

Ready For Anything

QUEENSTOWN LAKES COMMUNITY RESILIENCE GROUP NETWORK

Quarterly Update



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Queenstown Lakes Community Resilience Group Network - Quarterly Update December 2025

In this edition: CRG updates | News and views | Meet Bill Nicoll | Events and training | Tools and resources

It's been a busy quarter, with weather events, emergency team deployments, diplomatic visits, and projects kicking off! More on all of these below. We also have lots of updates coming about solar and batteries, so we'll pull these together and send out a special edition newsletter in the new year.

Before diving in, a huge thank you from QLDC and Emergency Management Otago (EMO) for your mahi during the recent weather event - especially the Glenorchy and Kingston CRGs, who rallied their communities and kept everyone informed and supported. Your efforts were a vital part of the response.

CRG updates



- Every event offers valuable learnings, and we're grateful to Glenorchy and Kingston for sharing their key takeaways to help us all strengthen our plans. It's especially helpful to see what worked well and what could be improved from the perspective of both an experienced and a new CRG. [Check out this Lessons Learned document for a deeper dive into the weather event.](#)
- Last month, the Wānaka CRG joined the [WAO walking tour](#), teaming up with other local groups to highlight community resilience (see photo). The sunshine definitely helped and there was plenty of time for good conversations about personal, household, and community preparedness. Local geologist Graeme Halliday fielded questions about Wānaka's landscape, earthquake risks, and flood hazards, helping people understand what these events could mean for the town. It was an awesome opportunity to connect with the community in a relaxed setting and to work alongside some of the strategic partners the CRG collaborates with around town.
- The Southern Corridor CRG kicked off the festive spirit with pre-Christmas drinks for its team and neighbouring CRGs. It was a great chance to catch up, connect with Frankton and Kingston members, and swap a few stories.

News and views

Council emergency management representation and structures

With the new council settling in, there's a lot happening in terms of briefings and committee allocations. Councillor Jon Mitchell, an experienced emergency management professional, has been appointed to the Mayors Joint Committee to support Mayor John Glover on Civil Defence matters. He'll also co-chair the Lifelines Committee, which covers power, comms, transport, three waters, ports/airports, and food security, and represent QLDC on the Otago Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Committee. Council staff will run an emergency management induction for councillors on 18 December and provide regular updates to the new Organisational Excellence Committee. Read [more about Jon](#), or [view the committee structures](#).

CARE project underway

QLDC, EMO, and Queenstown Airport Corporation (QAC) have teamed up on a joint initiative to further the district's AF8 earthquake planning. The CARE (Coordinated Air Repatriation and Evacuation) project aims to bring together the aviation community and subject-matter experts to co-design a practical, coordinated framework for aviation operations at Queenstown and Wānaka airports if the district becomes isolated following a major event. We'll keep you updated as the work progresses.

Accommodation sector workshops

In recent months, QLDC and EMO have worked with Destination Queenstown (DQ) to deliver emergency preparedness workshops for the local accommodation sector, with Upper Clutha sessions coming in the new year. The workshops focused on likely impacts of a major event like an AF8 earthquake, the critical role accommodation providers play in supporting visitors, and practical ways to strengthen their business continuity plans.

Backup power and communications, emergency supplies, strong manaakitanga (duty of care), and clear, calm communication were highlighted as essential for keeping guests safe and supporting the EOC with a coordinated approach to visitor welfare. Key messages included:

- **Shelter guests in place** if it's safe to do so, look after them, and keep them informed.
- **Liaise with DQ on capacity and needs** so this information can be passed to the district EOC.
- **Follow official instructions** on when and how people can leave the area to avoid unsafe or unmanaged movement. This includes **keeping roads clear for emergency services**, and **not going to the airport until advised** as operations will be suspended while comprehensive safety inspections and works are carried out.

Educational embassy visits

The British High Commission and the Australian and Dutch embassies recently visited Queenstown to meet local service providers and learn about support available to their nationals. They also updated groups on their consular services and how they assist their citizens. Emergency Management Otago briefed them on regional emergency and visitor welfare planning to help them understand what to expect during events and how they can help.

Emergency mobile phone coverage system extended to community groups

From mid-2026, the [Public Safety Network](#)'s emergency mobile coverage will extend beyond 25,000 frontline responders to include government, not-for-profits, and critical lifeline and infrastructure groups. [Read more](#).

Key Southern state highway upgrades

NZTA is investing in [resilience upgrades](#) on SH6 Cromwell–Frankton (\$3.9m), SH6 Frankton–Kingston (\$1.6m), and SH94 Milford Sound–Te Anau Downs (\$2m).

Vehicle-to-grid trial powers up energy resilience

NZ's first vehicle-to-grid (V2G) charger trial launches in Queenstown in early 2026, enabling EV owners to draw power from the grid and send it back. The 18-month EECA-funded project, run by the Queenstown Electrification Accelerator and Rewiring Aotearoa, aims to cut power bills, reduce peak demand, and boost resilience in a hazard-prone region. With newer EVs able to store several days of household electricity, the trial will generate NZ's first

large-scale data across homes, businesses, and vehicles, potentially paving the way for a national rollout. Visit the [Queenstown Electrification Accelerator website](#) for more details.

Long-term resilience planning

The [latest Government briefing](#) talks about how NZ can strengthen its resilience to severe weather, earthquakes, and other hazards, as well as the tough decisions and opportunities ahead for building a safer future.

Emergency Management Bill Introduced

The Emergency Management Bill was introduced in Parliament last week, marking a key milestone in strengthening our emergency management system and replacing the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002. The Bill responds to improvements identified after the North Island severe weather events and aims to strengthen the role of communities and iwi Māori, clarify responsibilities at all levels, lift minimum standards, minimise disruption to essential services, and ensure agencies have the tools they need in an emergency.

Key changes include providing membership roles for iwi Māori, rural communities and the wider community on Coordinating Executive Groups, and requiring engagement with iwi Māori and those disproportionately affected – such as disabled people and seniors – when developing local and national plans. The Bill also introduces mechanisms to set and enforce standards, updates how essential infrastructure providers are identified, and places more emphasis on councils' roles. More detail can be found in the [explanatory note at the start of the Bill](#).

Following its first reading, the Bill will be considered by the Governance and Administration Select Committee. The legislation is expected to pass in 2026.

Meet our new Controller



And while we're on the subject of Emergency Management Bills, we're pleased to introduce our new Controller! Bill Nicoll is known for his calm head, sharp thinking, collaborative leadership style, and ability to get results, and has held several roles during his nine years with QLDC.

He is the Resilience and Climate Action Manager, leading the district's climate and biodiversity work programme in partnership with mana whenua, the Climate Reference Group, local communities, and partners. He also drives the council's emergency management readiness, working closely with Emergency Management Otago, emergency services, lifeline agencies, CRGs, and groups to strengthen the district's preparedness.

With a background in engineering, systems thinking, resilience development, public sector leadership, and crisis management, Bill specialises in problem-solving and turning strategy into practical action, especially where climate, nature, and community resilience intersect. He brings the same focus and energy to life outside work, enjoying family time with his wife and three children, and staying active in the outdoors.

After years as QLDC's Emergency Response Manager, he is now a qualified Civil Defence Controller, one of four at QLDC, alongside Tony Avery, Katherine Harbrow, and Ken Bailey. His first hit-out was the recent weather event... a baptism by storm, literally.

What does a Controller do?

They're the Big Cheese in a crisis - taking command of an emergency response at the local, group, or national level. Their mission is to lead, direct, and coordinate all activities needed to save lives, protect property, and bring the situation under control. When a State of Emergency is declared, Controllers are granted additional statutory powers that allow them to access extra support and assets, direct people and resources, restrict or close areas, and make urgent decisions to protect the community.

Events and training

Southland strong

After supporting the Queenstown Lakes District response, Bill Nicoll and our EMO team (Craig, Dave, Jacqui, and Courtenay) quickly redeployed to Balclutha to step into key roles and relieve local teams. Sending [CIMS-trained staff](#) from councils, Civil Defence, and public sector organisations to other regions is part of a nationwide reciprocal

arrangement that boosts surge capacity and strengthens capability across the motu. Staff from around the country have joined Southland's response, working long hours in tough conditions and spending time away from their families to support local teams and help communities recover faster.

District-wide radio exercise postponed

Unfortunately the October weather event and EMO deployment put the kibosh on the planned radio exercise. With Christmas coming and calendars filling up, it will be rescheduled for the new year. Stay tuned for updates.

CRG network get-together

We're keen to host a CRG network get-together early next year to thank you for your mahi and give everyone a chance to connect. Got any ideas? We'd love to hear them - email Jen at jen@flyingsquad.nz.

Tools and resources

New swag

The team's been busy creating some new goodies for you! New CRG vests and official Community Emergency Hub signs are being printed to help boost visibility for CRG teams and mark primary hub locations. Your Emergency Management Advisors will distribute these once ready.

More downloadable resources

E-copies of the new Kerbside Collections in an Emergency poster and social media tile are now available in the [CRG Shared Resources Hub](#), our online library of downloadable 'templates' and promotional tools.

Quote of the Quarter

"A problem well stated is a problem half solved." - Charles Kettering

That's us for 2025. Thank you so much for your support and mahi this year! We wish you a Mere Kirihimete and a safe, relaxing holiday. Fingers crossed for an emergency-free 2026. Staff will be on-call over the Christmas period in case of... nope, not going to jinx it!

Please keep in touch and share your ideas, suggestions and news with us - email Jen Andrews at jen@flyingsquad.nz.