

## Submission on the Draft Community Plan 2006-2016

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft community plan 2006-2016. It is very encouraging to see the focus on public health in the draft plan, with one of the community outcomes being "A Healthy City", and an emphasis on our city environment supporting the health of the community.

It is also encouraging that the Council recognises the contribution of city development; community support; parks, open spaces and waterways; recreation and leisure; refuse minimisation and disposal; regulatory services; streets and transport; wastewater collection and treatment; and water supply to public health. However it is important to note that cultural and learning services; and economic development also affect health.

The draft plan includes some proposals that concern me because I believe they are potentially harmful to public health. The first is the withdrawal of the mobile library and the planned closure of the Redwood, Bishopdale, and Spreydon libraries. Literacy, and education in general, are important determinants of health.<sup>1,2</sup> There is no information provided in the draft plan to suggest that people in these suburbs will have equivalent access to libraries once their local libraries are closed (no increase in the number of libraries is proposed for years 1-3 or 4-10), and unless such evidence is available, I do not believe these libraries should be closed.

Secondly obesity is a major risk factor for later disease (especially cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes).<sup>3</sup> Physical activity, both in childhood and adulthood, is important in reducing the risk of obesity. Physical activity has also been shown to reduce the risk of some cancers and of declining cognitive function in older age.<sup>4-5</sup> Closing the Sockburn, Edgware, Belfast, Templeton, and Woolston swimming pools may make it more difficult for people in these suburbs to be physically active. (One new Northern area pool is proposed, but it appears that there will be a gap of several years between the closure of the small pools and the establishment of the new one). Rather than selling the Papanui pool land, would it be appropriate to convert it to use for an alternative physical activity, or green space?

Finally, the section on water supply does not mention fluoridation of the water supply. This is disappointing, as the Ministry of Health and the CDHB have requested the Christchurch City Council consider this. Water fluoridation is a proven public health measure which has been shown to reduce dental decay.<sup>6,7</sup>

I realise that resources are limited, and that the above suggestions will consume resources, but I wonder if this could be addressed by prioritising projects differently. For instance it is not clear to me from reading the draft plan that the fit-out for the new civic offices (\$4.3 million) should take precedence over retaining the libraries and swimming pools. It would be very useful to have more information on how some projects were determined to be "essential" and others assigned lower priority.

Thank you again for this opportunity to contribute to the development of the Community Plan.

## References

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