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Museums and galleries are delivering value to visitors and communities – new report

A new report analysing data from New Zealand museums and their visitors shows that cultural institutions are making an active contribution to cultural well-being, social cohesion and the economy, in addition to their vital role as kaitiaki of knowledge and taonga.

Museums Aotearoa commissioned the report, "The value museums, art galleries and heritage properties contribute in Aotearoa New Zealand", which brings together academic research and data collected across our museum, gallery and heritage sector. "By looking at both the individual and institutional data, we have been able to articulate clear benefits that these cultural organisations deliver," says Executive Director Phillipa Tocker. "One of the key findings is the remarkable extent to which cultural institutions provide a space for people to make and maintain new social connections," she says.

The report also references international research showing that places which have cultural institutions tend to be more economically resilient in times of recession, and that they generate more local government and state income than they cost to maintain. It has also been shown that the vast majority of ratepayers agree that their rates should be used to fund those institutions, even if not all residents visit them.

The report draws on a decade of national visitor surveys, including the most recent which specifically asked visitors about the benefits they experienced from their visit. Comments from international visitors show that museums provide an important site to engage with New Zealand culture and heritage, and increase the desire to visit the country again.

Local visitors' comments reveal a wide range of benefits derived from visiting cultural institutions, including increased empathy towards other New Zealanders, an appreciation of what their city provides for residents, and emotional and social well-being indicators.

"There are clear social benefits that museums, art galleries and heritage properties deliver, but too often value is only judged on numbers; the cost of provision and visitors through the door," says Tocker. "This report highlights cultural well-being and connection as well as economic data. We see this as a pointer to a more holistic approach to recognising the value of cultural institutions. We're hoping that museums and their funders will use this report to inform their planning and decision-making."

[download report on Museums Aotearoa website research page](#)

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About Museums Aotearoa

Museums Aotearoa is the professional association for New Zealand's public museums and art galleries and those who work in and support them.

New Zealand museums and public galleries care for more than 40 million items relating to New Zealand's history, culture and creativity. Generating in excess of 1000 public exhibitions and publications and attracting well over 12 million visits each year, museums and galleries are ranked as a top attraction for New Zealand's overseas visitors.

New Zealand museums are actively focused on enriching their communities by enhancing the quality of their facilities, collections, programmes, products and services.

www.museumsaotearoa.org.nz