional funding made available in future allocations to more accurately recognise the effort and resources that this work requires.
19. Replacing the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act is an opportunity to rethink the entities that lead the response to emergencies. Rather than a new arrangement that serves a similar role to the old Emergency Management Groups with added Māori representation, responses should be driven by entities that are meaningfully co-governed where mana whenua are able to influence decision-making.
20. We acknowledge that Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Groups will need to include members "with knowledge, experience, or expertise" of the physical environment in the Group's area. However, we do not agree with the way the draft Bill frames 'rural' representation as separate from tangata whenua representation and would like to see an acknowledgement of regional expertise that is grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The best subject matter experts in regional communities are often mana whenua. Even when tangata tiriti on the committee contribute their regional expertise, this contribution will likely be incomplete without input from tangata whenua.
21. One way to ensure that Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Groups include adequate regional representation would be through the involvement of community peak bodies (like Te Pai Ora SSPA, Community Networks Aotearoa and Volunteering New Zealand). Because we frequently and effectively work as a conduit between member organisations and government, we are uniquely positioned to offer perspectives that are both systemic and regionally specific. This means we can:
  - ensure community voice in emergency management planning;
  - connect Emergency Management Committees with community organisations;
  - facilitate community participation and engagement; and
  - represent community interests and knowledge.
22. We recommend that the clause covering appointment of Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Group members (currently 39) is amended to specify that peak bodies should have a role in identifying members from their networks.

*Additional details are required to adequately involve ‘disproportionately affected communities’*

23. Social service providers work with communities whose needs are exacerbated in times of crisis. For example, in 2023, following Cyclone Gabrielle, we heard from members that temporary accommodation was often not meeting the needs of children and whānau with disabilities, neurodiversity, addiction and/or mental health challenges.
24. The policy statement accompanying the Bill acknowledges that some populations may face greater risk including “rural communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, seniors, disabled people, children, and those experiencing socio-economic deprivation or isolation.” However, the Bill’s definition of ‘disproportionately affected community’ does not include a definition or elaborate on the way that factors like age and disability can exacerbate vulnerabilities.
25. An emergency management system that works for everyone needs to be underpinned by an understanding that emergencies don’t affect everyone equally. This could be achieved by amending the Bill to better align with the United Nations’ [Sendai framework](#) which includes detailed recommendations for an approach to disaster risk reduction that is inclusive and accessible. For example, it emphasises the importance of centring young people:
 

*Children and youth are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula.*
26. We acknowledge that the Bill addresses some of the framework’s recommendations but recommend that definition of ‘disproportionately affected communities’ is amended to explicitly include children, disabled people and older people.
27. The groups that are the hardest hit are also often the hardest to reach. Public communication may not meet accessibility standards and may not be delivered in a language that communities understand. Moreover, communities whose previous interactions with the State have been largely negative may be unreceptive to information.
28. We recommend that the Bill require public information to adhere to accessibility standards to ensure all emergency management information and communications are available to everyone. Best efforts should also be made to translate relevant information into languages other than English where these are spoken.
29. The Bill currently requires Emergency Management Committees to engage with representatives of disproportionately affected communities when developing proposals for emergency management plans. However, it does not specify what this engagement should look like. Local and regional emergency management plans should be developed with the active involvement of disproportionately affected communities, up to and including representation on Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Groups.
30. We also note that greater involvement of communities, including tangata whenua, in emergency management efforts will mean that those efforts can more effectively respond to the specific needs of those communities.

## Recommendation

31. Te Pai Ora SSPA recommends that the Committee amends this Bill so that it is better able to serve the needs of communities impacted by emergencies. In its current form, the draft Bill does not allow for an adequate level of representation that is needed for these communities to have their voices heard.
32. We suggest the following amendments:
  - incorporating Te Tiriti o Waitangi into the Bill with explicit Māori partnership provisions and a greater decision-making role for tangata whenua on Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Groups (including as representatives of regional areas and/or 'disproportionately affected communities' if appropriate);
  - a role for peak bodies in identifying members for Emergency Management Co-ordinating Executive Groups from within their networks;
  - a definition of 'disproportionately affected communities' that includes children, disabled people and older people; and
  - a requirement for public information to adhere to accessibility standards and be made available in languages other than English whenever appropriate and feasible.
33. Thank you for considering Te Pai Ora SSPA's submission.