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Written submission by email to: [akhaveyoursay@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:akhaveyoursay@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

## **SUBMISSION TO AUCKLAND COUNCIL'S DRAFT LONG TERM PLAN**

WeCreate is the alliance of Aotearoa's creative industries and major arts organisations, who collectively represent 30,000+ creators and creative businesses, over 40% of whom are based in Auckland<sup>1</sup>.

**The Auckland cultural and creative sector is a significant economic contributor and generator of work and employment in the city. The sector's future, and growth in Tāmaki Makaurau, relies on the experiences and skills that are, in part, developed through community arts and culture programmes, along with Tātaki Auckland Unlimited's economic development initiatives for the creative and tech sectors.**

Auckland is the 'Powerhouse' of Aotearoa New Zealand's economy. According to Infometrics, in 2023 GDP in Auckland measured \$143,740m, up 1.3% from a year earlier, compared with New Zealand growth of 0.7%. The arts and creative sector nationally contributed \$16.3bn or 4.3% of GDP to March 2023 – the highest contribution by the sector to date, and over 44% of its workers were based in Auckland. Workers in the sector were also more productive than the average, generating \$155,539 GDP/FTE<sup>2</sup>.

Most Auckland creative businesses are now highly digital and are 'weightless' exporters (eg. screen and music streaming, games & interactive media, digital publishing, digital visual arts, design and advertising, immersive cultural experiences, even fashion design and architecture), and they are therefore critical to our economic adaptation and resilience to climate change. Almost all parts of our creative ecosystem adapted to 'digital and online' during COVID restrictions – for many it was 'digital business-as-usual', reaching customers and audiences in New Zealand, and overseas.

Culture and creativity are the things that give 'colour' and joy to our city, and which keep people wanting to work, learn and visit here, and thereby keep our economy pumping. Creativity makes a city live - and be liveable.

The Auckland Plan 2050 states the aim that 'Auckland is prosperous with many opportunities and delivers a better standard of living for everyone'.

**WeCreate submits that further reducing Council's arts & culture funding (including via Local Board funding), and funding for Tātaki Auckland Unlimited's economic development strategies, expertise, and support, will result in failure to achieve this**

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<sup>1</sup> Please see <https://wecreate.org.nz/members-friends/> for details of our Member and Friend organisations.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mch.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2024-03/infometrics-1-page-summary-2023.PDF>

**objective. This poses a risk to the prosperity and opportunities for Aucklanders and their businesses, which will have a consequent economic effect nationally, and on Aotearoa's talent pipeline and international reputation.**

## **The Value of the Creative Economy to Auckland**

According to Tātaki Auckland Unlimited (TAU) in 2023, the creative economy in Auckland:

- Made up 6% of Auckland's economy
- Directly employed more than 59,500 people (2,000 new jobs over last 12 months)
- Generated \$8.8bn in GDP (7.8% growth over last 12 months; 52% of NZ's total creative GDP)
- Grew by 6.5%, on average, over the past five years, outpacing the rest of the Auckland economy (2.5%)
- Has significant growth potential (forecasts predict 8,000 new jobs 2024-2029)

**Screen Auckland's latest data shows that:**

- **Screen (including production, post-production, and visual effects) is worth \$1.72 billion to the Auckland economy (GDP 2023)**
- The sector directly employs 8,400 people in Auckland
- There are 2,370 screen business units located here

**35% of NZ's game development businesses are in Auckland**, the largest concentration of any city in NZ.

- Interactive/game development is one of our fastest growing industries – worth \$434.4m in 2023 (95% of which were high value digital exports), and if given the right support, particularly to combat fierce competition from Australian tax incentives – the industry is on track to be a \$1bn industry within a few years.<sup>3</sup>

Auckland is the **main hub of the NZ music industry, and a UNESCO City of Music** – with an estimated:

- 6000 songwriters, 2000 recording artists, 120 independent record labels, 254 venues reporting live music to OneMusic (licensing agency), including approximately 20 dedicated music venues, over 100 audio producers and approximately 35 recording studios, 173 artist managers and over 20 representative organisations.
- The music ecosystem is also comprised of event producers and contractors, independent record stores, music educators, music technology companies, music media companies, designers, photographers and video makers, and the live music segment has spill-over effects into hospitality and the visitor economy.

**Auckland is also the main hub for all other NZ creative industries – advertising, architecture, design, media, performing arts, photography, book publishing, creative tech and visual arts. There are 17,650 creative business units in Auckland – 46% of New Zealand's creative companies – all people who are currently choosing to live and work in Auckland.**

**What's good for Auckland is (almost always) good for Aotearoa New Zealand.**

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<sup>3</sup> NZ Game Developers Association 2024

## Work and Employment for Aucklanders

- **All creative industries derive their ideas and talent from artists.** Creative skills grow from exposure to creativity – at home, in arts education, and via community arts programmes. **Without these career pipelines, the economic viability of the sector in Auckland is at risk.**
- **Local government investment in arts and culture supports the grassroots of artists' careers and the creative economy ecosystem** – it is the breeding ground for experimentation, which is often where innovation, new ideas, and the economic benefits of 'the next big thing' comes from.
- An artist's creative practice is their 'work' or 'job', and this is often not well-understood by those who do not know the sector. The creative sector has double the number of freelancers and contractors than any other sector in the economy, and it is critical to support those individuals to enable their contribution to our society and economy.
- **Many of our least advantaged creatives get their careers started through community arts and culture organisations and programmes.**
- Access to arts and culture enables access to a rich and diverse education, enhancing social cohesion, and preparing young people with the skills needed in a changing world of work.

## Economic Development Support and Strategy

- **Auckland is the only city in New Zealand which has a comprehensive development plan for its creative economy, informed by sector leaders** – [Create Auckland 2030](#) – which is led by TAU and has the ambition of making Tāmaki Makaurau a 'global creative capital'. This type of coordinated support improves **economic efficiency and contributes to improved productivity.**
- TAU has recognised the **economic importance of the creative ecosystem**, and its rapidly growing digital permutations (creative tech) to Aucklanders, and to visitors; now, and especially for the future.
- They are actively supporting creative Aucklanders, creative businesses and seeking investors for the city and the sector. **Every dollar TAU spends returns \$2 - \$4 in direct, indirect, and induced impacts within the city's economy.**<sup>4</sup>
- **There will be particularly dire impacts on Auckland's burgeoning and highly productive screen, music, interactive and creative tech industries, and a negative impact on our growing international reputation and business prospects.**
- It is **international best-practice** for cities of scale, such as Auckland, to have **local/regional government agencies with a focus on growing and developing the Creative Economy.** (eg. multiple cities in the UK, Creative Victoria, Screen Queensland – please see the end of this document for Further Information).

## Other Key Considerations

- **People with creative skills are vital to the Future of Work in all industries, and their roles are less susceptible to automation/Artificial Intelligence.**
- The 2019 Australian Government Report [Creative Skills for the Future Economy](#) found that creative skills, requiring original thought and innovation, are particularly resistant to automation and are likely to face relatively higher demand in the future across a wide range of industries. **Of Australia's top five most innovation-active industries, between 10 and 28 percent of employees held a creative qualification.**
- **Australia is incentivising games and screen production** people and businesses to work there – more than NZ can currently compete with - this is a threat to the Auckland creative economy and talent pipeline.
- These incentives are included in Australia's [National Cultural Policy - Revive](#) – as they have recognised the contribution their creative industries have the potential to make. This policy

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Tātaki Auckland Unlimited

includes the **establishment of new support bodies and programmes for music and literature, which will also likely incentivise more Auckland creatives to migrate to Australia.**

- The ‘clustering’ of industries within the creative economy creates an **agglomeration effect, driving productivity.** An example would be how a thriving screen sector creates opportunities for writers, musicians, tradespeople, and hospitality workers.
- **The creative economy creates ‘spill-overs’ into all areas of society and business:**
  - **Knowledge** – where new ideas, skills, innovations, and processes developed within the creative sector spill-over into the wider economy and society.
  - **Industry** – seen in productivity gains and innovations that flow from the creative sector into other types of businesses. **This is especially true of the impact of screen production and live events on the visitor and hospitality economies.**
  - **Network** – the spread of tacit knowledge and deeper/broader labour markets (agglomeration effects) which arise from a high density of arts or creative industries in a specific location.

Source: [The Impact of Arts & Culture on the wider Creative Economy – Arts Council England 2022](#)

## **Strategic Direction for the Long Term Plan**

WeCreate appreciates that Council is facing multiple and increasing demands on its budget, and that there are many pressing physical infrastructure and resilience needs for it to meet.

WeCreate has been engaged with Council’s ‘Toi Whītiki’ Arts and Culture Strategic Action Plan for some years, and a refresh of this strategy could provide a template for the intentional and sustainable growth of Auckland’s creative ecosystem and economy.

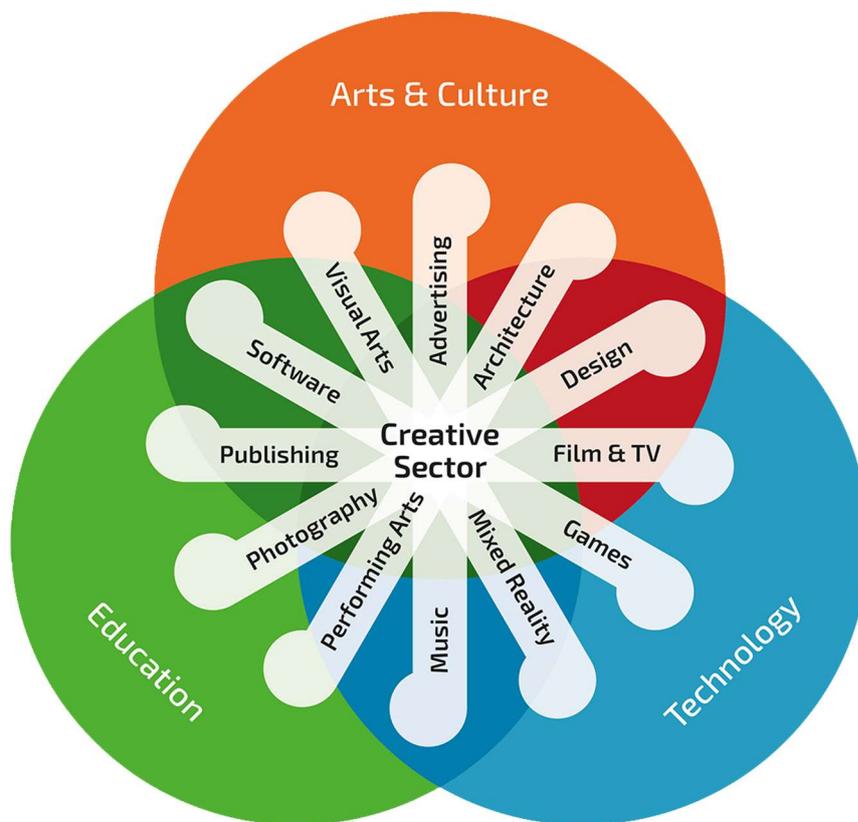
If Council seeks to enable its Vision for ‘a diverse and dynamic city, which honours the place of Māori and includes a rich array of cultural and sporting events, museums, galleries and built heritage’, we would like further information on how this might happen under **Option 1 – the Central proposal.** We would also like to propose adding to this Vision that Council ‘support the city’s arts, culture and creative ecosystem as levers for driving economic growth in Auckland’.

**Option 2, Pay More, Get More,** could deliver on ‘expanding employment initiatives and increasing support for technology, screen and creative industries.’ We submit that this should include: attracting and supporting creative industries education and training opportunities; finding ways to centre and support ngā toi Māori; maintenance of the city’s creative places and spaces, and ensuring these are well-staffed with the right expertise; and support for the diverse arts and culture activities that drive the life of the city, and support hospitality, tourism, and other industries that rely on the creative sector to some extent for their own growth and sustainability.

**We propose that now is the time for Council to more strategically invest in arts, culture and creativity for the future economic and social prosperity and productivity of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, and its people.**  
**WeCreate would be very happy to help with this.**

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## The New Zealand Creative Ecosystem:



## Further Information on how culture and creativity can drive economic and social prosperity in cities :

[UK Creative Industries Toolkit for Cities & Regions 2017](#)

[Creative Victoria](#) – Creative State 2025 Strategy

[Melbourne City Revitalisation 2022 – state investment](#)

[Screen Queensland](#)

[World Cities Culture Forum](#) – various publications on evidence-based creative and cultural policy making for cities.