



THE NEW ZEALAND  
SOCIETY OF AUTHORS  
(PEN NEW ZEALAND INC) TE PUNI KAITUHI O AOTEAROA

**75 years of working for writers**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2009**

## **Society of Authors calls the public to take action on the Local Government Bill**

The New Zealand Society of Authors (PEN NZ Inc.) is calling for the public to put pressure on the Government to ensure that free public access to community facilities be maintained.

The Society has written to the Hon Rodney Hide voicing our concerns at reports of the proposed law changes to Local Government allowing councils to strip local spending back to core services (defined as transport, water services and public health and safety). The proposed changes to the Act puts at jeopardy libraries and art galleries, potentially removing the right of free access to these community facilities from the very people the local councils were designed to support. Unfortunately a reply from Mr Hide has not been received to date, but have received full support from the Progressive, Green and the Labour Parties.

The Society is urging members of the public to contact their Local Members of Parliament to request that they take into consideration the need for community facilities to remain part of Local Government for the community good, and that the proposed Local Government Act is amended accordingly.

'We need the public to pressure the Government to give us assurances that these vital community facilities remain under the control of Local Government ensuring continued free access to libraries and art galleries' says Maggie Tarver, CEO of the New Zealand Society of Authors (PEN NZ Inc.). 'It's no good giving verbal assurances. We need it written into Local Government Act to ensure that these services remain available to the public in the long term. This is not just about Auckland's proposed Super City – it's about every library in every city in New Zealand.'

The Local Government Act 2002 (as at 1 July 2009) states that the purpose of local government is  
*to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future*

It also states that

*If a local authority or a council-controlled organisation provides a library for public use, the residents in that district or region are entitled to join the library free of charge.*

We urge the Government to ensure that it remains a requirement of local government to be responsible for the social and cultural wellbeing of its community, and to provide free public access to community facilities. We reject any changes to the Local Government Act that allows any local governing body to commercialise such facilities.

ENDS

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