

Greater flood support coming

The Government has promised further support for flood-affected areas in the lower North Island.

Prime Minister John Key and Civil Defence Minister Nikki Kaye visited Whanganui yesterday, to see the damage and meet mayors of areas ravaged by floods earlier this week.

Before a closed-door meeting with the mayors, Key and Kaye took an aerial tour of the flood-affected areas.

Kaye announced an additional \$50,000 for the Taranaki mayoral relief fund.

Horizons Regional Council has estimated the initial cost of flood recovery to be around \$120 million.

Key said historically the Government has paid 60 per cent of those costs.

He said it was early days and the Government would have to go back and assess what the next step would be.

"We had an opportunity to first hand see the damage, and get a sense of the recovery programme that is required," he said.

"I think what you can see is that the damage... on the farm, to roading and to the urban environment is greater than it was probably initially assessed.

"We are very conscious of the fact that a lot of damage has been done.

"For some of our farmers here this is going to be quite a slow and long recovery process.

"It's quite a major event for the region.

"We will need to go away now and work out what the next steps are from the Government's point of view."

Kaye said from existing mechanisms and previous events they know the Government will contribute at least 60 per cent.

The focus would be on supporting those whose homes were inaccessible, followed by the roading problems.

The Government would work alongside the mayors and the councils to work out where the gaps were



Dr Louise Webster is in Taranaki to play in the Doctors Orchestra, which is having a concert to raise money for Taranaki Hospice. Photo: ANDY JACKSON/FAIRFAX NZ

Playing music good stress relief

HELEN HARVEY

Statistics show doctors suffer high levels of stress, but playing music is one way they can chill out, paediatrician Dr Louise Webster says.

Webster said doctors had very high rates of depression and suicide but one of the best antidotes she'd found was keeping up an outside interest.

For Webster, who works at Starship Hospital, it is playing the violin in the Doctors' Orchestra, which is holding a charity concert for the Taranaki Hospice at the TSB Showplace on Sunday at 2pm.

Webster, who is one of more than 80 doctors and medical

students in the orchestra, said stress and depression was a problem for all health professionals. "If you look at mental health across the spectrum our stats aren't good.

"Any population studies show we have higher rates of stress-related symptoms and depression. It doesn't matter what discipline you do, doctors, nurses, the lot.

"We have lower levels of preventative health care, are less likely to go to the doctor when we are sick. So health professionals aren't great at taking care of our health and we have high rates of stress-related and mental health problems."

A big part of this is the culture, she said. "It's stiff upper lip, it's

just part of the job, you've just got to do it, you've just got to harden up. It's really unhelpful."

When staff got burnt out it was really bad for their patients and staff retention suffered.

"The Medical Council of New Zealand is very aware of this and is trying to do something about it. They have projects to try to get doctors to take care of themselves."

Traditionally doctors have not had a good work life balance, Webster said.

"But I think that is starting to change. The younger generation coming through are really questioning and looking at older doctors and saying 'do I want to live my life that way, do I want to

work those hours?'"

As a first-year surgeon she worked more than 125 hours a week and it was completely non-negotiable, she said.

"Now the hours have improved, but compared to how it was for my generation there is much more scrutiny, it is very stressful for young doctors and nurses coming through."

Webster teaches medical school students and often sees students she knew when they played music at high school.

"I say to them, I hope you are still playing the violin. Don't give up the oboe. Keeping up other interests is a very good antidote. It's important to keep other things going in your life."