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## **SUBMISSION TO RLC ANNUAL PLAN CONSULTATION DOCUMENT 2023/24**

The *Lake Rotoiti Community Association Incorporated (LRCA)* welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to Rotorua Lakes Council's Annual Plan 2023/24 Consultation Document (CD). The Association, as a long standing charitable organisation, takes a leading role in representing a large community of interest. We acknowledge the ongoing assistance provided by Council towards the various associated activities undertaken by LRCA and in support of our local communities.

### **GENERAL**

Closer analysis of the proposals contained in this Plan accentuate the difficulty in attempting to evaluate the intended outcomes. It is noted that the Plan deviates significantly from the LTP in terms of budget projections. However, it is unfortunate that the CD lacks the necessary detail to enable more in-depth critique of various proposed changes. For example, a simple comparison between this and the 2021/31 Long Term Plan (LTP) reveals that for 2023/24, the LTP prescribed \$105 million for CAPEX whereas the CD states that CAPEX has been reduced from \$162 to \$141 million. It is unclear as to whether the latest proposals include additions, deferrals and/or items brought forward.

Within the proposed Capex there are several significant variances outside of apparent increases which account for inflation. Since policy dictates Council borrowings to be only undertaken to improve existing facilities and infrastructure, with renewals funded from rates and charges, it is virtually impossible to determine the levels of debt versus rates applied to each capital cost centre. The addition of subsidies compound any such scrutiny. This also obviates the lack of ability to categorise the proposed \$26 million debt reduction (the saving from Economic Development Funding and Sports and Recreation projects presumably account for a large portion of this).

We would suggest that, instead of what might be regarded as punitive pruning of small projects and decreased core service delivery, cuts could be equally achieved by deferring or trimming some of the capital and other expenditure which appears to be non-essential at this time. This could include restructuring timeframes for major expenditure projects like the Museum and Aquatic centre, or further deferrals of items like fleet purchases or IT enhancements. As noted, the Plan fails to clearly distinguish between Expenditure (Opex) and Investment (Capex) so although the implications of such proposals are unclear, particularly in terms of rates reduction, further evaluation and review of Council expenditure within these areas is deemed appropriate as it appears to be excessive.

## PROPOSED EXPENDITURE CUTTING

We certainly commend Council's intent towards addressing the continuing challenges posed by an evolving economic climate and in respect of reducing expenditure to minimise the impact of rates, especially for those on low or fixed incomes.

Notwithstanding, we are concerned that Council has seemingly downgraded the relative importance of investment in its community. Most of the small investment projects which Council proposes to cut are part of the core amenities and facilities that significantly contribute to economic development and as such are extremely important to our communities. As well, our reputation as a renowned tourist centre is at stake. Tourists coming here also expect to have access to these amenities and facilities which essentially enhance the attractive environment and availability of services.

It is acknowledged that the proposed expenditure cuts traverse a wide cross-section of the community. User pays for service fees and charges is generally supported with the caveat that such fees and charges should also reflect a commensurate level of service, i.e. costs relating to efficient and effective delivery.

Whilst changing weather patterns have impacted on schedules, more recent years have seen a marked decline in the standard of verge mowing along main thoroughfares and outer amenities around the city. Decreasing or removing maintenance schedules for transport network maintenance areas including the upkeep of our rural road verges and reserves is regarded as a retrograde step and perhaps not worth the relatively small savings achieved.

The educational services related to waste management, are considered an essential part of addressing the enormous problems posed by waste disposal here and elsewhere.

### Ōtaramarae Boat Ramp

The 2021/31 LTP detailed capital expenditure of \$731 million over 10 years. We previously noted that, apart from sewerage projects (which outside of external subsidies are largely self-funded), this included just \$2.03 million for Lakes Infrastructure Enhancement and \$1.25 million of devolved funding to Lakes Community Board to expend across all lakes within the current boundaries. The infrastructure enhancements included an upgrade of the **Ōtaramarae boat ramp area** which has been a priority for the community over the past decade but continually delayed for various reasons.

We would emphasise that the impact to our District of both permanent and visitor growth on core infrastructure and existing amenities and facilities has been of increasing significance over many years with a notable resurgence since the relaxation of community movements and reopening of borders following Covid. Rotoiti is known to be the busiest lake in the District for recreational usage, especially over the summer and holiday periods. It has been estimated that up to 85% of boat traffic on our lake during this time comes from out-of-district, particularly Tauranga and Hamilton.

Ōtaramarae is the closest ramp for Tauranga visitors. It is heavily congested at weekends and other holiday periods for several months of the year with vehicles and trailers mostly having to park along the narrow roadside or on verges for a considerable distance to the detriment of residents and other road users alike. It is acknowledged that efforts to increase the parking area have proved challenging due to limited land availability. Whilst some cursory improvements to the boat ramp and jetty were carried out in 2020 the launching facilities remain less than adequate and continue to await further scheduled improvements.

Both the playground area and toilet block are considered to require urgent attention and upgrade (refer appended photos). Many high value tourists access this boat ramp from cruise ship and kayak tours and it is quite appalling that they are not able to use a toilet block and other facilities that meet at least minimum standards.

**We strongly urge Council to reconsider its proposal to pause upgrades to the Ōtaramarae boat ramp area.**

We would be pleased to speak to this submission if Hearings are to be held.

Nāku noa nā

*Reina*

**Reina Engelen  
Chairperson**

*Jim S*

**Jim Stanton  
LTP and Annual Plans Response Co-ordinator**

