

12 June 2020

Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Carmel Sepuloni

Museums Aotearoa requests that the government urgently consider further financial support for the museum and gallery sector to address the wide-spread impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including job losses and closures, on both an immediate and longer-term basis.

As you will be aware from the survey results we provided to the Ministry for Culture & Heritage (see attached), the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant and adverse impact on the nation's museums and galleries. A significant number of our institutions of all sizes are in the process of laying off staff or planning to close on a permanent or temporary basis.

While the Government has provided significant funds and other support to Crown Agencies such as Te Papa, Creative NZ, and Heritage New Zealand, the \$2m Museum Hardship Fund to be administered by Te Papa over the next 2 years does little to address the significant financial and other issues faced by the metro, regional and other museums and galleries throughout the country. In particular it is estimated that the significant drop in council and other funding sources (e.g. grants which have been diverted to health or community support), combined with the drop in visitor revenue, will force most of our nation's institutions to reduce their operational budgets by 40% to 90%. This has already started to turn into job losses, the halting of essential capital projects, a cutback in staff paid hours and museum opening hours, a reduction in collection care and in a number of cases temporary or permanent closure.

We have informed MCH officials about this issue, and now emphasise the magnitude of the problem – action needs to be taken before the sector is irreparably damaged. As you yourselves have acknowledged (29 May support package media release):

“A healthy cultural sector has many positive flow-on effects for other important parts of our economy, such as technical production, hospitality, venues and domestic tourism.”
(Jacinda Ardern)

“As we saw after the Canterbury earthquakes, creativity and culture creates jobs, drives economic recovery and enhances social wellbeing.” (Grant Robertson)

“Artists contribute so much to our economy, the fabric of our country and our communities. It makes absolute sense to put a plan in place that is focussed on sustaining their ability to work and remain employed.” (Carmel Sepuloni)

In the circumstances we hereby respectfully request an urgent meeting to discuss and agree on the additional funding and other support that can be provided to our ailing sector, including what can be done for those who have had to close or lay off staff.

Ngā mihi,



Phillipa Tocker
Executive Director
for Museums Aotearoa Board

cc Hon Nanaia Mahuta, Minister for Local Government

Museums in Aotearoa: an overview



This overview briefly outlines the shape and contribution of the public museum and gallery sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is based on data collected by Museums Aotearoa for the 2018 report, [The value museums, art galleries and heritage properties contribute in Aotearoa New Zealand](#).

Shape of the sector

Aotearoa has over 450 public museums and art galleries, ranging from large metropolitan institutions to local volunteer-run galleries, museums and archives, as well as a number of specialist museums. Only a very small proportion are 'national' in terms of their ownership, governance and funding structure. It is the other 400+ museums and galleries around the country that maintain the relationships with iwi, hapū, local experts and communities on which the collective knowledge of our shared heritage is based. The national institutions could not function without the wider sector, its relationships, expertise and collections.

Revenue

Central Government provides direct funding to Te Papa and to the four service museums through their departments. It also funds a range of museum and gallery activities through some specific targeted funds, and distributes lotteries revenue via DIA and CNZ.

The remainder of museums' funding is a mix of local council and self-generated income from admissions, retail, commercial, and other visitor-related revenue. Nationally, the proportions of funding across the sector are 52% local government, 20% Central Government (including CNZ, LEH etc), and 28% self-generated revenue.

Employment and economic impact

Official statistics from 2014 say that museums, art galleries and heritage properties employ just under 3,000 paid staff (FTE) and engage over 6,700 volunteers. Adjusted for undercounting organisations below the GST threshold and growth since 2014, we can reliably estimate over 4,000 paid staff and at least 10,000 volunteers at the start of 2020.

2014 figures state that museums, art galleries and heritage properties directly contribute 0.1% to annual national GDP. [ServicelQ figures for 2019](#) estimate museums contribution to GDP at \$269m.

Public/community benefit

Museums provide benefits to the public and our communities in three key areas:

- supporting wellbeing of local communities through learning, education, outreach and partnership programmes;
- providing ongoing kaitiakitanga, interpretation and access to public collections, now and for future generations;
- contributing to local economies through supply chains, jobs and tourism.