

18 December 2019

Steve Braunias  
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Tēnā koe Steve

**Official information request for information related to the New Zealand Review of Books  
Pukapuka Aotearoa (ref. 263)**

I write in reference to your article 'The killing of New Zealand Books', published on newsroom.co.nz on 27 November 2019. We're responding to your article under the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982, which is based on the concept that information held by Government agencies should be made available on request unless there is good reason for withholding it. The information you have requested is enclosed.

We acknowledge that members of the literary community want to understand why Peppercorn Press was declined in this instance. Our funding decisions are carefully considered. Each proposal is considered on its merits in a very contestable context. Applications were assessed by external peer assessors and subsequently discussed by a panel, before recommendations were made to the decision-maker (in this case, Senior Manager Arts Development Services, Cath Cardiff).

In this round, we received 296 applications requesting a total of \$12,365,935 and within the available funding, were only able to approve 94 grants totalling \$4,028,855. In this round, we have observed an increased demand for arts funding, coupled with higher quality applications that deliver to our strategic outcomes.

Creative New Zealand did not cut funding to New Zealand Review of Books Pukapuka Aotearoa – Peppercorn Press made an application to the highly competitive, contestable Arts Grants round which was unfortunately unsuccessful. By its very nature project-based funding is not guaranteed on a year-on-year basis

As a whole, the Literature panel considered this a very worthy application however, they did comment on two elements.

1. The first was regarding diversity. The Panel acknowledged that while Peppercorn Press' coverage of projects is okay, the actual writers contributing to the publication could be more diverse, along with the team behind it also. The panel noted that while Peppercorn Press positions itself as a publication of record, it would be beneficial to reassess this to understand what it means when that record is written by a limited group of people.

2. The second element was regarding sustainability. The Panel did acknowledge that the team managing the publication are volunteers. However, they do note that the distribution of the project is not particularly broad reach and not often visible in stores. It was encouraged that Peppercorn Press consider working on evolving a more commercial imperative and to diversify its income. This would allow them to be more self-sustaining in the long-term as it was noted that Peppercorn Press have received Creative New Zealand funding for a significant amount of time.

Creative New Zealand regrets that it was not in contact with Peppercorn Press prior to the official letter communicating the outcome of their application. However, we have since met with the Peppercorn Press board to discuss the outcome of their application and their future options. They have been offered support to make another application in the next Arts Grants round.

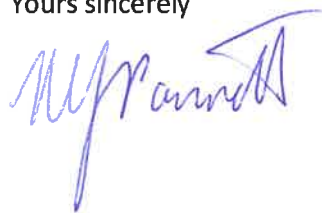
We acknowledge that change is never easy but we stand by our funding decisions which are guided by strategic priorities. These have been developed with the arts sector. Please see this message from Arts Council Chair Michael Moynahan [<https://www.creativenz.govt.nz/news/the-realities-of-contestable-arts-funding>] about the realities of contestable funding.

Creative New Zealand has provided information to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage regarding the decision to decline funding to the New Zealand Review of Books.

We are committed to continuing to support the literature community to ensure access to high-quality literary discourse such as reviews, and to help writers and publishers increase readership and sales.

If you wish to discuss this information request, please feel free to contact Pip O'Flaherty on 04 498 0730 or via email to: [pip.o'flaherty@creativenz.govt.nz](mailto:pip.o'flaherty@creativenz.govt.nz)

Yours sincerely



David Pannett  
**Senior Manager, Strategy & Engagement**

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