

## **South Canterbury Chamber of Commerce Submission – Timaru District Growth Management Strategy**

**12<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

### **Representation:**

The South Canterbury Chamber of Commerce is a membership based organisation representing over 520 businesses across South Canterbury including our largest organisations such as Fonterra Clondeboye through to sole traders. We have served South Canterbury businesses for 112 years and our purpose is to achieve Better Business Outcomes which in turn supports our whole community. We are the recognised and respected business services organisation for South Canterbury and the voice of the local business community. As an affiliated member of the New Zealand Chambers of Commerce Incorporated we are part of the national body representing the 28 plus Chambers of New Zealand representing over 22,000 businesses.

### **Introduction:**

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback to the Timaru District Council on the Growth Management Strategy and the opportunity for pre consultation and associated preliminary feedback. We would like the Council to consider an extension to the consultation timeframe phase as advice from a number of parties to the Chamber has raised concern that there has been insufficient time to develop and collate data from a range of industries that would enable the Council to make better informed decisions.

The GMS is a significant and important strategy that will inform the supply of zoned land through the District Plan review and how growth is managed for the next 30 years and as such provides a critical platform that needs to be based on robust and well researched data. Critical thinking and economic analysis needs to accompany the GMS.

We acknowledge and complement the Timaru District Council on undertaking this work aligned with the National Policy Statement. The work undertaken appears to be thorough and considered and we value the opportunity to have received a presentation from the TDC managers responsible for this work.

We appreciate the three fundamental challenges of the Growth Management Strategy identified by the TDC in relation to growth are an ageing population and the associated changing demands; the Council's statutory responsibilities and how it responds to and manages growth and the community expectation that the Council takes a proactive role in integrating and managing growth.

### **Submission:**

#### **Growth not stagnation**

Our main concern is that the information presented appears to present a forecast of stagnation and shows a future with minimal growth based on the Stats NZ data that forecasts population growth peaking at or around 2033 and then dropping to 2043. This creates a mismatch with our belief that growth will in fact be greater and in any case that our district should be seeking to attract substantial new investment and businesses and expand existing businesses. A forecast that effectively embeds stagnation should not be accepted by anyone. The Council is therefore encouraged to be more proactive in encouraging development and investment and ensuring the Timaru District is a vibrant and thriving community.

Our belief that growth will be greater is based on real experience in the last ten years and the known commercial increases that will continue to flow for example from further irrigation from Hunter Downs, the Tauranga investment in the Port, and tourism in the Region which may not have been accounted for in “typical” Stats NZ projections for the Regions. The current land perceived to be available for development is far less than the land that is viable and actually available for development another factor which requires consideration.

We seek Timaru District Council’s advice that these factors and the pipe line growth that has occurred over the last 3 years has been factored into this data?

#### Separate planning from immediate commitment to infrastructure/deferred zoning

We understand the reticence to commit to unrealistic growth if this means unwarranted infrastructure investment but the SC Chamber is recommending that the TDC develops a two staged approach ensuring there is both an ambitious growth plan mapped out but a separate model for future infrastructure and investment should the growth occur. The second more conservative model (largely as currently presented) should protect the Council from unreasonable obligations, but the former will ensure fewer longer term planning constraints for our next generation.

#### Residential Development

Preliminary feedback from businesses associated with the current growth in residential demand indicate that this area would also benefit from the same review of data and extrapolation as the industrial zoned areas. Consideration needs to include current growth and actual viable available land and acknowledge that many families who choose to settle in districts like Timaru do so because of the choice of rural and lifestyle properties. Intensification may only meet the needs of a proportion of our community.

#### Facilitate Investment

We also comment that the minimum goal of the District Plan should be to enable investment at least to the extent matched by other South Island districts. The Council needs to invest ahead of

developers so this can be achieved and to ensure sites are available for a range of activities so that services are always immediately available. At present this is not the case and the surrounding uncertainty of costs and timeframes lead to the district being at times uncompetitive.

We appreciate the comments provided by TDC's consultant on this matter in separate correspondence citing that "oversupply of such land at Ashburton and Rolleston may well undermine uptake for similar facilities in Timaru" however it is our view that this is necessary to remain competitive and our proximity to the port provides further competitive leverage in favour of the Timaru District. To shy away from this will surely commit Timaru to being uncompetitive.

#### Be ambitious to create the future we want

We understand the comfort provided by the Timaru District Plan whereby the Growth Management Strategy can be reviewed on a three yearly basis but we believe the current review is a deeper one that is not always repeated in these 3 year cycles. We compliment the Council on taking this current "deep dive" approach but also challenge that it needs to push the boundaries of the base data far harder if we are to create opportunities for ourselves and give business and developers confidence to invest in the longer term.

The South Canterbury Chamber request that the Timaru District Council reconsider the current statistical data being used, factor in the recent growth that has already occurred in the district and prepare scenarios modelled on the likely expansions and growth based on increased irrigation through Hunter Downs, the confidence provided by the port and tourism growth and complete a targeted economic analysis.

Submitted by:

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**Yes** we wish to be heard.