Belong Aotearoa Auckland Annual Budget Guide

**Snapshot of the cuts that would severely impact the people of Auckland:**

* Arts/culture infrastructure
* Climate action
* Community empowerment programmes
* Cycling/pedestrian improvements
* Early childhood education centres
* Education programmes (particularly about sustainability)
* Homelessness prevention programmes
* Local board community grants
* Public transport funding
* Stormwater infrastructure
* The Citizens Advice Bureau
* Youth centres

**You can make a submission in the following ways:**

1. Complete the form online here: [Feedback forms for the Annual Budget 2023/2024 | AK Have Your Say (aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)](https://akhaveyoursay.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/feedback-forms-annual-budget-2023-2024/survey_tools/annual-budget-2023-2024-feedback-form) or
2. Email your completed form to: akhaveyoursay@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz  or
3. Return it by post to:

AK Have Your Say

Auckland Council

Freepost authority 182382

Private bag 92 300

Auckland 1142

**Helpful links to understand the budget, it’s impact and/or other submission guides:**

* THE SPINOFF – where the budget cuts are <https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/23-02-2023/is-41-million-in-savings-worth-the-decimation-of-aucklands-community-and-culture>
* STUFF – Better budget <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/local-government/131493305/alternative-to-auckland-councils-grim-budget-doesnt-gut-services>
* GREENS – submission guide <https://www.greens.org.nz/auckland_council_budget_submissions_guide>
* INSPIRING COMMUNITIES – where the budget cuts are <https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/collective-response-to-auckland-council-budget-2023-24/>
* FOREST AND BIRD – submission guide – template is around issues rather than in budget submission template <https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/tell-mayor-wayne-brown-budget-must-prioritise-nature-and-communities>

**Please take note about this submission:**

\*\*\*WARNING\*\*\* If you choose to use this submission as a template please make sure to change at least the first line of this template into your own words. Any submissions that have identical wording will only be counted as one submission!

\*This content will need to be deleted if using as template as it is specific to Belong Aotearoa. If you are an organisation, you may want to replace with your own organisation experience, stories and insights.

For some questions you will be asked to select an option – our suggested option will be highlighted with the commentary you see below to go in the comment box.

Belong Aotearoa

Auckland Annual Budget Submission 2023

# Question 1 - Operating spending reductions

Do not proceed with any reductions and instead further increase rates and/or debt

We do not support the proposed operating spending reductions as this will have a detrimental and long-term impact on Auckland, and in particular our most vulnerable communities. (Here is where you can edit it to make sure there is a difference – you may want to put in your own organisation and person reason – e.g. I want my children to be able to still access community facilities and activities. – you could recount a story utilising the services that are proposed to be cut)

Do not proceed with any reductions and instead further increase rates and/or debt. Reducing the operating spend will have long-term impacts that will affect the city not only financially but also socially, culturally, and structurally.

An alternative budget seeks to increase rates and/or debt to address the current deficit.

From what we have seen from COVID and recent environmental events, community organisations, services and facilities are vital in supporting the most vulnerable; all of which will be significantly impacted by this cut.

Also, with the impact of cost-of-living crisis, now is not the time to cut back on services. Being able to access community venues to participate in civic activities, as well as support, not only provide communities with resources and information needed but they help build a stronger sense of community and belonging.

Belong Aotearoa has supported migrant and former refugee communities in Auckland for 20 years and understands just how much of an impact these cuts will have on communities.

With our programme Safari Multicultural Playgroups, that support families from migrant and former refugee communities to play, connect and learn in a safe, culturally appropriate and accessible local space, we know many of the cuts will impact them. Many utilise the community spaces and attend regional events such as Culture Fest, that often have activities that are low or free of cost, local and culturally relevant which has helped their overall wellbeing. For many of our families, they are isolated, and these activities and events have overwhelming positive impacts to their mental health.

Many migrants we work with have also told us that Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is one of the free and accessible services they accessed to help them navigate their many different queries. Whether their query was around employment, housing, education or even just social support, CAB was able to connect them with organisations that could support. They are an essential accessible service that has managed to continually service Auckland and it’s diverse communities.

Belong Aotearoa, as well as many other community organisations work alongside and are supported by local boards to deliver community projects specific to the needs of the different local boards. Local boards help communities connect to their local community and need to be resourced to provide initiatives that have both community and government working together. This not only helps leverage both parties but also helps grow a sense of belonging and connection for communities – as they see themselves as part of the democratic process and governance of their areas.

**We support COMET Auckland - Te Hononga Akoranga** (You may want to change to ‘I support’)

This organisation has had a huge beneficial and sustainable impact on families and education across Auckland with particular focus on families that are more vulnerable. We do not support ending their funding and support their ask to:

* A change COMET Auckland - Te Hononga Akoranga Trust Deed, to disestablish them as a CCO and enable them to re-settle as an independent charitable trust
* Provide COMET Auckland - Te Hononga Akoranga with at least three years’ transitional funding, while they find alternative funding streams.

The proposed cuts whilst are aiming to address current challenges will result in more challenges that will need far more investment over a longer period of time if accepted. The budget is not-fit-for purpose in a climate emergency and biodiversity crisis.

# Question 2 - Amending Auckland International Airport Limited (AIAL) Shareholding Policy

Don’t change the policy, keep all our shares and further increase rates and/or debt

The Auckland International Airport is a key strategic asset so we do not support the suggestion to sell any shares currently held by Auckland Council.

Whilst COVID has had a large impact on the current profit and thus benefit to council as shareholders. There is a growing trend as travel increases as COVID becomes more manageable and travel restrictions ease. In addition this is Auckland’s only international airport and as such will lose access and influence over a key piece that helps Auckland economically and socially.

Commentators point out that this is not a particularly astute time to sell these shares - at a low point in the market - and that once they are gone, this asset can no longer be leveraged or support future revenue raising for Council

# Question 3 - Managing rates and debt

Other

We know that a community, and in fact a city thrive, is the ability to connect, participate and contribute, to which our rates, taxes and fees help enable. They enable collective and public investment into structures, resources, activities and organisations that help a city, communities and neighbourhoods not only function but thrive holistically. Rates, taxes and fees across all Aucklanders help us achieve big goals and often expensive needs and challenges.

Similarly, debt can also be treated in the same way. Debt can also be used to spread the costs of investment that will have future benefits for our communities.

The proposed cuts to services are far from an inevitability; they’re irresponsible in the midst of a climate and inequality crisis. Reducing the Water Quality and Natural Environment Targeted Rates by two-thirds is especially irresponsible in the wake of substantial damage to our local environments and waterways caused by recent flooding. Auckland Council can increase rates and/or take on more debt, allowing much needed investment and preventing cuts to social services.

# Question 4 - Storm response

Proceed with the proposal to increase our operating budget by around $20 million each year

This spending is absolutely necessary to help keep us safe from the effects of future storms and flooding.

# Question 5 - Local board priorities

(This will vary depending on which local board you are wishing to feedback on)

Albert-Eden

* I support all priorities.
* We do not support any reduction of funding to local boards as the activities and services provided address local needs to help create stronger, more connected and thriving local communities that contribute to overall a stronger city. To lose local board funding you lose the local response to local needs potentially resulting in ‘one-size-fits-all’ solutions that are inefficient and irrelevant. In addition, it hinders the people representatives at a local level, that will impact the ability for local voice and needs being raised to a regional level.
* With lots of developments across the local board, the need to continue resourcing the local boards is even more important. Great communities do not occur without any investment into them and continually so. To support social cohesion and economic growth, local board helps facilitate the opportunities to do so, across government, communities and key stakeholders.

Henderson-Massey

* I support all priorities.
* Same as previous

Manurewa

* I support all priorities.
* Same as previous

Maungakiekie-Tāmaki

* I support all priorities.
* Same as previous

Ōtara-Papatoetoe

* I support all priorities.
* Same as previous

Puketāpapa

* I support all priorities.
* Same as previous

Waitākere Ranges

* I support all priorities.
* Same as previous

Waitematā

* I support all priorities.
* Same as previous

Whau

* I support all priorities.
* Same as previous

# Question 6 - Changes to other rates, fees and charges

Waste management rates changes: All Support

Changes to other rates:

* Swimming Pool/Spa Pool etc: Support
* Change which buses services etc: Support

# Question 7 - What else is important to you?

(You may not want to use any of the below as this part is to share what’s important to you)

This submission is advising for increased rates and/or debt rather than cuts as we understand the detrimental effects the cuts will have across Auckland.

Auckland is still dealing with COVID impacts, the recent flooding and cyclone and the rising cost of living, putting many individuals, families and communities at risk of falling into poverty. Now is not the time to cut the services and support funded by Auckland Council.

Auckland Council and local boards funding and services have supported some of our projects that have had a positive impact with diverse ethnic communities and we would want this to continue as this work has supported participation, social cohesion and inclusion.

As such we oppose reducing regional services such as community and education programmes, arts and culture programmes, regional events, economic development, and other social services activities. This would include reducing investment in climate education programmes essential to our city’s future resilience, and environmental work crucial to protecting everyone from severe weather impacts – like restoring wetlands, improving stormwater management, and maintaining urban tree cover.

We oppose reducing local board funded activities across all boards. The funding from local boards that communities see in the form of grants and investment into community services, provide great value to Aucklanders. For every dollar that council invests we get back many more volunteer hours. Many boards – such as Hibiscus and Bays Local Board and Māngere-Ōtāhuhu – invest a significant amount into support for local community conservation to protect taonga species (kauri) or landscapes (e.g., Pest Free Hibiscus Coast). Community efforts like these are important for nature and communities.

We oppose reducing regional contestable grants as they too provide great value to Aucklanders. Community efforts in active transport, increasing social cohesion and inclusion, maintaining and enhancing the natural environment, and contributing to a low-carbon economy are highly dependent on the support these grants offer.

We oppose reducing the Natural Environment Targeted Rate (NETR) and Water Quality Targeted Rate (WQTR) by around two thirds and using reserves collected from these targeted rates to continue delivering these work programmes as planned in 2023/2024. This proposed “pause” may impact delivery of essential projects to protect our biodiversity and taonga species in 2023/24, such as kauri dieback work. Our kauri forests are so important for cleaning our air, filtering our water, reducing erosion, recreation, and physical and mental wellbeing. Work must continue to protect kauri and our wider natural environment.

As such we do support an increase of the operating budgets, or ‘storm response investment’, by around $20 million each year to improve our ability to prepare for and respond to future storms. This investment must prioritise nature-based solutions, such as the protection of mature trees and growing our urban forest. Nature-based solutions are embedded at a national level in the Emissions Reduction Plan and National Adaptation Plan. We cannot simply maintain the status quo and continue to rely on the grey infrastructure that has failed us in the past. We must build back better. By protecting and restoring nature like urban forests and wetlands, we can protect our communities.

We also support action to manage the impact of future storms. Restoring access and services to areas affected by recent extreme weather must be the top priority for Council investment. The Council should work with the Government, EQC, and insurance companies to give certainty to homeowners and convert these properties to parks, and planted with native trees to stabilise the land, soak up stormwater, and enhance our urban forest. A comprehensive strategic region-wide review of infrastructure capacity and development zoning should be undertaken as a priority to identify those areas of the city suitable for intensified development. All properties within potential flood zones (as indicated in Council Geomaps) should be considered for conversion to park land. Our future city should plan to restore wetlands and forests in vulnerable areas alongside denser, well-serviced development in safe areas. The flood and cyclone impact is only a snapshot of the importance of why we need to invest into storm response, as many families continue to be impacted by the oversight into managing potential environmental risks to people.

We oppose maintaining the currently reduced number of public transport services. Public transport services must be increased to better serve community needs. We need to enable more people to use public transport in order to transition to a low-carbon transport system, reduce emissions and unclog our motorways. We need a transport system that is reflective of the changing demographics and changing city.

Auckland has been hit with multiple setbacks that has led to this deficit, but we need to invest into growth, not cut back, to get back on our feet. Together we can achieve more.