

SUBMISSION

DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2013-14

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We are pleased to provide these comments on your Draft Annual Plan. We have been very pleased to work with and for the Council in recent years to advance the cause of strong rural communities and this is a goal that the Board aims to continue.

Local government changes- page 9 and elsewhere

We appreciate the difficulties that are presented to the Council with changes to the Local Government Act 2002. We urge the Council to hold fast to the view that a certain level of support for economic, social and cultural services is necessary for a civil and supportive community.

We believe that the Clutha District Community Outcomes (page 11), developed by and for the whole Clutha community, are still very relevant and should not be swept away without further extensive community consultation.

Community Leadership – pages 14

The Ag. Board supports the Council's intention to be involved in economic development and community development services. While we may differ in how we would best go about the task, we support the Council's intention of "enabling and strengthening our business and primary production sectors."

We note that \$409,600 is a large sum to give to one organisation (the Clutha Development Trust) to meet the council's economic development goals, and we will be keen to see the emphasis given to agricultural development in the use of that resource.

We are encouraged by the fact that the Ag. Board has been able to generate an average extra \$150 000 funding each year for the last six years, over and above the Council's core contract of approx. \$60 000. So with similar success the Council's new contractor will be able to have a considerable impact.

The "Level of Service" and 'Performance Measures' in this section, however, do seem a bit 'thin.' We do strongly suggest that "facilitate programs to support and encourage economic diversification" misses the mark as a one-off statement to sum up the intentions of economic development for the pastoral production sector. We would judge that 'diversification' is not high on the priorities for farmers trying to make strong gains in either the dairy or sheep & beef sectors. The emphasis for most farmers, we contend, is to make the best of the farming system in which they are in. This is especially the case in tight economic times.

Of course, farmers need a certain flexibility of approach but the concept of 'diversification' harks back to the time in the 1990s when farmers considered hazelnuts, berry fruits, meadowfoam, peony roses and the like – all these are only on the margins of the industry today. The key Red Meat Strategy Report¹ explains the need for a reliability of supply and actually sees competing land uses as a risk factor for the industry. The strategy for the New Zealand Dairy Industry begins with a goal to improve profit from production increases by \$110/ha/year.²

That is, in both major agricultural sectors, more of the same – with improvements to best practice and on and off-farm processes. It is in these areas that the Council should direct the major part of their economic development resources.

Roading – page 19

Again, we appreciate Council's difficulties with a large roading network. We are certainly concerned with the statements: "In the shorter term we expect there will be less grading and maintenance metalling to unsealed roads. In the longer term it may result in very low volume gravel roads no longer being maintained. In the future there is the possibility that low volume sealed roads will become uneconomic to maintain, and may have to revert to metal." We can only support you in any efforts you are able to make, in political sphere or financially, to minimise the possibilities of the reduction of services here. Perhaps the point could be made that rural roads in Clutha are just as important to the national economy as some more high-profile roads in our larger cities.

Water Supply – page 25

We support the Council's work with the Clydevale-Pomahaka Rural Water Scheme Committee to enable an extension to the scheme's capacity.

Community Services – page 33

The Board in principle supports the local services as outlined. Where these services are used and valued by local people, Council should also be supportive and help make the services work for local people as appears to be the case. The Council in this way are supporting a host of volunteers who add value to our communities.

Thank you for your attention to these few thoughts.

PLEASE NOTE: We do NOT wish to be heard in person in respect to this submission, but would be happy to answer questions before or after your process.



Malcolm Deverson



David Inder

9 May 2013

¹ Beef + Lamb New Zealand and the Meat Industry Association of New Zealand, March 2011

² Strategy for New Zealand Dairy farming at <http://www.dairynz.co.nz/file/fileid/28556>