



Auckland North Community and Development Submission on Auckland Council's Proposed 2023/2024 budget.

In the draft 2023/2024 budget, Auckland Council has proposed sweeping cuts to community services, arts, public transport, sustainability programmes and more in order to save \$125 million.

Auckland North Community and Development Inc (ANCAD) is a registered charity and community organisation that has been supporting the Auckland North Region and wider Auckland region since 1974. It provides backbone capability and capacity-building infrastructure, training, resources, and programmes to community organisations and social services providers. It is a thought leader and respected influencer in strengthening communities and systems change through collective impact approaches that enable resilient, safe, connected communities.

ANCAD does not support the operating cost reductions proposed by Auckland Council. Alongside many community members, we made a submission to Auckland Council to express our concern about the devastating effects this will have on social cohesion, environmental justice, culture and equity in our communities.

Key points of ANCAD's submission:

- ANCAD does not support the operating cost reductions proposed by Auckland Council. Now more than ever, Auckland needs investment, not cuts.
- The budget cuts are not evidenced by research, and no consideration has been given to the implications of the budget and its unintended consequences for the removal of community and social services.
- Auckland Council investment needs to improve equity across locations and among population groups as intended by the Local Government Act 2002 and the Auckland Reorganisation Act.
- Auckland Council investment needs to support Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities.
- Auckland Council needs to preserve the strategic work and long-term investment in communities and community organisations carried out by Council over more than 50 years.
- Auckland Council needs to honour the Thriving Communities regional strategy, Age-friendly Auckland and other stated strategies.
- We are one city with diverse needs, challenges, strengths and opportunities, so locally driven and regional initiatives must be funded.
- Auckland Council needs to sustain and invest in internal systems, processes and staff to leverage wider investment from central government and business as well as existing community strengths.
- Community groups, organisations and departments provide a higher return on investment, over and above their direct dollar funding, through the support and



collaboration of staff and volunteers. This value will be irreplaceably lost if the cuts go ahead.

- If contestable grants and local board funding are reduced, Auckland Council will be significantly diminished as a stakeholder when strategic decisions are taken by other philanthropic funders and community organisations within the Auckland region.
- Auckland Council needs to make essential cuts equitably across all Auckland Council departments rather than targeting community services.

ANCAD's full submission to Auckland Council:

1. ANCAD does not support the operating cost reductions proposed by Auckland Council.

Auckland is currently experiencing substantial short and long term stressors, including the cost of living crises, a low-wage economy, a short-term inflationary environment, local emergencies such as the recent severe weather events and the aftermath of national emergencies, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

The need to rebuild social cohesion and mitigate isolation, respond to systemic shortages of affordable housing and food insecurity, support economic development and create weather-resilient infrastructure speaks to a necessity for investment and engagement rather than short-sighted cost cutting.

Auckland Council should align and implement the Treasury's Living Standards Framework to enhance the quality of life for Aucklanders. We are one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world and therefore need to invest in communities and individuals contributing to the business and community sectors.

Furthermore, Auckland is the leading city in New Zealand economically and socially. Emphasis should be on increasing productivity across the public, private, community, and business sectors to increase GDP. This, in turn, will create positive cost-benefit value for money spent by Auckland Council.

The strategic work and long-term investment in communities and community organisations carried out by Council over 50 years will be damaged and irreplaceable if the proposed budget cuts go ahead. The budget cuts are not evidenced by research, and no consideration has been given to the implications of the budget and its unintended consequences for removing community and social services. It is a reflection of poor governance when there is no articulated strategy to inform the cost-cutting measures or use of resources.

The budget cuts target low-hanging fruit items and are disproportionate when considering the whole of the operating income and expenditure of Auckland Council. The lack of equity in the budget cuts when considering community, arts and social services is discriminatory and arbitrary. It is at odds with the Thriving Communities regional strategy, Age-friendly Auckland and other stated strategies of Auckland Council.



Additionally, the 900% increase in community leases will put even more pressure on essential organisations that provide specialised services: the social groups for people experiencing disability, the toy libraries and playgroups creating communities of parents and caregivers, the environmental restoration group restoring native forests educating communities on environmental care, the community houses reduce social isolation in older adults; the Citizens Advice Bureau who provide free advice and support; the programmes supporting homeless people; the youth event reducing crime by building a sense of belonging and ownership; the community theatre providing equitable access to arts, the family violence network reducing harm in our communities; the welcoming communities grant encouraging new migrants to feel at home. All of these are essential.

Given the recent weather events and the impacts of climate change, investing in the environment through community projects is vital for building resilient and sustainable cities.

It is clear that a value-for-money review has not been undertaken in relation to this proposed budget. Community groups, organisations and departments have taken years to build trust, volunteer support, local knowledge and networks. They provide a higher return on investment, over and above their direct dollar funding, through the support and collaboration of staff and volunteers.

The proposed budget cuts will create a tipping point that will send organisations into crisis, with many winding up or removing value-added programmes and initiatives which serve their communities. There will be many job losses, and a vast body of community knowledge and leadership experience will be irreplaceably lost. It is far more economically wise to fund all of these groups/Council controlled organisations (CCOs)/departments and organisations than to cut funding and deal with the inevitable disruption that will arise for organisations and the communities they serve.

If contestable funding is removed and regional and local board grants proceeds, then Auckland Council will be significantly diminished as a stakeholder. They will not have a voice when strategic decisions are taken by other philanthropic funders and community organisations within the Auckland region.

We suggest using the levers of a rates rise combined with increased parking fines/costs, a consolidation/sale of underused assets (golf courses, bowling clubs, unused land, or buildings that the Council does not effectively maintain) and increased debt. We also suggest a review of expensive new capital expenditure and new builds, with some projects being postponed or abandoned.

If funding cuts are to be equitable and fair the same percentage reduction should be made across all spending sectors. At present, the intended cuts of \$125 million represent 2% of the total budget spend. Careful management can save that amount without destroying 50 years of community development and community volunteering goodwill.

2. ANCAD does not support the sale of Auckland International Airport Limited Shares



Reducing shareholding has been chosen as an easy way to reduce the amount of debt held by Auckland Council, but it will provide an income going forward and is an important part of Auckland's infrastructure. Once sold, those income benefits are gone forever. It is not an effective way to raise capital, given shares amount to only 18% and can only be sold once. A more diversified asset portfolio would be a more sustainable strategy.

We support using the levers of a rates rise combined with increased parking fines/costs, a consolidation/sale of underused assets (golf courses, bowling clubs, unused land, etc.) and increased debt. Asset sales, in particular where there is an excessive maintenance need, are a good way to go and should be supported.

3. ANCAD supports increasing debt and raising rates

This will enable all current funding to continue to be provided. Auckland Council has a good credit rating and is able to increase debt sustainably.

4. ANCAD supports the increase in operating budgets by \$20 million to prepare for and respond to future storms.

Auckland desperately needs improved stormwater infrastructure to improve outcomes for future weather events. Having seen first-hand the impact of the storms across the North Shore, including the lives lost, and the flooding of homes with sewage, this infrastructure enhancement is essential. Increasing investment will mean more jobs which will also subsequently build on Auckland's economy.

Community organisations support emergency preparedness initiatives, recovery and flood response work across the North Shore. Investment in housing infrastructure, coastal inundation management, business infrastructure and environmental sustainability to manage climate change events is critical for the future of Auckland as a liveable city.

5. ANCAD gave feedback on local board priorities for the following local board areas:
 - Devonport-Takapuna
 - Hibiscus and Bays
 - Upper Harbour
 - Rodney
 - Kaipātiki

a. Devonport-Takapuna Local Board

Our key priorities for 2023/2024 are as follows and we will keep these in mind when we are responding to our budget challenge:

- *Investing what we can in water quality improvements, particularly in the Wairau Estuary, environmental protection, and climate response*
- *Looking for ways to better connect with our diverse communities to ensure they are engaged, and represented in our local board area*



- *Supporting placemaking and initiatives across the local board to build great community connections and a sense of belonging*
- *Managing our available budgets to ensure our facilities, parks and sportsfields are well maintained and fit for purpose*
- *Supporting collaboration between our key community organisations to ensure they are sustainable by taking advantage of opportunities to share knowledge, skills, and expertise and to minimise duplication in delivery and costs to meet the changing needs in our communities*
- *Engaging with Māori and mataawaka in our area to better understand their priorities and aspirations to ensure these are considered when developing work programmes and services.*

ANCAD support all priorities of the Takapuna-Devonport Local Board.

All these priorities are essential for thriving communities and social cohesion. It is particularly important that we don't go backwards in our environmental work by cutting funding there. Our population is increasingly diverse, and there are more and more apartments going up. It's essential that people are given opportunities to connect with open space for their own well-being and for the community's wellbeing.

If funding for local board activities is reduced, ANCAD believes it is important to prioritise the following:

- Environmental restoration and pest control
- Funding support for youth activities
- Arts/community programmes and services

As a values-based community organisation, we understand that a diversity of community and social services is essential for supporting community cohesion and strengthening communities. All services are essential for a stable, functioning community.

Nevertheless, our choices reflect the need to retain these services to minimise the negative impacts on our community. Community and Social Services provide essential supports to meet the basic human needs of our most vulnerable communities and support social cohesion.

Environmental restoration supports climate change sustainability for our coastal communities and flood-prone areas. Losing the trust and impact provided by volunteers in this area will be irreplaceable.

Children and young people have been significantly impacted by covid pandemic and lockdowns, recent flooding, child poverty and the cost of living. Services are essential for the mental health and wellbeing of our rangatahi. Investing in the youth of today creates a foundation for a healthy, vibrant community in the future.



The strategic work and long-term investment in communities and community organisations carried out by the local board and Council over more than 50 years will be irreplaceable if the proposed budget cuts go ahead.

The budget cuts are not evidenced by research, and no consideration has been given to the implications of the budget and its unintended consequences for the removal of community and social services. The stated priorities of the local board do not reflect proposed cost-cutting measures or use of resources.

It is clear that a value-for-money review has not been undertaken in relation to this proposed budget. The budget cuts target low-hanging fruit items and are disproportionate when taking into account the whole of the operating income and expenditure of Auckland Council and the Local Board. The lack of equity in the budget cuts when considering community, arts and social services is discriminatory and arbitrary. It is at odds with the Thriving Communities regional strategy, Age-friendly Auckland and other stated strategies of Auckland Council and local board priorities.

The disruption to community organisations will be significant if there is reduced funding to social services providers, BIDS, CAB, community development organisations and environmental groups. These groups, organisations and departments have taken years to build trust, volunteer support, local knowledge and networks. They provide a higher return on investment, over and above their direct dollar funding, through the support and collaboration of staff and volunteers.

The proposed budget cuts will create a tipping point that will send organisations into crisis, with many winding up or removing value-added programmes and initiatives which serve their communities. There will be many job losses, and a vast body of community knowledge and leadership experience will be irreplaceably lost. It is far more economically wise to continue funding all of these groups than it is to cut funding and deal with the inevitable disruption that will arise for organisations and the communities they serve.

If Budget cuts to remove contestable and local board grants proceeds then Auckland Council and, by extension, the local boards will be significantly diminished as a stakeholder and will not have a voice when important strategic decisions are taken by other philanthropic funders and community organisations within the Auckland region.

Given the recent weather events and the impacts of climate change, investing in the environment through community projects is vital for building resilient and sustainable cities.

We suggest using the levers of a rates rise combined with increased parking fines/costs, a consolidation/sale of underused assets (golf courses, bowling clubs, unused land, buildings that are not effectively maintained by Council, etc.) and increased debt. We also suggest a review of expensive new capital expenditure and new builds with some projects being postponed or abandoned.



If funding cuts are to be equitable and fair, the same percentage reduction should be made across all spending sectors. At present, the intended cuts of \$125 million represent 2% of the total budget spend. Careful management can save that amount without destroying 50 years of community development and community volunteering goodwill.

b. Hibiscus and Bays Local Board

Our key priorities for 2023/2024 include:

- *Providing assistance to those local groups that assist youth by encouraging connections, collaborations, and resilience amongst these organisations; a luxury that many of these groups individually cannot afford but results in an integrated set of services for local young people*
- *Continuing to provide funding to ANZAC day events in the local board area*
- *Renewing the Ōrewa Library, to ensure one of the most valuable public assets in Ōrewa is fit for purpose, and continues to be able to offer free recreational reading and learning*
- *Continuing to fund pest plant and animal control, and the coordination of environmental volunteers, without which our native bush would be quickly degraded*
- *East Coast Bays Community Centre refurbishment, to upgrade and extend the lifetime of this Browns Bay community asset*

ANCAD supports all priorities of the Hibiscus and Bays Local Board.

If funding for local board activities is reduced, ANCAD believes it is important to prioritise the following:

- Community climate action and sustainability
- Local community events
- Community programme delivery

All of these priorities are essential for building social cohesion in an increasingly diverse community and for supporting young people where there is no other service provider. The environmental work is essential for reducing emissions in the current climate crisis.

We have chosen community events as they are the most likely to give people the chance to connect, and we understand that there are youth events as part of that. We've also picked environmental support because the current infrastructure for these must continue in order to make sure the volunteers and trust, and progress is not lost.

Community and Social Services provide essential supports to meet the basic human needs of our most vulnerable communities and support community engagement and social cohesion. Environmental restoration supports climate change sustainability for our coastal communities and flood-prone areas. Losing the trust and impact provided by volunteers in this area will be irreplaceable. Children and young people have been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, recent flooding, child poverty and the cost of



living. Services are essential for the mental health and wellbeing of our rangatahi. Investing in the youth of today creates a foundation for a healthy, vibrant community in the future.

The strategic work and long-term investment in communities and community organisations carried out by the local board and Council over more than 50 years will be irreplaceable if proposed budget cuts go ahead. The budget cuts are not evidenced by research, and no consideration has been given to the implications of the budget and its unintended consequences for the removal of community and social services.

At present, the intended cuts of \$125 million represent 2% of the total budget spend. Careful management can save that amount without destroying 50 years of community development and community volunteering goodwill.

c. Kaipātiki Local Board

Our key priorities for 2023/2024 include:

- *Supporting our local community organisations, within available budgets, to deliver services that meet the needs of our community*
- *Supporting our environmental groups, within available budgets, to deliver pest reduction and other initiatives to improve the natural environment*
- *Continuing delivery of our extensive track upgrade programme to improve the user experience and protect our kauri against dieback disease*
- *Working with council staff and community groups to address the flooding and seawater inundation at Little Shoal Bay by implementing the shoreline adaptation plan actions.*

ANCAD supports all priorities of the Kaipātiki Local Board.

If funding for local board activities is reduced, ANCAD believes it is important to prioritise the following:

- Community programme delivery
- Youth programmes
- Community climate action and sustainability

These services are essential for a stable, functioning community. Our rangatahi have been particularly affected by Covid and the recent weather events. It's important that they are supported. Additionally, as an ethnically diverse community, Kaipātiki needs opportunities for the community to connect. All environmental work is important in a climate crisis.

Our choices reflect the need to retain these services to minimise the negative impacts on our community. Community and Social Services provide essential supports to meet the basic human needs of our most vulnerable communities, and support community engagement and social cohesion. Environmental restoration supports climate change sustainability for



our coastal communities and flood-prone areas. Losing the trust and impact provided by volunteers in this area will be irreplaceable.

Children and young people have been significantly impacted by covid pandemic and lockdowns, recent flooding, child poverty and the cost of living. Services are essential for mental health and wellbeing of our rangatahi. Investing in the youth of today creates a foundation for a healthy, vibrant community in the future.

The lack of equity in the budget cuts when considering community, arts and social services is discriminatory and arbitrary. It is at odds with the Thriving Communities regional strategy, Age-friendly Auckland and other stated strategies of Auckland Council and local board priorities.

d. Rodney Local Board

Our key priorities for 2023/2024 include:

- *Develop a new park in Milldale in partnership with a developer to support the needs of the growing new community. Works may include open green space, playground, pump track, basketball half court with youth spill out area, bridges, seating, boardwalk, and toilets*
- *Renew the Goodall Reserve skate ramp while replacing fencing, seating and access paths*
- *Renew Helensville River Walkway viewing platform, wharf structure & deliver walkways improvements*
- *Renew major assets at the Wellsford Centennial Park, including the carpark, lighting, toilet and changing room block, tennis courts including associated drainage, cricket nets and pitches and the storage facility*
- *Deliver Warkworth town centre improvements guided by the Warkworth Centre Plan developed in 2022 and continue with the Helensville town centre improvements.*

ANCAD supports all priorities of the Rodney Local Board.

If funding for local board activities is reduced, ANCAD believes it is important to prioritise the following:

- Grants for community groups/organisations
- Community centres programmes and subsidies for hall users
- Ecological restoration programmes

Our choices reflect the need to retain these services to minimise the negative impacts on our community. Community and Social Services provide essential supports to meet the basic human needs of our most vulnerable communities, support community engagement and social cohesion. Environmental restoration supports climate change sustainability for our coastal communities and flood-prone areas. Losing the trust and impact provided by volunteers in this area will be irreplaceable. If restoration and renewal are not provided for,



it will cost more in the future. These priorities are essential to support the growth promoted in the mid-north of the city.

Children and young people have been significantly impacted by covid pandemic and lockdowns, recent flooding, child poverty and the cost of living. Services are essential for the mental health and wellbeing of our rangatahi. Investing in the youth of today creates a foundation for a healthy, vibrant community in the future. Grants and funding provide support for such programmes.

Given the recent weather events and the impacts of climate change, investing in the environment through community projects is vital for building resilient and sustainable cities.

e. Upper Harbour Local Board

Our key priorities for 2023/2024 include:

- *Invest in projects that improve the environment and address climate change including planting trees as outlined in the Upper Harbour Urban Ngahere Strategy, continuing to fund volunteer environmental work, development and implementation of a pest free strategy*
- *Support library and local community organisations to continue to deliver outcomes that provide a sense of belonging, wellbeing and resilience for residents*
- *Continue to deliver on stage 1A of Scott Point Sustainable Sports Park and Caribbean Drive sports field upgrade and toilet facility*
- *Investigate opportunities to implement actions from the Water Access Assessment to improve access to the Waitemata Harbour*
- *Progress delivery of the track upgrades at Sanders Reserve to provide for better tracks for walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders*
- *Invest in projects that allow communities to continue to enjoy open spaces such as renewal of playgrounds including Bushlands Reserve and Starlight Park, updating the Upper Harbour Walking guide and renewal and upgrades of walkways and paths.*

ANCAD supports all priorities of the Upper Harbour Local Board.

If funding for local board activities is reduced, ANCAD believes it is important to prioritise the following:

- Environmental restoration and pest control e.g. ecology initiatives assistance programme
- Community programme delivery, e.g. connected community programmes
- Local grants e.g. community grants programme and rate remission grants

All priorities are important to providing a good quality of life for local residents. All of these activities rely on volunteers and there will be a greater cost if these are cut and have to be rebuilt at a later stage. They also provide opportunities for connection which builds social cohesion, which is essential for a thriving community.



Our choices reflect the need to retain these services to minimise the negative impacts on our community. Community and Social Services provide essential supports to meet the basic human needs of our most vulnerable communities, support community engagement and social cohesion. Environmental restoration supports climate change sustainability for our coastal communities and flood-prone areas. Losing the trust and impact provided by volunteers in this area will be irreplaceable.

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If Budget cuts to remove contestable and local board grants proceeds then Auckland Council and by extension, the local boards will be significantly diminished as a stakeholder and will not have a voice when important strategic decisions are taken by other philanthropic funders and community organisations within the Auckland region.



6. Other Feedback

a. Public Transport

Increasing bus fare prices whilst keeping them running at the current lower rate will mean that more people will use their cars. We support increasing public transport.

b. Community Leases

We do not support the 900% increase to community providers who lease space in community buildings. Many of these essential community services organisations will not survive this increase at very short notice and will lack sufficient capital to continue operations. It should also be noted that many of these leaseholders provide support to venue hirers and Auckland Council staff when there is no other staff on site, and they contribute to building maintenance by keeping it clean and safe from crime.