

# COVID-19 Arts Report and Recovery Strategy

## May 2020

### **INTRODUCTION**

Creative Waikato has been focussing on capturing as clear of a picture of the impact of the COVID-19 situation on the wider arts and cultural sector as we can. As we head towards Level 1, there is picture emerging of what the needs are for artists, groups and organisations to ensure that we have clear plans moving forward. But, this situation continues to evolve, and the true impact on this sector will take up to a year to be fully realised. Arts funding has always had its issues – the key value points in this sector are around cultural value, societal value, and impact on well-being. This certainly can translate to economic value, but that is not the only measure.

As this situation is constantly changing, we are still compiling all the information and assessing where all the pressure points are. It will be hard to comprehend the true scope of what is happening and what the lasting effect may be for our local community arts and cultural groups who have a profoundly positive impact for the wellbeing of our communities. Even at present (Level 2) there is some uncertainty for some groups – particularly those in the performing arts.

*"People need culture. Culture makes us resilient and gives us hope. It reminds us that we are not alone."*

- UNESCO ResiliART Campaign

### **GENERAL BACKGROUND**

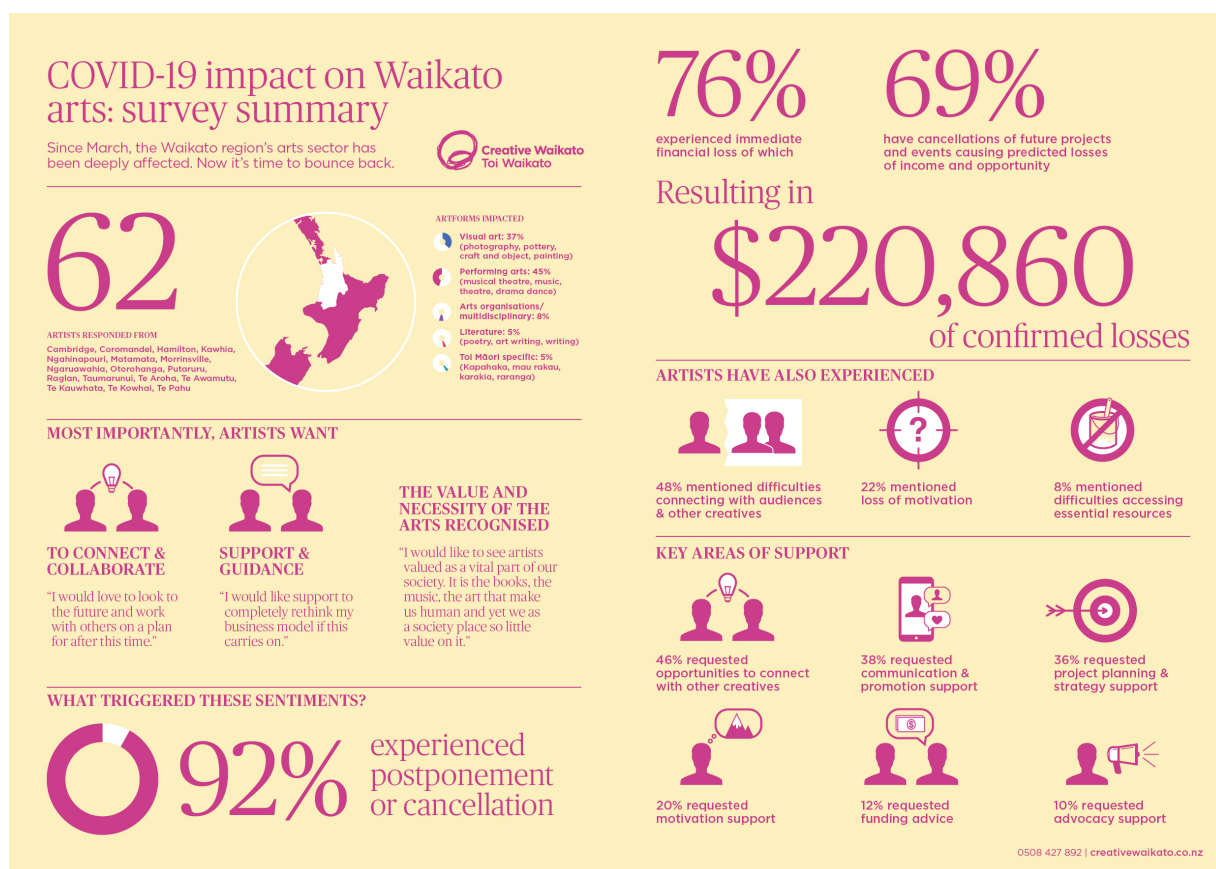
Global catastrophes change the world. The legacy of our current situation will be long lasting and it will continue to change the way we move, learn, connect and create. The arts sector is using this time of uncertainty to take a moment to settle in and think creatively about how we will respond.

We know that there will continue to be an arts sector after this crisis – it may be different for a while, but it will continue. There will always be a need for arts and creativity. We know the demand for the arts right now is at a peak – people are looking for things to do, things to watch, things to listen to, things they can be a part of from the safety of their homes.

Nature has a cycle of destruction and rebirth. It is when things seem darkest that the light can start to shine through, so what we are seeing is humanity's response to being faced with extreme change. We respond through the arts. We respond through kindness. Arts and cultural activities serve as a coping mechanism for humanity. They help us to adjust to new conditions. They help us find clarity around who we are and how we connect. We respond through creativity. Because of this, we are seeing

creativity on a level never before seen in human history. We just need to translate that into a broader understanding of the concept of value for the arts in the wider community.

We have completed one survey of our wider sector. This has examined impact, but was also intended to get a clearer picture of the support people need at this time. This has informed the support services that Creative Waikato has developed in terms of our approach, our development of resources, and our change of focus. We are also gathering information via ongoing communications (email, calls and digital meetings) with key stakeholders. This also helps us to better understand the issues faced, and support required to ensure our sector can thrive after this.



There is no doubt that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the arts and cultural sector. As stated above, there has certainly been an increase in creative activity throughout the lockdown, but participation (as audience, as performers, as members of groups and societies and classes) has ceased, causing major, and potentially long term challenges for arts organisations in the Waikato region - particularly for those non-profit groups who are heavily reliant on funding and volunteers to engage in their communities.

We know that now it is important to support the recovery and rebuilding of a sustainable, inclusive, accessible and relevant arts and cultural landscape for the future. To do this, it is vital to have a vision both for recovery, but also to use this as an opportunity to have a strategic vision for the future focus, development and vision for our arts and cultural sector across the region.

## How is the arts sector faring through Covid-19?

Obviously there has been a sector wide shutdown of a large number of arts activities – particularly those who bring members of the community together. Some of this has made a transition to online delivery, this has been varied, and whilst it serves the wellbeing of communities in some manner, it is not a replacement for face-to-face arts activities.

All local arts organisations had to cancel and/or postpone events – key components to their sustainability. There was also a call to adapt to online delivery, and many of these organisations had never worked in that way, or had the capability to make that change within the lockdown. There are questions around what the future will look like for the sector, and how to re-engage with audiences.

The Arts and Cultural sector will be hit harder by many other sectors financially, because it will take longer for events and activity to resume. The true impact of this may take 12-18 months to determine. Many of the professional/semi-professional artists also support themselves through work in the hospitality sector – which is also difficult.

The arts and creative sector will be hit harder by the COVID-19 recession than the general NZ economy.

Nationally, in the arts and creative sector, for the 12-month period to March 2021:

- Sector employment is forecast to decline by 11.7% versus 9.8% across the NZ economy.
- Sector GDP is forecast to decline by 16.4% versus 8% across the NZ economy. This decline is driven by decreased household incomes and tourism spending, and changes in audience behaviours.
- About 1/3 of workers are self-employed and many work part-time. Two key sources of secondary employment for creatives— hospitality and construction— will be among the hardest hit sectors.

*We know that the arts and cultural activity is vital for the wellbeing of a community and the sense of identity that we experience together.*

The arts serve to enhance emotional and physical health and hauora at this time of national crisis and trauma. As we prepare to face unprecedented mental health issues, the arts can provide an alternative and cost-effective essential contribution to some aspects of the complex mental health challenge – particularly for marginalised members of our community.

We know that online formats can provide some engagement, and there has been a huge increase in these offerings. This has some added benefit in terms of sharing of local work, for potentially reaching wider audiences and participants for work. There is some scope for how this can become part of a more varied offering through the various digital platforms, but this will never replace the activity that happens in shared spaces. Because of this, we know it is of vital importance that both artists and community arts groups are supported in order to get ready for when we can reconnect in person. It is possible that, even with our smaller audiences, community arts organisations will be able to face the public again ahead of commercial arts offerings, which often need larger audiences in order to break even financially.

**Artists are resilient.** They are used to adapting, but it is important that there is an ongoing framework to support their work. The arts can be seen as a largely service industry, where their direct impacts are in terms of liveability of our spaces and well-being of our communities. Having access to a thriving arts sector makes for an exciting and engaging city/town/region – there is a great strategic impact of setting things in motion to make this sector sustainable and active as it has a substantial contribution to the broader Waikato Region in many of the key measures – not only through the lens of cultural wellbeing.

## What are the key issues?

### Financial

- Loss of revenue – ticket sales, class attendance, funding (from gaming trusts etc), contracts cancelled due to performances not happening, loss of sponsorship.
- Ongoing expenses – staff, infrastructure, development costs
- Finite resources – exploring funding models for community organisations, part of existence prior to COVID, but the restart of activity will impact those even further.

### Organisational structure

- Lack of ability to plan with any certainty because of the way the transitions between COVID Alert levels work. The lead time on many activities is over weeks and months, rather than days, so the re-emergence of activity may face other organisational delays
- Need to upskill in terms of digital delivery, and ability to deliver with reliable quality to communities has been beyond the pre-COVID capabilities for many organisations.

### Professional Artists

- Loss of income.
- Health and wellbeing in the face of uncertainty – (despite often providing wellbeing for others through their work)

### Volunteer uncertainty

- Health and wellbeing of volunteers as we move back into Level 2 and Level 1
- Ongoing risks around volunteer burnout (was an issue preCOVID), often due to working on limited budgets and relying heavily on the work of passionate individuals.

### Audience and Participants

- Uncertainty around attending events/classes/rehearsals etc due to potential health risks (certain activities more problematic than others – choirs, orchestras, dance groups, kapahaka – close proximity works that also feature added risk of aerosol transmission through ‘droplets’)
- Wellbeing for the wider community who are unable to participate in cultural activities – community art classes, choirs, musical theatre, kapahaka, multi-cultural performance groups.
- Other cultural considerations around communities of people being able to connect through usual means that don’t translate in the online format – this will contribute to mental health issues.

## What is the funding situation?

There have been a range of COVID specific funding responses – many of these are focussed on those professional artists whose work and ways of operating has been stopped.

- Creative NZ Arts funding response – Phase One (completed 29<sup>th</sup> May)
  - o [Arts Continuity Grant](#) – supports short-term arts projects by artists and arts organisations (including groups and collectives) that can be delivered within a changed and evolving environment as a result of COVID-19.
  - o [Emergency Relief Grant](#) – provides temporary relief for independent artists and arts practitioners, who may be part of arts organisations (including groups and collectives), have received Government support ([COVID-19 WINZ Wage Subsidy](#)) and who meet our eligibility criteria.

Currently of the awarded CNZ funding approx \$295,000 has been allocated to artists in the Waikato Region. Many of these people have been first time recipients of funding from CNZ. This is a great sign for artists being enabled to create work, but it also speaks to the scale of arts funding delivered to the Waikato when this is nearly \$300,000 from \$16million.

- Other funding has been made available available for projects through NZ On Air, MusicHelps, Te Manghai Paho,
- Collected available arts specific funding:  
<https://creativewaikato.co.nz/creatives/bounce-back-covid-19>

## OTHER FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS:

One issue is for those groups who don't fit into the categories of the above funding, who are unable to deliver a project by the deadlines determined by those arts specific funding systems, or who need funding to support ongoing operation which has been impacted by the lockdown. Also, the community non-profit arts organisations often work outside the arts specific funding and rely on alternative funding methods or sponsorship. For groups who rely on ticket sales, and/or class fees etc, they are still coming to terms with what Level 2 requires, but some of that situation is addressed through the wage subsidy.

Some groups are okay for now, but it will depend on how long before they are able to resume regular activity – which may take until Level 1 (or 0). The performing arts (both hard and soft infrastructure) is at real risk here, because even with some funding support, a majority of the income of these groups is from ticket sales. There is need to examine the way these core community organisations are funded because there is an argument for community organisations to work outside of a commercial model in terms of other benefits it brings to the city and region, and if groups can make it through, the trends suggest that there will be a great appetite for live art experiences. The crucial thing is to make sure these groups are there for audiences when that happens.

## **Budget 2020**

There has been an increase in funding for the Arts and Cultural Sector in the 2020 Budget. There are a lot of exciting possibilities, but it is important to continue to advocate for the allocation of this funding into the regions of Aotearoa not just Auckland and Wellington. There is scope here for councils to partner with Creative Waikato on some clear advocacy around the importance of the regional voice in the discussions around this funding and how it is utilised.

The key parts of the budget that are potentially relevant to the Waikato are:

Budget funding initiatives for the cultural sector include:

- ***\$25 million for Creative New Zealand (over 2 years)***

This is the biggest government investment in CNZ since 2000 – which will strengthen the organisation’s ability to support the arts community’s recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

“Arts and creativity will be fundamental to our country’s ongoing recovery from COVID-19, so we’re delighted to have this additional investment to deliver to our hard-working arts community – a community that’s core to the heart and soul of Aotearoa New Zealand. It’s terrific to see the Government’s confidence and appreciation of the role of creativity and culture in our society.” – Arts Council Chair Michael Moynahan

It is important to note that between 2015-2018 the Waikato has received between 0.5-4% of CNZ National funding allocation.

It is also important to note that about 1/3 of CNZ budget comes from government funding. The majority (about 70%) comes from NZ Lotteries. Because of this, the impact of COVID on lotteries may have a larger effect on CNZ than anticipated. This will take some time to become clear.

### **OTHER KEY INITIATIVES:**

- **\$7.9 million for Careers Support for Creative Jobseekers** – a programme that will be progressively rolled out to support artists and creatives back into sustainable work and builds on the most successful aspects of the former Pathways to Arts and Cultural Employment (PACE) programme.
- **\$70 million over three years for a Creative Arts Recovery and Employment Fund** to support the rebuild of the creative industries by commissioning and supporting creative projects at a national and local level.
- **\$60 million over three years for a Cultural Innovation Fund** – a contestable fund to support new ways of operating, cross-sector partnerships, and create new ways to add value to the economy, particularly through digital exports.
- **\$20 million for a Cultural Capability Fund** to focus on immediate needs in response to COVID-19, such as legal services, online delivery and audience development.
- **\$16.5 million for a New Zealand Music Recovery Fund** specifically directed towards the contemporary popular music industry.

- The first wave of funding becomes available from July 2020.
- **\$2m for the Museum Hardship Fund** to be administered by Te Papa National
- **\$2.4 m over two years to [Te Matatini](#)** to deliver regional Kapa Haka competitions and the 2021 National Festival

Information from: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/support-arts-and-music-sector-recovery>

There is still a lot of unpacking to be done here. More clarity is needed around how the funds will work, how they will be administered, what the strategic vision will be for these new funds. This is the single biggest investment in the arts for nearly a generation. This shows that the arts are recognised as central to our success as a country. But it is still to be determined how this will feed into the region, and how it will feed into community focussed arts initiatives.

It would be ideal to see this embraced in all facets of the region. It is imperative that there is a regional voice in an arts advisory role in the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. Through sharing the view point of the regions within the Arts and Culture sector we can enable more arts activity in Aotearoa, which in turn enables more arts activity in the Waikato. There is an opportunity here for local council, leaders and arts champions to support this local voice at a national level.

There is also more to be explored in regards to deeply embedded funding issues. Community arts initiatives. The link between an arts perspective and the wider societal structure and ecosystem. Arts have a positive impact in all facets of society and community, and there is a breadth and depth of evidence to support this – particularly in regards to recovery and sustainable development. There is more to be explored locally and nationally through the collaboration between the arts and general health, mental health, corrections, youth and education. We hope that the funding will be used strategically towards a transformation of the arts ecosystem. Something that encourages a new level of sustainability for the arts, as well as ensuring that arts and cultural activity in our spaces are accessible and inclusive.

### **An Important Consideration:**

*There is a funding gap for community art venues and their operation. They don't often meet the funding criteria for CNZ who fund projects, they are competing with sports organisations for class-4 funding, they can get some philanthropic community funding, they can get some local government funding, but they run on a fine line, and this situation has severely impacted their ability to keep things running.*

*This is an opportunity to do things differently from the ground up. This is a chance to re-imagine how those funding streams work, and to invest into key arts and cultural strengths for the community. Visionary investment in the arts can give people hope for the future by marrying community building and wellbeing for the many and varied artforms, voices and culture that shape and enhance our daily existence in this region.*

## **Are there any initiatives, collaborations etc that are happening?**

Creative Waikato are working across the region to provide support and guidance around possibilities moving forward, but the lockdown has paused a lot of activity as we require more clarity around what is possible under levels.

Work has moved online where it can. This has proved useful in terms of sharing the work that we have available and has maintained a connection between groups and their audience. There are groups looking into what new online content they can develop, and how to reconnect with their audiences. There are some exciting possibilities with digital tools within the arts and cultural ecosystem – and there seems to be scope in the new 2020 Budget to explore this. But there are some issues. The key ones are: accessibility; saturation of content; low remuneration; Intellectual property; the need for new artforms that thrive in online communities. The other consideration here is the loss of the sense of community building, social identity, and inclusivity that occurs through shared real-world arts experiences. These are the things that have fundamental benefits for mental and physical health, as well as for societal cohesion.

There are campaigns currently being run to highlight local work, to encourage a wider understanding around the value of the arts, why it is important, and what it will mean for the city and our region moving forward in to a new and emergent possibility for what could be.

There are discussions in place for getting more artists into cities and public spaces to both showcase their work, and to benefit the wellbeing of people re-emerging into the Level 2 world. This will continue to expand as levels change, and people feel more comfortable engaging in public spaces. But there will still be a lag time for larger scale activity that requires lengthy pre-production, rehearsal and development before it becomes an engagement with the wider population.

## **A view for supporting the arts sector in the short and longer term?**

### **Short-term**

- Funding to ensure that groups that require it are able to continue functioning. It is the soft infrastructure of skilled people and groups that will be so important as we move back into operating as a city outside of our core bubbles. These groups will be providing wellbeing support, they will be activating our spaces, telling our stories, and ensuring that we can reconnect with our culture and identity through those shared experiences. (operational funding)
- Enabling activity where needed (project funding)
- Supporting initiatives by added promotion and audience development – there are exciting possibilities for what this could mean for Hamilton both in terms of arts activity, but also the perceptions of the city, liveability and tourism.

There is a paper to be delivered by CNZ to all local government bodies around supporting the arts, artists and arts organisations in the short term post COVID. Creative Waikato has provided support and feedback on the development of this paper.



## Longer term

*“Creativity and culture creates jobs, drives economic recovery and enhances social wellbeing”*

- Associate Minister for Arts Culture and Heritage Grant Robertson

Working towards the Waikato as being a cultural and creative region. This includes sustainable funding for arts activity at all levels, from community to professional. This means having a clear pathway within the region for sustaining professional artists so they can stay in the Waikato and be part of the broader arts eco-system.

Having a vision for a Waikato region that has a borderless arts strategy. An arts strategy that works towards the outcomes of Creative Prosperity, Creative Experiences, Creative Wellbeing and Creative Excellence as key overarching components of a thriving Arts and Cultural Sector. This is at the core of Creative Waikato’s Arts Navigator Framework. This strategy would support the strengths in our diverse community, and work with them to amplify their work, to connect and develop audiences, to grow community engagement and to celebrate our creative achievements in their many forms.

This would happen throughout the region. With a Waikato Arts strategy, we have an aspirational vision to see our region become a place with a vibrant arts and cultural sector that thrives with diverse and transformative creative activity. This means that there is the ongoing sustainable development of a wide range of artistic and cultural activities. The arts are valued and celebrated in our communities with robust and flourishing pathways from participation and audience engagement, to training and capability development through a range of practical activities and culminating in having a sector of creative professionals whose careers are able to live and thrive.

This would also mean Hamilton taking a lead for the region and becoming a ‘grown up’ art city. Ideally this would culminate in an aspirational vision for Hamilton as a UNESCO City of Culture. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development. The 246 cities which currently make up this network work together towards a common objective: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level. This status as a ‘Creative City’ requires substantial investment from the city into the arts and cultural sector as a commitment to what this means.

As an aspirational vision for Hamilton, this focus would have media arts as a core component of the city’s continued development. This would include investment in its cultural activities as well as emphasising the value of culture in the city’s hospitality, education and marketing sectors. Hamilton would become a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts. Creative activity would ultimately reflect our city’s dedication to promoting social equality and fostering the flourishing of human talent. This would allow us to have creativity as a cornerstone to support the local economy, increase levels of public participation in culture, renew investment in the city’s human capital, and ultimately contribute to the quality of life of our community.

It is important to encourage local government, industry and sector leaders to see artists as a more embedded component within the rest of society. This encourages a collaborative space where the value of artists in society can be better recognised and

utilised. As part of this, it would include a diverse but interconnected ecosystem of arts infrastructure (both hard and soft) that would provide clear pathways for artists and community members at any stage of the journey. \*(See attached ecosystem map)

## **Key Considerations for Recovery (+ support future visions and aspirations)**

*“A healthy cultural sector has many positive flow-on effects for other important parts of our economy, such as technical production, hospitality, venues and domestic tourism”*

- Rt. Hon. Jacinda Ardern

There are a range of considerations here, but some of the key things to encourage, invest in, and enable are:

- Audience engagement – Encouraging more local attendance and awareness at arts events. This can enable for core income for arts organisations for events with tickets sales, but also can drive more well-being benefits for the community through accessible arts activity. This is also more than just about building audience numbers, it's about building strong communities around arts organisations and becoming more resilient.
- Encouraging the creation and presentation of local stories – work that is for the good of the community.
- Sustainable models for careers in the sector – support the wellbeing of organisations and artists, as well as those who attend shows. Enable future planning and longer-term focus.
- Enable arts and cultural activity to be more representative and inclusive.
- Include arts and cultural representation in decision making around all facets of a society. This should include: Health and wellness; Aging; Rehabilitation; Public Welfare; Liveability; Environmental Sustainability; Economic Development; Workforce; Industry; Infrastructure; Technology and Innovation; Education; Political engagement; Community Cohesion; as well as Culture and Heritage.
- Enable creative spaces. Venues for arts activity, installations, exhibitions, rehearsals, concerts etc. Being engaged in individual and social art-making activities, in an inclusive space that enables that activity, can have a profound impact on people's mental health and can strengthen general wellbeing. This can also include encouraging more emphasis on the link between arts and health provision.
- Include arts and culture in local government 'Play' strategies, alongside other key city planning documents (LTP, Community strategies, Arts strategy, infrastructure planning). When exploring other examples of recovery strategies both nationally and internationally, 'play' through creative activities in urban environments is vital for mental and physical health as well as for encouraging creative thinking. This is connected to the UN SDG 11 for sustainable cities and communities. Play strategies are not just for physical activity (although that is key part), when paired with an art-informed framework they encourage creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. By enabling this we have an opportunity to increase the quality, livelihood and sustainability of the urban environment through playful experiences.

## Opportunities for our city and region

*“Artists contribute so much to our economy, the fabric of our country and our communities. It makes absolute sense to put a plan in place that is focussed on sustaining their ability to work and remain employed.”*

– Associate Minister for Arts Culture and Heritage Carmel Sepuloni

There is a real opportunity to consider an increased investment in the arts and cultural sector both through economic investment, and in-kind investment through support and access.

This should be a strength-based investment strategy looking at key organisations, events and projects that support and enable things that are working. A partnership investment that works towards aspirational goals for that organisation and the value and impact they bring to the community and the space where they are based. This is looking towards a meaningful engagement with understand that impact and wellbeing and enabling that understanding outside of the economic measures.

Looking towards the benefits of Audience development as a tool for the promotion of the work of arts organisations, a promotion of the activity in the city and the region, and the benefit for a community who have more awareness around local activity and local opportunities for connection, community and wellbeing. This increases the vibrancy of our society and community, and demonstrates that this place is a cultural hub. A creative space that is committed to the sustainable development of communities. A region that has clear pathways and development strategies, and a sector that is deeply embedded in the fabric of our identity so that this really does become the world-leading region that it could be.

This is a time for vision. A time for collaboration. A time for creativity. A time to reimagine our world as it could be, rather than just opting for the way things were.

## Are there groups/sectors that should be prioritised?

It is important to support venues and those places with arts focussed infrastructure – these spaces are so important for the city in terms of the ongoing arts activity, and it is important that the ability for those groups to remain operational is maintained. They also serve a number of other people-focussed arts organisations to enable further activity to happen.

The wider picture of how that funding is prioritised is still to be determined. There are also a range of soft infrastructure groups who enable the bigger festivals and activities to take place – these become signature moments in the Waikato Region, and again their sustainability becomes an important factor in our regions wellbeing.

Please see the Arts Sector list (included) to get a picture around the scope of the local groups/organisations/businesses/spaces etc. Obviously, this document doesn't list all the individual artist practitioners.

Performing Arts venues, which are often also subsidising community arts activity, are worth consideration here.

## What is happening in other regions?

The broader support for the arts seems to have primarily been through the work of Creative New Zealand, MusicHelps, Art Foundation, APRA, NZ Music Commission (which is covered in the funding section)

As far as specific funding support for arts organisations, we are currently unaware of any specific funding package in the regions with similar arts development organisations. We await the budget response from the government around the arts and cultural sector.

In terms of the COVID response, there is some research underway on a national level getting a better picture of what the response has been in different areas, where the gaps are, where there are positive results and strong engagement with a people-focussed recovery plan. It will be interesting to see the results here as this information becomes available.

60% of the venues in NZ are run by non-profit community organisations. They are all in a similar position requiring funding support, and it seems that this need will grow as time goes on.

Pre-COVID, The scope of council support in different centres is quite variable. Even the way this is articulated and measured is variable from council to council, so it is hard to accurately compare what the overall approach is. In cities like Auckland and Wellington there is large scale council investment in arts infrastructure (venues, events, organisations). Auckland Council is a major funder of theatres like Q Theatre, Basement Theatre, Centrestage Theatre, Corban Estate Arts Centre, TAPAC among others. They also substantially contribute to events like Elemental.

There has been a growing spirit of collaboration and discussion nationally between art organisations in similar situations around NZ. This includes sharing resources, discussions around frameworks for advocacy, and what the broader arts strategies are for the national and how different cities and regions feed into this discussion.

## OTHER IMPORTANT CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

In terms of the ongoing response, there is a lot to consider, and while we have been both in, and emerging from, lockdown there has been slow movement in terms of how the sector will re-emerge from this situation. There is still more to learn, more to be determined, and more to re-examine. Some of the key issues and considerations that we have been identifying are:

### **Arts-enabled decision making**

Arts is an important tool for humanity. It is drawn from creative thinking. It enables us to articulate things that can be hard to express in words. It lets us transcend where we may find ourselves, and to reconstruct and strengthen our ideas of identity both individually and collectively. It is vital for government, sector leaders, and strategic organisations to acknowledge the role that arts can play in terms of wider sector engagement, communication, creative thinking, and the needed reimagination of what our world could

be. There is strength in applying an arts-informed framework to decision making, and strategic development in all facets of community leadership. By engaging in an artistic and creative process we are embracing vulnerability, opening our minds and tapping into what makes us human. Creativity is vital to a thriving humanity and now is the perfect time to bridge this gap between creativity as an extra and creativity as essential. We believe, and evidence suggests that artists should be involved wherever possible, looking from different angles, engaging imaginations, testing new ideas, and shaking and prodding wherever they can. This could be an opportunity to explore what a new framework could be.

### **Sustainable Funding**

Many of the arts organisations in the Waikato region rely on a range of funding sources, and a lot of time is spent in the process of finding and securing funding. We believe there is the need for more sustainable funding streams for all manner of arts and cultural activity in alignment with the mandate from central and local government around the four well beings. There has been a call from the sector for more government arts funding for community organisations. And it is vital that funding can be enabled in the regions, but there is more work to be done here. But there is a potential for the Waikato to stake a claim as a creative region with Hamilton at its hub, but it relies on that people-focussed investment. It would be a great future focussed opportunity to explore the way our community and arts funding models work.

The idea of sustainable funding here is also looking at that funding as an investment over an extended period of time because the value brought to the people is vital. This longer term funding allows for more strategic use of that funding, to have broader visions for activity because there is more time to plan it, and to collaborate with other part of both the sector and the wider community because there is more time and scope to create authentic partnerships.

### **The Value of Art**

Unfortunately arts activity in the Waikato, and beyond, struggles to maintain sustainable careers due to the perceived nature of value. Artists, more so than other careers, are called upon to work for 'exposure' and to provide their work for far less than would normally be considered. Of course, this situation extends far beyond COVID-19, but we recognise the ongoing need for advocacy and discussion around appreciation and valuing of the work of artists. This is reflected in CNZ's national campaign. Creative Waikato has been an active advocate in this area, and will continue to be. This is also reflected in this need (both pre and post COVID) for audience development to encourage more members of the community to engage in local arts activity.

This is also connected to the idea of Arts-enabled decision making, where the value of that perspective is recognised and acknowledge, which in turn strengthens our community and the spaces in which we live. For this to happen in a meaningful and sustainable way, the arts need to be properly supported with a vision for the future. Artists need money and we need proper arts infrastructure. We need to invest in today's artists as well as tomorrow's. Because if we don't, then the incredible potential of our best creative minds will be wasted. But if we invest now, and start shaping our short, medium, and long term from a place of inspiration and creativity, anything will be possible.

There is also scope for local government to step up as advocates for the work of our arts and cultural sector in order to further enable the voice of the Waikato within national arts contexts. This would see a further strengthening of the partnership between Council and Creative Waikato as a key strategic organisation within this sector. Creative Waikato could present to national bodies as a leading strategic voice around arts development in the regions, which would strengthen the position of the Waikato within the Arts and Cultural Sector, and work to ensure more funding for regional arts initiatives and organisations.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

As we move into a post-COVID situation, there will be clear and urgent needs within the realms of mental health and well-being. Cultural activity has the potential to be a broadly beneficial focus area within this context. Ongoing international research has shown just how extensive the impact arts activity has on the mental health of a community.

When we consider this wellbeing, we know that cultural well-being can broadly encompass values, shared beliefs, customs, behaviours and identity. These sometimes intangible qualities help shape and define who we are as New Zealanders, our sense of space and place as individuals and communities, and they help to make our country the diverse place that it is. Both culture and well-being exist at the core of who we are as individuals, communities and a society. Culture is how we express our identity. It comes in many forms and shapes, but it enables us to share our stories and know who we are. Well-being is our capacity to live healthy and fulfilling lives. In terms of local government, well-being is focussed around the social, economic, environmental, and cultural situation of communities, in the present and for the future, and how these four components can be enhanced to benefit the people in our communities.

Well-being looks different in our diverse communities, and needs to be addressed within different contexts. We must acknowledge the well-being of tangata whenua and understand well-being from a te ao Māori perspective as being central to our understanding of well-being in Aotearoa. For this to happen, we need to support and protect our cultural identity and taonga (including local knowledge, te reo Māori, and sites of significance), and provide opportunities for their expression. The value of having a community engaging in creative and cultural practices is wide ranging. This can include: benefits for mental and physical health; a greater sense of belonging and social cohesion; improved self-esteem and confidence; transformative educational outcomes; and growing social prosperity.

### **Strategic Thinking and Innovation**

Arts and Cultural activity in the Waikato region is run by passionate people, by many volunteers, and by ongoing support from people who love the experience. COVID-19 has made a swift shift towards online delivery, and exploring other methods for support and engagement. For some of the sector this is definitely possible, and there are ways to diversify what the work is, but for things that are based around groups coming together to work - theatre, dance, kapahaka, music, cultural dance forms, and other performing arts it is interesting to think about what this will be and what innovation is actually possible.

There is a difficult balance between what works online, what doesn't, what requires a shift to Level 1, and what can provide an ongoing sense of community and identity in the meantime. There is some scope for innovation and strategic development within some arts organisations, and Creative Waikato has been working with those groups to facilitate those shifts and how that might work. There is more scope for how this online delivery could work, and how it is accessed, it just may necessitate a change in the design of work to make the most of this as a new format. Accessibility could be a good side effect.

## **SUMMARY**

Creative Waikato understands that this current situation is an opportunity for the sector to develop continued clarity around our individual and collective vision for the future, to innovate through a diversification of delivery, and to work towards re-engaging with local audiences and participants because the art world will have moved to a strongly local focus when things move from Level 2 into Level 1.

We have a vision for a community that prospers with diverse and transformative creative activity, and this is at the core of our own motivation, and through our ongoing capability development with our sector. In alignment with this, it is a great opportunity for local government, funders and strategic organisations to work together with our arts and cultural sector to support our organisations and communities. This support will acknowledge that cultural heritage, in all its multiple forms, from memories to landscapes, is a testament to human creativity, and is a resource for the construction of the identities of people and communities. As something that is alive and constantly evolving, it should be integrated into life and society in dynamic ways.

We look to bring back our active community and work to engage new participation to make arts and cultural activities accessible to all. We know that the demand on funding is always stretched, but we also know that ongoing funding support is vital to ensuring the survival of the sector. A sector that serves our community in a meaningful and powerful way. We also believe strongly that funding must be paired with the higher level strategic support, capability development and thought leadership that is currently the core focus of Creative Waikato. This is a time to innovate, and to imagine the new world as it could be.

***Mā te pohewa mā te auaha hoki, ka whakapuaki ngā kura e huna ana.***  
**With imagination and creativity, a hidden jewel can be revealed.**