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19 January 2024

Tēnā koe Hon Brooke Van Velden,

Fakaalofa lahi atu, kia orana, ko na mauri, mālō e lelei, mālō ni, ni sa bula, tālofa, talofa lava, warm greetings to you,

We would like to congratulate you on your appointment as the Minister of Internal Affairs.

Our organisations are key stakeholders in the library and information sector. LIANZA, SLANZA and PLNZ are writing to introduce you to our organisations and identify some key areas for our library and information members. You will find more details in the briefing paper attached to this letter.

We know you are early into your term as Minister of Internal Affairs, however, we would appreciate meeting with you in the near future.

Until that time,

Ngā mihi nui kia koe Minister, ma le fa'aaloalo lava, nuku noa nga,

**Richard Misilei**

President

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*Attached: Briefing Paper*

## ABOUT OUR ORGANISATIONS

**Te Rau Herenga o Aotearoa, the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA)** has provided leadership to the wider library and information profession for over 122 years.

With a strong national network, active member communities and volunteer base, an established profile, and strong international connections, LIANZA spans all parts of the diverse library and information sector. This includes public, school, tertiary, health, prison, tertiary, special libraries and information services. LIANZA is the peak body for the library and information sector.

LIANZA works closely with [Te Rōpū Whakahau](#), the professional body supporting kaimahi Māori in libraries. LIANZA also maintains a strong relationship with Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa the National Library of New Zealand. We have strong links to the wider galleries, archives, museums, marae, iwi and records (GLAMMIR) sector. We are a member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA).

**Public Libraries New Zealand (PLNZ)** is the key sector advocate for public libraries, particularly the current and emerging leaders in New Zealand public libraries. PLNZ has 307 members covering all New Zealand local authorities.

Public libraries represent the largest part of the library sector in New Zealand in terms of registered and active members (1.4M), collections (10M physical items, 12.6M digital items), service locations (340, including mobile libraries), visitation (25M physical visits, 33.4M virtual visits) and usage (34.5M physical loans, 16.7M digital loans/downloads) and staffing (2,360 FTE).

Public libraries are integral to their communities in providing community spaces and public programmes, access to technology and support to use it, as well as safe, respectful and supportive spaces for all community members

**School Libraries Association New Zealand Aotearoa (SLANZA)** provide advocacy, community, guidance and professional development on library practice and programmes for school library staff in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through their National Executive and regional networks, they aim to:

- provide a national voice for school library staff.
- [advocate](#) for the critical role of school libraries in literacy, reading, learning and wellbeing.
- provide help, guidance and support for school library staff.
- improve the professional recognition, working conditions and qualifications for all staff involved with school libraries.
- provide [professional development](#) through conferences, regional events, online courses, webinars and articles published in our magazine, [Collected](#).
- develop mutually beneficial relationships with associated national and international professional organisations.

## **LIBRARIES IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

Libraries are central to their communities, where people come together from every walk of life, at every age; to learn, participate in activities, use tools and connect with others.

From everyday people, the child at storytimes to the veteran who has been coming to the library for 50+ years, to people using special library services in their workplaces, and students using school and tertiary libraries – and everyone in between.

Public, special, school, tertiary libraries and whare taonga serve and engage with communities across Aotearoa and are trusted places for people to connect with information, knowledge and resources.

## **THE CRITICAL ROLE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES**

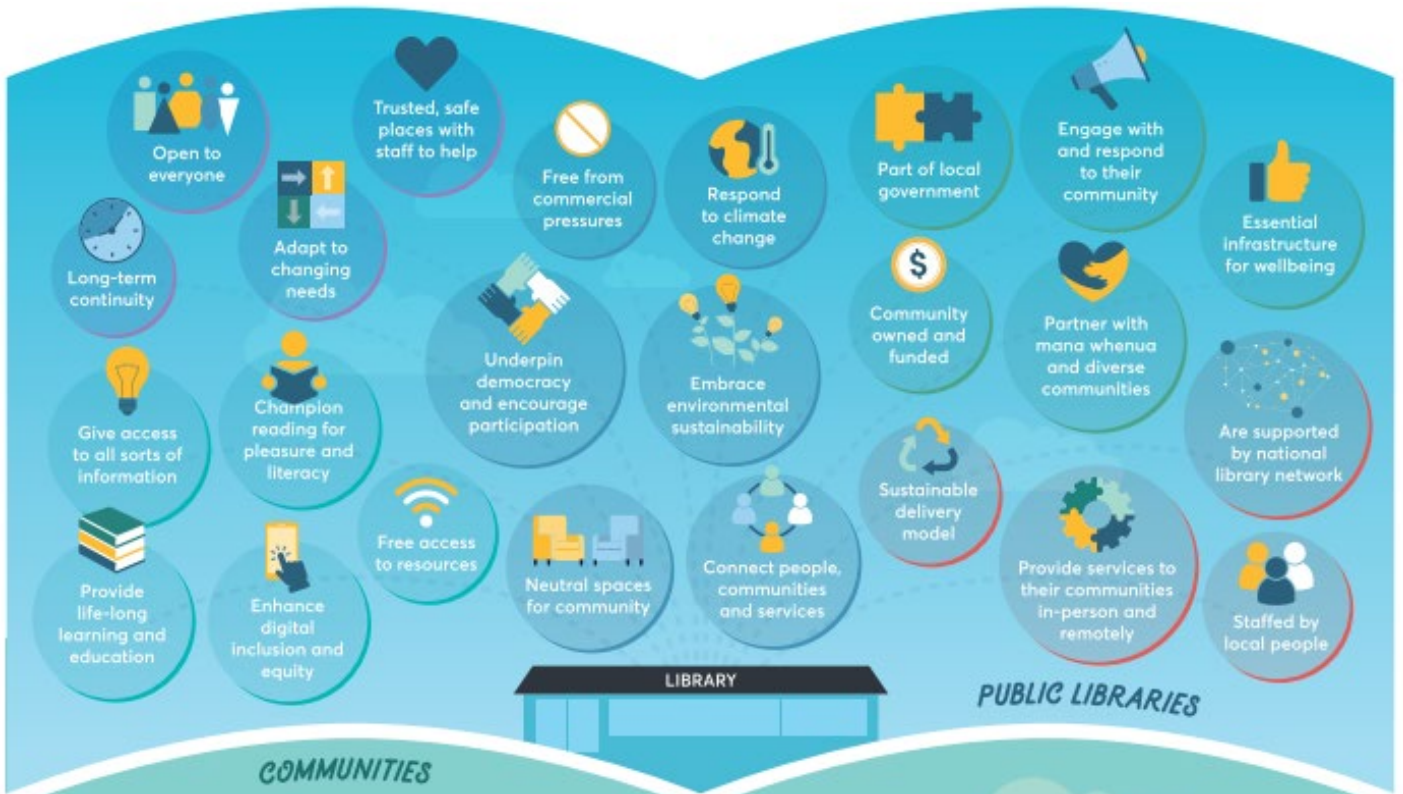
We believe library and information services add significant value to communities and citizens in Aotearoa, enabling them to prepare for the future. LIANZA's recent submission to the Future for Local Government Review highlights the many examples where libraries have been critical and effective enablers of community wellbeing, at the heart of community in every community, and which should be recognised and supported in all central and local government planning and delivery.

This submission is available [to read here](#).

The following infographic demonstrates what they do and the value of libraries in their communities.

A recent video about the value of libraries can be found on this link here:

[https://youtu.be/l4RX1qhX\\_wM?si=FrQ7nsLLJ3aqkLDr](https://youtu.be/l4RX1qhX_wM?si=FrQ7nsLLJ3aqkLDr)



**COMMUNITIES**



**PEOPLE**



## CURRENT ISSUES IN THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SECTOR

There are a number of areas we would like to draw your attention to:

### LIBRARIES RESPONDING TO CRISIS EVENTS

- Libraries play an important place for communities in times of crisis, not only as places to shelter but as information and community support hubs. For example, in Tāmaki Makaurau and the East Coast Te Tairāwhiti in February 2023 public libraries played an important role in providing trustworthy information as well as a place to shelter during flooding and cyclone events. Librarians deployed their specific skills to support emergency management and provide access to technology in the welfare response.
- Libraries and information services provided valuable information to help services better respond to the COVID pandemic crisis, aided people to obtain vaccination passes, and supported their communities during this time.
- Libraries and librarians will have an important role after the immediate crisis response, as places of social cohesion, community connection and guides to trusted digital and information resources, with many public libraries in regional areas doubling as civil defence bases.

### SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY

- The [New Zealand Libraries Partnership Programme](#) led by the National Library of New Zealand was an exciting initiative to help libraries recover from the post-COVID environment and enable innovations in the sector. However, the two-year NZLPP funding was a one-off. Not all the benefits, particularly in relation to digital access and enabling more equitable services for Māori, are sustainable without continued funding.
- Equity of access to library and information support is not assured for all Aotearoa New Zealand citizens. An inequity exists between areas with large and well-funded local government funding through rates, and therefore have well-resourced libraries, and those rural areas that don't. There is also inequitable access to library and information resources in under-resourced areas such as prison and school libraries.
- We collectively believe there is a strong case for central government funding to support public libraries where they are delivering national benefits. For example, in relation to digital equity and inclusion, civic participation, literacy, learning, social wellbeing and care of cultural and documentary heritage.

### DIGITAL EQUITY AND THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES

- Supporting digital equity has become everyday work for library and information services. What we learned from COVID times was that people struggled to get the information they needed. This was especially so for rural communities, students, older people, Māori and Pacific peoples. Having systems such as the APNK Network available was one way to ensure isolated people had digital access and could access the information they needed.
- Libraries' digital response is part of their core role in ensuring equity of access to information and equitable opportunity to participate. This response has been funded almost entirely by local government, with some central government support through the Aotearoa People's Network – the [APNK Network](#) in support of e-government. The APNK Network provides more than 1,100 free public devices, and access to the internet that supports more than 7,000 users daily.
- We collectively want libraries to be able to effectively implement strategies to increase digital inclusion in their communities and the APNK Network to be adequately resourced to reach all those who need it.

## DIGITAL INCLUSION AND LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

- The implementation of the *Strategy for a Digital Public Service* is transforming public services to “operate in the digital world in a more modern and efficient way”. The strategy pushes more people towards libraries for help as they try to access public services without the skills and tools to navigate the digital world.
- Moving beyond digital equity, we want to ensure that libraries can be an effective strategic partner for the government to enable digital equity and increase digital inclusion in their communities to support access to public services and civic participation. Public libraries are particularly well placed to support more effective digital engagement by communities with central government departments, agencies and services. With adequate funding school libraries are able to develop and foster digital skills for youth.
- Libraries are already sites for digital inclusion in addition to their other services. This front-line service provided by libraries needs greater recognition through comprehensive funding at a local level. This is a different issue to the provision of the APNK Network.

## PAY EQUITY FOR LIBRARY STAFF

- Pay equity and the current situation for library assistants is one of the library and information sector’s most pressing issues. Lack of pay equity has a flow-on effect on the ability of libraries to provide effective services and their ability to attract and keep staff.
- LIANZA has worked with Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi Public Service Association (PSA), Te Hautū Kahurangi Tertiary Education Union (TEU), Te Riu Roa NZEI, to highlight these issues for the sector. We were pleased when the [pay equity claim for school librarians](#) was successful.
- We support pay equity provisions being extended to other library professionals in the tertiary and public sectors for reasons of equity and fairness.

## EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SCHOOL LIBRARIES

- There is currently no requirement or specialised funding for schools in Aotearoa New Zealand to provide library spaces, services or staff. This means most students don’t have access to a school library run by a school librarian.
- New Zealand’s literacy levels continue to decline with persistent gaps between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnic groups and genders.<sup>1</sup>
- A recent National Library survey highlighted a library as essential for promoting and supporting reading for pleasure, achieving literacy standards, strengthening inquiry learning and teaching and enhancing students’ social and emotional learning and well-being.<sup>2</sup>
- Overseas research shows that school libraries, staffed by school librarians, lead to improved literacy and wellbeing outcomes. Both literacy and wellbeing are current government priorities. Learning experiences encountered within the library can significantly contribute to students’ development in these priority areas.<sup>3</sup>
- School libraries are uniquely positioned to engender sustained gains in student learning. To improve literacy in Aotearoa, the provision of specialised funding and support for every school in Aotearoa to have a school library adequately staffed with a diverse, inclusive collection that meets the interests and needs of the school community is essential.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/the-state-of-literacy-how-bad-are-things-and-why-does-it-matter/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/school-libraries/understanding-school-libraries/school-libraries-in-aotearoa-nz-survey-reports/school-libraries-in-aotearoa-new-zealand-2022>

<sup>3</sup> <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/school-libraries-as-safe-spaces-promoting-literacy-and-wellbeing/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/nzcerpress/curriculum-matters/articles/under-recognised-underused-and-undervalued-school-libraries>

- According to June 2023 information from the Ministry of Education of the approximate 2500 schools in New Zealand:
  - only 763 state schools in Aotearoa have a school library with space that can accommodate a minimum of 30 students.
  - there are only 51 full-time librarians and 797 part-time library staff, making a total of only 848 school library staff working in schools across Aotearoa.
- We encourage this government to address the chronic issue of inequitable access to library services staffed by qualified library staff in primary and secondary schools.

#### **REVIEW OF THE COPYRIGHT ACT**

- Aotearoa New Zealand is facing a review of the Copyright Act in the coming year with profound implications for libraries, access to knowledge, and the creative economy. The global pandemic and climate change have pushed libraries to increasingly operate in and occupy the digital space.
- The Copyright Act 1994 has not been reviewed for thirty years and apart from minor tinkering, does not recognise the virtual library or users accessing resources online. Without meaningful and consistent input into the review process, there is every chance that the legislative changes could severely disadvantage libraries.
- The voice of library and information services is crucial to be heard in any such review.
- A thorough and considered review of the Copyright Act is fundamental to ensure the protection of intellectual property created by New Zealand writers and researchers, as it is for access to this creative content.

#### **OPEN ACCESS TO RESEARCH**

- New Zealanders deserve access to publicly funded research and our researchers require access to international research. However, most research information is hidden behind international paywalls. This limits access to information and innovation that underpins our economy. Students, researchers and the general public require access to this content and access is their right, as citizens and taxpayers, for the purposes of education, historical research, development of government policies, for innovation in science and technology (Greer & Morris, 2019).

#### **DIGITAL ACCESS TO NEW ZEALAND CONTENT**

- New Zealand libraries and archives hold extensive documentary heritage collections which are currently inaccessible as they are only in hardcopy format. We encourage this government to prioritise funding for the digitisation and digital storage of New Zealand documentary heritage content locally and nationally to enhance access to this valuable and irreplaceable taonga.
- We encourage the government to extend the collection and preservation of New Zealand digital content for the benefit of current and future researchers, and for local communities to preserve and provide access to their cultural and community heritage.