

Hon Mark Mitchell

Minister of Corrections
Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery
Minister for Ethnic Communities
Minister of Police
Minister for Sport and Recreation



REF: EM COR 2024-25-095

May 12, 2025

Chairperson Daran Ponter
Greater Wellington Regional Council
Daran.Ponter@gw.govt.nz

Dear Chairperson Daran Ponter

As you will be aware there has been heightened public interest in how regional and local authorities have managed flood protection and control works during, and in the lead up to, significant weather events, e.g. the Wairoa River bar, and Lakes Ellesmere and Forsyth. This interest has come about as people's homes and/or businesses have been impacted from flood waters, with differing perspectives on what should have been done to manage the infrastructure (including waterways) to mitigate the flooding.

I am mindful that flood protection and control works decisions are taken at the local level and that there are a range of issues or factors that need to be considered when taking immediate remedial or precautionary work.

However, the consequences of these recent experiences have required Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) to be involved. Even when local authority staff and volunteers have done exceptional work to respond to events, the perceived inability to effectively manage the flood protection schemes and waterways has contributed in some places to a lack of public trust in the emergency management system's ability to prepare for and respond to significant weather events.

It is important that, as Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery, I have full confidence that regional and local authorities can make fast, early and well-informed decisions on flood management before and during significant weather events.

For this reason, I am writing to all Council leaders to ask for your frank and honest assessment of your current decision-making processes to effectively manage local waterways to prevent flooding ahead of and during significant weather events. I would also like to hear of any issues and challenges that your Council is addressing to improve decision making, and additional regulatory levers that may be needed.

I would welcome hearing back from you by 30 May 2025. Please send your response to Darren Brunk, Emergency Management and Recovery Private Secretary, emprivatesecretary@parliament.govt.nz

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M Mitchell'.

Hon. Mark Mitchell
Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery