



COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN CHRISTCHURCH
TE KAUNIHERA KAUPAPA ORANGA KI OTAUTAHĪ

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**Submission to Christchurch City Council
on its draft**

Long Term Council Community Plan 2004 - 14

Introduction

The purpose of the Council of Social Services (COSS) is to promote social equity, justice and wellbeing by advocating on issues, empowering groups and facilitating collaboration in the social services sector.

COSS is governed by a voluntary Board drawn from a range of statutory and voluntary social services, including a CCC staff member, and employs an Executive Officer to carry out the day-to-day activities of the organisation. Membership consists of over 140 voluntary agencies and a number of individuals or units from the state sector and local government, although services are not limited to members. COSS views draw on and reflect the wide networks we work within and are mandated by our broad, cross-sector membership.

General Direction

COSS has continued and enthusiastic support for the City Council's role in community development and community support. In particular we support the aspect of the Plan which is about the delivery to the people of Christchurch of sustainable quality of life outcomes. In the links that COSS has around the country, Christchurch is envied for having a progressive, innovative and responsible Council and this plan continues those goals so that Christchurch will continue to be an even better place to live.

At the core of COSS's work is the understanding that the best results are achieved through working together. COSS therefore particularly welcomes the opportunities that the new Long Term Council Community Plan provides for collaboration between the various sectors of our community. COSS is well-placed to make a strong contribution to the development of collaborative responses to the LTCCP and looks forward to opportunities to work closely with the Council on matters of social development.

Specific Outcomes

***A Sustainable Natural Environment* (Vol 2, pp 5, 40, 55, 94)**

COSS supports protection of the natural environment as this impacts on social wellbeing. The negative effects of a degraded natural environment are experienced disproportionately by the less advantaged members of our community. COSS endorses the role of the Council in contributing to the desired outcomes.

We recommend that where the Council is or intends to work with business in its contribution to the outcomes, this be extended to include voluntary sector organisations and central government agencies.

***A Learning City* (Vol 2, pp 7, 69, 72)**

COSS supports Council's continued contribution to educational achievement, lifelong learning, a skilled workforce and research and innovation. We welcome the recognition that learning is more than just vocational training and particularly endorse initiatives that promote access: eg the libraries network, and support for pre-schools and community education.

A Well-Governed City (Vol 2, pp 11, 39, 45, 64)

COSS has a belief in the value of participatory democracy and supports all initiatives that enhance access to decision-making. Given the recent changes in the governance structure it behoves the Council to be extremely aware of and responsive to issues of access to and the processes of decision-making. Processes for access must be diverse to take account of difference and address barriers to participation.

The consultation process must recognise the circumstances of people and organisations wishing to contribute. The time-frame for submissions to this LTCCP of barely four weeks, including Easter, will make it difficult for smaller groups in particular to participate. We recognise that the challenges of preparing the first LTCCP may have contributed to this and look forward to a more realistic timeframe for the next Plan.

We note the undertaking to “encourage better consultation” but have been unable to ascertain what specific actions will contribute to this or how it will be evaluated. *We recommend* that this be made more specific.

We particularly support addressing the Treaty relationship, especially the development of mutually acceptable consultation procedures.

We also endorse Council’s promotion of coordination between sectors and the development of cross-sector networks. We note the intention to improve collaboration in the areas of planning, policy development and evaluation. With our strong networks and throughout the social services sector in Christchurch and links to national structures, COSS has much to contribute in this area. We believe that a collaborative relationship between COSS and Council would be of great value in achieving shared goals.

Inclusive and Diverse Communities (Vol 2, pp 13, 39, 45, 48, 52)

While we concur with the community outcomes identified in this section, we believe that our community also recognises that each of us has the right to retain and express our own culture and ethnic identity. *We recommend* that this be acknowledged in the community outcomes.

COSS gives strong support for the place of the voluntary sector and its centrality in the health, life and wellbeing of the community. It is imperative that the sector is free from exploitation and is not seen as a ‘cheap option’ for the delivery of social services or the attainment of community outcomes. The sector must be adequately resourced for the immense contribution it makes towards community wellbeing. Resourcing may be ‘in kind’ as well as by way of grants, for instance access to free meeting rooms in Council Service Centres for low-income community groups. COSS as a key stakeholder and link to many voluntary sector organisations wishes to be closely involved with actions to contribute to a vibrant community sector.

We support Council activities to support strong communities and neighbourhoods, maintaining a sense of identity and place, and addressing inequalities. We particularly support Council’s continued involvement with those communities that do not have equitable access to resources; continued support for refugees and migrants; and promotion of cross-sectoral and cross-agency collaboration.

We note the intention to “review the Council’s community development role” offer our active support in this process. It is our experience that many of Council’s Community Development Advisors have a good understanding of the concept and practice of community development, a term that is increasingly misunderstood and misused by people in the social services and community sector.

We also note Council’s intention to “ensure employment initiatives are integrated with social development initiatives”. We would be concerned to see social development subsumed to economic development and ask that Council guard against this.

Healthy and Active People (Vol 2, pp 15, 45)

COSS supports Council’s role in contributing towards all of the defined outcomes and will continue to demonstrate our support through participation in Healthy Christchurch.

A Safe City (Vol 2, p 17)

COSS is extremely concerned about the violence and abuse directed towards members of the Maori, Pacific Islands, refugee and migrant communities. We would like to see the inclusion of an indicator that related to levels of racism in the city. We support the Council's contributions, particularly those relating to family violence and youth intervention.

Demographic data shows a trend for an ageing population in Christchurch. In light of this we *recommend* that the LTCCP should specifically address issues of safety for older people and that the Council identify how it can contribute to these.

A Cultural and Fun City (Vol 2, pp 19, 27-34, 43-44, 46)

COSS strongly endorses Council initiatives in providing a wide range of arts, cultural and leisure events and activities that enable wide participation. For many with limited incomes, free access to stimulating leisure pursuits and participation in group activities is extremely constrained. The unfettered ability to access the museum and art gallery, or to take part in festivals and events provided by the Council contributes greatly to their quality of life and wellbeing.

A Liveable City (Vol 2, pp 19, 37, 50)

COSS strongly supports Council ownership of accessible and affordable housing and the regeneration of housing stock; and also supports collaboration in the housing sector. There is a need to maintain the socio-economic mix in the inner city and to ensure that existing communities and residents are not displaced by housing regeneration.

COSS wishes to speak in support of this submission.

Anne Carroll
Chair