



# **Submission on Auckland Council Annual Budget 2022/2023**

March 2022

 **OraTaiao**  
NZ Climate & Health Council

# Foreword

OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate & Health Council, Incorporated  
Auckland, New Zealand  
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24 March 2022  
Auckland Council  
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## Submission on Auckland Council's Annual Budget 2022/23

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Auckland Council's Annual Budget 2022/2023. This submission was prepared by representative members of OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council including Dr James Hamill (PhD, FRACS) and Hayleigh Frost from Auckland. We are New Zealand's only climate change NGO focused on health and health-equity.

We welcome the climate action package – including the targeted rate - which is not only crucial to reducing the city's growing greenhouse gas emissions, but also offers significant health benefits to residents by improving public transport, cycleways and walkways and increasing urban forests. OraTaiao, alongside other experts in climate change and health, strongly believes that tackling climate change is potentially the greatest global health opportunity of the century.

Our submission is focused on the potential health gains of a well implemented climate package in Auckland.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dermot Coffey', with the name 'COFFEY' written in small capital letters below the signature.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Summer Wright', written in a cursive style.

Summer Wright  
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# About OraTaiao

OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council is an organisation calling for urgent, fair, and Tiriti-based climate action in Aotearoa; we recognise the important co-benefits to health, well-being and fairness from strong and well-designed mitigative policies.

We honour Māori aspirations, are committed to the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi, and strive to reduce inequities between Māori and other New Zealanders. We are guided in our practice by the concepts of kaitiakitanga (guardianship), kotahitanga (unity), manaakitanga (caring), and whakatipuranga (future generations).

OraTaiao has grown over a decade to more than 700 health professionals concerned with:

- The negative impacts of climate change on health, well-being, and fairness;
- The gains to health, well-being, and fairness that are possible through strong, health-centred climate action;
- Highlighting the impacts of climate change on those who already experience disadvantage or ill-health (i.e., equity impacts);
- Reducing the health sector's contribution to climate change.

As well as individual and organisational members, we are backed by 21 of New Zealand's leading health professional organisations for our Health Professionals Joint Call to Action on Climate Change and Health (see [https://www.orataiao.org.nz/friends\\_and\\_supporters](https://www.orataiao.org.nz/friends_and_supporters)). This support includes the New Zealand Medical Association, the New Zealand Nurses Organisation and the Public Health Association, plus numerous specialist colleges. Together, these organisations represent tens of thousands of our country's health workforce.

As an organisational member of the Climate and Health Alliance, and of the Global Climate & Health Alliance, we work with a worldwide movement of health professionals and health organisations focused on the urgent health challenges of climate change - and the health opportunities of climate action. OraTaiao signed the Doha Declaration on Climate, Health and Wellbeing of December 2012, which reflects this international perspective.

# Question 1 - Climate action targeted rate - What do you think of this proposal to introduce a climate action targeted rate?

OraTaiao **supports** the Auckland Council's proposed climate action targeted rate (CATR). If the fund is well planned, implemented and evaluated, it would be a turning point for Auckland to reduce its climate emissions and work towards the council's goal of halving emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero emission by 2050.

## Why OraTaiao Supports CATR

We support the planned improvements to be made to Auckland's infrastructure and transport network through the use of the climate fund. Not only will this reduce emissions but it will also have co-health benefits, reducing the prevalence of comorbidities within Auckland's population.

The fund directly aims to improve the public and active transport routes through an interconnected network that is usable across the region. It targets inequities by improving services in areas that are currently underdeveloped (i.e South Auckland) and increasing the frequency and coverage of networks. Good public transport has significant mental health benefits, especially for low-income areas, and bolsters a sense of community connectedness<sup>1</sup>. Currently, public transport favors higher income areas and does not deliver transport justice to lower-income suburbs<sup>2</sup>. To date, Auckland's transport network has had years of underfunding leading to a rise in emissions and under usage due to the often inconvenience and unreliability of the network.

The CATR will support the Council's Urban Ngahere strategy. Increased tree cover in lower-income areas will see equitable benefits from regeneration of urban forest. This will reduce our vulnerability to increasing heat by cooling the city through providing shade and transpiring water. The importance of this within Auckland city is depicted in the IPCC report; "A particular focus since AR5 has been the impact of climate change on cities (see AR6 Chapter 6). Heat risks are expected to be greater in urban areas due to changes in regional heat exacerbated by 'heat island' effects (high confidence)" (Ch 7, P67<sup>3</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> Wild K, Woodward A, Herbert S, Tiatia-Seath J, Collings S, Shaw C, Ameratunga S. The relationship between transport and mental health in Aotearoa New Zealand. 2021 Mar.

<sup>2</sup> Adli SN, Chowdhury S, Shiftan Y. Justice in public transport systems: A comparative study of Auckland, Brisbane, Perth and Vancouver. *Cities*. 2019 Jul 1;90:88-99.

<sup>3</sup> IPCC Sixth Assessment Report: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Available from <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

Tree canopies create more pleasant soundscapes an place to live “by generating sounds associated with the rustling of leaves in response to wind, and attracting bird wildlife sounds that would be rated more positively than a street canyon dominated by road traffic noise<sup>4</sup>.”

Māra kai fosters food sovereignty as food insecurity affects many Auckland residents. Accelerating efforts for local food gardens could remove monetary barriers to fresh vegetables and supplement local diets<sup>4</sup>. Consuming fruit and vegetables grown locally also improves the climate footprint of diet.

## **There are large co-health benefits to be obtained through the intended use of CATR in the both transport network and urban ngahere.**

The IPCC working group 2 summary describes the health benefits of climate action as:

- “Urban planning that combines clean, affordable public transportation, shared clean vehicles, and accessible active modes can improve air quality and contribute to healthy, equitable societies and higher wellbeing for all. Stimulating active mobility (walking and bicycling) can bring physical and mental health benefits (high confidence).” (Ch7, P114)
- “Urban green and blue spaces contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation and improve physical and mental health and wellbeing (high confidence)” (Ch7, P114)

Active transport is proven to reduce all-cause mortality and reduce morbidity from non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory diseases, diabetes and mental health. This is through the primary mechanism of increased physical activity and reducing air pollution from vehicle emissions by reducing the number of vehicles on the road. People who cycle improve their health as cycling to work is associated with a 45% lower risk of developing cancer, 46% lower risk of heart disease and 41% lower risk of premature death<sup>4</sup>.

An Aotearoa modelling study showed that switching short trips to walking and cycling will improve people’s health, as measured by increased quality adjusted life years and reduced healthcare costs<sup>4</sup>

The planting of urban ngahere (forests) promotes human health and wellbeing through psychological benefits<sup>5</sup> and enhances human appreciation for nature<sup>6</sup>. Urban forests also enhance

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Salmond, J. A., Tadaki, M., Vardoulakis, S., Arbuthnott, K., Coutts, A., Demuzere, M., & Wheeler, B. W. (2016). Health and climate related ecosystem services provided by street trees in the urban environment. *Environmental Health*, 15(1), 95-111. This is a good scientific review on the ecosystem services provided by urban trees.

<sup>5</sup>Hartig, T. (2004). Restorative environments. In C. Spielberger (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of applied psychology* (Vol. 3) (pp. 273–278). San Diego: Elsevier/Academic Press.

<sup>6</sup> Carrus, G., Scopelliti, M., Laforteza, R., Colangelo, G., Ferrini, F., Salbitano, F., ... & Sanesi, G. (2015). Go greener, feel better? The positive effects of biodiversity on the well-being of individuals visiting urban and peri-urban green areas. *Landscape and urban planning*, 134, 221-228.

local biodiversity and provide ecosystems for native wildlife. About one third of all New Zealanders live in Auckland and local access to nature often occurs in parks, so restoration of urban forests would confer benefits to a sizable population. Urban food forests can provide access to fruits and vegetables, which engenders a sense of community among citizens<sup>7</sup>. They benefit food sovereignty and provide a place to gather healthy food.

Further health benefits of Auckland's Council's plan of planting 14,800 native trees and 4000+ plants/trees for tiny forests are seen through the purification of the air by removing particulate matter pollution and reducing the risk of asthma, heart attacks, and stroke<sup>8</sup>.

Through improving the health of communities, CATR will improve the quality of life of Aucklanders whilst reducing the cost and burden to healthcare.

### **OraTaiao suggests the Council be specific and do more around planning and utilisation of the fund:**

The use of CATR must be well planned and evaluated to ensure it works and targets current inequities in deprivation and health. Thus the cost of public transport needs to be affordable for people living in low deprivation neighbourhoods, else it will fail to be utilised in these areas and potentially lead to increased gaps in deprivation. Routes also need to be direct and where people are wanting and needing to go for work and school, and essential and nonessential travel to ensure the uptake of public and active transport over personal vehicle use.

Public transport networks must be accessible and safe for elderly and disabled populations who rely on public transport for their autonomy and independence to mobilise around the city. This requires the network to be usable for these populations including for transport stops to be well located within these communities with good lighting and safety for on- and off-boarding. There needs to be ramps and infrastructure to allow people boarding and off-boarding buses and trains to do so safely and separated from cycle lanes<sup>9</sup>.

For the public and active transport routes to be well interconnected, buses and trains should have space to carry bikes for complete route planning of individuals to be able to get where they need to go. This will reduce the need for car park spacing near public transport stops and support active

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<sup>7</sup> Riolo, F. (2019). The social and environmental value of public urban food forests: The case study of the Picasso Food Forest in Parma, Italy. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 45, 126225.

<sup>8</sup> For an article on the benefits of trees in cities see:  
<https://www.c40.org/news/planting-healthy-air-a-natural-solution-to-address-pollution-and-heat-in-cities/>  
Planting Healthy Air is a comprehensive report on the benefits of trees in cities:  
[https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/20160825\\_PHA\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/20160825_PHA_Report_Final.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Raifman, M., Lambert K. F., Levy, J. I., & Kinney. P. L. (2021). Mortality Implications Of Increased Active Mobility for a Proposed Regional Transportation Emission Cap-and-Invest Program. *Journal of Urban Health*, 98(3), 315-327. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-020-00510-1>

mobility. Additionally, having safe bike lock ups across the city at popular locations will further support and empower people to cycle.

The active network needs to have separated walking and cycling paths that are physically separated from motorised traffic to prevent traffic accidents (cyclist vs pedestrian and cyclist vs vehicle) and increase perceived safety of these networks, thus supporting uptake. Separated paths are particularly important at junctions/intersections which can be difficult for cyclists and walkers to manoeuvre. When a city implements an active transport policy it becomes a safer place for pedestrians and cyclists<sup>10</sup>. An example of a separated path is along Auckland's Tamaki Drive that has concrete mounds separating cyclists from road traffic and an independent footpath. Where this route fails, is it being only a partial stretch of a long road that has walkers and cyclists sharing a path for the majority of the route.

Significant scope exists for further measures to support climate action in the rest of the budget (e.g. transport cap ex is 4.2 billion over 3 years). **This fund must not be looked on as the only source of funding for climate action**

## Summary

In summary, OraTaiao supports the implementation of CATR for the use of reducing Auckland's emissions through improving the public and active transport networks and planting of urban ngahere. OraTaiao does stress to the council that the fund be well planned and evaluated on implementation to ensure it is well spent across the Auckland region to ensure areas of low deprivation are not further increased and that it will be usable by Auckland residents.

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<sup>10</sup> From the Barcelona experience: Pérez, K., Olabarria, M., Rojas-Rueda, D., Santamariña-Rubio, E., Borrell, C., & Nieuwenhuijsen, M. (2017). The health and economic benefits of active transport policies in Barcelona. *Journal of Transport & Health*, 4, 316-324.

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