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MIN-4058 – talking points for oral update on the upper North Island flooding events – update 2

31 January 2023

Provide the Minister with an update on the impacts on transport links in the upper North Island following the recent flooding events

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Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's response:

- Unprecedented rain resulting in the highest daily rainfall on record in some areas has hit much of the upper North Island. Auckland has been particularly hard hit with severe flooding. Waka Kotahi has had staff and contractors working 24 hours to manage this event. Their staff advise that this event is unprecedented on the road network.

- There will be long term transport impacts for this event for both local roads and state highways. Waka Kotahi is working closely with its local government partners to understand the impacts.

- A high number of roads have been impacted by surface flooding and slips. While work to reopen highways in Auckland and Northland has occurred overnight on Friday and into Saturday, more slips have formed in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty region, forcing additional closures.

- Waka Kotahi has crews working around the clock the fix damage across the state highway network. The priority is to ensure the safety of road workers and motorists as further heavy rain is expected on 30 and 31 January on the east and south of Auckland, and into Waikato.

- While there are multiple closures on the state highway network, there are also a number of detours that are available for people that still need to travel. It is important to note that there are potential delays expected for motorists on these alternative routes.

- Waka Kotahi is directing motorists to Journey Planner for the latest updates on state highway road closures and alternative routes prior to travel, and is working with agencies in Auckland, including Auckland Transport to ensure that information being provided to motorists about their journeys is consistent. Motorists are also urged to avoid all non-essential travel.

Clearances to date:

- Contractors worked hard in extreme conditions to clear the overslip on State Highway 16 (SH16) on 27 January. SH16 by West Coast Road is experiencing intermittent closures which coincide with high tides. Waka Kotahi teams are on-site.

- SH1 Pūhoi to Warkworth was fully opened removing material overnight on 28 January. A temporary speed limit remains in place.

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- The overslip at SH1 Lonely Track on the Auckland Motorway has been cleared, and the road is now open in both directions.
- Flooding and slips are now clear on SH3 Te Kūiti and SH25 Thames to Coromandel is open under stop/go restrictions.
- All upper North Island regions have been responding to many slips on the State Highway network and teams have prioritised the reestablishment of access, which in some cases results in only single lanes being available.

Projected work and timeframes:

- A number of trees have come down alongside sizeable slips on SH1 over the Brynderwyn Hills, closing the highway from the SH12 intersections to Waipu. Multiple crews and geotechnical teams are working to clear the road. Work is being done to assess areas of risk, and anticipated impacts.
- The team in the Coromandel are busy working on reinstating access on SH25
- This team is also starting to develop a plan for the significant underslip on SH25A, which will take some time to open.
- With the benefit of work that has been undertaken since Friday, and knowledge of upcoming weather, contingency plans will be put in place.

Use of Pūhoi to Warkworth Expressway:

- Due to the closure of SH1 in both directions through Dome Valley, Pūhoi and the Brynderwyns, Waka Kotahi and its construction partners worked with Police to escort stranded motorists through the under construction Pūhoi to Warkworth motorway.
- This was done under strict health and safety protocols for a two-hour period between 2am – 4am on 28 January. Waka Kotahi is aware of some unsafe behaviour from motorists who have continued to attempt to enter the site after the convoy was completed at 4am, and security is in place at the site to ensure that motorists do not continue to attempt to enter the road.

State Highway 25A:

- The major drop-out site on SH25A continues to move, and more ground has been lost over the past 24 hours. SH25A is currently closed and is expected to remain closed for some time.
- Many slips have occurred on SH24, which is also closed. The slips are being worked on to reinstate access to the north of the Coromandel Peninsula.

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- Waka Kotahi is working through solutions for a long-term fix of SH25A. The situation is complex due to the amount of road surface and earth lost in the collapse.
- As soon as the weather allows the geotechnical assessments will recommence, which will inform the best way to rebuild the road as robustly as possible.
- The ability to commence physical works on site will depend on site conditions, which will be assessed this week. Information regarding costs and timeframes in not available as the situation is evolving and we are still in the emergency response phase.

Northern Gateway:

- The toll on the Northern Gateway has been paused from 5pm Monday, 30 January 2023, until 10pm Sunday, 5 February 2023, or until the state of emergency in Auckland is lifted.
- It will provide motorists who need to travel a reliable alternative to SH16 which is affected by flooding and the Hibiscus Coast Highway on-ramp which is closed due to damage.

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Backpocket information:

Current road closures and opening:

Roads that are now open, following previous closure (as at 8am 31 January):

SH1 Puhoi

SH1 St Marys Bay

SH25 Thames to Coromandel

SH3 Te Kuiti
SH2 Gisborne to Opotiki

SH43 Statford to Taumuruni

SH41 Tokaanu - closed between SH47 and SH32 due to a large slip.

SH25 Coromandel to Whitianga

SH2 Mangatawhiri to Maramarua

SH2 Between SH 25 and Mangatarata

Current closures include (as at 8am 31 January):

SH1 Brynderwyn - multiple slips

SH1 Hibiscus Coast Highway on-ramp

SH16 Helensville to Waimauku

SH26 Te Aroha to Paeroa

SH25A – due to storm damaged road (drop out). This will be closed for a considerable length of time.

SH37 Waitomo – closed due to a slip

Public Transport as at 3pm 30 January:

All modes are operating the Sunday timetable (with exception of the train block of lines) and normal operations are expected today.

Bus
- Northern Busway is fully operational and back at normal speed levels.

Train
- The Eastern and Western lines continue to be the focus of timetable disruptions for Tuesday given the slips.
- Auckland one Rail (AOR) are inspecting all train stations platforms.
- Pumping of water out of Britomart continues, further updates are expected.

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Ferry

- Ferries are a little busier today than expected. The first Hobsonville service has been sent and the only outstanding service not running is Rakino, no service tomorrow is expected either.

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