



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Petitions Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Petihana

54th Parliament
August 2026

Petition of Simon Kemp: Broaden access to academic journals

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Greg O'Connor, Chairperson

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Petition of Simon Kemp

Recommendation

The Petitions Committee has considered the petition of Simon Kemp—Broaden access to academic journals—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request regarding access to academic journals

This petition was signed by 174 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Dr Vanessa Weenink on 29 July 2025, and requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Government to enter into negotiations with journal publishers to broaden access to academic journals.

Comments from the petitioner

The petitioner told us that restricted access to scientific and professional research poses a barrier to New Zealand becoming “more knowledge-based”. He said that more than a third of New Zealanders aged over 25 have graduated with a Bachelor’s degree. For these people, the knowledge acquired during the course of the degree gradually becomes out of date. Those who have degrees that relate to their work, such as those who work in science, engineering, law, or medicine, need to update their knowledge. However, research is increasingly published via electronic media that requires access via subscription or payment.

The petitioner said that the electronic distribution of academic journals is controlled by publishing companies whose pricing systems restrict access for those who are not in academia. He believes that the problem causes the most difficulty for those working in professions where most of the relevant research occurs overseas.

The petitioner recommends that the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment should liaise with universities and professional representatives and then negotiate with journal publishers to broaden access to academic journals. He envisages that a government body would have a “central role” in the negotiations. He also recommended consulting with the Australian Government.

Comments from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

The ministry referred to a 2022 report by the former Prime Minister’s Chief Science Advisor which stated that the academic publishing market is dominated by the largest five commercial academic publishers, and that this model creates barriers to widespread access. However, it told us that academic publishing is moving towards transparency, equity, and public availability of publicly funded research.

The ministry said it supports open access through its Open Research Policy and that New Zealand researchers are increasingly making their publications open access. It told us that international research funding agencies increasingly support open access. Horizon Europe

and several major agencies in the USA now require that all peer-reviewed publications arising from funded research be openly accessible.

Comments from the National Library of New Zealand

The National Library told us that it supports efforts to remove barriers to access to knowledge by the public. It believes that free and equitable access to reliable information contributes to a strong, functioning democracy and cohesive society.

The National Library said that its role includes preservation of the work of New Zealand universities and Crown Research Institutes. It said that New Zealanders can access research publications from its collection online, or in person in Wellington for paywalled or otherwise restricted articles. It said that international journal articles can be accessed by people through their local library or school. Libraries and schools are members in the Electronic Purchasing in Collaboration (EPIC) national licensing initiative. They can also offer access via the inter-library loan scheme, or through journal subscriptions and pay-per-view access to individual articles. The National Library noted that, although EPIC is free for library users, accessible resources are subject to budget constraints.

In response to the petitioner's suggestion that the Government negotiate with journal publishers, the National Library said that national negotiation of free, open access to academic journals could be a way to broaden access to knowledge. However, it noted that the issue is complex and a "cross-sectoral partnership approach" could be taken to fully understand the problem and make recommendations for improvement. The National Library noted that in August 2024 Australia's Chief Scientist advised its Government to develop a strategy for broader journal access and to analyse different public access models. It told us that it could be helpful to find out what work is being done by the Australian Government to respond to the Chief Scientist's advice.

Our response to the petition

We acknowledge the petitioner's concern for the professional development of New Zealanders, and thank him for his petition. We agree that publicly funded research should be publicly accessible.

We note that in 2025, Australian and New Zealand universities announced open access deals for 2026 with four major academic publishers. The deals reduce universities' expenditure, including that of New Zealand's public research organisations, and increase public access to research. From January 2026, an agreement with one of the publishers ensures open access publishing for authors at participating institutions.

Further, we note that, from 2026, the Royal Society Te Apārangi will publish its journals in partnership with a global research disseminator, allowing New Zealand researchers to publish open access more cheaply. We believe that, internationally, academic publications are becoming more accessible. We agree with the National Library that it would be helpful for the Department of Internal Affairs to investigate the Australian Government's response to the advice of its Chief Scientist, which was to develop a strategy for broader journal access, and to analyse different public access models.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was signed by 174 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Dr Vanessa Weenink on 29 July 2025 and referred to us on the same day. We met between 18 September 2025 and 20 August 2026 to consider it. We received written submissions from the petitioner, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and the National Library of New Zealand. We received advice from the Parliamentary Library.

Committee members

Greg O'Connor (Chairperson)
Hon Andrew Bayly (from 1 July 2026)
Kahurangi Carter (until 11 February 2026)
Greg Fleming
Paolo Garcia (until 1 July 2026)
Celia Wade-Brown (from 11 February 2026)

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to this petition are available on the [Parliament website](#).