

# Civil Defence

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Labour will:

- Lead, and implement the findings of, a Cross-Party Review of Civil Defence
- Ensure recovery planning is embedded in our preparedness planning and training and develop a more sustainable volunteer base.
- Establish a 24/7/365 Day warning system for tsunamis and other emergencies and ensure consistent informed communications about emergencies

## Introduction

Nothing is more important than keeping our families and communities safe. Our Civil Defence services must be ready to respond effectively to any emergency and, more importantly, we must all be prepared for emergencies before they happen.

Events in Canterbury have heightened the public awareness of the types of risks that are a reality in New Zealand. People are more mindful than ever that we will all get through emergencies better if we get ready in advance. Labour will use this heightened awareness to ensure all New Zealanders do become as prepared as they can be for possible future events.

Civil defence and emergency management is substantially about resource and information co-ordination and planning undertaken at a regional and local government level. Emergency services, such as Police, Fire, Ambulance and other health services, play a critical role in our response to emergency situations. It is essential those services are integrated into every aspect of emergency management planning.

Labour has initiated a Parliamentary Inquiry and cross-party reference group on effective warning systems and civil defence co-ordination generally. Labour will implement the recommendations of that inquiry and ensure it brings forward appropriate and effective recommendations.

## Planning

New Zealand needs to be prepared for the next civil defence emergency before it happens – how we plan for a major event will determine in large part its impact. Labour's approach will bring a more integrated and co-ordinated sector to work effectively before an emergency happens.

It is vital that our civil defence and emergency services, such as Police, Fire, Ambulance and other health services, work in a cohesive but complementary way. There is increasing overlap in

responsibilities between the agencies, but also the need for each agency to have a clearly defined role in times of emergency.

This also applies to the roles of central and local government; the latter being particularly vital in terms of the Civil Defence structure.

**Labour will:**

- Initiate, lead, and implement the findings of, a Cross-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Civil Defence
- Ensure that recovery planning is embedded in our preparedness planning and training
- Ensure a 24/7/365 day GeoNet warning service, particularly for tsunami monitoring, and that communications are informed and consistent and there is clear co-ordination and chain of command in all emergencies
- Recognise the achievements of civil defence and promote learning from good practice to reach out to other organisations.

## **Volunteers**

The leadership and expertise of staff and volunteers are essential to an effective response to a major event.

In the immediate aftermath of the Canterbury earthquakes, various volunteer networks emerged to help tackle the huge recovery task ahead. From the trained staff helping with the emergency response to the university students and farmers offering to help shovel silt, every helping hand was needed to make this a manageable task.

However there is a question that must be asked about the sustainability of the volunteer networks that make up Civil Defence, which have struggled to find new recruits.

**Labour will:**

- Develop the sustainability of a volunteer base and also the capacity within communities to undertake the response and recovery roles in a crisis.

## **Empowering Communities**

For successful management of emergencies we must make sure that our communities have the resources and information they need to respond to a crisis and manage their own recovery.

We need to ensure everyone in New Zealand has access to Civil Defence information, including visitors. Public education needs to be targeted to Māori, Pacific peoples, migrants and other non-English speaking groups, as well as people with special needs, the elderly and children.

Campaigns need to take into account the different needs of different sectors of New Zealand society – e.g. people in rural areas as well as people in urban areas.

Part of this approach includes ensuring communities have the power to mobilise and develop their own ways to response to an emergency like the Student Army in Canterbury. Maori, particularly through Marae, should be proactively involved in emergency management planning, volunteer co-ordination and the provision of safe shelter and facilities.

**Labour will:**

- Restore the focus on empowering communities to develop their resilience and capacity for collaboration with and within communities so that they can not only respond to a crisis, they can own their recovery
- Work with schools, educational institutions, local government, health services, voluntary agencies and community groups to be ready to act appropriately and effectively in an emergency as did the Student Army.

