

JOINT STATEMENT FROM PLNZ AND LIANZA ON LIBRARY OVERDUE FINES 2025

CONTEXT

In May 2022, PLNZ launched its Fine Free Aotearoa campaign to support all New Zealand public libraries to become 'fine free' based on the experience in New Zealand and overseas that overdue charges are a barrier to library usage, and a disincentive to return overdue items.

The PLNZ and LIANZA Joint Statement on Library Overdue Fines in 2022 was a pillar of this campaign.

In 2019/20, of the 66 City and District Councils in New Zealand, there were 19 libraries (29%) which were fine free for children and youth with only two public libraries (3%) fine free for adults.

Since the launch of the Fine Free Aotearoa campaign in May 2022, this situation has transformed to such an extent that in July 2025, 65 libraries (98%) are fine free for youth members and 61 libraries (92%) currently have no overdue charges for adult members.

To reflect this significant progress, PLNZ and LIANZA have updated their Joint Statement on Library Overdue Fines and in July 2025 re-launched the Fine Free Aotearoa campaign to support the remaining libraries to become fine free.

POSITION

Public Libraries New Zealand (PLNZ) and Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA) encourage all public libraries to remove library overdue fines for all members to ensure New Zealanders have free access to information, reading, learning, and connections to their communities.

Removing overdue fines increases the use and membership of libraries. Using libraries provides communities and families with fair and equitable access to information for recreation and lifelong learning, with access to resources to build literacy and understanding, and with opportunities for individuals and families to learn and flourish in their community.

RATIONALE

PLNZ and LIANZA support the removal of overdue fines because:

- Library fines undermine one of the core principles of public libraries - the provision of free and universal access to information.

- There is no evidence that overdue fines encourage meaningful compliance with library borrowing periods. Rather the collective experience of libraries that have removed overdue charges is that library membership increases when financial barriers are removed and library borrowing increases when overdue penalties no longer apply.
- Library fines disproportionately impact those members of the community with the least ability to pay fines and with fewer alternative sources of information and access to reading materials.
- The collective experience of removing overdue fines is greater use of public libraries, including non-borrowing activities such as access to and use of technology, participation in library public programmes, social inclusion, literacy development and community cohesion.

Endorsed by the PLNZ Executive Committee on 25 July 2025

Endorsed by the LIANZA Council on 4 August 2025