

## **SUBMISSION TO THE DEVONPORT-TAKAPUNA LOCAL BOARD PLAN 2020**

**FROM: DEPOT ARTSPACE, DEVONPORT**

**This submission to the Local Board's Annual Plan was prepared before Covid-19 required NZers to Lockdown, leaving many community organisations and small businesses uncertain of, and in many instances fearful for their future. It has been reiterated by government and business leaders that there will be a 'new normal', although its form has not yet been described.**

**However, prior to Lockdown Depot Artspace had been considering its direction with regard to the changing shape of the creative sector both internationally and locally, in all spheres of practice, employment, service delivery and audience engagement.**

The following paragraph, written after research undertaken into the creative sector, was therefore surprisingly prescient in relation to the total social and economic landscape: "We are currently undergoing national and international crises, which are engendering a greater sense of what matters to people, and reinforcing the need for centres like Depot Artspace. Community, turangawaewae/sense of place, whakapapa/our history and stories are among those priorities. To address a situation by acting collaboratively to provide a positive response, such as an exhibition referencing turangawaewae sense of place would have significant community benefits." (P. of submission)

**The following submission raises these issues as we contemplate a more relevant, responsive and subsequently viable future which is actually synchronistic with the future following the current crisis. In this submission, we address the efficacy of a local focus, built on Devonport's rich early history, its creative whakapapa, small business infrastructure and strong sense of identity.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since it opened 24 years ago, change has been a constant as Depot Artspace seeks and responds to opportunities, and as it adapts to the changing environment while being true to its ethos and identity and effectively serving the local and creative communities.

This submission references the history whakapapa of the Depot, from its establishment to the present and documents changes over time as external challenges and changes, both local and national, have taken place. (APPENDIX 1)

Most importantly, it documents what is meaningful and what matters with regard to services that continue to fulfil the role of the Depot as a grass roots creative community committed to 'creating an environment that encourages creating an environment.....'.

This submission also references the changing landscape for arts and culture at both a national and global level as this affects our delivery of services and programmes locally, and our proactive responses to these changes. In many instances, community groups can neglect to reference the 'big picture' when addressing local issues and this is a continued source of concern when we approach contract negotiations with Auckland Council. As we are aware, any business or service that fails to analyse and adapt to the potential impact of change has an uncertain future and in the case of a community organisation, does not serve its community well.

## **DEPOT ARTSPACE: CHANGE AND ADAPTATION**

Depot Artspace has undergone various metamorphoses in response to need, demand and opportunity and the changing creative landscape, both locally and internationally.

### **Changes to the visual arts scene have included:**

- Burgeoning online sales of art work
- The rise of the secondary art market and a subsequent increase in, and expansion of art auction houses, from 2 in Auckland a decade ago to 7 currently, with auctions taking place weekly.
- The growing perception that art is an investment item. (Depot Artspace has produced a report on the implications of the secondary market for emerging artists, and on the commodification of art)

- The closure of established galleries, both as a result of noted changes and as rents increase and artists seek other sales opportunities. This is an international phenomenon.

Depot has addressed these changes through additional support for exhibiting artists, through increasing investment in targeted social media, paid print advertising, videoed artist interviews, live-streaming Q&A sessions, and a redevelopment of the Depot website to include an online gallery.

### **Changes to the music/recording environment:**

- The continuing growth of home studios.
- Increasing sophistication of equipment that facilitates recording and music production.
- Capacity for online collaboration, locally and internationally.

However, the recording studio, Depot Sound has defied the home recording studio phenomenon with an increase in demand, which led to the construction of an additional studio in 2016, funded by Lotteries Community Facilities. We consider this to be a result of the technical expertise of current studio staff and the natural tendency of musicians to gather and create collaboratively.

### **Changes in creative industries and employment opportunities:**

- The rise of the gig economy, which provides both opportunities for creatives as well as risks of exploitation. (CNZ's survey addressed the issue of fair pay for creatives who are often expected to provide 'free stuff'. Depot has also researched and uncovered the extent of exploitation that takes place in the guise of 'creative internships'.)
- Increasing impact of disruptive technology significantly reducing employment, for example in the film industry where hands-on jobs are now digitalised.

Depot has addressed these issues through the establishment and implementation of an online platform 'Revolution Creative' [www.revolutioncreative.co.nz](http://www.revolutioncreative.co.nz) which meets the employment needs of both creatives and employers. For small businesses wanting to build their profile or undertake one-off promotional work, this is a cost-effective opportunity, which also supports the creative sector.

Depot's successful ArtsLab programme for creative job seekers, now in its 19<sup>th</sup> year, has developed an online service, which is operating full time during lockdown. Post lockdown and with increasing employment challenges, it will have a greater presence at the Depot, creating critical mass and a dynamic interactive creative hub.

### **POST COVID-19**

Post Covid-19 the solutions developed by Depot Artspace to address change will become increasingly valuable to the creative sector.

While an online presence of services provided by the Depot will continue, we anticipate that once people emerge from Lockdown the need for and use of active, engaging and socially relevant community hubs such as ours will increase.

"For those interested in supporting creative economies, hubs are important, not least as 85% of global employment growth comes from small start-ups. Increasingly, hubs are a platform or workplace for creatives..... They also recognise that creativity is often the product of social encounter - creative practice is not confined to galleries, artist studios or cultural institutions. They are fostering new forms of making, learning and trading that can take advantage of new technologies while still recognising the value of expertise and craft skills."  
British Council, 2017

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our recommendations address the current state of the creative infrastructure as administered by Auckland Council, and also the potential for a new and positive future with directives altered accordingly and resources redirected or further allocated.

1. Depot Artspace envisions a new future for Aotearoa New Zealand, which is community, based, and where social wellbeing, community cohesiveness and economic prosperity are cornerstones of prosperity.

In Devonport, the creative sector has potential to play a significant role in supporting and strengthening our local identity, sense of place/turangawaewae, Devonport's attraction as a visitor destination and, subsequently our local economy.

This requires a new way of future-managing our community assets, directed less by external forces and more by those 'in tune' with the local landscape.

However, we submit that our current city structure as overseen by Auckland Council, does not facilitate future-thinking.

Depot Artspace' experience of council is primarily through its contract for services. As previously noted the creative sector has undergone significant change over the past few years to which we have responded proactively. However, our Council contract remains unchanged in terms of expected outcomes, which are now outdated and dissonant with community and creative sector needs.

- A. We therefore recommend evaluation of current contracts based on the fact there has been no review by Council of Arts Centres contracts and KPIs, in the 10 years since Auckland Council was formed. In fact, we are continuing to operate within NSCC guidelines.
- B. We also recommend, rather than a top-down approach in determining contractual obligations, that Local Boards and affected community groups are actively and equally involved in deciding on contract outcomes.
- C. We believe similarly that an approach to addressing the future and future needs of our community is most effectively made collaboratively, by members of the community representing all sectors: retail, hospitality and other businesses, the creative sector, community services, tangata whenua and TMA.

2. Another issue and subsequent recommendation, relates to both the implications for events under the current Covid-19 crisis and the potential for developing a local events programme to support the community and creative economy:

International events and those that encourage large gatherings, such as Auckland Art Fair, Writers' Festival, Auckland Arts Festival, sporting fixtures, concerts, and conferences have been cancelled and their future for 2020 and beyond is uncertain, as many are also dependent on travel.

This means that significant resources for budgeted events, held by ATEED, are unutilised, and could be directed to events supporting local tourism, local talent and the local economy.

In terms of allocation by ATEED of funds to support a local creative economy, we note their inequitable distribution of funding and that the region north of the Harbour Bridge received only 2.4% of \$19,500,000, or \$411,000 in two years. (APPENDIX TWO: ATEED financial distribution) Support for local events on the North Shore would go some way to addressing this inequity.

We also anticipate that 'Going and Growing Local', where communities build on their particular strengths and assets to prosper socially, environmentally and economically, is the way of a new future.

3. With 'Going and Growing Local' as a theme for the future, and with communities building their distinctive identities, it would be important that Devonport-Takapuna, and the North Shore, is represented by assets that are already a part of other areas. One component of most centres is a regional gallery, as with Te Uru in West Auckland, Mangere Arts Centre, Tu Tuhi Pakuranga, Franklin Arts Centre.

Our recommendation is that the plans for the Shore Exhibition Centre, initiated pre-amalgamation are revived and that it becomes a part Panuku's development plans for Takapuna. The former library, in the Strand was earmarked by NSCC for this development and Dr Rodney Wilson and architect Pete Bossley were engaged to progress the planning. (APPENDIX 3)



## **CONCLUSION**

This submission is based on a vision for the future as we emerge from Covid-19 with the knowledge that things will not be the same and that changes will need to be made to support our communities to not only survive but prosper.

Some of the issues we have identified, such as current contracts with Council and inequitable distribution of funding, will hold us back from future development unless addressed.

Other issues, including redistribution of ATEED funding and the revival by Panuku of plans that would support a vibrant, culturally self-sustaining infrastructure, can enhance our local identity and sense of place/ turangawaewae and facilitate a more prosperous future.

## **APPENDIX ONE: Depot Artspace History:**

Depot Artspace was opened in 1996 after a 4 year campaign to develop the former borough council works depot as a creative community space. The initial designs for the Depot were developed around it being an arts incubator, and as well as a rehearsal space for musicians, and fledgling recording studio, plans included artists' studios running the length of the building with an exhibition space for resident artists.

**Development history:** When the initial construction took place, undertaken by local volunteers and community connections, teams and individuals, inexpensive processes and materials needed to be used as finances were negligible.

A Comm. Service worker built the soundproof studios from haybales, with the assistance of volunteers and studio users, at a cost of \$5 – 800 including hay and electrical wiring.

Volunteers constructed makeshift walls for studios by hanging sheets of MDF from chains and these were occupied by artists from 1997 – 1999. A grant was also received from CEG to assist in studio construction (\$20,000) and further funding of \$50,000 was given to develop the incubator/mentoring service.

**Creative Mentoring:** It is important to remember that the Depot needed to represent the values of the defunct trust, whose mission statement included support for the unemployed, for young people and for the local community. This happened through the studios, and in 1999 with a fledgling arts mentoring programme.

From 1997 up to 2006 there were 12 studios in the Depot. The studios were used by painters, a writer, music teachers, sculptors, illustrators, screenprinter, and model and film makers, events and entertainment business.

Because the informal mentoring offered was having positive results and we saw an opportunity to develop and formalize the mentoring service and received funding from JR McKenzie Trust for pilot project for 3 years. In that time we assisted more than 40 creative practitioners into employment. The project was called AIMS ( Arts Incubator Mentoring Scheme).



**PACE (Pathways to Art and Cultural Employment)** In November 2001 the Labour Government launched PACE and at the beginning of 2002 we were approached by W & I to provide some of the services we had been offering on AIMS. In 2003 – 4 Lynn Lawton was employed to manage PACE and subsequently our numbers and programme developed with referrals increasing significantly.

**Internship Pilot:** From 2004 we began developing internships/apprenticeships – including job seekers and artists either from school or the community. In 2013 We were chosen to take part in an Internship Development scheme funded by ASBCT. To this day we run internships with continued success, assisting at least 90% into employment, both in NZ and overseas. Almost all would acknowledge the Depot as playing a part in their career development. We know this because many stay in touch with us.

**Kerr St Artspace/Whare Toi:** In 2001 – 2003, given the increasing demand on the Depot, we sought additional premises and eventually Kerr St was put up for tender. In 2003 we were successful and extensive work, with Community Corrections, supervised by Lynn, was undertaken.

**The Recording Studio:** From 1998 Riki Morris took over the Recording Studio and over 8 years it became iconic, a focus for the burgeoning Devonport music scene and its many prodigies. In 2006 Riki left and the studio the Depot successfully took over the management. Work in the studio continued to grow and we now run two busy studios, with two staff.

**JAM Radio:** In 2005 Louise Evans, who was on PACE, was employed under TFG to set up a radio station – a long-held vision of the Depot – to create a voice and presence for artists and the arts. JAM Radio was initiated, comprising interviews, music shows, poetry and story readings, essays, critiques and reviews – featuring participants across all ages, disciplines, walks of life, and interests.

**Cultural Icons:** From JAM's interviews Cultural Icons was developed, [www.culturalicons.co.nz](http://www.culturalicons.co.nz) and now hosts 96 interviews. Cultural Icons interviewees invariably discussed the influence of place, personal history, and relationships on their lives.

**Depot Press:** These developments included the first Depot Press publication, another new initiative also exploring our cultural identity "In Search of the Vernacular". Depot Press now features many publications – a number of which

specifically relate to the vernacular: 'Wahine', 'Urban & Rural – the Great Divide', 'In Search of the Vernacular', 'True Community' 1 & 2, 'Turangawaewae

**Revolution Creative:** In recognition of the gig economy and the patchwork of employment opportunities for creatives, Depot set up an online platform to support them to find work. This platform [www.revolutioncreative.co.nz](http://www.revolutioncreative.co.nz) also support employers, especially those small businesses which do not have resources to employ a creative worker for the range of ad hoc jobs they may need.

## **APPENDIX TWO: ATEED Financial Distribution**

Of the 91 events, ATEED has funded over 2 years (2017 – 2019) only four have taken place north of the Harbour Bridge. The population north of the Harbour Bridge is around 320,000 – 330,000 or 25% of the population of Auckland.

ATEED has spent **\$19,500,000** on these 91 events of which **\$411,000, or 2.3% of that money**, has come north of the Harbour Bridge that is up to Te Hana. (Smales Farm \$50,000, Matakana, \$10,000, North Harbour Stadium hockey \$350,000) **Of that \$411,000, \$350,000 went to sport or 85%**

Forty-five events have been focussed in central Auckland, primarily the CBD.

Thirty-five events, around 40% of the total events were sports-related. But, they received 76% of the total funding, \$14,900,000.

<https://www.aucklandnz.com/about-ateed/publications-and-public-information/public-information/ATEED-Major-Events-Investments-2017-18>

### **APPENDIX THREE: North Shore Exhibition Centre, the Strand, Takapuna**

‘Bossley Architects (with Tony van Raat) were engaged by the North Shore City Council and The Shore Exhibition Centre to design an Art Gallery for the North Shore of Auckland. It involves the conversion of the existing 1960’s modernist Takapuna Library building into a gallery.

The existing two-storey section will be restored to maintain and enhance many of the original modernist features of the building. A new three-story tower will sit alongside the existing. This element adopts the approach of the original, in that it expresses itself as a building of its own era, rather than attempting to mimic the original building. It is composed of different facade treatments, which enliven the overall composition by virtue of scale, colour and movement, and expand the sense of transparency expressed by the earlier building.

The sense of openness in the new section of the building is reinforced by revealing internal movements and activity to the street, including the vertical movement of the goods/passenger lift, movement of people up and down the glazed staircase, and the opening shutters which allow views and connection to the water from the upper level.’ From the initial design brief for the Exhibition Centre



