

29 June 2016

**Submission on the:** Founders Theatre: What Should We Do? Statement of Proposal

**Made to the:** Hamilton City Council

**From:** Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand)

1. Creative New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to consider and make submissions on Hamilton City Council's *Founders Theatre: What Should We Do? Statement of Proposal*.
2. Creative New Zealand doesn't wish to be heard in support of this submission.
3. The key contact person for matters relating to this submission:

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#### Overview

4. Creative New Zealand **strongly supports** the intention of a new theatre (option two) but we believe further options need to be developed and discussed to decide what form a new theatre should take.
5. The location of a new theatre will be a vital consideration. Evaluation and consultation will be needed to determine whether it is appropriate to build a new theatre on the existing site.
6. Serious consideration should be given to finding a new site that is better integrated into current retail, hospitality and other cultural activities in Hamilton City. It is our understanding that the existing location is currently quite isolated in this regard.
7. It is also important to consider community access to alternative facilities during the estimated five to six years it will take to open a new theatre. Many community groups in Hamilton relied on the Founders Theatre and it will be essential for Hamilton City Council, Creative Waikato and other stakeholders to ensure alternative venues are accessible and affordable.
8. Creative New Zealand is concerned that the information regarding patronage numbers and revenue for the Founders theatre since 2003/04 is underexplored. The report presented (Council Meeting – Agenda 31 March 2016, pg. 26) states *patronage has been declining over this period and reasons given for this are: the limitations resulting from aging infrastructure and the declining customer experience*. However no further information is given to justify this position. It will be vital that Council has the requisite evidence and can demonstrate a strong case that a 1250-seat theatre in Hamilton is sustainable and fit-for-purpose for the next 50 years.

9. We note that an “updated like-for-like” rebuild of the Founders Theatre risks carrying forward several of the issues that plagued the Founders Theatre. Therefore, we believe it is important that Council explores all the possible forms that a new theatre might take.
10. While it is likely that the cost of a new theatre will largely fall on Hamilton City Council, we do encourage Council to explore a mixture of funding sources. The government’s recently announced Regional Culture and Heritage Fund might be one possibility, alongside neighbouring councils and corporate sponsorship. The soon to be opened ASB Waterfront Theatre in Auckland is a prime example of successful fundraising through a mixture of private and public sources.
11. We note that Creative Waikato is assisting Council in eliciting feedback and submissions from the arts sector in the Waikato and we commend Council for this level of engagement. Considering the multi-faceted interaction a theatre of this scale will have with a variety of stakeholders, a broad range of input is an absolute requirement. We hope this level of consultation continues until the ground breaking.
12. Creative New Zealand looks forward to hearing from Council regarding the feedback from this consultation as well as on the next steps for this project. We are ready to continue the consultation process with Hamilton City Council through the multiple stages this project will take.

#### **Background on Creative New Zealand**

13. Creative New Zealand is New Zealand’s arts development agency, responsible for delivering government support for the arts. We are an autonomous Crown entity continued under the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 2014. We receive our funding through Vote: Arts, Culture and Heritage, and the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board. In 2014/15, we invested over \$41.5 million in the arts sector nationally.
14. Creative New Zealand’s Strategic Plan 2013–16, Te Mahere Rautaki 2013–16, identifies the four outcomes we are seeking to achieve on behalf of all New Zealanders:
  - New Zealanders participate in the arts
  - high-quality New Zealand art is developed
  - New Zealanders experience high-quality arts
  - New Zealand arts gain international success.
15. Creative New Zealand contributes to achieving these outcomes by delivering programmes in the following areas:
  - funding for artists, practitioners and organisations
  - capacity-building for artists, practitioners and organisations
  - advocacy for the arts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you wish to further discuss this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Pannett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Pannett  
**Senior Manager, Planning, Performance and Stakeholder Relations**