Shining a spotlight on creativity, one city at a time

All in for Arts: He waka toi e eke noa nei tātou

In March 2026, The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi and Creative New Zealand travelled to six cities across Aotearoa, bringing together leaders, decision-makers, artists, rangatahi and creative champions. Each gathering created space to korero about how we can amplify the arts and explore the role creativity plays in shaping a thriving future.

Across the series, 27 speakers shared powerful stories of creativity's transformative impact, and bold ideas for how the arts, culture, creativity, and ngā toi Māori can flourish.

Here's What We Heard

Creativity is essential infrastructure

Mayor of Tūranganui-a-Kiwa Gisborne, Rehette Stoltz, speaks at All in for Arts, Tūranganui-a-Kiwa Gisborne

- Across the motu, speakers reinforced that creativity shapes the systems, environments and cultural foundations that influence how we live.
- We heard how creativity should be embedded within public infrastructure, city planning and community spaces as a driver of identity, meaning and social connection.
- Māori, Pasifika and rangatahi voices highlighted that creative infrastructure includes spaces, platforms and support systems that enable expression and belonging.
- There was a clear call for the need to acknowledge that creativity is fundamental to our economy, our cities and our future.

"When artists are at the table from day one, alongside the engineers, architects and planners, the outcomes are richer and more cohesive."

Rehette Stoltz
Mayor of Tūranganui-a-Kiwa Gisborne

Creativity is healing, visibility and voice

Artist, Kamoe Paki speaks at All in for Arts Tūranganui-a-Kiwa Gisborne

- Across the series, we heard powerful stories of creativity being a tool for healing, expression and connection.
- Creativity reconnects people to themselves, their culture and each other.
- It provides visibility and voice for underrepresented communities.
- Nurturing creativity in rangatahi builds confidence, identity and resilience.

"Creativity is a bridge. It reconnects us… and gives us a voice when we feel unheard."

Kamoe Paki
Artist, Tūranganui-a-Kiwa Gisborne

Audience members at All in for Arts Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington

Creativity is human

Stuff Owner, Sinead Boucher speaks at All in for Arts Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

- Creativity is a fundamental human capability available to us all.
- In a world increasingly shaped by AI, creativity is what makes us distinctly human.
- Technology cannot replace imagination, storytelling and connection.
- Creativity is an infinite resource that flourishes when nurtured.

"Lean into all of the things that really make us human."

Sinead Boucher
Owner, Stuff, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

Creativity shapes the future

Head of Creative Leadership, Wētā Workshop, Rik Athorne, speaks at All in for Arts Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington

- Creativity allows us to reimagine what's possible and shape our collective future.
- It is central to innovation and systems change.
- Rangatahi voices highlighted creativity as a force for change. Investing in rangatahi helps foster a creative sector where young people feel seen, included and inspired to participate.
- Aotearoa can lead globally with creativity.

"Those who enable, support, and build the future around creativity, will be the ones who ensure the unique creative essence of New Zealand grows stronger."

Rik Athorne
Head of Creative Leadership, Wētā Workshop, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington

Creativity helps communities thrive

Director, Private Wealth Advisor, JBWere, Rik Anderson, speaks at All in for Arts Ōtautahi Christchurch

- Creativity strengthens connection, belonging and identity.
- It supports wellbeing and resilience.
- Creative ecosystems drive participation and economic growth.
- Creativity enables collective problem-solving.

"When creativity thrives, communities thrive and businesses thrive."

Jane Anderson
Director, Private Wealth Advisor, JBWere, Ōtautahi Christchurch

In the year to March 2025, the arts and creative sector contributed $18.5 billion to New Zealand's GDP

Infometrics, 2026

2025 Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi awardee, Businesswoman, Musician and Arts Ambassador Dame Lynn Kelly with audience members at All in for Arts Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

To propel us forward, we need you to:

Vote

In case you missed it – it's an election year. Make sure you're enrolled early (or check that you are), and most importantly – vote! Real change only happens when we show up. The Government works for us, but they can only represent what they hear and what they see. If you care about the arts, creativity and the future of our communities, you need to use your voice at the ballot box.

Put Your Values into Action

Think about what you value and what you want to see more of. Across the series, we heard how creativity shapes our communities, our wellbeing, and our future. But valuing it quietly isn't enough – we need to say it out loud. Talk about it. Share it. Advocate for it. Tell your local MP, your councillors, and your community leaders what matters to you. Because what we value and what we speak up for is what gets supported.

Give Back

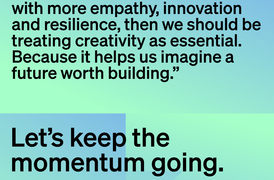
Support the arts where you can and how you can. Giving isn't just about money – it's time, energy, advocacy and showing up. Go to the show. Visit the exhibition. Buy the ticket. Give the koha. And if you can give more financially, there are ways to do that too – whether it's supporting artists directly or through membership programmes. If we all give a little, it makes a big difference.

Collaborate

Creativity thrives when we work together. One of the strongest messages we heard across the motu was that creativity doesn't sit in one place – it exists across communities, sectors and systems. We need artists working with councils. Business working with creatives. Communities working together to imagine and build what comes next. Collaboration is how we move from ideas to impact. It's how we create spaces that reflect who we are and where we're going.

Take Action

Now it's time to act. Change comes from what we do next – individually and collectively. Think about what action you will take. Because together, our actions will shape the future of creativity in Aotearoa.



"If we want better communities with more empathy, innovation and resilience, then we should be treating creativity as essential. Because it helps us imagine a future worth building."

Let's keep the momentum going.

Share this so more of us understand the power and potential of the arts!