



**Submission on the
Environment Canterbury Long Term
Council Community Plan 2009-2019**

From

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Submission from Sustainable Otautahi Christchurch, on Environment Canterbury's Long Term Council Community Plan 2009-2019

Introduction

SOC welcomes the opportunity to submit on the LTCCP.

To enlarge on the reasons why we are making a submission, our website (www.sustainablechristchurch.org.nz) contains the following:

Sustainability in Christchurch, NZ

Why seek a more-sustainable Christchurch City and Canterbury region?

** For our children and grandchildren to have a healthy future they will need clean air, reliable fresh water supplies, productive nearby farmland, employment opportunities and a supportive society. We are concerned that present directions or trends will not guarantee these basic needs are satisfied. Are you worried too?*

** Future global challenges need to be imaginatively met at the local level. Such challenges include very high petrol prices for NZ when global production and reserves fail to meet growing demand (Peak Oil Production), and also rising sea level and more storm events from climate change. We will be forced into energy efficiency and reduced fossil fuel use sooner or later. Would you prefer to see action soon?*

** There are alternatives emerging that deserve encouragement through our choices made at home and work. We can support organic food production, for example, and renewable energy generation from sunshine and wind, facilities for safer cycling and walking within the city and social innovations such as farmers' markets, community gardens and co-housing. When advocating and educating for sustainability, we are optimists. Do you want to seek local solutions instead of feeling you are a part of the problem?*

General Comments

We applaud ECan's efforts to tie the LTCCP to Community Outcomes and its expressed intention to adopt "... a sustainable development approach", as required by the Local Government Act 2002. This is especially challenging given accelerating climate change and the realisation that the peak in global oil production has already been or soon will be reached.

There are several mentions of climate change in the draft LTCCP, but only one reference to Peak Oil. These will be huge issues for our society and the sooner we begin adapting to their implications the less painful that adaptation will be. The draft LTCCP proposes plans to mitigate the effects of climate change, but there is little consideration of measures for adapting to the new circumstances. Minor tweaks to "business as usual" will not suffice for addressing the challenges we face. Instead, the way we live needs to be rethought so that we can adapt to entirely new circumstances. Peak oil, climate change and the global financial crisis demand urgent action and should be taken into account in all future plans.

The Community Resilience Unit launched by ECan in March is an excellent first step towards empowering our communities to survive the rapidly shifting circumstances they will face. Many of

these changes will be best addressed by responses at a community level as increasing fuel prices cause a shrinking of horizons. SOC believes the building of resilience at a community and personal level is vital and strongly supports the establishment of the Community Resilience Unit, with adequate funding.

Water Management

Climate change requires a precautionary approach to water use. ECan must strongly protect the region's aquifers to ensure their integrity (quantity and quality) in perpetuity. Protection of these resources of water should be one of ECan's highest priorities. In particular, there must be an emphasis on time-limited water consents.

SOC supports the proposal that consent holders pay at least 30% of the costs of water investigations and monitoring. Given the threat that excessive abstraction from the aquifers poses to water quality, we consider it dubious that "most of the benefits [of irrigation] accrue to the wider regional community". We believe instead that the community and future generations bear most of the risks of contamination. We would like to see general rate funding decrease over time as the proportion paid by businesses making money from cheap water increases.

Energy efficiency

SOC supports the provision of financial incentives to home owners for improving the energy efficiency of their dwellings. We would like to see this extended in some way to include rental properties as those on the lowest incomes usually do not own their own homes and frequently suffer the most from energy poverty. In the interests of improving the health of low income residents of Canterbury we are wary of changes to the Clean Heat Project that effectively reduce the likelihood of improvements to low-income rental properties.

Transport

Transport fuels are a major component of energy consumption and in the expectation of future oil price rises following on from Peak Oil, ECan should be working to reduce the region's consumption of oil for transport fuels. This could be through the continued enhancement of public transport and provision of better facilities for the encouragement of walking and cycling. SOC supports implementation of the Urban Development Strategy initiatives to minimise medium-distance commuting by resisting urban sprawl and promoting urban intensification, and also by enhancing regional centres to provide employment nearer to where people live. In the long term, regional transport should be moving towards more fuel efficient, lower carbon alternatives, including cycling and rail. In the meantime ECan should continue its efforts to improve public transport services and make them more attractive to travellers, thereby increasing utilisation and enhancing efficiency.

We support the proposal that a 90% urban: 10% rural rating split be introduced for public transport rates in the Selwyn District, as it gives rural dwellers an interest in public transport. We believe the rural component should be increased over time. Commuting by private car to work in the city from the lifestyle blocks in this area is becoming increasingly unsustainable.

Biodiversity

ECan has a vital responsibility to protect our unique natural heritage. Canterbury is one of the most modified and unnatural environments in New Zealand. With the spread of dairying the diversity of ecosystems, both economically productive and natural, is diminishing. Monocultures are risky and lacking in resilience, especially in the light of the anticipated outcomes of increasing climate

change. SOC supports the establishment of the Ashley/Rakahuri Regional Park, especially as a refuge for indigenous biodiversity.

Waste minimisation

SOC does not support reducing the annual funding of waste exchanges to \$67, 000 because waste exchanges perform a highly valuable function with diverse returns. If the general rate burden must be reduced then the \$20,000 funding shortfall could surely be met by increased charges on those businesses that create waste, thereby inducing them to reduce their waste production, at the same time as funding the waste exchanges.

Uniform Annual General Charge

SOC is uncomfortable with the introduction of a UAGC and its proportionally higher impact on low-income earners. It may be small now, but it is a dangerous precedent and could all too easily be increased over time.