[INSERT LETTERHEAD/LOGO]

Auckland Council

**RE: Proposed Annual Budget 2023/2024 (“Budget”)**

Date: [INSERT DATE]

From: [INSERT ORGANISATION]

Kia ora koutou,

[INSERT ORGANISATION SPECIFICS]

**Introduction**

We are writing to voice our deep concern at Auckland Council’s recently proposed Budget.

Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and its people are still recovering from the lasting impacts of COVID-19 restrictions and recent severe flood and cyclone damage - including many people working in our music, arts & cultural sectors such as artists, performers, promoters, production crews and other industry professionals who have suffered through two years of job losses and cancelled events.

Now is not the time to undo the hard work of our sector and Auckland Council’s previous investment by taking away the things that give ‘colour’ and joy to the city, and which keep people wanting to work, learn and visit here, and thereby keep our economy pumping.

**About the Music Sector**

Music and the arts are highly valued by Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland’s communities and bring many cultural and economic benefits to the city (as we have summarised in the annex to this letter).

Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland is the engine room of our national music industry and the arts & cultural hub of Aotearoa. In 2020, PWC estimated that the music industry alone contributed approximately $300 million to Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland’s local economy, and it is estimated that for every dollar invested in live music, over three is returned to the economy.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Auckland is a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a designated City of Music and was awarded Best Global Music City in 2022. Our city has a rich and storied heritage that has produced world-class musicians, producers, organisations, and events but the ecosystem that supports this success is fragile. It requires concerted effort and ongoing investment from both the sector and Auckland Council to ensure that our music ecosystem is resilient, sustainable and future-proof.

**Our Submission**

The fundamental purpose of local government (as enshrined by statute) is “*to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future*” and the Council’s Auckland Plan 2050 states the aim that “*Auckland is prosperous with many opportunities and delivers a better standard of living for everyone*”.

In our view this Budget, which would reduce both investment and community participation in creative and cultural activities including music, simply does not achieve this fundamental purpose or support this stated aim.

We submit that Auckland Council’s proposed Budget poses an immense and imminent risk to prosperity and opportunities for Aucklanders and their businesses, which will have a consequent economic effect nationally, and on the talent pipeline and international reputation of Aotearoa. The proposed cuts to arts & culture funding would stifle the music ecosystem and the benefits that music provides; and threaten the cultural well-being of our communities and the overall liveability, vibrancy, social cohesion, and identity of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

Of particular concern to us are:

* **the reduction in funding to Tātaki Auckland Unlimited (TAU)** which impact economic development, major event attraction, tourist and business event attraction, workforce pipeline development, and investment;
* **the reduction in funding to Regional Services** such as music programmes, community development groups, regional events, social services, and local board funding and to Eke Panuku Development Auckland Limited. This affects planned urban regeneration investment in waterfront including events, activation planning, and design for future development activities as well as public realm projects andlocal events in town centres such as Matariki festivals, weekend workshops for kids, Christmas, and cultural new year celebrations; and
* **the negative impacts this will have on under-represented groups** such as **Māori, Pasifika, youth, refugee, new migrant and rainbow communities who benefit greatly from the Regional Services’ cultural initiatives which will suffer from the proposed cuts.**

We submit that these proposed cuts will inevitably result in:

* **Fewer music events**. Without funding, many of Auckland’s music events and festivals will be cancelled or scaled back; and commercial events will be severely impacted by not being able to leverage the support of TAU (including Auckland Live and Auckland Stadiums). This will lead to reduced engagement between our communities and the many types of businesses that benefit from live events; a reduction in the diversity and vibrancy of the city's music scene; and will take away vital opportunities for young people to immerse themselves in or connect with their cultures.
* **Job and income loss**. Many artists, performers, music industry professionals and entertainment adjacent businesses benefit from council funded initiatives and rely on income derived from event audiences and related rights licensing to support their work. We are particularly concerned that Council has not fully considered the downstream economic impact caused by reducing opportunities for artists to exploit their intellectual property.
* **Reduced Tourism**. Auckland's music, arts and cultural scene is a major draw for tourists. There is still much work to be done to make Auckland a more vibrant place for tourists to visit/spend and these cuts will negatively affect one of our city's greatest appeals to visitors, leading to a decline in tourism and its associated revenue.
* **Harm to our cultural heritage and community well-being**. Music events are a source of social connection, community engagement, and personal growth and serve a vital role in preserving and expressing our arts, history, heritage and traditions. Cutting funding will negatively impact community well-being, particularly for vulnerable or under-represented groups. There will also be a further negative impact specifically on the music community who are already over-represented amongst those suffering with mental health issues.

**Our Response to Auckland Council’s Request for proposed solutions**

We understand and appreciate the enormity of the task Council faces. However, it is difficult to propose detailed solutions/options to overcome the Budget shortfall due to the lack of detailed financial information, and especially economic analysis of the impacts of the proposed cuts on Auckland’s economy and employment prospects in the Consultation Documents.

When faced with making difficult decisions – either in expenditure or in policy – best practice is to start with an evidence base. We don’t see an evidence base for the proposed budget. We are very concerned that the Budget has been prepared without due diligence, and the impact on current and future generations of Aucklanders has not been properly considered and understood.

**Our Requests of Auckland Council**

We urge Councillors to:

* **Reject this current Budget proposal** – specifically, the cuts proposed to Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, Regional Services, Eke Panuku, Local Board Initiatives and Contestable Grants.
* **Reconsider the proposed approach to addressing the current shortfall.** We request that Council considers a different mix of financial levers other than decimating community investment (such as targeted rates increases, borrowing and/or asset sales) when preparing a revised budget.
* **Undertake robust analysis** of the impact that any revised proposal will have on the long-term prosperity and prospects of all Aucklanders.

**A city is more than its infrastructure – and now is the time to invest in the recovery, and future resilience and prosperity of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and its people.**

As a representative music organisation, we welcome the opportunity to provide further feedback on the Budget and note that we are willing and able to discuss with Auckland Council how music can play a vital part in achieving Council’s long-term aspirations.

Yours sincerely,

[INSERT SIGNATURE & NAME]

**Annexure**

**A Brief Summary of The Economic & Cultural Value of Music and the Arts**

**for Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland**

As is reflected in Council’s own *Toi Whīkiti* *- Auckland’s Arts and Culture Strategic Action Plan* - 88% of Aucklanders believe that the arts are good for you, 86% agree the arts help to improve society and 90% agree that they learn about different cultures through the arts.

Music is the most accessible of all artforms - able to be enjoyed almost anywhere by anyone at any time - and it plays a vital part in nearly all arts & cultural events and initiatives. This is the reason that music features prominently in municipal health and wellbeing outcomes; and why so many cities around the world use music to define their city’s image, attract investment and tourism, provide social cohesion for their citizens, and rely on it in times of crisis to help and heal.

Music helps makes a city live, and be liveable in many ways.

* **Music Boosts the local economy**. A thriving music sector engages communities and ratepayers, attracts tourists, creates jobs, and generates revenue for local businesses such as restaurants, hotels, and retail. This, in turn, contributes to the overall economic growth and prosperity of the city.
* **Music Supports education and creativity.** Music education can improve academic performance and cognitive skills, while also fostering a lifelong appreciation for the arts. This can contribute to a more educated and creative workforce, which can spill over into other areas of the city's economy, such as technology and business.
* **Music Enhances Auckland's identity**. Our vibrant music scene gives Auckland a unique identity and sense of place, allowing the city to attract and retain residents, businesses, and visitors. It also contributes to a sense of pride and belonging among Aucklanders.
* **Music Fosters community**. Music events provide opportunities for people to come together and connect, fostering a sense of community and social cohesion. This helps to build a more inclusive and welcoming city.
* **Music Improves wellbeing and quality of life.** Access to music activities improve our quality of life by providing opportunities for recreation, entertainment, and personal growth. This contributes to the overall well-being and happiness of Aucklanders.

1. [*The Economic & Cultural Value of Live Music in Australia 2014*](https://livemusicoffice.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/LiveMusic-report-FINAL.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)