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Auckland Council  
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**Submission on the *Annual Budget 2023/2024***

Thank you for the opportunity for the Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS) to provide a submission on Auckland Council's Annual Budget 2023/2024.

We welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss our submission.

The primary contact point for this submission is:

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Ngā mihi/Yours sincerely,



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## 1. Overview

For Tāmaki Makaurau to prosper, its people require good health, productive lives and to feel included in society. Good health is determined by strong communities, socioeconomic resources, easy access to public and active transport, quality education, and a health-promoting physical environment. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is a fundamental human right<sup>1</sup>. Providing the social, economic, cultural, and environmental conditions that promote well-being within present and future communities is one of the main purposes of local government<sup>2</sup>.

The Auckland Council Budget 2023/2024 aims to take steps towards achieving a resilient and prosperous city, in accordance with the needs and desires of those who call Tāmaki Makaurau home. ARPHS acknowledges the complexities confronted by Auckland Council (Council) in addressing major financial challenges in a region facing significant social, economic, and environmental pressures. As a health organisation in the Auckland region, we care about achieving equity for our community and we are concerned about the potentially regressive impact of some operational spending reductions. We urge Council to prioritise cost-saving and revenue-raising mechanisms that advance equity. In a budget that aims to deliver what Aucklanders want, it may also be appropriate to reflect upon whose voices have not been heard in this consultation process.

Tāmaki Makaurau faces a number of challenges such as rising inequality, increasing numbers of residents, an ageing population, climate change and a rising incidence of long-term health conditions. In addition, our hāpouri (communities) are experiencing harms to mental health and other detrimental impacts associated with tobacco, alcohol and substance abuse. Addressing these issues is essential to improve population health and reduce inequity. These are the concerns that inform the comments below on the Auckland Council Budget 2023/2024.

Key points that ARPHS would like you to consider include the following:

1. Ensure that local government's commitment to uphold the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is reflected in Council budget processes and decision-making.
2. Prioritise the reduction of social and health inequities when considering spending reductions and revenue-raising mechanisms.
3. Balancing long-term goals against the current needs of Tāmaki Makaurau will help Council to make decisions around budgetary levers and spending initiatives that promote intergenerational equity. By incorporating a long-term lens into decision-making, Council can help to protect future generations from inheriting an unfair burden of social, environmental, and economic challenges.
4. Consider and analyse the extent to which the budget gives effect to existing Council strategies, including the Auckland Plan 2050, Ngā Hapori Momoho Strategy/Thriving Communities Strategy 2022-2032, Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri/Auckland's Climate Plan,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution>

<sup>2</sup> Local Government Act 2002, section 10 (1)

- Transport Emissions Reduction Pathway, Auckland Council's Child and Youth Strategic Action Plan, and the Smokefree Policy 2017-2025.
5. Strive for inclusive, accessible, and transparent local government consultation processes in order to capture and reflect the voices of marginalised communities.
  6. Modify the local board funding formula (90% population base, 5% deprivation and 5% land area) to help address health and social inequities and provide guidance and direction to local boards as to the intended use of the targeted funds.
  7. Where a reduction in local board funding impacts the viability of a community programme or initiative, a council-led process for supporting local boards to secure alternative funding would facilitate a transition and reduce the likelihood of an important initiative ending.
  8. Ensure the provision of infrastructure and services that promote healthy and sustainable environments and communities, prioritising areas of high socioeconomic deprivation. From a public health perspective, this includes the provision of community gardens, sports and recreation facilities, smoke-free environments, accessible active and public transport options, affordable early childhood education, strong social infrastructure and healthy natural environments.

The following sections contain more detailed commentary on the Auckland Council Budget 2023/2024.

## 2. Responses to Consultation Questions

The priorities and concerns raised in ARPHS' submission are in response to the following consultation questions;

- Question 1: Operating spending reductions
- Question 7: What else is important to you?

### Te Tiriti O Waitangi

Whilst ARPHS recognise the limited scope of a budget consultation document, the omission of any reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the Auckland Council Budget is not only problematic but undermines the people that ARPHS and the Council serve. Implementing Te Tiriti o Waitangi in this document endorses the Council's commitment to partnering with the community.

ARPHS aligns our public health evidence-based practice with the World Health Organization principles<sup>1</sup>. Te Tiriti o Waitangi—in particular, Article 3 (Ōritetanga)—guides our approach to public health in Aotearoa New Zealand. ARPHS' approach and role as a Crown agent is to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi to ensure equitable physical, mental and social well-being and health outcomes, for all in Tāmaki Makaurau. To enable the success of our public health approach, ARPHS is committed to Māori partnership at all stages and levels of decision-making; across policy development, implementation, evaluation, and fiscal decisions<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> [The Waitangi Tribunal's WAI 2575 Report: Implications for Decolonizing Health Systems – Health and Human Rights Journal \(hrjournal.org\)](https://hrjournal.org)

There are many benefits of local government sharing power and reciprocal decision-making with Māori. Power sharing and reciprocity enables initiatives to flourish, ensures transparency, and encourages public participation in the consultation process. Article One (kāwangatanga) and Article Two (rangatiratanga) of Te Tiriti o Waitangi provide guidance for these relationships. Meaningful application of these articles by local government is essential to achieve optimal health and wellbeing in our communities. ARPHS encourage Council to strongly consider how it can honour Te Tiriti in the development of future budgets including the upcoming 10-year budget. These engagement processes gain the greatest traction by being transparent and reflected in public consultation documents.

Furthermore, ARPHS are concerned about the potential lack of awareness in the wider Auckland community of the Auckland Council budget consultation, and the accessibility of the process for those who are marginalised. The Council has a responsibility to ensure that the voices of Māori, Pasifika, disabled people, tamariki/youth, refugees, new migrants, the LGBTQIA+ community, and other diverse communities are represented and reflected in their decision-making. This concern is heightened by the likelihood that the current proposed budget will disproportionately impact those whose voices are least heard. For future decision-making, including for the upcoming 10-year budget, ARPHS encourages Council to undertake an inclusive consultation process that amplifies the voices of those who are marginalised.

Moreover, ARPHS are eager to see Council's commitment to ōritetanga (equality) and wairuatanga (wholistic wellbeing of an individual) reflected in budget decision-making. This commitment can be demonstrated through the prioritisation of budgetary levers and spending initiatives that address the economic, social and health inequities which exist for our community as a whole, including for those who are disadvantaged. Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi by protecting the wairuatanga of all who call Tāmaki Makaurau home will positively reflect on Council's dedication to achieving a resilient and prosperous city.

***Recommendation: Ensure that local government's commitment to uphold the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is reflected in Council budget processes and decision-making.***

### **Impacts of Spending Reductions on Equity**

ARPHS are strongly committed to achieving equitable health outcomes for all people in Tāmaki Makaurau. Social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors are strongly linked to the wellbeing of communities, and equitable access to these determinants is vital for achieving health equity. ARPHS are concerned that the reduction in funding and coordination for a number of regional and local services will exacerbate and entrench existing inequities across Tāmaki Makaurau. Some specific areas of concern include;

- Reducing or stopping targeted regional social and community programmes will have disproportionate impacts on those already experiencing high levels of social and economic deprivation. These impacts will be strongly felt through the cessation of funding for homelessness initiatives and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, and reduced funding and support for community empowerment initiatives, youth centres, the Western Initiative, and the Southern Initiative. Delaying or discontinuing these programmes will not only entrench inequities, but also remove the advocates for those who are marginalised. This

risks further minimising the voices of marginalised communities in Tāmaki Makaurau, exacerbating social and economic inequities, and acting in direct opposition to the visions of the Ngā Hapori Momoho Strategy 2022-2032<sup>4</sup>.

- Reductions in local board funding will also disproportionately impact communities that are already socially and economically disadvantaged. Many local boards have identified the need to discontinue, reduce spending, or increase fees across community and youth programmes, local economic initiatives, and community facilities. The essential role of community investment in responding to Tāmaki Makaurau’s growing social, economic and health inequities is indisputable. This is realised under the Council’s Ngā Hapori Momoho Strategy 2022-2032 and the health sector’s Te Pae Tata<sup>5</sup>. If local board funding must be reduced, ARPHS recommend that the local board funding formula (90% population base, 5% deprivation and 5% land area) is modified to redistribute funds and mitigate the inequitable impacts of reduced spending.
- Specific reductions in operating spending under the current budget will disproportionately impact disabled Aucklanders. Compared with non-disabled people, disabled people in Tāmaki Makaurau experience poorer social, economic, and health outcomes. Local government have an obligation to respond to these inequities. ARPHS are concerned that by defunding the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Council is removing a vital support for the disability community in responding to experiences of discrimination and marginalisation. Furthermore, reductions in opening hours of libraries and recreational facilities will have an inequitable impact on disabled people who are overrepresented in unemployment figures and hence rely more heavily on these facilities. ARPHS would also like to see reassurance that the Total Mobility scheme is protected amongst operating spending reductions, as an indispensable scheme that supports those who cannot use public transport. Finally, in order to fully understand the inequitable impacts of the budget on disabled people, it is imperative that the voices and interests of the disability community are fairly reflected through the consultation process and strongly considered in further budgetary decision-making.
- Council-funded public community events provide many opportunities for equitable services, including health, to engage directly with populations. For example, the Stroke Foundation’s mobile blood pressure team engage directly with priority population groups to run health checks and provide advice on healthy lifestyles at such events. High blood pressure is the main risk factor for stroke. Māori and Pacific people are more at risk of stroke. Without events like Polyfest, health promoters lose a valuable interactive hub through which to engage with priority populations.

Additional public health impacts of the Auckland Council 2023/2024 budget are detailed below, including in the areas of community gardens, sport and leisure facilities, transport, education, smoke-free initiatives, and natural environments. Equity considerations are further detailed with respect to each topic.

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<sup>4</sup> Auckland Council (2022) Ngā Hapori Momoho / Thriving Communities Strategy 2022-2032.

<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/topic-based-plans-strategies/community-social-development-plans/docsthivingcommunities/nga-hapori-momoho-strategy-2022-2032.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Te Whatu Ora (2022) Te Pae Tata Interim New Zealand Health Plan 2022. <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/publications/te-pae-tata-interim-new-zealand-health-plan-2022/>

**Recommendation: Prioritise the reduction of social and health inequities when considering spending reductions and revenue-raising mechanisms.**

**Recommendation: Modify the local board funding formula (90% population base, 5% deprivation and 5% land area) to help address health and social inequities.**

## **Community Gardens and Nutrition**

Adequate fruit and vegetable intake are dietary factors that are protective against many chronic diseases but their cost in comparison to foods high in fat, sugar and salt, means they can be difficult for people to choose or consume in adequate amounts<sup>6</sup>. Having access to adequate nutritious food is a basic human need and a fundamental human right<sup>7</sup>.

Many community gardens in Tāmaki Makaurau sit on Council owned land, are run by community volunteers and require funding to maintain garden establishment, expansion<sup>8</sup>, equipment and resources. Stopping or reducing funding can make resources (including volunteers) and the community garden itself difficult to maintain and ultimately remove access to nutritious produce for many community members<sup>7</sup>.

Higher deprivation communities are less likely to have access to fresh fruit and vegetables are more likely to experience chronic health conditions such as diabetes<sup>6</sup>. New Zealand literature shows that community gardens contribute to community wellbeing by providing access to fruit and vegetables, increasing nutritional intake, reducing chronic health conditions, increasing physical activity, supporting financial wellbeing, improving environmental sustainability, revitalising culture and helping to develop a sense of community<sup>8, 9, 10, 11</sup>

Community gardens are particularly important in promoting Māori health. Gardening your own produce has strong social and cultural roots in Aotearoa, New Zealand<sup>8</sup>. For Māori, gardening was not only a survival skill to feed whānau and hāpouri (communities) nutritious produce<sup>10</sup> but was interconnected with Te Ao Māori social and spiritual dimensions<sup>8</sup>, the retention, affirmation and acquisition of mana and the exchange of mātauranga Māori<sup>12</sup>. Māra (garden) enrich all four domains of Te Whare Tapa Whā<sup>8</sup>. Māra are effective and acceptable Māori health promotion initiatives, empower Māori to take control of their own health and lives, allow reconnection to

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<sup>6</sup> Earle, M. D. (2011). Cultivating health: Community gardening as a public health intervention (Doctoral dissertation, University of Otago).

<sup>7</sup> Toi Te Ora - Public Health Service, (2013). Growing Healthy Communities- Food Security Toolkit for local government, Bay of Plenty District Health Board.

<sup>8</sup> Egli, V., Oliver, M., & Tautolo, E. S. (2016). The development of a model of community garden benefits to wellbeing. *Preventive medicine reports*, 3, 348-352.

<sup>9</sup> Bowers, S., Carter, K., Gorton, D., Heta, C., Lanumata, T., Maddison, R., ... & Walton, M. (2009). Enhancing food security and physical activity for Māori, Pacific and low-income peoples. August 2009. Wellington: Clinical Trials Research Unit, University of Auckland; GeoHealth Laboratory, University of Canterbury. Health Promotion and Policy Research Unit, University of Otago

<sup>10</sup> Hond, R., Ratima, M., & Edwards, W. (2019). The role of Māori community gardens in health promotion: a land-based community development response by Tangata Whenua, people of their land. *Global Health Promotion*, 26(3\_suppl), 44-53.

<sup>11</sup> Heerink, S., Sinclair-Phillips, V., Jagger, A., & Hay, K. (2021). Expanding field education: Hope trust community garden. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 33(1), 112-115.

<sup>12</sup> Earle, M. D. (2011). Cultivating health: Community gardening as a public health intervention (Doctoral dissertation, University of Otago).

customary Māori knowledge and practices, and provided a channel to sustain healthy Māori communities<sup>10</sup>.

Furthermore, community gardens mitigate the inequitable impacts of social, environmental, and economic crises on food security. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and severe weather events highlighted existing inequities, created new challenges to food access, availability and affordability, and highlighted chronic food insecurity in many communities<sup>13</sup>. Community gardens support community recovery and resilience in these events and provide a stable known food source in times of hardship. For example, after the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, community gardens acted as a place for the community to access fresh produce, de-stress, share experiences, find community support, and partake in social interaction and community bonding in a safe environment<sup>14</sup>.

***Recommendation: ARPHS recommend retaining existing funding for community gardens to strengthen community wellbeing and give effect to the Auckland Plan 2050 and Auckland's Climate Plan. If funding must be cut, Council should support community garden initiatives to secure alternative funding streams.***

## **Sports and Recreation**

Environments that promote physical activity are a critical factor in achieving population wellbeing. We are concerned about the regressive impacts of reduced funding to sport and leisure facilities on the wellbeing of Aucklanders.

Seventy-eight percent of Auckland residents participate in at least one recreation and sport activity a week and eight to nine out of ten young people aged, five to 18 years, take part in at least one recreation and sport activity regularly (one or more times per week).

Despite those numbers, supporting many of the community sports clubs and regional physical initiatives is not without barriers. Financial stability was one of seven challenges recently identified as a cause for falling junior memberships<sup>15</sup>.

According to the Auckland Sport and Recreation Strategic Action Plan (ASARSAP) 2014-2024, sport and recreation make a major contribution to our quality of life, health and wellbeing. Yet, the proposed cuts in the 2023/24 budget are directly opposed to all four priorities set out in the ASARSAP<sup>16</sup>.

With a proposed \$20m funding cut to regional services, \$5.65m cut to regional contestable grants, and a \$16m cut to local board funding, Aucklanders face significant negative impacts to their health and wellbeing. Leisure centres with reduced opening hours and deferred

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<sup>13</sup> Dombroski, K., Diprose, G., Sharp, E., Graham, R., Lee, L., Scobie, M., & Martin-Neuning, R. (2020). Food for people in place: Reimagining resilient food systems for economic recovery. *Sustainability*, 12(22), 9369

<sup>14</sup> Shimp, N., Wesener, A., & McWilliam, W. (2019). How community gardens may contribute to community resilience following an earthquake. *Urban forestry & urban greening*, 38, 124-132.

<sup>15</sup> Return to Play Survey, 2020, Active.

<sup>16</sup> Sport and Active Recreation in the lives of New Zealand adults 2013/1014 Active New Zealand Survey Results Sports New Zealand.

infrastructure maintenance for sports fields are a few of the likely outcomes should Council make these cuts.

In lieu of Council budget cuts, the cost burden will fall to non-profits. Sports and other non-profit community organisations occupying council facilities at a nominal fee will face large rises. Small buildings will cost \$2500 instead of \$250 for "a building maintenance fee" and bigger facilities would go from \$500 to \$5000 and \$1,000 to \$10,000. All of the organisations using such facilities would see their administration fee rise from \$1 to \$1300 <sup>17</sup>.

***Recommendation: If funding must be reduced, ARPHS recommend that Council consider a structured withdrawal from contestable and regional grants with a focus on equity. Simply pulling funding is a one-dimensional approach that fails to facilitate or guide any transition to other commercial funding streams. Small, part-time organisations may not have the capacity or experience to explore switching funding streams.***

## Transport

Maintaining and improving the use of range of active travel and public transport options within Auckland is of high importance.

Active travel has considerable positive effects on physical and mental health of individuals, improving heart health, reducing risks of some cancers and improving sleep quality and stress. The current budget proposes a reduction in bike hub services and opening hours in both Waitemata and Albert-Eden local boards. Bike hubs provide equitable access to bike ownership within communities, as well as opportunities to engage in core bike services and education in the absence of significant financial barriers<sup>18,19</sup>. Evaluation of bike hubs in New Lynn has demonstrated that bike workshops are effective drivers of community economics and community cohesion, producing \$103,280 of value in 2017-2018 period, and 84% of respondents considering them an important part of the community<sup>16</sup>. In addition, international evidence shows that community cohesion is supported through these bike hubs, promoting social wellbeing and increasing rates of cycling among the local community.<sup>20</sup> The proposed reduction will likely reduce the accessibility to bicycles for lower-income users, in particular, and compromise community sustainability. These impacts will limit Council's ability to achieve its commitments under the Auckland Climate Plan and Transport Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP) of increasing cycling rates to 7% through the provision of infrastructure and community initiatives.

In addition to the impacts of reduced funding for active transport, the budget proposes a reduction of 588 bus services a week across the city. ARPHS recognises that the reduction in bus services may be in part due to driver shortages. However, the provision of quality bus

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/auckland-mayor-aims-for-7-percent-rates-increase>

<sup>18</sup> Fehnker, L. (2018). New Lynn Bike Hub Impact Evaluation.

<sup>19</sup> Alexandre Rigal (2022): Changing habits in the cycling subculture: the case of two bike workshops in France, *Mobilities*, DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2022.2071630

<sup>20</sup> Meixner, 2017

services has significant public health benefits through promoting physical activity and reducing vehicle emissions. Evidence shows that there is 8-33 minutes of additional physical activity a day for people who use public transport and wider use of public transport can significantly contribute to decreasing physical inactivity in populations.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, modelling has suggested that even a 2.87% increase in public transport use instead of single occupancy vehicles for travel in Auckland can have substantial reductions in emissions that harm human health<sup>22</sup>. Vehicle emissions are responsible for 763 premature deaths annually in Auckland.<sup>23</sup>

Council has previously demonstrated a recognition of the importance of accessible active and public transport for supporting an equitable, healthy, thriving, sustainable Tāmaki Makaurau. The Climate Action Plan commits to “make travel by public transport faster, more frequent and reliable over a wider network”. TERP commits to increase bus trip share to 13% by 2030 through the delivery of “a frequent, reliable and accessible PT network capable of achieving 550 million trips per year.” ARPHS expect to see these commitments given effect in the current budget.

***Recommendation: It is expected that the transport proposals in the budget will have inequitable impacts on population wellbeing in Tāmaki Makaurau by decreasing active transport and contributing to high vehicle emissions. ARPHS recommend that Council give effect to their commitments under Auckland’s Climate Plan and the Transport Emissions Reduction Plan in the 2023/2024 budget.***

## Education

### *Kauri Kids*

ARPHS are concerned about the inequitable public health impacts of stopping the provision of Council-operated early childhood centres in Tāmaki Makaurau.

The first 2000 days of a child’s life (from conception to age 5) are foundational for lifelong positive health outcomes for tamariki.<sup>24</sup> The Auckland Plan 2050 acknowledges that children have a right to an education<sup>25</sup> and that there is consistent evidence linking good quality education, especially childhood education, with improved skills development and lifelong learning.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Auckland Council’s Child and Youth Strategic Action Plan (*I Am*

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<sup>21</sup> Rissel, C., Curac, N., Greenaway, M., & Bauman, A. (2012). Physical activity associated with public transport use--a review and modelling of potential benefits. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 9(7), 2454–2478. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph9072454>

<sup>22</sup> Páraic Carroll, Brian Caulfield, Aoife Ahern, Measuring the potential emission reductions from a shift towards public transport, *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, Volume 73, 2019, Pages 338-351

<sup>23</sup> Kuschel et al (2022). Health and air pollution in New Zealand 2016 (HAPINZ 3.0): Volume 1 – Finding and implications. Report prepared by G Kuschel, J Metcalfe, S Sridhar, P Davy, K Hastings, K Mason, T Denne, J Berentson-Shaw, S Bell, S Hales, J Atkinson and A Woodward for Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Health, Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, March 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Te Whatu Ora, Te Aka Whai Ora (2022). Te Pae Tata: Interim New Zealand Health Plan. [https://www.tekawhaiora.nz/assets/Uploads/Publications/TePaeTata\\_Oct\\_2022\\_a5\\_A4s.pdf](https://www.tekawhaiora.nz/assets/Uploads/Publications/TePaeTata_Oct_2022_a5_A4s.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> United Nations General Assembly (1989). Convention on the rights of the child.

<sup>26</sup> Auckland Council (2018). Auckland Plan 2050: Opportunity and prosperity. <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/auckland-plan/about-the-auckland-plan/docsprintdocuments/section-7-opportunity.pdf>

*Auckland*) prioritises children and young people supported at all levels of education, from early childhood education.<sup>27</sup>

Ten not-for-profit, council-operated Kauri Kids Centres have been operating for up to several decades and fill a unique gap in early learning services. Parents have chosen to enrol their children to these centres as they are low-cost and highly flexible options for whānau compared to for-profit private organisations. The nature of these centres means that children living in areas of high socioeconomic deprivation are able to access quality education at a young age. All Kauri Kids centres are located within or next to existing council facilities (community houses, pool or leisure centres) that promote supportive environments for whānau to participate in community initiatives.<sup>28,29</sup>

Kauri Kids centres are also case studies on healthy kai and wai through initiatives such as the Healthy Environment Approach.<sup>30</sup> The project at Kauri Kids centres (and Out of School care (OSCAR) programmes) aimed to get better equity with health outcomes in South Auckland and led to 8000 healthier meals at Kauri Kids since October 2019.<sup>31,32</sup> These best-practice community initiatives should be preserved to ensure children continue nourishing kai from an early age.

The proposed removal of council funding for early childcare education facilities will shift demand to the market, increasing financial barriers and decreasing access to early childhood education for whānau experiencing socioeconomic deprivation. Aotearoa has some of the highest childcare costs in the Western world. According to the latest OECD data from 2018, a typical couple who both earn the average wage and have two kids spends 28% of their income on childcare.<sup>33</sup> The majority of kindergartens, a cheaper alternative, have waiting times for children aged four years.<sup>34</sup>

***Recommendation: ARPHS encourage Council to retain funding for the direct delivery of early learning services through the Kauri Kids programme, in particular, ensuring the EQ1 1-3 centres remain open (Otara, Clendon, Papatoetoe) and centres in suburbs with high need (Birkdale, Beach Haven). This will enable Council to meet their commitments under the Auckland Plan 2050 and Auckland Council's Child and Youth Strategic Action Plan.***

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<sup>27</sup> Auckland Council (2021). I am Auckland implementation and evaluation annual update 2021 <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-by-laws/our-plans-strategies/topic-based-plans-strategies/community-social-development-plans/annualreports/i-am-auckland-annual-update-2021.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Auckland Council (2023). Kauri Kids early childhood education centres. <https://aucklandleisure.co.nz/kaurikids/>

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Education, New Zealand Government (2021). Education Counts, Early childhood services: ECE directory builder. <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/directories/early-childhood-services#>

<sup>30</sup> The Southern Initiative (2023). Resources. <https://www.tsi.nz/resources>

<sup>31</sup> The Southern Initiative (2020). South Auckland leisure centres helping kids eat healthy. <https://www.tsi.nz/news/creating-a-healthier-environment-for-good-kai>

<sup>32</sup> The Southern Initiative, The Western Initiative (2020). The Southern Initiative - Year in Review 2019. <https://knowledgeauckland.org.nz/media/1868/southern-initiative-auckland-year-in-review-2019.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021). Net childcare. <https://data.oecd.org/benwage/net-childcare-costs.htm>

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Education (2018). Understanding waiting times and occupancy rates: Results from the 2018 early childhood education census. [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/196577/Understanding-ECE-Waiting-Times-and-Occupancy-Rates.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/196577/Understanding-ECE-Waiting-Times-and-Occupancy-Rates.pdf)

## Enviroschools

ARPHS are concerned about the impacts of reduced funding of the Enviroschools programme on achieving healthy environments and supporting positive community relationships.

A whole-of-school approach is recognised by the World Health Organization as being important to achieve healthy environments.<sup>35</sup> Enviroschools supports this kaupapa by teaching children and young people about the environment, sustainability and wider food systems.<sup>36</sup> The result of this programme is empowering young people to design and lead sustainability projects in the community.

Auckland Council's Child and Youth Strategic Plan (*I Am Auckland*) Annual Update in 2021 acknowledges that Enviroschools is a pivotal programme for students to connect with the environment and lead sustainability actions in the community and also links this to the Auckland Plan 2050 Focus Area 3 (Strengthen rangatahi leadership, education and employment outcomes).<sup>37</sup> A 2015 independent evaluation revealed that, nationally, students were participating in over 10,000 sustainability-focused actions in multiple action areas inside and outside schools and early childhood education centres.<sup>38</sup> Enviroschools are actively connecting with community organisations (88%) and forming positive relationships with whānau and the wider community. This process enabled students to be more aware of tikanga Māori as they “celebrate and respect the atua and Kaitiaki.”

***Recommendation: ARPHS recommend retaining funding for Enviroschools to preserve existing schools' sustainability journeys and positive community relationships already seen to uphold Auckland Plan 2050 Focus Area 3 (Strengthen rangatahi leadership, education and employment outcomes) and Auckland Council's Child and Youth Strategic Action Plan.***

## Smokefree

ARPHS emphasise the importance of the Council giving effect to the Smokefree Policy 2017–2025 in the 2023/2024 budget, in order to achieve the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 goal<sup>39</sup>. The Smokefree initiative has a significant impact on equity, population health and wellbeing, and the prosperity of Tāmaki Makaurau. Achieving the goals of Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 requires action from local government, including through funding and implementing activities that support smoke-free compliance, such as raising community awareness through public communications

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<sup>35</sup> World Health Organization, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2021). Making every school a health-promoting school - Implementation guidance. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025073>

<sup>36</sup> Toimata Foundation (2017). Enviroschools: Key results of the 2017 Enviroschools nationwide census. [https://enviroschools.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Enviroschools\\_Census\\_2017.pdf](https://enviroschools.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Enviroschools_Census_2017.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Auckland Council (2021). I am Auckland implementation and evaluation annual update 2021 <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/topic-based-plans-strategies/community-social-development-plans/annualreports/i-am-auckland-annual-update-2021.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Crocket A, King J, McKeeg K, Oakden J (2015). The Enviroschools programme: summary of evaluation and return on investment scenario analysis. <https://enviroschools.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Enviroschools-Evaluation-and-ROI-Summary-Report.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Auckland Council (2017). Smokefree Policy 2017–2025. <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-policies/Documents/smokefree-policy-2017-2025.pdf>

and smoke-free signage. Continued investment in these activities is especially important in the 2023/2024 annual budget period in order to meet Auckland Council's commitment to be smoke-free by 2025.

***Recommendation: ARPHS recommend continued Council investment in activities under the Smokefree Policy 2017-2025 in order to achieve the goal of Smokefree Aotearoa 2025***

## **Natural Environment and Climate Change**

The budget commits to implementing Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Plan in 2023/2024. ARPHS supports the retention of this work in the budget, as climate change affects many dimensions of human health and wellbeing.

It is of concern, however, that many of the proposed cuts to Council services, such as reduced bus services, are not aligned with the commitments of Auckland's Climate Plan. In addition, many of the cuts at local board level relate to services, programmes and initiatives that aim to improve the quality of our natural environment, including the expansion of green spaces.

"Are we building harder, hotter cities?", the recent report by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, contains recommendations specifically for councils regarding their role in achieving equitable expansion and improvement of green spaces. Councils are asked to acknowledge the key environmental, recreational and cultural services that green spaces provide and the extent to which these can be compromised by urban development. (See Section 5; recommendations 1, 6 and 7) <sup>40</sup>.

Pro-equity funding options for green spaces are proposed in the report, e.g., hypothecated rates levy and targeted levies as ways to "improve equitable access to green space by focusing spending on existing suburbs with the lowest quality green space" (page 147).

***Recommendation: Ensure that the budget does not privilege hard infrastructure projects for transport and urban development over projects that expand green space and protect the environment. This should be part of the council honouring "Auckland's Climate Plan".***

***Recommendation: Apply an equity lens when proposing council-led and/or local body budget cuts that involve initiatives relating to green space as well as those that improve the quality of water, air and other aspects of the natural environment.***

***Recommendation: Retain sufficient budget to implement the council-specific recommendations (1, 6 and 7) in the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.***

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<sup>40</sup> Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. Are we building harder, hotter cities? The vital importance of urban green spaces. March 2023

### 3. Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on Auckland Council's Annual Budget 2023/2024.

## **Appendix 1 - Auckland Regional Public Health Service**

Auckland Regional Public Health Service is part of the NPHS Northern region. The NPHS began on July 1 2022 when a new national health service Te Whatu Ora was established under the Pae Ora (healthy future) legislation.

Public health services in Auckland work alongside whānau, iwi, communities and organisations to create and support healthier communities and to reduce or eliminate the cause and spread of infectious diseases. This also means collaborating with communities and those in other sectors to improve the wider determinants that affect people's health, like housing or transport.

Our staff includes medical officers of health, senior medical officers, health protection officers, public health nurses, health promoters and those in systems, intelligence and planning roles, and management. We fulfil a range of regulatory roles around alcohol licensing, smokefree compliance, infectious disease management and environmental health.