



10 April 2023

Onemana Residents and Community Association Response to Thames Coromandel District Council Draft Annual Plan 2023/2024

The Onemana Residents and Community Association (ORCA) makes its submission on behalf of its membership, this comprising of 120 residents or property owners. The membership is drawn from the approximately 380 ratepayers forming the Onemana community.

ORCA was formed in 2019 after the Onemana Ratepayers Association sought to increase and widen its community connection beyond just ratepayers. The success of this is clearly demonstrated in the membership numbers along with the initiatives, works, projects and events now driven by ORCA.

These include the development of the Onemana Community Plan, the implementation of the Onemana Community Emergency Response Plan, activities caring for and supporting the natural environment, coast care and community health and wellbeing.

ORCA is the key link with Thames Coromandel District Council.

Submissions previously made to Council include aspects encompassing foreshore management, freedom camping, water and wastewater standards, dog control and policing, village signage and road safety. ORCA continues to support the Onemana Surf Life Saving Club, the Onemana Pool and Spa Complex and the Onemana/Opotuere Volunteer Fire Service.

ORCA is a registered Incorporated Society.

ORCA is the appropriate community representative entity to make submissions and comment on the Thames Coromandel District Council Draft Annual Plan 2023/2024.

Executive Summary

ORCA makes the following key points in its submission

- There is an acceptance that rates must increase, but not to the levels indicated in the draft plan. Council must be prudent, austere and open when determining the proposed increase – we question this.
- Understanding the reason for the increase cannot be determined by ORCA due to the lack of detail provided in the annual plan.
- Determining Capital Expenditure is unintelligible as the information provided is incomplete – an example being how can Council have a plan where the top two events which will significantly impact work – being Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle, are not costed in the plan.
- Rubbish – ORCA accepts change is necessary to waste collection and disposal but believes what is proposed is neither efficient nor cost effective. It is believed the changes are being implemented under urgency rather than good management.
- ORCA is of the opinion Council's draft annual plan does not demonstrate the leadership and prudence required to move the wider region out of the storm impacted crisis and through challenging economic forecasts.

Reasoning

The association makes five key points to Council to assist in its deliberations around the Annual Plan 2023/2024. All five aspects include the planning process, information available, and the cost impact of that.

In its plan Council has project commitments along with commitments for staffing, contractors etc – ORCA is submitting under business and economic prudence, austerity and being open, Council must relook at all its proposed works, costings and reconsider its budget forecast to achieve the 7.7 percent as detailed in the Long-Term Plan.

In simple ORCA is stating that Council cannot expect to pass on the level of increases proposed – not just for the Onemana area and south-eastern ward, but for the entire district. Council must realign its priority schedule and associated costings.

With the current draft plan, when evaluating the proposed increases, ORCA could not find the detail available to support those increases. Council must provide this information with Councillors demonstrating their awareness of how this has been achieved.

ORCA has attended meetings and seen correspondence whereby councillors have requested clarification from staff, this since the draft plan was approved. If councillors do not have an understanding, how can organisations such as ORCA and ratepayers be expected to provide informed judgements.

Council describes the annual plan as rebuild and recovery. ORCA's concern is that there is only \$2.2 million in the budget for recovery work – which is outside of the recovery from Cyclones Gabrielle and Hale. ORCA accepts that government funding has been requested, and some commitments made, but we are being asked to consider a plan and budget where the recovery aspect is incomplete.

ORCA's position on rubbish and solid waste is that Council is attempting to implement a system which has not been thought through in detail, some of which will have negative impacts rather than being positive. An observation of the process, Council agreed and signed a new 10-year waste contract and only after that was signed, did council request feedback from residents on proposed future collection options.

And now in the draft plan, residents are being asked to again consider the collection processes. ORCA submits that it does not support several aspects of the proposed waste collection which is having a significant impact on the proposed new rate. ORCA is adamant that the PAYT pre-paid tag purchasing will firstly slow the collection process as tags are checked, people will put out bins without the necessary tag, and thirdly as has been displayed elsewhere, people who do not have a PAYT tag will simply drop their rubbish in neighbours' bins – particularly holiday makers.

ORCA does not support the food waste collection option. ORCA questions the viability of this service district-wide, and the subsequent cost impact on ratepayers. ORCA has concerns that the collection timings will have, holiday homeowner food waste left outside properties, like having blue bags sit on footpaths for days until collected. ORCA has discussed on-property compost solutions as a replacement option, therefore where requested, food waste bins should be replaced with compost bins.

With the options 1, 2 or 3 under the plan, ORCA supports a middle of the road approach in Option 2.

As to works in respect to the Onemana community, crucial aspects are the water quality upgrade, cleaning of ponds behind the commercial area along with stormwater drains, and appropriate mowing of the parks and recreational zones.

We are fortunate like many areas on the Coromandel Peninsula, our residents continue to assist with general beautification; the care of our environment including birdlife; foreshore care; community awareness and support in caring for our fellow residents – all valuable in providing cohesive communities.

The provision of council's core services contributes to this – water, roading, sewage, recreational environment and civil defence. Added to this is a secure electricity supply and communications – not direct council responsibilities but a significant aligned interest.

Conclusion

ORCA does not believe the plan demonstrates critical aspects the likes of which will be required to keep rates to an acceptable level, or the initiative and forward thinking required to meet the challenges of the recent weather events, and the economic challenges ahead.

Significant more work is recommended on the plan before our community will accept Council's final recommendation. Examples being:

- Provision of fully costed and detailed budgets that are presented against previous years actual spend – not just annual plan budgets
- Explanation on why recovery costs for the main events have not been included beyond the \$2.2 million to date
- Provision of a detailed breakdown of the \$40 million recovery costs that is mentioned by Council in the draft plan
- A detailed breakdown on what the additional revenue will cover including the difference between the LTP and the proposed spend

Such information is required to achieve a rating contribution acceptable to residents and the promised new inclusive forward direction needed to meet existing and future challenges.

Ruhi Pene

Chairman – Onemana Residents and Community Association Inc

