

BRCT submission on the Draft Annual Plan 2017-18



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The Chief Executive Officer
Dunedin City Council
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Submission on the Dunedin City Council's *Draft Annual Plan 2014-2015*.

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We would like to speak to our submission, if possible.

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1 Overview

Thank you for this opportunity to submit to the Dunedin City Council ***Draft Annual Plan 2017-2018***.

The Blueskin Resilient Communities Trust (BRCT) is a registered charity and has been creating climate solutions since 2008. The Trust is governed by a voluntary board with representation from the Blueskin settlements around Blueskin Bay and has **Jeanette Fitzsimons** as patron. Our Waitati office has two full-time staff, one part-time volunteer administrator, four Home Performance Advisors, two associates, and many community volunteers and pro bono specialists all contributing time and skills on our range of projects, services and expertise. Approximately 383 subscribe to our email newsletters and in social media we have 480 Facebook 'likes' and 332 followers on Twitter.

We valued participating in the Community Conversations Forum on the 4th of April.

While we understand that Council is required to focus on changes from the LTP for the year concerned and that involve only significant or material differences, we value the opportunity to comment and also to give a signal on what we think must be considered for a longer term focus.

We support the City vision ("Dunedin is one of the world's great small cities") and encourage improvements in process and services. We desire greater partnership with, and closer collaboration between, Council and community in all strategic areas, and particularly on climate change issues. We place great importance on ensuring the active implementation of plans and strategies to deliver effective action and to meet our Compact of Mayors obligations. We offer partnership and our community experience, knowledge and ability to deliver results to hasten the low carbon pathway that the City has embarked upon through the Compact of Mayors.

We would like to speak to our submission, if possible.

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2 Our opinion on the proposed changes

2.1 *Environment Strategy Implementation*

We endorse the Council allocating \$200, 000 towards the implementation of Te Ao Tūroa - Dunedin's Environment Strategy. The strategy prioritises and guides the city's efforts to reduce carbon emissions, climate change adaptation work, and all other environmental protection. Maintaining, replenishing and growing our natural commons is essential if we are to thrive as a city and a community.

We suggest increasing the funding allocation to \$250, 000 in the 2017 – 18 year to allow more successful and timely delivery of the strategy's priorities.

We strongly encourage spending that leverages partnerships and increases action on the ground. There are many ways to deliver action and while some require staff time, targeted funding for specific projects via partners can often deliver action faster and more effectively than employing a staff member with no resources to implement action. We see some easy first steps that deserve the greatest support, as these are substantive areas of work likely to yield positive results.

2.2 *Energy & Emissions*

The Energy Plan 1.0 outlines goals that aim to: take advantage of economic opportunities in a changing energy context; save costs and enhance quality of life from energy efficiency improvements; boost the city's energy security and ability to adapt to future change; reduce Dunedin's climate change and environmental effects. Energy is critical to our health and wellbeing and our economy. We are very concerned that even this modest plan is significantly under-resourced and does not yet appear to have much profile within Enterprise Dunedin, the location from which many actions could be initiated, supported or enhanced. On a positive side, we are pleased with the Council's support of the Cosy Homes Trust and Cosy Energy Advice and we hope the Council can support more of this community action. Bigger, faster action on implementing the Energy Plan through leveraging partnerships will help lower emissions and create new jobs in the city. For example any procurement policy for energy could prioritise local low carbon energy sources to keep the energy dollar in local circulation or supporting lowering emissions.

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The Council's plan to reduce Council's carbon footprint (the Emissions Management and Reduction Plan) may also be modest and easily achievable but we are not confident that it is receiving adequate attention or resourcing either.

The Compact of Mayors to which the Council is a signatory commits us to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions, enhance resilience to climate change and track our progress. It is essential that we as a community act on this commitment, and invest appropriately.

2.3 Future Public & Urban Infrastructure

We support the Spatial Plan with its overall objective of establishing a *Compact City with Resilient Townships*. Transport infrastructure is critical infrastructure and there has been some great progress made on building cycleways (with a few bumps along the way). We support the development of safe cycleways away from main traffic routes. We need greater focus on enabling the transition to an electric transport fleet as well, and further effort to bring governance of the public transport infrastructure in-house, along with pedestrianisation of the Octagon and along George Street.

When improvements are made to the CBD through the Central City Plan we expect that any upgrades to CBD heating systems via a district heating system will be married with new roading to reduce business disruption. In particular, we request that the Council take advantage of the opportunity associated with the required upgrades of the Civic Centre and the Dunedin Public Library to replace gas heating with biomass heating. A centrally located biomass boiler could function as a satellite to a wider district heating system.

We request that Council explore city resilience in the face of rising groundwater/sea levels and consider Dunedin North for suitable new housing development in the future. This area has good services, proximity to the CBD, and has a large number of older properties which could be replaced by more environmentally suitable housing for mixed age group and families rather than only for students and OAPs.

In the Blueskin area we need a risk assessment of public and critical infrastructure (halls, schools, roads, electricity, food growing areas) as we plan to adapt to climate change and sea-level rise. We request that Council review current landholdings in the Blueskin area to evaluate the opportunity for community-led development, whether as new housing zones or for other purposes.

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2.4 Community-Led Development

We are one of a number of Dunedin Community-led Development organisations, and we were established in 2008 to meet a community desire for community-led development. We want to see the relationship between the Dunedin City Council and Place-based Communities such as ours enhanced. We believe that thriving and connected communities will achieve our goal of being “a great small city”.

We commend the council for the decision (25th Jan 2016) to approve a budget of \$90,000 a year for each of the 2016/17 and 2017/18 years to facilitate place-based support services. We support the creation of a “Community Advisor” position to facilitate these services for place-based groups across the city.

We look forward to the report to the 2017/2018 Annual Plan that will review “actions, benefits” and provide a critique of this funding – and we anticipate the opportunity to contribute to this review and report.

We are working on climate change adaptation and note the complex issues faced by the communities of Greater South Dunedin, Long Beach, Waitati, Warrington, Karitane, Brighton and Ocean View. We commend the considerable council resource that is being invested into support for community-led development in Greater South Dunedin.

We also recognise the fragility of place-based organising elsewhere in the city – where Department of Internal Affairs funding has finished or is about to finish – or where groups struggle with no or very little funding. We also note the continued frustrations for some place-based groups as they attempt to navigate council and engage support for locally led change. We call upon the council to consider significant investment in place-based organising and groups’ city wide.

We call upon council to demonstrate through investment an understanding of the importance of community-led development to being a “great small city” - and the importance of community-led development to social wellbeing and economic development.

We call upon the council to explore the models of other cities – Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton, Porirua, and Invercargill – who have recognised the value of place-based organising to their social and economic well being and have invested appropriately.

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2.6 *Spending & Action Priorities*

Climate change is the defining issue of our times. We believe spending priorities should be more firmly directed to supporting community led development where the support can lead to building community resilience, emissions reduction and/or adaptation.

Our spending suggestions:

- Allocate \$200, 000 towards the implementation of Te Ao Tūroa - Dunedin's Environment Strategy
- Ideally increase the \$200, 000 allocation towards the implementation of Te Ao Tūroa - Dunedin's Environment Strategy by \$50, 000 to \$250, 000
- We believe that in 2016/17 there was a one-off budget of \$100,000 for ground water and sea-level rise planning. We request that this budget is increased further and is increased year on year.
- Please allocate \$200, 000 (doubling the current allocation) into more resources to assist successful implementation of the Energy Plan, meet the targets in the Emissions Management and Reduction Plan, and advance the Compact of Mayors to the point of establishing an action plan.
- Focus attention on local Smart Grid work to maximize the benefits for consumers, new and existing businesses and the electricity network as a whole. We seek a \$20, 000 investment in a scoping a market trial to unlock further investment in energy innovation and stimulate local business
- Consider significant investment in place-based organising and groups' delivering increased community resilience, emissions reduction and/or adaptation via community-led development
- Confirm funding for the Cosy Homes Trust, Cosy Energy Advice and an in-house Eco Design Advisor to 'invest to save' and improve the liveability of our city
- Invest \$10, 000 matching funds as a co-funder of a feasibility study to look at replacing fossil fuel heating with biomass for Council buildings and assets and commit to eliminating all fossil fuels for heating purposes by 2020.

Our suggestions for action:

- Focus attention on Climate Safe Housing work and climate change adaptation
- Encourage an increase in the development and use of renewable electricity generation within city limits
- Increase low carbon transport use through facilitating or enabling the development of key infrastructure infrastructure and assets (additional EV charging stations; cycleway development; Fleet replacement with EVs)

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- Ensure progress is maintained on implementing the Energy Plan, Te Ao Tūroa/Dunedin's Environment Strategy, the Social Wellbeing Strategy and the Integrated Transport Strategy.
- Any savings or surplus should be used to hasten Council action on climate change. We particularly encourage spending that both mitigates climate change impacts as well as enabling adaptation, such as our ClimateSafeHouse project and our proposed Blueskin Wind development.
- To ensure minimum disruption to the CBD when Central City Plan improvements are made, carefully align timelines for infrastructural work (i.e. district heating pipelines and biomass boilers) with paving work related to pedentrianisation, and with upgrades to the Civic Centre and Dunedin Public Library.
- Ensure that thorough risk assessments of public and critical infrastructure for all of Dunedin are done to allow good planning to adapt to climate change and sea-level rise.
- Ensure that the DCC leads by example in caring for the environment and the health of its citizens, i.e. through use of non-toxic weed and pest control to help to restore and enhance biodiversity across the city.