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Tēnā koutou katoa

Submission to: Rotorua Lakes Council
Subject: Annual Plan Consultation 2023/24
From: Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand)

1. Creative New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to submit feedback on Rotorua Lakes Council's draft Annual Plan 2023/24.
2. We acknowledge the pressures faced by Council in navigating current challenges, including financial pressures and climate change risks. As a central government organisation, we are weathering our own financial pressures and constraints, and understand the need for sharpening strategic focus to effectively respond to dynamic times.
3. Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori are vital parts of the communities and identity of Rotorua. They make valuable contributions to the city's social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing by connecting people to place, shaping community identity, and building social cohesion. In Rotorua, ngā toi Māori uniquely underpins and enhances the city's reputation as a tourism destination and offers significant contributions to the city's economy, identity and creativity.
4. Council presents the draft Annual Plan as the action plan for achieving positive progress for Rotorua over the next year, through four key priorities of housing, community, economy and infrastructure. However, the Annual Plan's proposals fail to currently recognise the essential role arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori play in Council achieving these priorities and upholding its statutory obligations to promote wellbeing.
5. **We are concerned that Council has not adequately considered or understood the implications of its proposals to reduce funding for arts and culture, and urge Council to uphold the social, cultural and economic value of ngā toi Māori, and arts and culture, in Rotorua by maintaining investment in the draft Annual Plan 2023/24.**

6. We look forward to attending the public hearing to speak in support of our submission. If you wish to discuss any aspect of the submission in the meantime, please find contact details for the team at the end of this submission.

SUMMARY

7. We acknowledge Council is facing several key challenges in drafting its Annual Plan, including inflation, the ever-present impacts of climate change, and cost-of-living concerns, while balancing community needs with prudent fiscal management.
8. Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori are essential parts Rotorua communities and their wellbeing. Six in 10 residents of the wider Bay of Plenty region agree the arts contribute positively to the economy, and over half agree the arts improve society.¹ Ngā toi Māori, including heritage arts practices, make an especially important contribution to Rotorua as a distinct part of the city's identity, culture and economy.
9. Creative New Zealand **does not support** Council's proposals to reduce funding for culture and mahi toi, in particular pulling back on arts and creative communities funding by \$728,000 through:
 - reducing Council funding for the commissioning of new public artwork and focussing only on maintaining current pieces the district owns (\$600,000)
 - reducing capacity and resourcing in its facilities/venues for arts development, creative development, and supporting the volunteer network (\$128,000).
10. Our feedback covers the following **key points**.
 - Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori are a vital part of communities in Rotorua.
 - These proposed changes will have a long-term, negative impact on the arts and culture ecosystem in Rotorua, with direct widespread impacts on communities in Rotorua.
 - Ngā toi Māori and customary Māori arts practices have a significant presence in Rotorua, and will be disproportionately affected by Council's proposals.
 - Investment in ngā toi, arts and culture, and creativity is investment in the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of Rotorua, and will help Council achieve its priorities.
 - Rotorua Lakes Council has a crucial role in the city's arts and culture ecosystem.
11. Please find further detail to support these points **below**.

RESPONSE TO DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2023/2024

Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori are a vital part of communities in Rotorua

12. Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori make significant contributions to community resilience, wellbeing and social cohesion. Engagement with arts, culture and creativity positively enhances wellbeing, and means communities are more likely to have strong connections to community, land and place.²
13. Our *New Zealanders and the arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna toi 2020* research demonstrates that arts and culture make these contributions in the wider Bay of Plenty region, where:³

- 63 percent of the region’s residents say the arts help define who we are as New Zealanders, and 62 percent say they learn about different cultures through the arts
- arts and culture are especially important to **Asian New Zealanders and Māori residents of the wider Bay of Plenty**, with 78 percent of Asian New Zealanders and 64 percent of Māori in the region saying the arts are an important way of connecting with their culture
- **63 percent of Asian New Zealanders in the region say that the arts are important to their personal wellbeing** (significantly higher than the national average), and are more likely than average to say that arts are part of their everyday lives
- **64 percent of Māori** agree that ngā toi Māori is an important way of connecting with their culture and identity, and Māori are more likely than all New Zealanders to hold positive attitudes towards the arts.

14. Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori provide essential infrastructure for strong, prosperous, connected and healthy communities in Rotorua. This includes community hubs, whare taonga, museums, arts centres, festivals, art schools, whare wānanga, galleries, creative skill development workshops, education programmes, residencies, master classes, exhibitions, performances, makers’ spaces and internships, among many others.
15. As with other infrastructure such as transport and housing, arts and culture requires secure, stable investment from core funders, including Rotorua Lakes Council, to survive and service the city.

The proposed changes will have a long-term, negative impact on the arts and culture ecosystem in Rotorua, with direct widespread impacts on the communities and wellbeing of Rotorua

16. Despite the draft Annual Plan’s short-term focus, Council’s proposals to reduce operational spending will significantly disrupt arts and culture in Rotorua, with a direct impact on communities that does not justify the proposed rates reduction of 0.36 percent.
17. We note Council has an obligation to manage its finances in a way that promotes the current *and future* interests of the community, including cultural wellbeing, and the draft Annual Plan needs to protect the interests of communities in Rotorua to arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori.⁴
18. Council identifies the following implications of its proposals for arts and creative communities in its consultation document:
 - a loss of stakeholder and artist relationships
 - new arts commissions will require 100 percent external funding
 - a loss of capacity and resourcing will mean work-loads (eg, volunteer programme coordination and delivery) will need to be reallocated to other staff or the programmes may themselves need to be scaled back.
19. These implications are severe and will have an irreversible impact on communities in Rotorua – from the survival of arts organisations, collectives and groups, wage reductions and people leaving their professions, to people losing opportunities to develop skills and spaces to connect with their culture and identities.
20. As a result of the proposals to reduce capacity and resourcing, **Council will lose the ability to deliver Creative New Zealand-provided Creative Communities Scheme (CCS) funding to Council**. Since 1995, Creative New Zealand has provided funding to all city and district

councils to distribute in their area through CCS. The funding supports more than 1,800 projects every year and applications are made directly to councils. In 2021/22, Rotorua Lakes Council received \$58,500 from Creative New Zealand.

21. Creative New Zealand has a close relationship with the Volunteer and Creative Communities Scheme Lead role in the Council, which consistently delivers the scheme at a level that exceeds our expectations. This means that Rotorua District Council's delivery of CCS is among the most effective in the motu, in terms of diversity of projects, community reach and participation numbers. This is due to the experience and commitment of dedicated staff working closely to form lasting relationships with community groups over a long period of time.
22. The 2021/22 CCS funding for Rotorua supported 37 projects by and for the Rotorua community, including the Kupu Māori Writers' Festival, raranga workshops, the Matariki Festival, Art in the Park, Open Studio Project, the Latin American Fiesta, Rotorua Community and Family Fun Day, and the Holi festival. Delivering CCS not only directly supports local arts activity, but strengthens Council's connections with local communities.
23. These projects are highly visible in communities in Rotorua and enhance the city's reputation at a national level, including the Te Anga Pāua o Aotearoa Kapa Haka Festival.⁵ After COVID-19 put a hold on the national kapa haka festival taking place in person, IDEA Services contacted rōpū from across Aotearoa to share videos of their best performance to create a virtual festival. Through kapa haka, this festival uplifted the wellbeing of people with intellectual disabilities, and opened doors for many kiritaki to build stronger social relationships and contribute to their marae, hapū and iwi.
24. CCS funding also supported the Rotorua Accelerando Programme delivered by Youth Opera Aotearoa, which supports young high school performers to have intensive classical vocal and stagecraft training to develop musical careers. These students would not otherwise be able to afford or access these educational experiences. After one week of involvement in the project, they performed a passionate and empowering concert for whānau and supporters.⁶
25. Cultural infrastructure that has taken many years to build in Rotorua risks being lost from the proposed reductions in spending. The Council's ***Percent for the Arts Policy*** has been a significant success for revitalising public art in Rotorua, and fostering the city's sense of identity. We often discuss the model with other local authorities thinking about how they integrate the benefits of place-making and enhancing city spaces, making them more inviting and vibrant within their existing funding.
26. Since this policy was introduced in 2013, the built environment in Rotorua has come to life, and the realisation of several art initiatives and projects is bringing a sense of vibrancy, identity and optimism to the city. The transformation of Sulphur Lake, previously a neglected and unsafe area in the Government Gardens, now boasts a sculpture trail, with inviting and tranquil spaces, linking city attractions and showcasing the talent of local sculptors. Since 2013, Council's *Percent for the Arts Policy* has supported the development of murals, sculpture, performances and events in the central city, as well as in suburban shopping centres, parks and other facilities. Many of these projects have been created by Māori practitioners and supported opportunities for greater visibility and expression of ngā toi Māori in public spaces.

27. Arts, culture and ngā toi in Rotorua depend on a delicate funding ecosystem, with many interdependencies. We know that this ecosystem is fragile and still recovering from the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 that disproportionately impacted arts and cultural sectors. Creative practitioners and arts organisations are **currently under significant financial strain and operating with very limited resources**. Council maintaining its support for arts and cultural sectors is crucial for their resilience and to create sustainable careers. Creative New Zealand's recent *Profile of Creative Professionals 2022* research with Kantar Public found the median income for creative professionals is \$37,000, substantially less than the median income for those New Zealanders earning a wage or salary (\$61,000).
28. The spending cuts will also **disproportionately impact communities** who rely on Council funding of arts and culture experiences, including Māori (see further detail below), Asian New Zealanders (as noted above), Pacific peoples, the Rainbow community, and people with disabilities.
29. **We encourage Rotorua Lakes Council to undertake further analysis and research on how their proposals will impact arts and culture in Rotorua before it makes further decisions.** We are concerned that Council is not adequately taking into account, or understanding, the impact of the proposed spending cuts for the arts and culture ecosystem, and the people it supports and services.

Ngā toi Māori has a significant presence in Rotorua and will be disproportionately affected by Council's proposals

30. Council's spending cuts will **disproportionately impact Māori artists, practitioners and communities**, which rely on Council funding to share mātauranga, collaborate, create and present arts and cultural experiences with marae, whānau, hapū and iwi in Rotorua. As evidenced by the examples detailed above, this includes funding through the CCS and the Percent for Art Fund.
31. Ngā toi ā rohe (the arts of a particular region; iwi, hapū) plays a significant role in the protection, preservation and transmission of language, culture, mātauranga and ngā toi ā rohe, and expresses the mana motuhake and unique identity of the people of an area, such as in Rotorua. Ngā toi Māori has ritualistic, cultural, historical, communal and spiritual significance for Māori, and is deeply rooted in mātauranga Māori for the benefit of the community.
32. Given the significant interest of Māori in Council's arts and culture funding, **we encourage the Council to uphold its statutory obligations to provide opportunities for Māori to participate in its decision-making processes with the draft Annual Plan** and ensure decisions will reflect Council's work to recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi.⁷
33. Any decisions by Council on the future of arts and culture in the Annual Plan must not only consider the implications for ngā toi and the wellbeing of Māori communities, but also be directly informed by the experiences and perspectives of tangata whenua through adequate consultation and input.
34. **Ngā toi Māori is also widely embraced by wider communities in Rotorua.** Success in protecting, revitalising and promoting these artforms supports many artists, practitioners and tourism operators in the region, and positively enhances the reputation of Rotorua nationally and internationally. Council's proposals in the Annual Plan will adversely impact

the ability of residents and visitors to the city to engage and participate in arts, culture and ngā toi Māori unique to the region, by reducing the ability of practitioners to create and promote their work.

Investment in ngā toi, arts and culture, and creativity is investment in the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of Rotorua, and will help Council achieve its priorities

35. We note Council's statutory obligations to advance the cultural, social, economic and environmental wellbeing of Rotorua.⁸ Investment in arts and culture is investment in community wellbeing. We note that local government's role in providing services to communities that support wellbeing includes funding for arts and culture.⁹
36. Council identifies housing, community, economy and infrastructure as key priorities. Arts and cultural organisations are vital partners for Council to achieve these priorities by strengthening communities through connection, empowerment and placemaking, and to support Rotorua through the current challenges it faces by helping build healthy and strong communities.
37. Support for arts and culture also supports cultural, social, economic and environmental wellbeing. Creativity and culture create jobs, drive economic recovery and improve social wellbeing. They enhance the reputation of Rotorua as a destination to live, visit and invest in. Strong arts organisations and regular arts and culture experiences feed other parts of the creative ecosystem and the Rotorua economy, including education, health, trade and enterprise, hospitality, retail and tourism.
38. The economic wellbeing of Rotorua is further closely intertwined with arts, culture and ngā toi Māori, especially through its tourism industry. This close relationship is embodied by the New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute at Te Puia, where the Institute's statutory functions in the New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute Act 1963 include preserving, promoting and perpetuating Māori arts and crafts, alongside developing tourism attractions in the Rotorua district.
39. Visibility and exposure of ngā toi Māori for the wider public, including visitors to Rotorua, drives demand through more public art, touring work, lively events and festivals, and Māori content in galleries, museums and other public spaces. The Council's funding for arts and culture through the draft Annual Plan, including public art, is a crucial part of ensuring ngā toi is being produced, enjoyed and celebrated in Rotorua.
40. In its consultation document, Council notes that "our community continues to face uncertainty and challenges in an ever-changing environment. Challenges can be positive, acting as a catalyst for change and providing opportunities to do things differently...". Artists, arts organisations and creatives are uniquely positioned to help Council rise to these challenges and opportunities, as connectors, activators and innovators. Artistic, cultural and creative activity attracts economic investment, creates cohesive and connected communities, and can find innovative solutions to climate challenges, urban development, upgrading infrastructure, and placemaking.

Rotorua Lakes Council has a crucial role in the city's arts and culture ecosystem

41. Responsibility for supporting cultural wellbeing through funding arts and culture in Aotearoa New Zealand is shared between local and central government, with input from the private

sector. Many arts organisations and community centres in Rotorua receive core funding from Council, often in partnership with private funders.

42. Creative New Zealand recently held regional workshops about the future of arts development with arts and toi communities around the country. In Rotorua, we heard directly from local artists and arts leaders that they are seeking more autonomy and regional arts decisionmaking power through a local lens. Creative New Zealand are currently co-designing new approaches with communities to give them stronger decision-making roles in arts development activities by, for and with their communities, to meet specific and nuanced arts development needs more effectively.
43. Council's investment in arts and culture is vital for local arts development in Rotorua and creating a strong, autonomous and resilient local arts infrastructure. Without local government contributions, the city's arts and culture services risk being lost, as funding is not guaranteed from other sources.
44. Creative New Zealand itself is experiencing unprecedented demand for funding, and our own ability to support the sector is under strain. **We will not be in a position to fill gaps left by the withdrawal of Council's funding, or a reduction in its investment in arts and culture.**
45. Ongoing collaboration between central and local government, and shared investment, is vital for a resilient and supported arts and cultural sector in Rotorua. This collective approach relies on Council **maintaining its contributions and investment** and we strongly encourage Council to ensure retaining funding support for arts, culture and creativity remains a critical factor in its budget deliberations.

CREATIVE NEW ZEALAND'S INTEREST IN THE ARTS IN ROTORUA

46. Creative New Zealand is the national arts development agency of Aotearoa New Zealand, responsible for delivering government support for the arts. We're an autonomous Crown entity under the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 2014.
47. Our legislative purpose is to *encourage, promote, and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders*. We do this by *Investing in the arts, Developing the arts, Advocating for the arts, providing Leadership in the arts, and by Partnering for the arts*.
48. Creative New Zealand receives funding through Vote: Arts, Culture and Heritage and the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board Te Puna Tahua. In 2021/22, Creative New Zealand **invested \$74 million in the arts**. In 2021/22, we invested **\$1,274,237** of direct financial support in Rotorua.
49. Under the Creative Communities Scheme, we fund territorial authorities directly to support local arts activities. In 2021/22, we invested **\$58,500** with Rotorua Lakes Council and your creative community.

CONCLUSION

50. Rotorua Lakes Council's investment in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi is investment in the wellbeing and future of Rotorua. Arts and culture play a vital role in your city by creating connected healthy, strong and prosperous communities.

51. Retaining investment in arts and culture by Rotorua Lakes Council in this budget cycle presents an opportunity for Rotorua to not only navigate current challenges, but to grow and thrive.
52. We wish to acknowledge and celebrate here long-time Rotorua Councillor and strong advocate for ngā toi Māori, Trevor Maxwell. This year Trevor’s dedication to his mahi was honoured, being made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for his contributions to Māori, the arts, and local body mahi. He has been a councillor with the Rotorua Lakes District Council for 45 years and has made such a significant contribution to arts and culture in Rotorua and Aotearoa.
53. Please contact us if you have any questions or if you wish to discuss this submission further. The key contact people are:

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Ngā mihi maioha, nā



David Pannett
Acting Chief Executive—Tumu Whakarae