

MEDIA RELEASE

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Latest report into New Zealand writers' earnings reveals the difficulty to make a living from writing.

A report that looks at how New Zealand writers earn from their writing has again revealed that very few are able to make writing their full-time career.

The Writers' Earnings in New Zealand report, undertaken by Horizon Research and commissioned by Copyright Licensing New Zealand in conjunction with the NZ Society of Authors, NZ Writers' Guild and Playmarket, follows on from the same research project completed in 2016. As in 2016, respondents were a mix of fiction, non-fiction and children's book authors.

On average, writers' who took part in the research earned 31% of their personal income, or around \$15,200 per annum, from their writing (up from 24% and an average of \$13,500 in 2016). Just over half the respondents said that in addition to any income they earned from writing they relied on their partners' income and/or relied on having a separate job to supplement their writing earnings. For 42% of the writers, the employment they had was unrelated to being an author.

"The health of the cultural life of Aotearoa New Zealand is indispensable to the sense of who we are as a nation and peoples. It's disappointing and deeply worrying to discover, thanks to this research, that most New Zealand authors earn an income well below the minimum, not to mention living wage, and have to supplement their earnings with additional work and/or support from family. As we strive to become a compassionate society, so we must strive to understand and support the cultural vitality of our country, and enable our writers to sustain themselves financially," Siobhan Harvey, President, New Zealand Society of Authors.

Having a passion or love for reading, writing, literature, books or stories was the most stated reason for starting to write - this is common across the creative industries. As in 2016, the biggest challenge writers felt they were facing was the financial difficulties associated with being a writer. Many writers talked about how they weren't able to earn a living off writing alone.

NZ Society of Authors CEO, Jenny Nagle said "It is timely to ponder this sum, our average annual earnings for writers, in light of the review of the Copyright Act. Authors forgo considerable income through lack of compensation for the exceptions we already have in law. We champion sustainable incomes for writers in order to support the creation of new art and a lasting cultural legacy, that is so necessary for all our well-being."

The published report comes at a time when the Copyright Act is in the early stages of review and is currently open for public consultation. Writers' main concern about the review is that they don't know enough about the issues to be able to comment. The report also highlighted that they fear that their ability to earn from their work will be further reduced and that users of content will end up with more rights to their work than the writers have.

Paula Browning, Chief Executive of Copyright Licensing New Zealand says, "It's really concerning that our authors don't feel equipped to participate in the review process. We have worked with the NZ Society of Authors to prepare information to support writers to make submissions about their rights. It's vitally important that our writers' experiences with copyright, inform the review of the Act."



Submissions close 5 April 2019, and New Zealand writers are encouraged to put pen to paper and email through a submission. For guidance on how best to do this, more information can be found on the NZ Society of Authors [website here](#).

The full Writers' Earnings in New Zealand report is available on the Copyright Licensing New Zealand website here: www.copyright.co.nz.

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Further information

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Background

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