

# NZSWG

---

New Zealand Writers Guild  
Puni Taatuhi O Aotearoa

---

## SUBMISSION TO MANATŪ TAONGA LONG TERM INSIGHTS BRIEFING

THE COMPONENTS OF AN IMPACTFUL AND  
SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL SECTOR INTO THE FUTURE

NOVEMBER 2021

## INTRODUCTION

### WHO ARE WE?

New Zealand Writers Guild Puni Taatuhi o Aotearoa (NZWG) is the professional membership association and registered trade union of Aotearoa New Zealand script writers, established in 1976. NZWG is committed to working in a way that adheres to the spirit and the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. NZWG is a member of the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG), Council of Trade Unions (CTU NZ) and WeCreate.

NZWG thanks Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage for the opportunity make a submission on the Long Term Insights Briefing (LTIB). We look forward to sharing how the creative sectors can better contribute to the future economic and cultural wellbeing of Aotearoa.

NZWG wholly supports the recommendations within the WeCreate submission to Manatū Taonga, and took part in the joint WeCreate and Manatū Taonga online LTIB workshop session held in early November 2021.

### OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Below are the NZWG aims and objectives relevant in this submission to Manatū Taonga.

- To protect, represent and further the interests of New Zealand writers.
- To be the national and international voice of New Zealand writers.
- To establish, maintain and improve minimum conditions of work and rates of compensation for writers.
- To promote policy, legislation, and legal and economic rights for the benefit of writers, including but not limited to the issues of copyright, moral rights, and status of the artist.

### WHO ARE THE SCREENWRITERS OF AOTEAROA?

Our screenwriters cannot be categorised as one homogenous group; they are communities of talented workers of mixed age, ethnicity and genders, who live all over Aotearoa. They are an amalgamation of budding and experienced career professionals whose living is made on the creation of ideas inked onto pages.

NZWG represents screenwriters in three broad categories;

1. New and Emerging — this group is the broadest and most diverse. From absolute beginners and students to change-of-career professionals from other industries, our emerging screenwriters cross boundaries of age, ethnicity, and gender. There is significant funding support available to this group, although the communication of that fact is not very strong.
2. Mid-Career – Aotearoa’s most successful, yet most overlooked group of screenwriters. These writers work on their own and others’ creations, collaborate with other writers, directors and producers, and grow their own slate of original work. Mid-career writers work incredibly hard and earn their living at their craft; yet once they have broken in with credits and produced work, they find there are fewer funding opportunities, support and guidance available to them. In a larger industry, mid-career writers would have more work available to them; in Aotearoa, they are in direct competition with emerging screenwriters for funding opportunities that are not tailored to their experience levels.
3. Experienced — this is a fine group of screenwriters who have spent decades honing their craft, establishing their creative voice and pushing through the glass-ceiling at mid-career point. NZWG salutes these seasoned professionals who have displayed high levels of craft, stamina and invention.

Screenwriters in Aotearoa have to be the most resilient type of creator in the ecosystem. Writers are the Research & Development department of the screen industry, taking the most risk and working through the greatest number of rejections and failures in attempting to get scripts to screen. They work closely with their producing partners and have a solid understanding of the intricacies of the process that scripts must go through to be developed, funded and filmed. As such, their knowledge and experience match that of screen producers, and their work is indispensable in the local screen industry.

Screenwriters are the bedrock of the scripted screen industry, directly responsible for the pipeline that many other screen sector workers rely on. An increase to funding of development work is key to ensuring the growth of the Aotearoa screen industry.

## STRATEGY ON THE TABLE

Consultation on strategic, long-term changes to policy and legislation give an opportunity for screenwriters to voice concerns and add weight to those things that support, nurture and grow their careers and outputs for a culturally vibrant Aotearoa. A fresh vision and conversation for this long-term briefing are welcomed.

However, we have been here before. And in order to move forward, we must learn from and utilise the consultation outputs that have already taken place. Consultation works when those who are engaged with are listened to and their knowledge, experience and wisdom is harnessed and positively directed.

Here we outline just some of the key strategic work currently on the table, the shared insights and strategy from these programmes of work can inform a more holistic and successful LTIB for the cultural sectors.

---

### SCREEN SECTOR STRATEGY 2030

NZWG was an active member of the Facilitation Group of The Screen Sector Strategy 2030. This strategy, which was delivered to the government in August 2020, holds some key objectives in bettering the funding environment for the growth of locally generated IP and growth of the economic and cultural stories of Aotearoa. NZWG endorses the aims and objectives of the strategy including the desire to drive the following sections:

- Accelerate development and protection of home-grown IP for local and global audiences.
- Strengthen existing, and secure new, funding and investment.
- Work with the Government to modernise the regulation that shapes the sector.
- Identify and agree on a structure and establish a body for pan-sector representation.

---

### SCREEN INDUSTRY WORKERS BILL (SIWB)

The SIWB legislation, heading to second reading in the second quarter of 2022, will change the way all business is handled for workers in the screen sector. NZWG is an active member of the Film Industry Working Group, which consists of cross-sector representation and has been a turning point in the maturing of our sector. The process acknowledged the journey the screen industry has taken, from a “cottage” industry to a thriving and viable part of the GDP.

The legislation, should it pass, consists of four contracting principles that must be included in every contract, alongside the ability for screen workers to collectively negotiate standard minimum agreements. They are:

1. Parties must act in good faith
2. Workers must be protected from bullying, discrimination and harassment
3. Engagers must act fairly and reasonably when terminating contracts
4. Workers must receive a fair rate of pay

In order for the collective bargaining and subsequent contracts to become successfully embedded, there will need to be significant conversations, consultation and changes to the way screen productions are funded in Aotearoa. The key element of this conversation will need to be about increasing funding to the key screen funding agencies – New Zealand on Air, New Zealand Film Commission and Te Māngai Pāho.

The SIWB conversation goes beyond single crown entities, Ministries and Ministers, and will require cross sector and cross government engagement to successfully transition Aotearoa to a mature screen sector.

---

#### THE LIVING STANDARDS FRAMEWORK 2021

Culture is a capital, and should be recognised as such within the Living Standards Framework (LSF). This consultation work is ongoing and NZWG is actively engaged in this feedback.

NZWG also implores Manatū Taonga to consider the positive benefits of recognising culture, in all its forms, as a capital within the LSF. The research undertaken to date highlights that countries and communities that recognise the economic and societal benefits of culture have higher wellbeing statistics – and show measurable outcomes economically. Which in turn embeds value, encourages education, increases funding and promotes growth of cultural wealth amongst people and their communities.

Economic and other wellbeing benefits of culture (in all its forms) are not mutually exclusive, they are mutually advantageous for the future of Aotearoa.

---

#### REVIEW OF THE COPYRIGHT ACT

This review is ongoing, and NZWG is actively engaged in the consultation of the review. The act is central to the ability of copyright creators and owners to economically benefit from their creations.

Without robust protections and the ability to challenge infringement of their works, creators could be stripped of their earnings and the ability to reinvest in their creations.

---

#### REFORM OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION – TOI MAI

The Reform of Vocational Education and the Toi Mai Workforce Development Council (WDC) will be highly influential in determining learning pathways for the next 25 years in the cultural, creative, recreation and technology industries. NZWG's Executive Director is on the Board of Toi Mai.

The work through all of the WDCs will be industry led and the consultation that informs the Workforce Plans will need to directly align with the future planning work of this LTIB.

## FEEDBACK

### COMPONENTS OF CULTURAL SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE

***What do you think about the infrastructure components we have listed? Are any components missing? Should any be removed?***

NZWG supports the changes to the listed components as recommended by WeCreate in their submission. Reiterating that this infrastructure cannot function without better supported people who create and embody culture. We support strengthening and including more detail under the following components:

#### **CONNECTION**

- Recognition and understanding of the value and potential of our creative and cultural ecosystem, centralising mātauranga Māori
- Better cross government connection and responsiveness
- Aotearoa more connected to local and international markets, networks and infrastructure
- Enhancing New Zealand’s international reputation

#### **EQUITY**

- Driven by the communities it seeks to enable – at the head of the table

#### **INVESTMENT**

- Partnerships between government and private sector investment
- Investment in locally generated Intellectual Property (IP)
- “Business / Creative Professional” funding over “Project” funding

#### **LEARNING PATHWAYS**

- Broader focus on this title to better reflect sector needs – SKILLS, TALENT & CAPABILITY
- This will need to align directly with the work being undertaken by the Toi Mai WDC
- Despite employing approximately 130,000 New Zealanders, and international evidence supporting the growing importance of creative skills in the Future of Work, the sector is currently poorly represented in the government’s Future of Work Forum

NZWG would like to see the following components added:

#### **VALUE**

- Measurement of culture to show its inherent value – including the many sectors and sub sectors underneath the “Culture” banner
- Embedding economic and wellbeing value at the heart of all cultural activities

#### **EDUCATION**

- Educate people early. Discovering and nurturing creatives and creatives businesses of the future
- Skills and talent development. At all levels of education, early childhood, primary and secondary schools, school leavers, upskilling in sector, all the way to change of career
- Educate government, communities and individuals on the value of creativity and culture

### **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

- Better safeguarding, protecting and promoting the legal rights of creatives and creative businesses to earn from their work
- Clear, enforceable and accessible regulations

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

- Weightless industries – cultural sector at the forefront of sustainability change
- Commitments to reducing carbon emissions

#### ***Which components do you consider to be most fundamental in fostering a sustainable and impactful cultural sector in the next 10-20 years?***

The components are a sum, and depending on the outcomes we are seeking, they will need to be adjusted accordingly. NZWG points Manatū Taonga to the work already undertaken through the Screen Sector Strategy 2030 to best highlight the fundamentals in fostering a sustainable and impactful screen sector in the future.

NZWG endorses the aims and objectives of the strategy including the desire to drive the following sections:

- Accelerate development and protection of home-grown IP for local and global audiences
- Strengthen existing, and secure new, funding and investment
- Work with the Government to modernise the regulation that shapes the sector
- Identify and agree on a structure and establish a body for pan-sector representation

Full Screen Sector Strategy 2030 report found [HERE](#)

#### ***Please provide any additional feedback or ideas you have about the components of cultural sector infrastructure or the examples in the supporting material.***

Ensuring that cultural sector workers and businesses are better classified and measured.

Screenwriters pay tax on the works they create, let's consider the benefits of a joint IRD and Manatū Taonga collaboration to show the true economic contribution of the sector.

### **FUTURE LENS**

#### ***What do you think will act as significant drivers of change over time within the cultural sector?***

Celebrating success is a key driver of change, this sits directly next to valuing the cultural sector. With the ability for the sectors and society to measure these successes through better collections of data and representation of culture in society.

Other key drivers of change:

- Technology – invention, adoption and access; the control of markets by multi-national Digital Service Providers, automation, Artificial Intelligence, and the value and security of data and IP assets
- Climate change
- Social and political upheavals
- Ongoing and future health needs
- Shifts in audience and market demand

***How do you think these drivers of change could affect some of the components you've discussed?***

In the time of Covid the cultural sector has proven its ability to adapt and change for growth. Ensuring that government (through a cross government approach) can match this flexibility, adaptability and better respond to rapidly evolving sector needs will become a major driver of many of these components.

Ensuring that Māori are centralised in all decisions of change and future planning. What is good for Māori is good for everyone.

***What are the key risks, opportunities, and challenges when considering cultural system infrastructure to 2040?***

NZWG supports the elements listed in the WeCreate submission. Emphasising screenwriter specific risks, opportunities and challenges:

**RISKS**

- Failure to celebrate the success and value of the sector; this debases and devalues the cultural sectors
- Unfair or exploitative rights agreements driven by old fashioned funding structures and international heavy weight pressure, international trade agreement concerns

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Equitable profit share outcomes — including access to the New Zealand Screen Production Grant (NZSPG) for original authors for more than just feature films
- True commitment to consultation with screenwriters before funded development opportunities are designed

**CHALLENGES**

- Broad cross sector and cross government buy-in
- Shifts in viewership and market trends
- Capability building
- Environmental and health crisis

***Please provide any additional feedback or ideas you may have about the future of cultural system infrastructure.***

A true industry, societal and internationally recognised definition of the 'cultural sector' at the centre of the Manatū Taonga LTIB. This will knit together all of the industries, communities and elements of culture that make up the fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Unfortunately, the prevalence of an attitude that the Manatū Taonga is not in sync with the screen sector means that an "us and them" perception stands in the way of meaningful connection between the sector and the Ministry that supports it. Compounded by feelings of creative individuals and businesses voices not being heard, a significant and unfortunate divide has been created. Covid has accelerated this for many individuals in the sector, shaped by funding opportunities offered during the Covid response.

NZWG would love to see this change: we want to see a maturing of the sector to work better together with Manatū Taonga to produce successful and fulfilling stories for Aotearoa's screens and beyond.

## CONCLUSION

NZWG is in strong support of ensuring that funding policies and processes prioritises the work of Aotearoa screenwriters, and working toward positive changes for the future wellbeing of Aotearoa New Zealand.

We look forward to the continuation of this conversation with Manatū Taonga.

On behalf of Aotearoa Screenwriters,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice Shearman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Alice Shearman  
Executive Director

New Zealand Writers Guild | Puni Taatuhi o Aotearoa

[alice@nzwritersguild.org.nz](mailto:alice@nzwritersguild.org.nz) | 09 360 1408