

PROPOSED ANNUAL PLAN

2020-21



Otago
Regional
Council

What's inside?

What are we doing this year?
How much and who pays?

Have YourSay – let us know what's important to you

Your elected Otago Regional Councillors

Here in Otago, we’re privileged to live among stunning, diverse landscapes and waterways. It is one of Aotearoa’s most beautiful regions, but we’ve got our environmental challenges. Gritty issues that we need to sort together.

Together with our communities, we’re grappling with the best ways to protect and sustainably manage our water and land resources. We’re already experiencing more floods and fires - the impacts of climate change. And no matter where we live, pollution in our water and how much water we use is a challenge for everyone.

At ORC, over the 2020-21 year, we’re increasing our efforts and spending because we must work faster and more effectively to address these issues—whether they relate to water, climate change, biodiversity and biosecurity, or urban development. Impacts on our environment are happening now so we must deliver effective environmental policies and rules that are robust and workable for our communities.

Our communities have been asking us to do more. Through catchment and community groups, and feedback directly to councillors and staff in other community settings, we’re listening.

ORC’s strength lies in the skills and expertise of our people. In collaboration with the knowledge and insights of our communities, we’re working together to improve outcomes for our regional environment.

So, in 2020-21, we will make new rules to protect our environment, set up landowner groups to manage rabbits, fund projects with catchment groups that undertake work to improve water quality and biodiversity, and consider a ferry service in Queenstown. To do all of this we need to invest more in our people, building our capabilities and resources. People are our biggest asset when it comes to delivering our work programme. We want to be better equipped to develop the best possible framework for sustainably managing Otago’s natural resources.

Minister for the Environment, David Parker, has recently set Otago ambitious timeframes for managing our water resources more effectively. It’s important



Marian Hobbs
Chair
Dunedin



Michael Laws
Deputy Chair
Dunstan



Hilary Calvert
Dunedin



Alexa Forbes
Dunstan



Gretchen Robertson
Dunedin



Gary Kelliher
Dunstan



Michael Deaker
Dunedin



Carmen Hope
Molyneux



Andrew Noone
Dunedin



Kate Wilson
Molyneux



Bryan Scott
Dunedin



Kevin Malcolm
Moeraki

Our vision is for a healthy environment, a connected, engaged and proud community, a strong economy and a resilient region. Working with our communities, everything we do is for the future of Otago.

that we meet these—not just because he’s asked us to—but because we want Otago on a firm footing for the future. Our ability to meet the challenge sits both with ORC and our communities. Working together, we can achieve our goals.

Investing more in our work programme means we’re able to make a greater difference in a shorter time. While some of these funds will come from ORC’s reserves and investment income, there is also a proposed increase in rates for 2020-21, compared to that stated in our Long-term Plan (LTP).

In a nutshell, we’re accelerating the pace of what we’ve already said we’d do in the LTP. You’ve seen this as we recently delivered the first in a series of plan changes to keep things moving; we’re not slowing down.

We are more equipped now than at any other time with the expertise we have on staff. We have capitalised on opportunities to hire talented professionals returning home to Otago and to bring in new thinking through creating a diverse team. Yet there are still hills to climb. With good leadership and community working together we can create success.

Representative and transparent governance is vital to achieving what’s best for Otago. It includes having a deep understanding of our communities and the challenges and opportunities they face. We have a new, energised Council, connected, engaged and eager to work hard on behalf of its communities.

Working with our iwi partners, we give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi partnership, strengthening it and acknowledging the unique, enduring relationship iwi have with this land. We are privileged to have local iwi representation on our Strategy and Planning Committee and have entered into arrangements to ensure we can access important iwi skills and advice for the work we do.

Here, we provide an overview of work in our four priority areas for the 2020-21 annual plan and how we propose to fund this work. The annual planning cycle provides a process for the ORC and community to review budgets set out in the LTP. We’d love you to have a read and give us your recommendations.

We’re not the
ORC of old.

Where are we at?

The following pages provide an overview of our activity. It's through the lens of our four current priorities.



Freshwater

- Regional planning - water and land
- State of Environment monitoring
- Freshwater plan implementation



Climate change

- Mitigation and adaptation
- Natural hazards
- Flood protection, drainage and river management



Urban development

- Urban development strategy
- Transport - look out for our related Wakatipu ferry service consultation on YourSay and send us your submissions
- Regional passenger transport plan and regional land transport plan



Biodiversity & biosecurity

- Regional pest management plan implementation
- Align our biodiversity strategy with the National Policy Statement



Other activities

- Air
- Regulatory
- Governance and engagement



Managing freshwater

We all want healthy freshwater now and in the future.

How we look after the quality of our water and how much we use is an issue and responsibility for everyone in Otago.

On our journey to create good outcomes for freshwater, we need to harness the strength of collaborative community partnerships based on stronger relationships.

We must determine how we will manage the future of Otago. And we know there are tensions about water that divide our communities. Water is life for us all. Water is important to our iwi partners, farms and businesses, just as it is important to fishers and swimmers.

Through good leadership, setting a clear direction and sharing knowledge with our communities, we can build a positive future for our environment, ourselves and generations to come.

We value the contributions our communities make to our collective knowledge of water quality and quantity. There's great work going on in Otago's catchment groups – community-led action that is making a real difference for the long-term good of our water.

We can join up the community's on-the-ground knowledge with the science and expertise of our people. Working together, we're able to achieve so much more.

The proposed Otago Regional Land and Water Plan will be the legal and policy framework that guides how we manage water.

By strengthening our current Regional Plan: Water we're bridging the gap until new rules are in place for effective long-term management of our waterways. This will be done through our Land and Water Plan. We're doing this work now at the request of the Minister for the Environment—to achieve the best possible framework for managing Otago's water resource into the future.

It takes time to gather the information needed to create a workable plan. Listening to our communities and combining our data with what they know and experience, will give Otago the best shot at delivering the healthy water we all want.

We must build momentum in 2020-21 to achieve that.

We want to formalise our assistance for catchment groups and communities working together to look after our waterways by having funds available to support their work.

Buoy gives life to lake data

A solar-powered monitoring buoy tracking changes in water quality health on Lake Hayes is the first of its kind used in Otago.

Two more buoys are planned for Lakes Wanaka and Wakatipu. We'll be keeping the momentum going on our State of the Environment monitoring programme in the Upper Clutha Lakes region in 2020-21.

Gathering better information

We're doing more, at a faster pace, to look after Otago's freshwater.

We're hiring more people with the science expertise to expand our monitoring and reporting capabilities.

By establishing a robust network of monitoring sites, we'll gather better information on what's happening in our lakes, rivers, streams and estuaries, and do a better job of supporting our communities while meeting central government's national standards.





For a safe, resilient future

Climate change is real.

It's happening here. It's impacting on our land and wildlife, livelihoods and lifestyles. We see the extreme weather events it brings—floods, droughts, fires—and rising sea levels.

In our communities and businesses, we're all vulnerable to the economic and social impacts of climate change. That's why, at ORC, we're committed to making climate change a consideration in everything we do.

We're finding out as much as we can about what climate change really means for Otago communities so we can plan for it well and our communities are able to adapt.

Reflecting the growing importance of this issue in our communities, we've already accelerated our LTP work programme. In 2020-21 this pace will continue.

Our work includes gathering information to better understand climate change risks. Understanding risk as best as we can means we're able to help our communities deal with climate change. By leading the way and sharing our research and understanding, we can support communities to make the best possible decisions.

Understanding the risks of climate change and its impacts on Otago's coastline, groundwater, infrastructure assets (such as flood banks), and land stability is vital to informing the actions our communities choose to take. That's why Dunedin locals might have seen us working in South Dunedin to understand groundwater levels. We're also taking action to assess our own flood protection infrastructure, to ensure they're ready for climate change.

We're finding out as much as we can about what climate change really means for Otago communities.

We also face the challenges of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Understanding our region's emissions will help with the daily and long-term choices we all make. We plan to assess CO₂ emissions for the Otago region, explore options for low emissions public transport, and assess our own greenhouse gas emissions. Our proposal for a ferry service in Queenstown and our collaboration with Dunedin City Council on bus fare options are two examples of how we're incentivising car-free, low-emission travel.

Together with our communities, we're preparing for and tackling the challenges of climate change.



Protecting our communities

This coming year, we're assessing how the Lower Clutha Flood Protection Scheme is performing, to understand more about how it will cope with the extra pressures of climate change.

The scheme protects communities, farmland and industry from the flood hazards of the Lower Clutha floodplain and delta.

The likelihood of more frequent high winds, storms and sea level rises, means we need to learn more about how it will respond to these kinds of events.

Getting ready

This year, we've been assessing the potential region-wide risks that climate change could create.

It's a major project, building our knowledge about potential future scenarios, risks and consequences.

This coming year, we'll use this information to understand how Otago could adapt to climate change, and what it could mean for how we live, work and thrive in the future.



Better urban environments

Our patch includes New Zealand's fastest-growing area—the Queenstown Lakes District. Between 2013 and 2018, census figures tell us that the district grew 6.8% per year on average. Other urban areas in Otago are also growing.

This growth brings challenges, including housing shortages and environmental impacts.

Our new Otago Regional Policy Statement (RPS) will be notified in 2020-21. It sets the direction for future management of Otago's natural and physical resources and includes a stronger focus on managing urban development.

What do we want? Broadly, we want urban development that doesn't encroach on highly productive land and minimises impacts on water quality. We also have responsibilities for working to ensure that there is enough capacity for development to support future housing needs. This is new work for ORC.

You've told us that sediment in waterways from urban development is not acceptable. We've heard you and taken action when needed. In future, we want greater controls on sedimentation in urban areas because we agree that those effects need stronger management.

Public transport is an area we've been busy in and where we'll be doing more. Our changes to public transport services in Dunedin and Queenstown have been well received. To further build on this, we recognise the need to ensure working conditions are fair, including a living wage for our bus drivers.

Orbus Queenstown is playing a part in reducing urban congestion and carbon emissions. This year we added an additional direct service between Lake Hayes and downtown Queenstown. We're also consulting with the Queenstown community on options for a water ferry trial on Lake Wakatipu, as one of a number of transport solutions under the Way To Go partnership with Queenstown Lakes District Council and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (NZTA). You can read more detailed information and have your say online on the Wakatipu Ferry trial from 14 April.

In Dunedin, the Orbus service has been greatly enhanced by the central city bus hub providing a better-connected network with easy transfers in a central location. In the coming year, as we review the Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP), we will look at fares, zones and network changes. We continue to work with our Connecting Dunedin partners, Dunedin City Council and NZTA, on how to encourage and incentivise more bus use. This partnership will also be pivotal in changing behaviour as major construction starts for the hospital, waterfront and tertiary precinct.

There's plenty more to come to build a better future for our urban environments. In 2020-21, we'll be exploring how our transport planning and actions integrate with urban development. You will have an opportunity to consider this via the planned review of our Regional Land Transport Plan.

Respecting our land

Where will people live in Otago in the future and how do we protect our productive land?

An ORC team is about to start painting the picture of our land's productive qualities and how these integrate with our communities' urban growth needs.

Otago already has excellent soil mapping and climatic data from GROWOtago. By adding social and economic data into the mix, we'll learn more about how and where it's best for urban and rural residential areas to grow, and about the current use and productive potential of our land. This knowledge will help inform our planning.

It's important we look after what we've got.

Getting around our cities and towns

ORC influences transport in Otago directly through our public transport services and indirectly through our regional and transport planning processes.

Our goal is to give people more sustainable travel choices, to make our urban spaces more liveable and to reduce carbon emissions.

We work closely with local councils and NZTA. We consider opportunities to expand our public transport network in Otago, and encourage people, where possible, to make more sustainable travel choices such as cycling.

We want urban development that doesn't encroach on highly productive land and minimises impacts on water quality.





The Teviot Flathead Galaxias is becoming increasingly rare; classified as ‘nationally critical’, it shares this position with the kākāpō. It is one of New Zealand’s most endangered galaxiids.

Photo credit: Rod Morris



Looking after our plants and wildlife

Otago is New Zealand’s second largest region. Our biodiverse plants and wildlife come under threat from pest plants and animals as well as humans and we have some very special species to look after, some unique to Otago.

Biodiversity outcomes are often delivered through our work on water. We also achieve those outcomes through our biosecurity work like on wilding pines, rabbits and wallabies. We don’t often kill pests ourselves these days, except on our own land or as part of our wallaby programme, but we work with landowners to ensure they understand and comply with our Regional Pest Management Plan. We do recognise that our spending on biodiversity is light.

While our pest work has benefits for biodiversity, we need to address the level and balance of our resources to be effective in both biosecurity and biodiversity in the future.

We’re completing a business case that determines the operating approach we’ll take to deliver future service. The service that we provide must be sustainable for the community. Our business case will inform a future conversation with you about ‘how much’ and ‘how fast’ we deliver. This will occur in the next 12 months.

So, for 2020-21, we propose to inject more resource into pest management as

we rise to the challenge of implementing the new pest management plan. We want to get better at working with landowner groups to support them in managing pests on their properties.

Our pest management plan is an important step forward. It sets out the rules and requirements for managing specified pests in Otago. It gives us more effective powers to work with landowners who need to do more to control pests on their properties, particularly in areas on the outskirts of cities, towns or villages. We have more work to do managing pests on Crown land.

For biodiversity, 2020-21 is about using our current, albeit limited resource, to build an Otago inventory of biodiversity —it’s a critical piece of work that supports landowners, communities and ORC to make decisions and choices.

Our ECO Fund continues to support community-driven, environmental projects that protect and enhance Otago’s environment. Our funding support for the good work of the Predator Free Dunedin project is now into its second year.

While there are challenges ahead, in partnership with Otago communities, we’ll continue to progress our work protecting the health of our ecosystems and wildlife.

Working together to achieve more

Collaborating more with our communities to tackle pest management— that’s our focus this year.

We’ll continue to support community-led projects with funding, teaming up with landowners to provide support and assistance, or sharing resources and knowledge in joint projects with community groups, agencies and neighbouring regional councils.

We need to do more. We’d like to collaborate more with landowners, including establishing landowner-led rabbit control groups.

Working more closely together, we’ll achieve more for our future.

Mapping our biodiversity

Maintaining our biodiversity is a huge challenge.

We need to play our role as regional leaders and partners of community-led biodiversity actions. A key project we’ll be working on in 2020-21 is building an inventory of Otago’s biodiversity that can be shared across groups working in this space.

Creating this database, including mapping ecosystems, is an important step forward in prioritising actions that protect and support our plants and animals to thrive.



Other activities

Burn dry, breathe easy

Breathing healthy air is vital to life.

At ORC, we want to deliver the best outcomes for our communities when it comes to air quality.

Our ‘Clean Heat Clean Air’ programme anchors our Air Quality Strategy. We’ve reached a point where we’re asking the question: “Is this programme delivering the air quality results we need?”

Alongside this, the financial reserves that subsidise ‘Clean Heat Clean Air’ run out in 2020-21.

So, it’s an opportune time for us to review the subsidy programme and look at future options. The results of this review will be discussed with communities in the near future.

For 2020-21 we plan to maintain our current programme, which includes ‘Clean Heat Clean Air’, engaging with communities on good practice and exploring new heating and burning technologies.

Whatever we decide to do, we want good quality air for Otago. We need to work out the best way to achieve that.

Regulatory

As regulators for the environment, we have to make sure we’re well equipped to get the work done. We’ve had our internal processes reviewed and we’re implementing improvements based on these recommendations. We’ll be better equipped to process resource consents, develop and set rules for how a natural resource can be managed, and check that the rules are being followed.

We are responsible for the regulation of ports, harbours, waters, and maritime-related activity in Otago under the Maritime Transport Act.

In some districts this responsibility is delegated to other councils who are responsible for the waters in their patch, like Queenstown Lakes District Council.

The Central Otago District Council has requested we take back responsibility over Lake Dunstan in 2020-21.

This means that we will extend our current Harbourmaster activity to include Lake Dunstan.

To prepare for this change we will amend our Revenue and Financing Policy.

This will enable us to fairly allocate rating for this activity in the future. At this stage it’s unclear what or if there’s additional cost associated with this change in delegation—we will come back to the community in the future with an update.

Governance and engagement

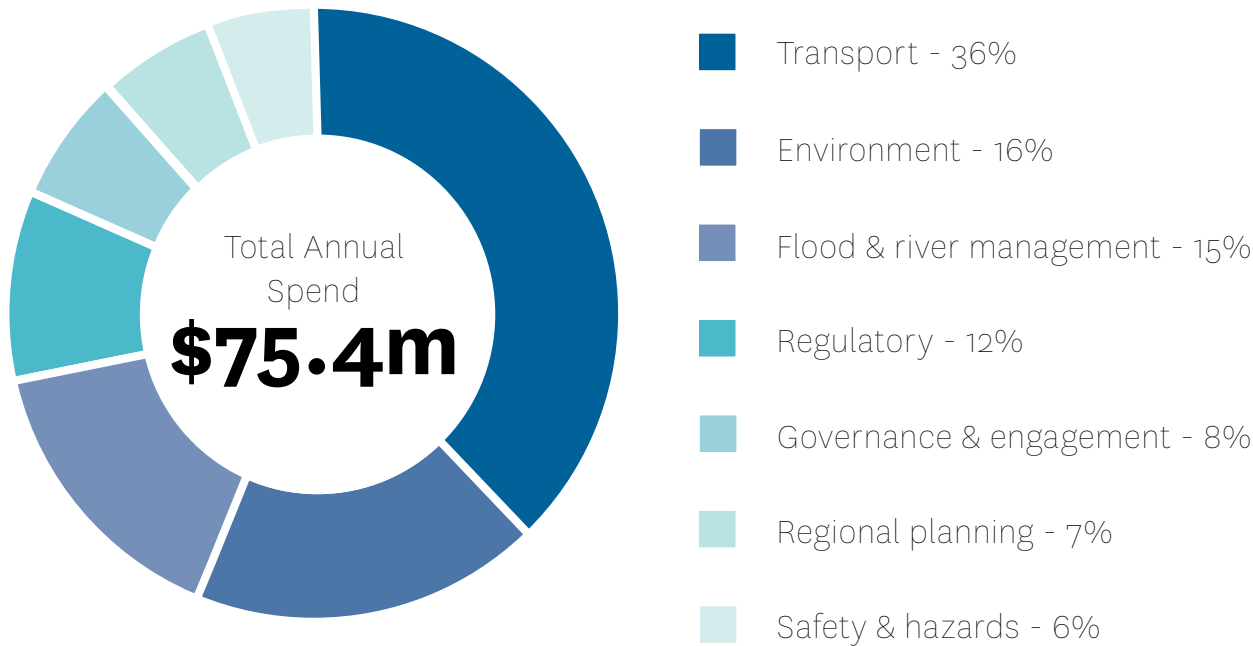
Our Councillors want to be involved. We have increased the number of meetings Council will have outside Dunedin and across the region this triennium and each Councillor has increased responsibilities.

We’re supporting the Otago Mayoral Forum by providing the expertise needed to allow this group to discuss and explore major projects that benefit the region. We also provide a regional perspective for city and district councils in Otago when they’re reviewing their district plans.



Our business case will inform a future conversation with the community about ‘how much’ and ‘how fast’ we deliver.

The money – how much and on what?



Transport

We're responsible for public transport in Otago and provide services in Dunedin and Queenstown. We offer the Total Mobility scheme to meet the needs of people unable to use public transport. We also facilitate wider transport projects in Otago.

\$1,000,000 increase* from 2019-20 budget

*increase reflects improved work conditions for our bus drivers. We have also ensured resource to improve our Passenger Transport and Land Transport Plans. We are also consulting on the Wakatipu ferry trial. If you live in Queenstown, submit online from 14 April on yoursay.orc.govt.nz



Safety & Hazards

To ensure our communities are kept safe, we identify and monitor natural hazards. We also respond to flood events and support Otago Civil Defence and Emergency Management.

\$345,000 increase* from 2019-20 budget

*increase reflects our continued commitment in this area.



Regulatory

To look after the environment, we need to regulate its use. As regulators, we process resource consents, develop and set rules for how a natural resource can be managed and check that these rules are being complied with.

\$2,100,000 increase* from 2019-20 budget

*increase reflects the reset of our approach to freshwater, ensuring we can meet Otago's needs for resource consents and monitoring. We are looking at extending our current Harbourmaster activity to include Lake Dunstan. To prepare for this change we will amend our Revenue and Financing Policy so we can fairly allocate rating in the future.



Environment

We have a responsibility to lead and work with our community regarding our natural environment. This involves facilitating the sustainable use of our water, land, air and coasts. Protecting our unique biodiversity, pest management, state of environment monitoring and reporting, and incident response.

\$452,000 decrease* from 2019-20 budget

*decrease is due to large reduction in grant funding for the wilding pine programme. There is a \$576,000 increase on biosecurity work compared to 2019-20 budget.



Governance & engagement

Our democratic decision-making process and the community-elected councillors ensure everyone's voices around Otago are heard and that leadership is provided for the benefit of the region.

\$933,000 increase* from 2019-20 budget

*increase largely reflects our support to the district plan reviews that other councils in our region are completing.



Flood & river management

Many of our urban and rural communities are in low-lying areas close to rivers, and livelihoods rely on being able to use the land. Our flood protection schemes help to protect people and properties from floods; our drainage schemes help to maintain the productive capability of the land and waterways.

\$1,200,000 increase* from 2019-20 budget

*increase reflects the reassessment of existing schemes and their infrastructure to ensure they are fit-for-purpose into the future.



Regional planning

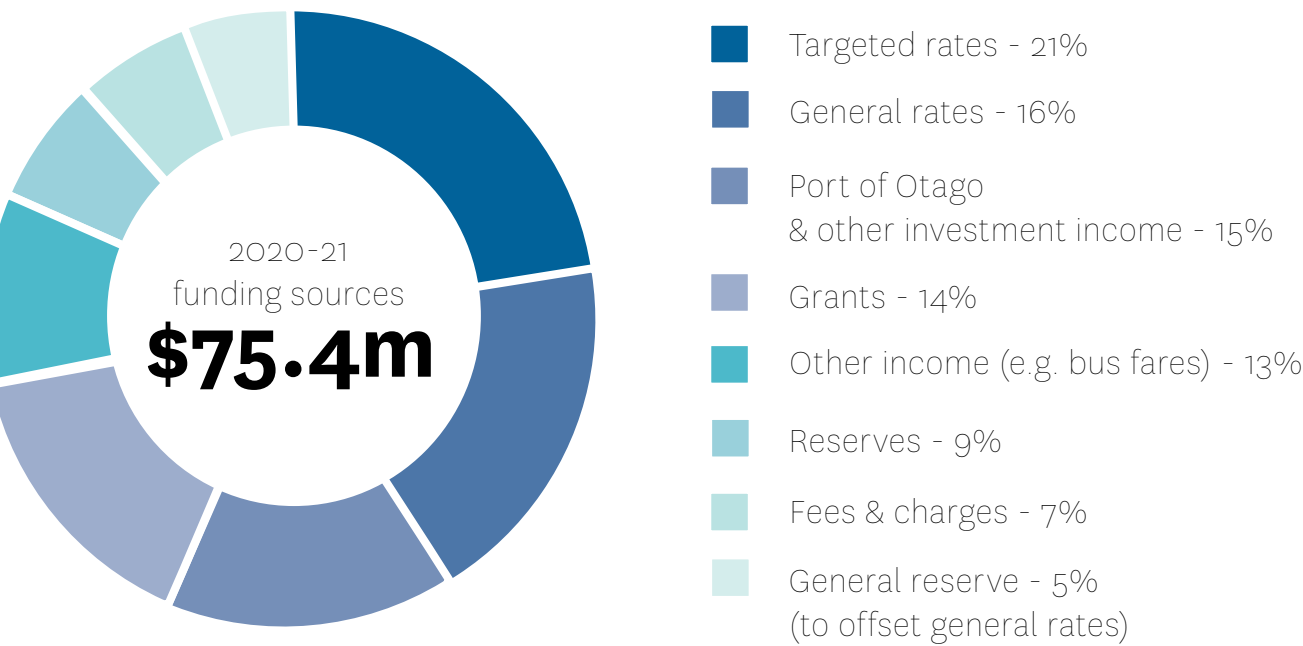
Our regional plans set out policies and rules for sustainable use of natural and physical resources of the Otago region, including water, land, air and the coast.

\$1,900,000 increase* from 2019-20 budget

*increase reflects the resetting of our regional planning programme.

The money – who’s paying for it?

While your rates go a long way toward paying for the work we do, we don’t expect you to pay for everything. Some of our funds come from other sources.



We have minimised general rates by:

Increasing the Port Otago dividend from \$8.1 million to \$10.1 million.

Using \$4 million of our general reserves.

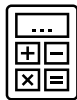
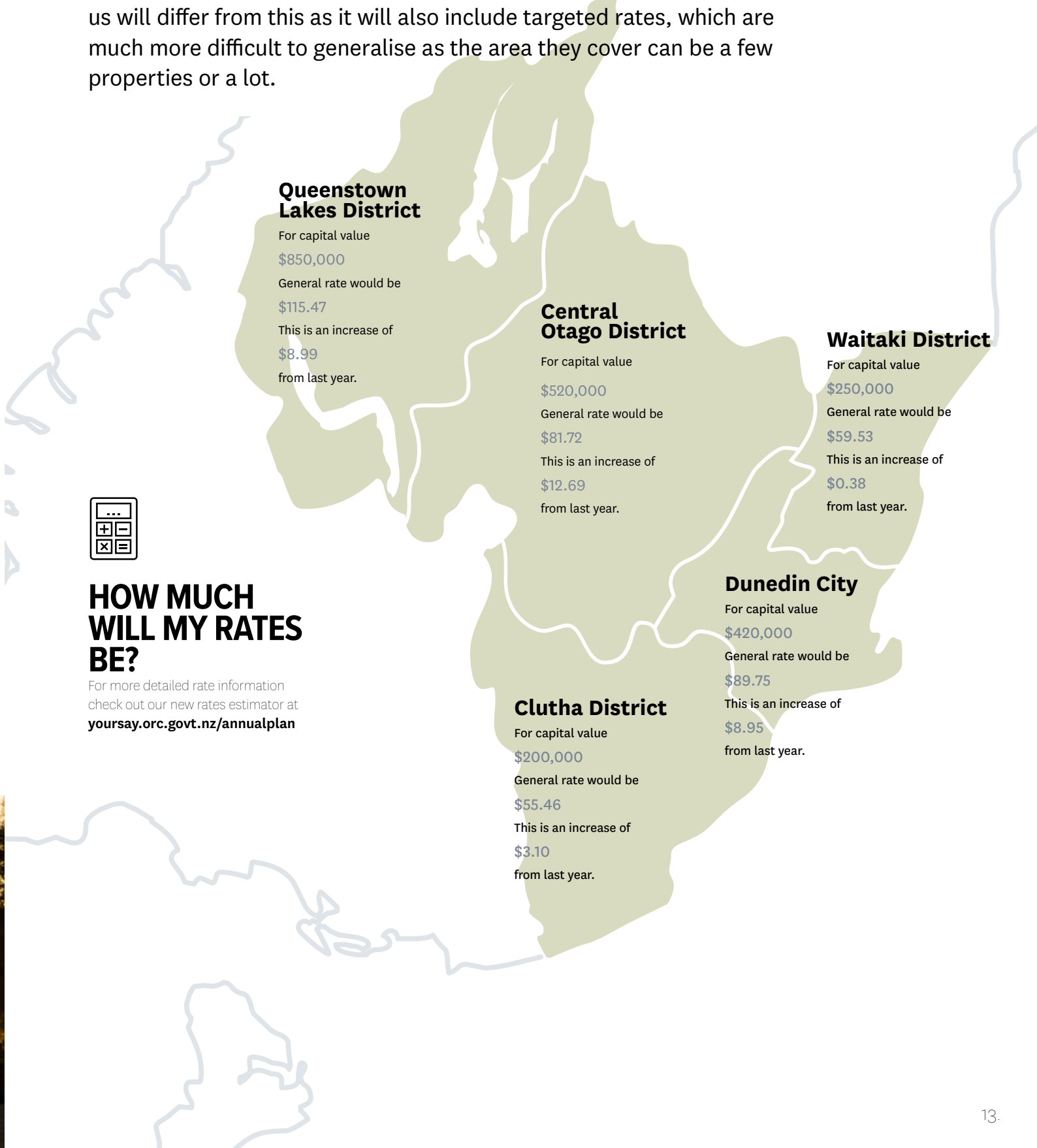
Our Long-term Plan forecasted a need to increase its rating revenue to match community aspirations, particularly on freshwater. While we did not foresee the level of expenditure now proposed for 2020-21, we’re in a position to use our financial strength. We have reduced the rating requirement through using investment income and reserves.

Overall rate increase

General	9.1%
Targeted	2.8%
Average rate increase	5.5%

The money – how much do you pay?

Otago has the lowest regional council rates in New Zealand. This is for your general rates only. As a rule of thumb, the increases shown stay in proportion to your property’s CV. The rates bill you receive from us will differ from this as it will also include targeted rates, which are much more difficult to generalise as the area they cover can be a few properties or a lot.



HOW MUCH WILL MY RATES BE?

For more detailed rate information check out our new rates estimator at yoursay.orc.govt.nz/annualplan



Proposed changes in fees and charges (starting 1 July 2020)

The fees and charges schedule was last reviewed in 2018 for inclusion in year 1 of the LTP 2018-28. Since then there has been a review of the average cost to process consent applications. Consent deposits are no longer in line with the cost of processing applications. Increasing the deposit amount to accurately reflect the cost of processing applications should reduce the need for invoicing at the conclusion of the process. Consent processing fees have also been adjusted to better reflect the current staff structure.

The table below shows our proposed changes to fees and charges.

	Proposed 2020-21	Current fees and charges
Scale of charges: (staff time / hour including GST)		
Management (current Executive)	190	235
Team Leader / Principle (new)	170	-
Senior Technical	135	170
Technical	115	125
Field Staff	115	100
Administration	85	85
Publicly notified application deposits		
Concurrent applications (remove)	-	225
Non-notified application deposits and fixed fees		
Single consent application	1,750	1,000
Multiple consent application (new)	2,300	-
Concurrent applications (remove)	-	50
Variation to conditions section 127	1,750	1,000
Administrative variation section 127	1,750	500
Exemptions from water metering regulations (from deposit to a fixed fee)	400 fixed fee	200 deposit
Bore permit (from deposit to a fixed fee)	600 fixed fee	500 deposit
Variation to a bore permit (remove)	-	500
Transfer of consent holder and certificate deposits		
Transfer of permits and consents	200	100
Priority table	200	100
Section 147 certificate	500	200
Certificate of compliance	1,750	200
Section 125 extension of term (remove)	-	100
Administrative Charges		
Remove all one-off administrative charges		

Have your say



We’ve told you what we’re up to and where we’re at for 2020-21. Now, have your say on the projects we’re doing.

Name/organisation

Street No

Street name

Suburb/town

Postcode

Phone

(so we can contact you if you wish to present your submission)

Email

I would like to speak with ORC about my submission **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐

If yes, please provide your contact number above.

Your name and feedback will be made public as part of ORC’s decision-making process (we will not make your phone or e-mail details public). This information will be included on papers for the public and media, but will only be used for the Annual Plan process. For additional room, please include another sheet of paper and number your responses using the numbers we’ve used here.

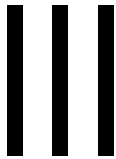
1. Managing freshwater

2. Climate change - for a safe, resilient future

3. Better urban environments

4. Looking after our plants and wildlife

5. Let us know what else is important to you, for our future



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