

April 2025

**DUNEDIN FRINGE ARTS TRUST SUBMISSION TO THE DCC'S DRAFT 9 YEAR PLAN (2025-2034):  
THE FUTURE OF PERFORMING ARTS VENUE [TE WHARE O RUKUTIA](#)**



Syrup Bois performing in Te Whare o Rukutia during the Dunedin Fringe Festival 2025 Opening Night Birthday Party: photo by Armstrong Photography

**SUMMARY:**

We propose that the Dunedin City Council and the Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust enter a formal Service Level Agreement to work together to secure the future of Te Whare o Rukutia. This would include:

1. An operator fee (through a Service Level Agreement) of \$97,768 per year for 3 years (adjusted yearly for inflation and scope of service) to contribute towards DFAT's fixed costs associated with operating and supporting the venue to its full potential;
2. An option to renew the Service Level Agreement after the initial 3 years, which will need to reflect inflation, changes in theatre equipment technology, and scope of service.

A Business Plan and budget for Te Whare o Rukutia is included as part of this submission, along with a letter of support from peak funding body Creative New Zealand.

A comprehensive history of the Te Whare o Rukutia project – which was provided to Councillors in 2024 – is available [HERE](#).

We extend our gratitude to Councillors and staff for their ongoing support of DFAT's work, including peppercorn rental and free power for Te Whare o Rukutia: support without which it would not have been possible to establish and operate the venue.

### **ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND:**

The Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust (DFAT) is a year-round anchor cultural organisation in Ōtepoti that provides platforms for creative expression that help nurture communities. Our annual programmes include the **Dunedin Fringe Festival** (an annual 11-day multidisciplinary arts festival), **Amped Music Project** (a free music mentorship programme for high school aged youth), and the **NZ Young Writers Fest** (a free annual literary festival by and for young writers). We also operate the performing arts venue **Te Whare o Rukutia** and the **White Box Gallery in Fringe HQ** (19 George St).

### **TE WHARE O RUKUTIA BACKGROUND:**

[Te Whare o Rukutia](#) is an all ages, affordable temporary performing arts venue in central Dunedin established to help meet the needs of Ōtepoti's performing arts community following the closure of the Fortune Theatre in May 2018. It aims to be "a pou for Ōtepoti's performing arts community, supporting new experiences for our audiences and a stronger creative sector." The name Te Whare o Rukutia was gifted to the venue by Ōtākou and Puketeraki rūnaka.

The venue's pilot phase was from 8 May 2022-22 December 2023. During that time, Te Whare o Rukutia hosted 125 bookings, an audience of approximately 12,000, and was in use for 53.76% of the available days (300 days of 558 days). DFAT also granted \$78,550 towards artist projects taking place in Te Whare o Rukutia during the pilot.

Since DFAT's request to the Dunedin City Council for operational funding for Te Whare o Rukutia was declined during the Annual Plan 2024-2025 process, DFAT has kept the venue open and taken bookings as capacity allows.

### **PROPOSED SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT:**

Te Whare o Rukutia currently has no operational funding. DFAT Trustees agree that the operation of Te Whare o Rukutia must be cost-neutral for DFAT, and currently it is not.

We also note that the \$17.1 million committed in the last 10 Year Plan for a professional theatre venue has been removed from the 9 Year Plan budget. Given this decision, the need for Te Whare o Rukutia to continue operating while a long term solution to the performing arts venue issue is found is vital to support the performing arts ecosystem in Ōtepoti.

Even if the \$17.1 million were committed to a new build in the future, or renovations were made to the New Athenaeum and The Playhouse, delivery of those projects will be years away and may involve a years-long closure of existing venues for renovation work. As such, Te Whare o Rukutia is still needed until one or more of these long-term solutions are delivered and operational.

In light of these changes, we propose that Whare o Rukutia be retained for at least 3 years to bridge the continued need in Ōtepoti's performing arts infrastructure.

As stated in the Summary, we propose that the Dunedin City Council and the Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust enter a formal Service Level Agreement to work together to secure the future of Te Whare o Rukutia. This would include:

3. An operator fee (through a Service Level Agreement) of \$97,768 per year for 3 years (adjusted yearly for inflation and scope of service) to contribute towards DFAT's fixed costs associated with operating and supporting the venue to its full potential;
4. An option to renew the Service Level Agreement after the initial 3 years, which will need to reflect inflation, changes in theatre equipment technology, and scope of service.

Please refer to the below Business Plan and budget for more detail.

DFAT has the staff expertise, industry contacts, infrastructure, community trust, respect and connections to operate the venue efficiently, affordably and effectively, as it has for nearly 3 years.

In keeping with our mission, vision, values, strategic and business plans, DFAT is also committed to supporting our priority communities – including Māori and Moana artists, youth and people with disabilities – with skill building opportunities, funding and access to resources, including space.

We look forward to discussing this proposal with you.

Kā mihi nui,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R. E. Mapson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Rebekah Mapson**

Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust Chair, on behalf of the DFAT Trustees

# ŌTEPOTI DUNEDIN **FRINGE** Te Whare o Rukutia

## TE WHARE O RUKUTIA SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT BUSINESS PLAN DUNEDIN CITY COUNCIL LONG TERM PLAN 2025-2034



Syrup Bois performing in Te Whare o Rukutia during the Dunedin Fringe Festival 2025 Opening Night Birthday Party: photo by Armstrong Photography

### **TE WHARE O RUKUTIA BACKGROUND:**

**“Te Whare o Rukutia isn’t just a venue; it’s the beating heart of our community’s creative pulse.” – Moewai Marsh (Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa)**

[Te Whare o Rukutia](#) is an all ages, affordable temporary performing arts venue in central Dunedin established to help meet the needs of Ōtepoti’s performing arts community following the closure of the Fortune Theatre in May 2018. It aims to be “a pou for Ōtepoti’s performing



arts community, supporting new experiences for our audiences and a stronger creative sector.” The name Te Whare o Rukutia was gifted to the venue by Ōtākou and Puketeraki rūnaka.

Te Whare o Rukutia was established and is operated by the Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust (DFAT). The principal stakeholder is the Dunedin City Council, which entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with DFAT in 2022. The Council agreed to undertake structural renovations to the space to make it possible to fit it out as a performing arts space, and continue to provide peppercorn rental and free power as the owner of the building, recognising “The DCC and Fringe Arts Trust have a shared purpose in wanting to encourage and facilitate arts and culture within Dunedin.” (Memorandum of Understanding, p 2) DFAT raised all the additional funds required to establish and equip the venue, and owns all the venue’s assets.



Te Whare o Rukutia: photo by Armstrong Photography

The venue’s pilot phase was from 8 May 2022-22 December 2023. During that time, Te Whare o Rukutia hosted 125 bookings, an audience of approximately 12,000, and was in use for 53.76% of the available days (300 days of 558 days). DFAT also granted \$78,550 towards artist projects taking place in Te Whare o Rukutia during the pilot.

Te Whare o Rukutia has evolved with the needs of the creative community into a space for rehearsals and residencies, festivals, workshops, live music and all-ages gigs, performance of all types, community events, improv, dance and more.

Since DFAT's request to the Dunedin City Council for operational funding for Te Whare o Rukutia was declined during the Annual Plan 2024-2025 process, DFAT has kept the venue open and taken bookings as capacity allows.

The absence of operational funding has meant DFAT has been forced to [increase venue hire fees](#), which has resulted in less community members being able to afford to use the space. Hire fees (not including the venue manager or technician that are charged at \$46 per hour) increased at the following rate per day (half day by negotiation):

- Standard rate: increase of \$60 (15%)
- Community rate: increase of \$100 (50%)
- Low fuss rate: increase of \$50 (100%)



*Our Air, Our Breath, Our Wind* exhibition at Te Whare o Rukutia, NZ International Science Festival 2023: photo by Rewa Pene, courtesy of NZ International Science Festival

The vast majority of Te Whare o Rukutia hires are at the 'low fuss' or 'community rate': 'low fuss' hires cost the organisation money, and 'community rate' hires are either cost neutral or cost DFAT money to host, depending on the nature of the event.

The prevalence of bookings at these rates also indicates that it's local creatives that most need affordable access to a performing arts venue in the city.



## **PROPOSED SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT:**

We propose that the Dunedin City Council and the Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust enter a formal Service Level Agreement to work together to secure the future of Te Whare o Rukutia in the medium term.

Te Whare o Rukutia currently has no dedicated operational funding. Funding from all sources currently supports only DFAT's core annual creative programming and its administration: the Dunedin Fringe Festival; the Amped Music Project; the NZ Young Writers Fest; the White Box Gallery; and Fringe HQ.

DFAT Trustees agree that the operation of Te Whare o Rukutia must be cost-neutral for DFAT, and currently it is not.

DFAT has the staff expertise, industry contacts, infrastructure, community trust, respect and connections to operate the venue efficiently, affordably and effectively, as it has for nearly 3 years.

In keeping with our mission, vision, values, strategic and business plans, DFAT is also committed to supporting our priority communities – including Māori and Moana artists, youth and people with disabilities – with skill building opportunities, funding and access to resources, including space.



A dancer from *TwentyNineteen* performing at Te Whare o Rukutia: photo by Armstrong Photography

**“Having a team which understands the needs, the processes, and the barriers facing the performing arts community is really appreciated. Having a professional venue that is accessible and affordable for performing arts is definitely needed in Dunedin ... as is being a place where diverse voices are heard and supported.”** – Anna Noonan, Dance Ōtepoti

We suggest the following high level overview of the agreement:

**Dunedin City Council provides:**

1. 20 Princes Street at the current rental rate of zero dollars per annum and free electricity;
2. An operator fee (through a Service Level Agreement) of \$97,768 per year for 3 years (adjusted yearly for inflation and scope of service) to contribute towards DFAT's fixed costs associated with operating and supporting the venue to its full potential;
3. An option to renew the Service Level Agreement after the initial 3 years, which will need to reflect inflation, changes in theatre equipment technology, and scope of service.

**Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust provides:**

1. The ongoing use for hirers of Te Whare o Rukutia's assets currently deployed in the venue (ie. sound and lighting equipment, drape kits, staging, theatre seating, projector and screen, equipped kitchen, etc);
2. The services and support of our expert staff and contractor network;
3. The use of our digital assets including ticketing and box office, website, social media, email database, and marketing and communications capacity.



Rushi Vyas performing in Te Whare o Rukutia during the Dunedin Writers & Readers Festival 2023: photo by Rachel McKenna, courtesy of Dunedin Writers & Readers Festival



**The Service Level Agreement would allow DAFT to:**

1. Deliver value to ratepayers, artists and audiences;
2. Keep Te Whare o Rukutia available to the community at affordable hire rates;
3. Support hirers with DFAT staff's extensive knowledge of production, event management, marketing, ticketing, etc;
4. Staff the venue and its administration adequately so the venue can operate at its full potential;
5. Build on the success of the venue to date;
6. Market the venue, thus increasing potential revenue to help keep Te Whare o Rukutia operational;
7. Operate Te Whare o Rukutia as a core part of its daily business activities.



Jak Darling & Booth the Clown performing *Delightfool* at Te Whare o Rukutia: photo by Armstrong Photography

**The operator fee will contribute to (refer to attached budget):**

1. Staff costs to support operations (production, marketing, ticketing, administration, duty manager);
2. Marketing costs: design, printing, promotion;
3. Ticketing platform costs and payment processing fees;
4. Insurance, website fees, wifi costs, cleaning, consents and licencing costs, office equipment;
5. Technical equipment maintenance and repair.

**Alternative options:**

1. If the DCC is unable to enter a Service Level Agreement with DFAT to operate Te Whare o Rukutia, DFAT is willing to sell the DCC the venue's equipment and assets so it can operate Te Whare o Rukutia itself.
2. If the DCC does not want to establish a Service Level Agreement with DFAT to operate Te Whare o Rukutia or operate the venue itself, DFAT will remove our assets and return the property to the Council.



Amped Music Project 2024 participants 'Seek Help!' performing in Te Whare o Rukutia: photo by Craig Birch-Morunga

**TE WHARE O RUKUTIA & THE ŌTEPOTI LIVE MUSIC ACTION PLAN & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:**

Under Theme 3 (“supporting the live music ecosystem”), the [Ōtepoti Live Music Implementation Plan](#) says it will “Identify existing music spaces and explore options to improve their availability to the community for use as a creative hub. eg. Otago Access Radio; [Te Whare o Rukutia](#); Artsenta; University of Otago.”

Te Whare o Rukutia – which is the home of DFAT’s [Amped Music Project](#) and one of the only remaining alcohol free all-ages venues in the city – is not currently adequately resourced to support the ŌLMAP.

By contributing an operator's fee to DFAT to operate Te Whare o Rukutia, the Council has the opportunity to deliver on the “developing infrastructure” commitment in the ŌLMAP and would ensure a well loved venue remains available to musicians and other performing artists.

### **CONCLUSION:**

DFAT believes a Service Level Agreement is an easy-to-implement, cost effective option for the Council and ratepayers that ensures Te Whare o Rukutia is retained as an affordable community asset and – in the medium term – addresses the lack of suitable and affordable venues for performing arts in the city.

It also honours all the labour DFAT has already put into the project on behalf of the community.

**“... to keep Te Whare going would be a great return on a massive injection of cultural health and artistic productivity, specifically for youth, in the city. Please ensure the investment already made by the DCC and DFAT does not go to waste and the venue stays available to the Ōtepoti creative sector.” – artist Daniel Allen**



Dunedin Fringe Co-Director Kate Schrader MCing *Karaoke Please* in Te Whare o Rukutia, Dunedin Fringe Festival 2025: photo by Armstrong Photography



**Te Whare o Rukutia Proposal**  
**Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust**  
**July 2025 to June 2026**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>In Kind Support</b>		
26 Princes Street rent	\$ 75,000.0	Based on last conversation with DCC about market rent for venue
26 Princes Street power	\$ 5,000.0	Loosely based on 19 George Street premises as we don't have the data for this cost at 26 Princes Street
<hr/>		
<b>Event Income</b>		
Food and Beverage (bar income)	\$ 2,829.0	
Ticket Rebates (payment processing fees less Stripe charges)	\$ 195.0	Stripe is the system we use to process payments
Venue Hire Income	\$ 22,000.0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 25,024.0</b>	
<hr/>		
<b>Event costs</b>		<b>Event costs are covered by any bar income OR by the hirer through the Venue Hire fee and other costs that are invoiced for e.g. Security</b>
Duty Manager engaged for events with a bar	\$ 510.0	
Food and Beverage purchases for resale	\$ 822.0	
Front of House (ticket sales, managing door, ushering)	\$ 324.0	
Security	\$ 480.0	
Operations Manager	\$ 7,092.0	10% of .85 salary including leave, kiwisaver, ACC
Co - Director / Creative Producer	\$ 8,196.0	10% of Fulltime salary including leave, kiwisaver, ACC
<b>Total Cost of Sales</b>	<b>\$ 17,424.0</b>	
<hr/>		
<b>Venue Overheads</b>		
Cleaning (regularly between hires, rubbish removal)	\$ 7,000.0	
Consents & Licences	\$ 1,500.0	
Depreciation of assets	\$ 22,860.0	
Insurance	\$ 2,300.0	
Marketing and publicity	\$ 37,500.0	
Materials	\$ 200.0	
Venue Equipment (<\$500)	\$ 300.0	
Payment Processing Fees (Stripe)	\$ 204.0	
Phone & Data	\$ 1,560.0	
Printing	\$ 150.0	
Production costs (health and safety, venue management, equipment management, etc)	\$ 30,000.0	
Subscriptions & Cloud Services	\$ 480.0	A contribution to the total cost of Xero (finance), Mailchimp (promotions) and Eventotron (ticketing/event management) subscriptions
Ticketing Expenses	\$ 814.0	Monthly Eftpos terminal rental and admin fees
Website & Email Hosting & Fees	\$ 500.0	
<b>Total Overheads</b>	<b>\$ 105,368.0</b>	
<hr/>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 97,768.0</b>	<b>This is the service level agreement request</b>
<hr/>		

30 April 2025

To the Dunedin City Council

I am writing to support the Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust's submission for Te Whare o Rukutia.

Creative New Zealand is aware of the lack of professional venues for performers in Ōtepoti Dunedin. Since opening in 2022, Te Whare o Rukutia has served artists, creatives and the wider community with a space for residencies, rehearsals, live performances, and community meetings. It is an important space valued by the creative community.

For the Ōtepoti creative sector to flourish, it is vital that spaces such as Te Whare o Rukutia remain affordable and accessible. Creative New Zealand supports the Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust's proposal to maintain the venue.

As an anchor cultural organisation in Ōtepoti Dunedin, the Trust is primed to manage the space and uphold the principles in the name of Te Whare o Rukutia: a pou for Ōtepoti's performing arts community, supporting new experiences for audiences and a stronger creative sector. This year marked the 25th Dunedin Fringe Festival – a significant milestone for an arts festival, particularly following a global pandemic and constrained funding environment for the arts. The Fringe Festival is an important platform for artists and contributes to the sustainability of the arts ecosystem in Aotearoa New Zealand. Creative New Zealand is proud to be one of the three core funders.

Creative New Zealand has provided consistent investment in the Trust to sustain its arts development programmes, support communities in need and remove barriers to access and participation in the arts. The Trust is well-governed and prudently managed, and Creative New Zealand included the organisation as part of our Arts Organisation and Groups programme, providing \$100,000 towards its 2024 programme. This builds on our support of the Trust since the early 2000s.

The Trust's commitment to increase the depth and diversity of its community engagement, education and participation is clearly articulated in the strategic plan. Creative New Zealand has seen the evidence of successful implementation of this strategy in recent reports and statistics provided.

We recognise the leadership role that Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust plays for the arts within Ōtepoti. We encourage the Dunedin City Council to support this important regional arts organisation to deliver for and with its diverse community.

Please contact me should you wish to discuss anything further.

Noho ora mai ra,



Cassandra Wilson

Lead Practice Advisor: Theatre, Dance & Festivals - Kaiārahi Whakamahere Ritenga, Whakaari, Kanikani, me ngā Taiopenga, Creative New Zealand | Toi Aotearoa