



## Advocating for Change in the Creative Sector:

Impact, learning and insights

Whāia te toi huarewa o te auahatanga, hei kete toitoi manawa mō Tāmaki Makaurau.  
Seek the pathway of creativity as a kete of inspiration for Auckland.

# Advocating for Change in the Creative Sector: Impact, learning and insights

Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi is Auckland's regional arts trust. We are a centre for creative knowledge and practice, we co-design and facilitate sector conversations and connections, and we advocate for the policies, practices and infrastructure our sector needs. Our overarching focus is driving systems change that makes Tāmaki Makaurau a city alive with creativity.

Since 2020, we have actively stepped into a sector advocacy leadership role – working locally and regionally to understand and champion issues and strengthen and mobilise sector voices. We also work nationally, often alongside the [Regional Arts Network Aotearoa \(RANA\)](#), to champion the value of arts, culture and creativity, and influence investment and policy. This paper captures our advocacy work across 2022-23.

## Activity Highlights 2022-23

### Stop the cuts

We launched the StopTheCuts campaign and partnered with other key sector stakeholders to rally community advocacy in opposition to the proposed Auckland Council budget cuts (see more below). As part of this campaign, we also made our own written and oral submissions to Council.

### Ngā Toi Advocacy Network

Throughout 2022-23, we continued to convene the Ngā Toi Advocacy Network as a online forum for the sector to connect, share learning and strategise shared priorities for advocacy.

### Arts Action Now !!!

In the run up to the 2023 general election we established Arts Action Now !!! to support the sector in positioning arts, culture and creativity as a key issue, advocating for national strategy and policy.

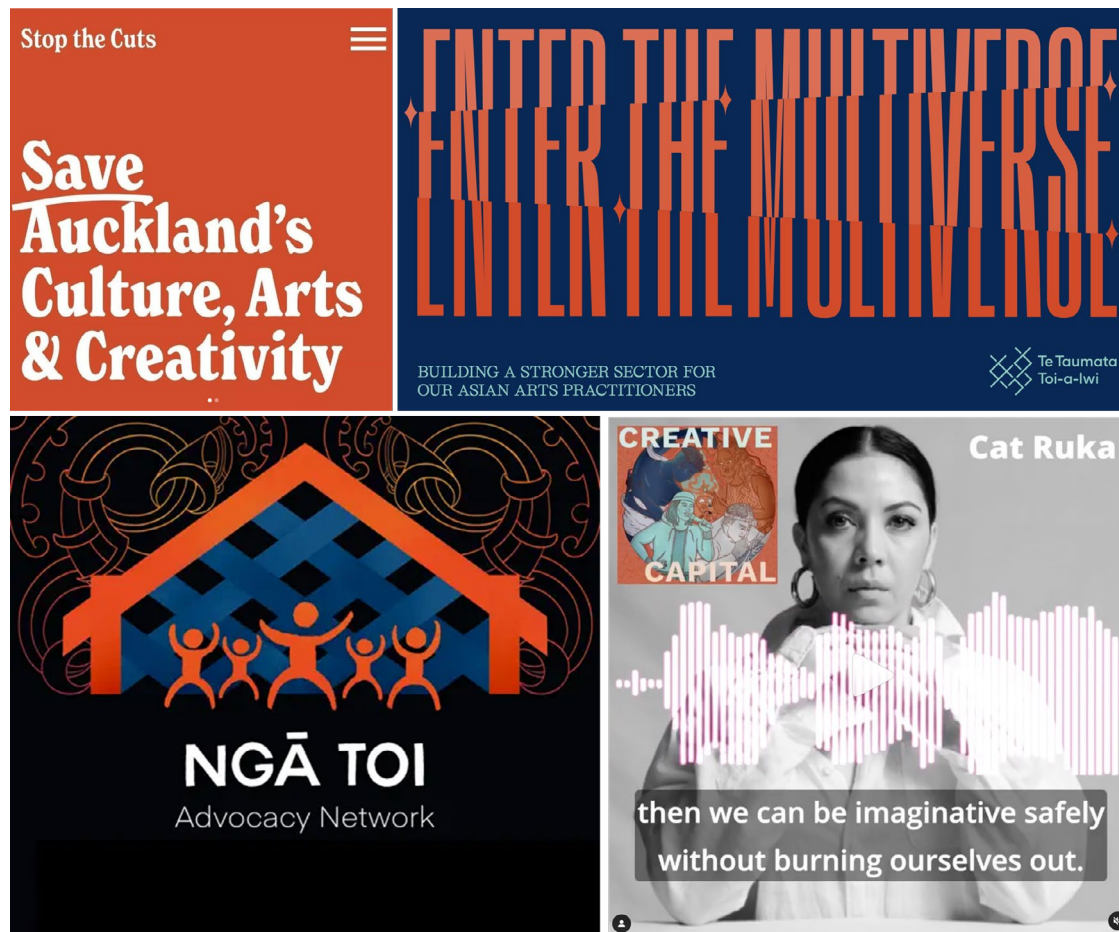
### Advocacy for systems change

As part of our ongoing efforts to influence wider systems change in relation to policy and resourcing, we:

- Produced a think piece for the Auckland Arts Investors Forum outlining a vision of the sector's future state, and key opportunities for systems change. This was influential in the Forum collaborating to develop an evolved ngā toi Māori investment prototype (currently under design).
- Commissioned Enter the Multiverse to understand the needs and aspirations of the Asian diaspora arts community in Tāmaki Makaurau, which directly influenced the priorities of Creative NZ and Foundation North's Asian Artists' Fund.
- Through our co-convening of the Auckland Investors Forum we sought to influence collaborative responses to systemic issues with funding equity and accessibility, informed by our third publication of the report: Mapping the Auckland Funding Ecosystem for Ngā Toi – Culture, Creativity and the Arts.

### Advocacy for systems change continued

- Published the report Hōhā and Hauora – Learning about Arts Advocacy to share insights we have gathered along our advocacy journey and support the practice of others in our sector.
- Led the development of a business case in collaboration with RANA for new government investment into regional arts; as well as writing a think piece about the need for a national strategy for arts, culture and creativity, and key considerations for its development.
- Developed five podcasts through new series Creative Capital, as a vehicle for ongoing advocacy around the need for systems change.





## Auckland Council Budget 'StopTheCuts' Campaign

Our advocacy work across 2022-23 centred on mobilising opposition to the proposed Auckland Council budget cuts that were announced in December 2022. The proposed cuts would have had a devastating impact on the creative sector through the loss of funding and community services.

We worked closely with the Ngā Toi Advocacy Network and key sector leaders/advocates to develop the 'StopTheCuts' campaign, which included a range of key advocacy activity:

- We commissioned an impact survey to understand the potential effects of the proposed cuts on the sector, which received 1,063 responses.
- We engaged and collaborated with arts leaders, governors, organisations and other community networks to develop advocacy strategies and key messages, and to understand what resources the sector needed so that we could provide more targeted support. This also helped to strengthen collaboration and ensure a more networked response.
- We created an online web portal, which had over 63,000 unique visitors. The portal was designed to inform the sector and public of the potential impacts of the cuts. It also provided vital access to information, submission templates and guidance, and clear and compelling key messages. This helped to strengthen the sector's capacity to engage in their own direct advocacy.
- We provided one-to-one media training to leaders in the sector, growing the reach of key messages and strengthening the capability of key advocates to have influence.
- We championed opposition to the cuts through our social media channels and media interviews.
- Following the closure of the submissions process, we wrote further advocacy letters to councillors to inform and influence decision-making.

# Stakeholder Kōrero

“Looking at the ecosystem of cultural organisations, and if funding stopped, the flow on effect would have been massive. We were just wanting to try and make sure there is enough funding for people to do what they do.

“We thought making something louder would be more impactful, so we tried to get people to work together. It was a great moment for us to work collaboratively, because so much of the time we are working in our zones and we forget just how much stronger we are together.

“Everyone was so impressed with what Te Taumata was doing and the way they made it so much easier to get access to information and make submissions.

“It was great to feel there was cohesion. StopTheCuts showed that if you get enough people talking about something you can create change.”

– Zoe Black (Objectspace)

“Te Taumata did really well to champion the impact of the proposed cuts to the arts and in bringing groups together to collaborate. Their approach was good, there was quick mobilisation, strong messaging, good involvement in communities, good presence at events and they used good collaborative approaches.

“It was inspiring to see another group taking a lead in expressing opposition to the cuts. When we developed our plans, I think that encouraged us to go further.”

– Max Harris (Better Budget Auckland)

“The StopTheCuts campaign appears to have had a huge impact and created a clear template on how to do that kind of advocacy work. That campaign demonstrated the importance of connection and advocacy.

“It provided confirmation of the strategic direction for Te Taumata, of working in an advocacy and leadership space and of exploring how systems change can be navigated and influenced.”

– Jeremy Mayall (Creative Waikato)

“The most valuable work that Te Taumata did over the last year was their advocacy over the budget cuts.

“They mobilised very quickly and got the internal advocacy strategy in place and then developed external assets that allowed us all to very easily amplify their efforts exponentially.

“I give huge thanks to them for being the central cog that helped to mobilise the creative sector in Tāmaki. It was a rare example of the arts sector mobilising with one clear voice.

“The key now is to make this sticky and as connected and effective as possible.”

– Shona McCullagh (Auckland Arts Festival)

“StopTheCuts was so invigorating because it did something immediately on the ground. The campaign was great, it was clear in its messaging. We all had enough contacts that we could circulate the messages right through Tāmaki and that worked well. I was excited and energised by it. It was action, and it was a good model. It galvanised the community, gave us a tool to do something.

“Often people don’t know how to go about doing something, but this was enabling and made it simple to draw attention to the value of the arts. People understood what they could lose. We’re all quite burnt out in the arts community, but we came together, shared resources, made action and it worked.”

– Judy Darragh (Arts Makers Aotearoa)

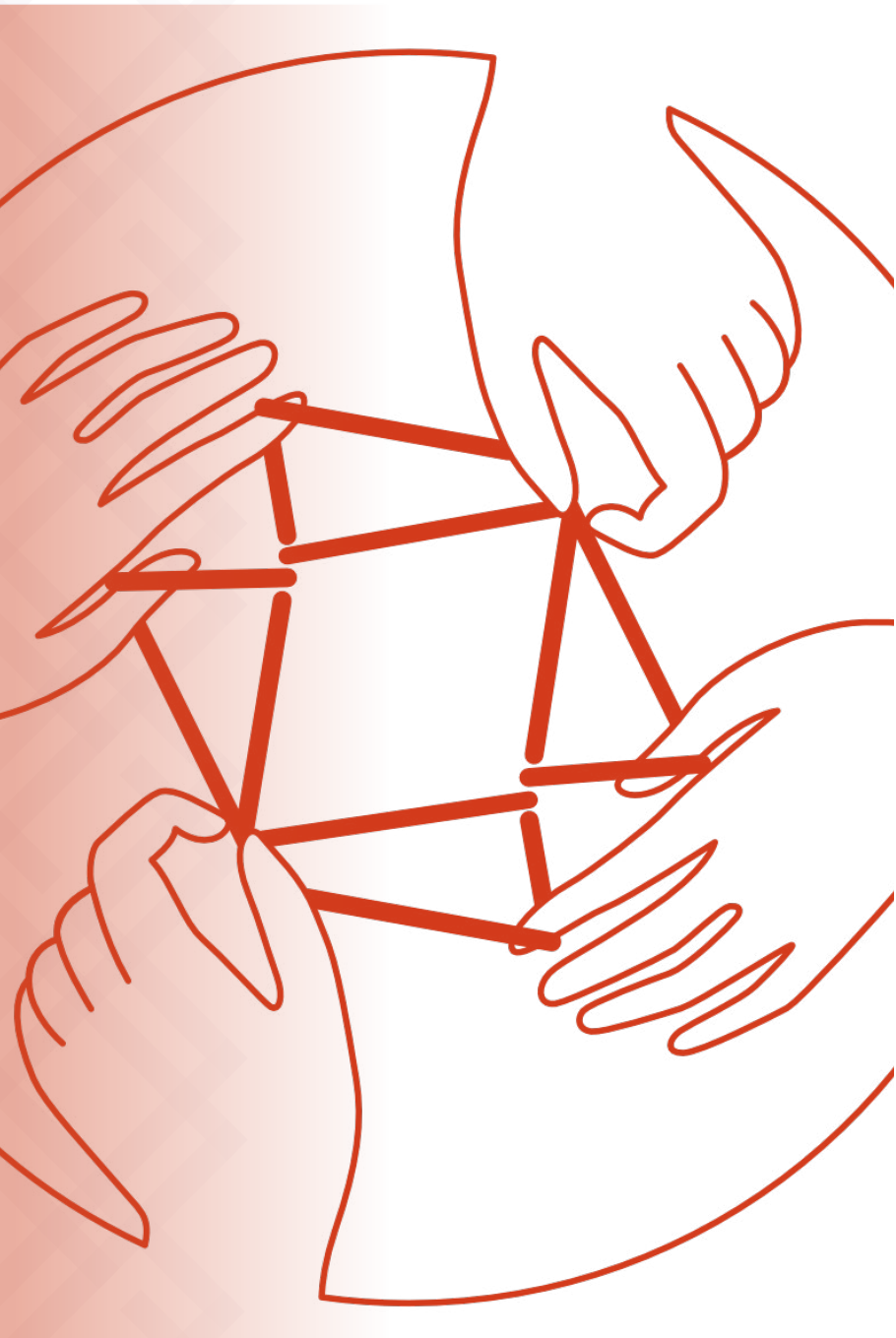
“Te Taumata was already doing a lot of advocacy work when the Council budget cuts were proposed, and I felt they could be a central pillar to a response.

“Te Taumata helped to set a collaborative tone that was really helpful. Having a cause to collaborate around is always useful, but the collaboration and cooperation was really the end result, in terms of positive outcome.

“I think Te Taumata was important in terms of galvanising a response. They provided that central backbone that is needed when people are feeling super busy and stressed in a crisis. It needs that centralised push, that sense that something is happening, that people can participate and feel they are contributing.

“Everyone recognises that cuts still happened, but a lot was held back and there was a stronger public view of the value of the sector.”

– Michael Brook (formerly Tātaki Auckland Unlimited)



## Advocacy Impact

### Greater visibility of sector needs

By gathering evidence of the potential impact of the proposed Council budget cuts through our survey and report, we provided greater visibility of sector's needs and of the interdependencies in the regional funding ecosystem.

### Mobilisation of collective advocacy

Feedback from sector stakeholders and collaborators described the importance of our role as a backbone organisation to catalyse and support collective advocacy. We were able to build new relationships, strengthen existing networks and develop effective collaboration with key partners both within and beyond the creative sector, including Objectspace, Arts Makers Aotearoa and Better Budget Auckland.

Working with our partners, we were able to generate and share assets and resources to support advocacy efforts. Our partners reported to us that collaboration and collective advocacy were priority outcomes achieved through the StopTheCuts campaign. This collaboration will provide a vital platform for future advocacy work.

### More effective advocacy messaging

Working with our Creative Network and partners, feedback shows that we were able to generate clear and simple messaging about the value of arts, culture and creativity, helping to drive a more singular and impactful voice through the Council submissions process. The flow-on effect of this was to increase public and political attention to the value of arts, culture and creativity.

### Strengthened sector capacity for effective advocacy

Partners have described to us feeling energised, more confident and inspired to engage in advocacy action. Through our online portal, we were able to increase the accessibility of the Council submissions process, resulting in greater engagement. Our templates and guidance also strengthened the sector's capacity to advocate effectively.

### Contribution to increased submissions, effective in influencing Council

Through the StopTheCuts campaign and other aligned activity, we were able to effectively mobilise the sector, contributing to a significant number of submissions that mentioned arts and culture – which was the top feedback theme reported by Council (28% of submissions).

The volume of response was a contributing factor to Council winding back some of its proposed cuts impacting the arts and culture sector, including \$23 million in regional grants and community services and \$12 million in local board spending.



**“we need someone to pick up the advocacy role and bring us all together at the table. If we can keep collectivising and Te Taumata can keep leading, it will be impactful.”**

**Judy Darragh - Arts Maker Aotearoa**

# Key Learning and Implications for Future Approaches to Advocacy

## Crisis is an effective catalyst

The announcement of the proposed Council budget cuts poured fuel on an already fragile and burnout creative sector still experiencing the impacts of Covid. We quickly learned again that a sense of urgency and crisis helps to galvanise advocacy efforts. People are motivated to respond and work together. Harnessing and maintaining this energy when the sense of crisis has dissipated, is a key challenge to overcome.

## Collaboration amplifies impact

Te Taumata was able to tap into the diverse strengths of our team and Creative Network to pull together StopTheCuts. We fully activated our network approach – accessing deep and broad skills, and testing and interrogating ideas and approaches in ways that upheld the quality and efficacy of our work.

StopTheCuts showed very clearly that capacity and capability to advocate well is lifted through sharing of ideas, information and resources; and working collectively on advocacy increases the volume and reach of the messaging, giving greater public and political influence. The allyship created through collaboration is also a key way of building solidarity and supporting the wellbeing of advocates.

StopTheCuts saw collaboration with partners outside of the creative sector. This ensured advocacy messaging was more holistic and reflected the intersectional nature of creativity, community, the environment and other issues.

## Power of simple, positive messaging

StopTheCuts centred on positive messaging, focusing on the value of arts, culture and creativity in making Tāmaki Makaurau a vibrant city. This enabled strong cut-through and also provided a platform for more joined up advocacy with other sectors.

## Be responsive to the community

Through our survey and wider engagement with sector, we were able to be more directly responsive to the community's needs and could actively work to remove barriers and support people to engage with the submissions process.

## Use your privilege and platform

We were really intentional in using our privileged position to raise the voice of the sector – deploying financial resources, tapping into our Council, CCO and other connections to understand what messages might work best to influence councillors, and leveraging our relationships to amplify the reach of StopTheCuts. Organisations involved in advocacy need to be clear what risks we are willing to take, and should be transparent about our position and how we will use our power and platform.

## Advocacy and wellbeing

The sense of urgency in responding to crisis drives a pace of work that is frenetic. At times, the intensity of our work on StopTheCuts, was challenging – particularly as it followed on from the intensity of Covid-advocacy, then the Auckland Anniversary floods and Cyclone Gabrielle.

Working in a space of advocacy can also mean encountering challenging views and behaviour, such as racism, discrimination and devaluing of arts, culture and creativity. We aim to moderate the harm of being exposed to this by bringing those involved in advocacy into a wider group that share the kaupapa, working collectively, and sharing responsibility for supporting individual and group wellbeing.



## Next steps – looking forward to 2024

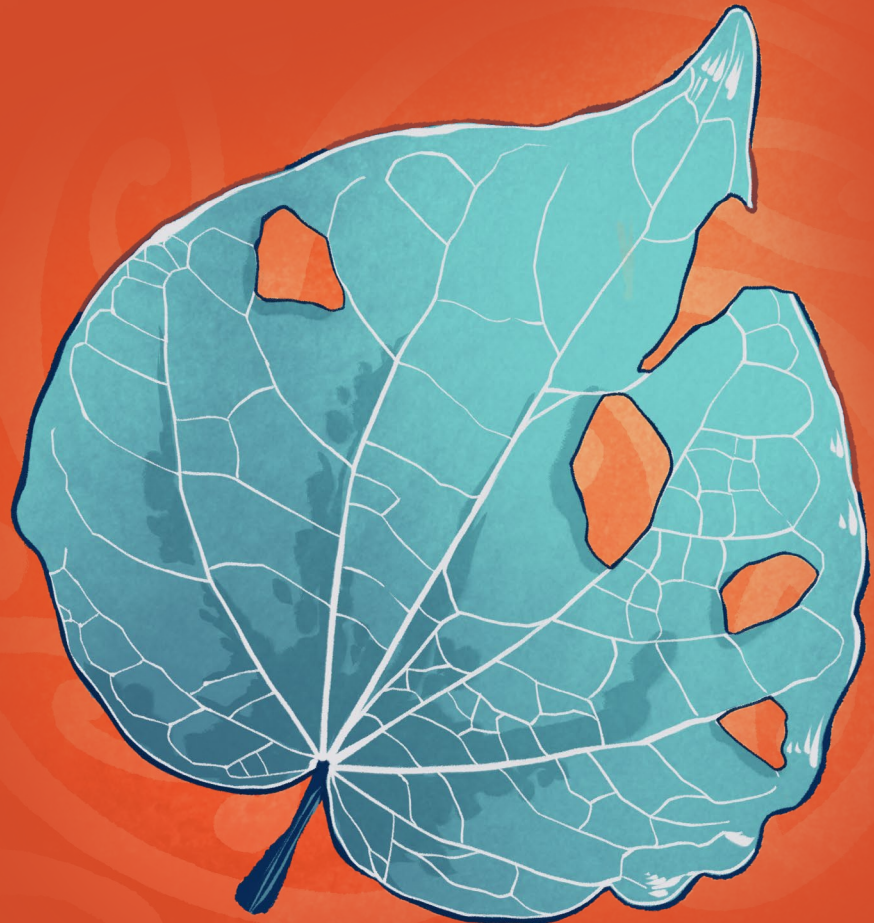
Our focus following on from 2022-23 focused centred on positioning arts, culture and creativity as a key election issue, making sure that it isn't left behind by politicians and the Government.

As we move into 2024, we will prioritise influencing the approach of the incoming government – to increase baseline funding to the sector, listen to sector voices, centre te ao Māori, develop more evolved models of investment, and to resource regional arts development in line with regional sports development.

We will be developing a briefing to the incoming Minister, and continuing to work closely with RANA to engage with the sector to understand needs, and advocate for change at a national level in response.

Our regional work in Tāmaki Makaurau will focus on coming together during key advocacy rallying points, such as the Auckland Council Long-term Plan, to ensure arts, culture and creativity is valued and investment is protected and strengthened. This approach means we will move away from the monthly hui Ngā Toi Advocacy Network hui, and instead use our learning from StopTheCuts to convene and mobilise when there is opportunity, energy and momentum.

To ensure we can effectively convene and rally the sector around key issues, we will concentrate on maintaining and deepening our sector engagement – particularly with more marginalised communities that have fewer resources and platforms to speak out. We need to keep asking 'whose voices are missing?' and 'how can we use our power for influence?'



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