



27 November 2020

Via email: Rachel.Currie@orc.govt.nz

Dear Ms Currie,

OUR WATER OUR VISION

Thank you for the opportunity to present our feedback in relation to Otago Regional Council's (ORC's) 'Our Water Our Vision' project. Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) looks forward to the development of this vision and considers this to be an exciting opportunity to ensure the protection of the future of the waterways that are so important to the district and the wider region.

The residents of the Queenstown Lakes District are passionate about the need to ensure our lakes and waterways are protected and pristine for future generations. As outlined in the Upper Lakes Rohe Snapshot document (Clutha Mata Au), the lakes and rivers of our district are central to the environmental, social, cultural and economic wellbeing of the district. The near-pristine water quality of our lakes and rivers are a true taonga for residents and visitors alike, complementing perfectly the breathtaking landscapes for which the district is renowned. Preserving the quality, purity and spiritual connection to these bodies of water is essential for our communities.

At a strategic level, the importance of our lakes and rivers is reflected in the vision statements in QLDC's Vision Beyond 2050¹, particularly the 'deafening dawn chorus', which seeks, "our waterways and lakes to be drinkable" and that "we set the standard for combating biodiversity loss". All QLDC's vision statements: Thriving people; Embracing the Māori world; Opportunities for all; Breathtaking creativity; Zero carbon communities; Disaster-defying resilience; and Pride in sharing our places, can all be linked to the protection of our lakes, rivers and wetlands. We would encourage the ORC to consider the application and integration of these in the development of their own vision.

We are keenly aware of the risks that contamination and mismanagement present within our catchments and the impact that this could have on our both our environment and the health of our people. Water as a visual value, as an intrinsic element within our landscape and as a safe, healthy resource for consumption and bathing are paramount. Our Council is committed to enhancing all of these values and considers a close, engaged, working relationship with ORC to be critical to the achievement of this. QLDC is also acutely aware that most of its water and wastewater infrastructure is located close to our principal water bodies. The Council is striving to improve resilience and redundancy within its networks and systems.

As a central tourism destination within New Zealand's visitor economy (both domestic and hopefully again one day, international), examples of contamination and sickness in Havelock North were significant factors in our pursuit of a Visitor Levy to fund good quality visitor infrastructure in the district. If a similar event were to occur in Queenstown, the impact upon our reputation, tourism economy and health system would be severe.

Similarly, water is a key resource input to our agricultural and horticultural industries. Economic diversification is a key aspiration for QLDC and primary agriculture remains a key industry for the district, so ensuring adequate availability of water, along with responsible management and discharge needs to be part of any future vision.

¹ <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/media/wgscwzro/qldc-vision-2050-boards-feb19-v2.pdf>

Water quality is an absolute concern and priority for QLDC and meeting the drinking water standards will be a core focus of our next Ten Year Plan. As we have advocated for in other forums, we are keen to see better regulation of septic tanks, as groundwater contamination is a significant issue for the district in areas around the Headwaters. The protection of ground and surface water quality, the safe and efficient use of our scarce water resources and for many communities the transition to improved reticulated networks is a critical challenge. Our communities deserve good water and we look forward to working with ORC to help deliver these transitions.

QLDC is on a journey of demonstrable commitment to water and te mata o te wai, which is reflected across the organisation and in a number of strategies. Our Thirty Year Infrastructure Strategy, approach to discharge management, Climate Action Plan and forthcoming Ten Year Plan all reflect this. Good water quality is vital for the biodiversity of our flora and fauna and all agricultural activities. We are also keen to reduce the take of water for bottling and proposed a remit to LGNZ to this effect earlier this year.

As a district, QLDC is anticipating significant growth to continue after the short term impacts of COVID 19 have passed. The challenges faced in managing water responsibly must continue to be at the forefront of our thinking. QLDC applauds ORC's commitment to the health and mauri of the water in the region and the importance that it holds. This aligns with QLDC's commitment to the drinking water standards as shown in the forthcoming Ten Year Plan.

Please note that this submission reflects the position of officers and has not been ratified by Council.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Theelen
Chief Executive