

Christchurch Youth Council

Environment Canterbury Long Term Plan Submission



Introduction

The Christchurch Youth Council (Rūnaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi) is dedicated to advocating for a strong youth voice in Christchurch. We aim to provide young people with the avenue to have their say. We aim to create a community where the youth voice is as valued as all others in the community. Imagine every big conversation about Christchurch's future having a young person around the table: that's our dream!

Our kaupapa is to:

- 1) Advocate, support and strive for a stronger voice for young people.
- 2) Engage and promote the ideas of active citizenship and participation in order to encourage young people to contribute to their communities.
- 3) Create space and a positive environment to allow young people to speak about, and be involved with issues affecting them.
- 4) Foster networks and build relationships with decision makers in order to influence change for young people.

Youth Engagement Workshop

Working with the Youth Engagement Team from Ecan, we held the 'Kai + Consultation' youth engagement workshop on Thursday 8th March. This event was open to all youth and we got a relatively good turnout of about 30 young people along to the evening.

At the event we had talks from some Ecan councillors and staff about the submission process, before splitting into groups to workshop aspects of the plan. Each group provided written feedback and this feedback has been taken by CYC and collated to form this submission. Comments on transport were separated out and given to the Youth Reference Group for sustainable transport who are writing a transport specific submission.

The three topics covered in this submission are 1) Biodiversity and Biosecurity, 2) Freshwater Management and 3) Hazards, Risk and Resilience. We hope Ecan finds our submission of value and we appreciate the opportunity to co-host the Kai + Consultation event with Ecan which greatly assisted us in putting together a submission representative of the voice of Christchurch youth. Particular thanks to Hannah Dunlop from Ecan for her help with the event.

Climate Change/Hazards, Risk and Resilience

We were encouraged to see that climate change was being made a portfolio programme. As shown in the Christchurch Youth Action plan, young people care about the environment, and are concerned about issues such as pollution related to climate change in the city and green urban development (see 4.2.2. and 4.3.2.).

There were some concerns around whether the council had the necessary tools and mechanisms to follow through on its goals regarding climate change in the long term plan. For example, questions were raised around items 6.15.1 and 6.15.2: how will the council be kept accountable for ensuring it really does factor climate change into its decisions when implementing practical programmes in years 2 and 3? Others wondered why only 2% of the budget was going toward climate change integration, while 4% was afforded to Navigation and Recreational Boating Safety. Furthermore, we wondered how ECan will be cooperating with the Christchurch City Council to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

While there seemed to be a lot of emphasis around education, we were unsure what concrete, proactive measures would be taken to address climate change, and what would be included at the climate change integration events. Young people at the event wanted the long term plan to focus more on mitigating climate change rather than merely adapting to it, particularly in regards to reducing carbon emissions (for example, through the management of resource consents).

We were happy to see that ECan is addressing flood and coastal protection, showing a consideration of the future impact of climate change, and that ECan is taking a proactive approach with natural disasters and emergency management. Some questions remained around why there was discrepancy in funding for natural hazards vs. emergency management, and what actions ECan would take in case the alpine fault ruptures.

Biodiversity and Biosecurity

Overall, this section received a lot of positive feedback from our consultation event with many young people commenting the Long Term plan had great motives and potential. The direction ECan is heading and the urgency on action to ensure long lasting biodiversity and biosecurity was warmly welcomed and strongly supported by all. More specifically, the fact that action was taken now, ensuring future generations get to enjoy our beautiful native flora and fauna was a point of praise for ECan.

However, it was strongly felt that not enough was being done to ensure to the survival of indigenous species to further add to our nation's biodiversity. Furthermore, it was voiced that this plan lacked a long term vision, with a lot of emphasis placed on the immediate future, and little attention on how to ensure the work completed now can have long lasting implications.

Given the natural threats faced by Braided Rivers and Wetlands, it is encouraging to see these take a high priority in ECan's work. The transparency of figures in terms of funding made the document easy to read and understand. However, due to the small amount of funding allocated to such projects as braided rivers, it was suggested that ECan consider delegating work out to voluntary community organisations, for projects such as tree planting, to further maximise the impact this funding will have.

In the long run, the proposal Ecan has made is a productive step forward to ensure continued biodiversity and biosecurity. This will have Economic benefits and help to maintain the 'clean, green NZ' image our country prides itself on. One point of feedback was many of the young people attending the event, felt the document contained a lot of industry relevant jargon, that the average citizens reading the consultation document would struggle to understand.

Freshwater Management

Freshwater management was felt to be a critical issue for many young people at the consultation. There was a general concern that environmental issues were being left for future generations to deal with, although we were happy to see that Freshwater Management is now a priority issue for ECan. We would like to see regional bodies such as ECan have more power to take action and mitigate environmental issues now, before they become an even more costly problem in future. We want serious action on freshwater management and better communication and education on freshwater issues for young people.

Farming

Many of us felt that the Long-Term Plan did not go far enough in addressing the root causes of freshwater pollution. We understand that dairy farming is a major contributor to pollution in our waterways, and we would like to see stronger action on providing farmers with incentives (and disincentives) to be more sustainable. Some solutions could include measures such as taxes, stricter consent processes to reduce nitrate leaching (no long-term consents for water ownership), reviewing water quotas regularly, and less subsidization of water irrigation schemes in order to encourage farmers

to use more efficient irrigation methods and to internalize more of the costs of pollution, but other options should be investigated.

A healthier more sustainable Christchurch city

Another issue was cleaning urban waterways (the Avon in particular) which have become more polluted since the earthquake. We want to be able to use the Avon recreationally without becoming sick if we fall in, which is currently the risk. Another suggestion was that the council look into managing where water goes more sustainably (e.g. recycling house water for toilets, filtering water etc.).

Education

One of the themes about freshwater management was that the young people didn't believe that there is enough awareness about freshwater management and would like to see more education schemes in the future so that people know about the importance of freshwater management. Programmes such as enviroschools are good but rely on schools taking the initiative, so many youth did not get the opportunity to participate during their time in school. Perhaps some form of competition or schools environmental challenge that could be targeted at teams of students from schools would encourage students to get involved, without it having to be teacher led.