

# OUSA Submission on the Otago Regional Council Long-Term Plan

## Welcome

### Otago's challenges and opportunities

Do you have any feedback about the challenges and opportunities facing Otago?

The Otago University Students' Association (OUSA) agrees with the Council's indication of the region's key challenges and opportunities.

In alignment with the Future for Local Government Report it is critical that the ORC continue to build relationships and further empower local hapū and iwi across the region. This dynamic will allow a more inclusive local democracy that embraces te ao Māori and allows all members of the Otago region to contribute to its management and future.

The past five years have demonstrated the need for adaptability in a globalising world as the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we all lived our lives, worked and engaged with our communities. Further change is just over the horizon with central government reform of local government responsibilities, the impact of a deteriorating climate crisis and a more volatile economic environment. That is why it is important that this long term plan prepare to meet these challenges head on with a robust response.

### Do you have any feedback about our focus areas for the next 10 years?

As detailed in previous answer, the OUSA endorses the ORC's proposed focus areas as valuable and consistent with its goal of preserving the health and connectivity of its environment and communities.

Each area is of substantial interests to the council, concerning many stakeholders across the region. However, if the Council can make meaningful progress in these six areas it can count itself extremely successful in its contribution to the region and its inhabitants.

## Proposal 1: Investing in our Environment

Do you support this proposal? Yes

What level of total funding should be available? \$2 million

How should this initiative be funded? A targeted rate on districts that participate

## Proposal 2: Investing in Public Transport

### !Bus Services in Dunedin

Do you support the increased investment and the addition of extra services? Yes

Please comment: As indicated by previous OUSA submissions to the ORC, the student population is absolutely in favour of more accessible, and environmentally friendly public transport.

Public transport provides tremendous economic benefits to communities, allowing riders greater access to work, education, healthcare, and recreational activities. For students in particular, who are spending ever more of their income on rent and groceries, many would be happy to see their fares and rates go further. However, this is true of everyone who uses public transport across the entire region. Additionally, further pedestrianisation of the university precinct creates a higher demand for and usage of busses which needs to be wallet friendly.

The world is advancing closer and closer to climate catastrophe and while it might feel very "doom and gloom," at times there is certainly work that can be done to reduce emissions. The further electrification and decarbonisation of Otago's buses through the \$289 million investment is of significant value to the health of the wider community and environment.

Option 1, would further make more buses available and accessible to residents and students across Dunedin, allowing them safe transport home.

Do you support the increased investment and the addition of extra services? Yes

Please comment: None

## Proposal 3: Changing our Rating System

### !Public Transport rates funding

Tell us what you think: support the 20% Otago-wide rate (i.e. general rate), support the targeted rate portion of transport rates being on a district wide basis?

Any other feedback? None

### !Paying back what we borrowed

Do you support repayment of existing transport deficits over 5 years? Yes

### !Flood Protection, Drainage and River Management

Do you support 80% of all flood protection schemes being rated based on flood scheme areas (i.e. targeted rates) and 20% through Otago wide rates (i.e. general rates)? Yes

Do you support 90% of all drainage schemes being rated based on drainage scheme areas (i.e. targeted rates) and 10% through Otago wide rates (i.e. general rates)? Yes

Do you support the general rate allocation being applied across Otago? Yes

### !Targeted rate allocations

Do you support reducing the number of benefit zones for flood and drainage target rates? Yes

Do you have any other feedback on the flood and drainage rating proposals? None

### !Catchment Management funding

Do you support establishing a new catchment management rate, which would be rated across Otago based on capital value? Yes

Please comment on the proposed catchment rate: The OUSA supports the creation of the catchment management rate as it increases transparency for ratepayers and has a minimal effect on rates.

### !Navigational safety

Do you support a new navigational safety rate to fund harbour and navigational safety activity, which would be rated across Otago (except Queenstown Lakes) based on capital value? Yes

Please comment on the navigational safety rate: None

## !Wilding pine control

Do you support discontinuing the wilding tree rate and using the biosecurity rate to fund support for wilding conifer control groups? Yes

Please comment on the wilding tree rate proposed change: None

Do you have any other feedback on the other rating proposed rating proposals? None

## Infrastructure Strategy:

The OUSA supports the Council's efforts to maintain its flood and drainage infrastructure. While it does come with a hefty price tag, the regions ability to deal and protect property and lives from extreme weather events, as a direct cause of climate change far outweighs this cost across thirty years.

Acknowledging the risk of the strategy being more expensive, our initial thought is that the cost of investing in this key infrastructure far outweighs the cost of relying on obsolete infrastructure in the event of a freak weather event.

Feedback about the increase in rates?

The OUSA supports the proposed increase in rates. While we acknowledge that the increases are comparatively high in a time of economic austerity and a timid market.

However much of the investment detailed throughout this long-term plan is long overdue and over the next ten to twenty years will provide value back to the community and we believe will be of considerable value to the community.

Further, where the council seeks to exceed its 10% rates increase limit it mainly concerns large projects that have in the OUSA's opinion have received underfunding such as public transport and infrastructure investment.

To provide numbers indicating student support of the proposals discussed throughout this submission in an informal survey of 40 people on the University of Otago campus conducted by the OUSA, I have attached the results below. This data was collected by OUSA during the Otago Regional Council informal pop-up consultation event on the Long Term Plan on the 12th of April.

Students were invited to answer the question "What should be the priorities of the Otago Regional Council over the next three years?" and given three chips to deposit in seven glass

jars with numerous answers to indicate what they believed the priorities of the regional council should be. The answers were taken largely from this report and are described below with the final numbers of tokens in the jars.

"Improve regional climate resilience" - 23

"Large scale Environmental Fund \$500,000" - 3

"Large scale Environmental Fund \$1,000,000" - 9

"Large scale Environmental Fund \$2,000,00" - 23

"Public Transport Investment" - 36

"Regional Bus Trials" - 18

"Service Reduction and Rates Reduction." - 5

While not a perfect survey, it allowed Cr Elliot Weir, Cr Alan Somerville, ORC staff and I to explain (with the aid of the fabulous LTP consultation guide) the finer points of each priority as it related to the Long Term Plan.

From this survey, it is clear that priorities for students include large scale environmental community funding and public transport investment. Students were largely not in support of service reduction or lower council rates.