



16 May 2013

**Submission to Wellington City Council
on
Draft Annual Plan 2013-14**

From the Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington

Summary

Oral Submission: We wish to present an oral submission to the Draft Annual Plan. Please contact: Mary Anderson, 04 385 5541 ext. 6040 or mary.anderson@otago.ac.nz.

This written submission comments on: reducing alcohol-related harm; expanding smokefree areas and tobacco control; reducing air pollution; greenhouse gas mitigation; climate change preparedness; “Smart Energy” initiatives; parking; transport; housing; public libraries; and children.

Background

1. The Department of Public Health of University of Otago, Wellington, works to improve, promote and protect health and to reduce health inequalities through research, teaching and community service. The Department hosts researchers with expertise in disease prevention and population health, tobacco and alcohol, housing and environmental health, and includes He Kainga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme and the New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities, which leads a ‘Resilient Urban Futures’ work programme.

Reducing alcohol-related harm

2. To reduce the harm caused by alcohol, we recommend that Council use the existing law to maximise controls on late night alcohol consumption, explore the options for new bylaws to maximise reduction of alcohol-related harm in the CBD area, and prohibit alcohol marketing in the city to the fullest possible extent. We recommend Council to respond strongly and positively to concerns of local communities about alcohol supply in their localities, and to support local community action against expansion of supply.

Expanding smokefree areas and tobacco control

3. To protect the health of city residents, the Council should support the Government's Smokefree 2025 goal through a number of measures. These include:
 - Prohibiting via bylaw smoking along the streets that make up the Golden Mile, with the potential to expand throughout the CBD if this intervention was shown to be successful after a year;
 - Prohibiting via bylaw smoking on public beaches (for example, within a certain distance of the flags used by lifeguards or the central half of each beach);
 - Conversion of existing voluntary smokefree policies for parks into bylaws with fines;
 - Provision of adequate signage for all such smokefree areas;
 - Prohibition of street-based restaurant and café seating unless it is smokefree;
 - Enforcement of the existing littering bylaw and increased fines;
 - Prohibition of film-making on Council properties if the film includes smoking;
 - Explicitly marketing the Summer City programme as smokefree; and
 - Acting pro-actively to identify opportunities and support initiatives to prevent young people starting to smoke, assist smokers to quit, and achieve the Smokefree 2025 goal.

Reducing air pollution

4. Parts of Wellington suffer from poor air quality, especially in winter and mainly from domestic fires. This is a health hazard, a nuisance and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions (especially if coal is burnt). We recommend much tighter controls on the quality of fire places and wood burners allowed in Wellington, with strong enforcement. Council could consider maintaining a list of suppliers to guarantee to deliver only dry firewood. We also recommend adding additional air monitoring stations in areas of Wellington with chronic air pollution problems in winter, such as Karori.

Greenhouse gas mitigation

5. We recommend that greenhouse gas mitigation be one of the Council's top priorities. This would include measures and investment to further enhance walking and cycling as commuter options, promote public transport options while discouraging car use and car parking (for example through higher parking fees and fines), and continuing to prevent urban sprawl and increase intensification in the inner city. These measures are further discussed below in the sections on Parking and Transport.

Climate change preparedness

6. We recommend that climate change preparedness be one of Wellington City Council's top priorities. This would include further scenario modelling with different degrees of sea-level rise to inform measures; considering enhanced foreshore protection, especially protecting the CBD area, and expansion of

foreshore park and green space areas in the city to provide a buffer from sea-level rise and storm surges. This extra green space would also have various public health advantages.

“Smart Energy” initiatives

7. We support the funding of “Smart Energy” initiatives. The goals of reducing climate change emissions and improving the health of buildings for residents and workers are important. We recommend that initiatives towards these goals be given high priority for funding.
8. We recommend that the money available goes to those projects where funding will likely provide the most benefit to the city’s residents in terms of outcomes (which might include direct benefits, co-benefits, and learning which policies work best for Wellington) and where projects have the potential for long-term sustainability. This will not necessarily be projects where sponsorship or dollar-for-dollar co-funding is easily available. We suggest that any requirements for co-funding vary across the initiatives, with less required for projects without obvious sponsors but which offer greater benefits to the city and its residents, or which benefit vulnerable people (with consideration of equity when allocating funding).
9. In particular, we support measures to increase the uptake of energy retrofits, both through the existing schemes (2 Healthy Homes projects) and by incentivising retrofits concurrent with earthquake strengthening (7 Energy retrofits as part of earthquake strengthening work). We also support component 3, which seeks to diversify our energy sources through subsidising solar photovoltaics.

Parking

10. Section 7.2 of the Draft Annual Plan states that “[p]arking is important for shoppers, people working in the city, visitors to the city, and people coming in to the city for recreational activities”. However, many shoppers, commuters, and visitors to the city do not come by private car. Compared with the national average, a high proportion of Wellingtonians do not own a car (13.5% of households, 2006 figures) and, according to the Draft Annual Plan, we are enthusiastic users of public transport and a high proportion of us walk and cycle. For these people, parking is not only unnecessary and unimportant, but may also detract from their experience of the city, for example by increasing congestion and air pollution, negatively impacting safety, and occupying valuable public space that could be better utilised. Research and international practice shows that attractive public space designed for people and free of cars is also best for retailers.
11. We support the idea of ‘user pays’ parking put forward in this Draft Annual Plan. Parking is not free to provide and it is fair that people who wish to drive and park at their convenience pay for the privilege, rather than all ratepayers footing the bill. This approach is also fairer to those travelling by other modes such as public transport, cycling and walking. Our following recommendations for parking will provide good policy support for those who travel by other means than driving.

12. We consider it a good policy to charge for parking at the Freyburg Pool car park at a rate equal to nearby on-street parking. This car park would also benefit from a time limit to ensure that it continues to provide for the facility users and not for all-day users.
13. We support charging for parking at the Botanical Gardens. Users of the Botanical Gardens may want to stay longer than two hours, so we would suggest a longer time limit.
14. We support the introduction of a permit system for use of taxi stands around the city. Taxis currently benefit from a service provided by the ratepayer. This cost should be internalised by the commercial taxi industry, which would improve economic efficiency and equity.
15. We recommend that parking should be paid for by users at weekends. The supply of free weekend parking costs the ratepayers \$1.3 million per annum. Additionally, the provision of free parking incentivises driving over other modes, making it difficult for Wellington to meet its carbon reduction targets, as well as perpetuating the public health issues associated with car use. The Draft Annual Plan asks that the Council “manage the transport network so it is sustainable, safe and efficient.” Free on-street parking is not sustainable, safe or efficient.

Transport

16. We would like to praise the Council for supporting safe cycling infrastructure in Tawa. We strongly recommend more such investments in other parts of the city, especially on arterial routes and in the Wellington City centre.
17. We propose that the number of bus lanes continues to be increased, and that buses be prioritised over cars on public roads. These actions are currently lacking in the Draft Annual Plan.

Housing

18. The section of the Draft Annual Plan on “Activity programme: Social and recreation” includes Council’s plans for social housing. We submit that social housing should also be considered as part of the “Urban development” section. We support the Council’s urban planning focus of “a compact, vibrant, attractive and safe city that is built on a human scale and is easy to navigate.” Accessible, affordable, quality housing is a key part of good urban design.
19. Poor quality housing has negative impacts on health.¹ We support Wellington City Council’s target of having “85% of tenants rate the overall condition of

¹ Howden-Chapman P, Matheson A, Viggers H, Crane J, Cunningham M, Blakely T, et al. Retrofitting houses with insulation to reduce health inequalities: results of a clustered, randomised trial in a community setting. *British Medical Journal* 2007;334:460-464. Howden-Chapman P, Pierse N, Nicholls S, Gillespie-Bennett J, Viggers H, Cunningham M, et al. Effects of improved home heating on asthma in community dwelling children: randomised community study. *British Medical Journal* 2008;337:852-855. Baker, M, Telfar-Branard, L, Kvalsvig, A, Verrall, A, Zhang, J, Keall, M, Wilson, N, Wall, T Howden-Chapman, P. Increasing incidence and inequalities in infectious diseases in a developed country. *The Lancet*, February 20, 2012.

their house/apartment as good or very good". It is important that tenants are happy with the quality of their houses. However, we note that the BRANZ survey of housing conditions finds that there is disparity between the condition of a house as reported by an occupant and the actual condition of the house. Occupants are likely to report the house is of better quality than it is.² Therefore, we recommend that the Council include an objective target: that 100% of city housing pass the Healthy Housing Index,³ which is akin to passing a 'warrant of fitness'.

20. We are concerned about the weakness of the Council's target regarding homelessness: "100% of known homeless people are supported by agencies". Given the Council's aim to end homelessness in Wellington by 2020, as stated in *Te Mahana: A draft strategy to end homelessness in Wellington by 2020*, the Annual Plan should include a stated target for reducing homelessness, with funding allocated towards meeting this target. Wellington City Council has a legacy of progressiveness in addressing homelessness, and as such we recommend that actions to reduce homelessness should be included in the Draft Annual Plan.

Public libraries

21. Public institutions which support community development, social contacts and civic life are very important for the wellbeing of the people of Wellington. Public libraries are a key place where residents are able to access local and worldwide information in an atmosphere that is rich in a range of personal, cultural, educational, social and economic possibilities, but also free and open to all.
22. We do not support reductions to library branches and opening hours. Local public libraries are especially significant for people who are not readily able to travel into the central city and who may be at home most of the time, such as older people, young families, people with disabilities and people who are not in paid employment. These groups are amongst the most vulnerable in our city and their wellbeing would be negatively affected by reductions in library service. The proposed reductions in branch library opening hours would also reduce access for workers returning to suburban homes at the end of the working day. Branch libraries also play an important function in attracting people to suburban shopping areas, thus contributing to the local economy (shops and businesses). We note that the savings from proposed cuts in library service would be small compared to the costs to communities.
23. We recommend that library services instead be enlarged and extended, as their role is of increasing importance to Wellington's young people, ageing population and other vulnerable groups at a time of economic uncertainty.

² BRANZ 2010 House Condition Survey - Condition Comparison by Tenure
http://www.branz.co.nz/cms_show_download.php?id=53af2b0c2e5ca5169a0176996bba7ee88de082c0

³ <http://www.healthyhousing.org.nz/research/current-research/healthy-housing-index/>

Children

24. Children and young people make up around one quarter of the residents of the city. They have a major part to play in helping Wellington to achieve its future goals. Council decisions and services have a great impact on children's present wellbeing and their foundations for future success in life. Council, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, has a duty to pay special attention to children and to involve them as active participants. We suggest that Council consider adopting the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities initiative, which is a practical tool to assist local authorities to make our city a great place for children, young people and their families to live.