

Hon Stuart Nash  
Parliament Building  
Wellington, 6160



30 March 2022

**RE: What's next now that the Auckland Showgrounds, the sole suitable venue in Auckland for major exhibition events, has gone?**

Dear Minister,

We were pleased with last week's announcement that outdoor events were able to resume with no limit on numbers. As you can imagine, the events sector is now eagerly awaiting the move to Orange when both outdoor and indoor events will be limitless. Events professionals are wondering what additional support will be released if the sector doesn't have an announcement about a move to Orange on 4 April. As previously communicated with you, this is on the basis that the current CSP is not fit for purpose despite the revised comparator period being 2021.

We understand that the Auckland Showgrounds is in the process of being leased out as a film studio complex.

In this letter, we would like to address:

1. The rationale behind such a lease to the film industry
2. The impact of this decision on the events sector
3. The need for your intervention

**1. The rationale behind leasing Auckland Showgrounds to the film industry**

We would like to understand the rationale for the leasing of the Auckland Showgrounds to the film industry specifically keen to understand:

Why is there a need for another studio after the unexpected departure of Amazon Prime's *Lord of the Rings* TV production resulting in the country's studios having spare capacity. Does Auckland actually need a fourth big studio complex?

If indeed it is needed, is there a need for a film studio to be in this prime location on the city fringe? Greenlane presents a convenient access with a quick motorway access for exhibitors and the events supply chain as well as plenty of parking for the public to attend events.

Why wasn't there any public consultation process or debate on the use of this venue in line with Logan Campbell's vision for this space? Additionally, the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) designates the Showgrounds as a precinct set aside for the primary activities of exhibitions, trade fairs, conferences and events. Surely the Mayor needs to uphold the AUP Precinct terms as well as helping protect the millions invested by Auckland Council and the New Zealand Government in the building upgrades to enable growth of exhibitions back in the early 2000s for the benefit of the taxpayers.

## **2. The impact on the events sector**

Without a decent size venue, exhibitions in Auckland will not be held anymore.

Why is Auckland, our country's largest city, with more than one third of our population, on the verge of losing its largest events centre? To clarify, the Viaduct Events Centre can only accommodate 15% of a normal show at the Auckland Showgrounds – the equivalent of half of Hall 1, yet with some of the exhibitions needs the equivalent of seven of those halls. Noting that the NZICC when completed won't be large enough to host exhibitions. We therefore wonder why "movie" is winning over "event"

We are puzzled by the ill-informed comment of Mr. John Barnett from Endeavour Ventures *"He thought the trade shows, meanwhile, were struggling. "And from the events point of view, the impact of Covid most probably puts them in a weak position. The events industry might be upset, but I don't think their future is anything like it was pre-Covid."* On which ground has Mr. John Barnett been making such a statement other than for lobbying on behalf of his industry?

Australia is ahead of New Zealand in their covid recovery, and their events sector is demonstrating that events are making a strong return, signalling a post-Covid future that could soon be within our grasp here in New Zealand. Matt Pearce, CEO and co-founder of Talk2 Media and Events runs a webinar on this topic today (Seminar that some of the DPMC Team will be attending) outlining to New Zealand events professionals just how fast Australian events have bounced back. New Zealand really needs to get ready for when events activities are back to pre-covid times.

## **3. The need for your intervention**

We are highly concerned by this new lease, and we are asking you to intervene to prevent the loss of public access for concerts, expos and many other exhibitions and events to a film studio.

As the Minister of Regional Economic Development, Tourism and SMEs, we urge you to liaise with Mayor Phil Goff and outline to him the importance of tradeshows and consumers shows for the regional economical and wellbeing benefits of Auckland and New Zealand.

Without strong leadership, advocacy and intervention from Central Government, we will see the events sector and its supply chain - already been significantly impacted by covid-19 for the last two years, as you know - collapsing further with events like the iconic Royal Easter Show, The Auckland Food Show, The (Hutchwilco) New Zealand Boat Show, Foodtech Packtech, BuildNZ, Facilities Integrate NZ, Meetings, Fine Food New Zealand, The Auckland Home Show, Armageddon, Covi Motorhome Show, The National Safety Show, The Baby Shows, The New Zealand Gift Fairs, Materials Handling & Logistics Show and many others dear to New Zealanders disappearing from the Auckland scene.

This loss will have a flow on effect on tourism, hospitality and SMEs depriving New Zealanders of the significant community, economic and social benefits those events provide. Notwithstanding this would also result in a mass net outflow of knowledge, ideas, productivity, investment, talent and jobs for the people of Tāmaki Makaurau on top of indirectly impacting the rest of the country.

Our Vice-Chair and I look forward to your prompt response on this matter. In the meantime, I remain at your disposal for any additional information you may need.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ségolène'.

**Ségolène de Fontenay**  
**General Manager**

**Copies to:**

Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage  
Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage  
Hon Kiri Allan, Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage

**ENC:** Evaluation of events held at ASB Showgrounds in July 2016, yet those shows have grown significantly across to 2020.