

# Pride Fest Out West

Case study as part of an evaluation of Auckland Council's investment into Arts and Culture in Auckland.

November 2025





## Mihi and acknowledgement

**Our grateful thanks are extended to all who provided their input and assistance to this project and the preparation of the report.**

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

This case study forms part of a broader evaluation of the Value of Auckland Council's investment in the arts and culture sector. This project was commissioned and funded by Auckland Council.

The overall project has been undertaken by Adrian Field (Dovetail), Georgia Parslow (Dovetail), Cat Ruka (Dovetail Collaborator) and Amanda Hunter (Dovetail).

# Pride Fest Out West: Background

## About Pride Fest Out West

Pride Fest Out West is a community-led initiative that offers a range of events to West Auckland during Pride Month each February. The festival has been running since 2021 and offers free activities aimed at a range of ages and audiences, including children's book readings, markets, drag performances, games and fitness classes, and information sessions. In 2025, there were a total of 61 events run over the month.

Pride Fest Out West events take place across 20 Proud Centres - community venues such as libraries, community centres, and hubs in West Auckland. Auckland Council teams from the three main hubs, where the three largest libraries are located, coordinate the programme and support Proud Centres to facilitate and host events across West Auckland. Expressions of interest for events aligning with the festival's values are open to the community from September to November.

Once community members have had an event accepted for the festival, they become a community partner and work with Proud Centre staff to plan and programme their own event. The festival hosts large, day-long events such as Geek out for Pride and market days which bring together a range of local artists and community members. There are also smaller events, such as yoga classes and book readings run at multiple locations, allowing the events to be experienced by whānau in different parts of West Auckland.

Pride Fest Out West was built upon the concept of Proud Centres, which are community spaces across Auckland that are activated during the Auckland Pride Festival to host inclusive, LGBTQIA+ focused events, but are also safe, inclusive spaces where all communities are welcome year-round. Pride Fest Out West was developed in response to structural and funding changes within Auckland Council to reignite the kaupapa in West Auckland.

**"Proud Centres started with a bang, it was really abundant and full, and there was all this free programming across the city. Then it dwindled and Pride Fest Out West was a real bastion of keeping the kaupapa alive."**

– Auckland Pride Festival

The festival brings Pride to the suburbs by hosting events in familiar neighbourhood venues like libraries and community centres. This reduces barriers like distance and travel cost, and creates inclusivity by offering small, close and familiar settings to engage with Pride events. Events are also free, and venues have free parking, which removes cost as a barrier to participation. The scheduling is flexible, with events offered at different times to suit people with various commitments. By activating local spaces and working closely with the community, the festival ensures a broad mix of people can take part and feel included.

**"Pride used to be very central Auckland-based, and a lot of the families didn't feel like they had the ability to celebrate."**

– Community partner

# Pride Fest Out West: Working in partnership to deliver value through investment

Pride Fest Out West is an example of responsible and collaborative stewardship of resources, bringing together the knowledge, skills and resources of various groups across the West Auckland community to deliver the festival each year. Pride Fest Out West is community-led, with community partners bringing events together in ways that they know will work for their specific communities. The financial resources, Proud Centre infrastructure and programming knowledge and expertise of Auckland Council staff are leveraged to deliver impact across West Auckland. The authentic partnership between Auckland Council and Auckland Pride Festival is a highlight of this collaborative approach.

## A collaborative approach with community partners

Pride Fest Out West is, first and foremost, a community-led festival. Proud Centre staff highlighted the importance of ensuring that community partners are enabled to deliver initiatives that they want to see in their own communities. The expression of interest process is an intentional way of bringing together local creatives and small business owners to contribute ideas for the festival and potentially become community partners in delivering events.

Community partners who worked with Proud Centres to plan and run events in the festival this year described this as an easy, collaborative process, removing a number of barriers to running events such as cost and coordination while allowing them to control the content and delivery of the events. All community partners in this evaluation shared positive experiences working with Proud Centre staff across Auckland and many described a values connection with the team that was an important aspect of this relationship.

**“They were really lovely, I loved it. It was my first event ever, and the team made it so easy. There was a lot of support for all the questions that I had, they answered quickly and with a lot of respect.”**

– Community partner

## Leveraging Auckland Council resources for greatest impact

The Pride Fest Out West structure strategically leverages the programming resources of the three main West Auckland Hubs (New Lynn Community Centre, Te Atatū Peninsula Community Centre and Te Manawa in Westgate) to deliver value across West Auckland during the month of Pride. The festival uses a connected marketing approach that brings all Proud Centres under the bespoke Pride Fest Out West banner. The event has its own look and feel that ties into the overall Auckland Pride Festival celebrations while maintaining a unique West Auckland identity. Participants in this evaluation were often surprised by the impressive event turnout, and this was in part due to the marketing power of hubs boosting awareness and interest in events across smaller centres in West Auckland.

**“The shared marketing meant that a whole lot of people got amplified. They got a whole new audience.”**

– Proud Centre staff

Proud Centres are also able to leverage Auckland Council infrastructure across the area to host events. The spaces were described by evaluation participants as “beautiful”, “welcoming” spaces that bring together different generations and people from across the community. Leveraging these locations means events can be run efficiently and at no cost to community participants.

**“It's a beautiful space. Everyone is welcome regardless of if they're queer or not.”**

– Community partner

### **Building connections and capability across Proud Centres**

Pride Fest Out West was praised for building connections across the Proud Centres in West Auckland and building the capability and capacity of smaller Proud Centres to run events for their local communities. There was practical value in collaborating. For example, central hubs were able to negotiate bulk rates with community partners, enabling them to run events that they wouldn't have been able to with their own programming budgets. Proud Centres were also able to collaborate on programming to ensure events were offered in multiple locations, creating an accessible and cohesive experience for communities.

**“It was a really collaborative approach that was headed by the three main hubs with the organisation and and bringing us all together. We could bounce ideas off each other. That was really beneficial.”**

– Proud Centre staff

This approach also leveraged the programming knowledge and expertise of teams within the hubs to upskill smaller Proud Centres to run their own events, for Pride Fest and beyond. Smaller Proud Centres appreciated having access to this knowledge and expertise and forming connections with staff across the area that they may never have connected with otherwise.

The event also created opportunities to learn from challenges and create resources that would support Auckland Council staff networks more broadly. As one Proud Centre team member explained, pushback from a small portion of the public around drag events in previous years had prompted the team to create resources and tools to help staff feel more confident managing these conversations.



Messy Play, Survey Feedback, 2025



### **Working with Auckland Pride Festival to deliver Rainbow programming**

Pride Fest Out West was described as an example of genuine partnership and collaboration with the communities being uplifted and supported. The mahi is carried out in partnership with Auckland Pride Festival every year, who provide support to Proud Centre staff to create spaces authentically and meaningfully for Rainbow communities. Initially, Pride Festival undertook a process of engaging face to face with community venues across West Auckland to understand staff levels of comfort, competency and relationality with Rainbow programming for Rainbow communities. Through this process, they encouraged teams to connect with each other and understand who they could lean on for support throughout the festival planning and delivery process.

**“There were less experienced Rainbow programmers and more experienced Rainbow programmers and then Pride and the arts and culture team at Council in that dialogue, we are an interconnected network.”**

– Auckland Pride Festival

This was seen as a valuable process for ensuring Pride Fest Out West is carried out safely and in service of Rainbow communities. This process also supports Proud Centres to operate this way year-round. Through creative programming such as Pride Fest Out West, the West Auckland Proud Centres are building up the capability and capacity of these organisations so they can hold Rainbow communities safely in future. The relationship between the Auckland Council Proud Centre staff and Auckland Pride Festival staff was described as “symbiotic, authentic and genuine” by Auckland Pride Festival.



GeekOut, PrideFest Out West Facebook, 2025

# Pride Fest Out West: Building artistic, social and cultural capital

Pride Fest Out West looks to build artistic, social and cultural capital within West Auckland communities by creating safe spaces where all communities are welcome to showcase and engage in the arts. The event amplifies Rainbow artists and small businesses and brings communities together to create social connection as a result of shared experiences.

## Creating safe spaces for communities to participate and engage in the arts

Representation and visibility are at the core of Pride Fest Out West programming, with events, facilitators and performances that are selected to reflect the diversity of Rainbow and wider communities. Community partners commented that events and festivals like Pride Fest Out West play an important role in maintaining visibility of and celebrating Rainbow communities. A number of participants reflected on how much public attitudes have changed since they themselves were growing up and saw initiatives like Pride Fest Out West as contributing to these attitudinal changes within societies over time.

**“I think now the kids are like, it's okay to be queer, it's okay to be a drag queen, you can be trans. All that accessibility now, I never had that.”**

- Community Partner

Responsive and inclusive content and programming is an important aspect of the festival. Expressions of interest are assessed against the core values of the programme to ensure values alignment and avoiding events that could look like they've “had a rainbow slapped on them.” Events range from fun and engaging sessions run by members of Rainbow communities or Rainbow organisations through to informative sessions to provide information and advice to those in the community.



**“We had someone with her mum talking about her transition. There were whānau there that just wanted to talk to someone and who had been through that journey.”**

- Proud Centre staff

Pride Fest Out West was seen as a celebration of the increased access that young people have to Rainbow role models and artforms, as well as a recognition of the value of the work that older members of Rainbow communities have achieved. Participants described how meaningful it was to be able to attend an event with the knowledge that nobody would judge them or treat them as different to others in the space.

## Catalysing creative activity and amplifying local creatives

Pride Fest Out West provides opportunities to platform existing creatives, as well as first-time, emerging talent in the community. Some of the community partners in this evaluation have been participating in Pride Fest Out West from its very first year, using the opportunity to showcase their creative talents while aligning their work with values systems they believe in. One community partner explained that they had a business idea that they wanted to pilot, and Pride Fest Out West offered them the opportunity to run a series of events at Proud Centres. The business has now launched online, and the partnership continues with ongoing programming outside of the festival.

**“Having a chance to test the business out before jumping straight in. I still have a lot of the people that originally came in February coming to each session. It kick-started what I'm passionate about.”**

– Community partner

The variety of events and locations throughout Pride Fest Out West created a platform for diverse local artists and creatives from Rainbow communities to showcase their talents and engage with their communities. The events also make spaces for alternative artforms or artistic expression. The Zine fest and markets run as part of the month are opportunities for smaller crafters to showcase and share their talents with the wider community. Drag performances were another example, with one participant noting that although this artform is often not given the legitimacy it deserves, Pride Fest out West actively affirms its value by purposefully programming drag events.

Exposing communities to different artistic expression and amplifying Rainbow artists in the community was seen to have the potential to inspire future generations of artists. Having people speak power to their own narratives and sharing this with broader audiences was seen as an important way of catalysing future creativity across West Auckland.



## Creating community cohesion through creative spaces

Pride Fest Out West looks to create spaces where communities can come together and connect in the moment, and community partners reported that they could see this happening at their events. Ensuring spaces are safe, inclusive and bringing together diverse communities creates opportunities that may not be possible in other spaces. Some evaluation participants reported witnessing connections in the community go beyond the event itself, such as parents forming groups. There were also examples of community partners making connections that turned into ongoing friendships.

**“I've had mums who've come to me and said thank you I never really felt accepted when I went to other mums and bubs classes because I was the only lesbian or gay there.”**

– Community partner



# Pride Fest Out West: Delivering value for the people of Tāmaki Makaurau

Pride Fest Out West has become an important social connector, drawing large audiences from across Auckland and beyond, boosting local businesses, and fostering collaboration among community partners. The festival provides inclusive, creative spaces where people can learn, share, and celebrate Rainbow communities in West Auckland.

## Fostering economic growth, locally

The Pride Fest Out West events are popular and well-attended. Despite it being a local festival, some attendees had travelled long distances from other parts of Auckland and from as far as Hawke's Bay to take part. Many events sold out quickly due to high demand and community partners were surprised by the number of event attendees well-exceeding what they had anticipated.



GeekOut, PrideFest Out West Facebook, 2025

**“We had someone who travelled six hours and a few people took flights to Auckland. As soon as it was over, I had people in my comments section asking “when's the next one? I'll fly from Australia.”**

– Community partner

This created opportunities for community partners to share their small businesses and connect across the community, contributing to the local economy. Community partners described making connections that led to future growth in their business and social media followings. There was a reciprocal relationship across businesses involved who described promoting the other events and businesses through their own mahi. Community partners also noted that free event space hire made the events particularly accessible.

**“I'm getting about 100 new followers a day and that's been consistent since February.”**

– Community partner

## Informed and engaged citizens

Pride Fest Out West has created opportunities for the West Auckland community to engage with arts and culture, as well as learn about different communities and topics. Events included panel discussions and storytelling sessions that explored issues like identity, inclusion, allyship, and feeling comfortable in your own skin, helping people understand the lived experiences of Rainbow communities and encouraging tamariki and rangatahi to explore these themes.

**“I do a reading and talk to some of the themes in the book, which are about accepting difference and celebrating your own uniqueness and kindness and a little mental health.” – Community partner**

The festival also acts as a conversation starter in the Proud Centres both during and outside of the events. Proud Centre staff reported that the public would ask about Pride month and broader questions about Rainbow programming and the community. Creating a safe space to ask questions like this can be important for communities who have not had opportunities to engage like this in the past.

The Proud Centre event staff have made their stance on inclusion and creating safe spaces for Rainbow communities clear, and this stance sends a message to Rainbow staff and broader communities that they are seen and valued by Auckland Council. Following the planned disruptions in Te Atatū, the Proud Centres posted on Facebook inviting the community to karakia to reset the wairua of the space, and in less than 24 hours had a number of community members join to stand with them in solidarity, demonstrating broader community and civic engagement.

**We had over 150 people turn up. Most aren't from the Rainbow community, but they wanted to show their support. It was powerful for people to say they were standing up for our whānau.**  
– Proud Centre staff

Some of those who took part in this evaluation signalled that Pride Fest Out West achieves the outcomes it sets out to in terms of creating safe spaces, uplifting local talent and bringing people together. However, these participants also stressed that events like Pride Fest Out West go beyond this, contributing to systemic outcomes that support long-term community wellbeing, inclusion, and social change. By embedding Rainbow visibility in everyday spaces, building networks of support, and affirming diverse communities through creative expression, Pride Fest Out West strengthens the social fabric of West Auckland.



Malcolm Clarke, PrideFest Out West Facebook, 2025

**Pride Fest Out West clearly demonstrates the value of [Auckland] Council supported arts initiatives. It builds belonging, encourages expression, and brings people together in ways that are both creative and deeply human. It felt like we were part of something bigger, and that, I think, is the point of both creating and attending these events, and why it is so important to continue.**  
– Community partner, survey feedback

