

Submission to the Ashburton Long Term District Plan 2021 – 31

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Mount Somers Holiday Park

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the Long Term District Plan, this is an important opportunity to help shape the future of our district.

We moved to Mount Somers in late 2019 after buying the Mt Somers Holiday Park. We have two key issues we would like to submit for consideration. We would like the opportunity to present this submission in front of the council (either in person or via zoom, whichever is most convenient for the Council).

Affordable housing - subdivision rules include a requirement to provide a range of section sizes

Affordable housing is a nationwide issue and one that the Ashburton District is not immune to. In our short time running the holiday park we have experienced first-hand the urgent demand for more affordable housing options in the district.

We have had families seek urgent accommodation, with us, after losing their accommodation provided as part of their jobs. These families have been unable to find any accommodation let alone accommodation appropriate for their young families. Many of these families have moved to the district for work and the lifestyle that the district offers. We have provided a short term option for these families while they look for appropriate homes.

The Council has a major influence at all stages of housing supply, including the planning and zoning of land, provision of infrastructure, and house construction. However the Council's response to the growing demand for housing has been inadequate. We have seen many 0.5 - 1 hectare subdivisions pop-up in our area. These sections are excessive and counter to the housing crisis that faces our nation. The Council have also been too slow to unlock land owned by Council for housing developments, and reluctant to provide the necessary infrastructure such as roads and three waters (drinking water, wastewater and stormwater services).

We know this is a complex issue that requires a broad response. We were encouraged to see the Districts strategic direction has goals including community outcomes around "providing opportunities for people of all ages and at all phases of life to enjoy a quality of living that is economically sustainable and affordable." We see a role and responsibility sitting with the District Council around affordable housing. Many Councils around the country provide social and affordable housing. We would support our council investing in affordable housing to help meet this growing need.

One option we would like considered is that subdivision rules for new subdivisions could include a requirement to provide a range of section sizes. By requiring new subdivisions to include even a small percentage of the new titles to be smaller and more affordable options it will provide more affordable land and building options. This would not need to be at the expense of house prices or of the profitability of subdivisions to the land owner. Requiring a mix of section sizes in new subdivisions would give a wider range of people the option to build new houses and add to our housing stock. This may make it more achievable for first time home buyers to build having the flow

on effect of freeing up existing rental properties for others who need it. We are lucky to live in a place with lots of space and plenty of new developments. We would love to see consideration given to how these new developments could play a larger part of the solution to our shortage of affordable housing by increasing the housing stock.

Freedom camping - short-term ban on freedom camping in the two Council operated scenic reserves

Responsible camping has a long history in the Ashburton District. Many people enjoy traversing the mountains, rivers and lakes around the district.

Responsible campers come in all shapes and sizes: some choose to camp as an affordable way to have a holiday at a favourite campground; some spend their retirement touring the country in a motor caravan; and others camp while hunting or fishing. However, we are concerned about the impact on the environment, and the cost to host them.

There are two local freedom camping spots at nearby rivers (Bowyers Stream and Taylors Stream). Both of these sites have required investment from the council to keep them tidy and safe for campers to use. We understand that there is further investment proposed for the Bowyers Stream scenic reserve. We also understand that there is investment scheduled for the Mt Somers Domain camping ground bathrooms. This seems counter intuitive to invest in both paid and free camping options that are so close to each other (within 6 km of the domain and holiday park). A short-term ban on freedom camping will encourage people to stay in the Mount Somers Village. Our experience of travellers in vans is that people who pay even a small amount are more likely to spend more money in the area. We feel it makes more sense to limit freedom camping options and to encourage use of the existing small businesses and council camping options. A short term ban will also allow an opportunity to gauge the impact and assess options for long term decision.

We propose a short-term ban on freedom camping in the two Council operated scenic reserves. This could provide a short-term boost to the local economy through encouraging campers to stay either with us at the holiday park, or to the Mt Somers Domain campground which is run by the local Reserve Board.

Key decisions in the discussion document

We support the preferred options for both installing water metres and elderly persons housing rent increases.