



To: Auckland Council

Submission on: **Auckland Council Emergency Budget 2020/2021**

Name of submitter: Civic Trust Auckland

Date 19 June, 2020

## **Introduction**

- 1.0 Civic Trust Auckland (**Civic Trust**) is a non-profit public interest group, incorporated in 1968, with membership, activities and interests throughout the greater Auckland region. Its aims include the protection of natural landforms, the preservation of heritage in all its aspects, the encouragement of good planning for the city and region, and the promotion of public interest in the environment.
- 2.0 Civic Trust made a submission on Auckland Council's Annual Budget and TMA Draft Annual Plan, and in that, we made various points regarding transport, the environment, and climate change. Our views on those matters remain as originally submitted.
- 3.0 According to the executive summary, a key principle in preparing its emergency budget was the maintenance of critical council services and investments to support economic activity and overall community well-being.

Council has signalled its intention to help make up the revenue shortfall through temporary reductions in Council services, the deferral of various capital expenditure projects, and also the sale by Panuku Development Auckland of surplus assets (asset recycling).

Civic Trust support a rates increase in order that necessary infrastructure work continues and that services continue to be provided. Notwithstanding that general support, we have various points to make in support of and in opposition to certain specific matters. These include:

### 3.1 Capital Expenditure

- a. We wish Council to proceed with work to seismically upgrade the **Leys Institute and Gymnasium** so that all community activities previously catered for there can return to the site of these significant heritage buildings.

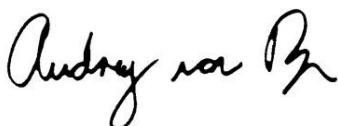
## Operating Expenditure

- b. While Council is no doubt making small reductions to as many line items as possible, Council is meant to provide for the protection of historic heritage as a matter of national importance. Council is already 5 years late in its Auckland Plan commitment to "develop a suite of incentives to conserve heritage" by 2015, so the \$100,000 **reduction of regional heritage grants** should not be implemented.
- c. We note that Council proposes saving some \$21m under the 2.5% rates increase option by, amongst other measures, removing rubbish bins to reduce emptying costs. We suggest that Council might more effectively leave the bins in place and collect extra revenue by enforcing existing by-laws for such things as littering.
- d. The projections as to the trickle down effect for the Auckland economy from **America's Cup** are questionable and quite likely over optimistic. While it is no doubt a thrilling competition for some, it is certainly not essential. Contracts should be honoured but Council's commitment should be scaled back as far as possible.
- e. We submit that initiatives by the Tūpuna Maunga Authority to fell trees at this time of climate change and emergency budgetary constraint are inappropriate and at this time, Council should not fund the TMA's provision for tree-felling provided for in its Draft Operational Plan 2020/21.

## Asset Sales

- f. We note that asset recycling of \$44m for the 2019/20 year is budgeted to increase to a target of \$200m for the 2020/21 period. We note that Panuku consider consultation requirements and community opposition to sales may present a constraint to accelerated sales. These assets belong to the Public and what might be characterised as a fire sale in a tenuous property market should certainly be the subject of community oversight, most appropriately through the local boards.

Signature of person authorised to sign on behalf of submitter



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