

## **YALDHURST RURAL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION Inc. Submission on the LTCCP**

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I wish to talk to the main points in my submission at the hearings to be held between Thursday 25 May and Wednesday 7 June 2006.

**This submission is on behalf of an organisation**  
**The organisation represents 88 members**  
**Our submission refers to the full Version**

### **Comments on the major projects in our Draft Community Plan**

Looking over this section of the LTCCP there are many worthwhile projects listed. Some are absolutely vital to ensure that the city is to maintain adequate services for its residents. These include the expansion of the Waste Treatment Plant, replacement of old wastewater pipes and stormwater pipes. As you have stated in the LTCCP, there are many areas where short term target rating is applied. We believe these projects should be targeted to the residents that are benefitting from connection to the city's sewer and water network. The rural residents of the Yaldhurst area are not connected to this system and are unlikely to be in the foreseeable future.

The proposed spending of \$59.5million on a new bus exchange seems a very knee-jerk reaction. As the rural residents of Yaldhurst have no bus service, the idea of their rate increase going to this building would not find immediate favour. It appears that the current bus exchange (at a recent cost of \$30 million) has been an influence on the increase in bus patronage, however, there are many other options that could be considered before further clogging up of the central city streets with every bus routed to this new exchange. For example, ring exchanges linking to the current central city exchange. A further possibility could be the old Moorhouse Ave rail station linking the city centre with a shuttle bus, and combining this with a rail system which could allow some sort of "park and rail" link to the satellite towns/areas etc. Lots of good ideas should be canvassed for a 10 year plan.

You state a Bio Solids Plant of \$23.2million to develop versus \$20 million approximately to send waste to Kate Valley. Without any ongoing activities presented for the running of such a plant or whether there are any revenue outcomes, how can this be accepted as an alternative?

### **Comments on groups of activities (The activities and services the Council provides?)**

#### **Page 86: Council Proposed Savings**

A saving of approximately \$2 million, whilst admirable, appears minor compared with the huge budgets attached to the proposed essential projects. Of interest to the Yaldhurst Rural Residents is the closure of some community halls. Should the Yaldhurst Hall be included in that decision, then we would hope the Council would invite the community to take part in that decision.

**Page 94: City Development**

Throughout the LTCCP there appears to be an urgency to purchase land. The City Development activity includes \$22.6million, spent over the next 3 years, and under the Parks etc activity \$160million, over the next 10 years. A considerable amount of this is on land purchase. Plus under Discretionary projects, strategic land purchases include \$37.6 million. This all seems one heck of a lot of ratepayers' money for land, when the projected increase in population is only 7%.

**Page 106: Cultural and Learning Services**

\$48 million, including capital expenditure, is allocated to cultural and learning services. In all of these areas the cost per customer or visitor is way outside what a private organisation would find economic, so why should we, the ratepayers be burdened with poor management of the Council plan. \$20 per visit to the art gallery?

**Page 111: Democracy and Governance**

This states that the Council would like to have 75% of residents satisfied with decisions made by Council. The LTCCP suggests that at present this is 57%. I am sure that if this 57% of people put time and energy into reading and digesting the LTCCP, the proportion of them agreeing with the plan would reduce dramatically.

**Page 126: Parks, Open Spaces and Waterways**

The proposed Capital Expenditure for 2006/07 of \$24.5million represents 58% of the Activity Operation costs. In following years it is 81% and 75% respectively. On page 225 figures are stated on the expected population increase (7% over the next 10years). We feel our ratepayers would find this level of capital expenditure rather extravagant and unnecessary.

**Page 134: Recreation and Leisure**

\$29.5 million (2006/07) and \$39 million (2007/08), including capital expenditure, is allocated to this activity. This represents costs in excess of \$30 per visit to swimming pools / leisure centres etc – ridiculous!

**Page 150: Streets and Transport**

Country Streets (rural) ? The statements listed that follow this heading do not seem to relate to activities carried out on these types of roads.

**Do you have any other comments or suggestions you want to make**

We appreciate the amount of time and money that has gone into preparing this long term plan and as a document the presentation is great and easy to read.

We thank the Councillors for agreeing with the rural residents that the existing 25% rebate for rural areas shall continue. We are, however, still very concerned about the proposal to change some of the properties from rural to residential for rating purposes. The reasons that the general rebate is given to the rural sector should apply to all rural properties.

Our main issue with the long term plan is the increasing costs. While the plan states that the CCC knows what we the ratepayers want, we are sure that this is incorrect. From our discussions we have yet to hear one person say they agree with the proposed exorbitant increases. The overwhelming opinion is that all increases in rates should be tagged to the rate of inflation, and budgets set accordingly.

There is a clear intent, especially in the Draft Summary, to sell this LTCCP at the low end of a projected rate increase (8.5% assumes capital values of \$150,000 or less). From our observations, the average capital value of Yaldhurst rural properties is at least \$400,000, therefore the more likely scenario is an average rate increase of 12.9% (page 242). This is nearly four times the CPI.

As the Council officers and Councillors are unable to prepare a budget comparable to inflation, we suggest that an independent body look at the total budget and seek the approval of the ratepayers, before it goes to the Council for comment.

For many years submissions appear to have fallen on deaf ears at the Council, who seems to just continue on spending money regardless of what ratepayers say. As an example, libraries have been a subject of major submissions over the years. We believe the proportion of rates going to this area is excessive. The number of quality libraries in Christchurch for such a small city is uneconomic. In Yaldhurst we can travel to some four libraries that are equidistant. Modern technology should lend towards library duplication being minimised.

The LTCCP is suggesting some library closures and a potential saving of \$450,000. We feel \$10 million might be more of a saving. The city has many libraries and most services are repeated in each library; the cost of issuing and returning books becomes uneconomic. A major overhaul is well overdue. To be fair to both library staff and the ratepayers, a review should be carried out by suitably qualified persons independent of Council staff.

There are many other major costs aside from those listed above; these also appear to require a closer look. Unfortunately 10 minutes to speak to a submission gives no time to discuss these in any detail.

What comes through strongly in the plan is that we have an aging population and most of them are ratepayers. What is in the LTCCP for them? Not much. They will have to pay ever increasing rates, but on fixed incomes, so will have choice taken away as what they can spend their income on. Ultimately, some may be forced into selling their property to survive.

The Council seems to disregard the ratepayers themselves as a resource. From one of our members comes an article on a South American city that was faced with a similar scenario to what we have in Christchurch. The ratepayers were fed up with ever increasing rates and being dictated to by a Mayor and Council that thought they knew what the ratepayers wanted. The ratepayers eventually elected a people's Mayor who had a wise head, and was able to unite the ratepayers by listening and reacting to their views. The new council dramatically reduced costs to the ratepayers and was also able to unite the ratepayers into carrying out a number of projects with voluntary labour.

We have a great city but don't have a great community. We barely know our neighbours and most ratepayers don't get involved in community projects. We know this is not all the Council's fault, but nor has the Council encouraged any great participation in major projects by the people of Christchurch. There are many ratepayers/residents who are older and wiser, and still have abilities that can be used for the good of all at no cost. Why not make use of them.

To briefly summarise, the proposed rate increases are unacceptable and if the Council does not have the will or ability to reduce rate increases to the current level of inflation, an independent group should be formed to do so. The end result and better involvement of ratepayers should dramatically improve their impression of the Council.