

29 April 2025



Dunedin City Council  
PO Box 5045  
DUNEDIN 9054

Tēnā koutou

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the draft 2025-2034 9 Year Plan.

Our submission relates to the lack of capital expenditure budget for performing arts venues in this draft Plan. We have four messages:

**1. Council should reinstate the capital expenditure budget for performing arts venues from previous Long Term Plans.**

Our previous submissions to Council, alongside multiple other submissions and reports, set out why a vibrant performing arts scene is so important in Ōtepoti Dunedin, and why investment in fit for purpose venue infrastructure is so necessary.

Council has itself acknowledged this. It has been engaging with the performing arts community since 2018 on the specific question of which venue(s) could or should be refurbished or built. It was therefore incredibly disappointing to the performing arts community to see the capital budget for this kaupapa disappear in the draft 9 Year Plan.

We respectfully request that Councillors consider accommodating at least \$17.1 million capital expenditure budget for performing arts venues within the 2025-2034 Plan.

**2. The Playhouse Theatre should be the first venue developed as part of a collaborative, long-term plan for the city's performing arts venues**

Dunedin Repertory have worked constructively with Council, other venue owners and advocates over the past three years. We have developed plans and costings for the Playhouse, which Council contributed funding towards, and we have reported back on how the Playhouse "piece of the puzzle" fits in context of other venue ideas in circulation.

Most recently, in December 2024, in response to a specific request from Council, the Playhouse worked through a process with Zeal Land, Stage South, the Regent and the Mayfair to explore a sequenced package of venues that would meet the city's needs.

The Playhouse Theatre had support among this group to be the first project, being the smallest, cheapest, easiest and fastest project to deliver, as well as having had the most public consultation to date and enjoying strong public support (this is evidenced in Dunedin Theatre Network Stage 1, 2 and 3 reports, all available at:

[www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz](http://www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz)).

The Children's Theatre we run every school holidays is a very special part of the city's creative landscape, offering unique opportunities for preschoolers, children and rakatahi to experience and participate in live performance, at an affordable level.

We recommend Councillors consider investing the first \$3.35 million of the the reinstated capital expenditure budget as cornerstone investment in the Playhouse Theatre. The Repertory Society would then seek to fundraise the remaining \$2.44 million of the \$5.79 million project cost.

We continue to stand in support of our friends and colleagues at other venues – the Athenaeum, the Mayfair, the Regent and Stage South as advocates for a new-build performing arts centre. We believe the remaining reinstated capital expenditure budget should be put towards the sequenced package of venues proposed earlier this year. This would give the city a network of venues in different sizes, styles and purposes to support a wide range of creative and literary endeavours.

### **3. We are open to a conversation that would enable investment in the refurbishment of the Playhouse Theatre to be capital expenditure**

We are open to a conversation about ownership model. We understand Council's position regarding capital vs operating expenditure. At no point have we ruled out a change in ownership model of the Playhouse.

We would like to discuss with Council options that would allow Council's cornerstone investment to be capex, as well as still enabling the Repertory Society to fundraise from other sources, and that would provide for an appropriate model of running the theatre post-refurbishment.

### **4. It's now or never for the Playhouse.**

We first presented the idea of cornerstone investment in the Playhouse to Council three years ago. At that time, we drew attention to the Playhouse's deteriorating condition. That condition has continued to worsen since then.

Unfortunately, we are not in a position to wait a further two years for the next Long Term Plan.

**If no capital expenditure budget is allocated to performing arts venues in the 2025-2034 Plan, we will move on from the idea of refurbishment.** We will need to concentrate our limited resources on repairing and improving the Playhouse for whatever time it is safe to continue operating. We anticipate that will be approximately two more years.

We look forward to speaking to our submission.

Kā mihi nui

The Dunedin Repertory Society Inc.