

# FIRSTMATE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

1 JULY 2023 TO 30 JUNE 2024





## Mission Statement\*

FirstMate is about people who depend on the revenue of the seafood sector to ensure:

Their wellbeing is enhanced • Pride in the sector • Successful whānau  
Resilient businesses • Strong sector and strong future

## Our Values\*

Mana • Respect • Trust • Confidentiality • Collaboration  
Professionalism • Empathy

\*Mission Statement and Values developed by Capiche based on SSI team documents and discussions with stakeholders in 2019.



# Message from the Co-Chair, Geoff Donley



Kia ora,

Welcome to FirstMate's 2023-2024 Annual Report. In this report we cover how our charity was able to support New Zealand's fishers, marine farmers and their whanau with their mental health and wellbeing.

Our vision is unwavering. We know mental health and wellbeing is a critical challenge in our seafood community, where our seafood community need to be able to access people that deeply understand them and their unique issues.

From 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, our Navigators, our help line and our support services supported 80 fishers and marine farmers. These were not one-off chats. Each client averaged five interactions to make sure they were getting the support they needed.

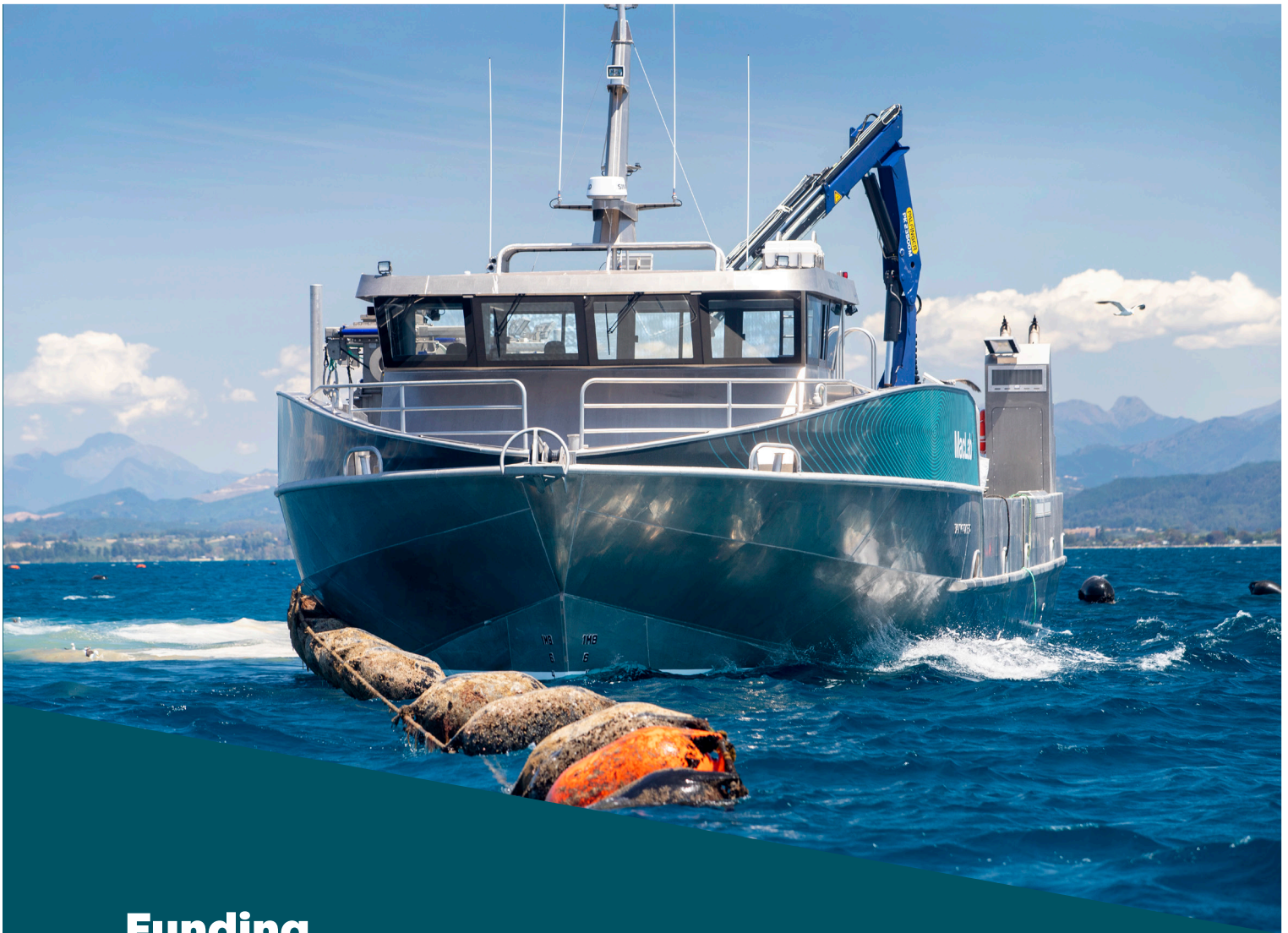
The main stressors exhibited were depression, stress, anxiety, financial, a relationship stressor, crew/employment issue or drug/alcohol issues. The support provided tends to be general – a listening ear from someone who'd been there and understands. We also referred some of our clients for counselling support or for agency, employment or financial support services.

Each person who gets in contact has unique and different stressors, and knowing that they have access to someone who cares and understands cannot be underestimated.

## Through the year, our internal focus has been on:

- » Strategic business planning including a business case for reduced spend, financial reporting, budgeting, administration and reporting
- » Service agreements with our main contractors
- » Engagement with MPI and strengthening relationships
- » Engagement with our seafood sector stakeholders and strengthening relationships
- » Continued fundraising to support the sustainable delivery of FirstMate

**Nga mihi,  
Geoff Donley**



## Funding

**This year marked a significant shift in FirstMate's funding structure. We transitioned from full government funding to a co-funding model.**

This included the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) contributing \$400,000 in annual funding, with additional support allocated for Cyclone Gabrielle recovery efforts.

Several businesses offered financial support to FirstMate, including Penwarden Trust, Shipwreck Relief Fund Trust and Ocean Law.

Collaborating closely with industry bodies, we successfully secured their financial support and are grateful for their help to deliver our services: Seafood NZ, Aquaculture New Zealand (AQNZ), NZ Rock Lobster Industry Council (NZ RLIC), and Paua Industry Council (PIC).

Our focus concentrated on financial sustainability and to this end, we created a business case that identified a leaner business operating model. This included workshops, Board engagement and investment in time and effort to build a model that would best service those in need into the future.

The business case also identified that we needed to better fundraise, and through this year we prioritised government relations, building relationships with the new portfolio Ministers and their teams so they understood and engaged with the work of FirstMate.

We also drafted fundraising and sponsorship strategies to better plan how we could access funding for future business sustainability.

The funding environment through the year became more challenging, and it's likely that there will be changes to FirstMate operations required in the next financial year.

## On-the-ground and grassroots support for fishers, marine farmers and their whānau

We supported 80 fishers and marine farmers (our clients) from all over New Zealand, with 94 cases and 403 interactions (average of 5 interactions per client), most of which were mail (83%). Our clients primarily came from Inshore (55%), aquaculture (13%), deep sea (11%) and Rock Lobster (11%).



The top five locations include Nelson Bays (16.3%), Christchurch (8.8%), Southland (8.8%), Gisborne (7.5%), Napier (7.5%) and then 18 other regions between 6.3% and 1.3%.



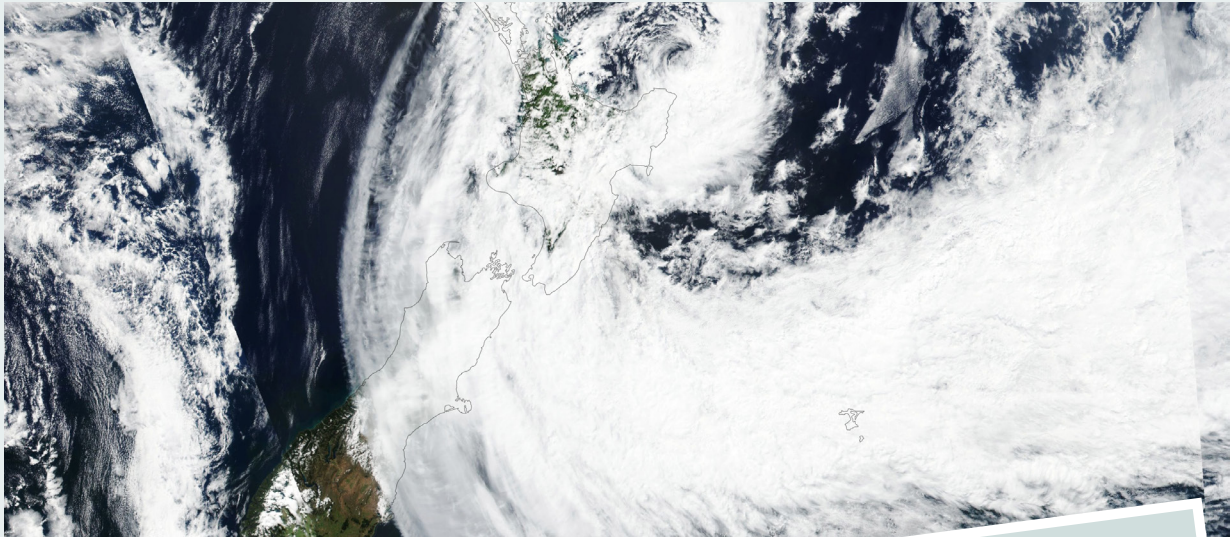
Our fishers and farmers (clients) came to us with a range of different stressor causes. Top stressors are personal, e.g. depression, stress, anxiety (13.2%), financial (11.1%), whanau, friend or relationship stressor (9.7%), crew / employment issue (7.6%) and drug / alcohol issue (6.3%).



Other stressors included compliance, operation, incident or accident, spatial conflict, fisher future sustainability, vessel loss, health issue. The support we offered was mostly a listening – and understand – ear. We referred some of our fishers and marine farmers (clients) for counselling support services, or for agency, employment, financial support.

Over the year we held four industry engagements, nine community events and attended (with stalls or presentations) at three conferences.

Our Navigators remain a vital part of FirstMate, in almost every port in New Zealand. We increased from 18 to 19 Navigators across the year. This cohort has been supported with tools, regular meetings, insights, marketing materials and in-person training.



## North Island Weather Event

From July to December 2023, we utilised Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) Seafood Adverse Events Support Programme (NIWE) funding to embed Adverse Event Navigators in the three regions most impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle that tore through the North Island in February 2023.

The cyclone significantly impacted fishers and marine farmers in Northland, Tairāwhiti, and Hawke's Bay regions.

The three Adverse Event Navigators reflected that they didn't meet a fisher who hadn't been impacted by the cyclone. Their role was to support community engagement, events, and raise awareness. FirstMate provided Navigator support, hosted community events, developed business continuity resources, delivered awareness campaigns, and provided crucial wellbeing support to impacted individuals, connecting with fishers and marine farmers, offering assistance, and fostering valuable relationships.

From August to December 2023, nine community events were held, receiving positive feedback from over 200 attendees, demonstrating increased community support and awareness. These events highlighted key stressor themes, including debris, sediment runoff, travel issues, and concerns about regulatory changes and costs.

FirstMate Navigators also supported the debris trawling project that helped fishers understand where log debris could be situated as a hazard to their fishing.



**Through the fisher engagement, we identified that our fishers and marine farmers had no planning tools for future emergency events. We created fisher-specific Business Continuity and Preparedness Plans and distributed and promoted widely.**

# Spreading the word and building awareness

After a successful year of establishing FirstMate's brand in seafood communities, we transitioned in 2023/24 from a growth strategy to a maintenance/preservation strategy. This involved scaling back digital advertising while keeping engagement strong.

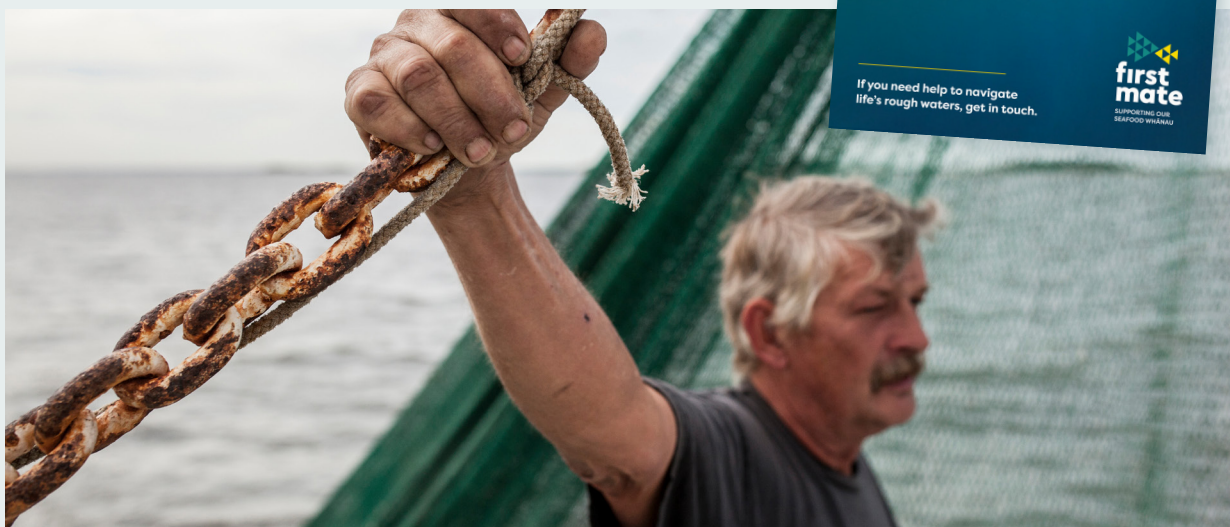
Our website remained a key resource for our fishers and marine farmers, attracting more than **7,000 users** and generating **13,000 page views** from **41,500 events**.

## This year's key digital campaigns focused on adverse weather events, including:

- » Adverse Event Navigator campaign, with targeted outreach in Northland, Hawke's Bay and Bay of Plenty
- » Cyclone Gabrielle informative videos
- » Promotion of our fisher business continuity plan and emergency preparedness plans

## Digital Highlights

- » Our digital presence saw strong engagement this year. On Facebook, we reached over **168,000 people** organically, with **4,800 interactions** and grew our follower base to **1,470**.
- » Instagram followers **increased by 27%** to 400, and LinkedIn saw a **51% rise** to 220 followers, with **14,000 impressions** and a 9.44% engagement rate.
- » Paid campaigns on Facebook delivered nearly **half a million impressions**, with click-through rates well above the industry average. Paid Instagram ads reached **35,000 people** and generated more than **600 interactions**.





**first  
mate**

SUPPORTING OUR  
SEAFOOD WHĀNAU