

30 April 2025

Dunedin City Council  
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E te Kaunihera, tēnā koutou katoa

**Submission to:** Dunedin City Council  
**Subject:** Draft 9 Year Plan 2025-2034  
**From:** Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand)

1. Creative New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Dunedin City Council's 9 Year Plan 2025–2034.
2. We thank Council for its ongoing support of arts, culture, and creativity, and commend Council's commitments to creative and cultural vibrancy in Ōtepoti Dunedin.
3. Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori are vital parts of Ōtepoti's communities. They make valuable social, economic, and cultural contributions to the city by connecting people to place, shaping community identity, and building social cohesion.
4. The 9 Year Plan presents a vital opportunity for Council to effectively invest in the creative sector, and we commend the increased support for music, festivals and events. However, we don't believe Council's proposals adequately recognise the need for cultural infrastructure in Ōtepoti, especially a performing arts venue.
5. Secure and stable investment in cultural infrastructure, services and activities by Council is crucial for a strong, vibrant and resilient creative ecosystem in Ōtepoti. Ongoing investment and support for arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori in the 9 Year Plan, and through Ara Toi, supports the resilience and wellbeing of Dunedin's communities, and ensures the city and region can thrive.

#### Key Points

6. We acknowledge Council is facing challenges in preparing its 9 Year Plan while managing many competing priorities. It is encouraging to see Council's increased



budgets to support arts, culture and creativity in the city including events, festivals, music and heritage.

7. However, the success of Council's investment in the creative sector relies on strong cultural infrastructure, and without accessible venues, the potential impact of Council's investment risks being lost. We urge Council to retain its commitment to funding for a new performing arts venue in the 9 Year Plan to secure the creative sector's social, cultural and economic contributions to Ōtepoti.
8. We encourage Council to ensure that investment in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori is prioritised and visible throughout the 9 Year Plan's proposals because:
  - Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori are vital parts of local communities
  - Investment in arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori, is investment in prosperous, healthy and vibrant rohe and communities
  - Te reo, mātauranga and ngā toi Māori, brought to life by tangata whenua and ringatoi, strengthen communities' sense of belonging, connection and are central to our unique national and regional identities
  - Local councils play a crucial role in offering stable support for arts, cultural and creative activity and infrastructure that enable communities to thrive
  - Arts, cultural and ngā toi Māori organisations, iwi and hapū can be valuable collaborators with Council to build strong relationships with communities and build flourishing localities.

### Response to 9 Year Plan

9. Investment in the arts and ngā toi Māori is investment in prosperous, healthy and vibrant rohe and communities.
10. From our most recent *New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi* research in 2023, we know that New Zealanders' personal connection with the arts continues to grow.<sup>1</sup> Many feel the arts contribute strongly to their mental health and wellbeing. New Zealanders are also increasingly recognising the economic benefits of the arts, and support for public funding of the arts, including funding from councils, is higher than ever.
11. The evidence tells us that art, creativity and ngā toi Māori are good for us, our communities and cities:

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<sup>1</sup> *New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi* (2023). Creative New Zealand.



- engagement with arts, culture and creativity positively enhances wellbeing, and means communities are more likely to have strong connections to community, land and place<sup>2</sup>
  - six out of every 10 Otago residents feel the arts contribute to community resilience and wellbeing, and view the arts as playing a major role in Otago in years to come<sup>3</sup>
  - the creative sector contributed \$17.5 billion to New Zealand's GDP in 2024.<sup>4</sup>
12. Young people, Deaf and disabled, Māori, and Pacific peoples participate in the arts most frequently, and are more likely to agree that the arts are important to their personal wellbeing. LGBTQIA+ communities also participate highly in the arts and need more accessible and inclusive environments to support their engagement.

### ***Investment in cultural infrastructure, activities and events***

13. We commend Council's vision of Ōtepoti Dunedin as a vibrant city enriched by memorable, inclusive events. It is fantastic to see increased budgets in the 9 Year Plan to implement the Ōtepoti Live Music Action Plan, and the Draft 2025 Festivals and Events Plan.
14. Ōtepoti has a strong reputation for arts and culture, with a community undertaking work of national and regional significance across literature, visual arts, music and performing arts. Council's support for arts, cultural and creative activity ensures the sector can continue to deliver social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes for the city's communities.
15. We are encouraged to see Council's focus on celebrating inclusivity through the Draft Festivals and Events Plan to ensure community events are diverse and inclusive to all communities. It is also good to see the fantastic and significant work in the Ōtepoti Live Music Action Plan on supporting the music community to learn and perform across the city and Save Dunedin Live Music.
16. However, the success of this investment and these Plans relies on meeting the city's needs for strong cultural infrastructure, including accessible and affordable performing arts venues, across the creative ecosystem.
17. We are concerned that Council has removed funding for a new performing arts venue.

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<sup>2</sup> Wellbeing and Arts, Culture and Creativity in the Waikato: Understanding the impact of arts, culture and creativity on the people of the Waikato region. (2022).

<sup>3</sup> *New Zealanders and the Arts—Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi* (2020). Creative New Zealand.

<sup>4</sup> *Infometrics sector profiles 2024*. Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture & Heritage.



18. We note that a mid-size venue was supported by respondents to Council's 10 Year Plan – Early Engagement in 2024, who also commented on the need for more support for the city's arts, culture and music sectors.
19. As with other infrastructure such as transport and water, arts and culture require secure, stable investment from core funders, including Council, to survive and service the city. The impact of unstable or paused investment in the professional performing arts risks the loss of vital arts and culture infrastructure – which will cost more in the long run as it is harder to rebuild and re-establish than to maintain.
20. A performing arts venue – that showcases theatre, dance, music, ballet, and kapa haka – would be a significant asset for Ōtepoti. Arts venues offer vital spaces to showcase and perform high quality work for local and visiting audiences. They are also crucial for Ōtepoti's local economy by offering skills development and employment opportunities, where creative communities can make, develop and produce work.
21. New research also shows that the live performance sector contributed at least \$17.3 billion in social and economic value to Aotearoa New Zealand in the 12 months to 30 June 2024. For every \$1 spent on live performance, \$3.20 is returned in benefits to the wider community.<sup>5</sup>
22. For example, in 2024, the Dunedin Fringe Festival's 25th anniversary programme saw a boost in audience numbers and revenue for artists and the city. As the largest Fringe festival in the South Island, the festival has a significant economic and cultural impact for Ōtepoti. Last year, ticket sales generated \$141,715 in income for artists, a 41 percent increase from the previous year.
23. Ticket accessibility remained a priority, with 94 percent priced at \$25 or less as well as 16 free events, ensuring that festival experiences remained within reach of the broader community. The economic impact of the Festival was significant, generating at least \$1.2 million for the local economy. For every dollar invested, the Festival returned five dollars. The Fringe team rely on a huge team of volunteers to keep costs down and many partnerships across the community to bring diversity to the programme.
24. Strong arts organisations and regular arts and culture experiences also feed other parts of Dunedin's economy, including education, health, trade and enterprise, hospitality, retail and tourism. Arts and cultural events supported by Council create jobs, drive economic growth and deliver important cultural, economic and social benefits to Dunedin residents.
25. The loss of performing arts infrastructure in the city, with the closure of Fortune Theatre seven years ago, is impacting Ōtepoti's wider creative ecosystem and reputation. We are hearing from the performing arts community that they are seeing reduced career

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<sup>5</sup> Measuring and Articulating the value of live performance in Aotearoa, Massey University, 2024.



pathways, loss of expertise (such as producers leaving the city), fracturing of creative practice development, and general loss of audiences. An accessible, fit-for-purpose arts venue would enable touring productions to reach Ōtepoti, alongside the development of a high quality local performing arts practices.

26. The current outlook for the creative sector is challenging. We know from our research that creative organisations are under significant strain and operate with limited resources, and the erosion in the professional performing arts has a knock-on effect across the creative ecosystem. For example, trained technicians and lighting designers offer and their transferrable skills into film and tv, dance and movement artists can contribute their skills into gaming technology, and professional actors support the local film industry and visibility of Ōtepoti to national and or international audiences.
27. We continue to advocate for the development of a mid-sized performing arts venue and recommend Council considers re-instating the \$17.1 million ring-fenced in the capital budgets for its development. We encourage Council to continue to work with the Dunedin Theatre Network and Stage South alongside the creative communities, mana whenua, tourism stakeholders and business owners on this project.
28. As the appetite for artistic and cultural activity continues to grow alongside population growth, it's important that Council invests in cultural infrastructure that enables Dunedin's creative communities and practitioners to create and deliver their work. Just like the live music eco-system – the performing arts eco-system requires safe, affordable, fit-for-purpose spaces to learn, and spaces to perform. For the whole arts ecosystem to thrive, investment across both sectors is essential.
29. There is a need for other venues that creative communities can use to make and present their work, such as whare haka, studios, rehearsal spaces and venues. It is fantastic to see the Ōtepoti Live Music Action Plan's commitment to helping the music community provide and access affordable, fit-for-purpose and safe spaces for recoding, rehearsing and performing music.
30. We encourage Council to actively explore how it might continue this work to enable greater access to venues for all arts communities to make, rehearse and perform their work. We know there is an increasing need for accessible and affordable spaces where Dunedin's artists, creatives and ngā toi Māori practitioners can create and share their work with audiences.
31. Council's commitment to arts activities, including live music, alongside the performing arts venue development and greater access to venues for arts communities, would see a joined-up approach to resolving some of the city's biggest challenges – including enhancing access to spaces for developing, rehearsing and presenting for the arts community.

***International visitor entry fees – Toitū and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery***



32. We acknowledge the significant investment from Council to ensure the accessibility of both cultural institutions as free public spaces and need to consider raising revenue to support this. We commend Council's priority of making all visitors welcome to Ōtepoti's cultural institutions.
33. We encourage Council to consider alternative options to the introduction of a \$20 international visitor entry fee at Toitū Otago Settlers Museum and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, to ensure the valuable collections of art, stories and taoka of the people of Ōtepoti remain accessible to all visitors.

### ***Working with mana whenua***

34. We commend Council's commitments to working in partnership with mana whenua through Te Pae Māori and Te Taki Haruru, and to shape the city's direction and development with mana whenua contributions to decision-making.
35. Ngā toi ā rohe (the arts of a particular region, iwi, hapū) play a significant role in the protection, preservation and transmission of language, culture, and mātauranga, and express the mana motuhake and unique identity of people of an area, such as iwi and hapū in Ōtepoti Dunedin. We know from our 2023 research that ngā toi Māori is increasingly embraced by Māori and New Zealanders as a whole.
36. Council's support for ngā toi is a crucial part of ensuring ngā toi Māori is being produced, enjoyed and celebrated. Investment in ngā toi Māori also supports the revitalisation of te reo Māori and te ao Māori. It grows knowledge and value of the stories, values and places of importance to tangata whenua. Art-making activities connect participants to their whakapapa, tipuna, manga and awa, aiding wellbeing and a deep sense of belonging.
37. Success in promoting, revitalising and promoting ngā toi Māori also supports many artists, practitioners, businesses and tourism operators in the region, and positively enhances the reputation of Ōtepoti nationally and internationally.
38. Councils also have an important role in their funding and management of Māori cultural institutions. Dedicated funding and leadership of ngā toi Māori in Council supports capacity building and partnerships with iwi and hapū are valuable ways to build well-resourced, thriving and visible ngā toi Māori practice and Māori cultural institutions.

### ***Partnerships with the creative community***

39. Artists, creatives and ngā toi Māori practitioners in the region are valuable partners for Council to deliver its priorities and services to Dunedin's residents. Creative communities are skilled at designing and delivering innovative, strategic and cost-



effective solutions, and we encourage Council to consider how it can continue to develop strong, new partnerships with the creative sector.

40. For example, Otago Polyfest is a significant event on the cultural calendar for whānau and kaiako across the Otago region, having celebrated diversity and creative expression for many rangatahi from across the region for over 30 years. The event sees thousands of rangatahi take the stage celebrating Pacific and Māori culture.
41. There are 30 Pacific festivals around New Zealand, and Otago Polyfest is one of the oldest, celebrating the generations of families who have both attended and performed. The festival itself began as an afternoon of performances by a few Dunedin primary schools 30 years ago and is now a significant cultural event for Otago schools and whānau.
42. Otago Polyfest clearly demonstrates the benefits of multiple funding streams – across Creative New Zealand, Council, Otago Community Trust, and deep and strong working relationships embedded in community. This multi-stream support allows initiatives to be delivered that meet the needs of creative and cultural communities and Ōtepoti Dunedin audiences.
43. Meaningful partnerships with iwi, hapū and mātanga will also ensure ngā toi and mātauranga can be included and engaged with in Council's projects and activities. We encourage Council to continue to work with hapū, iwi and mātanga to ensure indigenous knowledge is valued and the stories of local mana whenua are appropriately told in community spaces.

#### **Council is a crucial investor in arts, culture and ngā toi Māori**

44. We acknowledge Council is facing several key challenges in drafting its 9-Year Plan and needs to balance prudent fiscal management alongside investment in critical infrastructure and the needs of all communities.
45. Dunedin City Council is a major, and crucial investor and partner in arts and culture. Many arts organisations receive core investment from Council, often in partnership with central government and private funders. Dunedin's arts and culture services are reliant on local government contributions, as this support is not guaranteed from other sources.
46. Creative New Zealand's ability to support the sector is under strain, we remain concerned about the sustainability of the arts community, with public funding from both central and local government under pressure. Private investments, including corporate sponsorship and private donations, are also down in the current economic climate.





47. Shared investment is vital for a resilient and supported arts and cultural sector. To maintain this collective approach, we encourage Council to ensure funding support for arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi is a core part of its 9 Year Plan.

### **Creative New Zealand's interest and investment in the arts in Ōtepoti Dunedin**

48. Creative New Zealand is the national arts development agency of Aotearoa New Zealand, responsible for delivering government support for the arts. We're an autonomous Crown entity under the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 2014.
49. Our legislative purpose is to *encourage, promote, and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders*. We do this by *Investing in the arts, Developing the arts, Advocating for the arts*, providing *Leadership in the arts*, and *Partnering for the arts*.
50. Creative New Zealand receives funding through Vote: Arts, Culture and Heritage and the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board Te Puna Tahua. In 2023/24, we invested nearly **\$79.4 million** in the arts.
51. We recognise the importance of Dunedin to arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi in Aotearoa. For arts that delivered in the Otago region, Creative New Zealand provided **\$2.5 million** of direct financial support in 2023/24. Of this, **\$1.9 million** in funding went directly to Dunedin, supporting individual arts projects as well as investment into major Dunedin-based cultural organisations, including Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Blue Oyster Art Project Space, Dunedin Arts Festival, Dunedin Fringe Festival and Dunedin Symphony Orchestra.
52. Under the Creative Communities Scheme, we also fund territorial authorities directly to support local arts activities. In 2023/24, funding of **\$282,098** was provided to the Otago region, which included **\$93,420** to Dunedin City Council and your creative communities.

### **Final thoughts**

53. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the 9 Year Plan 2025–2034.
54. We share your aspirations for Ōtepoti and look forward to continuing to work with you to realise the potential of arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi in the region. Our collective approach will ensure the creative sector and ngā toi can deliver value to Ōtepoti's communities.
55. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or if you wish to discuss further. The key contact person is:





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Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa, nā



Elizabeth Beale

**Co-Manager, Policy & Performance**

**Pou Whakahaere Paparua, Kaupapa Here, Arotake Hoki**

