

COMMUNICATING TO STAKEHOLDERS AND CUSTOMERS CRITICAL IN STORMY TIMES

Case study on Watercare's response to the Auckland Anniversary
Flood and Cyclone Gabrielle

Rachel Hughes, Head of Communications, Watercare



The double whammy: *Auckland Anniversary weekend floods*



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Impact on services

- Around 3,000 homes were without water for up to five days after a slip broke a watermain.
- The quality of the water in our dams deteriorated due to slips. This restricted the volume of water we could treat.
- One water treatment plant was flooded and remains offline.
- Ten wastewater pump stations were flooded, destroying their pumps and electrical systems.
- Around 100 local wastewater pipes were broken by landslides.

The double whammy: *Cyclone Gabrielle*

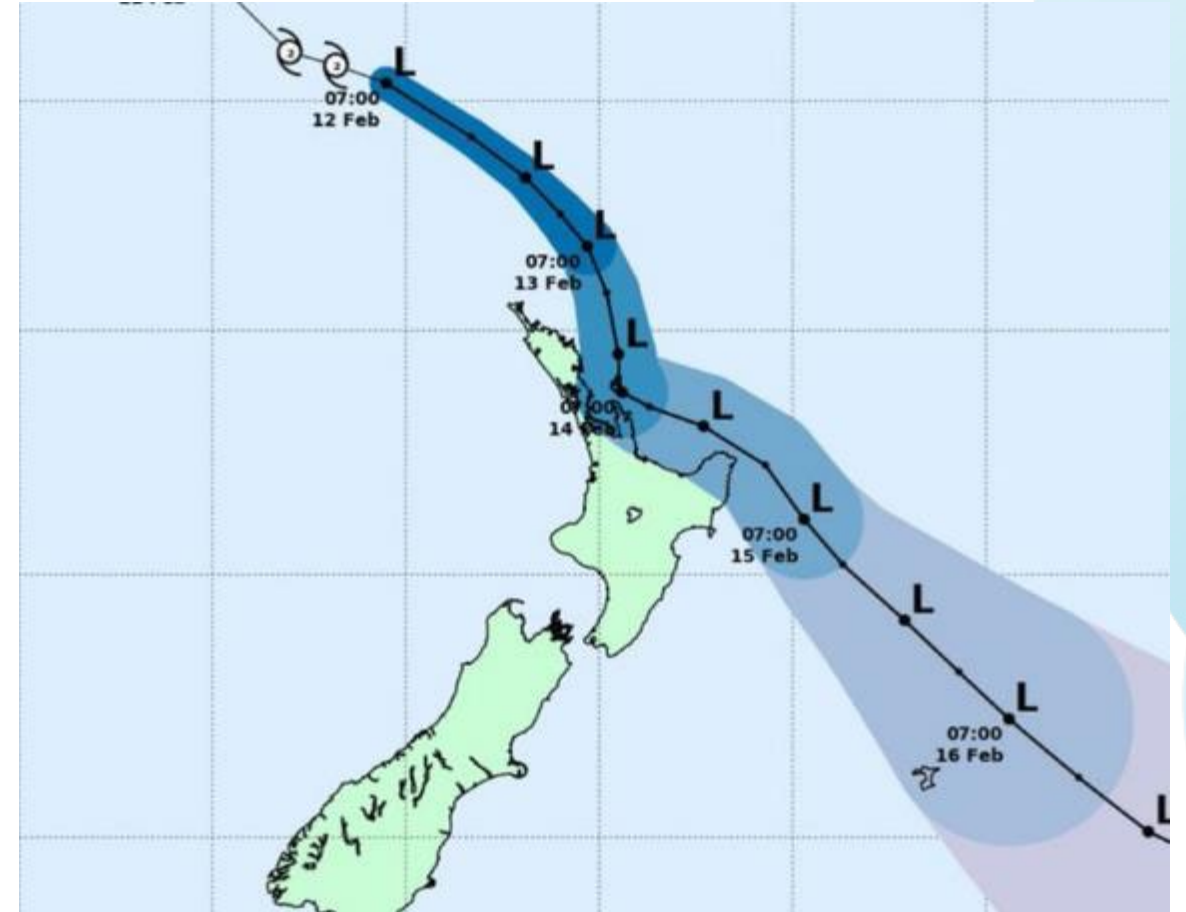
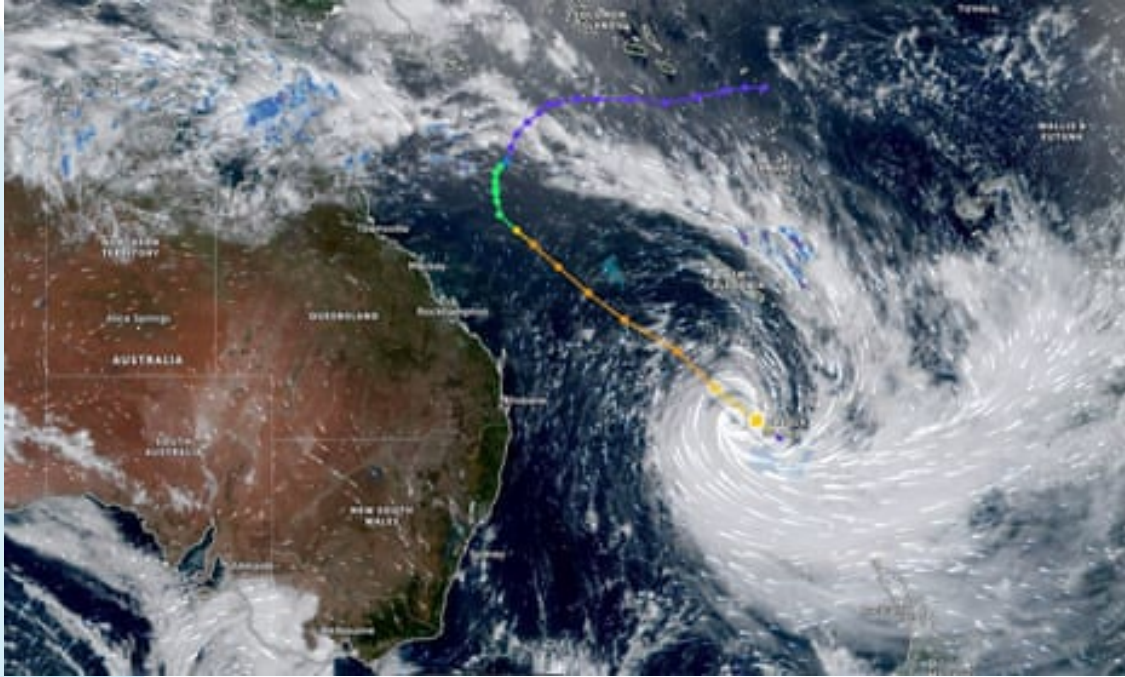


Image credits: *The Guardian* (above) and *Radio NZ* (right).

The double whammy: *Cyclone Gabrielle*




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Impact on services

- Muriwai's water supply was severely damaged by a landslide.
- Three local water treatment plants shut down temporarily due to water quality, process, or power issues.
- Numerous local wastewater pump stations shut down temporarily due to power outages.
- The quality of the water in our dams deteriorated further due to slips.

A strategic approach to communications



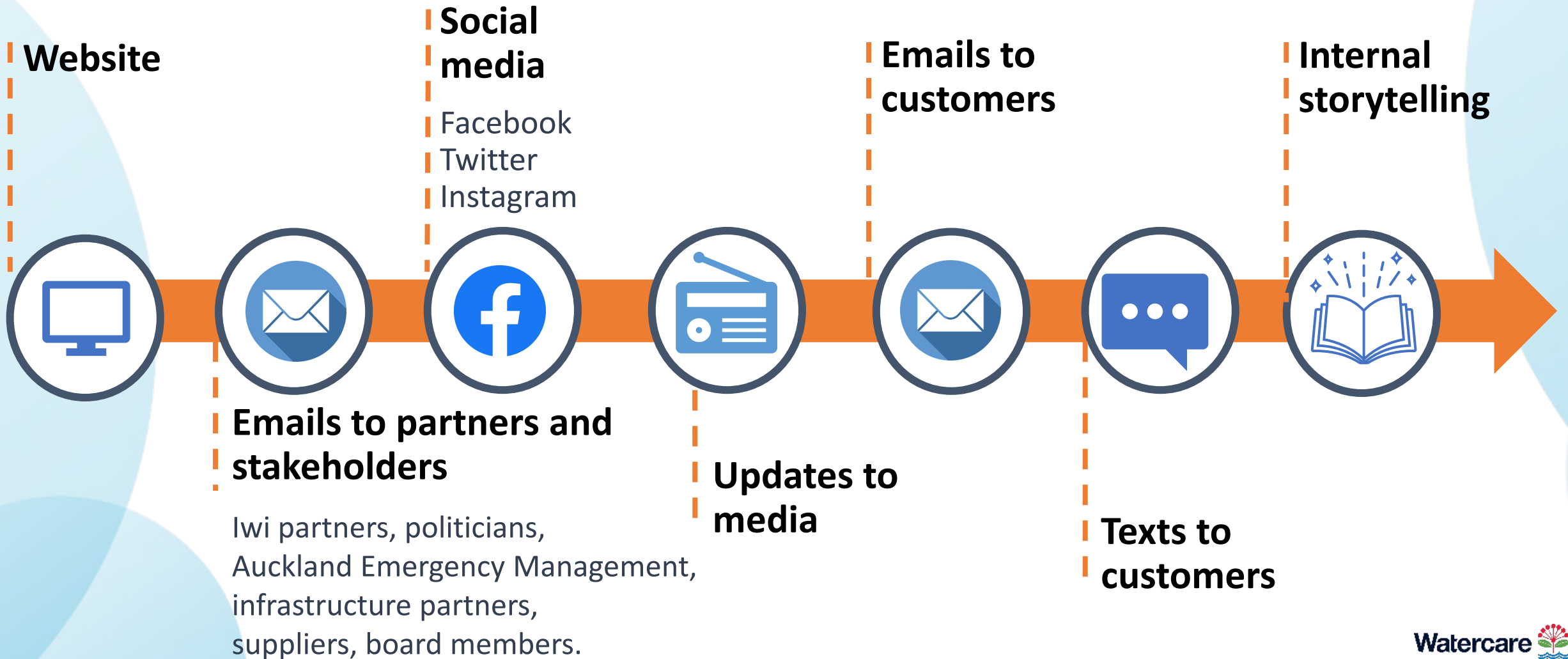
Stay in control of your
narrative!

**Don't let misinformation
and rumour fill a void.**

Timeliness is everything.

Don't aim for perfection.

How we ran our communications response



The power of social media

We flooded our social media channels with messaging

We posted on our pages and in community groups.

We asked stakeholders to share all our content to extend reach.



The power of being prepared



The power of networks

Learnings from across the ditch

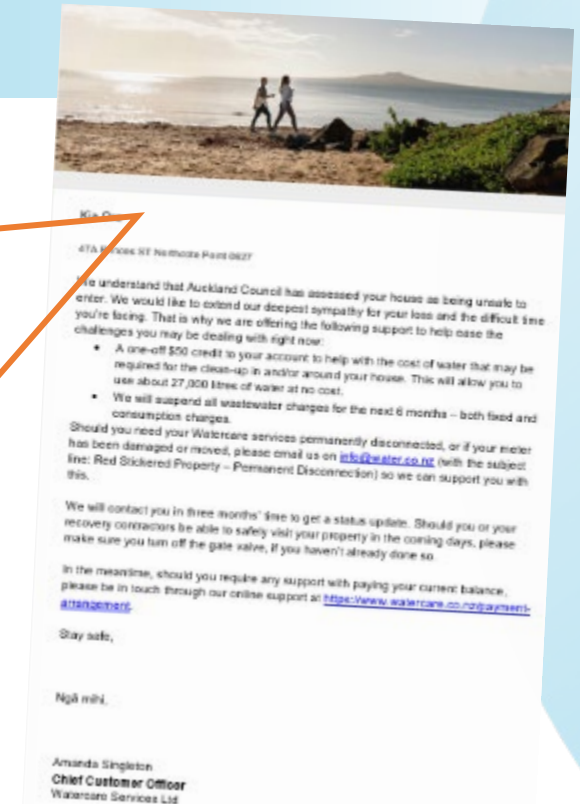
What our Australian colleagues told us:

- Watch out for fatigue it's a marathon
- Be clear on your priorities throughout
- Get ready to do it better next time

What we were able to do:

- Proactively offer a relief fund to impacted
- Arrange community drop in sessions

"Wow, Thank you so much for your concern and considerate offer. It is so lovely to not have to tell our story over and over."
Kind regards
Suzanne



Results

*“Well done, Watercare.
Plenty of timely
communication and talented
staff who performed the
physical work in an efficient
manner.”*

Customer via Facebook

*“Just a note to say that the
emails are right up there
with the best common
sense and informative
notices I’ve seen from utility
agencies in a long time. As
in probably ever.”*

Customer via LinkedIn

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Patai?

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