



Mātai

Te Mata Mātai Hura

Mātai Medical Research Institute

TAIRĀWHITI GIBBORNE | NEW ZEALAND

Mātai Tairāwhiti Relief Fund

2ND ANNIVERSARY UPDATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A heartfelt thank you to all our donors – locally, nationally, and internationally, big and small – whose contributions to the Mātai Tairāwhiti Relief Fund have been instrumental in supporting recovery efforts across the region.

We also wish to acknowledge some of the key contributors.

MAJOR SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

Auckland RUM raffle club	Hugh Green Foundation
Bunnings Warehouse	JN & HB Williams Foundation
Coates Associates	The Mahon Family
Craigs Investment Partners	Perpetual Guardian
East Coast Exchange	Pultron Composites
Gisborne Adventure Trust	Ruatoria Sports club
Gisborne Rowing Club	Sawmill Brewery
Gisborne Salvation Army	Trust Tairāwhiti
Gisborne SPCA	Turanga Health
Hear4u	Vero Liability Insurance

Thank you to Jacintha, Kirsty, and John from Wellington for their help in resourcing the Mātai Awhi room; to Blair Knight, Simon Eriksen, Ben Snelling, and Jono Key for organising the Auckland RUM raffle, with a special acknowledgment to Blair Knight for his significant additional support to the fund.

We also extend our gratitude to the Gisborne Cyclone WhatsApp network, initiated by Merrin Quilter, and to Fleur and Simon Gardiner, Katie Lybrook, Tony Stehlin, the Quilter family, and so many others in our network for their huge efforts in distributing food and goods. Our thanks go to Kate Hill (NZVA) and Lindy McGee (Gisborne SPCA) for collaborating with us on animal welfare initiatives. We are very grateful to the Mātai, Turanga Health, and Pultron Composites staff and students for their tireless, hands-on support in the cyclone's aftermath. Mātai also provided a platform for the Gisborne Tairāwhiti Farming Recovery Fund to collect donations and to assist rural Gisborne Tairāwhiti areas with in-kind contributions from Mātai, Coates Associates, and BDO Gisborne.

MĀTAI TAIRĀWHITI RELIEF FUND – 2ND ANNIVERSARY UPDATE

Two years ago, February 12–15, 2023, Cyclone Gabrielle left a trail of destruction that impacted individuals, families, and community organisations. In response, the Mātai Tairāwhiti Relief Fund (MTRF) was launched to provide much needed financial and material support to those affected.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of donors, the fund raised \$535,567, with a special mention going to the Auckland RUM Club raffle, which contributed \$283,000. Every dollar donated went directly to those in need, providing immediate relief while also supporting long-term recovery efforts and future resilience.

The MTRF prioritised funding initiatives that not only offered immediate assistance but also strengthened community resilience for future challenges, with a core focus on supporting those who help others. This included restoring community spaces so they could continue serving their communities, funding disaster

preparedness and resilience efforts, and funding to future-proof communities against future disasters.

The fund also supported the resourcing of the “Awhi” Room, a space where individuals and families could freely access essential supplies such as food, clothing, and hygiene products. Additionally, the room served as a drop-off point for donated goods. Volunteers from Mātai and the wider community helped distribute supplies from the Awhi Room to those struggling to access essential items.

Your support has strengthened communities and made a tangible difference. Two years on, explore the stories of those impacted and see how your generosity has made a lasting impact.



THE IMPACT OF YOUR SUPPORT

RUATORIA CITY SPORTS CLUB \$40,000

MTRF co-funding, alongside Sport Gisborne, was used to repair the club's sports facilities, allowing it to continue providing vital sporting and recreational opportunities to the community.

The funding enabled the club to clean up and reopen its clubrooms toward the end of the 2024 season. This support allowed them to host home games, accommodate teams during the Heartland Competition, and celebrate the end of the season. With additional funding, they secured semi-permanent toilet facilities, new training gear for both senior and junior players, and deep-cleaning equipment. Additionally, they provided players and coaches with pre-game essentials such as strapping tape and medical kits, allowing them to focus solely on the game.

“

The funding also allowed us to set goals, including our short-term objective of reopening and our long-term goal of lifting our clubrooms to create an inclusive and diverse whānau-friendly club. We extend our sincere gratitude for your generous support.”

– Cheyanne Te Maro,
Ruatoria City Sport Club



THE PINEHOLLOW RIDING SCHOOL

\$20,000

Pinehollow provides horse riding activities to schools, kindergartens, and the public, with a strong focus on supporting those with higher needs.

The cyclone left the school covered in contaminated silt that damaged equipment and left it unable to operate. In the months following the cyclone the school considered closing down. The donation enabled Pinehollow to get back on its feet and continue offering services. This included assistance with the removal of contaminated silt, the replacement of essential riding equipment, and repairs to the base of the arena.

“

Thank you for helping us get back up and running, and for your faith in us. Because of your support, we've been able to continue our work with neurodiverse children, trauma-affected youth, and children with behavioural challenges. We hope we have made you proud.”

— Jacquie Paull, Pinehollow Riding School



Before



After



From this . . .



. . . to Wednesday twilight bowls, engaging 60 people each week.

WAIROA BOWLING CLUB

(\$22,000)

The funding was allocated to a crucial project—resurfacing the club's green, which had suffered significant damage. This project was of utmost importance to the club's members, business bowls, schools, and the wider community, as it ensured the restoration of a vital community space. The funds supported resurfacing needs and the replacement of base timber.

“

We the Wairoa Bowling Club and the community are so very grateful for your support it has been a long two years of hard work but when we see the amount of community and club members out on the green laughing and having fun it makes it all worth it.”

— Vern Withy, Wairoa Bowls Club



NGĀTI POROU SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB (SLSC)

\$4,708

Ngāti Porou SLSC operates as a mobile community lifeguard service within the Ngāti Porou rohe, covering the East Cape to Gisborne. The funding was used to replace a damaged equipment trailer, which had hindered the club's ability to resume surf life saving education and patrols. The new trailer ensures the club can continue delivering essential beach safety services to the community.

““

The funding also allowed “It's hard to believe that it's been nearly two years since Cyclone Gabrielle. The support we received has made a world of difference. We're pleased to report that our storage container is now fully repaired, and we've been able to purchase new lifeguard equipment. We're particularly proud to have the highest number of new lifeguards qualified in the Gisborne Tairāwhiti district for the 2023/2024 season. Additionally, we've started our new Mokopuna lifeguard programme this season.”

– Peter Boyd, Kaihautū, Ngāti Porou SLSC

TURANGA HEALTH

\$85,000

In the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle, there was an urgent need to establish a robust emergency response framework in the rural regions of Tūrangānui-a-Kiwa (Poverty Bay). Funding was allocated to two key areas:

EXPERT COUNSELLING TRAINING (\$25,000)

This initiative brought MIND Health to Gisborne to deliver a specialised training course for local counsellors and health coaches within Turanga Health. The training equipped local organisations to facilitate group-based sessions, with a particular focus on supporting rural areas and whānau experiencing post-cyclone distress.

RESILIENCE INFRASTRUCTURE (\$60,000)

Funding was used to develop essential infrastructure to ensure the continuity of emergency response in affected areas, including Muriwai, Manutuke, Waingake, Waerenga Kuri, Ngatapa, Matawai, Motu, and Hangaroa. This included the provision of eight industrial generators, strategically located at priority community hubs to provide reliable alternative power for critical operations. Other items provided where required included an emergency cabin, defibrillator, wheelchair, emergency radio, and power cords. This infrastructure helped with the resilience of key community spaces, safeguarding the well-being of residents and ensuring emergency preparedness in these vulnerable rural areas. Additionally, a van was purchased to provide the Motu Area School with transport.



COMET SWIM CLUB

\$10,000

Following the cyclone, Comet faced a three-week closure and incurred costs of over \$50,000. The funding allowed the club to invest in fitness and on-land training gear for any future closures due to weather events, ensuring that swimmers can continue to train.



The funding was used to help build strength and resilience in our athletes. We've been able to establish a gym/dryland programme that our swim and surf athletes can use to stay active and continue progressing when they can't be in the water. This also enhances their training and development alongside water activities. We've also been able to collaborate with other sports, including surf life saving and Midway SLSC, ensuring that athletes in both settings benefit from the equipment the funds allowed us to purchase. A massive thank you to all involved - the funding it has made a big positive difference in what we do."

– Glenn Hamblyn, Comet Swim Club



TE KARAKA VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE

\$58,000

Heroic actions of the volunteers saved lives during the cyclone. The team is unwavering in their dedication to ongoing community safety.

Funding went towards a dedicated four-wheel drive emergency vehicle which has enhanced their capacity to respond to emergencies.



The vehicle is also in use on call outs for medical responses. It has sped up response times and improved safety. The township is bouncing back with a lot of the affected housing already lifted. Thank you for your support."

– Jamie Simpson, Chief Fire Officer, Te Karaka Volunteer Fire Brigade

TAIRĀWHITI MULTICULTURAL COUNCIL

\$5,000

The organisation supports affected ethnic communities by providing essential resources like food, temporary accommodation, and psychological support. Additionally, their language translation services bridge communication gaps, offering vital assistance.

Through the funding, and a collaboration with Civil Defence, they developed a video delivering key emergency messages in 23 different languages, ensuring migrants and refugees have access to vital information. These are available on [YouTube](#). See also the story in [The Gisborne Herald](#).



HEAR4U

\$40,000

Hear4U was a men's mental health group dedicated to addressing the growing mental health crisis among men in New Zealand. The team worked tirelessly across the region to provide critical support.

The funding enabled the organisation to distribute over 300 parcels and provide much needed additional counselling support services. The parcels became a lifeline with many impacted by the disaster, and helped prevent further mental health distress, even suicide, by opening doors for those impacted to reach out and seek counselling. The team transported parcels via row boats, four-wheelers, and utes. Hear4u helped support more than 400 families in the wake of the disaster.

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For many, this was the first time, they have ever financially asked for help, or food parcels. Many have been rejected by other organisations, or government services, and left to feel embarrassed or unsupported. These parcels have been symbolic of community, support, and understanding. Clients who have received these packages are community role models, taxpayers, and hard-working people - unfortunately, Cyclone Gabrielle has changed their lives - morale is low, but "an act of kindness" can help prevent further mental health distress, even suicide. Many blokes booked counselling sessions, and joined our 8-week challenges as a result too, as packages have been great for marketing our healing pathways. Thank you so much for your support".

– Krissy Mackintosh #Hear4U



THE GISBORNE YOUTH ADVENTURE TRUST

\$25,000

The Trust hosts the Trampoline Club, Gymnastics Club, and Judo Club, while also supporting various community groups, including local clubs and schools. The facility sustained significant damage during the cyclone, such as multiple roof leaks and damage to the entrance area. Thanks to the donations received, the Trust successfully repaired the roof and driveway, ensuring the facility could continue serving the community throughout the winter months.



THE EAST COAST EXCHANGE (ECX)

\$60,000

The East Coast Exchange (ECX) is a community-led funding platform and public record of actions taken by organisations and individuals during and after the cyclone to support recovery, build resilience, and regenerate the Gisborne environment. Guided by its kaupapa—'Empowering Regional Regeneration with Innovative Resource Models for Frontline Action'—ECX has played a key role in powering up regional regeneration, directing funding toward initiatives that strengthen community resilience, enhance local expertise, and enable long-term solutions.

The funding supported out-of-region expertise and community resilience efforts, including:

- Water resilience – Expanding rainwater collection and storage capacity by 46,000L.
- Food security – Supporting the development of community food gardens.
- Strategic knowledge-sharing – Facilitating expertise and insights on climate solutions, sustainable forestry, land use change, water resilience, and aid recovery.
- Economic transition – Supporting nature-based jobs, equitable transitions, circular economy initiatives, and social enterprise.

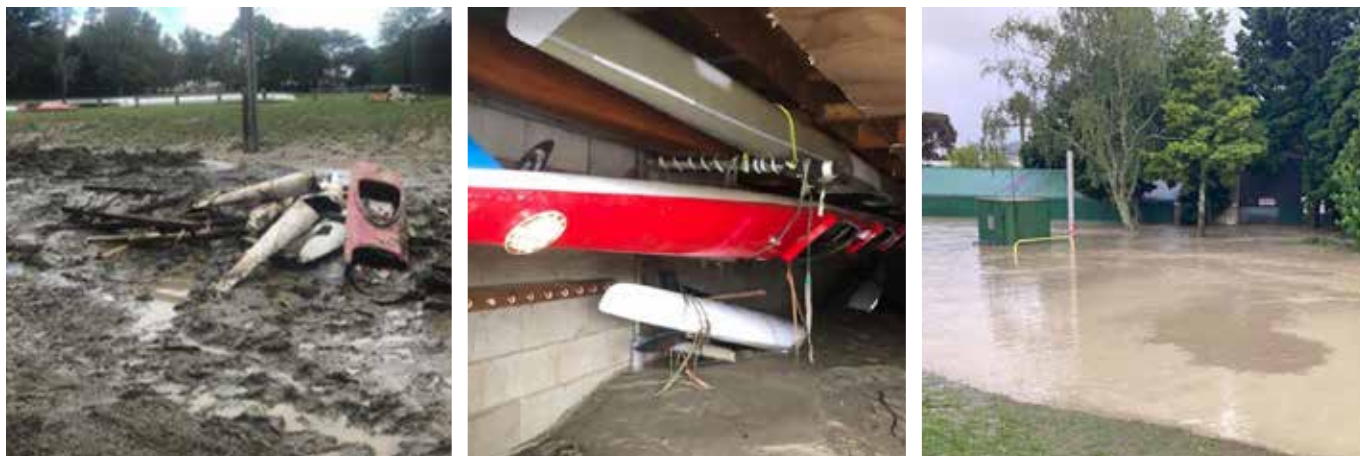
These initiatives have helped build a stronger foundation for recovery in Tairāwhiti, ensuring that communities are better prepared for the future while continuing to restore and regenerate the environment.



THE POVERTY BAY KAYAK CLUB

\$25,643

The club is a popular destination for water sports enthusiasts and provides a platform for people to learn and practice kayaking. The fund enabled the club to purchase five beginner paddle kayaks that were destroyed during the floods.



GISBORNE BMX CLUB

\$16,315

Funding went toward restoring the BMX tracks, making it safe and accessible for the community to use again.

The club held several working bees to restore the track surface. Club volunteers helped to scrape, reshape and re-lime the tracks. With the tracks now in great shape, the club held a successful series of 'Try BMX for Free' sessions in term 3 of 2024. The sessions were open to the community to come down and have a go at BMX riding, with start-up tips and coaching from club members.

The club now has riders training for the Oceania and National Championships coming up in February and March.



Having an upgraded track which stands up to the weather challenges has been hugely beneficial for the riders as they prepare to compete in the biggest events on the annual BMX calendar. We are incredibly grateful to have received the funding which enabled these track upgrades to take place."

– Amy, Secretary of Gisborne BMX



SPITFIRE

\$3,900

With funding support, Spitfire conducted a post-cyclone data gathering initiative. The focus was on properties affected by Cyclone Gabrielle in the Waipaoa and Whatatutu region, to provide a detailed summary of the current state of the impacted areas. First-hand accounts of the damage were collected from the community to help guide and support recovery initiatives.

POVERTY BAY BOWLING CLUB

\$14,000

Recognising the club's role as an important community hub, the fund provided funding to aid in the restoration of the damaged Carpet Green.



MANGATU MARAE

\$70,000

Funding supported the development of a Community Resilience plan for the Mangatū-Whātātūtū-Pūha area. The community was significantly impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle, facing flooding, isolation, limited resources, and a lack of access to medical support and broader assistance. Recognising the challenges of their remote location and inadequate infrastructure, Mangatū Marae took steps to ensure preparedness for future emergencies. The funding enabled them to equip evacuation sites, and establish a dedicated emergency response team comprising local registered nurses and healthcare professionals. As a result they now have plans in place and resources to meet the basic needs of 400-500 people for at least a week, without external aid.



4-wheel quad bikes were provided to enable access and delivery of goods to people when they are cut-off, when roads become hazardous and inaccessible by car/truck.



TE KARAKA BOWLING CLUB

\$14,000

The club faced significant challenges, including the loss of their green, rendering it unusable. As a vital hub for community events, school activities, and social gatherings, the club plays a central role in the Te Karaka community. The funding supported essential repairs, ensuring the club can continue to host these important events.



WAIPAEOA COMMUNITY

\$10,000

The Waipaoa community faced immense challenges following Cyclone Gabrielle, including drainage issues, insurance hurdles, and ongoing weather events.

With support from the MTRF, the community organised a Family Day, attended by around 150 people. The event featured bouncy castles for children, a marquee, and a coffee cart. This gathering provided a much-needed moment of respite and unity. Surplus funds were used to host a community Christmas BBQ,

Inspired by the success of these events, the community is now considering holding annual events to build connections and provide ongoing support for those in need.

The experience inspired one event organiser to take on the role of a civil defence contact for the area, actively collaborating with local authorities to better prepare the community for future challenges.



AWHI ROOM

Mātai set up a space for individuals and families to access free food, clothing, and other necessities. The Awhi room also served as a base for volunteers to connect with those most impacted by the cyclone, delivering food and clothing directly to those unable to visit the facility.

“We had a wonderful surprise when a truck loaded up with supplies for emergency distribution from Wellington turned up. A huge thanks to Jacintha, John, Kirsty and their team of helpers for a gift that became the “Awhi Room” for supplies distribution from the Mātai building. It’s incredible how far and wide the support for Tairāwhiti came from.” – **Samantha Holdsworth, Mātai Director of Research**



SUPPORT

On-the-ground support was provided by Mātai staff, Turanga Health, the Gisborne Cyclone WhatsApp Group, Bunnings Warehouse, and the SPCA. This included assistance with clean-up efforts, delivery of essential items to families and pets, and door-knocking to check on whānau / families.



01: The team at Bunnings put in a tremendous effort to provide urgently needed essentials such as gumboots, and help with distribution.

02: From day one, Fleur (Craigs Investments Partners) and Simon Gardiner alongside Mātai staff worked to deliver food and essential items to the Te Karaka township.

03: Mātai MRI tech Paul Condron and Tuta Ngārimu divided a marlin donated by Fred Lewis for distribution of fresh fish to whānau in need; Kelly Norris and her amazing team of wahine cooked up a storm for our community in need.



01: Deborah Quilter led a team packing goodie boxes for Takiwatanga Tairāwhiti

02: Henry from Turanga Health delivering food for local families – Turanga Health delivered essential health services and provided mobile GP services to communities in need

03: Samantha Holdsworth (Mātai), Lindy McGee (SPCA), and Kate Hill (President NZVA) working towards animal and veterinary welfare.

MTRF DISTRIBUTIONS SUMMARY

\$535,567 TOTAL FUNDS RAISED

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PLANNING

\$85,000	Turanga Health
\$5,000	Tairāwhiti Multicultural Council
\$3,900	Spitfire
\$60,000	East Coast Exchange (Ecx)
\$70,000	Mangatu Marae
\$58,000	Te Karaka Volunteer Fire Brigade
\$40,000	Hear4U

COMMUNITY CLUBS & HUBS

\$25,643	The Poverty Bay Kayak Club
\$25,000	The Gisborne Youth Adventure Trust
\$20,000	The Pinehollow Riding School
\$4,708	Ngati Porou Surf Life Saving Club
\$12,000	Gisborne Rowing Club
\$40,000	Ruatoria City Sports Club
\$16,315	Gisborne BMX Club
\$10,000	Waipaoa community
\$22,000	Wairoa Bowling Club
\$14,000	Te Karaka Bowling Club
\$14,000	Poverty Bay Bowling Club
\$10,000	Comet Swim Club

