



Public Health
ASSOCIATION OF NZ INC
KĀHUI HAUORA TŪMATANUI

_____ Branch
Public Health Association of New
Zealand
c/o _____
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24 December 2006

Chief Executive Officer
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**Submission on the _____ Council Long Term
Community Council Plan**

Attached is a submission from the _____ branch of the Public Health Association of New Zealand on the _____ Council draft Long-Term Community Council Plan.

This submission uses the layout of the submission form for specific issues and then attaches further information

Yours sincerely

Chair
ABC Branch
Public Health Association of New Zealand

Public Health Association submission on the draft _____ Long Term Community Council Plan

Introduction - who we are

The Public Health Association New Zealand is a non-party political voluntary association, which provides a major forum for the exchange of information and stimulation of debate about public health in New Zealand. PHA NZ is a member of the World Federation of Public Health Associations.

Membership of PHA NZ is open to all individuals interested in public health and covers more than 300 individual members from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Members include policy makers, providers, purchasers, epidemiologists, academics/researchers, health promotion and health protection professionals, public health nurses, public health physicians, managers of health services, consultants and community workers among others.

The health role of all Councils

City Councils are obliged by the Health Act (1956) to “improve, promote and protect public health” (s 23). This is reinforced by the views of the residents that a safe and healthy community is one of the key desired outcomes for the District. To achieve this Council needs to collaborate with others and to take specific actions itself.

The Public Health Association _____ Branch is delighted to see that the _____ Council is committed to working with other agencies to achieve the desired community outcomes. However, the PHA believes that there are actions that the Council itself should be taking to achieve the health role of Council.

Outcomes, services and performance measures

One of the changes in the new Council planning processes is to include desired community outcomes and the Council needs to identify the way that its activities contribute to those desired outcomes. It would be helpful if the identified community outcomes on page _____ was accompanied by the Council services that contribute to that outcome.

Similarly, Council should include in its performance measures the relevant desired outcomes from services.

These changes will more clearly provide a guide for the future on the ways that Council can make significant changes to achieve the desired community outcomes.

A safe and healthy _____ community

One of the most desired community outcomes for _____ Council is a safe and healthy community. Public health acknowledges that the context within which people live impacts upon their health status - access to

education, adequate income, warm, dry and low-cost housing, meaningful work and access to nutritious and affordable food.

It is now widely accepted that the factors that have the greatest effect on people's health lie outside and beyond the control of the health sector. Income, housing, education and employment are factors that play a major part in the ill-health people experience during their lifetime.

Many of the crucial underlying factors in health are a direct part of the operations of the _____ Council, as has been noted in the draft LTCCP. These include:

- healthy environments including clean and healthy air, food and water;
- adequate affordable housing;
- environments that support healthy life choices, (such as city design that supports physical activity);
- safe transport systems that support social integration; and
- social and cultural wellbeing

Assessment of the health impact of policies

In addition to the ways noted above that Council can directly affect health, Council policies can also have indirect impacts on determinants of health.

Health impact assessment (HIA) is a formal approach used to predict the potential health effects of a policy, with particular attention paid to impacts on health inequalities. It is applied during the policy development process in order to facilitate better policy-making that is based on evidence, focused on outcomes and includes input from a range of sectors. The guide, updated recently is part of a wider culture change across government to incorporate a much broader range of considerations in routine policy work. HIA has strong links with the new Local Government Act 2002 that requires local bodies to use a sustainable development approach and to consider the well-being of their communities. The guide to the tool¹ can be accessed through the Public Health Advisory Committee, either in a hard copy or an electronic format.

A supportive, participative and culturally aware community

A supportive community and a participative, well informed and culturally aware community are two desired community outcomes in their own right. But a supportive, participative, and culturally aware community can also contribute to good mental health, and assists people and communities to make healthy choices. New Zealand health authorities and the World Health Organisation identify mental ill-health as one of the most significant burdens of disease.

¹ A Guide to Health Impact Assessment: A Policy Tool for New Zealand. Public Health Advisory Committee. National Health Committee. March 2004.

Improved social and cultural wellbeing for Maori is very important both for improved Maori health and the subsequent impact on improved economic wellbeing. Council plans to support Maori involvement in the Council are a very important step in improving Maori health and wellbeing. It is important that there be Iwi participation in governance, services and monitoring.

Council should consider adopting performance measures to identify the extent of support, participation, and the like.

Vibrant Communities

“A range of sports, recreation and leisure opportunities” connects with “affordable, safe and reliable transport networks”.

Councils design or set parameters for the design of open spaces, footpaths, roading, and transport systems. These public spaces and infrastructure can be vibrant places for people to be and reinforce strong social relationships. They can be easy to access for all, and encourage people to meet, walk and pass through, thereby pleasantly increasing essential physical activity. Or public spaces can be miserable concrete alleys crammed with vehicles.

The choice lies with the Council in setting the design of these areas. Public space and transport design can improve health by incorporating healthy walking and other activity such as cycling into the design, and supporting social integration and participation of all groups in the community by having effective public transport.

All road development or change should incorporate ways to support safe walking and cycling and incorporate effective public transport.

Community services

Housing (pages)

Shelter is a basic human need. When families are in housing that is not weatherproof, or are damp or crowded are much more likely to suffer from meningitis, asthma, chest and skin infections. The council should consider extending housing provided by the Council.

The Council should consider what role it should play in the direct provision of housing, given the serious shortage of housing in the district.

Given the importance of adequate housing the Council should follow progress by reporting on levels of household crowding² as well as housing affordability, and avoidable hospital admissions for people in the District for conditions associated with poor housing and overcrowding, such as cellulitis and subcutaneous abscesses, meningitis, and bronchiectasis.³

² The Social report 2003. Ministry of Social development, Wellington, p70-74

³ Data on avoidable admissions within each District Health Board is analysed by the Ministry of Health and is available from the DHB.

Community facilities for social and physical activity (pages)

Physical activity is also important for wellbeing. It will be important that the Council monitors the impact of rising fees on the use of recreation facilities to ensure that cost does not restrict use of facilities. Number and type of users should be reported in the performance measures.

Other useful performance measures could be hectares of parks and reserves per capita, number of clubs by activity type and level of participation in sport (SPARC collects this data)

Essential services

Council programmes and infrastructure for the maintenance of healthy air, food and water are crucial for healthy populations. Investment in infrastructure for water, waste disposal and sewerage programmes are very important and the PHA supports investment in these areas and their related inspection services as a high priority for a healthy McKenzie Country.

Water, wastewater and solid waste management (pages...)

Council should also consider fluoridating water. Fluoridation is a safe, cheap and effective means to improve dental health. Irrespective of the decision on fluoridation, Council should monitor and report to the community the rates of DMF teeth of children at age five and age 12 as part of the performance measures for water services.

It could be useful for the Council to report the proportion of dwellings without reticulated water, and the number of “no water” events when there is interruption to water supply. Similarly it could be useful for the Council to monitor the proportion of dwellings without reticulated sewerage, and surface water and river and lake water quality.

Roading (pages...)

Public space and transport design can improve health by incorporating healthy walking and other activity such as cycling into the design, and supporting social integration and participation of all groups in the community by having effective public transport. All road development or change should incorporate ways to support safe walking and cycling and incorporate effective public transport.

In particular the PHA asks that the _____ Council note that the Council affects physical activity choices of people by many of the Council design and transport decisions, not simply by the recreational facilities available.

The performance measures for roading should include a measurement on the extent to which all roads (not just footpaths) are safe for pedestrian users and for cyclists or a measure of the proportion of sealed roads with a cycle way.

Environmental services

Planning services

Many of the planning, inspection and enforcement services have a significant impact on health. These are often areas in which active cooperation with other sectors can have really positive impact on community health and wellbeing to contribute towards the community desired outcomes.

Building controls (pages...)

In line with the emphasis of the new Local Government Legislation this service should be renamed “Adequate and affordable housing”.

A service that the Council should provide is to enforce the provisions of the Health Act in relation to dwelling houses.

Given the importance of adequate housing the Council should report on levels of household crowding and housing affordability⁴, and avoidable hospital admissions for people in the District for conditions associated with poor housing and overcrowding, such as cellulitis and subcutaneous abscesses, meningitis, and bronchiectasis.⁵ These should be reported as part of the housing performance measures for the Council.

Liquor Licensing (pages...)

One of the significant health issues for many communities is alcohol-related harm – road crashes, alcohol related violence, disorderly young people and unplanned, unsafe sexual activity. District councils have a role in planning consents, inspection and enforcement services for the sale of alcohol.

Collaboration of the _____ with Police and regional public health staff can result in very positive movement towards the desired outcome of safe and healthy communities. The Liquor Licensing” service should be renamed “Liquor Control”. Collaborative work with other agencies should be specifically included as part of “what Council does”. The performance measures of the success of Council activity should include level of compliance with license.

Liquor licensing is one of the ways to reduce alcohol-related harm. Alcohol-related harm information that the _____ Council should report to the community as performance measures are such items as alcohol-related crime, drink-drive data⁶, hospital admissions for alcohol poisoning, and numbers of people seeking treatment for alcohol-related problems⁷.

⁴ The Social Report 2003. Ministry of Social development, Wellington, p70-74

⁵ Data on avoidable admissions within each District Health Board is analyzed by the Ministry of Health and is available from the DHB.

⁶ Available from the Police

⁷ Available from the District Health Board

Environmental health services (pages...)

This is a very important part of Council activity. A wider range of performance measures should be reported. For food, the Council should report not only if all food premises have been visited but also the provision of information on standards and training available, the proportion of premises that required intervention, and the incidence of food borne disease related to food from commercial food premises.

Other issues such as the extent of hazardous substances in the district, number of complaints and the incidence of communicable disease should be reported.

Commercial Activities

Forestry (pages...)

Forestry is a dangerous industry. Council should be able to be proud of the way that it manages this important aspect of Council business. Performance measures should include the safety record of the Council-owned forestry.