Bonjour, kia ora tatou, good morning.

Dunedin’ ambition is to be one of world’s great small creative cities. Nothing less.

We developed our Arts and Culture Strategy, Ara Toi Otepoti – to achieve that.

That’s not just about fine arts, but a city where we integrate creativity into the city’s identity for economic and community sustainability and urban development.

But Dunedin didn’t just need an arts strategy. It needed a complete redirection.

Why?

During the 19th century, when our city was very young, we were economically successful, outward looking and cosmopolitan, and had a vibrant artistic milieu.

But from about 1920 onwards, our economic and population base shrank and the city became very inward looking.

We needed to reverse that trend with a strategic approach including not just the creative sector, but also social wellbeing, economic development and environment strategies.

Those are all interlinked and were developed in partnership with our community.

We started with economic development and we identified Dunedin’s quality tertiary educational institutions with their output of graduates and research as a basis for our economic revival. They produce high value creative intellectual property.

But more than that, we have a Fine Arts School, a School of Music, computer studies programmes and most the prestigious literary, music and fine arts fellowships in New Zealand. With them, we have the basis for a creative renaissance as well.

Our arts strategy is expressed most obviously of course in our UNESCO City of Literature status, and, as you would expect, we run all sorts of arts and fringe festivals, and book and writers’ festivals.

But also creative arts impact more and more areas of city life. For example:

- we have achieved urban regeneration by creatively repurposing 19th century commercial buildings in a previously rundown part of the city
- creative design is expressed in above ground infrastructure – in the heritage commercial area, innovative street furniture and streetscaping
• street art proliferation by international artists revitalising inner city areas

• massive growth of creative businesses in IT, computer game design, architecture, fashion design, computer graphics for America’s Cup, (made in Dunedin) medical and medical/educational software.

Boosting the broader creative sector also encourages city to be much more outward looking and internationally connected:

• Through our UNESCO City of Literature status, Dunedin was offered a stand at the Bologna Children’s book fair

• Edinburgh and Shanghai are both UNESCO Creative Cities and both Dunedin’s Sister Cities with greater emphasis on cultural connections.

• For example, a recent China Film Festival opened in Dunedin.

• Dunedin mounted multimedia art exhibition in the ancient Yu Garden in Shanghai.

• Design and architectural companies are gaining international contracts.

And an important benefit flowing from Ara Toi is the renewed confidence and self-assurance of Dunedin’s whole creative sector, especially in our international interaction.

We want our creatives to interact with the world even more, so we will hold a Creative Cities symposium in Dunedin in late November in partnership with the University of Otago’s Centre for the Book and the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO.

Speakers will feature from around the world and across the creative streams, followed by a day of creative workshops especially to seed cross-stream project ideas and collaborations.

I would love to see many of you there, for two reasons:

• to show you how integrating creativity into our city’s identity is setting us on a path for economic and community sustainability and success

• and to create yet more international connections.

See you in Dunedin.

Dave Cull
Mayor of Dunedin