

17 April 2025

To the Mayor and Councillors
Dunedin City Council

9 Year Plan submission

Kia ora koutou

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the 9 Year plan consultation process.

Otago Youth Wellness Trust is a community based organisation in Dunedin, working with high and multiple needs young people aged 11 to 18+. We provide a service that enhances their wellbeing, breaks down barriers to opportunities and ensures them a secure future. We also provide the attendance service for the city, which covers tamariki aged 6 to 16 and over 70 schools in the DCC geographical boundary area.

Currently, we are tenants of the city in part of the building at 20 Parry Street West. The building suits our needs perfectly, with its location out of the CBD, parking space as well as space to engage our young people in one-on-one therapy as well as group work. The outdoor space has allowed us to create a garden which involves our young people not only in learning how to grow and nurture mainly vegetables, but also how to harvest and then cook. Being close to Unipol, we are able to partner with them to support rangatahi utilise the facilities with scaffolding from their caseworker which enhances wellbeing and confidence to use natural support services within our community. As part of building health & wellbeing we are in a handy location to make use of the stunning harbour cycle way and have a set of bikes on site for use. Parking is essential as we are a mobile service – we go out to our clients rather than expecting them to come to us, when their challenges and anxiety may not allow them to even leave their homes.

For some years we have been assisted by the Council with a property grant which covers our building lease costs. We would appreciate the Council continuing this support, as we are never fully funded by the Government contracts we hold to meet the actual needs of the community. In this current environment, already some of the contracts relating to our wraparound service are in jeopardy. We currently have 190 young people in wraparound, and over 170 in the attendance service.



Most of our funding goes into our team of registered social workers, occupational therapists, teachers and youth workers to deliver our services. The rent support is the equivalent of a full time worker, which is so very valuable.

These are the kind of outcomes we have – some words from our young people and their whānau:

Brittany

Due to the complex nature of many of our rangatahi's situations, it is crucial that a slow and steady approach is taken by our caseworkers to build trust and rapport with our clients. Brittany was 13 years old when she was referred to OYWT. She received ongoing wraparound support with her caseworker for two years.*

"At first, I was more reluctant, and I just wanted to be left alone. I didn't want to drag out my problems and talk about them. But we worked up to it gradually by setting goals and we got there. I'm glad I followed through with it and opened up."

At the end of her wraparound support, Brittany reflects on the support she received and how far she has come.

"My caseworker brought out the best in me, I probably wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for the things she taught me. I feel like there are so many things I can do, the world is my oyster".

**name changed to protect anonymity.*

Mother's story

"Casework was important to my daughter because it gave her a person – someone outside whānau she could talk to and feel safe with, and not a doctor, psychiatrist or psychologist. Someone she could just be herself with, spend time just talking about "stuff" big or little. She had someone who could give her life options to investigate, skills to manage her anxiety and keep her motivated.

"Knowing my girl had support was not only wonderful for her, but me too. I could talk to her caseworker to let her know if I had any worries, what was happening and get the support she might need.

"That gave me time to breathe – we have been on a long and complicated journey and the stress was all mine; I had no one to share it with. Knowing my daughter was being cared for meant I could take some time for me.

"Without Otago Youth Wellness's help I am not sure I would still have my beautiful girl. The wraparound practice is totally effective and I know she would still be on medication and not able to live a "normal" life, flatting and taking care of herself. She certainly would not have a part-time job, and be able to get up every day, shower and go out of the house by herself. OYWT connected her with other supports including

YouthGrow and Malcam Trust that helped grow her confidence and prepared her for work.

"I have been involved with the mental health sector for many years with both of my children and this has been the most helpful, useful and successful organisation we have been involved with. They are amazing, caring and understanding of the needs of young people needing their help."

Thank you for considering our submission. We greatly appreciate the support the Dunedin City Council gives in many different ways to support rangatahi in our community, including the shared spaces made available in our city environment. Supporting organisations such as ours have spaces to base our kaimahi to then work out in the community with rangatahi, empowers our rangatahi to find their confidence, develop interests and pro-social skills to function and thrive in our community.

Kā mihi

Melissa Mitchell-Bain

CEO - Otago Youth Wellness Trust