

SAVE OUR LIBRARIES

Submission on the Draft Christchurch Long Term Council Community Plan 2006 - 2016

This submission refers to the proposal to close some of the Christchurch City Council public libraries, as set out on Page 86 of the full LTCCP.

It is made on behalf of Bruce Tulloch and 15492 others whose signatures are on the accompanying petition.

We oppose the Christchurch City Council proposal to close public libraries at Bishopdale, Redwood and Spreydon plus the Mobile Library service - or any other city libraries. Their value to the community greatly exceeds the claimed saving in costs.

The Council, on Page 294 of the LTCCP, lists Strategic Assets. These include

The library network as a whole including the central library, the suburban libraries and the mobile library service.

Long term intentions for library services are given on Page 104 as follow:

“CULTURAL AND LEARNING SERVICES

What is the Council’s objective? To provide a library network that meets information, learning and recreational needs.

What is the Council already doing? Providing 14 libraries with books and other stock for reference and/or borrowing. Providing an information service through the libraries.

What will we do in years 1 to 3? Continue to do the same.

What will we do in years 4 to 10? Continue to do the same.”

This appears clear. The Council intends continuing to do what it does at present as far as the number of libraries is concerned. On Page 106 it makes provision for renewal and replacement of library stock and building maintenance. There is provision for upgrading Halswell Library but no mention of additional libraries being provided within the ten year duration of the Plan.

The Council, however, actually has twenty libraries, not just fourteen. These comprise sixteen in the city - Bishopdale, Central City, Fendalton, Halswell, Hornby, Linwood, New Brighton, Parklands, Papanui, Redwood, Shirley, South Christchurch, Spreydon, Sumner, Upper Riccarton, the Mobile Library plus the four on Banks Peninsula, Akaroa, Diamond Harbour, Little River and Lyttelton.

On Page 86 of the Plan the Council indicates that despite the statements on Page 104 it actually does not intend to "continue to do the same" in terms of numbers of libraries. The entry there states:

"COUNCIL'S PROPOSED SAVINGS

Services and actions considered for reduction

Rationalise community libraries (e.g. closing Redwood, Bishopdale and Spreydon) - Saving up to \$450, 000. As part of the early thinking about the 2025 Libraries Plan, rationalisation of some libraries is being considered. A number of new libraries have been built which provides the opportunity to assess whether all of the current libraries are required to meet community needs.

Exit mobile library - saving \$80,000.

The number of mobile library stops made, and the number of items issued has been decreasing, especially with the opening of new libraries at Parklands and Upper Riccarton. This service is therefore to be reviewed. "

Given that the LTCCP states that we have fourteen libraries at present (Page 104) when we actually have twenty and then proposes closing four, the mathematics become a trifle obscure.

A letter to the Council CEO on 24 February asked if some cost/benefit study had been done to justify proposed closures and why the particular communities named had been chosen to lose their libraries. The reply, dated 13 March, avoided answering these specific questions although it did state that Redwood, Bishopdale and Spreydon were examples only.

The general public perception appears to be that however many libraries we may have the Council proposes closing some, probably those named but possibly others. There was considerable disquiet in Redwood, Bishopdale, Speydon and along the extensive Mobile Library route, and unease elsewhere. There was also a suspicion that if libraries escaped closure their budget may be cut to compensate. Opposition rose rapidly.

A driver of this, and of the widespread anger which people expressed, was the apparent irrationality of the examples give. Redwood and Bishopdale are in the North-West of the city, which is an area of residential expansion and gateway for the commuter traffic from the North. Closing these libraries would only leave one in this quadrant of the city, at Papanui, right on one of the most congested road arteries we have.

The comment with the Council proposal that new libraries had been built so some could presumably be closed was repeated by the Mayor in a newspaper interview. This was greeted with incredulity. The lavish new libraries have been built in South Colombo Street, Parklands and Upper Riccarton. Suggesting these would compensate for closing libraries on the far side of town seems to show a remarkable lack of geographical knowledge. Spreydon, the third suburb proposed for closure, was different. Its catchment merges with the South Colombo Street library but it is well-used and being beside a local shopping centre, unlike South Colombo Street, it is very convenient.

When the big new library was being opened in 2003 the Council reassured Spreydon users that it would not be at their expense and that their facility would be kept open for at least another ten years. Presumably the Council had forgotten this promise. Reminded of it by local MP Jim Anderton the Council quickly backtracked and confirmed that Spreydon will indeed not be closed in the meantime. So is there another small library now at risk instead?

Concerning the mobile library, since the city is expanding in size and population and the Council has no extra libraries in the LTCCP it would seem there is a strong case for expanding this service, re-routed where necessary to cope with changing circumstances. This flexibility is highly desirable as it can provide a service where there is insufficient business for fixed libraries and be easily amended as need arises.

The proposal to cut out the library services mentioned also aroused suspicion because it was seen to be in conflict with a considerable number of the laudable aims expressed in the LTCCP and other Council publications. Contradictions between these pronouncements and the proposed actions breeds cynicism, which is in no-one's interest.

Christchurch City Council CITY SCENE April 2006 "Our city is built on strong communities." "Everybody, and particularly the most vulnerable, is able to participate" "A broad range of learning opportunities is available".

The Council has a **Creating Strong Communities Portfolio Group** specifically to encourage and monitor social resilience, cohesion and health.

LTCCP. Council Vision (Page 9) "a place of ... thriving urban villages" "people feel safe and supported, with leisure and lifestyle options to balance work and play" "cultural activities are a constant part of the fabric of our communities ..." "We offer world-class education and training to provide our children with future-proof skills ..."

Community outcomes - A city of Lifelong Learning (P46) "A broad range of learning opportunities is available in Christchurch."

Strategic directions. Goals and Objectives (P49) "Increase involvement in lifelong learning by: Providing resources and information, through libraries and websites; Encouraging people of all ages to take advantage of learning opportunities". (P50) "Provide accessible and welcoming public buildings ..."

Healthy environment (P52) "planning ... transport in a way that minimises pollution" "development needs to be ... sustainable." (P53) "reduce reliance on fossil fuels..." (P6 and 7, Mayor's Introduction) "think of your community. Think about your children's children. ... What will make this city easy to cross on foot, by bicycle, or by vehicle?"

Liveable City Key challenges (P55) "Increasing congestion threatens key transport routes in and out of Christchurch." "important not to leave older neighbourhoods ...to deteriorate as new areas develop." "Living in poorly-planned neighbourhoods can make it difficult to get to ... leisure facilities. It can leave people feeling isolated."

Prosperous Economy (P56) Goal- "Encouraging people to take part in lifelong learning to make the workforce skilled and adaptable"

Cultural and learning services (P104) Objective "To provide a library network that meets information, learning and recreational needs."

Compare these worthwhile aims with the effects of the proposed library closures.

"Creating Strong Communities" - so why eliminate those facilities where people come together in a relaxed, familiar and friendly environment, a refuge from the noisy and impersonal commercial bustle, a place where people can enrich their lives with information and entertainment? Children can learn about the wider world, students study, older citizens keep in touch with developments and those with disabilities find comfort and support. Libraries and their resources are a wonderful escape from loneliness and isolation. Making them inaccessible or just harder to get to actually harms communities, and especially the most vulnerable. Not a desirable move.

"Thriving urban villages" - so why cut out the libraries which are central to these neighbourhoods, the attraction which helps keep community shopping centres viable and gives a focus to social and intellectual life? The huge car-dependent malls suck life out of the smaller and more relaxed "village" hubs, the real financial, environmental and social costs of this energy-gobbling congestion-creating and ultimately unsustainable pattern of life are becoming more and more apparent. Why speed the process?

"Life-long learning" Libraries are vital in encouraging children to read, they are hugely important in developing skills and knowledge in formal education and for building the well-informed and adaptable population essential to our future. They enable people to keep up with advances in professional, technical, scientific and other fields. Self-education is enormously important in a rapidly changing world. Why cut whole sectors of the population off from the very facility which most assists the "future-proofing" the Council advocates?

"Healthy environment - Safety" Fuel and energy costs will continue to rise considerably and availability may be restricted. Reducing road traffic, personal and commercial, will be a necessity. Local self-sufficiency will become more important. Cutting down unnecessary travel will help reduce costs, congestion delays, pollution and overseas funds expenditure. Eliminating local libraries, however, will force users either to travel or do without library services.

The Papanui Road/Main North Road corridor is one of the three highly congested traffic arteries the Council identifies as major bottlenecks. Why push more traffic onto this by closing the Redwood and Bishopdale libraries leaving as the single library in the whole North-West that at Papanui, which is near the junction of Papanui, Harewood and the Main North Road and just across the road from the traffic-generating Northlands Mall and Papanui High School.

Is it thought reasonable that school children presently within reach of the Redwood and Bishopdale libraries should instead cycle into the traffic maelstrom around Papanui?

"Liveable City" The council acknowledges the ill effects of people being unable to get to community facilities and the problems of loneliness. It declares that everyone must be able to participate, particularly the most vulnerable. So why then deprive them of their libraries? Once lost, it will be very hard to get them replaced.

“Prosperous Economy” Do we encourage people to take part in life-long learning by making it difficult or impossible to access libraries easily?

“Cultural and learning services” The Council states that its objective is to provide a library network that meets needs and also that the library service as a whole, including the mobile service, is a strategic asset. Does ignoring the needs of certain suburbs and chopping them out of this network meet this objective?

Other submitters will have covered the adverse impact of library closures on particular groups - young children and their parents, school children, students local and from overseas, people educating themselves, the old, the disabled and others. Some may have expanded on the consequences of increased traffic, the erosion of neighbourhood centres, the corrosion of quality of life.

The financial position is not clear. The figures on Page 107 referring to libraries presumably cover the actual twenty in operation rather than the fourteen Page 104 says exist, and presumably include the cost of those proposed for removal. The \$530,000 estimated as annual saving from the closures equates to around \$1.52 per person for the population of Christchurch based on the 2001 census figure given in the LTCCP. If the population growth projection given there is correct by now we will have hit 385,533 citizens and the amount saved would be around \$1.38 each. A great number of people think our libraries are worth a lot more than this.

In addition, the “saving” quoted is misleading. That may be the amount the Council saves but in reality what has been done is to pass most of the cost on to others, simply transferring the burden to deprived users. Those whose libraries are removed carry the whole cost while the “benefit” is an insignificant saving per individual spread over the whole city. This defies notions of social equity, inclusiveness, fairness. The Council CEO avoided saying why just some parts of the population should be disadvantaged, rather than any cost-cutting being spread evenly. Having put extremely lavish new libraries in some areas should not be covered by cutting out very popular libraries in the heart of other suburbs.

The examples of contradictions between the proposal to close libraries and the rest of the LTCCP seem to indicate it was a late addition as it is not compatible with the primary goals and objectives. The general public perceive it as irrational and arrogant. There is a great deal of community anger and a perception that those councillors and the Mayor who voted for the cuts are very much out of touch with the values of a great many of their citizens. This causes people to be dubious about the quality of other policy forming and decision making and concerned about the effectiveness of Council operation. There is a feeling that too much is being pushed through without adequate research or discussion.

Whether these perceptions are correct or not is hard to tell, but as it is perceptions which motivate people, rather than objective reality, it is extremely important that the Council recognise the damage done to relations and takes steps to correct problems or improve communication with the voting public.

The proposal to close libraries should be withdrawn. Any cuts in funding or any other significant changes to our library services should only be made after proper research, disclosure of specific options and full public consultation.



Bruce Tuller

SAVE OUR LIBRARIES

We the undersigned oppose the Christchurch City Council proposal to close public libraries at Bishopdale, Redwood, and Spreydon plus the Mobile Library service - or any other city libraries. Their value to the community greatly exceeds the claimed saving in costs.

NAME

ADDRESS

SIGNATURE

R. Dennis	107 Te Matai Rd.	Ruth Dennis
A. Dennis	107 Te Matai Rd.	Arthur Dennis
Wendy Chambers	26 Flinders Rd	W.P. Chambers
Kay Cunningham	104 Acornvale Rd.	Kay Cunningham
Colleen Bailey	4 Awarley St. Kaupoi	Colleen Bailey
Peter Kauri	18 CLYDESDALE STREET	P. Kauri
Ben Patalasio	59 Bamford St.	Ben Patalasio
Brandon Rockhouse	9 Shelley St	Brandon
Lol Welsh	41 Vagues	Lol Welsh
Tom Kelly	81 HANSHURST ST	Tom Kelly
Danny Taylor	5 Terrelle St	Danny Taylor
Jaime R. Roman	83/95 Grant Rd	Jaime Roman
J. Soren Floss	43 Anderson St	J. Soren Floss
J. HALL	160 TANURED	J. HALL
S. P. Jones	214 Barwood St.	S. P. Jones
B. PATRICK	409 Winton Terrace	B. PATRICK
Jean Smith	26 Waterford Ave.	Jean Smith
Ken Smith	" " "	Ken Smith
David de Manon & Rubbins	James Rd.	David de Manon & Rubbins
Susy Hall	Old Tai Tap. Rd.	Susy Hall
J. LEERMANNORS	14/95 Grants	J. LEERMANNORS

22 spaces Copy form as required. Use to support submissions to the Council or send to 11 Trafford St Chch by end April

Kayla