

To: Ashburton District Council

Submission to the ADC Long-term plan

I would like to make the following submission to the Long-term Plan

- 1. Biodiversity capacity:** I support the proposal to increase the capability in biodiversity.

Currently, ADC does not have a biodiversity officer or anyone with ecological training. Bert Hofmans, Open Space Planner, co-ordinates the Biodiversity Working Group (ADBWG) but has limited time for this part-time role. His work has been very valuable and appreciated but a greater capacity is required. The forester, Terry O'Neill, is also appreciated for his interest in native biodiversity.

Biodiversity is in crisis in the Ashburton District. Very little native biodiversity remains on the plains due to agricultural intensification. Despite identification of significant sites, there has been further loss.

In the foothills and high country, pressure from intensification has also increased rapidly over the last decade and there is been continual loss of native biodiversity. The council has little capacity, knowledge of, or interest in, the value of remnants that are often removed. Complaints from the public are often not followed through and due to the complicated conditions and exemptions to resource consents required to clear native vegetation in Rural C, it is difficult for the public to know whether vegetation clearance is legal or not. A biodiversity officer could advise the planning department and roading crews of the value of native remnants.

The National Policy Statement on Biodiversity will also have implications for the council and a biodiversity officer will be needed in this capacity.

As well as funding for a biodiversity officer, funding is also required for other biodiversity initiatives such as the purchase of remnants and the establishment and maintenance of insurance reserves.

2. Biodiversity and climate change:

There needs to be an understanding that all native vegetation has a high value for climate change mitigation. Tiers of native vegetation, such as matagouri and other native shrubs, increase shading of the ground surface, woody shrubs sequester carbon, hold moisture and increase soil carbon. All native vegetation should be considered valuable and should require a resource consent to be removed, not just in Rural A & B, must also in Rural C where current ADC regulations allow native vegetation removal.

3. Water:

There is poor water quality in many private wells and community water schemes. This has a huge implication for public health in the coming decades. It must be acknowledged that agricultural intensification is the major contributor to this situation and changes to farming practices must be made.

Despite changes to minimum flow irrigation consent conditions the Ashburton River is still grossly over-allocated. Preparations should be put in place to move to the proposed 10 cumecs minimum flow.

The NPS on freshwater must be supported, and I would like council to note that rather than Ashburton District having a “agriculture-based economy” (p. 15) it has an “environment-based economy”, as our agricultural wealth is based on abundant water, benign climate and good soils, all of which must be protected for use to be sustainable in an increasingly turbulent future.

Conclusion:

On page 8 of the “Our Plan – Our Place” document, there is the statement that “... our community outcomes... take a whole of community view. They integrate social, cultural, environmental well-being.”

I would like ADC to take this seriously, ensuring that all decisions in every department consider the implications of those decisions on native biodiversity, water and climate change. We no longer have the luxury of silo thinking – we are in a biodiversity, climate and water emergency.

Mary Ralston

I would like to be heard in support of this submission.