



# Helen Mason

Healthy, thriving communities, *Kia Momoho Te Hāpori Ōranga.*



26 April 2017

## A Heartfelt Thank You

At the Board meeting on 19 April, our Board was briefed on our DHB's response to both ex-tropical cyclone Debbie and ex-tropical cyclone Cook. The Board acknowledged the tremendous efforts by our teams in responding to both of these events. They were impressed with how quickly people responded, and went above and beyond to ensure our communities were as well supported as possible. Our Board members spoke of their pride in our teams who responded so willingly, and so ably.

As I reflect on the events of 5 April, with the flooding of Edgecumbe, followed a week later by further heavy rain, flooding and disruption to services, my heart goes out to those directly impacted by these events. I can't imagine what it is like to be in the shoes of those who have lost their homes, or will not be able to reoccupy their homes for a long time. We have team members who have been directly impacted by these events, and we will be working hard to ensure that we are supporting them and their families as well as we can.

Many of you across our DHB have been in touch asking what you can do to help those displaced, for example through the donation of clothing, household items, etc. We want to ensure that the support we provide is the support needed by our communities and our staff who have been affected. As you may be aware, Karen Smith has agreed to step into the role of Recovery Manager. One of the things Karen will be working on, is giving us advice on how we can best provide that support. Karen will let us know as soon as she can.

I have been reading a bit about how we respond in a crisis. I came across a comment that "ordinary people responded in extraordinary ways". That was certainly the case in how our Bay of Plenty health community responded to the events of recent weeks. There is always the risk, that in acknowledging some people, others are missed out. We will be working hard to ensure that everyone who contributed to the health response is appropriately acknowledged. In the interim, some of the actions which really resonated with me were:

- How with both events, staff quickly stepped up, and were willing to take on additional roles, and work outside of their usual hours.
- How the community providers in Edgecumbe worked so hard to ensure there was access for the Edgecumbe community to GPs services and pharmacy services, so quickly and so effectively.
- How those working in health who were also directly impacted by the events, were still focused on supporting their communities.
- How our neighbouring DHBs, and Canterbury DHB made very early contact with us, to provide support and valuable guidance.
- How quickly some problems were solved, for example getting free GP visits and free pharmaceuticals in place.



Images from our Emergency Operations Centre during the response to ex-tropical cyclone Debbie and ex-tropical cyclone Cook.



Staff of Edgecumbe's Riverlea Medical Centre had to relocate the Centre to Te Teko when their building flooded during the recent emergency.

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**"You never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that it's an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before."**

*Rahm Israel Emanuel (44th, and current, mayor of Chicago).*

- The response of the marae and local kaupapa services in ensuring people were housed, fed, cared for and comforted.
- The collegiality displayed across teams within the DHB, and between the DHB and community providers.
- The responsiveness of community providers, when the call went out seeking their support.
- The great team problem-solving which was demonstrated, along with the depth of knowledge, professionalism and experience demonstrated by our teams.
- Seeing people working together who wouldn't usually have the opportunity to work with one another.
- How calm and methodical people were.
- The lack of any anger, frustration or frayed tempers amongst the health teams responding.

My reflection is that our CARE values strongly informed our response. Our compassion and concern for our communities drove actions. Our compassion for one another, meant that we worked respectfully with one another, and worked to ensure that those who needed additional support in their roles got it. People absolutely demonstrated “will do” attitudes, as well as taking this as an opportunity to work as “all one team”.

It was also a good reminder that true leadership exists beyond title and office. Everyone who stepped up to support the response was demonstrating their leadership skills, and helping to set expectations, regardless of role.

So my heartfelt thanks to everyone who responded to these events, who worked so hard to ensure our communities were supported and had access to the services and advice they needed.

This has also been a sobering reminder for all of us to have good emergency preparations in place for our families and whānau. I encourage you to check again that you have good plans and provisions in place.

There is still a long road ahead for our communities impacted by these events. Our focus now moves to ensuring that they are well supported in the months ahead.



*Bay of Plenty District Health Board Mental Health and Addiction Services clinical director Dr Sue Mackersey with one of the five Hilux 4WD trucks loaned to the DHB by Pacific Toyota over Easter.*