



# 2013 Rates and Services Review

**Outputs from the  
Community Working Group  
Meeting 2  
20 August 2013**

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### Introduction

The second meeting of the group was held on Tuesday 20 August 2013 in the Level 2 Function Room, Administration Centre, 137 Beamish Street Campsie. Twelve members of the Canterbury Community participated. Unfortunately ten members of the group who participated in the first meeting were unable to attend. Two new members, invited to supplement the 18-29 age group, did attend.

The meeting comprised:

- A recap of the first meeting, and comments from the group on the outputs
- Review and discussion of the answers to the questions from the first meeting
- A discussion around three scenarios for service reductions and rate increases
- A discussion of a shared definition of the challenge facing council.

The outputs from these activities are presented in this document.

### Next Meeting

The next meeting of the group will be held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2013. The topic for this meeting will be:

- **Strategies** – what are the possible strategies available to us?

## Comments on Outputs from Meeting 1

After discussion about the Demographic Profile it was suggested that it might be helpful to have more people who are renting represented in the Community Working Group.

## Comments on Answers to Questions from Meeting 1

The following additional questions were raised during discussion of the Answers to Questions from the first Meeting.

### **What is the process for installing speed humps?**

Studies here in Australia and internationally have shown that speed is the key contributing factor to serious injury in the event of a road accident, and that reducing speed greatly reduces injuries and loss of life. Such devices are therefore highly beneficial in terms of road safety.

A request from residents usually triggers an investigation into the need for 'traffic calming devices such as speed humps. This investigation may include traffic counts and speed monitoring. If the investigation indicates traffic calming would be beneficial then this is recommended to the Local Traffic Committee, an independent body comprising representatives from council, local police, Roads and Maritime Services, and others. The Traffic Committee then determines if the installation should be undertaken.

### **Have previous community surveys been undertaken?**

Yes we have undertaken surveys of community attitudes to services and facilities provided by council in 2007, 2010, and 2012.

### **Why don't the results of the survey match the word clouds in the Community Strategic Plan?**

The survey results in the Answers to Questions are people's rating of the importance and satisfaction with a range of services and facilities provided by council. This is people's feedback on what council is providing now.

The word clouds in the Community Strategic Plan are a representation of people's responses to the questions 'What do you love about Canterbury?' and 'What would a better life look like for you here in Canterbury in ten years'. The responses to these questions represent what people value, and what they want for the future of the City.

### **Is more dense development the solution?**

More dense development does accommodate an increase in population into the limited area of the City of Canterbury. Because of the limits on the way in which council is allowed to levy property rates under the Local Government Act, however, the additional income from rates on more dense development does not necessarily cover the costs of the additional demand for services generated by the additional population.

### Tell Your Story

In this part of the meeting each table group was provided with a scenario and participants were asked to think about how this scenario might impact on them, their children, their neighbours, and the people they know. Each participant then related this to the rest of the table group. The table group then discussed their response to the following questions:

- How would this scenario impact on us and those around us?
- How do these stories reveal what is important to us?

The purpose of this discussion was to explore different perspectives on the challenge facing council, and ultimately work towards a shared definition. It was not intended to solve the challenge.

### Scenario 1 – Roads

Roads are not maintained or improved at the level needed.  
This saves about \$2.5 million per year.

#### **How would this scenario impact on us and those around us?**

- Parking might be harder to find
- Increased tensions between neighbours
- Decrease in quality of life
- Civic pride will be lowered, resulting in less caring behaviour, increased rubbish, and increased costs in responding to this
- Increased hooning because of lack of care
- Lower safety / increased accidents
- Nature strips that look bad affects how neighbours feel
- High use of car – increasing time to get to places
- Safety is a big issue
- Can't use bicycles because the roads are bad – affects fitness, increases use of cars
- School zones might not be adequately provided
- Garbage trucks will increase the damage to the roads
- Increased traffic on main roads, increased congestion
- Safety concerns over sign maintenance
- Pushing traffic into alternate local streets to avoid pot holes and the like
- Devalue home prices
- Emergency services wouldn't get to you as quickly

**What does this reveal about what is important to us?**

- Quality of life
- Safety
- Civic pride
- Costs from inaction
- Mobility and access to services
- Accessibility
- Effect on economic activity such as local shops due to poorer access to them
- Health impacts
- Pollution issues / environmental impacts
- Time (don't want to waste it driving)
- Family – kids not able to play on the street because cars use alternate routes to avoid damaged roads
- Impacts on older and frail people

## Scenario 2 – Parks and Sporting Fields

Parks and sporting fields are not maintained or improved at the level needed. Some sporting fields are ultimately closed and converted into open space. Some cricket, soccer, rugby and AFL clubs are affected. This saves about \$2.5 million per year.

**How would this scenario impact on us and those around us?**

- No impact
- Improvement to some if playing fields resort to open space – more room to walk the dogs
- Would lose the atmosphere of suburb / activity
- Green space, trees, natural environment would be missed
- Would reduce use of the parks if the standard decreased
- There would be a health impact if parks weren't used as much
- People might become more selfish as community activities such as sports ceased
- High density residential needs well-maintained parks
- Decrease in property values if parks degrade
- Loss of economic activity from sporting events
- Security concerns increase with poorly maintained parks or little activity in parks.

### What does this reveal about what is important to us?

- Lifestyle, quality of life
- Community spirit and atmosphere (even if it doesn't impact us individually)
- Green space
- Health
- Economic prosperity
- Safety

### Scenario 3 – Rate Increase

Rates are increased by 5.5% per year above the Rate Cap of 3% per year for three years in a row. The increases in the average rate above the Rate Cap each year are about \$65 or about \$1.25 per week. Over ten years this gives an extra \$102 million, or about \$10 million per year.

| Year | Rate Cap increase per year | Increase above Rate Cap per year | Average Annual Rate |
|------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 2013 |                            |                                  | \$1,034             |
| 2014 | \$31                       | \$57                             | \$1,122             |
| 2015 | \$32                       | \$63                             | \$1,217             |
| 2016 | \$33                       | \$71                             | \$1,321             |

### How would this scenario impact on us and those around us?

- Those on fixed incomes would be impacted, especially those that don't own their own home, and who have to pay rent as well as other living expenses.
- Would not be happy about it, but would have the capacity to pay
- Would pay it for the benefits it provides for quality of life.
- Owners would pass the increase on to tenants, so they would be affected.
- Combined with the increases of other costs associated with living it would be difficult.
- It would lead to the gentrification of Canterbury as only those who can afford to live here would stay – others would move on.
- It would not be easy.
- Accept it if the case was made.

### **What does this reveal about what is important to us?**

- The very friendly village atmosphere of Canterbury suburbs is enjoyable and valuable
- It is important to retain the small business character and encourage a sense of place and identity.
- Diversity is important.
- Not paying too much in rates is important.

### **Common themes**

The following things emerged as common themes in what was important to participants:

- |                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| • Quality of life     | • Civic pride              |
| • Community spirit    | • Diversity                |
| • Health              | • Wellbeing of others      |
| • Safety              | • Small business character |
| • Village atmosphere  | • Green space              |
| • Economic prosperity | • Environment              |

### **Shared Definition of the Challenge**

From thinking about their own stories and what they heard of others' stories, participants described the challenge facing council in the following ways:

- How will council achieve a balance between maintaining services, such as road repair, and saving some money, by reducing the service?
- What is the cost of maintaining the high quality of services expected, and is this cost acceptable?
- How does council maintain the standards of living expected by its ratepayers and justify its expenditure to those ratepayers?
- How can we fund all the services we want?
- How does council adequately maintain and continue to upgrade parks and sporting fields within the confines of limited budget increases?
- Availability of funds from development? Adequate awareness? Support from other respective authorities?
- How can council maintain current services whilst making rate increases as low as possible?
- How would council be able to maintain facilities without imposing 'excessive' costs to the community?



- How to maintain facilities or improve them whilst containing or lowering costs? How to balance those that are for and against? How to calculate the economic impact of reducing expenditure?
- Cost of maintaining parks – where does council raise the funds for this?
- How to reduce the costs that council pays for services?
- The work of council supports the essential quality of life in Canterbury City eg. the atmosphere generated by lively sports fields. How can council present the case to ratepayers that these 'intangible' things require an increase in their rates? What alternative sources of revenue are options to increase revenue for council? Can ratepayers be convinced that these will not be enough to meet revenue needs?

The key theme emerging from the discussion was the desire amongst the group to **maintain current services** because they are needed for quality of life in Canterbury.

Other themes emerging include:

- Keeping rates as low as possible
- Keeping costs of providing services as low as possible
- Finding alternative sources of income
- Demonstrating the need for rate increases

A possible shared definition of the challenge is:

*How can council maintain the services needed for quality of life in Canterbury, keep costs down and find alternative sources of income so that rates can be kept as low as possible, and clearly demonstrate the need for any increase in rates?*