



ESR President  
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CHRISTCHURCH

4 May 2004

**Submission on the Christchurch City Council's  
Long Term Council Community Plan 2004**

The attached papers by two of our members, Andrew Dakers and John Peet, are submitted by the Christchurch Branch Committee of Engineers for Social Responsibility.

We would appreciate the opportunity to talk briefly to the main points in these submissions, at the hearings in June.

Our membership includes professionals with a wide range of expertise, much of it directly relevant to both engineering and wider socio-economic issues of long-term community planning. For this reason, we are both interested in, and committed to, assisting the City Council in its aims to ensure the future health and vitality of this city.

Yours sincerely,

David Painter  
President, Engineers for Social Responsibility

**Submission to LTCCP, Christchurch City Council**

**Andrew Dakers, ecoEng Ltd**

**1 May 2004**

My submission relates to the outcome, **democracy and governance**. I believe that getting the structures and processes for this outcome right (or as near as pragmatically possible to "right") will provide a sound foundation for all the other desired outcomes.

The City Council's website states that; *Under the new Local Government Act, the Christchurch City Council is required to develop a Long Term Council Community Plan. The purpose of the long-term council community plan is to --*

- *describe the Community Outcomes; and*
- *describe the Council's activities; and*
- *provide integrated decision-making and co-ordination of the resources; and*
- *provide a long-term focus; and*
- *provide a basis for accountability to the community; and*
- *provide an opportunity for participation by the public in decision-making processes on activities to be undertaken by the local authority.*

These are admirable objectives and are essential if Christchurch and our neighbouring region is to become a safe, healthy, sustainable and enjoyable place to live.

The words used in this statement of purpose are good but what actually **happens** is much more about the actual daily decisions of our decision makers and how effectively staff and others actually implement these decisions at the coal face. I am aware from my own experience, that the actual implementation of concepts such *integrated decision-making and co-ordination, long-term focus* and *for participation by the public*, first requires, for many, a new knowledge and skill set, attitude change and a change in workplace culture. None of these happens easily, and certainly not by default. I see no recognition of this fundamental fact in the recommendations in the draft Community Plan. For example where are the performance measures for interdisciplinary projects work **within** the Council. Integration and co-ordination will never happen without conscious interdisciplinary effort by key Council staff. The Community Plan refers to *working with others* (p 23, Vol. 2), and is referring to working with others outside the Council office walls. This is commendable and very important but I believe it is equally important, if not more important, that it happens within Council Office walls.

According to the draft Community Plan the City Council will be managing about \$430M or more of expenditure (operating and capital) and is proposing a large project total expenditure of about \$253M. These are substantial sums of public money. It is the allocation of these expenditures that determines the real character of our City and the direction and nature of future development. This is also about the wellbeing of its people and ecologies. The actual allocations are a direct result of decision making. One of the stated purposes of the LTCCP is to *provide an opportunity for participation by the public in decision-making processes on activities to be undertaken by the local authority.*

What I am particularly interested in and concerned with is:

- Who makes the real decisions about the allocation of this expenditure (and I realise a significant proportion is non-discretionary and defaults to existing system drivers).
- What knowledge, skill and attitude these decision makers have.
- What degree of transparency and accountability is structured into the Council's decision making processes.
- With respect to these decision makers, what is their level of understanding of, and commitment to, the stated vision of a "sustainable Christchurch". Also of interest to me is their actual commitment to the overall community outcomes in the draft report (p24 vol 1.)

The **democracy and governance** outcomes could ultimately address some of these concerns provided the City Council communicators make available to the public, clear statements as to **how** each important decision is made and **who** makes them. I am concerned that present key decision making gives inadequate attention to nature and importance of systems thinking. I am also concerned that too many decisions are driven by personal political agendas and by excessively persuasive or even aggressive personalities. This brings me to the concept of a semi-independent research and planning institute.

Jaime Lerner, Governor of Curitiba recently visited Christchurch. The Council organised a seminar and public meeting during his visit. The city of Curitiba is upheld by many as the model for sustainable city development (Refer to the report: *Showing the way, Curitiba: Citizen City* Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, June 2002, available from [www.pce.govt.nz](http://www.pce.govt.nz)). The success of Curitiba is largely due to the visionary leadership of systems-thinking Jaime Lerner and the commitment to his vision of a supporting institute called the Research and Urban Planning Institute (IPPUC). This is a semi-independent agency of the Curitiba Council. As the PCE report states, *the IPPUC is without doubt the key agency in Curitiba when it comes to researching and designing the city's paths to the future.* The report goes on to say that, *IPPUC, with the ultimate say over what is funded, is a very influential agency – distancing the raw politics of the council chamber decision making. A high level of council input does go into the decisions, via a weekly meeting between the Mayor and IPPUC's President.*

Following the visit of Jaime Lerner, I was hoping to see our Council take a serious look at setting up an Institute similar in function to the IPPUC in Curitiba. I see no mention of such an initiative in the draft Community Plan. While initially this may be costly to set up, I am confident that substantial efficiencies would be gained in the future. Christchurch could (and should) become a model city for integrated governance.

The Local Government Act 2002, requires that the territorial authorities *provide integrated decision-making and co-ordination of the resources.* This will never happen unless the council management and administration structure is specifically designed to facilitate such integration. In reading the draft Community Plan I suspect that the word "integration" is not well understood by Council policy makers and decision makers. Sadly there is no evident serious commitment to integration at any level, in this draft document.

I recommend that the City Council gives serious consideration to setting up a semi-independent research and planning institute which has the specific task of providing critical and soundly research input for those key decision that plot the future pathway of Christchurch City and its region.

## Submission on the Christchurch City Council LTCCP from John Peet

Because of the very limited time available for preparation of responses, the following comments are somewhat more brief than would be desirable in an ideal situation. In preparing them, I have concentrated on a small number of what I see as key generic issues, rather than details. In doing so, I have given most of my attention to some assumptions implicit in the Plan, that I regard as open to debate. In doing so, I hope to enlarge the framework within which planning is carried out.

Before I do so, I wish to affirm the point that there is a great deal of creative, human-centred vision implicit in these documents, which augurs well for the long-term future of Christchurch. I warmly support most of what is there. I also had the impression, however, that this was, in many respects, especially in the Summary of Community Outcomes section, a “wish list” of what people would like to have in the future, and obviously I would like to see these outcomes too. I would caution, however, against the implicit belief that any or all of them are actually achievable, if only we put in place policies to reflect our good intentions!

I also wish to introduce a note of caution. Virtually all current policies, whether of local or of national governments, reflect the comfortable assumption that there will be a more-or-less steady and smooth transition from today’s situation into the long-term future. This in turn gives rise to the idea that, in planning for a sustainable future, only marginal changes are needed in policies, to reduce some current undesirable side-effects of human social and economic activities. The most obvious outcome of this sort of thinking is that it induces a feeling of complacency among citizens and those in positions of responsibility. It then risks the outcome of an inability to ensure that policies are produced in such a way that their outcomes (e.g. built structures and infrastructures) are flexible and resilient enough to be capable of responding rapidly to major changes if and when they do occur.

If significant changes occur in the underlying assumptions - which I regard as highly likely - then the “rules of the socio-economic game” are likely to change rapidly and probably irreversibly. There are in fact a number of issues, local and international, that have the potential to interfere with the Vision, and I would argue for use of the Precautionary Principle rather than confidence in smooth transition to a rosy future as the basis for planning. Most importantly, as a professional engineer, I caution against the belief that Science and Technology will automatically come to the rescue if something goes wrong, or ensure us continuing growth in the supply of goods and services without environmental and/or social damage.

I raise the following issue as an example where the precautionary principle may be of help in encouraging a way of thinking that will encourage development of a resilient Plan for the future:

The Peak Oil hypothesis, for which there is mounting supporting evidence (see, for example, <[www.peakoil.net](http://www.peakoil.net)> or <[www.oilcrisis.com](http://www.oilcrisis.com)>), suggests that the availability of *cheap* petroleum fuels is not likely to last more than a few more years. For the last decade or two, the rate of discovery of new petroleum resources worldwide has been approximately one quarter the rate of consumption, a statistic that one cannot regard with complacency. There is no known substitute for *cheap* oil - and it is going fast. Although a number of substitutes are *technically* possible, none can be manufactured at a price that is anywhere near current oil prices. It is, therefore, highly likely that substantial and continuing real price increases will start to occur within the next decade, making transport (for example) very much more costly.

A consequence will be a change forever in not only the nature of (currently transport-intensive) urban living but also a challenge to the easy assumption of continuation of the (currently transport-intensive) export economy as the source of Christchurch's and Canterbury's wealth.

In this event, the need to adopt very different policies over a wide range of urban issues will be urgent. Will we be ready? Will our (relatively energy-efficient) public transport system be adequate? Will the likely reduction in (highly transport-intensive) tourist inflows damage the economy? Should more private motoring and the construction of more roads and motorways remain in the Plan? In a context such as this, the assumption (vol 1 p 5) that "*As our city grows and the numbers of private motor vehicles increases ...*" must be regarded as questionable. A similar assumption is implicit in the MCTS Report (p 4) "*With increases in population and car ownership forecast over the next 20 years, ....*"

As one response to my point, it might be better to complete only the currently-started road improvements and not start any major new roading initiatives. A much heavier emphasis on public transport and on urban planning for a more transport-constrained future would be sensible, not least because even if the Peak Oil hypothesis is not confirmed for many years, policies such as this would still have advantages for a civilised and pedestrian-friendly city.

A further point is that I found the framework for the Summary of Community Outcomes good but rather weak, especially in the section "A Sustainable Natural Environment". In reality, it is the natural environment and nothing else that provides the air, water, soil, food, energy, waste disposal ..... and so on, ecosystem services that are both prerequisites and absolute essentials for our very existence. That is not just a significant role, it is an absolutely essential and unsubstitutable one! Humans and the total ecosystem of the planet are interconnected, and our future health and sustainability depend critically on the health of the ecosystems that support all life, not just our own.

My point here raises the same questions as did the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment in his report "Creating Our Future: Sustainable Development for New Zealand", 2002. In that report, he distinguished (pp 6-7) between "environmentalism" and "sustainable development", positions commonly reflecting, respectively, the Weak Sustainability and Strong Sustainability approaches. The former is reflected in Government policy and in the LTCCP, whereas the PCE and many other workers in the field point out that only the latter has a realistic potential for achievement of true sustainable development. It may appear to be a challenge in the short term, but if we grasp the nettle we will reap substantial rewards in the longer term.

I urge the Council to expand its perceptions and adopt a Strong Sustainability position. I would be very happy to assist in this process.

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