

## Office of Hon Amy Adams

Minister of Internal Affairs  
Minister for Communications and Information Technology  
Associate Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery

Member of Parliament for Selwyn

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08 FEB 2012

Alli Smith  
Executive Director  
Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA)  
PO Box 12 212  
Wellington 6144

Dear Ms Smith

Thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister received on 23 November 2011 about the introduction of legislation to protect free public libraries. I am replying to your letter as Minister of Internal Affairs as this portfolio now includes responsibility for the National Library.

The Government recognises that public libraries play an important role in ensuring that information is available to all New Zealanders, and in supporting lifelong learning and a love of reading. There is no clear evidence, however, that legislating for free public libraries would ensure better library and information services for New Zealanders. Furthermore, imposing further requirements on local authorities for library services risks undermining local democratic processes.

Public libraries are the responsibility of local authorities. The Local Government Act 2002 (the Act) is framed so that local authorities can choose what services are appropriate for their communities and how those services are paid for, in consultation with their communities. As you acknowledge, the Act recognises the role of public libraries through listing libraries as core services and specifying that if councils provide a library then membership must be free for local residents.

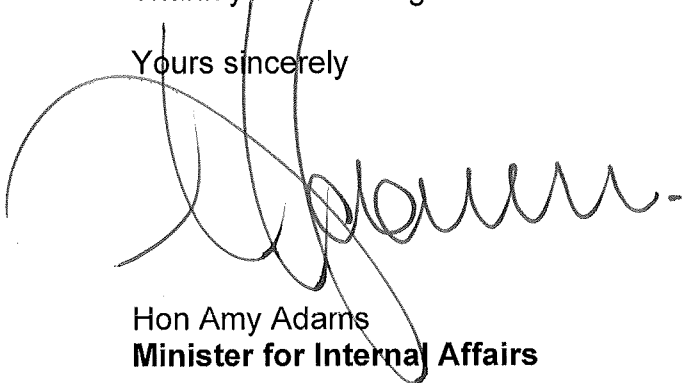
Introducing a further legislative requirement to provide free library services would not be in keeping with the Act's framework, which steers away from prescribing how activities must be funded. Public library legislation would not necessarily have an impact on the allocation of council funding to library operating budgets or guarantee the level of library services that councils could provide.

In your letter you draw attention to legislation in other jurisdictions. I am advised that the scope and requirements of public library legislation varies markedly between countries and there is no clear evidence that legislation has guaranteed quality library services for local residents in those countries.

The New Zealand Government supports public libraries through a range of services provided by the National Library of New Zealand. This includes working with the Association of Public Library Managers to develop Kotui, a shared library management system for public libraries, and continuing support for the Aotearoa People's Network Kaharoa, which provides free public access to fast broadband internet services in public libraries.

Thank you for writing to me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy Adams', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the left.

Hon Amy Adams  
**Minister for Internal Affairs**