

Hurunui District Council Submission to the National Infrastructure Plan

Hurunui District Council generally supports the *Infrastructure: Facts and Issues* document.

The Hurunui district is one of the smaller territorial authorities in the country with an estimated resident population of 10,850. As such our ratepayer base is small and we are often burdened with the costs of implementing government policy. We urge the government to consider our ratepayer base and the impact that requiring local government to provide infrastructure for these communities will have on them.

Our primary concern is that on page 97 the document states that specific sections on Transport, Corrections, Education and Health will be included in the plan despite page 3 showing that it will be more extensive than this. We believe that it is important to include other types of infrastructure, namely Drinking Water, Irrigation, Waste Water & Sewerage, Telecommunications and Energy. We understand that the government is not necessarily directly responsible for these types of infrastructure. However, we believe that they are such a vital part of our economy and wellbeing as a country the government should be considering the future of such infrastructure.

Drinking Water and Waste Water/Sewerage

Local authorities are responsible for the management of this infrastructure. We support the principles in the paper on these. We urge central government to consider any effects that legislation and planning may have on rating and budgeting of territorial authorities.

Telecommunications

Broadband has become an integral part of the way in which we communicate and do business in New Zealand, yet some areas of New Zealand still do not have access to reliable, high speed internet. The number of people with access to high speed internet is still low in the Hurunui district compared to the rest of the country.

The expansion of mobile networks has helped some people connect but this has still not reached many areas of the Hurunui district due to topography. We still have townships with no cell phone reception¹.

Our district is geographically isolated and the isolation is compounded by the lack of broadband infrastructure. The benefits of broadband being available across our district are that our communities would be better connected despite the geographic distribution. We applaud the government's planned investment into broadband for rural areas.

We believe that the government needs to take a more active role in encouraging the furthering of wireless services across New Zealand. An inability to connect to into digital systems is seriously limiting the potential growth of some of townships.

Irrigation

Agriculture makes up a huge part of industry in the Hurunui district and New Zealand. Nationally agriculture directly makes up 5%² of our gross domestic product (GDP).

¹ Maps available on telecommunication network's websites

² Statistics New Zealand Website -

http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/economic_indicators/gdp/grossdomesticproduct_ho_tpmar09qtr.aspx

When downstream processing is included it is estimated that it makes up over 15%³ of our national GDP. In the Hurunui district 40.1%⁴ of employees in major industry types are employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. Without a thriving agriculture industry the Hurunui district faces severe unemployment and the economic impacts would be devastating for the district.

It is expected that climate change is expected to bring about changes in our rainfall patterns with more rain anticipated in the west coast and less in the east. It is also predicted that droughts in the east will also become more common⁵. Already many farmers in the district are feeling increased pressures due to an increase in the demand for water and a decrease in water available⁶. Studies have shown that there is enough water for farming activities and that the issue is one of unequal distribution both geographically and seasonally across Canterbury⁶.

Many farmers are beginning to look to water storage and irrigation runs as a way of decreasing the effect that the geographic and seasonal variations have on farming activities. In the Hurunui district the Hurunui Water Project is currently through the consent process and has received some assistance from the government to study the effects of the proposed scheme on the environment. We encourage the government to show continued support for the investigation of irrigation schemes to help ensure that their impacts are fully researched and investigated.

We believe that government should be playing a role in planning and developing infrastructure to minimise the effects that farmers are facing due to the changes in rainfall and water distribution. As agriculture is one of our primary industries it is important that the government contribute to the infrastructure to support it. Irrigation will play a major role in farming in Canterbury and the Hurunui district in the future.

³ Federated Farmers - http://www.fedfarm.org.nz/about_us/farmingfacts

⁴ Statistics New Zealand Website - <http://wdmzpub01.stats.govt.nz/wds/TableViewer/tableView.aspx>

⁵ Ministry for the Environment Website - <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/climate/about/impacts.html>

⁶ Environment Canterbury, *State of the Canterbury Region Water Resource October 2008*, <http://ecan.govt.nz/publications/Plans/StateOfTheCanterburyWaterResource-2008.pdf>