

27 August 2025

Governance and Administration Committee

Tēnā koutou katoa

**Submission to:** Governance and Administration Committee  
**Subject:** Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill  
**From:** Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand)

### Introduction

1. Creative New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill (the Bill).
2. Creative New Zealand **does not** wish to be heard in support of this submission.
3. The key contact person for matters relating to this submission is:

**Name:** Elizabeth Beale  
**Position:** Co-Manager, Policy & Performance  
**Email:** [elizabeth.beale@creativenz.govt.nz](mailto:elizabeth.beale@creativenz.govt.nz)

### Key points

4. Creative New Zealand has a strong interest in the Bill, recognising its potential to impact how local authorities choose to support arts and culture, with the possibility of a reduction in current levels of support.
5. Creative New Zealand submits that:
  - the requirement for local authorities to play a role in promoting the cultural well-being of their communities under the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act) should be retained, as it provides a clear legislative basis for local authorities to support arts and cultural infrastructure and services within their respective districts
  - if provisions relating to cultural well-being are removed, the responsibility of local authorities in the provision of arts and culture infrastructure and services should be included in the Bill's definition of core services.
6. In terms of the Bill, we recommend that:
  - the proposed new section 11A(1)(e) (*Core services to be considered in performing role*) set out in section 7 of the Bill be amended to include the text shown in **bold underline**:  
...(e) libraries, museums, reserves, and other **cultural and recreational facilities and services**.

## Further information

### *Removal of community well-being provisions*

7. Creative New Zealand believes the removal of all references to ‘cultural well-being’ by the Bill could be interpreted by local authorities as a mandate from central government to reduce their support for arts and culture infrastructure and services.
8. Creative New Zealand relies on local authorities' co-operation and co-investment to fulfil its legislative mandate of encouraging, promoting and supporting the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders.<sup>1</sup>
9. Co-investment is critical to the maintenance of key regional and locally based arts organisations across New Zealand. Most organisations Creative New Zealand funds rely on a combination of revenue from central government (*primarily* through Creative New Zealand), local authority support and other funding from community-based trusts and private sector support, alongside earned revenue such as ticket sales. A reduction in any of these sources will impact the viability of organisations and the services they can deliver to New Zealand communities. Other funders and stakeholders—such as trusts—often expect territorial authorities to invest first and will typically look for this commitment before making their own.
10. At the community level, Creative New Zealand has been working in partnership with the 67 territorial authorities (TAs) for 30 years to deliver the Creative Communities Scheme, which helps support local arts activities. Creative New Zealand provides funding to TAs, with councils administering the Scheme and making funding allocation decisions. The Scheme demonstrates the way central and local government work together to support arts and culture provision.
11. The inclusion of cultural well-being in the Act reinforces the complementary role of local authorities and central government in supporting arts and culture infrastructure and services. The legislation should allow for this co-operation to continue.
12. Any reduction in arts and culture services provided by local authorities is likely to result in additional pressure on Creative New Zealand to make up the shortfall. We’re also aware that other funders—such as community trusts—are under pressure to prioritise core social services, making it unlikely that alternative funding sources would be readily available if local authority investment declines.

### *Definition of core services*

13. We believe the importance of arts and culture in local and regional communities should be reflected in the Bill, by including cultural facilities and services in the Bill's proposed definition of core services (*New section 11A inserted (Core services to be considered in performing role)*).
14. This would ensure arts and culture infrastructure and services remain fundamental and essential areas of responsibility for local authorities and supports the inclusion in the proposed *Principles relating to local authorities* (section 8(2) of the Bill) for local

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<sup>1</sup> Section (3)(1), Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 2014:  
<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0001/latest/DLM3007308.html>

authorities to, in taking a sustainable development approach, take into account ‘the social, economic, and cultural interests of people and communities’.

15. Local authorities are currently significant investors in arts and culture – particularly ‘hard’ infrastructure such as the venues within which arts activities occur, including activities supported by Creative New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> Creative New Zealand has a limited role in supporting venue infrastructure.

*Increasing support for arts and culture among New Zealanders, including for public funding*

16. There’s a growing body of research relating to the contribution of the arts to a community’s social cohesion, as well as to an area’s economic prosperity.
17. The results of Creative New Zealand’s long-term research into New Zealanders’ attitudes to, attendance at and participation in the arts show strong support for public investment in arts and culture. The 2023 results show:<sup>3</sup>
  - **62 percent** of New Zealanders agree that ‘the arts should receive public funding’ – up 10 percent since the study was first undertaken in 2005
  - **over half (54 percent)** of New Zealanders agree that ‘my local council should give money to support the arts’, up from 47 percent in 2017 when this question was first asked
  - **60 percent** of New Zealanders agree that ‘the arts help improve society’, up from 52 percent in 2014 when this question was first asked.
18. Further, the results show the extent to which communities value the availability of arts experiences and the role they play in their communities:
  - **two thirds (67 percent)** of New Zealanders agree that ‘arts facilities are important to create a vibrant place to live’
  - **62 percent** of New Zealanders agree that ‘arts and culture have a vital role to play in the future of (my area)’
  - **over half (53 percent)** of New Zealander agree that ‘my community would be poorer without the arts’, up from 43 percent in 2014 when this question was first asked.

**Who we are**

19. 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 operating under the [Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 2014](#) (the Act).
20. Under the Act, we must uphold the principles of:
  - (i) **participation**, by supporting initiatives that encourage participation in the arts
  - (ii) **access**, by supporting the availability of projects of merit to communities or sections of the population that would otherwise not have access to them

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<sup>2</sup> In the year to 30 June 2024, the Local Authority Financial Statistics (Stats NZ) show that territorial authorities invested \$627 million (total operating expenditure) in the ‘Culture’ category.

<sup>3</sup> *New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi*: <https://creativenz.govt.nz/development-and-resources/new-zealanders-and-the-arts---ko-aotearoa-me-ona-toi>

- (iii) **excellence and innovation**, by supporting activities of artistic and cultural significance that develop the creative potential of artists and art forms
  - (iv) **professionalism**, by maintaining and developing a professional arts infrastructure at both the national and community levels
  - (v) **advocacy**, by promoting New Zealand's arts and artists locally, nationally, and internationally.
21. Creative New Zealand receives funding through the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board Te Puna Tahua (NZLGB) and Vote: Arts, Culture and Heritage. NZLGB funding represents around 75 percent of total revenue.
22. In 2024/25, Creative New Zealand invested over \$60 million in the arts, supporting the sector through investment and funds, targeted programmes and initiatives, partnerships and collaborations, policy and advocacy, and research.
23. Our vision is that the arts and ngā toi Māori are flourishing: created by a thriving arts community, enriching lives here and around the world. Our long-term goals are:
- **Empowered communities**, making decisions on the arts and ngā toi Māori closest to them.
  - **Thriving artists, ringatoi and practitioners**, with viable creative careers, supported by a strong arts infrastructure.
  - **He mana toi, he mana tangata**, thriving and highly visible ngā toi Māori, valued in Aotearoa and around the world.
  - **Inspired New Zealanders**, embracing our arts and ngā toi Māori every day.
  - **A valued arts development agency**, leading with impact and delivering for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or if you wish to meet to discuss this submission further.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa, nā

David Pannett  
**Senior Manager, Strategy & Engagement**  
**Pou Whakahaere Matua, Rautaki me te Tūhono**