

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

Submission on It's Our Place, Our Future Climate: Proposed Climate Change Policy

To: Ashburton District Council

Submitter: Canterbury District Health Board

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Community and Public Health
C/- Canterbury District Health Board
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Proposal: The aim of this policy is to set out broad terms how Council will respond to climate change affecting the Ashburton District.

SUBMISSION ON IT'S OUR PLACE, OUR FUTURE CLIMATE: CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

Details of submitter

1. Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB).
2. The Ministry of Health requires the submitter to reduce potential health risks by such means as submissions to ensure the public health significance of potential adverse effects are adequately considered during policy development.

Details of submission

3. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the It's Our Place, Our Future Climate policy document. The future health of our populations is not just reliant on hospitals, but on a responsive environment where all sectors work collaboratively.
4. Health is influenced by a wide range of factors beyond the health sector. These influences can be described as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, and are impacted by environmental, social and behavioural factors. They are often referred to as the 'social determinants of health'¹.

General Comments

5. The CDHB commends Ashburton District Council for proactively drafting a Climate Change Policy. Climate Change is already impacting upon the health of our population, and these effects will amplify over time. Collaborative action at a local, regional, national and international level is required urgently to mitigate and adapt to these effects and ensure the health of our population, which is intrinsically linked to the health of the environment, is protected.
6. The CDHB supports the approach to introduce a high-level policy, however recommends that an action plan is drafted alongside this to operationalise the policy goals and principles. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that time is of the essence when it comes to both mitigation and adaptation to Climate Change, therefore policy will only be effective if meaningful action is the result. At present this policy contains a number of aspirations, however no detail as to how concepts such as 'collective duty to safeguard the natural environment',

¹ Public Health Advisory Committee. 2004. *The Health of People and Communities. A Way Forward: Public Policy and the Economic Determinants of Health*. Public Health Advisory Committee: Wellington.

'thinking and acting with the long-term in mind', giving 'appropriate regard for climate change adaptation and mitigation' will in practical terms, be carried out and measured.

Specific comments

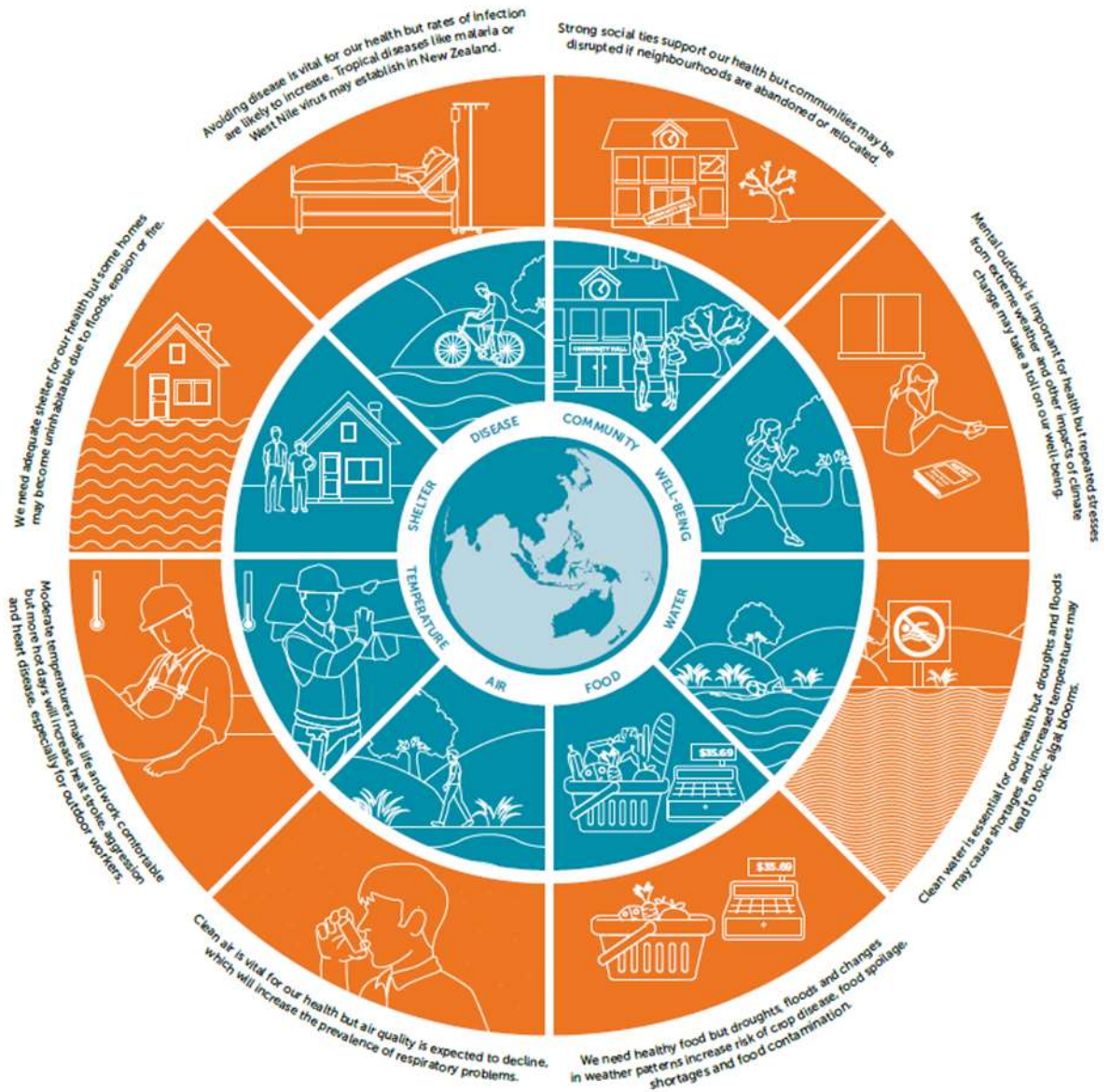
7. The CDHB recognises that the definition used by the Council, is the IPCC definition², however the technical nature of this definition requires some baseline understanding into the science behind climate change and the wordiness of it does make it difficult to interpret. It also minimises the role of human activities on climate change, which should be emphasised given local territorial authorities ability to regulate and influence aspects of such activities. The CDHB recommends that the definition for Climate Change is amended to mirror the UN Convention on Climate Change, which reads:

*"Climate change" means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.*³

8. The CDHB recommends that health impacts are detailed more explicitly in section 2 'Climate change and its impacts'. Health is mentioned here, however the severe impact that climate change is having, and will continue to have on the health of individuals and our population as a whole is not adequately explained to communicate the risk to wellbeing and survival. Sec. 2.2 (e) identifies higher levels of heat-related human mortality in summer and possible reduction in winter related mortality. The CDHB agrees this is one human health impact from climate change. However, as the diagram below shows, the health impacts of climate change are wide and far reaching, not limited to heat-related illness. Increased severity and frequency of extreme weather events, including droughts and floods are identified in sec 2.3 as the greatest risk for the Ashburton area. The impact of such events relate to reduced mental health and wellbeing, housing, food security and clean water (both recreational and drinking) which pose significant risks to human health.

² IPCC. 2018. Special Report 15: Global Warming of 1.5°C. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

³ United Nations Convention on Climate Change. 1992



Building Blocks of Health disrupted by Climate Change⁴

9. The CDHB recognises that for the Ashburton District, risk to agricultural productivity and the local economic impact from Climate Change is of significant relevance. The policy should reference the wider impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity, and recognise of the large contribution land use change, particularly for agricultural purposes, has played in carbon emissions. Details are included in the recent report released by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment⁵,

⁴ Royal Society Te Aparangi. 2017. *Human Health Impacts of Climate Change for New Zealand: Evidence Summary*. Retrieved from: <https://royalsociety.org.nz/assets/documents/Report-Human-Health-Impacts-of-Climate-Change-for-New-Zealand-Oct-2017.pdf>

⁵ Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. (2019). *Farms, Forests and Fossil Fuels: The Next Great Landscape Transformation?* Retrieved from: <https://www.pce.parliament.nz/media/196517/overview-farms-forests-and-fossil-fuels.pdf>

which also challenges current approaches to climate policy, particularly emissions targets, and provides actions to address these issues, such as carefully considered reforestation coupled with changes in productive land use, changes in industry etc. If not addressed urgently, the report agrees that the environmental impacts of climate change, which are implicitly linked to the health impacts will become worse:

“Water pollution, soil depletion, biodiversity loss and pest invasions are just some of the problems we are grappling with – and all of which climate change will exacerbate⁶.”

10. Additionally, it should be noted that the impacts of Climate Change are not distributed equally across communities. Some populations and communities will experience the adverse outcomes from Climate Change disproportionately and require additional assistance from local territorial authorities and central government to mitigate and adapt. This policy therefore needs to be cognisant of equity considerations, for example communities situated near the coast or rivers, rural communities who are reliant on food production for income, those who may not be able to afford alternative housing should theirs be at risk, and indicate that necessary support will be provided to adapt. The CDHB acknowledges that the equity/justice principle touches on this however the explanation could be strengthened.
11. Similarly this policy does not identify the need to consider the impact of Climate Change on customary Māori lands. The Greater Christchurch Partnership Resettlement Pattern Update (Our Space 2018-2048⁷) has recently identified the issue of rising sea levels inundating customary Māori land, traditional food gathering sites and sacred sites. Such considerations need to be included in this policy and a commitment to working with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Papatipu Rūnanga to identify and mitigate the impacts of climate change for local Māori.
12. The CDHB recommends that the policy goals in section 3 are re-worded, as phrases such as ‘over time’ do not communicate the sense of urgency required in Climate Change responses. Climate change is a serious and urgent issue, and so

⁶ Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. (2019). Farms, Forests and Fossil Fuels: The Next Great Landscape Transformation? Retrieved from: <https://www.pce.parliament.nz/media/196517/overview-farms-forests-and-fossil-fuels.pdf>

⁷ Greater Christchurch Partnership. 2018. Our Space: Greater Christchurch Settlement Pattern Update. Draft for Consultation. Retrieved from: <http://greaterchristchurch.org.nz/assets/Documents/greaterchristchurch/Our-Space-consultation/Draft-Our-Space-2018-2048.pdf>

these goals need to reflect the need for urgency in preparing the Ashburton district and taking action to mitigate and adapt.

13. The CDHB also recommends that linkages are made with the UN Sustainable Development Goals⁸ within the policy goals or principles section as these are well understood, shared goals in which local territorial authorities can use as a framework for action to work across sectors.
14. The CDHB recommends the term 'stewardship' in section 4 is replaced with '*kaitiakitanga*' which in a New Zealand context, better explains the responsibilities local territorial authorities have in relation to their natural environment and to mana whenua.
15. Some principles appear to focus only on reducing emissions (4.1(a) and b)). The CDHB recommends that instead reducing emissions is specified as a policy goal and that the principles remain all-encompassing and high level, as principles of stewardship and anticipatory governance are relevant to many climate change impacts (eg. water quality and quantity, air quality, land use, sea-level rise).
16. The CDHB strongly supports inclusion of principle 4.1(e) *work as one*. Adequate mitigation and adaption to climate change will require a multi-agency, multi-sector response. Therefore enabling mechanisms and frameworks for collaboration is an important role local territorial authorities can play.

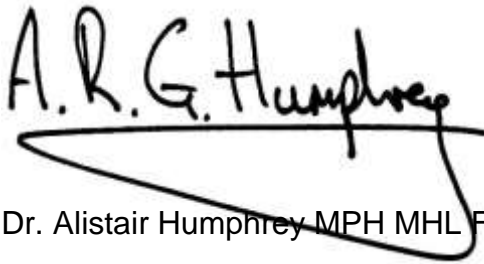
Conclusion

17. The CDHB does not wish to be heard in support of this submission.
18. Thank you for the opportunity to submit on It's Our Place, Our Future Climate: Proposed Climate Change Policy.

⁸ United Nations. (n.d) About the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Person making the submission

Date: 5th April 2019

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.R.G. Humphrey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

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