

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

Christchurch Resettlement Services Inc
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This submission is made on behalf of the Board of Trustees of Christchurch Resettlement Services Inc., by Sue Dewe, Chairperson.

We are grateful for the opportunity to put our views on the Long Term City Council Plan.

Christchurch Resettlement Services (formerly known as Refugee Resettlement Support) has been in existence twelve years. We provide professional services to refugees and migrants. These services include social work, youth work, ongoing orientation for refugees, pre-school services for refugee children, and health promotion with resettling communities.

Many of the services that we offer are not provided by any other agency in Christchurch and of necessity require specialized and experienced staff. Some of the services are crucial and critical in that many of the people involved have had experiences that the average New Zealander may not even be able to imagine and their circumstances may be extremely distressing and volatile.

We value the financial and other support the CCC has provided over the years.

We request that the following be considered:

- **That the Council maintains funding to agencies like ours to deliver professional services to meet local needs.** We are particularly concerned that any such funding has a cycle of at least three years to enable us to institute long term strategic planning and retain specialized and dedicated staff. Central government funding does not necessarily match local priorities, particularly as Christchurch is unique as the only major centre in the South island for numbers of refugees and migrants.
- **That the Council has as an urgent priority the funding of a local Refugee and Migrant Centre** that is able to house local refugee and migrant organizations as well as provide a venue for other agencies and service providers (government and non-government) to access these communities. Such a centre would allow disparate and often impoverished communities and service providers to coordinate the delivery of skills and services in an efficient and cost effective manner. Further it would provide a window between Christchurch's new communities and the host community and

encourage the development of mutual knowledge and understanding to the benefit of both. For many years Christchurch provided leadership to the rest of New Zealand in its provision of services especially to refugees. Our agency for example in its provision of social work support was/is unique in New Zealand. In recent years other local authorities have gone some way in supporting local initiatives in refugee and migrant work. It is vital for the health of Christchurch's residents as a whole that support for refugees and migrants as some of its most disempowered citizens be reinstated as one of the most important priorities for the city in its future planning.

We believe it is important that Christchurch City Council continue its financial support of local community groups providing services. We would like to see this component retained in the Council's Community Plan.



**Sue Dewe
Chairperson
CRS Board**