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Corporate Plan Output: Housing Policy and Advice	

The purpose of this report is to initiate representation to the new government with regard to housing issues, which have caused concerns to this Council for some time.

### BACKGROUND

In 1996, the Council undertook a significant review of its involvement in the provision of affordable housing. As a result of this review which included an extensive consultation process, the Council resolved to continue with its present service delivery and, indeed, to expand that service through the adoption of the vision statement:

*“To contribute to the community’s social well-being by ensuring safe, accessible and affordable housing is available to people on low incomes including elderly persons, and people with disabilities.”*

As one of the actions to achieve the vision, the Council also resolved:

*“To write to the Minister of Housing seeking urgent attention to the following matters:*

- (i) The Government acknowledge homelessness is a reality in New Zealand, including Christchurch, and provide a statutory definition of homelessness.*
- (ii) That the Government acknowledge that the policy of requiring Housing New Zealand to achieve a commercial return on its investments while also having social objectives is neither working nor achievable.*
- (iii) That the Government acknowledge that its market rental policies have resulted in a significant increase in private sector rentals and that it therefore consider a return to a differential rental system related to income, or that the accommodation supplement be increased to 100% of the eligible amount and that it be targeted to meet tenants’ needs.*
- (iv) That low interest loans for low income first home purchasers be made available through the Housing Corporation and that the deposit be income related.*
- (v) That the Government ensure that:*
  - Housing New Zealand houses comply with acceptable standards.*
  - Monitoring of housing standards is enacted.*
  - Legislation covering issues such as security of tenure is tightened.*
  - That the Government through its own agencies and in association with the Real Estate Institute promote good practice in the rental market.*
- (vi) That the Government consider joint venture developments/housing projects with the Council, such as low interest loans, on a similar basis to those provided to councils in the past.”*

Whilst the previous government acknowledged the Council's letter of concern little seems to have happened over the intervening three years with respect to mitigating the Council's concerns.

In July 1999, Councillor Anderton and the Property Manager visited Australia to study management options for affordable housing and were impressed with the level of research undertaken at a Federal Government level with regard to housing need trends/demands. The July 1999 report to the Council recommending a management regime for Gloucester Courts made a number of recommendations and the Council resolved, inter alia:

*"That central government be lobbied to carry out appropriate research on future housing needs."*

#### **RESEARCH IN GENERAL**

Mr John Dryden, the Council's Environmental Policy and Planning Manager, comments as follows:

*"Since the end of the Housing Commission and Departments in the 1980s, there has been a dearth of research into present and future housing needs of New Zealand. As well, there has been an absence at central government level, of any support or indeed interest, in the urban renewal of our major cities. Residential activity is of course, the major land use in all cities and a better understanding of future demographic trends, lifestyles and how they translate to housing types, sizes and locations, can only help us with the better planning of our city."*

#### **CURRENT SITUATION**

The new government clearly has a mandate to make appropriate housing available and affordable for all New Zealanders, including those who could be classed as disadvantaged/marginalised. Reviews of the Housing Accommodation Supplement have been promised as have "state housing" rentals set at a maximum of 25% of family income.

The Christchurch City Council leads New Zealand in the delivery of affordable local authority housing and has done so since 1938.

The Christchurch City Council has the second largest housing portfolio in New Zealand behind Housing New Zealand and clearly has a significant interest in any review of "state" housing policy.

**Recommendation:** For discussion.

#### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That an invitation be extended to the Minister of Housing to meet with the Mayor and Housing Working Party to discuss the issues raised in this report, and to visit city housing complexes.