

Kia Ora Councilors, Mr Mayor and Staff. My name is Dave Bennett and I am the spokesperson for Save Dunedin Live Music. We would like to submit today on our hopes for the future of music in Otepoti Dunedin.

Dunedin punches well above its weight in terms of the quality, diversity and vibrancy of its music scene. While Dunedin's music scene has many strengths – it is collaborative and supportive, we have high quality music education centres and a strong international reputation – it is also facing similar challenges to other cities across Aotearoa and globally. In particular, challenges facing music venues, including those stemming from the regulatory environment, have been well documented in the Aotearoa media in recent years.

In that context, we would like to say how great it has been working with Jeanette Wikaira and the Ara Toi team on the Live Music Action Plan. We will be the first city in Aotearoa New Zealand to have a dedicated music action plan. We believe a draft is immanent and look forward to seeing it.

However, we do have a few things we'd like to raise with you today

First, music is an integral part of our economic growth as a city, ensuring that our city is a desirable place to live and work and provides opportunities for our young people. Music also has community and spiritual benefits and plays an important role in fostering individual and social wellbeing. Music helps to make Dunedin's parks, venues and city spaces vibrant and engaging. We would like the councillors to keep these factors in mind when ensuring that any Plan is not only robust, but that it is properly resourced.

Second, it is only with clear and robust planning that music can flourish. We understand that Variation 3 of the District Plan will not include many of the provisions that would be relevant to a live music action plan, such as considering zoning changes to allow for entertainment precincts, or for considering the regulations around residential activity in commercial and mixed use zones. While we understand that Variation 3 is only covering minor improvements, we would like to know WHEN relevant provisions will occur. Is there the possibility of a variation specifically in response to the live music action plan? Or if these issues will be explored in variation 4, could we get that in writing and an approximate timeline? It would be great to address these planning issues before it is too late for live music in our city. We have already lost too many venues.

The second point we'd like to raise is from the commercial touring and promotions industry: the growing need for a mid-sized venue. Current venues are either ill suited to certain types of performances or under equipped for musical performance. The cost barriers of accessing some venues or having to hire all the equipment to use them, or both, makes Dunedin financially unviable as a tour date for many smaller national and international artists.

This situation reduces opportunities for local bands, reduces opportunities for local support businesses and makes our city less attractive to a vibrant young population costing us one of our most important resources. Amidst rather enthusiastic pressure from the local music scene we would therefore like to hear the council's plans for sammy's? the council purchased the venue with the intention of preserving a piece of Dunedin's musical heritage and since then it has sat dormant, apart from one evening when it was revived by some young members of the community for a gig with the intention of highlighting the lack of venues to play in Dunedin. We would like to see an estimate of the proposed cost of repairs to the building and for that to be made public so the community can decide whether it is worth it? If it turns out to be undesirable to the Dunedin community, we would like to explore what the other options for an accessible, usable mid-size venue in Otepoti Dunedin.

So just to reiterate, we are very pleased with the work council and staff have done on this issue to date, but we look forward to: a well resourced LMAP, a written commitment to when planning variations will occur that will permit provisions that would be relevant to a LMAP, and finally we'd like a little clarity around Sammy's and/or alternatives. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Nga Mihi
David Bennett
Spokesperson
Save Dunedin Live Music.