

Submission



He Tūāpapa ki te Ora: Infrastructure for a Better Future 2021

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SUBMITTED TO: Infrastructure Commission

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Introduction

1. Ashburton District Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the draft Aotearoa New Zealand Infrastructure Strategy, *He Tūāpapa ki te Ora: Infrastructure for a Better Future*.
2. Located an hour's drive south of Christchurch, more than 35,300¹ residents live in the district, with the main town of Ashburton accounting for over 50% of residents. The rest of our residents live rurally or in smaller towns or villages across the district.
3. Ashburton District has experienced moderate and sustained population increase since the mid-1990's, increasing by 23% between 2006 and 2013 (a 3.3% increase per year). This growth, however, is now slowing, with an average growth of 1.3% per year since 2013.

General comments

4. Council supports the submissions prepared by Taituarā and the Canterbury Mayoral Forum.
5. In addition, we would like to highlight some specific areas of particular concern to our district.

Building a better future

F6. Ensure security and resilience of critical infrastructure

6. Council supports the identification of critical national infrastructure, including critical infrastructure owned by local authorities. We request that where local authority assets are identified as critical, there should be commensurate central government funding attached, in recognition of the critical regional and national importance of those assets.
7. This became very evident when the SH1 bridge across the Ashburton River was closed due to the recent Canterbury floods. This highlighted the criticality of local bridges on core routes and detour routes. While this flood has been called a 1 in 200 year flood, it is probable that more intense and frequent rainfall events, driven by a changing climate, will increase the frequency of such severe floods. There is a real chance that this will become a more regular occurrence.

¹ Source: Statistics New Zealand Population Estimates 30 June 2020

8. We also strongly encourage that the Alpine Fault is kept at the forefront of considerations when assessing the resilience and security of critical infrastructure. New research on the Alpine Fault indicates that there is a 75% probability of an Alpine Fault earthquake occurring in the next 50 years. This brings a now highly likely event into the planning window of all current and planned infrastructure in the South Island and lower North Island.

Enabling competitive cities and regions

C5. Improve regional and international connections

9. Council supports the proposal to develop a national freight strategy. Having a single source of information would be invaluable, and provide consistency between transportation types. However, we do have concerns about the achievability of this due to differences in funding and policies across the country.

Creating a better system

S2. Ensuring equitable funding and financing

10. We have concern over Q28 that this is effectively asking what more can be done with the same (or less) funding. This implies that current levels of funding are adequate or even excessive when this is plainly not the case. We believe that many local authorities are actually doing a very good job in managing infrastructure costs that are outstripping the levels of funding available to meet those costs. In many cases, this is driven by higher standards and community growth, both of which afford limited opportunity to ameliorate cost increases.
11. In recent times, these cost increases have resulted in Waka Kotahi requesting more analysis of land transport programmes and projects. In many cases, this places extra cost and time demands on already strained resources. The proportion of spending that goes towards paperwork rather than physical work is concerning.
12. Our interpretation of S2.3 is that this is effectively user pays. If so, equitable rules are paramount - but fraught with difficulties. Highly intrusive monitoring would provide the truest data but is likely to raise privacy issues.
13. Council thanks the Infrastructure Commission Te Waihangā for the opportunity to submit on He Tūāpapa ki te Ora: Infrastructure for a Better Future.



Hamish Riach

Chief Executive – Ashburton District Council