



community energy action
charitable trust

4 May 2006

Our Community Plan
Christchurch City Council
PO Box 237
CHRISTCHURCH

Community Plan submission

I wish to talk to the main points in my written submission at the hearings to be held between Thursday 25 May and Wednesday 7 June 2006.

This submission is completed by me on behalf of Community Energy Action Trust.

My submission refers to the full version of the Plan

Contact name: Bede Martin
Organisation: Community Energy Action Trust
P O Box 13 759
CHRISTCHURCH

Ph: 03 363 9567 Mobile: 021 230 2908

Email: bede.martin@cea.co.nz

In August 2005 Community Energy Action (CEA) applied for funding from the Metropolitan Fund. The application was declined. This submission asks Council to consider meeting the need that was outlined in that application.

Community Energy Action Trust

CEA provides affordable energy efficiency measures, including home insulation, primarily to people on low incomes. Affordability is achieved by accessing government subsidies that are passed on to customers. CEA has installed insulation measures in over 9000 mainly low income households in Christchurch since 1994.

The project

This section briefly outlines the reasons behind our application to the Metropolitan Fund.

Together with Age Concern Canterbury we are aware that many elderly people live in poorly insulated homes, have inadequate or unaffordable heating and hence are unable to heat their homes. This need is important to address. The project for which Council funding was sought provides home insulation measures as well as assistance with heating appliances for those most in need. The preferred form of heating is heat pumps which satisfy Christchurch's clean air requirements while being considerably more affordable to run than conventional electric heaters. Referrals are received from Age Concern Canterbury, other agencies working with the elderly, or directly from householders, their families or medical professionals. In addition to government subsidies for insulation this project obtains extra funding to reduce the householder's contribution for the cost of insulation and to subsidise the installation of a heating appliance where the need is greatest.

Since running the Pilot Project in 2004 funding has been received from the Canterbury District Health Board, M-Co (MARIA Governance Board), the Southern Trust, Community Energy Action's reserves and most recently from Contact Energy. A substantial social need exists and this funding remains insufficient.

Numbers assisted to date by the two key agencies are:

| | Pilot year | 2005 | 2006 (to 30 April) |
|---|------------|------|--------------------|
| CEA assisted | 13 | 72 | 21 |
| Age Concern Canterbury assisted | 61 | 81 | 13 |
| Total assisted by Winter Warmth project | 74 | 153 | 34 |

Our submission

We are keenly aware of pressures on Council to meet ever-growing community needs and the problem of increasing rates. In this context CEA wishes to place before Council the need to carefully consider the needs of low income, vulnerable elderly people living in Christchurch whose homes are cold. They are cold due to a variety of causes, key among these being poor levels of insulation and inadequate and/or unaffordable heating.

In the mix of Strategic Directions outlined in the draft Community Plan we believe this issue needs to be considered under the Strong Communities (p. 49), Healthy Environment (p.51) and Liveable City (p. 54) headings.

Strong communities

Goal 2 and Objectives state Council will aim to "improve people's standard of living" by "Providing affordable housing for those on low incomes and with limited means".

Comment: if pressure on Council housing is high then it is logical to encourage homeowners to stay in their own housing and private tenants to remain in their rental properties as long as possible. To adequately insulate and heat these residences supports this and in turn allows Council to target those most in need of Council housing.

Goal 4 states Council will “Help communities to meet all their needs” by “Targeting those who are most disadvantaged”, by “Initiating and supporting community development projects” and by “Helping public, private and community agencies work together to address key areas of social need”.

Comment: to support CEA’s proposal is to implement these ideals in a very real way. Many elderly people suffering from cold housing do not want to relocate. The least disruptive and most affordable option is for them to be assisted to make their home warmer by making home insulation and heating affordable, which this project does. It targets those who are “most disadvantaged” in that they are aged, on low incomes and (to receive assistance with a heating appliance) they will suffer from a cold related health condition.

The “Key challenges” (p. 50) notes the ageing population and increasing demands this places on housing, health, and other services. Warm housing enables people to stay in their homes longer, reducing pressure on housing; improves health outcomes and reduces the need for other social services. For Council to consider funding to enable this to happen for a much larger volume of elderly people will help overcome these challenges.

Healthy environment

Goal 2 (p 52) refers to the Council actively contributing to improved energy efficiency with the key objective being “Encouraging energy efficiency”.

Comment: CEA’s work in insulating homes and installing energy efficient heating will assist the Council achieve this objective. Where houses referred to this project are eligible for Clean Heat subsidies from Environment Canterbury they are referred on to ECan. CEA is meeting a need for energy efficiency beyond the Clean Heat programme.

Heating being upgraded by CEA is often not only inadequate but also inefficient, and accordingly a heat pump is our preferred option. We have sourced good quality heat pumps at an excellent price.

Liveable City

As the comments on page 54 say “A good built environment ...has economic benefits ... reducing management, energy and maintenance costs for buildings.” Goal 4 is to “Maintain and enhance the quality of development, and renewal of the city’s built environment” by, among other objectives “Working with other organisations to ensure that Christchurch people live in homes that meet their social, health and economic needs.” A Key Challenge to achieving the Liveable City goals is that “Poor housing affects people’s health and can contribute towards poor educational attainment.”

Comment: Goal 4 is a major reason for Council to support this project. The Key Challenge mentioned above is supported by research conducted in 2002 by the Wellington School of Medicine and motivates CEA’s health outcomes. The main concern with poorly insulated and heated housing for elderly people is the poor health outcomes, along with the inability of many to afford to heat their homes adequately.

Canterbury Warm Home Standard and Costs

Community Energy Action, in partnership with Age Concern Canterbury and Community Public Health, is working towards having a Canterbury Warm Home Standard for Elder people adopted. This would aim to ensure living areas maintain a minimum temperature of 18° C and bedrooms a minimum of 12°C. Endorsement of this from a wide range of government and voluntary agencies is currently being sought.

If Council invested \$140,000.00 each year a further 300 homes of elderly people could be included in the programme (subject to other sources of funding also committing to the project.) This amount makes up 24% of the total project cost for 300 houses, the balance needing to come from:

- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (45%)
- Grants (20%)
- Community Energy Action (5%)
- Householders/landlords (6%)

Should Council decide to consider supporting this project then additional statistical information can be provided and detailed negotiations entered into. This submission merely sets out to make Council aware of the issue and to consider supporting a project that will improve the health and life quality of a growing proportion of the population. However, note that it is estimated that 10,436 people, aged over 70, and suffering from a chronic health condition live in Christchurch. This age group is increasing rapidly.

Conclusion

Community Energy Action seeks Council's consideration in addressing the issue of poorly insulated and heated homes occupied by vulnerable elderly people in Christchurch. A small project being co-delivered by Age Concern Canterbury and Community Energy Action has grown significantly since being piloted in 2004 but is severely constrained by funding.

To support this programme Council will be achieving, in a very real way, its own goals and objectives relating to *Strong Communities, a Healthy Environment*, and a *Liveable City*.

In considering the many pressing issues facing Council and Ratepayers, Community Energy Action advocates that this sector of the population is in need of significant financial support for the foreseeable future.

Bede Martin
Chief Executive