

4 December 2018

Via email to: NationalStrategy@dpmc.govt.nz

National Disaster Resilience Strategy Submissions
Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management
PO Box 5010
Wellington 6145

Dear Sir / Madam,

NATIONAL DISASTER RESILIENCE STRATEGY – RAUTAKI MANAWAROA AITUĀ-Ā-MOTU

Thank you for the opportunity to present our submission on the proposed National Disaster Resilience Strategy.

We support the Strategy's vision and goal, and the three main action areas – Manage Risks; Effective Response to and Recovery from Emergencies; and Strengthening Societal Resilience – are a useful framework for the work we are undertaking at the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) around risk management and building community resilience. Some of the indicators of success are also useful, particularly around community and hapū planning, business continuity, and personal preparedness.

We would, however, like to suggest that the Strategy promote the role of "Citizen Responders"; that is, the contribution of ordinary people during a disaster.¹

There are two key opportunities in acknowledging and developing the citizen responder role:

- Citizen responders as engaged participants: many people caught up in a disaster situation have the ability to take on a participatory rather than a passive role. Active participation can potentially reduce the impression that emergency services will be available as soon as, and for as long as, they are needed. This assumption is an issue in developed countries, such as New Zealand, where heavy reliance on formal responders and their affiliated volunteers has developed.

With the growing likelihood of disasters occurring, particularly with climate change impacts, formal response agencies are likely to be overstretched. The Strategy could provide the opportunity for communities and individuals, who are usually the first on the scene, to develop an understanding of how they might respond in a coordinated manner. This is the rationale behind the QLDC's Community Response Plans. Effectively, these plans provide a framework in which local individuals and households, agencies, organisations, vulnerable populations, and formal responders will work together during and after a crisis.

¹ Whittaker, J., McLennan B., & Handmer J., "A review of informal volunteerism in emergencies and disasters: Definition, opportunities and challenges", *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 12 (2015) 358-368

- Citizen responders as effective support: Citizen responders can be a valuable and skilled resource for formal responders who may not always be on ground immediately. The Strategy could take a broader view of “informal volunteerism” to include the role of “digital volunteers” who are in a position to deliver effective “real-time” communications during emergency situations.

Emphasising the role of citizen responders will strengthen the National Disaster Resilience Strategy by acknowledging the time, knowledge, skills and resources that ordinary people can contribute in times of crisis. It can reduce reliance on formal emergency responders, and build community confidence and resilience.

Please note that this submission reflects the position of officers and has not been ratified by full Council.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Theelen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Theelen
Chief Executive
Queenstown Lakes District Council