



# Removing Library Fines:

## Improving community access and investment

Fines were introduced to encourage members to return books. Evidence suggests this is ineffective and creates barriers to use. The fines model is outdated considering increases in e-resources. Overdue fines are out of step with Council strategies to increase use of libraries, empower communities and further their well-being. 89% of NZ public libraries are completely fines free as of February 2025, with only seven still using overdue fines.

### Fines are not a sustainable form of revenue

**If everyone returned their items on time, there would be no revenue**

**33%**

33% of fees & charges incurred was never collected by Auckland Libraries in 2020. Libraries' revenue from fines has decreased over the last 5 years due to increased use of e-resources.

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Collecting fines is expensive -costs include hours of staff time, collection agency costs and ill will. Some libraries reported it costs them more to collect fines than the amount they were collecting.

### Fines don't bring back materials faster

Libraries that have eliminated overdue fines get materials back at the same rate (or even faster). Your Library will continue to send overdue notices and charge borrowers for items not returned.

**50%**

Upper Hutt saw a reduction of more than half in the amount owing for lost books in 2023, showing more "lost" books being returned.

**3x**

Without the threat of a library fine books were *three times* as likely to be returned -The City of Sydney.

### Fines DO have a negative impact

**35,000**

Prior to being fines free about 35,000 Tamaki Makaurau library members were blocked annually from borrowing because they owed more than \$10.



Most libraries report that those blocked from borrowing for unpaid fines are over-represented in poorer neighbourhoods, and by Māori and Pacific.

"I didn't want to come back to the library -I was scared about the fine. I'm so happy now there aren't fines." ~Upper Hutt Library Customer.

"We didn't have books in my house so I went to the library for my homework. Then I got some overdue fines, and my family couldn't afford to pay them. I never went back".

### Dropping fines will increase use

**12%**

12% ↑ increase in borrowing after removal of fines in Tairāwhiti.

**18%**

18% ↑ in membership after removal of fines at Library Upper Hutt City Libraries

**8,000**

8,000 ↑ in membership in Tasmania when overdue fees were scrapped