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Submission to the Board of Review

Re: The Review of the Classification of *Into the River* written by Ted Dawe.

25 September, 2015

The New Zealand Society of Authors (PEN NZ Inc.), established in 1934, is the principal organisation for New Zealand authors.

Referencing Part 3, Clause 20 of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 we are writing this submission because our organisation and our members will be affected by the classification of *Into The River*. Censorship of this book infers ongoing censorship of New Zealand literature and this has ramifications for our members and all New Zealand writers. It is our responsibility as an organisation representing authors to submit to the Film & Literature Board of Review valid considerations for the Board, in their re-examination of the classification of this book.

Article 19 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which New Zealand is a signatory, states everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

Censorship of this book will hinder freedom of opinion and expression by New Zealand's writers. It will also impact on what can be distributed and sold once it is written and this is how authors earn a living.

Censorship of this book means that, in future, a work of fiction needs to meet Family First's criteria of censorship boundaries, or any other group that has a particular interest they wish to promote as a valid basis for censorship.

PRESIDENT: Kyle Mewburn Tel: 027 862 1747 Email: kyle@kylemewburn.com

The New Zealand Society of Authors (PEN NZ Inc.)

Principal advocate for the professional interests of writers. Protecting basic rights to freedom of expression. Working to improve income and conditions. Promoting New Zealand writing and literary culture.

Ted Dawe is not “inventing possibilities” for the people who read his book, he is weaving events that actually happen (swearing, sexual activity, paedophilia and drug use) into a story. Banning the book does not stop these events from happening and withholding information about experience because that experience is judged as unpleasant or undesirable does not make it go away. Reading about this subject matter allows the individual, whether teen or adult, to understand issues in a context separate from their personal experience and to sort out, even clarify their own values.

There seems to be a concern that access to the material in Ted Dawe’s book will somehow damage young people; however it can equally be argued that knowledge of risks and issues allows young people to protect themselves from threats and the very real risks that exist in the society they are moving into. The material included in the book is not gratuitous, but serves a purpose to the narrative and to the health of our wider society. It is delivered within the context of a much larger story about alienation, racism and loss of identity.

The written word aims to promote ideas and it is through sharing these ideas that bridges of understanding are created between people. These bridges cross political, geographical, ethnic, cultural, religious and other divides. The classification of books written by New Zealand writers, fiction or non-fiction, should not be determined based on the values of a minority group in New Zealand society, and should not reflect religious preference. It is the Boards responsibility to ensure freedom of expression in New Zealand is not limited because of political, ethnic, cultural or religious differences.

Thank you for your consideration. We await your response.

Yours sincerely



Jackie Dennis
Chief Executive Officer



Kyle Mewburn
President

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