

## University of Otago Submission on the Dunedin City Council's 9-Year Plan

To: Dunedin City Council

9 Year Plan

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This is a submission on the consultation documents for the Dunedin City Council's (the Council) Draft 9-Year Plan 2025-34.

The University of Otago (the University) is a significant stakeholder in many of the Council's initiatives and maintains a close interest in the Council's proposed activities. The University supports the Council's activities in terms of planning for the City, and therefore welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft 9YP.

The University submission seeks to provide commentary, support and suggestions on a variety of matters in the plan which overlap with University interests in the city. These are presented below in no particular order of importance.

### **Infrastructure:**

The University supports the Council's coordinated approach to infrastructure, acknowledging the need for service upgrades, including addressing capacity issues in the city, as well as addressing the physical spaces within the urban environment. Whilst the University is not anticipating a significant growth of its Dunedin Campus over the period of this plan, we do anticipate growth in student numbers which will place increased demand upon residential property and has the potential to drive residential development growth. Infrastructure will need to accommodate that growth. Similarly, the physical spaces in the urban environment, often affected by infrastructure projects, are extremely important to our communities (University staff and students), both in terms of amenity for those that are already here and as an attractor to those yet to come. As such, the coordination of both these elements are critical to the University.

### **Three Waters Infrastructure:**

As noted above, with increased student numbers projected in the coming years, the three waters infrastructure needs to be able to cope with both current capacity and future demand. The University supports investment in this area to support our communities with core services. This is particularly relevant in areas of the city where capacity cannot meet current or future demand such as around Aquinas College where we have recently invested significantly in wastewater retention to manage peak demand into the Council sewerage system.

### **Transport Infrastructure:**

The University is supportive of initiatives which encourage and support mode shift for city residents. The University is aligned with the Council in supporting low emissions forms of transport such as walking and cycling networks, enabling public transport, and shifting to low emission forms of motorised transport.

The University is supportive of the Mosgiel park and ride which will provide positive mode shift for many staff within the University community, assisting to reduce vehicle journeys into the city and reducing reliance on parking in the central city and tertiary precinct.

The University remains invested in collaborating with the Council on transportation projects relating to roading and footpath projects which seek to improve safety and amenity for our communities. The University is also supportive of any works which make it easier for those with disabilities to transition through the city.

### **Transport Infrastructure: Albany Street Cycleway**

One transportation project which the University is highly supportive of is the Albany Street cycleway. Whilst this project is not specifically called out within the 9YP, the University understands that the project remains included in the plan for 2026.

Discussions on this project stem back a significant number of years, commencing initially with the Tertiary Precinct upgrade project which was subsequently deferred several years due to budget reallocation. The proposal then moved to the introduction of a cycleway, connecting Anzac Avenue elements of the cycle network with the central city. The University is broadly supportive of this proposal, not specifically because of an anticipated high volume of University users of the cycleway,

but as a means to facilitate better connections across the city for all users of the network and supporting mode shift in the tertiary precinct and central city.

There are a number of other areas of this proposal that the University is supportive of:

1. **The width reduction of the carriageway:** The University has been supportive for some time of the reduction in the speed limit in the tertiary precinct which is now in effect (30 kph). The reduction in the carriageway width which also will naturally slow vehicles down on Albany Street. This is particularly important around this edge of the campus where high student numbers are present with a high number of road crossings over to the OUSA clubs and socs building. Reduction in carriageway width will assist improve safety in this part of the precinct.
2. **Improved Junction build-outs:** Several of the side street junctions entering Albany Street are proposed to be altered as part of the works. This will improve pedestrian sightlines and safety as well as facilitating the cycle way.
3. **Pedestrian Crossings:** The introduction of several mid-block crossings will support the above noted high pedestrian numbers in the tertiary precinct. This is particularly relevant at the Eastern end of Albany Street where the introduction of the new 450 bed Te Rangihīroa College has seen a significant increase in pedestrian movements travelling to and from central campus.

One area of concern that has been highlighted to us by the Council project team, and through the hearing process in 2023, is the net loss of parking spaces on Albany Street. We note that from a University perspective some of this will inevitably result in a loss of parking amenity (in part) for the University. Whilst this is unfortunate, we feel that the wider benefits being put forward as part of this proposal far outweigh the loss of parking.

We note that the issue of parking has and will continue to be a polarising subject matter for both the University and likely the Council. We are however committed to working towards mode shift in this space and have been working closely with ORC to increase public transport patronage over several years as well as considering other means of reducing parking load in the precinct. Most recently we have introduced the Parkable app across our campus which is providing a tangible reduction in demand. As such, it is our view that the benefits in terms of pedestrian and cyclist amenity and safety in the precinct far outweigh the loss of some parking.

We are therefore in overall support of the proposed works for Albany Street and thank the Council Transport Team for their efforts and collaboration in this endeavour to date.

#### **Peninsula Connection:**

The University is supportive of the Peninsula Connection as it relates to tangible mode shift opportunities for the city and for University communities.

#### **Climate change mitigation**

The University notes that there will be emissions reductions, both for Council as an organisation and at the city-wide level as a result of initiatives funded through packages included in the draft 9YP. However, the University also notes that no additional investment is included in the draft 9YP to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ōtepoti Dunedin, and that the Council considers neither of the two investment packages previously prepared by Council staff would "bring about the degree of change at the pace required to achieve the city's 2030 target" (p.33). Rather than this being justification to include neither of these packages in the draft budget, it should be viewed as a reason to consider that a high level of investment is required to get close to achieving the target.

The decision not to consult on the medium or high investment packages means that the University (and other members of the public) do not have enough information about what additional investments should be included in the finalised 9YP.

Underinvesting and falling well short of the target fails to show leadership or support others in the city who are trying to do their part to reduce emissions but rely on Council infrastructure and services. Underinvesting in climate mitigation runs contrary to the vision described on page 8 of the consultation document, of "a future for Ōtepoti Dunedin that ensures the wellbeing of future generations and the sustainability of the environment from a te ao Māori perspective." It also ignores the voice of those who responded to the Council's Zero Carbon Survey and related engagements, who called for strong and decisive action on both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The University, as a member of the Dunedin Zero Carbon Alliance, as a large employer and destination for thousands of students, and as a centre for research and teaching, is committed to playing its part to address climate change. The Zero Carbon Alliance has been successful in identifying opportunities for organisations to collaborate on, particularly around workplace travel, waste and climate literacy. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Council and the wider Zero Carbon Alliance on mutually beneficial actions that will reduce emissions at organisational, city, national and global levels.

Reference to specific initiatives relating to climate change mitigation:

- Bioresources facility (p.16) - we note this will be funded over the period 2025-2042 and is an important part of the city's decarbonisation. The seventeen year implementation timeframe, however, seems at odds with the urgency of the climate crisis. We also note that options for dealing with biosolids sustainably can often cater for other organic waste streams as well. Indeed, if the solution is based on composting, adding other organic waste streams will only enrich the end product. As it is not yet certain how much capacity the new Green Island organic waste facility will be able to handle, and thus when and how much commercial organic waste it can receive on top of kerbside collections, we encourage the Council to consider opportunities for the bioresources facility + Green Island facility to receive as much organic waste in Dunedin as soon as possible. Clarity around the future of the composting facility after the Green Island Landfill closes would also be appreciated.
- Car parking (p.28) - the introduction of fees for Sunday parking is estimated to increase revenue by \$150,000 per annum. The University understands that while the Council has tendered for, and selected, a preferred provider of a car share scheme in Dunedin, one barrier to this provider launching is the availability of on-street car parks and the potential lost revenue from these foregone public car parks. We suggest that some of this revenue from Sunday parking be used to offset the lost revenue from launching car share in Dunedin. This will support more businesses and families to reduce the number of vehicles they own, which in turn has proven in cities like Wellington, to increase mode share of active and public transport, thus reducing emissions. Further investment (from Sunday parking fees or

elsewhere) to support the car share provider to offer a fully electric fleet of car share vehicles, and provide a flexible model that enables one-way journeys (for example, to or from the airport) would substantially increase the emissions reduction potential of this scheme.

- Dunedin Railways Ltd (p.31) - the Council and DRL should strongly consider expanding rail offerings to activities that support reducing emissions, such as supporting students to get to and from Dunedin at peak periods of travel (beginning and end of semesters, semester breaks, long weekends). The Council funded a student to research the barriers to such a service (see the report [here](#)) but no further action appears to have been taken on this opportunity. We note that ORC intends to support some Targeted Event Services as part of its draft Regional Public Transport Plan (p.27), and both Council/DRL and ORC should work together, with input from the University and OUSA, to provide affordable, timely and low emissions options for students.
- Dunedin urban cycleways tunnels trail (p.31) - we believe that the Tunnels Trail Trust has spoken with the Council about lower cost options that would allow the launch of the tunnels trail as a cycleway suitable for commuting (but perhaps not meet requirements for wheelchair accessibility). The University has a number of staff who commute from Mosgiel, Fairfield and Green Island who would benefit from a safe, reasonably flat cycling route to the city. Even if staff only cycled this route one day a week, this would have an impact on the University and city emissions inventories. Further improvements could be made over time, when funding allows, to expand the utility of this trail, particularly for shorter trips and recreation.
- Central city rummage store and three community run recycling centres (p.36) - Please work with the University and OUSA on the scope and location of these facilities to ensure the needs of students are catered for.
- Moana Pool (p.38) - we understand that despite the investment, heating will still ultimately rely on fossil gas (LPG), though using less than currently thanks to efficiency gains. Like the Council, the University still has facilities that rely on LPG as a primary source of heat/steam, though we are working towards ensuring that fossil gas is only used as a backup. Work by University academics and students, and external consultants on options for decarbonising University facilities, as well as conversations with EECA who are co-funding the electrification of several South Island hospitals, suggests that fully electrifying Moana Pool would be feasible based on available technology, and should deliver cost savings due to the high, and increasing, cost of LPG.

#### **Festival and Events Plan and Ōtepoti live music action plan:**

The University supports the drafting of such plans and supports events which will make Dunedin an attractive and vibrant city. The University recognises that it has an opportunity to increase use of its campus for public use and events and encourages the Council to work with the University on this initiative.

The University is currently inviting submissions on its [Dunedin Campus Activation Review](#) and has included the Council General Manager for Arts, Culture and Recreation on its panel. The University encourages the Council to submit on the University Dunedin Campus Activation Review. Written

Submissions are due by 23 May 2025 - for further information regarding submissions please contact the Reviews Manager, Megan Wilson (m.wilson@otago.ac.nz).

#### **Heritage Action Plan:**

The University is supportive of the Heritage Action Plan which broadly aligns with our values for heritage assets, of which we have many assets of local and national significance. The University supports the additional funding within the initiative and is keen to be included in a heritage building owner's forum.

The University is also keen to be involved in any future discussions or consideration relating to scheduling of buildings within the University's portfolio. Whilst we are in agreement with three of the proposed scheduled buildings as part of the 2GP process, we are in strong disagreement about the scheduling of the Archway Lecture Theatres and are actively seeking its removal from the schedule. The University should have a greater voice in these matters as it relates to a portfolio of buildings which are not always appropriate for retention or adaptive reuse. Scheduling buildings which are no longer useful is counter productive to the University's core vision and costly to either maintain or litigate.

#### **Other Matters:**

As mentioned previously in this submission, the University is anticipating growth in student numbers over the period of this plan, specifically 2025-2030. There is currently no acknowledgement of this growth in the plan, nor the infrastructure to support it, and the University believes that it has not been factored into any city-wide growth modelling in the Housing Capacity Assessment update October 2023. The University would support a further review of housing capacity for the city and would request engagement in that process. Any further iterations of the 9YP should reflect those changes, particularly with regard to infrastructure.

The University would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to comment on the draft plan and would be available to discuss any of the above matters further at the appropriate time.



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