

1 May 2015

ECan Review
Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362
Wellington 6143

Dear Ministers

Submission on the Environment Canterbury Review

This submission is made on behalf of Ashburton District Council (the “Council”). Our contact details are PO Box 94, Ashburton 7740 and (03) 307-7700 and our email is info@adc.govt.nz

Introduction

Ashburton District Council appreciates the opportunity to give its views on the Environment Canterbury Review discussion document. In forming this submission, Council has held a workshop subsequent to the public meeting where Hon. Louise Upston, Associate Minister of Local Government, presented.

The Ashburton District Council area covers 6,175 km² with a population base of approximately 32,000 people. It is the third fastest growing region in Canterbury and the fifth fastest growing in the country.

The Council is involved in the Canterbury Water Management Strategy and supports the joint Ashburton Zone Committee. The economy of the Ashburton district is heavily reliant on irrigation sourced from Canterbury’s aquifers and river systems. Hence, the Council recognises the progress made since Environment Canterbury’s commissioners have been appointed and does not wish to see this work reversed in the future.

Executive Summary

Ashburton District Council supports:

- The proposal to establish a mixed-model governance structure for Environment Canterbury for the next local government term as a transitional structure to a fully elected Council, subject to a review of the governance and core functions of ECan.
- The mixed-model governance structure be changed from the proposed 7:6 elected:appointed membership to 8:5 elected:appointed membership.
- The Chairperson being selected by the elected and appointed members from among themselves.
- The special resource management powers currently exercised by the Commissioners being retained until the review of ECan governance and functions is completed.
- Consideration be given to reviewing ECan’s transport function with a view of it being transferred to city or district councils or a legal entity established to perform this function.

Priorities for Environment Canterbury

Ashburton District Council agrees that the five goals identified in the ECan discussion document are right for ECan governance. Council has the unanimous view that these goals are all equally important and should not be placed into a hierarchy.

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Council is unanimous that resource management is a top priority – particularly for water issues in Canterbury and appreciates that good governance in this area is essential.

Support for a mixed-model governance structure (majority decisions)

Ashburton District Council agrees the proposed governance structure is suited for Canterbury currently and meets the goals for ECan. Council supports a mixed-model governance structure for the next local government term. During that term, it is anticipated that further consideration will be given to reviewing the effectiveness of the governance model and what changes will need to be made.

We would like to see this mixed-model approach as an interim governance structure over the next three years, with a view to having this model reviewed prior to the 2019 elections (i.e. review should commence in 2018). There is an anticipation that there may be a full return to elected representation post-2019.

A higher elected member representation is preferred and Council recommends a change from the proposed ratio of seven elected and six appointed members (7:6) to eight elected members and five appointed members (8:5).

Council unanimously agrees that the Chairperson of ECan should be elected from the 13 members, and the Ministerial appointees be appointed for the whole term of three years.

Retention of Special Resource Management Powers

Ashburton District Council believes that Environment Canterbury must retain the special resource management powers for the duration of the 2016-2019 transitional period. We also support the retention of the Regional Water Committee and the ten Zone Committees so that the local viewpoints are incorporated into decision making.

Council would like to suggest the boundaries of what determines urban versus rural (with regards to whether or not the Selwyn district is considered part of the Christchurch urban area or part of rural Canterbury) be reviewed.

Review of Environment Canterbury's transport function

Council supports the Creech Report recommendation that a review be undertaken to consider the best management and operational structure for public transport in the region (p71, MfE).

Council agrees that settling on an appropriate transportation governance structure is important. This may require ECan's current transport functions are transferred to city or district councils or into some other more appropriate entity created for this purpose, which is in accordance to the Local Government Act 2002 (s17).

We thank the Ministers for considering our submission on behalf of Ashburton District Council.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Dalziell
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Angus McKay
MAYOR

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