

Totara Street: Building the Conditions for Safer Spaces

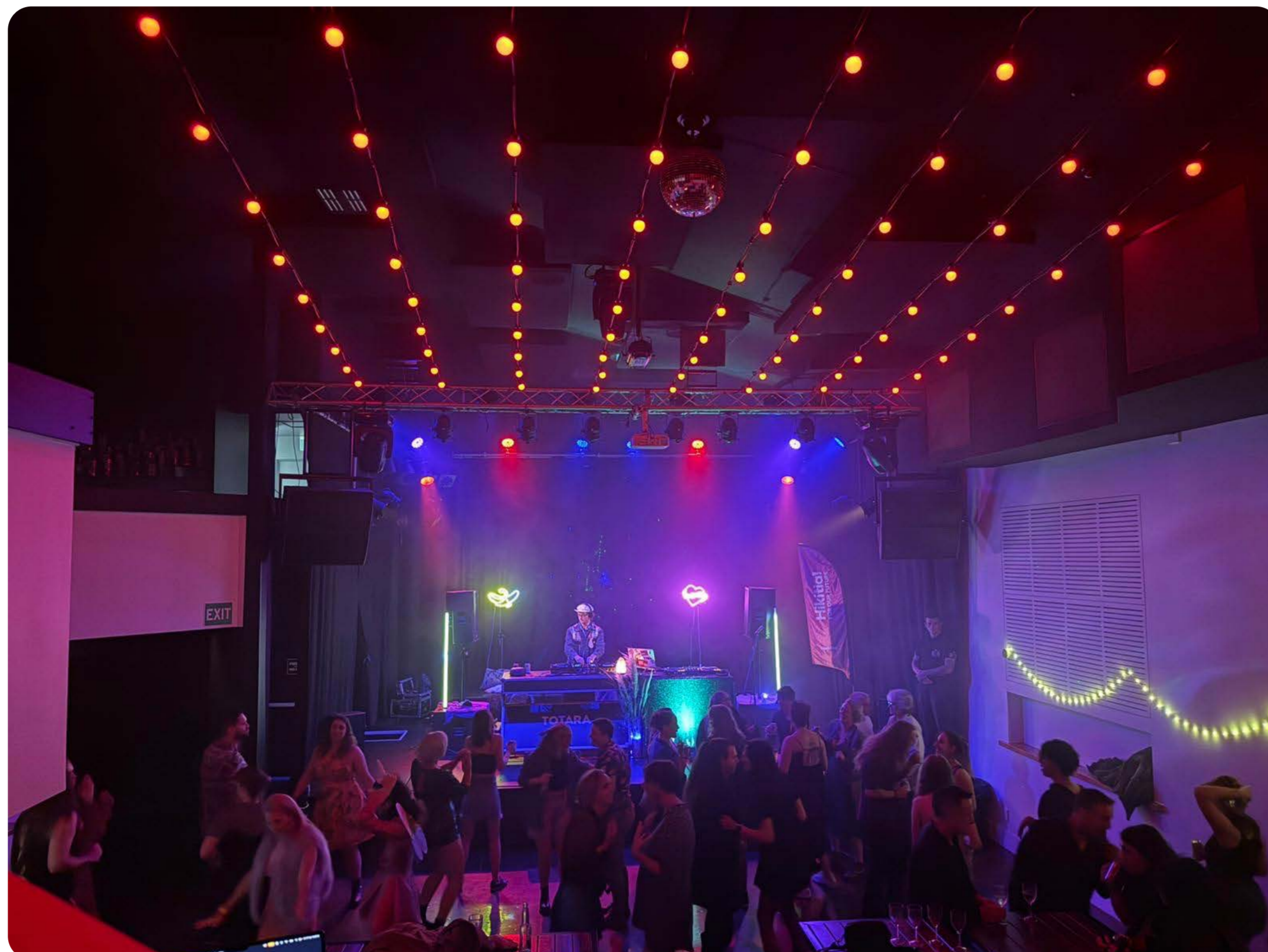
April 15, 2026 8:23 am



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Shifting from reactive responses to shared responsibility for safer music spaces

Hikitia! connected with Totara Street, as it is already a well-regarded and trusted venue. It brings together a wide mix of people across music, arts, and community, and has strong existing relationships and credibility.



At the same time, like much of the nightlife environment, safety is largely shaped by response. Staff and security are often required to make judgement calls in the moment, particularly in grey-area situations, without a shared framework or consistent expectations. There are also wider system pressures, including gaps in support once people leave venues and limited alignment between different parts of the system. These conditions mean that, without strengthening, the environment will likely continue to rely on individual decision making rather than more collective, preventative approach.

Hikitia! entered this space through existing relationships, taking a community-led approach. Early conversations focused on listening and understanding how the venue and those connected to it were already thinking about safety, before introducing a primary prevention lens in a way that felt practical and relevant.

Through this process, a connection was strengthened between Totara Street and Elite Security. Conversations explored shared challenges, including grey-area harm, inconsistency in responses, and the role security plays in shaping what happens in a space. There is openness from leadership to reflect, ask questions, and consider what a more aligned approach across venue and security can look like.

At the beginning, readiness sat in an early stage. There was awareness and interest, particularly at leadership level, but no formal structure or shared approach in place. As the relationship has developed, that readiness has shifted. There is now movement toward preparation, with agreement to bring key people together, develop shared expectations, and begin a staged approach to training across leadership and staff. The work is also being formalised through MOUs, signalling a level of commitment that was not present at the outset.

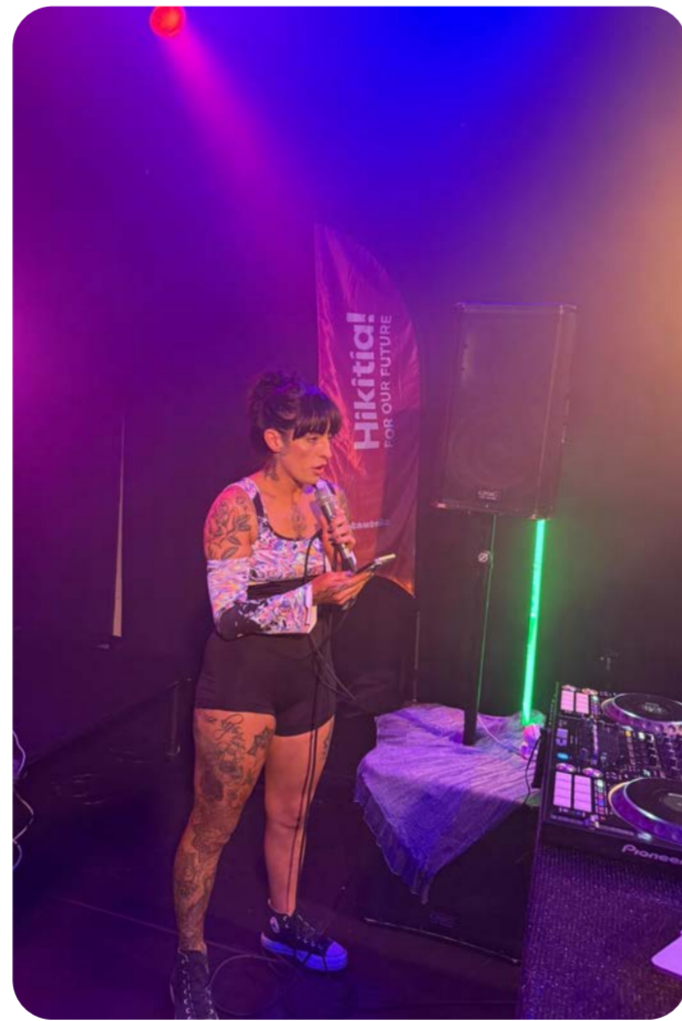
One of the early outcomes of this relationship has been the co-development of **Haus of the People**, a music event at Totara Street in partnership with Tauranga Moana Rainbow Collective.

This event has emerged through the relationships built between Hikitia!, the venue, and community. It represents a collaborative effort to create a space where communities can gather, and where inclusion, visibility, and safety are intentionally considered. It also provides a practical opportunity to bring together community, venue staff, and security in a shared space, and to continue strengthening relationships and understanding across those groups.

Alongside this, the involvement of Elite Security is significant. As a company working across multiple venues and events, their engagement creates the potential for this work to extend beyond Totara Street. What is being explored and developed within this partnership has the ability to influence how safety and prevention are understood and practiced in other settings over time.



Right — Juice
Left — Hikitia! Mobiliser Rachel Axis-Taane



Hikitia! Mobiliser Rachel Axis-Taane speaking at event.



Haus of the People event poster.

The work is still in its early stages, but there are clear indicators of progress. Conversations have moved into planning, leadership has expressed commitment to next steps, and structures are beginning to form that support ongoing work. Prevention is starting to be seen as something that can be part of how these environments operate, rather than something separate.

Looking ahead, the focus is on continuing to build alignment between Totara Street and Elite Security, progressing training across teams, and learning from opportunities like Haus of the People to inform what works in practice. As this develops, the intention is that the learning from this space can contribute to wider change across the nightlife and events environment.

“Thank you for making me safe to be myself xxx”

“Please do this regularly! Best night out in a long time” ❤️

“Great vibes need more”
❤️

“THANKS FOR BRINGING THE LIGHT IN A WORLD FULL OF SHADOWS”

ToC

If we support venues, security, and community to build shared understanding and alignment around prevention, they can more intentionally shape the environments they are part of, strengthening safer norms and influencing how safety is practiced across the wider nightlife system.