

OIA23-0145

26 April 2023

Ted Higgins
fyi-request-22232-dd81ec53@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Ted Higgins

Thank you for your email of 23 March 2023 requesting information relating to an advisement to the senior leadership of Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) regarding psychosocial wellbeing in NZ communities. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You requested the following:

I would like a summary of the advisement to the senior leadership of MPI regarding psychosocial wellbeing in NZ communities, plans underway to address, and reasons for inaction / declination to onboard advice.

Have these conversations taken place? If so, what was the outcome?

I would like the scope of this to extend to the beginning of this calendar year until the date of request.

MPI's Office of Rural Communities work to deliver policy and system advice on issues facing rural communities. Recognising the unique challenges these communities face the Office takes a strategic approach to its work by:

- Prioritising high impact areas where it can work closely with other government agencies and across MPI to develop policies that better support outcomes for our rural communities.
- Focusing on ways to support the upskilling of policy professionals in rural proofing so policies are developed with a clearer understanding of the needs and impacts on rural communities from the start.
- Considering data and insight gaps where opportunities exist to support or undertake further research to better understand the needs of rural communities.

The directorate's mission is to ensure rural communities are prosperous, sustainable, and resilient. We support farmers and growers through changing times and challenging situations.

Through local connections, MPI staff, including senior leadership are aware of the continuing challenges that rural communities are facing.

MPI supports the wellbeing of these communities through funding and working with the national Rural Support Trust (RST) network of 14 regional RSTs and their National Council. This work has been critical following Cyclone Gabrielle and other adverse events. To increase local

connectedness, MPI provides funding and advice to rural community hubs and wellbeing projects. MPI also supports rural advisory groups to ensure that regional Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) organisations are well informed of impacts of adverse events on rural communities and individuals, how well they are coping, and what support would be of most assistance. Through regular meetings with Te Whatu Ora, MPI encourages initiatives that deliver equitable well-being services to rural and isolated people.

Current MPI wellbeing initiatives are focused on primary sector recovery from Cyclone Gabrielle. In addition to adverse event funding for RSTs in the affected areas and grants to primary sector organisations undertaking a range of wellbeing activities, MPI has brought together a primary industry cross-sector group. The focus is on ensuring efficient delivery of recovery events to help people connect and get back on their feet. This group is organising a webinar to discuss wellbeing impacts, provide some light relief and deliver information on available resources. A number of those in the group are also members of an Action group convened by MPI who have developed a wellbeing action plan for the primary sector.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Ministry for Primary Industries at Official.InformationAct@mpi.govt.nz. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143 or at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Story', is positioned above the typed name.

Nick Story
Director Rural Communities & Farming Support