Waimairi Ward

Community Profile

September 2026

Burnside Park

Christchurch City Council

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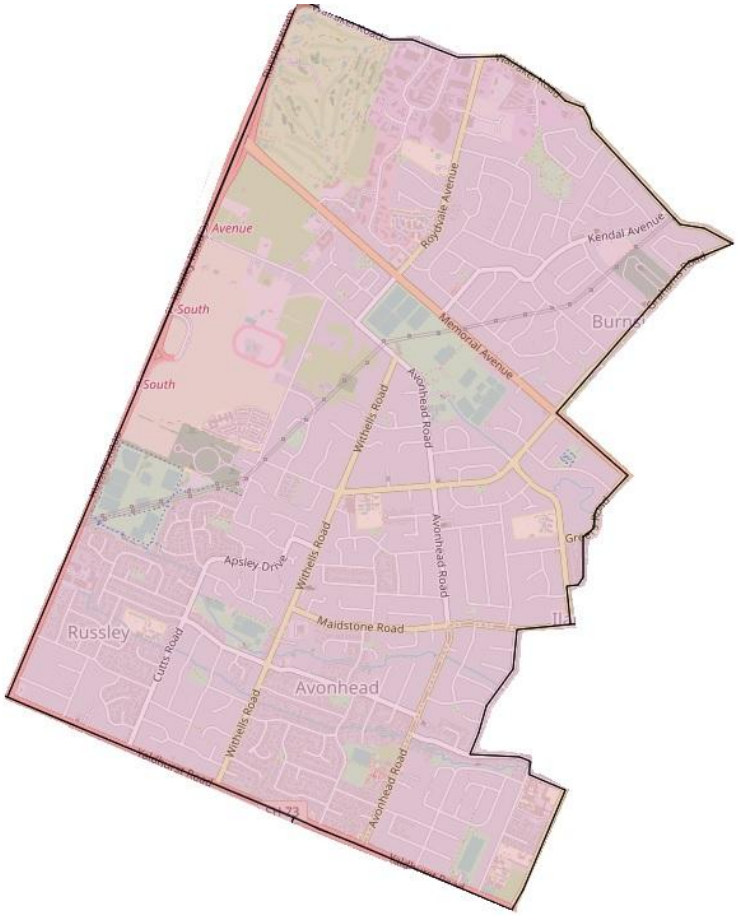
Picnic area at Nepal Reserve in Burnside

Profiles compiled by the Community Support and Partnerships Unit, Christchurch City Council

***New Zealand Index of Deprivation (NZDep)**

The NZDep is an area-based measure of socioeconomic deprivation in Aotearoa New Zealand created by Otago University. It measures the level of deprivation for people in each small area. It is based on nine Census variables. To read more about the variables used and view maps in more detail, visit http://www.ehinz.ac.nz/indicators/population-vulnerability/socioeconomic-deprivation-profile/

Ward Area Overview



The Waimairi Ward includes the suburbs of Russley, Avonhead, Burnside and a significant portion of Ilam.

Being on the outskirts of the city, it is surrounded by main routes in and around Christchurch, with access to the main roads south and north, and to the West Coast. It also has quick access to the Christchurch Airport. The area is home to several large sport and recreational parks including Avonhead Park, Crosbie Park, Burnside Park, Upper Riccarton Domain and the Russley Golf Club.

The area has eight schools, including five primary schools, one secondary school, a charter school, and a specialist education school. It is home to Avonhead Shopping Centre and is conveniently located near two of Christchurch's largest malls, Westfield Riccarton and The Hub Hornby.

View of the mountains from Russley Golf course

Facts and Figures

Waimairi Ward 2023 Census

23,997
Population

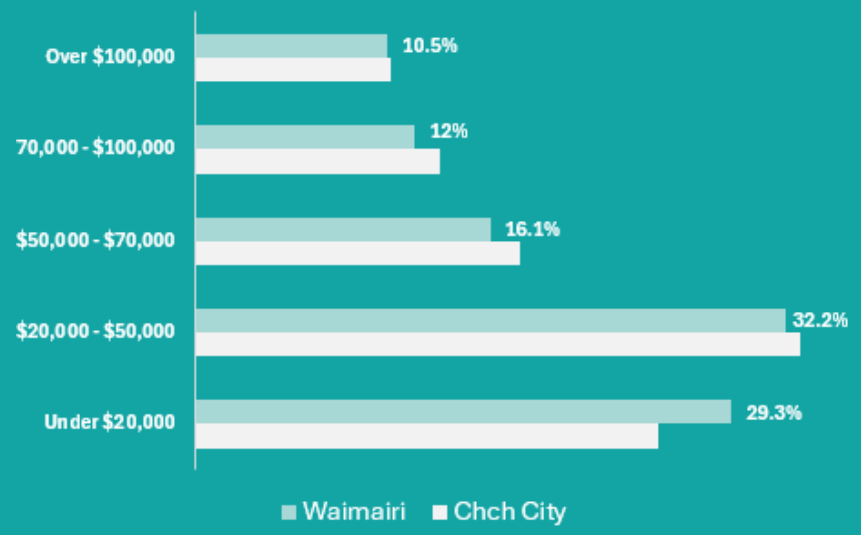
37.8
Median Age

8,559
Dwellings

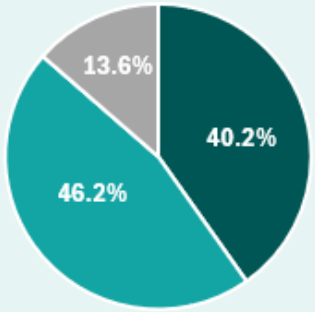
Cultural Diversity

66.2% European
6.9% Māori
3.4% Pacific Peoples
29.1% Asian
1.8% MELAA

$ Personal Income



Family Type



- Couple without Children
- Couple with Child(ren)
- One Parent with Child(ren)

Businesses

Approximately
2,469 businesses
employing
10,662 people
(Feb 2024)

Community Infrastructure

Although the Waimairi Ward doesn't have a Council library, there is a strong social infrastructure in the area thanks to the faith-based organisations. These groups collaborate well with each other and offer complementary programmes.

There are also many smaller interest groups and sports clubs, with a concentration in the Avonhead and Burnside areas which have two large parks.

Overall, there are around 70 community connection places with churches, sports clubs, and community facilities in the area. The eight schools and large parks with sports clubs on-site provide numerous facilities available for community use.

The only Council-owned community facility in the ward is located at Avice Hill Reserve on Memorial Avenue. This facility offers a lovely setting for the Avice Hill Arts and Craft Centre. The building was gifted to the Council for community use, with a focus on supporting arts and crafts groups.

3 Community development/support organisations

43 Sport/recreation groups

6 Faith-based organisations

8 Schools

20 Community-owned facilities

1 Council-owned facility

1 Residents' Association

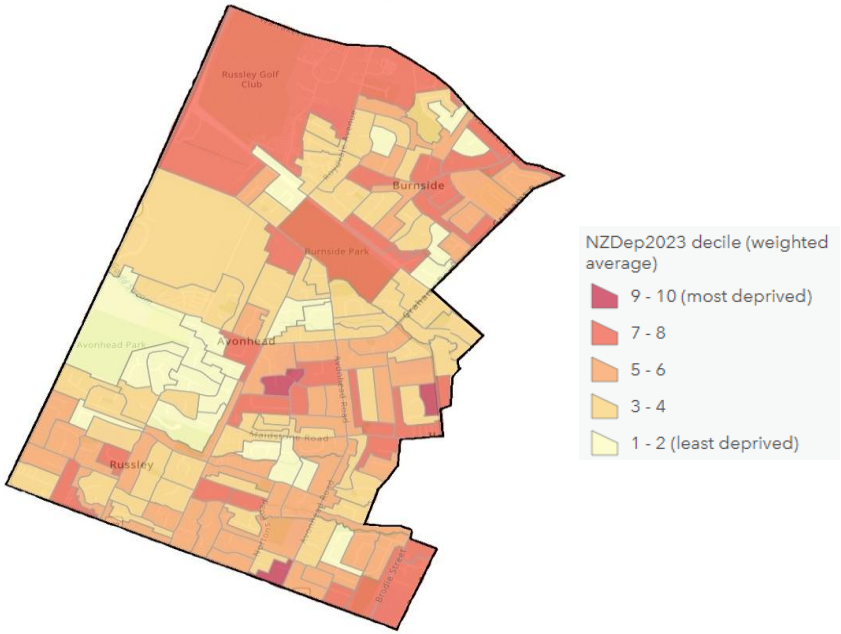
Facilities and Amenities

- 1 Council owned community facility: Avice Hill Arts and Craft Centre
- 1 shopping centre: Avonhead Mall
- 8 schools: 5 primary, 1 secondary (providing Year 7-13 education), a charter school, and a special education school
- 2 Council-owned cemeteries: Avonhead Park and Waimairi

Avice Hill Arts & Craft Centre

Avonhead Mall

Socio-economic Deprivation Index



The scale of deprivation ranges from 1 to 10:

- 1 represents the areas with the least deprived scores.
- 10 represents the areas with the most deprived scores.

Relative to the rest of Christchurch City, Waimairi Ward residents were living in less deprived areas overall.

In Waimairi ward, around 2 per cent of the population lived in the 'most deprived' areas (i.e. deciles 9 and 10), compared with 16 per cent of all of Christchurch City's population.

Around 13 per cent of this ward's population lived in the 'least deprived' areas (i.e. deciles 1 and 2), compared with 22 per cent of all of Christchurch City's population.

The median personal income in Waimairi Ward is $36,600, slightly lower than Christchurch's median of $40,400. A notable 16.9 per cent of residents earn $10,000 or less, while only 12 per cent earn over $100,000, reflecting a diverse income distribution.

Employment rates are slightly below city averages, with 45.7 per cent of residents working full-time (50.1 per cent citywide) and 15.7 per cent in part-time roles (14.5 per cent citywide). The unemployment rate is 2.4 per cent, slightly lower than Christchurch's 2.7 per cent. However, 36.2 per cent of residents are not in the labour force, likely due to a higher proportion of retirees and students.

Home ownership is high at 70.7 per cent (compared to 64.8 per cent citywide), with fewer rental households. Rental costs are above the city average, with more tenants paying $500+ per week and fewer low-cost rentals available.

Median house prices vary: Ilam ($987,500) is the most expensive, followed by Burnside ($862,750) and Avonhead ($818,500), while Russley ($721,000) offers more affordability. This aligns with the ward's high ownership rates and strong property values.

There are 18 social housing units managed by the Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust and 74 Kāinga Ora owned properties.

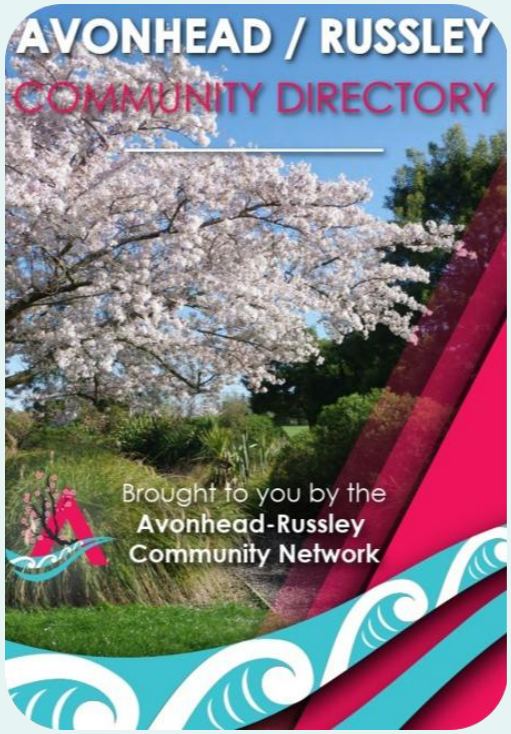
Strengthening Communities Together Strategy

This section of the Community Profile provides a narrative of the ward in relation to the four Pillars of the strategy. You can view the full strategy document on the Council's website by clicking here.

Te Pou Tua Tahi: Te Tāngata

Pillar 1: People

The city actively promotes a culture of equity by valuing diversity and fostering inclusion across communities and generations.



The Waimairi Ward offers many desirable features, including quality schools, green spaces, recreational opportunities, and easy access to the city centre. The community thrives with active participation in local organisations, sports clubs, and recreational groups. Churches and social services play a key role, providing programmes for children, youth, and older adults, while working collaboratively to meet community needs.

Home to diverse cultures and neighbourhood identities, the ward supports grassroots initiatives that focus on inclusion and wellbeing. Groups like Burnside Elim Church and St Mark's Church build connections through outreach, youth programmes, and support services. A bilingual safety video—created with the community, Council, Civil Defence, and emergency services—is a strong example of cross-sector collaboration that supports Mandarin-speaking residents and newcomers, while enhancing community safety.

The Burnside Bryndwr Community Network (BBCN), launched in 2023, fosters a connected and welcoming community through collaboration, shared learning, and local well-being initiatives. A City Mission Community Development Worker was also established in response to local needs identified through the BBCN.

Community directories are another key initiative. Led by local groups and supported by the Council, the Burnside Community Directory (2024) reached 3,500 homes, and the Avonhead and Russley Community Directory was distributed in 2025 to nearly 7,000 residents. These resources have been well-received, helping residents discover new activities and feel more connected to their neighbourhood. Local groups have reported increased interest and participation. Hard copies have been especially valuable for older adults, and the bilingual safety video has supported Mandarin speakers by building confidence and increasing access to key safety information.

Volunteerism remains strong across the ward. A standout example is the Bishopdale Menzshed, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2024. Based at the former Kendal School in Burnside, the Menzshed plays a vital role in fostering social connection, sharing skills, and supporting the community.

Council funding supports local groups through grants and the Better-Off Fund, which has contributed to a new community worker, facility upgrades, and improved shared spaces. Regular liaison meetings and huis further strengthen community collaboration.

Te Pou Tua Rua: Te Whenua

Pillar 2: Place

We support and help build connections between communities and their places and spaces to foster a sense of local identity, shared experience and stewardship.

Local school students at Crosbie Park planting day

Waimairi is a well-established and connected ward, offering a variety of community facilities, parks, reserves, and suburban centres. It is home to a diverse mix of residents, including long-time locals and new arrivals from various cultural backgrounds. Key community anchors such as local churches, schools, and sports clubs help foster a sense of belonging, while valued green spaces like Burnside Park, Avonhead Park, and Crosbie Park provide spaces for connection and recreation.

Groups across the ward actively contribute to placemaking. At Crosbie Park, the Friends of Crosbie Park is a volunteer group enhancing the park and nearby Ilam Stream by planting over 500 native plants, clearing weeds, and improving the park's biodiversity. This effort has fostered a greater sense of community connection, with participants ranging from retirees to young families. The group's work has transformed the park into a welcoming space for both residents and wildlife.

Similarly, the Friends of Corfe Reserve work tirelessly to enhance its biodiversity. The Ōtākaro/Avon River runs through the reserve, home to monarch butterflies and diverse native plants. The group has been removing pest weeds and planting native species, transforming the area into a thriving community space.

At Nepal Reserve, local residents were actively involved in deciding how to enhance the space. As a result, large sun umbrellas, a picnic table, and new surfacing were installed, making the reserve more inviting and accessible. These improvements, funded by the Better Off Fund, are a significant step forward in creating a welcoming space for the community. The next stage of native forest planting is planned for September 2026.

The bilingual safety video project fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging for Mandarin-speaking residents. Developed through community collaboration, it provides important safety information, helping new and changing communities feel more confident and integrated. This project reflects community activation and kaitiakitanga of public spaces, strengthening ties and encouraging shared responsibility for well-being.

Te Pou Tua Toru: Te Mahi

Pillar 3: Participation

Residents and groups in the wider community are socially and actively engaged and able to initiate and influence decisions affecting their lives.

Students from Roydvale School speaking to the Community Board regarding the tree planting plan for Juniper Reserve

Waimairi Ward is home to a variety of formal and informal groups that allow residents to engage with their neighbourhoods and local issues. While traditional residents' associations are less common in this ward, the Avonhead Community Group plays a role in the area. Additionally, the Ilam & Upper Riccarton Residents Association (IURRA), which covers parts of the Waimairi Ward, is being revived by a group of residents working with Council staff. The association aims to address issues such as noise, car parking, and student housing, and to represent the community. Other informal groups, like Friends of Crosbie Park and Friends of Corfe Reserve, show how residents are coming together to care for their environment and contribute to Council decision-making.

In April 2024, the Nepal Reserve Community Meeting gave residents the chance to shape the future of their local reserve. Discussions covered tree planting, infrastructure improvements, and community amenities.

As a result, sun umbrellas, a picnic table, and adjusted planting plans were implemented based on feedback. This collaborative approach shows how community input directly shapes local development.

In August 2024, Year 5/6 reporters from Roydvale School presented a deputation to the Fendalton-Waimairi-Harewood Community Board regarding the Juniper Reserve tree planting plan.

They also published an article and participated in a site visit with Council staff to discuss plantings, showcasing the involvement of local youth in environmental initiatives.

Volunteering data indicates that while Waimairi residents remain engaged in voluntary activities, participation has decreased in recent years. The percentage of people volunteering dropped from 15.9 per cent in 2013 to 12.8 per cent in 2023. While this remains slightly above the citywide rate of 12.3 per cent in 2023 (down from 13.9 per cent in 2013), the trend reflects an ageing volunteer base and fewer younger individuals stepping in to replace older volunteers. Contributing factors include busier lifestyles, economic pressures, and the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This shift in volunteer behaviour highlights the need for flexible, short-term, or online opportunities, which may better suit the current community landscape. Despite these challenges, the Council continues to support and encourage local groups to build capacity and sustain volunteerism in new ways, ensuring continued community involvement.

Te Pou Tua Rua: Te Whenua

Pillar 4: Preparedness

People feel safe in their communities and neighbourhoods and work together to understand, adapt and thrive in the context of change and disruption.

Climate Change Resilience

Climate change is the biggest challenge of our time. It is already affecting our weather, health and wellbeing, natural environment, taonga species, mahinga kai, food production, biosecurity, infrastructure, and the economy.

The Christchurch City Council is responding to climate change in Ōtautahi Christchurch by working towards targets for reducing emissions, and by helping our communities prepare for and adapt to our changing climate. Key risks identified include hot weather and drought, strong winds, wildfires, heavy rain and flooding, and rising sea level, coastal and ocean changes.

Inland communities of Christchurch face key risks from increasing temperatures, drought, and more intense rainfall, which threaten terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, while flash flooding from extreme rainfall and river flooding impacts built assets and infrastructure.

Preliminary conversations, initiated by St Christopher's Church in Avonhead, have taken place with Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) to explore the church's potential role as a Community Emergency Hub. While no formal plans are yet in place, these discussions reflect growing local interest in strengthening emergency response capacity in the Waimairi ward.

Local Community Governance staff organised a Community Organisations Emergency Response Hui in May 2025. This hui helped local groups to understand their potential roles during an emergency and covered:

- The range of ways organisations can contribute
- A real-life example of community readiness (BERP)
- The role of a Community Hub
- How to begin developing a Community Response Plan

This event supported shared understanding and paved the way for future partnerships and preparedness initiatives across the ward.

The Nepal Reserve Development Project, part of the Council's Urban Tree Planting Programme, addresses local fire risks and underutilised green space while modelling community-led resilience. Sparked in 2023 by a local FENZ employee who played a key role in generating early community and Community Board interest, the project was then led by Council staff in collaboration with residents.

Community feedback gathered through multiple engagement opportunities helped shape the development of the reserve. As a result, the project includes drought-tolerant native planting, improved shade areas, and fire safety features. These enhancements support urban cooling, stormwater absorption, and reduced environmental risks, while also fostering wellbeing and social connection.

Another example is the Juniper Place Reserve initiative, part of the wider Urban Forest Plan. Initially focused on increasing tree cover by 54 per cent, the project evolved into a collaboration with Roydvale School students. Through meetings, site visits, and a deputation to the Community Board, students influenced planting choices - promoting native species that support biodiversity, shade, and climate resilience. This also encouraged youth involvement in environmental stewardship and civic engagement.

Te Pou Tua Rua: Te Whenua

Pillar 4: Preparedness cont...

The Safety Without Barriers project, initiated by Christchurch Community Church, improves safety and preparedness for Mandarin-speaking residents - many of whom live in the Waimairi Ward. In collaboration with the Council, CDEM, NZ Police, FENZ, St John, and Joint Media, the bilingual videos cover emergency procedures, crime prevention, and key laws. A second Civil Defence video was created to enhance understanding of emergencies.

Widely shared via WeChat, Facebook, supermarkets, and universities, the videos have empowered residents, built trust, and strengthened local resilience.

As one WeChat user wrote: *"Christchurch is my second hometown. Thank you for providing such high-quality, specific safety guidance for residents and visitors."*

You can view the video by clicking here.

"This project has built trust and fostered inclusivity within our community, empowering Mandarin-speaking residents with the knowledge and confidence to thrive in Christchurch."

Eliesha Tay, Christchurch Community Church

Key Community Issues

Issue	Actions being taken
Traffic and parking problems caused by development of Dakota Park and Airport Business Park, including speeding, poor visibility, high-density on-street parking, and safety concerns for school children crossing roads.	Following concerns raised in the 2021 Avonhead/Russley safety survey, the Community Board's 2023-25 Plan prioritises traffic safety improvements in the area. The Board has requested investigations into potential solutions, including lowering speed limits, introducing traffic calming measures (e.g. speed humps, road narrowing), and installing visibility mirrors. Progress will be measured by the implementation of safety initiatives.
Airport Noise and Air Pollution	Residents have raised concerns about noise and air pollution from Christchurch Airport. In response, a committee was formed, and the Community Board appointed a representative to address arising issues. The committee continues to work on finding ways to reduce the impact of noise and air pollution on nearby residents.
Low Water Levels in Waimairi and Ilam Streams	The Network of Ilam Stream (NOTIS) has advocated for the restoration and enhancement of the Ilam Stream, aiming to "bring our stream back to life." Their efforts led to the project being included in the Council's 2021–2031 Long-Term Plan. Following this: • The Council commissioned a feasibility study recommending habitat and riparian improvements. • A project brief was developed to improve the stream and investigate options to augment its flow, in line with the Council's environmental goals. • Funding was allocated through the Annual Plan, and in 2024, planting work was carried out by contractors as part of this project. • These contractors have been engaged to maintain the planting for the next three years. • Council staff are now exploring ways to involve the community more actively in future stages of the stream's care and enhancement.

Issue	Actions being taken
Residents and local organisations have raised concerns about water quality at the headwaters of the Ōtākaro Avon River, particularly within Corfe Reserve, which became part of the Waimairi Ward in 2022.	The Drinkable Rivers Project, in partnership with the Ilam & Upper Riccarton Residents Association and Villa Maria College, is focusing on improving water quality in this area. Alongside this, the Friends of Corfe Reserve - a local volunteer group - are carrying out regular ecological restoration work. With support from the Community Partnership Ranger, they've removed pest weeds, planted native species, managed predator control, and monitored biodiversity. Their efforts are helping to improve the overall health and resilience of the reserve and the river's headwaters.
Social Isolation, Safety Concerns & Lack of Community Events in Burnside A 2022 social research survey in Burnside highlighted community concerns around social isolation, feelings of being unsafe, and a lack of accessible local events.	**2026** The first Kia Ora Burnside – Connect@Kendal event was held in 2026, providing an accessible opportunity for residents, families, and local organisations to connect. Planning is underway for the event to return in 2027. The Burnside and Bryndwr Community Voices engagement has been completed. More than 1,400 residents contributed, including 577 young people and 64 Mandarin-speaking residents. The findings highlighted the importance of welcoming newcomers, improving awareness of local activities and services, strengthening youth participation, and providing more inclusive and bilingual communication. A BBCN communications coordination pilot was also established in 2026. This supports the BBCN website and Facebook page, the monthly BBCN Connect e-newsletter, community group profiles, and a central community sign-up system. Findings from BBCN's youth survey identified that many Burnside High School students would like to become more involved in their community and take on leadership roles. BBCN is considering how pathways could be developed to support their contribution. Jellie Park has been closed since April 2026 while major maintenance, renewal and earthquake-strengthening work is undertaken. The outdoor pools, gym and group fitness facilities are planned to reopen in November 2026. Staff are also considering the safety of the surrounding green space. **2025** The Burnside Bryndwr Community Network (BBCN) was formed to build a stronger, more connected, and safer community. Key actions include: • **Inclusive Events** - such as Kia Ora Bryndwr and a planned Burnside celebration to foster connection and celebrate local culture.

Issue	Actions being taken

Social Isolation, Safety Concerns & Lack of Community Events in Burnside cont...	• **Communication & Awareness** - through the Bryndwr Banter, a refreshed Burnside Community Directory, and a new community website launching July 2025.
	• **Local Connections** - via annual hui and strong partnerships with churches, schools, community groups, and service providers across both suburbs.
	• **Understanding Community Needs** - in 2025, BBCN is running a wide-reaching engagement initiative, including:
	  ○ A survey reaching 3,500 homes in each suburb (print, digital, and translated versions available)
	  ○ Focus groups with youth, seniors, parents, students, and migrant communities
	  ○ Pop-up activities and informal conversations in parks, schools, and community spaces
	  ○ Insights will inform a 2025 Community Snapshot, and a follow-up survey is planned for 2026.
	• **Improving Public Spaces** - through planting days, clean-ups, and adding amenities like benches and shade in local reserves.
	• **Looking Ahead** - exploring formalisation options for the network and holding annual reviews to guide shared priorities into 2026 and beyond.
	The BBCN continues to grow as a grassroots collaborative, championing community-led responses to local challenges and supporting Burnside and Bryndwr to thrive.

Safety concerns for students at Westburn School, particularly regarding the busy Waimairi Road entrance and the Grahams Road/Waimairi Road roundabout.	In response to concerns raised by Westburn School, the Christchurch City Council trialled several safety measures at the Grahams Road/Waimairi Road roundabout starting in July 2023. These included temporary speed cushions, pedestrian safety rails, and cycle sharrows to improve safety for all users. Following the trial, the Waimāero Fendalton-Waimairi-Harewood Community Board approved the installation of permanent speed humps at the sites of the temporary cushions. These measures aim to enhance safety for students and pedestrians in the area.

Issue	Actions being taken
Increase in Social Housing & Support for New Residents With an increase in social housing in Burnside and Bryndwr, many new residents are moving into the area from other parts of the city and around New Zealand. Many of these individuals or families face challenges in adjusting to a new community without established connections or local support systems. This can contribute to a sense of isolation and lack of engagement, further impacting overall community wellbeing.	**2026** BBCN is using the Community Voices findings to improve communication, strengthen engagement with new and culturally diverse residents and create more accessible opportunities for connection. This includes maintaining relationships with Kāinga Ora, schools, churches and community organisations and supporting collaborative approaches to welcoming and connecting new residents. **2025** These efforts aim to reduce isolation, support integration, and create a welcoming community for all residents, including those in social housing. • **Inclusive Events:** BBCN hosts events like Kia Ora Bryndwr and the proposed Burnside event to foster connection and inclusion for new residents. • **Building Connections:** The Burnside Community Directory and annual hui help new residents access local services and support networks. • **Targeted Engagement:** A 2025 community survey will gather insights on how new residents engage, guiding future integration efforts. • **Local Partnerships:** BBCN collaborates with schools, churches, and community groups to provide support and resources to new residents. • **Ongoing Outreach:** Pop-up engagement in parks and public spaces offers informal ways for new residents to connect and build relationships.
Preparedness and climate resilience	An introductory Building Community Readiness for Emergencies session was held in August 2026 with organisations from Avonhead and Russley. The group is exploring ways to strengthen organisational emergency plans, provide community preparedness education and identify the venues, volunteers, resources, and communication channels that could support the community during an emergency. A strong El Niño is expected to influence New Zealand's weather through spring and summer 2026/27, including an increased likelihood of drier and windier conditions in eastern areas. The 2026 Be Ready for Climate Change booklet will be available electronically through the Community Board webpages, with hard copies distributed in selected areas.