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ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

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WREDA
Greater Wellington Regional Council
PO Box 11646
Wellington 6142

Submission on the: **Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency (WREDA) Proposal**

Made to the: **Greater Wellington Regional Council**

Introduction

1. This submission is from the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (**Creative New Zealand**).

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Overall Comments

3. Creative New Zealand notes the anticipated benefits of moving to a single agency as outlined in the *Aligning for Growth* proposal to establish a Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency (WREDA). We recognise the importance of strong economic leadership to help the Wellington economy perform to its full potential. However, while the anticipated benefits from the new single entity indicate operational improvements and efficiencies it is not clear from the proposal how these changes will support the identified outcome of the Wellington economy performing to its potential. It would be good to have a clearer understanding of what will change at a higher outcome level as a result of the new agency.

4. Creative New Zealand would also welcome greater clarity about how the new agency would contribute to achieving to the Wellington City Council's vision for arts and culture: "Wellington is the place for all people to experiment with, learn about and experience New Zealand's arts and culture, especially contemporary work." (*Wellington City Council Arts and Culture Strategy*, December 2011)

Specific Comments

5. We have some concerns about the inclusion of Positively Wellington Venues (PWV) in the new agency. The proposal refers to a "single agency that prioritises business and wider economic

success ...". We are concerned that including PWV in the agency risks the focus of PWV being focused solely on "business and economic success". Such a focus risks an exclusive emphasis on revenue generation and a disregard for the wider benefits which accrue from engagement in the arts by Wellingtonians and visitors to Wellington.

6. This is likely to result in a reduction in accessibility to venues by less commercial, or community hirers of venues. We are aware that not-for-profit performing arts companies and event organisers already find PWV venue hire fees challenging and we would be concerned if an increased drive for revenue created additional barriers to access by those users to venues.

7. We note that when Auckland Tourism Event and Economic Development (ATEED) was established in 2009 it did not include Auckland venues. Under *Auckland Live* Auckland venues have a wider mandate than economic development including supporting Auckland's key national and regional arts companies; 'nurturing the next generation' [of arts audiences]; 'access for all'; 'education and community' and 'industry support and leadership'.

8. The Auckland Live model is the recurring model in Australasia and internationally where the focus is on dedicated, fit-for-purpose performing arts centres with audience development and community outreach and education mandates. Creative New Zealand strongly endorses these wider objectives for venues owned and operated by territorial authorities on behalf of their communities.

9. The performing arts do generate economic benefits (e.g. the economic impact of the International Arts Festival and other major arts events). However, while economic benefits are significant, the primary drivers for, and benefit from may arts events are wider cultural and social benefits. From our review of New Zealand and international research (including our own three-yearly *New Zealanders and the Arts* surveys) we know that the arts:

   - improve educational outcomes
   - create a more highly skilled workforce
   - improve health outcomes
   - improve personal well-being
   - rejuvenate cities
   - support democracy
   - help define cultural identity
   - create social inclusion
   - are important to the lives of New Zealanders

10. We know the Greater Wellington Regional Council and Wellington City Council are very aware and supportive of these wider benefits of the arts. We ask that Councils take into account the potential impact on arts venue users of a narrow economic agenda for PWV if it is included in the new agency. We note, too, that even in terms of economic benefits, it can be difficult for the full potential of the arts economy to be realised if access to venues by performing arts

companies and community events is limited by a fees structure which is wholly commercially driven.

Wellington City Council's Arts and Culture Strategy

20. Creative New Zealand notes that the proposal's focus on "business and economic success" does not appear to have taken into account the priorities and focus areas of the Wellington City Council's Arts and Culture Strategy. One of this strategy's main priorities is to ensure that "our local creative talent can access the city's venues [...] to develop and present their work." In this context, the strategy also sets out the Wellington City Council's commitment to "encouraging and facilitating the use of venues [...] for creative activities."

21. Creative New Zealand believes that the *Aligning for growth* proposal needs to be reconciled with the Wellington City Council's Arts and Culture Strategy to ensure that opportunities for PWV to build on Wellington's success as "New Zealand's creative capital" are not compromised. Within the framework of the proposed WREDA, attention needs to be given to how the new proposed agency could deliver to the strategy's three priorities and focus areas, in particular those which relate to the availability of the city's venues for local not-for-profit performing arts companies, event organisers and community groups.

Background on Creative New Zealand

22. Creative New Zealand is an autonomous Crown entity established under the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 2014.

23. Creative New Zealand's *Strategic Plan Te Mahere Rautaki 2013–2016* identifies four outcomes it seeks to achieve on behalf of all New Zealanders:

    - New Zealanders participate in the arts
    - High-quality New Zealand art is developed
    - New Zealanders experience high-quality arts
    - New Zealand arts gain international success

24. Creative New Zealand contributes to achieving these outcomes by delivering programmes in the following areas:

    - Funding for artists, practitioners and arts organisations
    - Capability-building for artists, practitioners and arts organisations
    - Advocacy for the arts

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this submission.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Wainwright
Chief Executive