

## 6. ENVIRONMENT CANTERBURY ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT FOR CHRISTCHURCH/WEST MELTON RIVERS AND GROUNDWATER

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Corporate Plan Output: Supply of Water	

The purpose of this report is to outline progress by Environment Canterbury towards their Water Chapter of the Natural Resources Regional Plan and advise of the opportunity the City Council has for input into this process.

### BACKGROUND

Environment Canterbury intends to release a draft of the proposed Water Chapter of the Natural Resources Regional Plan (NRRP) by June 2001. A document outlining the relevant issues and options was published in October 1999, to which the Christchurch City Council made a submission earlier this year. In addition to water resource issues that affect the Canterbury Region as a whole, Environment Canterbury consider that the Christchurch – West Melton Aquifer System warrants specific consideration and are therefore in the process of preparing an Issues and Options document for this area in particular.

The Christchurch—West Melton issues and options document is intended for distribution to key stakeholders and interest groups. A special issue of the Environment Canterbury publication “Living Here” will contain an overview of the issues and will be distributed to all households in Christchurch. The purpose of the documents are to promote community understanding and discussion of critical factors affecting the water resources or the Christchurch – West Melton area, and to get feedback on how the community would like to see these resources managed. Feedback received from these documents and concurrent focus groups will be used by Environment Canterbury to prepare the draft water chapter of the NRRP.

The document presents options for:

1. balancing minimum flows in the Avon and Heathcote rivers with water use requirements,
2. levels of groundwater quality, and
3. levels of water quality in the Avon and Heathcote Rivers

The issue of minimum stream flows in particular warrants careful consideration because the maintenance of higher stream flows comes at a significant cost to the community, either in terms of lower water availability or the cost of additional infrastructure.

### THE COUNCIL’S INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS

City Council staff have had the opportunity of input into earlier drafts of the Christchurch —West Melton issues and options document with regard to effects on the City Council’s infrastructure. Environment Canterbury is now seeking input from the Christchurch City Council through a joint Councillor workshop that was held on 15 November 2000, with a follow-up workshop to be held on 6 December 2000. The purpose of these workshops is to ensure that the issues and options document presents complex issues regarding the sustainability of Christchurch’s water resources in a way that is readily understood and addresses the needs of both the environment and stakeholders.

Copies of the draft document entitled “Our Water in the Balance” were distributed to members of the Joint Christchurch City Council—Environment Canterbury Committee and further copies have been distributed to members of the City Services Committee. This draft is for discussions purposes and has not been publicly released.

Following publication of the document early in 2001, Council staff will prepare a formal submission on behalf of the Council with input from the appropriate Council Committees.

**Recommendation:** That the Council continue to be involved in this process through the Joint Christchurch City Council—Environment Canterbury Committee, and through formal submissions in due course.

**Chairman's  
Recommendation:**

That the City Services Committee:

1. Continue to be directly involved in the process as the Council's Standing Committee responsible for water supply.
2. Hold a special meeting in February 2001 to receive a report from staff on issues for the submission to be made to Environment Canterbury.
3. Recommend a draft submission to the Council at its February 2001 meeting.