

Creative Spaces in Auckland

A review of inclusive arts organisations



Mapura Studios

“Arts for well-being are the main thing – all arts organisations should be saying that arts are good for health and well-being, culture and social cohesion” (Individual interviewee)

**arts
access
aotearoa**
Whakahauhau Katoa O Hanga

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InterACT festival

Introduction:

This review of arts organisations in Auckland was undertaken by Arts Access Aotearoa in November 2017 in response to a primary question posed by Creative New Zealand which asked, 'What are the primary areas of need (for Creative Spaces) in Auckland?'

The review engaged representatives of arts organisations in Auckland that are inclusive of people who face barriers to participation in the arts. By definition, Creative Spaces are inclusive arts organisations in the community/not for profit sector that provide the place and facility for people with limited access (due to disability or circumstance) to have access to and inclusion in the arts. Survey participants work in multi arts delivery with children or youth through to adults who have disabilities and sensory impairment, people recovering from mental ill-health and people who are Deaf. The review process used a survey, in-depth personal interviews and a focus group.

The process allowed participants to discuss and analyze the challenges they face as they respond to community needs. The findings in this review show the need for a wider scope for action on strategic planning, understanding the value that accessible and inclusive community arts make to a thriving city.

This report should be read in reference to the 2017 UK report 'Creative Health and Well-being' which is the most recent and complimentary study into this sector's value.

<http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

Executive Summary:

The review highlights areas of long-held concern. Creative spaces sector members know there are specific systemic barriers that reduce and challenge their ability to respond to community needs. These barriers impact their ability to increase accessibility and inclusion in arts and creativity services. Their programmes and services improve the well-being, health recovery, social development and accessibility for people who face barriers to participation and inclusion. The challenges for creative spaces, allied organisations, community arts workers and art therapists included in this review are collected under three specific themes.

1. Recognition:

Participants stressed that the sector was not recognised as having 'real value'. Whether in arts, health or social outcomes, their general experience was that the need for creative expression and participation in creative activity and projects is generally not believed to be important. Their service and contributions were not understood nor could they be valued by funders, policy makers and policy agencies due to a lack of empirical evidence.

“The under-resourcing and under-valuing of our organization is debilitating, and, the still general perception that being an artist is not a “real job,” a participant said.

Review participants stressed a need for greater mutual understanding between funders, policy makers, political leaders and philanthropists that recognised the value and importance of their community arts organisations in delivering better arts, health and social outcomes.

Another participant said “There is disparity at local board level – (Auckland) council needs to ensure their strategic direction is followed.”

2. Representation:

The respondents felt they are not represented by a peak body locally, and that there is a need to represent and advocate for their needs and concerns to local government, central government, policy makers and officials and to philanthropic funding agencies.

There is also a need to clearly articulate their vision, the value of the service they provide and what needs they are responding to. For example, unemployment, youth at risk, recovery from mental ill-health or living with a disability.

There was consensus that Auckland Council and other funders do not have a consistent strategy supported by evidence demonstrating how community arts organisations respond to health and well-being needs by migrants, youth, seniors, disabled, refugees, and other minority groups.

There is however, a Creative Arts Network (CAN) which has been recently formalised but without investment it will rely on volunteers for administration. Those who could run CAN are stretched by commitments in their own organisations and work places.

3. Investment:

Creative Spaces understand their services are professional and should be remunerated. Agencies could utilise their services to achieve agreed outcomes and mutual strategic goals.

Project by project grants investment are piecemeal, not strategic and miss the opportunity to have greater impact. Creative spaces feel ‘siloed’ and are missing the connection to a clear vision that contributes to local and central government policy targets or outcomes.

Creative Spaces need a way to apply for core funding on longer time frames for agreed service delivery. This would form part of a district-wide approach that would support their ability to be sustainable, respond to changing needs and obtain a greater reach into communities that need their service.

Recommendations:

This review provides the following recommendations:

1. That local and central government agencies and philanthropic organisations who share goals for the well-being of people in an accessible and livable Auckland undertake cross-cutting (cross-agency) research and actions in order to better understand the value and delivery opportunities of the creative spaces sector.
2. That these same agencies develop policy and collaborative infrastructure that recognise the value of the community arts sector and its potential to increase the well-being and health outcomes desired by agencies that have the ability to invest in their delivery.
3. That a strategic plan incorporating community arts organisation's and allied arts workers in the arts and well-being / health and disability sector is developed with local and central government planning and funding agencies. The task would seek understanding of the value of the creative spaces sector and apply new thinking to the needs of the communities' who benefit from access to arts and creativity. Community arts providers, funders and policy writers would seek an alignment of resources to reduce waste and benefit from opportunities.
4. That as a first step, a meeting would be convened for all interested and obligated parties in Auckland to discuss these issues. It would ideally have representatives from Auckland Council and central government agencies and funding agencies, together with creative spaces representatives. Representatives would present to their experience, outline their needs and what drives them. They would explore options for a sector strategic plan with recommendations and actions.
5. That a core outcome is worked towards. A co-operative infrastructure with agreed actions and targets can be reported on annually. As a result, better outcomes for people using community arts services will be achieved and the creative spaces that deliver them will be recognised, valued, and able to deliver their services sustainably.



Mural by artists from Toi Ora Live Arts Trust

What are the gaps?

The following questions were asked and discussed in the research process.

Questions: What gaps are there in your service and what areas of need would you deliver to if you could?

Respondents demonstrated there is a need for their programmes and service to have greater reach. They could include more participants in excluded sectors of the population if they had the support to do so. There is a need for a greater reach to include seniors, children, youth, additional to disabled people and mental health consumers.

“We cannot employ full time staff.” a focus group participant said. However without a strategic sector plan and with low funding “we don't know where the gaps are.” Further research into population and communities and creative spaces' provisions are needed for this.

There is no strategic plan for creative spaces in Auckland and no research to supply evidence of need and value. There are no strong partners with shared goals to join with the creative spaces in developing a plan. It is felt that funders need to 'put some skin in the game' and provide core funding for lead organisations to get to a stage where they can be sustainable, plan ahead, develop the capability of their staff and reach more people who can benefit from their projects.

There are gaps in their visibility. Organisations felt their profile was often lost to the needs of providing the programme and their ability to promote their value was low.

“We need to get our story out – the perception of what is delivered.”

There was a gap in funding opportunities for contracts or funding that crossed over arts and mental health categories. Organisations see the need to respond to arts and health outcomes and recognition of the value in this crossover is needed.

There is a gap in the ability for organisations to communicate and work together, thereby avoiding silos to benefit from sharing resources.

There is a gap in empirical research to support community arts groups wanting to respond to social change and health needs.

A focus group participant expressed “If the policy makers in Wellington have the research, then let's see it.”

There is a gap in the ability and strength of community arts organisations to promote their value to funders, policy makers and politicians and for those in power to understand the value in what is being offered.

The general feeling of frustration is encapsulated in these two comments from focus group participants. "There is a disconnect between top down and bottom up". And, "We need to be understood by Auckland Council, MOH, MSD."

Question: What are the key areas of need in Auckland?

Respondents indicated the following:

- **A Strategic Pathway**

There is a need for a clear strategy for the long-term development and sustainability of the community arts organisations and individual tutors that provide participation and inclusion in arts for people from excluded / vulnerable or disabled communities.

Local and central government departments, agencies, funders and philanthropists need to be actively involved in a strategic plan on the sector's purpose, outcomes, sustainability and development.

There needs to be a clear and coordinated voice for and by this sector to deliver its story and value.

An ability to measure, evaluate and prove the value of programmes, projects and service is required.

- **Professional standards and qualifications**

There is a need to recognise and remunerate competence, qualifications and contribution. Good people are being lost from the sector. Good people with skills to offer are unlikely to join.

"We are going backwards," one participant stressed.

- **Investment and funding**

Getting policy makers and funders to connect strategically across departments and agencies is important so they understand that investment is needed and why. Siloed funding that does not allow for flexibility (or example, arts and mental health) makes it harder to deliver to health needs using arts. There is no organisation available to provide stable funding for community (arts) organisations that provide high standard results for improved mental health and social well-being.

Concerns around investment are inherent in these participant responses:

"Almost all projects have to be 'new'".

"We feel we are all competing within the same small restricted pots"

"Funders should put skin in the game – we take all the risk - it is difficult to provide to the needs we know are there."

"There is no strategy".



Circability Central

Question: What other organisations are delivering to these needs?

The sector that provides arts and cultural inclusion for communities who face barriers in Auckland are varied and do not fit one particular model. In fact, they are as diverse as the communities they serve and the arts they enjoy. There are programmes in circus skills, painting, sculpture and digital art, creative writing, dancing and choreography, theatre performance, festival production, cultural arts (kapa haka to whakairo) music making and performance.

Question: What organisations deliver accessible arts projects or programmes in Auckland?

Nga Rangahtahi Toa; Arts Center Helensville; Corbans Art Estate; Toi Ora Live Arts Trust; Artists Alliance; Mapura Studios; Circability Trust; Changing Minds; A Supported Life; Two4Nine; Giant Leap Foundation; Hoehepa Foundation; Seniors Dance; Interacting Disability Arts Theatre Company, Youth Town. There are several independent practitioners who work outside of and within these organizations: for example Tiffany Singh.

Touch Compass Dance Company is a member of the sector (but Totara funded by CNZ).

Whitecliffe College and Raukatauri Music Therapy Centre (private training colleges) and the Auckland University School of Education Critical Studies are allied to and supportive of the sector member's progress and concerns.

Creative Access Network (CAN)

This newly incorporated society has been established primarily as a linking organization through which funds could be applied for and distributed. It has a voluntary coordinator and because it has only recently been established it has no funded achievements yet. The supporters of the network have indicated they have limited capacity to coordinate or do extra funding applications.



Mapura Studios

Question: What resources might be accessed to address Auckland's needs?

Participants in the focus group have suggestions (and solutions) regarding their needs.

Strategic Planning

Leadership and connections are required to bring about strategic planning and recognition because the Auckland sector feels unrecognised. Cooperation with Auckland Council, Creative New Zealand, MOH, MSD, DHB etc. is required.

CAN Network

If the CAN network had financial resource to employ its coordinator more local work could be achieved on these points:

- How to organise ourselves
- How to collaborate together
- How to research together

Conference

A meeting /conference is needed for planning and engagement. Participants would be from the creative spaces / funders / government departments, DHB's and agencies. A strategic plan facilitator is required to bring the creative spaces together with policy writers, funders, politicians and philanthropists. Government departments such as MSD, Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children and Ministry of Health need to be included.

Facilitation

A facilitator or service is required to bring together the perspectives and expertise of Auckland Council, central government departments and agencies, and local funders. This would uncover a collective understanding of the value of the creative spaces sector. Policy change is needed to recognise the value of this sector and investment should be an important outcome.

Partnerships

Participants understood that partnerships with larger or strategic organisations are necessary and could be explored in a strategic plan. Formally partnering with the likes of universities or private training institutions could bring more resources, improve professional standards and help sustainability. Assistance in brokering partnerships is necessary.

“They will support research that teaches the next generation of policy makers” a participant said.

A respondent identified, “It is also noted that in order for the services of creative spaces to be inclusive they can also be adjunct to libraries, pools, sports facilities and



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community centres where multi-purpose space is available” and that “We must be partners and included within much bigger organisations.”

Funding

Creative Spaces need a way to apply for core funding on longer time frames for agreed service delivery that will then support their ability to be sustainable and, respond to changing needs, obtain a greater reach into communities that need their service.

There has been no growth in funding of this sector that responds to population growth and cost of living, compliance and insurance. Applications are limited to a finite number of funds.



Mapura Studios

Background to Arts Access Aotearoa

Arts Access Aotearoa was established in 1995. Its vision is that “All people in New Zealand are able to participate in the arts”.

As an advocacy and service organisation Arts Access Aotearoa works with others to bring about changes in policies, service delivery and public awareness that make the arts more accessible and inclusive.

Arts Access Aotearoa supports arts organisations and venues to increase their accessibility, builds the capability and leadership skills of grass-roots community organisations providing arts opportunities to people with a disability, raises public awareness about access to the arts and provides a national information service. It is also the lead organisation advocating for the arts to be used as a rehabilitation tool for prisoners.

Method of enquiry

The review used three ways to collect data from Auckland stakeholders who Arts Access Aotearoa considers play an important contribution in making community arts accessible and inclusive in Auckland.

- An online survey
- Interviews in person and by telephone
- A focus group

The participants covered a broad range of people representing creative spaces (visual art studios) such as Mapura Studios, associated arts organizations (Giant Leap Foundation – Deaf Theatre) art tutors (Whitecliffe College of Art and Design) and community arts workers (Tiffany Singh) and Touch Compass (a professional dance company).

What are the key areas of need in Auckland? This question opened an exploration into what are the needs that the community arts sector responds to, who is responding and what gaps are noticeable. In this study participants responded to ‘need’ in two ways. It is interpreted by respondents as need by the community that organizations and individual community arts workers serve. There are also needs experienced by the arts organisations in order for them to deliver to their communities.

Contextual challenges for Auckland to overcome in creating a robust community arts sector

The challenges that Auckland faces (while not unique to this city or district) are currently experienced at the extreme end. They are caused for the most part by fast growing population fueled by immigration. By the end of May 2016 the population grew by 2.6% raising the total to 1.66 million. Infrastructure (such as public transport, highways and water) has not kept pace with demand.

Likewise there is a shortage of houses, (35,000 new homes annually are needed to meet demand). A housing crisis has caused very high house price rises (the average house in July 2017 was \$1,044,303); rental prices (average two bedroom home is \$495 per week) and homelessness is obvious. The public health and water storage systems are stretched.

The creative spaces sector includes a diverse range of organisations that receive mainly project by project funding. With organisations running to lean budgets with no reserves, they aim to balance their income and expenditure but are paying their staff low wages. These do not in many cases reflect decades of work experience and standards. They are strained by rising costs in rent, transport, travel, health and safety compliance and insurance.

Regarding professional development and funding a participant said "We are going backwards."

All organizations are constrained by lack of investment. This lack restricts their development or growth for longer term sustainability and ability to plan. Some participants say they face burn out or are disillusioned due to lack of career pathways for staff and without core funding options that allow them a base line security from which to develop organisational strength.

There has been no growth in funding of this sector that responds to population growth and cost of living, compliance and insurance. Applications are limited to a finite number of funds. Two respondents said:

There was general agreement when a focus group participant said, "We are competing against one another in silos." And another said "Existing funding models undervalue the contribution of the sector."

These and other issues form a background to Auckland city and districts' capability to develop a thriving community arts sector that responds to the creative and cultural needs of a diverse, multi-cultural city and for people who face barriers to participation due to disability or circumstance.

Conclusion:

Across Auckland, community arts organisations and arts workers are responding to the needs of people who face barriers to inclusion through arts programmes that aid well-being, improve health, social behavior and happiness, all the while developing cultural expression and strengthening artistic skills.

These creative spaces are a valuable asset to Auckland's development as a creative, livable city as they provide the places and programmes for people (irrespective of impairment or circumstance) to be creative, to express their voices and be contributing, engaged fulfilled citizens.

New Zealand agencies do not currently fully understand the value, (economically and creatively) of these organisations and the people that work in them. However their results are of great value.

The creative spaces sector has not been strategically engaged with by policy makers and funders to maximise their potential individually or collectively to assist in major issues such as youth at risk of addiction and crime, prisoners returning to the community, adults facing social isolation, unemployment or recovery from physical or mental illness.

It is important for everyone to listen to the experience and needs of all parties (the creative spaces, policy makers, funders and the artists). A plan is needed and agreement on the steps to unlock the potential of this sector. A planning conference for agreed outcomes, cross-cutting (inter-agency) infrastructure and straight forward non-siloed investment will be a start.

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