

27 March 2025

AK Have Your Say
Auckland Council Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau
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E te Kaunihera, tēnā koutou katoa

Submission to: Auckland Council Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau
Subject: Draft Annual Plan 2025/2026
From: Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand)

1. Creative New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to provide further feedback on Auckland Council's draft Annual Plan 2025/2026. Thank you for your time and questions at the recent Annual Plan 2025/2026 Regional Organisation / Interest Group session too.
2. We thank Council for its ongoing support of arts, ngā toi, culture and creativity in Tāmaki Makaurau, and commend Council's vision for the Annual Plan to create an Auckland that is beautiful, thriving and safe, for all Aucklanders.
3. As part of our advocacy programme, we work with decision-makers across the motu to show that supporting arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori is an essential part of thriving communities, a stronger economy, and a more connected and inclusive Aotearoa. We know that by working together, we can help 'grow the pie' for the arts and ngā toi in Tāmaki Makaurau.
4. Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori are vital parts of Auckland's communities. Aucklanders' participation in the arts is at its highest ever level, with two in three Aucklanders agreeing that arts and culture have a vital role to play in the future of where they live.¹
5. Council's secure and stable investment in cultural infrastructure, services and activities, throughout the Annual Plan, is crucial for a strong, vibrant and resilient creative ecosystem in Auckland.
6. We share your aspirations for Auckland and look forward to working with you to realise the potential of arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi in the region. Our collective approach will ensure the creative sector and ngā toi can deliver value to Auckland's communities.

¹ *New Zealanders and the arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna toi* (2023).



KEY POINTS

7. We acknowledge Council's financial pressures and the need for alternative funding to support destination management and major events activities, such as through a bed night visitor levy. However, **we do not support a reduction in economic and cultural development investment, and urge Council to maintain its funding for major events** until alternative funding is secured.
8. We encourage Council to ensure that **investment in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori is prioritised and visible throughout the Annual Plan's proposals**. This is because:
 - arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori are vital parts of local communities
 - investment in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi, is investment in prosperous, healthy and vibrant rohe and communities
 - te reo, mātauranga and ngā toi Māori, brought to life by tangata whenua and ringatoi, strengthen communities' sense of belonging, connection and are central to our unique national and regional identities
 - local councils play a crucial role in offering stable support for arts, cultural and creative activity and infrastructure that enable communities to thrive
 - arts, cultural and ngā toi Māori organisations, iwi and hapū can be valuable collaborators with Council to build strong relationships with communities, and create flourishing localities.
9. We strongly encourage Council to ensure **local boards prioritise investment in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori** for 2025/26 as essential infrastructure for Auckland's local communities.

RESPONSE TO ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26

10. Ongoing investment and support for arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi in the Annual Plan is vital to support strong, connected and healthy communities in Auckland, and to help the region to grow and prosper.
11. From our *New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi* research, we know that Aucklanders recognise the economic and social benefits of the arts and are engaging with the arts at levels higher than ever before.
12. Our research² demonstrates that:
 - two in three Aucklanders agree that arts and culture have a vital role to play in the future of where they live
 - over half of Aucklanders value the arts for creating opportunities to socialise and connect
 - 65 percent of Aucklanders agree the arts improve New Zealand society
 - Aucklanders' personal connection with the arts has strengthened, with 66 percent of Aucklanders agreeing that the arts are good for their mental health and wellbeing.

² Auckland residents survey findings in *New Zealanders and the arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna toi* (2023): <https://creativenz.govt.nz/-/media/project/creative-nz/creativenz/publicationsfiles/2024-nzers-and-the-arts/20240730nzartsaucklandfinal.pdf>

13. **Young people, Māori, Pacific peoples and Asian New Zealanders** are also more likely than other Auckland residents to agree that the arts are an important way of connecting with their culture, and taking part in the arts supports their identity. **Rainbow communities and people with lived experience of disability** also participate highly in the arts and need more accessible and inclusive environments to support their engagement.
14. Support for public funding of the arts in Auckland has increased since 2020, with the majority of Aucklanders agreeing that their local council should give money to support the arts.
15. We strongly encourage Council to ensure the Annual Plan is retaining the valuable contributions of the creative sector and ngā toi to Auckland and its communities. As with other infrastructure, such as transport and water, arts and culture require secure, stable investment from Council as a core funder to survive and service the region.

Funding destination management and major events

16. We acknowledge Council's support for economic and cultural development in Auckland. It's heartening to see recognition of the significant contributions made by arts, live performances, events and other cultural experiences to the region's economy in the AP.
17. We recognise Council's need for alternative funding for major events activities, and that visitor levys are increasingly being used to offset financial pressures on local councils globally. A visitor levy has significant potential for equitably supporting cultural infrastructure, arts and cultural activity, and placemaking in Auckland.
18. However, until alternative funding is secured, **we urge Council to maintain its funding and delivery of major events in the region** and reconsider the reduction of rates funding for investment in economic and cultural development.
19. In 2023, Tātaki Auckland Unlimited data showed that the creative economy in Auckland:
 - made up 6 percent of Auckland's economy and directly employed more than 59,500 people
 - generated \$8.8 billion in GDP and grew by 6.5% percent on average over the past five years, outpacing the rest of the Auckland economy.
20. Along with this, 76 percent of Aucklanders agree that Tātaki Auckland Unlimited Trust's programme, events and exhibitions enrich their lives.³
21. Strong arts organisations and regular arts and culture experiences also feed other parts of Auckland's economy, including education, health, trade and enterprise, hospitality, retail and tourism. Arts and cultural events supported by Council and Tātaki Auckland Unlimited's events portfolios – including Synthony, Aotearoa Arts Fair and the NZ International Comedy Festival – create jobs, drive economic growth, and deliver important cultural, economic and social benefits to Aucklanders.
22. If Council were to cease delivery of major events without a bed night visitor levy in place, Auckland's creative ecosystem would be negatively impacted in the long-term. Unstable or paused investment could lead to loss of vital arts and culture infrastructure; this costs more in the long run, as it's harder to rebuild than to maintain.

³ Tātaki Auckland Unlimited Trust, *Annual Report for year ended 30 June 2024* (p.7).

23. The current outlook for the creative sector is very difficult. We know from our research with the Auckland Arts Investors Forum that creative organisations in Auckland – from major companies to community programmes – are under significant financial strain and operating with very limited resources.⁴
24. Arts organisations rely on a mix of central and local government funding, box office and other support. They operate on thin margins with revenue streams under pressure, making them vulnerable to any changes in relationships with funders.
25. Creative New Zealand’s own ability to support the sector is currently under strain, and we will not be in a position to fill gaps left by any withdrawal of Auckland Council’s funding, or a reduction in its investment in arts and culture, through the Annual Plan. Private investments, including corporate sponsorship and private donations, are also down in the current economic climate.
26. Creative New Zealand’s *Profile of Creative Professionals* research found the median income for creative professionals is just \$37,000, substantially less than the median income for New Zealanders earning a wage or salary (\$61,000). Forty-four percent of creative professionals supplement their creative income with other work; the median income from creative pursuits alone is \$19,500 per year.
27. Despite these challenges, arts and cultural events uplift and connect your communities, and support the Annual Plan’s objective to ‘create a thriving economy that supports growth and opportunities for all’.
28. For example, the Auckland Writers Festival – in which Creative New Zealand is a co-investor – broke all attendance records last year, with 85,000 attendees from around New Zealand and around the world. It’s the biggest festival of its kind (per capita) in the Southern Hemisphere. The festival has economic benefits for the Auckland region and creative sector by offering employment, skills development opportunities, and partnerships. It also serves an important social function by connecting writers, economists, journalists and thinkers with the public, through talks, workshops and panel discussions.
29. A reduction in Council’s major events funding not only curtails the benefits of these programmes, events and exhibitions, but puts the survival of arts organisations, collectives and groups at risk. It would likely result in wage reductions, people leaving their professions and a deep loss of skills and expertise.
30. Auckland Council is a crucial investor in these arts and cultural events, and the organisations that deliver them. We would be happy to have further conversations with you on this.

Proposed activities and investment

31. We commend Council’s vision in the Annual Plan to create ‘a diverse and dynamic city which honours the place of Māori and includes a rich array of cultural and sporting events, museums, galleries and built heritage’.

⁴ ‘Mapping the Creative Sector Investment and Outcomes: Creative Sector Funding Case Study Insights’
Report for Tāmaki Makaurau Arts Investors Forum (August 2024):
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/66302a2be2c53361e9bd5ceb/t/671967338a5dab28e69483f8/1729718068609/Case+Study+Insights+Summary.pdf>

32. To achieve this vision, we strongly encourage Council to ensure arts and ngā toi are prioritised throughout the Annual Plan's proposals, projects and outcomes, to ensure its investment in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi is reaching across the wider creative ecosystem (artists, creatives, arts communities, ringatoi and arts organisations).
33. Arts, cultural and ngā toi Māori practitioners and organisations are **valuable and well-placed partners** for Council to achieve its broader priorities and vision, including delivery of the Annual Plan's **major projects in 2025/2026**, such as the upgrades to community facilities, urban regeneration, and the City Centre Programme.
34. As connectors and innovators, they are particularly skilled at providing effective and impactful ideas for Council's projects, and hold strong relationships with mana whenua, funders, government, non-profits, businesses and other community groups. Partnerships with Council can also build capacity into the creative ecosystem and make a significant contribution to creative workers' incomes.
35. For example, Touch Compass is a disability-led charitable trust that provides high quality performances, art activations, youth and community classes, workshops, and professional development. Their programmes help to strengthen the disability community, support artists to build connections, and provide people with disabilities positions of leadership. Strong and symbiotic relationships sit at the heart of their funding partnerships, including with Creative New Zealand where they have provided policy advisory support on our Accessibility Policy.
36. It is encouraging to see Council's intention to honour the place of Māori, which includes a **\$16 million investment to support Māori outcomes** and the Marae Infrastructure Programme.
37. Te reo, mātauranga Māori and ngā toi Māori are central to Auckland's unique central and regional identity, as the largest Māori city in the world. Success in protecting, revitalising and promoting Māori artforms supports many artists, practitioners and tourism operators in the region, and positively enhances Auckland's national and international reputation.
38. Councils have an important role in their funding and management of Māori cultural institutions, and we are heartened to see Council's commitment to supporting the Marae Infrastructure Programme. Dedicated funding and leadership of ngā toi Māori in Council would also support building cultural capability, and decision-makers should consider partnerships with iwi and hapū to build well-resourced, thriving and visible ngā toi Māori practice and Māori cultural institutions.
39. We encourage Council to ensure the Annual Plan recognises the importance of ngā toi in Auckland, as Council's support is a crucial part of ensuring ngā toi is being produced, enjoyed and celebrated.

Local board priorities

40. We strongly encourage Council to ensure local boards prioritise investment in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori as an area of importance for communities in 2025/2026.
41. Arts and cultural programmes and services support local board priorities, including employment for rangatahi, celebrating diverse communities, and Māori outcomes, among

many others. Our research also demonstrates that Aucklanders place considerable value on the arts at a community level.⁵

42. Community arts organisations rely on the support of local boards who support arts and culture programmes, events and public art; fund local arts, cultural groups and projects; and support local facilities.⁶
43. In Ōtara, Sistema Aotearoa is a highly-effective and unique youth development programme also supported by Creative New Zealand. The programme supports young people to access orchestral music opportunities. It has a strong community presence, with up to 95 percent engagement from Māori and Pacific participants.
44. Sistema relies on Auckland Council's community facilities as venues to bring people together. Funding through the Ōtara–Papatoetoe Local Board supports Sistema to rent office and programme delivery spaces at the Ōtara Music and Arts Centre. However, the programme is under pressure, with local board funding not currently CPI-adjusted to cover costs.
45. To ensure these programmes continue to serve crucial community functions, local boards' prioritisation of arts and culture services, activities and programmes in the coming year is essential.

CREATIVE NEW ZEALAND'S INTEREST IN THE ARTS IN AUCKLAND

46. Creative New Zealand receives funding through Vote: Arts, Culture and Heritage and the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board Te Puna Tahua. In 2023/24, Creative New Zealand **invested nearly \$79.4 million in the arts in New Zealand**. We've been investing in the arts in Tāmaki Makaurau for 60 years, since our inception in 1964.
47. In 2023/24, we invested \$22.4 million of direct financial support in Auckland, almost 30 percent of our total investment by region. In addition, our investment in activity that takes place nationwide (16 percent) and online (4 percent) sees benefits flow to Auckland by supporting arts and cultural experiences presented in the region; and our international programme (8.6 percent) adds additional investment to Auckland via artists based in the region. **Our funding continues to match significant population bases and investment in Auckland is proportional to the population** (2018 Census).
48. Our direct support for arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi in Auckland includes the following.
 - Funding for over **30 major Auckland-based arts organisations**, including orchestras, theatre companies, festivals, opera, craft/object and art galleries, dance companies, publishers and residencies through our multi-year Investment programmes (Toi Tōtara Haemata and Toi Uru Kahikatea) which provide three and six-year funding contracts. The total value of these contracts in 2025 is **\$11.36 million**. This investment equates to approximately 33 percent of total investment through these programmes.
 - Under the Creative Communities Scheme, we provide funding to territorial authorities to support local arts activities. The annual allocation to Auckland Council under the Scheme is **\$1.33 million**. In 2023/24, this funding supported approximately **221 projects** which

⁵ Auckland residents survey findings in *New Zealanders and the arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna toi* (2023): <https://creativenz.govt.nz/-/media/project/creative-nz/creativenz/publicationsfiles/2024-nzers-and-the-arts/20240730nzartsaucklandfinal.pdf>

⁶ *Toi Whītiki Arts and Culture Strategic Action Plan* (2016). Auckland City Council.

engaged 30,397 participants and had 411,034 attendances. Allocations to territorial authorities under Creative Scheme are based on a population-based formula.

- Project-based funding to Auckland-based artists, arts practitioners and arts organisations to support a range of activities. In 2023/24, this funding **totalled \$6.9 million** to support **136 projects**. This investment equates to approximately 26 percent of total investment through these programmes.

49. We also work strategically with key investors in the creative sector in Auckland, including Auckland Council, Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, Foundation North and Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi through the Auckland Arts Investors Forum, to coordinate our investment in Auckland-based arts.

FINAL COMMENTS

50. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on Council's Annual Plan. We understand there is pressure on Council's budget and acknowledge your commitment to investment in Auckland's creative sector.
51. Investment in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi throughout the Annual Plan will ensure Council can achieve its vision and priorities for Aucklanders. The creative sector plays a vital role in Auckland by creating connected, healthy and strong communities.
52. We were thrilled to visit Tāmaki Makaurau, this year and last, to co-host with the Arts Foundation, *All in for Arts—He waka toi e eke noa nei tātou*.⁷ We were excited to again work with the Auckland creative community and hear from locals, who talked about how arts and creativity impact their lives every day.
53. To quote Deputy Mayor Desley Simpson, "I believe that creativity is a necessity in addressing the complex challenges we face... Creativity is key to finding ways to protect our environment for future generations... Through music you can tell stories, pick up on emotions and unite communities. Art is the vibrant pulse of Auckland." We wholeheartedly agree.
54. Please contact us if you have any questions or if you wish to discuss this submission further. The key contact person is:

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Ngā mihi maioha, nā



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⁷ <https://www.thearts.co.nz/all-in-for-arts>