

Tēnā koutou katoa,

2021-2022 has been another year of challenge which has tested our resilience.

We continued to adapt to the uncertainty brought by Covid-19, in many instances identifying and implementing solutions to circumstances that were changing overnight.

These included adapting to new frameworks - alert levels moving, the traffic light system, vaccination requirements, and staffing shortages. Businesses and events across the region grappled with ever-changing operating requirements. Further to that, Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington was a centre of protests as the frustrations from some people across the country boiled over, providing more obstacles to the people that live here, and the small business owners working hard to stay afloat.

WellingtonNZ was agile in its responses, with a continuation of the 'Love Local' campaign, as well as continuing impactful domestic campaigns to attract out of region visitation. We welcomed international visitors back to the region in April when the border restrictions were lifted, putting out the 'Welcome Matt' to our Australian manuhiri especially, supporting Wellington Airport with goodie bags as we celebrated the return of international travellers. Our Destination Team quickly re-entered trade markets that had been dormant for nearly two years, promoting the region to a global market.

Destination Pōneke, the destination management plan for Wellington, was launched at the end of 2021. The team at WellingtonNZ, alongside mana whenua, local tourism industry providers, and other stakeholders developed the plan to reshape Wellington into a zero-carbon city famous for transformational experiences. It is the gold standard for other regional tourism organisations, and many have since used it to guide them on their own sustainability journeys.

A key programme of the plan included the pilot of the 'WellingtonNZ Sustainable Tourism Programme', which was held in conjunction with Tourism Industry Aotearoa and saw 12 businesses complete a three-month regenerative tourism programme to ensure their businesses are sustainable and that visitors have a positive experience and respect our environment.

Events have always been vital to our success, and despite all that was thrown our way, our team helped bring international sport back to the region in the form of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in March. Another notable event which WellingtonNZ supported was the exhibition of Swedish artist Hilma Af Klint at the Wellington City Gallery, which enabled 42,000 people to have a respite from Covid-19 pressures as they looked in awe at these paintings, and which drove visitation to the region. Further to this, we continued to promote in the arts through the Surrealist Art Exhibition at Te Papa, which had 74,000 people visit it, despite the challenges of ongoing lockdowns.

The Well_ngton sign we put up on the waterfront was well suited to the times. It was designed so those people visiting an iconic Wellington location had something to take a photo of, and capture and share the memories. It garnered national attention and as intended has become a mainstay on Instagram posts from locals, domestic travellers and international visitors.

Our team at Screen Wellington continued to support the film sector through the Māoriland Film Festival (the world's largest indigenous film festival), by signing off hundreds of filming permits, and by assisting in attracting global productions to the region, known collectively as Studio Wellington, for its large offerings of infrastructure.

And as ever, there was important structural mahi happening in the background, which will impact generations of Wellingtonians to come. Both the Wellington Regional Economic Development Plan and the Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy were in development, and the conversations that

shaped the strategy for these important plans will ensure those that live, work, and play in Te Whanganui a Tara will thrive.

Together, in the face of adversity, we have remained steadfast in our determination to make the region better for those who live, work and play here, and the future is looking bright.

Ngā mihi nui,

Tracey Bridges
Chair, Wellington NZ

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