

Submission on behalf of Wild Dunedin - from:

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## **Introduction**

Wild Dunedin is submitting on the Long Term Plan as it applies to the Festivals and Events draft plan.

Wild Dunedin is a festival which aligns strongly with the city's brand as it highlights our natural assets. It appeals to visitors as well as residents. It encourages people to enjoy nature, understand it, and care for it. Wild Dunedin and DCC work well together to play to our common strengths and to bolster Dunedin's identity.

## **Submissions**

There is much of value in this plan. We are optimistic that it will help the events sector contribute more to Dunedin.

It is good to see the proposal for an incentive fund for DVML to attract major events.

It is good to see the proposed increase in the overall budget for events and festivals, with the injection of an extra \$800,000 then \$1.2 million per year into major and community events.

It is a concern however that in item 1.1 of the spreadsheet page 63 the budget rationale refers only to council-led events. This seems to be a common theme through the budget spreadsheet (which is the nub of the plan), and leads to the conclusion that council-led events will have precedence in being boosted from community to regional, or regional to national. It is a concern that key focus areas are George St Market, Chinese Festival and Matariki. Of these only the Chinese festival really plays to Dunedin's strengths. A market is a market – while for Matariki Dunedin is competing with every other city at exactly the same time. These are weak areas to focus on – let alone commit \$250,000 per year (item 1.7 and 2.3).

# We submit that the increase in budget should be spread more fairly over council-led and community-led events. The plan makes no reference to the huge extra value the city gets out of supporting community-led festivals like Wild Dunedin which rely on a large amount of volunteer and in-kind support, as compared to running events in-house and paying for a full team.

# We submit that this budget increase should be spread to support existing events with potential for growth ahead of new events. As with the best customer, or best staff member - the best event is the one you have. This does seem to be indicated, but the vital issue is one of balance. It would be a shame to promote new events only to lose old ones through lack of support.

# Item 1.8 says regional events will get \$140,000 per year to grow to major event level. We submit that community events should be considered for this growth potential also.

3# Item 1.10 allocates sizeable budget to develop a 2028 Solar Eclipse Event. We support seizing this opportunity, and submit that a local private sector events team be considered for this project.

# We seek clarification on page 36 of the draft plan, as there is no explanation of how these categories compare with the previous DCC categories of Community, Major and Premier events.

# We further submit that criteria for DCC funding should include:

1. The event's alignment with the cities brand and strengths.
2. The event's ability to bring in tourism, boost the local economy, and serve the community.
3. The event's timing. One concern is that there are a lot of events close together in autumn which can lead to "event fatigue," conflict and lower attendances . Another timing concern is Matariki, which is a fantastic national celebration. Dunedin needs to observe it. But – it is of course the same time as every other city is also celebrating Matariki and trying to attract visitors. We submit that DCC needs to consider how our Mataraki event will celebrate Dunedin's particular strengths and how it will attract visitors, and so decide how that affects DCC funding decisions.
4. The event's return on investment. In our example Wild Dunedin(gratefully) receives \$40,000 to \$50,000 in DCC funding and has attracted nearly 40,000 people. We submit that DCC should compare this with its contributions to other community-led and council-led events and make funding decisions accordingly. We get 2/3 to ¾ of our funding from other funders and sponsors - and struggle to do so.
5. The event's longevity and future prospects. It would be an enormous help and ease the on-going stress on our volunteer committee and part-time employees if DCC could make multi-year funding grants.

# We do have a concern with the plan focusing solely on prioritising the use of council-owned venues – we submit that this is unfair on other organisations and private operators.

Wild Dunedin does use many DCC venues and gets great support from DCC organisations like Toitu, DPAG, Botanic Gardens – and we could make more use of others such as George St which would tick the box of maximising the use of DCC venues throughout the city. However we also use venues owned by other organisations and private providers and are keen to see fair support of these also.

# We agree that conferences are an underutilised element of the visitor destination focus. We encourage DCC, the University of Otago, Polytech, conference organisers etc to target conferences that play to Dunedin's strengths i.e. nature, heritage, arts, science, tech, education, farming, recreation etc.

We have heard from conference organisers that the lack of dining opportunities mid-week is hindering the appeal of Dunedin as a conference destination. Festivals with links to dining events such as the Wild Dunedin sustainable dining series could help address this issue.

# We feel a rates hike to cover the events funding boost may disadvantage lower income ratepayers, and submit that DCC consider rates rebates for this group. We are not sure that a boost in accommodation, hospitality and retail spend by people coming into the city for events would trickle down to struggling rate payers.

# We applaud the proposal to increase promotion and city-wide activation for festivals and events. Again we submit that community-led events and existing events should be given fair treatment with council-led and new events.

# We applaud the proposal to more effectively gather data and analyse the benefits with impact measurement tools available to all.

# We applaud the intention to “pre-package” DCC support of events, especially for repeat events. This will be helpful.

# We submit that the plan is unnecessarily long and complex – the crucial parts are on the spreadsheet.