

MESSAGE FROM WELLINGTON NZ CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Tenā koutou katoa,

After several challenging years, it is pleasing to report that 2022-2023 has seen WellingtonNZ undertake a full programme of work designed to bring vitality and growth to the city and region.

With COVID-19 restrictions lifted and international borders reopened, Wellington was up and running again. Our iconic events returned – along with the cruise ships. We threw open the doors to a newly-restored St James Theatre and the striking Tākina Wellington Convention and Exhibition Centre became the city's newest asset.

The year has not been without its challenges as worldwide the post-COVID economy struggled to gain momentum, and Wellington was not immune. However, we have put in place several initiatives we believe will support local businesses and deliver on our mission to create a thriving region for all.

One of WellingtonNZ's most notable achievements for the year was the August 2022 launch of the Regional Economic Development Plan. This plan provides long-term direction of the wider Wellington economy and its initiatives will help create some of the 100,000 decent new jobs needed in the region over the next 30 years as the population grows.

The plan also supports our region to increase productivity and resilience, as well as ensuring we are more sustainable and inclusive, with thriving Māori and Pasifika communities. It is supported by the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee which works to positively shape the region's future.

WellingtonNZ is also working with our partners on a Māori economic development plan for the region, strengthening our relationships by applying principles of whakawhanaungatanga, manaakitanga and pūkenga. And our technology strategy launched this year aims to raise the profile of the tech sector in Wellington by attracting investment to the city and scaling up the inception of new companies, among other initiatives.

In our “year of recovery” the city welcomed back the World Of Wearable Arts after a two-year COVID hiatus. This internationally renowned show completed a sold-out season at the TSB Arena and set the bar for many of our regular events. The Homegrown music festival, Wellington On A Plate and Beervana all performed strongly.

WellingtonNZ's work to attract major events to the city is vital to our success, with proof of that coming in January when musician Ed Sheeran performed in Wellington, breaking Sky Stadium's single-day attendance record. With so many people congregating in Wellington for the show, we used the opportunity to showcase local musicians at the waterfront with a “Road to Ed” activation.

The same month Ed was in town, the Football Ferns played the USA in a foretaste of things to come with the FIFA Women's World Cup. Other football-themed events were held in the lead up to the tournament.

One of the most significant events of the year was the opening of Tākina. This beautiful building inspired by the rugged Wellington landscape, has conference and exhibition bookings well into the future. Expectations are that it will bring in and protect business worth about \$45 million a year, along with about 500,000 people.

Notably, TRENZ – the tourism industry’s largest and most important trade event of the year – was secured for Tākina next year. This is a first for Wellington that was not previously possible.

At Tākina exhibitions, managed by WellingtonNZ, work in tandem with conferences, bringing more people to the facility and giving Wellington another major attraction. The first exhibition, Jurassic World by Brickman, has delivered on that strategy.

It is worth noting that international visitor spend has returned to pre-COVID levels and we are confident of further growth. The return of cruise ships to Wellington Harbour in October was especially welcome and over the season we hosted about 150,000 passengers.

Significant progress has also been made implementing actions outlined in Destination Pōneke – the destination management plan which acts as WellingtonNZ’s roadmap for how the city develops as a visitor destination. At its core is an initiative to make Wellington carbon neutral by 2050 which has seen 12 businesses complete a sustainability programme.

Our team at Screen Wellington put together an attraction strategy to encourage more domestic and international screen production to the region and from that a head of attraction position was created and an appointment made.

One of the highlights of the year was the collaboration of screen industry expertise to create a showreel showcasing the region’s locations, creative capabilities and studio infrastructure with endorsements from high-profile practitioners Sir Richard Taylor, Sir Peter Jackson, Dame Jane Campion and James Cameron.

We firmly believe the building blocks are in place to safeguard the region as we progress. Times may be uncertain but with determination, commitment and creativity, a thriving future for all is within reach.

Ngā mihi nui,

TRACEY BRIDGES
CHAIR, WELLINGTON NZ

JOHN ALLEN
CEO, WELLINGTON NZ