



19 April, 2013

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Christchurch City Three Year Plan
Christchurch City Council
Democracy Services
PO Box 73013
Christchurch 8154

Draft Christchurch City Three Year Plan 2013-2016 (Draft TYP)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Draft Christchurch City Three Year Plan 2013-2016*.

As Children's Commissioner, I have a statutory responsibility to advocate for children's interests, rights and welfare, including advancing and monitoring the application of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) the State and other Crown instruments. My powers, functions and responsibilities are contained in the Children's Commissioner Act 2003.

I believe that the *Draft Christchurch City Three Year Plan 2013-2016* Plan provides a significant opportunity to enhance the well-being of children and young people in Christchurch.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the people who lost their lives and the losses and pain of all people in Christchurch and Canterbury who have suffered as a result of the earthquakes. I note that many children were relocated as a result of the earthquake and many have suffered emotional trauma. There is a chance now, though, for Christchurch to rebuild and look to a brighter future. The rebuild and redevelopment of Christchurch is an unprecedented opportunity to incorporate children's interests and wellbeing in a more visionary and integrated way. The *Draft TYP* provides one such opportunity.

Benefits of giving consideration to children's interests and wellbeing. Children and young people are important users of local authority services including public transport and recreational and cultural facilities such as libraries and swimming pools. As such children and young people have a strong interest in the design, control and delivery of these facilities and services. Not only do children and young people have a right to a voice in local governance arrangements and in the planning and delivery of services, evidence shows that when they are involved, the resulting policies and services are more relevant, efficient and enduring when their views are considered.

By giving greater priority to the interests and voices of young people (0-18 years), the Christchurch City Council will help ensure the city is recognised on the international stage as a city that supports and nurtures its youngest citizens. It will be seen as a great place for children, young people and their families to live. This would help attract and retain talented

young people, families and investment.

The *Draft TYP* sets out proposals which potentially impact upon children and young people. There is an opportunity to strengthen the consideration that children's interests and wellbeing are being given within these proposals through engagement with children and young people.

Incorporating the interests and views of children into your planning processes need not be a daunting undertaking. There are many toolkits and framework already available to support this. For example, the UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities/Communities (CFC) framework provides building blocks that you can start with one, and add to over time (see <http://www.childfriendlycities.org/>). CFC translates the process needed to implement the UNCROC by national governments into a local government process while adapting to local conditions. Taking steps to make Christchurch more child-friendly is very achievable and would certainly, in my view, would strengthen the work that Council is already doing in relation to children and young people.

Recommendation 1: *I recommend that the Christchurch City Council adopts a UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities Framework as a way of achieving better outcomes for Christchurch's children and young people.*

Built and Natural Environment. The Council has an important role to play to help ensure that urban design supports social well-being and facilitates social cohesion, rather than leads to social polarization. It is essential to have a cityscape that is safe and promotes social cohesion in the population living in the urban centres, including children and young people. Societies with better social cohesion have better health outcomes overall.¹

There are some key projects included in this *Draft TYP* which will influence the future growth of Christchurch and others that seek to rectify existing issues. Giving greater consideration to creating child and youth friendly urban environments will strengthen these projects. I suggest that design assessments for all new public realm projects should be undertaken to assess and consider the needs of children, including disabled children. I agree with the proposal to establish an Urban Design Panel. This Panel would have an important role to play to ensure that children's interests are considered and given weight when reviewing major development proposals, and I would support inclusion of a panel member with expertise on child-friendly built environments. I also recommend the Panel include consultation with young people their process.

As I stated above, there are tangible benefits that result from consulting with children and young people. My office recently undertook consultation with children on their views of actions needed on child poverty. While much of what they said aligned closely to the recommendations of my Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty,² the children identified an issue the experts missed: it relates to them having the opportunity to play with friends, even if they are poor. This reaffirmed to me the importance of having excellent, free recreation opportunities, especially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and I take this opportunity to share with you.

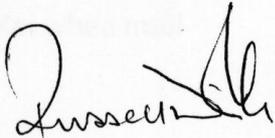
Recommendation 2: *I recommend that the development of recreational areas and green, open spaces are accorded priority in urban planning, and that parks, playgrounds and public spaces are safe and welcoming for children.*

¹ Public Health Advisory Committee (2008) Re-thinking urban environments and health. Wellington.

² See *Solutions to Child poverty in New Zealand: Evidence for Action*, December 2012, at <http://www.occ.org.nz/>

Conclusion. As an emerging international city, it is appropriate that Christchurch focuses on the future and makes provision for it. Placing children and young people at the centre of policy and planning for the next generation requires forward-looking planning and socially and environmentally sustainable policies. A child-friendly city benefits all of society, not just the youngest generation, helping to 'future-proof' the city and promoting vibrancy and a sense of community.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the *Draft TYP*. I am happy to offer the involvement and assistance of my Office to help develop this work and seek the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this further. If you require further information, please contact my Senior Advisor, Michelle Egan-Bitran on (09) 3746100 or at m.egan-bitran@occ.org.nz.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell Wills', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Russell Wills
Children's Commissioner