

22 May 2024

Via email: [joy.christison@tewhatuora.govt.nz](mailto:joy.christison@tewhatuora.govt.nz)

## RESPONSE TO TE WHATU ORA ON DRAFT TWO OF TE WAIPOUNAMU HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on draft two of the Te Wai Pounamu Health & Wellbeing Plan (**the plan**). This response reflects the views of Central Otago District Council (**CODC**) and Queenstown Lakes District Council (**QLDC**) on behalf of their communities. The territorial authorities are collaborating on this response as it is a crucial regional issue and a high priority in both districts.

### **CODC and QLDC would like to support and work with Te Whatu Ora to improve health outcomes in the districts**

CODC and QLDC welcome the opportunity to work with Te Whatu Ora to support and improve health and wellbeing in the Central Otago and Queenstown-Lakes districts (**the districts**) and to develop and deliver on a plan for improved health services and networked delivery.

Local government has a legislated role in promoting the wellbeing of its communities under the Local Government Act 2002,<sup>1</sup> and can directly influence actions that will contribute to the plan's focus on people, place, and wellbeing.

This response does not comment on specific components outlined in the plan. Instead, it raises concerns about the impact on the communities' health and wellbeing from the long-standing lack of investment in the districts' health services, infrastructure, and workforces.

### **The Health and Wellbeing Plan needs to urgently address our districts' existing sub-regional variations in health services and deliver a baseline level of networked services, infrastructure, and workforce**

There has been a long-standing lack of investment in local provision of publicly funded health services, infrastructure, and workforce to meet our districts' health needs. Despite councils regularly advocating to government for better public health care, we are yet to see sufficient progress on expanding services, or more flexibility on engaging with communities and the private sector to support the development of local solutions.

---

<sup>1</sup> s10(1)(b) The purpose of local government is ... (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.

The lack of health services and infrastructure is a key concern for communities:

- During the development of CODC's district vision in 2024, the community ranked health care second (better access to hospital facilities and services – 93%) and third (better access to specialist health services – 92%) in importance to realise the community's vision for Central Otago.
- QLDC's 2023 Quality of Life Survey (**the survey**) identified a lack of health services was one of the key issues the community expressed most concern about. The survey found that 39% of the community have had to travel outside of the district for medical services.<sup>2</sup> There were urgent calls for a more robust, accessible, and equitable healthcare system to better serve residents' growing and diverse needs.
- The survey also identified important equity considerations, as survey respondents with no disposable income were more likely to report having had to travel outside of the district for services such as maternity care, mental health services, and/or counselling. The entry of private hospitals into the district demonstrates there is a high level of unmet health service need but does not replace the need for publicly funded services, as this would create greater inequities in access to health services.

### **CODC and QLDC districts have sustained high levels of population growth but have limited access to health services close to home**

The resident population in the districts is diverse with the Queenstown Lakes population being younger and the Central Otago population ageing. There is a significant migrant population, and nearly 8% of the population are Māori. There are a high number of domestic and international visitors to the region who also require health services.

The available health services are inadequate to meet the needs of the current population. Currently, the combined resident-only population of 79,000 is nearing the size of Palmerston North. Including visitors increases the population substantially. The QLDC district has an average daily population of 70,205 (visitors and residents) and a peak daily population of 99,220. The CODC district has a peak daily population of 51,857.<sup>3,4</sup>

The lack of health services, infrastructure, and workforce is exacerbated by the high levels of population growth in the districts:

- By 2053, Queenstown Lakes District is forecast to increase to 150,082 residents and 217,462 residents and visitors. By 2054, Central Otago District's peak daily population is forecast to increase to 85,621.
- Queenstown Lakes District has been the fastest growing area in New Zealand for many years, and over the past ten years it has grown at 5.92% per annum. In 2023 alone, it experienced 8% growth. Over the past five years, Central Otago District's resident population has grown at an annual rate of 3.4% making it the third fastest growing district nationally.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Community Research - QLDC](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/community/population-and-demand>

<sup>4</sup> [Growth Projections - 2022 \(codc.govt.nz\)](#)

- Actual population growth has consistently and significantly exceeded Stats NZ growth projections. More accurate growth estimates have been developed for the districts with the guidance of external experts. These estimate growth in Queenstown-Lakes of 2.4% per annum in the medium scenario between 2023 and 2048, and 3.18% per annum in the high scenario. These demand projections are used by councils, private sector, and government agencies to inform investment in infrastructure and services. These demand projections have proven to be more accurate than Stats NZ predictions and could assist Te Whatu Ora to plan more accurately for service delivery.

**Collaborative action is needed to ensure a fit-for-purpose approach to addressing baseline health needs**

We applaud the essential services that Te Whatu Ora does deliver for our communities and all of the outstanding frontline staff that help our locals and visitors every day. However, after decades of calls for better health services, the districts' communities need a clear commitment to local planning to improve health services in the districts commencing in the 2024-25 year. CODC and QLDC reiterate that they would welcome the opportunity to work with Te Whatu Ora to support this.

Meeting the health needs of the districts must be based on a robust health-needs assessment, accurate data on resident and visitor population growth, and consideration of the districts' geographical distances and constraints.

Ensuring the development of holistic cross-sector service models will require transparency about what and how social and health services are commissioned in the districts. High land value and travel distances from major service hubs may be limiting the establishment of services based in the communities they support, but limiting service responsiveness to local needs cannot continue.

CODC and QLDC encourage Te Whatu Ora to take a joined-up and collaborative approach with all agencies and groups that have a role in health and wellbeing in the districts. Together, all agencies can work on the best mechanisms to deliver services and infrastructure that meets the districts' significant growth challenges and enables the districts to grow well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,



Glyn Lewers  
QLDC Mayor



Tim Cadogan  
CODC Mayor