

## Progressing Pacific Education

In June this year the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and Statistics New Zealand published the Education and Pacific Peoples in New Zealand report.

The report (available at [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)) forms part of The Pacific Progress series of reports which aim to provide a statistical overview of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, and to inform our understanding of how to improve outcomes for them.

The report suggests that Pacific children are much less likely than other groups to attend Early Childhood Education (ECE) before school. Key barriers include poor access to appropriate services and low demand from families.

Many Pacific children start school without some of the prior learning needed for success in a school environment. Having English as an additional language can make it more difficult for children if teachers or schools do not understand the different learning process this entails. Moving from ECE to school requires significant adjustments for children.

Teachers have a key role in supporting the shift from ECE to school for Pacific children and their family, the report said.

In 2004 AUT University set up the National Diploma of Teaching (ECE Pasifika), and introduced a Pasifika specialty in its Bachelor

of Education degree in 2009 for ECE and primary teaching in recognition of the changing face of the New Zealand, and especially Auckland, classroom.

The School of Education, at AUT University's North Shore-based campus, ensures it is teaching Pasifika perspectives on curriculum, theory and professional practice for the Pasifika primary and early childhood education specialities and locating these within the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

With different cultures, sometimes there is a need to take different approaches - no one size fits all teaching methods and flexibility is required to ensure graduates are equipped with the right skills and strategies to handle any classroom.

Statistics in the report showed that of the 18,397 teachers in licensed teacher-led early childhood services in July 2009 there were a total of 1,539 Pacific teachers, of which 60.3% were qualified, compared with 64.0% of all teachers. This was a huge improvement for Pacific teachers, from 35.4% back in 2001.

At AUT University this year there are approximately 200 students enrolled in the National Diploma of Teaching (ECE, Pasifika) and 58 in the Bachelor of Education (Early childhood and Primary) with a specialisation in Pasifika Teaching. In 2009 the School of Education graduated 44 Pasifika students.



## Showing Some Mussel

For someone who isn't very fond of mussels, AUT University doctoral student Tim Young spends a lot of time studying them.

As part of his PhD in marine biochemistry, Tim is currently analysing the settlement behaviour of *Perna canaliculus*, otherwise known as the green-lipped mussel - a staple in the diets of seafood lovers worldwide.

The New Zealand green-lipped mussel represents the largest shellfish industry, with over \$200 million per annum in exports. For New Zealand to grow its aquaculture sector and increase its international competitive edge in the seafood market, innovative research is essential - cutting edge research such as Tim's.

Initially, he never considered a future in aquaculture, however after undertaking both undergraduate and postgraduate study at AUT University, an interest in marine sciences emerged and Tim says it is great to finally indulge his own curiosity and develop his research into marine sciences.

"There has been a strong relationship between my foundation in chemistry and studying marine sciences because how marine invertebrates interact with their environment is all chemically influenced."

Although the green-lipped mussel is extensively cultivated in New Zealand, very little is known about its larval behaviours. The longer-term implications of Tim's research could result in



increased growth and retention of mussel-yield; potentially increasing the economic viability and volume of mussel production in New Zealand for the international marketplace.

With numerous scholarships, research grants and two commercial patents already to his name; under the tutelage of Dr Andrea Alfaro and Dr John Robertson, Tim is already paving the path to being one of New Zealand's leading marine scientists'.

Winter Graduation was a recent highlight for AUT, with ceremonies held at the Bruce Mason Theatre last week and preceded by the traditional procession along Hurstmere Road. Rooted in ancient tradition, graduation remains popular, with more students than ever attending in person and filling the auditorium with family members and friends. It is a time to celebrate years of challenge, study and accomplishment, and to thank those who helped along the way. I was pleased to be present for the graduation of the university's oldest graduate, the Hon. George Gair. George, 83, has ably served New Zealand, Auckland and the North Shore in many capacities over the years - as MP, Cabinet Minister, Mayor, Ambassador - and is a long-time friend and supporter of the University. His Master of Philosophy thesis is titled 'Managing Change as a Minister of the Crown,' and in a twist that proves the value of long and rewarding professional associations, it was supervised by the North Shore Campus' Professor Marilyn Waring, (a one time Parliamentary colleague of George's) and North Shore City Councillor, Dr. Grant Gillion. Graduation reminds us that people undertake university study for a variety of reasons. It is a personal and public good - adding value, and contributing in important ways to both personal and societal outcomes. As I write, this University has just announced joining others in halting acceptance of further enrolments for this year - a consequence of Government imposed limits on the number of students that can be enrolled. This, at a time when the country continues to face significant workforce shortfalls in areas where we are now turning students away and when the alternative for many, at least short-term, will be unemployment. This restriction does not apply to international students, who 'pay their way' with higher fees, a fact that offers no comfort to those local students who cannot obtain, nor buy, a place.



Max Abbott, Pro Vice-Chancellor, North Shore

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