

Wanganui District Council
Arts Policy
2008



Promoting cultural wellbeing
in the Wanganui District
through arts



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Executive Summary

In 2006, Wanganui District Council reviewed its Arts Policy.

We reconsidered what had been written in the original 1993 Arts Policy in light of feedback from the Wanganui arts sector and an assessment of current central government policy. A number of key themes emerged through the review process. These include:

- Council's role in supporting the Arts
- Lack of coordinated marketing and promotion of the arts
- Shortage of funding to develop the arts
- The potential contribution of arts to tourism and the local and regional economy
- The need to increase access to and participation in the arts
- Whether our built environment reflects our culture

This policy sets out Council's response to the issues identified, provides guidance to Council officers and set priorities for funding and other forms of support. It also aims to provide a cohesive vision and a set of goals that the arts sector, the Council and the whole community can work towards for the future.

We acknowledge at all times that the Wanganui community's resources are limited. This means that we have to be more focused and smart about how we achieve and sustain success. We know that there are many others including central government, neighbouring authorities and regional agencies who have an interest in the arts sector. It makes huge sense therefore to work collaboratively and identify ways to maximise the benefits for Wanganui.

History of the Arts in Wanganui

Wanganui is rich in its arts history, with the Whanganui River central to historic, cultural and artistic development. The River (Awa) has provided both inspiration and the essential heart beat for oral, visual and written creative expression over a period spanning many centuries.

European development in the 19th and 20th centuries increased the population markedly, to a point during the 1920s when Wanganui was New Zealand's fifth largest city. This period of expansion saw the establishment of significant cultural institutions: the Wanganui District Library (1877), Whanganui Regional Museum (1892), The Royal Wanganui Opera House (1900) and the Sarjeant Art Gallery (1919). The Library, Museum and Gallery now comprise the Queens Park (Pukenamu) cultural precinct.

The 20th century also sustained a high degree of arts/cultural sector activity with the establishment of a number of performing and visual arts entities, clubs and societies: the Wanganui Brass Band, marae-based Kapa Haka groups, the Wanganui Camera Club, Wanganui Arts Society (to name just a few!). A number of practising artists and writers also made Wanganui their home – either through birth and family connections, or through later-life choice. Collectively and individually, this has built a strong and passionate arts infrastructure within Wanganui.

21st century arts development in Wanganui has been influenced significantly by the establishment in the late 20th century of the Quay School of the Arts, a faculty of the Universal College of Learning (UCOL). Originally part of Whanganui Polytechnic, the Quay School demonstrated leadership and vision with its academic curriculum: Fashion, Fine Arts, Print-making and Glass. Along with the internationally-renowned School of Computer Graphic Design, the Quay School provided a galvanising force for further arts development, and attracted both student “raw talent” and an ever-increasing number of talented graduates intent upon working and living in Wanganui. Its tutors and academic leaders have also been drawn from an experienced, international pool of talent. As a result, Wanganui now has a significant number of artist studios and galleries that add further substance to an intensifying and vibrant arts environment.

The 21st century has also heralded a strong rebirth in arts development from tangata whenua, particularly where collectives such as Manawa Ora provide the opportunity for pure indigenous creative form to be experienced in wider, mainstream environments.

Brief Snapshots of The Arts in Wanganui

Maori arts and performance is deeply associated with Wanganui's landscape and environment with weaving and carving used to visually convey important myths, legends and history. Intricate wood carvings can be found on meeting houses and marae all over Wanganui. They are created by master carvers, versed in the oral traditions of the tribe.

The Putiki Pa includes a carved meeting house, Te Paku-o-te-rangi which replaced an earlier house washed away in the great flood of 1891. Next to the meeting house is a carved pataka (storehouse) which dates from 1891. The church at Putiki (St Paul's) has the finest tukutuku panels lining the walls. The work was carried out locally under the direction of Sir Apirana Ngata.

Various marae along the Whanganui River serve as a focal point for Maori oratory, language, meeting houses with tukutuku panels, and detailed carvings from Maori carvers.

The Wanganui District Library is one of the oldest public libraries in New Zealand. Its specialist collections housed in the Alexander Heritage & Research Library include historical and contemporary material about the Whanganui region, Whanganui Iwi, and 19th century publications about New Zealand.

Wanganui literary history is also boosted by the number of famed New Zealand writers that have lived here: notably Janet Frame, Ian Cross, Robin Hyde, James K. Baxter.

The Whanganui Regional Museum houses objects of both national and international significance, highlighted by exceptional Maori taonga, including the carved Te Mata-O-Houroa waka taua (war canoe) of the Whanganui river. The collection also houses Lindauer portraits of early Maori chiefs, and the works of photographer W H T Partington: vintage prints of Wanganui Māori that provide a window on people who lived along the Whanganui River one hundred years ago.

The Wanganui Camera Club, established in 1894, have produced some very well known early Wanganui photographers such as Harding, Denton and Lampe who have left an incredible photographic record of the city and district.

The Royal Wanganui Opera House an historic landmark for Wanganui opened in 1900, and from the year of its opening the Opera House played host to international opera performers. Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Mikado" is recorded as the first locally staged opera in 1900. In 1915, the Maori Opera Company raised 14 pounds for "native troops" as part of the patriotic fund raising of the day. (In later years, the Opera House has hosted pop/rock concerts, including the infamous Pretty Things concert of 1965.)

The Wanganui Male Choir has performed concerts in the Royal Wanganui Opera House since 1901. It was established in 1898 as the Wanganui Liedertafel, and later renamed the Wanganui Male Choir.

The Wanganui Amateur Musical and Dramatic Society which spans over a century of arts in Wanganui has also been associated with the Royal Wanganui Opera House since 1901, if not since the year of its opening.

The Wanganui Arts Society has been in existence since 1901. Members of the Society were instrumental in the establishment of the Sarjeant Gallery.

Wanganui Repertory Theatre celebrates its 75th Jubilee year in 2008. The theatre society became incorporated in 1933, and has its home at 4 Ridgway Street in the former town library building. Repertory holds an important place in Wanganui's performing arts history with its unique and intimate sized public theatre, and a focus upon dramatic productions. The theatre auditorium has undergone extensive renovations of late, with the society completing a project of rewiring, new heating and seating. Traditional productions such as "The Importance of Being Earnest" sit well alongside more modern plays like "Agnes of God" and "Amadeus". Repertory is also well known for its commitment to comedic productions with the likes of "No Sex Please, We're British" and "Noises Off", as well as a variety of Roger Hall plays and pantomimes. A number of Repertory players have gone on to play significant roles in New Zealand theatre with their involvement at the NZ School of Dance and Drama in Wellington.

The Sarjeant Gallery was officially opened in 1919, and was founded through the generosity of Henry Sarjeant. However, the permanent collection was started in 1901 when the committee of the Wanganui Arts Society, of which Mrs Sarjeant was a member, purchased the first picture for the town's collection. Work by New Zealand artists was first acquired in 1926, and increasingly this has become the primary focus. The existing New Zealand collection is a significant and comprehensive holding of art from the 1840s until the present day.

Tylee Cottage is a renovated historic building from 1853 that has been relocated a short distance from the Sarjeant Gallery. In 1986, the Sarjeant Gallery, in partnership with the Wanganui District Council and the QEII Arts Council of New Zealand, began an Artist-in-Residence program in Wanganui. It is funded by the Wanganui District Council through the Sarjeant Gallery. The purpose of the residency is to provide a unique opportunity for an artist to undertake some relevant aspect of their work.

The Wanganui Community Arts Council was established by local artists in 1977 to provide a venue for artists and craftspeople to exhibit and sell their work. The Community Arts Centre was established in 1990. The objective of the Community Arts Centre is to facilitate a coordinated approach to marketing and promotion of the arts in Wanganui.

National Policy Context

Creative New Zealand

It is important that this Policy recognises the important partnership opportunities that exist in the area of arts, especially with central government. The Ministry of Culture & Heritage administers annual government funding to Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand).

The Council of Creative New Zealand is responsible for overall policy development and governance of the organisation. It guides the development of Creative New Zealand's three-year strategic plan, and determines the division of funding between the two arts boards. The purpose of Creative New Zealand is to encourage, promote and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

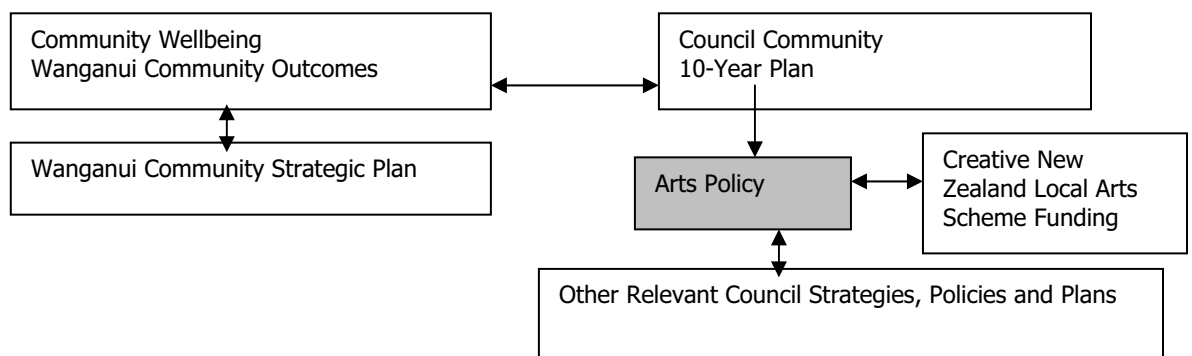
The Creative New Zealand Strategic Plan outlines four strategic priorities:

1. New Zealanders engaged in the arts
2. High quality New Zealand art is developed
3. New Zealanders have access to high quality arts experiences
4. New Zealand arts gain international success

Creative New Zealand works with local authorities to support and develop community arts. This is achieved by identifying appropriate community art projects through the Creative Communities New Zealand Local Arts Funding Scheme which funds arts and cultural activities in the District. This funding is administered by the Wanganui District Council, through an Assessment Committee, to support art projects that contribute to the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the community and will link to policy actions in the new Wanganui Arts Policy.

The Wanganui District Arts Policy will recognise the relationship of Tangata Whenua through the signed Tupoho and TamaUpoko Relationship documents. (Appendix I)

Wanganui District Council Policy Linkages



Definition of Arts

New Zealand arts: excellent, distinctive and essential in the lives of all New Zealanders

“The Arts play a vital role in the lives of New Zealanders. They tell us about ourselves. They challenge us, entertain us and enrich our lives. And they provide employment, skill development and opportunities for international exposure that benefits artists and our country.”

Creative New Zealand Strategic Plan 2007

The Arts Policy will contribute to community wellbeing in the following ways:

- **Cultural:** Enabling the community to engage with and experience the arts, and promoting arts by building creative capacity.
- **Social:** Enhancing connectiveness, community participation and celebrating our diversity and culture.
- **Environmental:** Enhancing our built environment through cultural and creative expression.
- **Economic:** Increasing economic benefit to the District through education, business and tourism. Encouraging Wanganui artists, practitioners and organisations to build their capacity, profile and relationships and work in order to have enduring national and international success.

Scope of Policy

The meaning of “the arts” includes but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance, performing arts, creative writing, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and crafts arts, fashion design, film, carving/whaakairo, weaving/raranga, printmaking, music, mixed media, glass arts, video, textiles, and educators of arts.

Treaty of Waitangi

The Wanganui District Council Arts Policy will be guided by the principle of partnership established by the Treaty of Waitangi Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Vision

That the Wanganui community values, supports and is inspired by the arts, and that the arts sector accepts its leadership role in the community.

Goals

- ❖ That Wanganui has a profile nationally and internationally as a centre of excellence for the arts
- ❖ To have a well-resourced arts sector
- ❖ For the arts sector to be a key driver for tourism and economic development
- ❖ That the arts sector is connected and engages the community
- ❖ That our environment celebrates our arts and cultural diversity

Objectives

1 To build Wanganui's profile as a centre of excellence for the arts through improved management, marketing and promotion of the arts

Policies

1. Facilitate a coordinated approach to marketing and promotion.
2. Support and promote iconic events and activities such as Whanganui Artists Open Studios, Wanganui Glass Festival, Puanga/Matariki, Kapa Haka, Opera Week, the Wanganui Literary Festival, and the Jazz Festival.
3. Provide and promote excellence in art collections, activities and events through the Sarjeant Gallery.
4. Provide and promote excellence in collections, activities and events through the District Library.

Initiatives

- ❖ Identify the key responsibilities for an Arts Coordinator.
- ❖ Employ an Arts Coordinator to facilitate the sector's marketing and promotional requirements.

2 To build creative capacity

Policies

1. Continue to fund the Council cultural facilities and Tylee Cottage.
2. Facilitate networking and coordination amongst the local arts sector to maximise resources.
3. Build and maintain mutually beneficial partnerships locally, regionally and nationally with UCOL, Creative New Zealand and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Te Puni Kokiri.
4. Continue to administer opportunities for funding through Community Contracts and the Creative Communities Funding Scheme.

Initiatives

- ❖ Review the levels of service and funding needs of our cultural facilities.
- ❖ Secure funding to employ an Arts Coordinator to facilitate greater networking and coordination.
- ❖ Identify the infrastructural resources required to utilise the creative market of graduates who wish to stay and work in Wanganui, and support the establishment of collaborative ventures.

3 To maximise the tourism and economic potential that can be derived from the arts sector

Policies

1. Provide support for the Wanganui Glass School.
2. Provide support to the sector to develop arts tourism.

Initiatives

- ❖ Establish the Glass PTE.
- ❖ Develop a Visitor Strategy that acknowledges the importance of the arts sector.

4 To improve access to and participation in arts activities

Policies

1. Encourage and maintain linkages between the arts and education sectors.
2. Incorporate art into youth and children's programmes and initiatives reflecting the range of ethnicities, cultures and interests of the community.
3. To divert "taggers" into legitimate and positive art expression.
4. Encourage greater participation in and support for the arts from residents and visitors.

Initiatives

- ❖ Continue to provide art programmes for primary and secondary school students at the Council's cultural facilities.
- ❖ Consider the potential for art programmes as part of Council's youth strategies.
- ❖ To investigate additional funding sources to increase the annual Creative Communities capacity.

5 Our built environment reflects our culture through the use of public art

Policies

1. Recognise the significance of cultural assets of the District.
2. Promote and facilitate the incorporation of local public art works within urban design and developments.
3. Encourage art works that express Maori culture and reflect the partnership between tangata whenua and the Council.
4. Recognise the value that our cultural precinct contributes to the quality of life in Wanganui.

Initiatives

- ❖ Develop a Public Art Policy.
- ❖ Ensure Asset Management Plans are up-to-date.
- ❖ Consider requirements for public art in Council and other developments.
- ❖ Continue to investigate options for cultural precinct development.

Timeframe

The immediate priority is to ensure an Arts Coordinator is employed to enable greater coordination, promotion, networking, funding, liaison and advocacy can be undertaken for the arts sector. The other actions will need to be considered in terms of the following timescale.

Short Term:	Completion within one year of adoption of the policy
Medium-term:	Completion within two-three years
Long term:	Completion within six years

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Arts scholars have struggled with the challenge of quantifying the net benefits (and costs) of the arts to society. In order to gauge the success of this policy, it will be necessary to evaluate and monitor its application. One tool that may be used will be a community survey.

Given the rapid speed of change in the external environment with new national and regional initiatives and new funding opportunities, any review will occur as part of the Wanganui Council review and evaluation of policies.

Acknowledgement

A wide range of publications and material was used in the development of the Wanganui Arts Policy and the Council wishes to thank the art organisations and the many volunteers who participated in contributing to the review of the policy.

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Appendix 1

A questionnaire was distributed to a wide range of arts organisations and individuals in Wanganui.

Analysis of the survey revealed a number of positive and negative factors affecting the arts sector in Wanganui.

The following additional comments received through consultation revealed a wider community perspective on arts development.

- ❖ Support the art school area – already established.
- ❖ Need for arts to be acknowledged as much as sport
- ❖ Further develop the outstanding reputation of Wanganui which has already been formed nationwide
- ❖ On moving to Wanganui we were impressed with the cultural facilities provided. The arts and cultural facilities within Wanganui are highly regarded by all outsiders who visit here.
- ❖ People with disabilities: art is important in rehabilitation and is part of holistic approach to community wellbeing.
- ❖ Art is part of our heritage and culture
- ❖ Would like to see public art developed in the future.
- ❖ Require greater Council involvement
- ❖ Like to see Music month festival with combination visual arts/dance with music
- ❖ Sarjeant Gallery has excellent research collection for students, staff and artists

Findings of the Survey

The following is a brief outline of findings from the survey of the Wanganui arts sector.

A major theme was that the arts give Wanganui its distinctiveness and that they must be supported. Respondents indicated that they required Council support to market arts as an economic driver, to provide more symposiums and more exhibitions. Additionally it was felt to be necessary to network within the sector and seek support from each other.

Survey results confirmed that people involved in arts activities in Wanganui have a committed and active approach to the arts. This has not changed since 1993. The artists are involved in making a wide variety of art forms, and many engage in multiple disciplines. The main art/activity undertaken by respondents was painting (30%) followed closely by education (25%). Other popular mediums were music (21%), writing (19%), sculpture (16%), photography (16%) and video (16%).

Areas that the arts sector would like to see developed in the next two to three years are support and funding (26%), coordination (17%), increase of participation in the arts in Wanganui (19%) and more publicity about the arts in Wanganui (17%).

The promotion of the arts, and the support the artists receive from the Council and the community was seen as significant.

Solutions that the respondents identified to develop the arts sector include more publicity and marketing of the arts in Wanganui (34%) and more exhibitions (27%) to be held in Wanganui.

The biggest challenges that the respondents identified for the future of arts in Wanganui are funding (29%) and marketing (27%).

The Local Government Act states that Councils are responsible for the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of their communities. The respondents were asked if they felt that the Council is fulfilling its role in regard to cultural wellbeing. Those that responded 48% said no, 32% responded to yes and 20% not sure.

When asked of the quality of life in Wanganui, 35% of respondents indicated that the quality of life was excellent, 30% indicated good.

The study revealed a significant in-kind contribution to arts organisations as a result of volunteerism: 527 volunteers donate their time to arts organisations. Volunteers for the arts include members of committees, organizing shows, selling goods, tickets and programmes. While volunteer contributions do not have an economic impact in a strict sense, volunteers keep arts organisations functioning and are an important component of the art industry in Wanganui.

Quality of Life Considerations. There are other benefits from the presence of major arts organisations that are difficult to qualify. 22% of the respondents indicated that they moved to Wanganui because of friends. Respondents also indicated that friends had informed them of the arts community in Wanganui. 19% of the respondents have always lived here.

Arts Sales. Respondents indicated that 45% of artists sales have been to Wanganui residents, 29% of art sales to the rest of New Zealand and 11% of sales overseas. Many respondents did not fully answer this section because of citing privacy reasons, but these results may indicate that Wanganui people are arts consumers.

The survey showed that generally artists received a low income. Many earned less than \$5,000pa. Only a small percentage indicated their income in the survey citing privacy reasons.

Appendix 2

Consultation

The final consolidated population list of artists, covering all art forms comprised a total of 250 names with contact details. The list reflects changes in privacy policies of organisations, and the researcher had to rely on associations and organisations with their own mailing lists to feed the information to their members to participate in the survey. Other mailing lists of associations whereby members were advised to participate in the questionnaire were 300 (local community arts organisation) 58 (Australasian Performing rights) 35 (Dance New Zealand).

Surveys were distributed to the Wanganui District Library, Whanganui Regional Museum, Sarjeant Art Gallery, as well as the Wanganui District Council website, and the Whanganui Arts and Culture website. The public were also informed of the review through the local media as well as neighbourhood newsletter, e.g. Castlecliff News, inviting the public to participate.

Development of the questionnaire

The design of the questionnaire was the responsibility of the Arts Working Group.

Conduct of Survey

For the pilot study 10 artists were selected. The selection of respondents were undertaken by Whanganui Arts, Culture & Heritage Development Trust membership. As a result of the pilot survey only one respondent commented on a minor modification to the questionnaire.

It was piloted exclusively prior to finalisation with a number of local artists. The final survey was then distributed across the art sector between October and December 2006.

While all of the artists were asked to complete the survey form, many were not fully completed. A total of 250 questionnaires were sent out with a response rate of 33%.

A list of artists working in each art discipline was compiled from membership lists and directories provided by:

Whanganui Arts, Culture & Heritage Development Trust

Publications listing artists' services

World Wide Web sourcing the local art sector

In the case of artists' professional associations, they were contacted and surveys were sent to the association who then distributed through their system.

Public galleries

Schools

Informal community networks

Organisations who were contacted were extremely cooperative in supplying material. In an effort to meet privacy concerns several indirect methods were used to contact individual artists, for example by sending letters via artists' representative organisations etc.

The feedback of the survey ultimately depended on enthusiastic support by the arts organisations and individuals for their contribution to the Arts Policy.