

MAY 2010

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NEWS FROM AUT UNIVERSITY | TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

AUT farewells a visionary educator

PROFESSOR DES GRAYDON, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Law at AUT University, passed away surrounded by family on April 9 after a short illness.

Professor Graydon leaves a legacy of revolutionary tertiary education teaching and learning in New Zealand and tens of thousands of students and staff have benefited from his passion and stewardship.

Professor Graydon joined ATI in 1980 as a lecturer in accountancy after a career in management and chartered accounting.

In 1984 he became the Head of the Accountancy and Law Department, before being appointed as the Dean six years later. As Dean he was a pivotal figure in launching AIT's business degree in 1992 which contributed significantly to AUT becoming a university in January 2000.

Under Professor Graydon's watch the AUT Business School has grown to become the second largest in the country with more than 5,000 enrolled business students from undergraduate through to MBA and PhD, and with 250 staff members.

As Faculty leader, Professor Graydon took an active role in appointing senior academics from New Zealand and overseas universities, growing the faculty's professoriate rapidly and significantly. The outcome has seen growth in AUT's research and scholarship profile to becoming one of New Zealand's leading academic centres in accountancy and finance, and employment relations.

AUT Vice Chancellor Derek McCormack says when Professor Graydon became Dean, business education was highly competitive so AUT sought its niche.

"Des was an innovative educator. He led the faculty for twenty years through times of enormous change in a very competitive and difficult environment," says McCormack.

"He established a distinctive style and contribution for a university business school, where the student was at the centre, and independent thought and practice was their goal."

Professor Graydon's passion for a different type of learning saw a shift away from large lecture theatres to a model of intimate learning spaces, where students could discuss and debate, and know their lecturers.

With that, Professor Graydon had the courage to create a new building based entirely on this foresight. He collaborated in creating small classrooms and the round tables that echo the feel of a boardroom, where he encouraged lively and robust enquiry in the classroom.

McCormack adds that Professor Graydon's vision for students was about outcomes not just education, and that's why he so heartily supported AUT's international student exchange programme.

"Des took his faculty to the world, with student exchange programmes and with thousands of international students



coming to Auckland to study AUT's distinctive business degree programmes."

Professor Graydon strongly endorsed the compulsory work placement because he believed students learnt by participating. And he would take enormous delight in hearing about AUT's graduates getting good positions in the workforce.

McCormack says the whole AUT community will feel the loss of one of the university's most significant leaders.

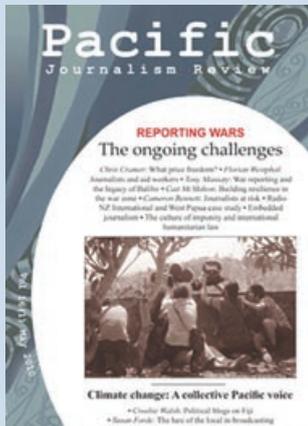
"Des was a hugely capable leader. He was sure-footed and offered clarity of vision."

"Everything he did was scrupulously planned and executed. He was a tough-thinking decision maker and he achieved an extraordinary success rate. He was sought out to be on reviews, committees and working groups where his contribution was always noteworthy."

"The accomplishments of Des' perspiration will be our building blocks," says McCormack. "The accomplishments of his inspiration will be our plan."

It was Professor Graydon's wish to establish a scholarship for a business student so 'The Des Graydon Memorial Fund for a student scholarship' has been created through the AUT Foundation.

The challenges of war reporting



THE PACIFIC MEDIA CENTRE joined the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC) this month to host *Reporting Wars: The Ongoing Challenges*.

The seminar featured a video message from Chris Cramer, Global Editor for Multi Media at Reuters News, New York, and a panel of leading New Zealand war correspondents and a Red Cross legal adviser who debated issues such as the safety and protection of journalists and international humanitarian law. The panel, hosted by Dr Camille Nakhid of AUT's

Pacific Media Centre advisory board included Jon Stephenson, Cameron Bennett of TVNZ and Mike McRoberts of TV3.

Prior to the seminar the Pacific Media Centre also hosted a special screening of the film *Balibo* about the killing of six journalists in East Timor in 1975. This was followed by a question and answer session with Tony Maniaty, one of the film's consultants and author of the book *Shooting Balibo*. Maniaty, who was at Balibo shortly before the journalists were killed and who now works for the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, gave a personal perspective about this tragic episode in journalism history.

During the seminar a special edition of the *Pacific Journalism Review* on war reporting was launched by Jean-Luc Metzker, Head of the ICRC regional delegation in the Pacific, based in Suva, Fiji.

Professor appointed judging convenor

CHAIR of AUT Marketing and Advertising Professor Roger Marshall has been named judging convenor for the 2010 TVNZ-NZ Marketing Awards.

NZ Marketing magazine publisher and owner of the awards Vincent Heeringa says they are thrilled to have someone of Professor Marshall's calibre heading up the judging.

"Our ambition, together with award partners the NZ Marketing Association is to lift the quality and number of entries this year. Appointing an academic leader of Roger's standing sends an important signal to the industry that the awards place high value on proven, business success."

Professor Marshall says he's honoured to be asked and looks forward to working with a professional team over what promises to be a couple of exciting days.

Sue McCarty of the Marketing Association says Professor Marshall joins an impressive list of new judges on this year's panel due to be announced soon.

Child witnesses face injustice in criminal courts

CHILDREN becoming distressed under examination, language barriers and excessive delays are some of the issues raised in a report about child witnesses launched last month.

Child witnesses in the New Zealand criminal courts: A review of practice and implications for policy was released by AUT's Institute of Public Policy (IPP) as part of the two-day LexisNexis Child Law Conference.

Research instigator and co-author Dr Emma Davies, who is the IPP programme director of social development, presented an overview of findings on child witnesses in the criminal justice system at the conference.

Dr Davies says the results are disturbing because children acting as witnesses are already vulnerable having likely been subject to trauma or abuse.

"This is about children who are victims, complainants and witnesses of horrendous crimes," she says. "They are children telling adults in a court room what has happened to them.

"The report considers how to make the process fairer for children while ensuring the accused gets a fair trial."

The independent research was funded by the New Zealand Law Foundation with contributions from the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice and the New Zealand Police.

IPP senior research officer and co-author Dr Kirsten Hanna also presented the report's findings at the conference along with fellow co-author Dr Emily Henderson.

Dr Hanna says testifying in court can be difficult even for adults, and for children it can be traumatic.

"Ensuring children are able to testify effectively is critical to the quality of justice in New Zealand. Yet our research reveals significant concerns about how child witnesses are treated in the criminal justice system in our country."

The research focuses on children up to 17 years of age who have given evidence as witnesses for the prosecution in criminal proceedings as complainants or witnesses. It uses data from 2008 and 2009 collected from Auckland, Manukau, Wellington and Christchurch District and High Courts.

Dr Hanna says the research shows that child witnesses faced long delays while awaiting trial as well as inappropriate questioning in the courtroom.

"On average, children waited 15 months for their cases to come to trial," she says. "When you add the police investigation and sentencing, the wait stretches out to 20 months."

"That's a long time in the life of a child, in some cases nearly a quarter of their life."

She adds that the period awaiting trial can be stressful for children and their supporters, and long delays can impact on memory.

The research identifies successful alternative processes that could be adapted to New Zealand.

CO₂ emissions threatening marine species

MASSIVE CO₂ emissions are changing the chemistry of the world's oceans and are threatening marine species and the wider ecosystem.

AUT senior lecturer Kay Vopel says the greatest risk to our marine environment is the accelerating enrichment of seawater with anthropogenic CO₂.

"This CO₂ pollution results from our ignorance of the fundamental processes that link the marine environment with the atmosphere and the land.

"The overall human CO₂ emissions over the industrial era amount to close to 560 billion tons. A little less than half of this CO₂ remains in the atmosphere acting as greenhouse gas leading to climate change. The remainder is, at present, removed in roughly equal parts into the ocean and by land vegetation."

Currently Vopel says annual emissions are around 10 billion tons of carbon – a rate that exceeds the natural emissions by a factor of nearly 100.

About 87% of this release originates from fossil fuel combustion and cement production and another 12% from deforestation.

"The ocean is a complex system well-designed for maintaining a balance between inputs and outputs of carbon. But the current rapid rise in atmospheric CO₂ exceeds its

capacity to maintain this balance."

The result of this imbalance is a wholesale shift in the chemistry of the upper water column worldwide which Vopel says will fundamentally change the open-ocean and coastal ecosystems in the near future.

"In some regions, ocean acidification has already decreased mean surface water pH to a level that was not expected to happen for several decades."

The far-reaching consequences of this acidification include decreased rates at which reef-building corals produce their skeleton, reduced ability of marine algae and zooplankton to maintain their protective shells, a decline in marine plankton as a food source in the food web of marine species, and a reduction in the survival of larval marine species, including commercial fish and shellfish.

Vopel says better education of future generations is critical to bring down the dangerously high CO₂ levels.

His research group is currently working on two fronts – investigating how the climate of a high-CO₂ world will affect coastal ecosystem functioning and developing novel tools to assess the sustainability of marine aquaculture.

"A particular focus for the research into the impact on the coastal ecosystem is



how rapid sedimentation of fine grained land-derived (terrigenous) clay affects the seafloor – which is timely given the predicted increases in extreme rainfall and therefore in particles which will end up in coastal habitats."

Effects of such deposition on the functioning of coastal ecosystems are well documented and of global concern but the underlying mechanisms are poorly understood.

"The assessment tools we are working on aim to simplify and reduce the costs involved in assessing the ecological impact of marine farms – a condition of resource consent.

"Using emerging underwater technologies we hope to develop a new robust, integrated and cost effective approach for use here in New Zealand."

3D type wins over audience

VISITORS to the HP Future Designers exhibition at Urbis *Designday* voted AUT graduate Anzac Tasker their favourite designer.

Seven stunning installations by recent AUT design graduates impressed *Designday* guests in March, but it was Tasker who took home the prize, winning an HP touch screen laptop – one of only two in the country.

Tasker says bringing type away from the computer and back into craft was the concept behind his installation, which was a unique and fun approach to typography. This was demonstrated with white panels and 3D type; some rotating, some only

making sense from certain angles, but all fresh, innovative and intriguing.

Other works by AUT graduates at the exhibition included life-size fashion illustrations, composited digital video, suspended and rotating garments, animated and futuristic illustrations, architectural studies and a lizard trap.

Urbis editor Nicole Stock, who helped choose the final seven students says, "Urbis is very supportive of young designers and we felt *Designday* was a great opportunity to showcase the great young talent to a discerning and design loving audience."



AUT provides valuable training for Department of Labour

WHEN the Department of Labour wanted to brush up on their Māori language and culture skills, AUT University was able to offer them the expertise they needed.

Te Kakano (The Seed): Māori Cultural Awareness and Treaty Workshop was created by AUT in collaboration with Opus International and the Department of Labour (DoL).

Te Kakano is a joint training programme in Te Reo Māori, Tikanga Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi and is a DoL initiative to fulfil its vision and framework for the Māori Strategy. AUT's Te Ara Poutama delivers the training which is helping to build capacity within the Department to deliver on the strategy. So far 200 staff have completed the training.

Pacific flair infused in book

THE School of Hospitality and Tourism and the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI) hosted the launch of *Me'a Kai: The Food and Flavours of the South Pacific* at AUT recently.

Written by NZTRI member Robert Oliver, the book is more than just a collection of recipes. It also covers Oliver's journey through Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tahiti and the Cook Islands and his fascinating encounters with local cooks and food producers.

Oliver says the book has a clear mission: to support sustainable tourism in the South Pacific.

"My goal is to improve the quality of food offered to the South Pacific region's tourism market and to contribute towards rural prosperity in the Pacific by creating an increased demand for locally grown foods."

Nurses a critical force in smoking cessation

NURSES are uniquely positioned to help educate and empower smokers to give up the habit, according to Smokefree Nurses Aotearoa/New Zealand (SNANZ) director Grace Wong.

The scope of nursing practice combined with their reach in the community and the respect with which they are received puts them in an ideal position to combat smoking, says Wong.

"If one nurse can reach 14 smokers, which is a very realistic

target, and support them to give up smoking then that would have a dramatic impact on smoking rates in New Zealand."

A senior lecturer in nursing at AUT University, Wong says SNANZ is based at the university and was launched in 2007 to promote the delivery of smoking cessation interventions into nurses' everyday practice throughout New Zealand.

SNANZ has recently attracted two years' funding from the Ministry of Health due to its alignment with the Ministry's 2009/2010 health target to provide "better help for smokers to quit".

Recent figures from the Ministry of Health put the number of early deaths caused by smoking at 4,500 - 5,000 each year, including deaths caused by exposure to second-hand smoke.

The Ministry of Health target is aiming for 80 percent of hospitalised smokers to be provided with advice and help to quit by July 2010; 90 percent by July 2011; and 95 percent by July 2012. A similar target for primary care will be introduced from July 2010 or earlier, through the PHO Performance Programme.

Ultimately SNANZ hopes to see the smoking cessation interventions become a standard part of nursing practice.

"The steps involved really are as simple as nurses asking their patients whether they smoke, giving brief advice to smokers and then providing cessation support."

Patients are not the only focus for SNANZ which also aims to increase the quit rates for smoking and decrease initiation and relapse among nurses and student nurses – according to a 2007 study carried out by Wong 12 percent of nurses smoke.

"Nurses are role models for their patients so by supporting them to give up smoking, the programme is also helping to send the right message to the communities that nurses are working with.

"The long-term goal of SNANZ is to decrease death and disease caused by smoking in New Zealand – nurses can tip the balance to make tobacco smoking history."



Vice Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Teaching

Teaching that fits

'ONE SIZE fits all' is not an approach that should be applied to teaching, according to Health and Environmental Sciences senior lecturer Sue Raleigh. A lecturer in human anatomy and physiology at AUT, Raleigh is a recipient of a Vice Chancellor's award for excellence in teaching.

"At the core of all my interactions with students is the belief that they are unique and so I need to relate to them in unique ways. There is also an intangible element to teaching – I call it the 'magic' – which is about finding the connection and stumbling on the ideas that really work and get the message across."

"I run with intuitive ideas I have that I think will work – I have used tables and chairs to explain a pharmacological process and my own body with post-it notes attached to illustrate the process of the sperm dropping enzymes as it sniffs its way towards the ovum."

In the end, Raleigh says there is no single formula to good teaching but being passionate is a good starting point.

"My students have often said to me, 'I thought this would be boring but it's not!'"



Going the extra mile

GREG TREADWELL from the School of Communication Studies has been awarded a Vice Chancellor's award for excellence in teaching. Specialising in news reporting, editing and design, new media journalism and photojournalism, he teaches across a range of papers, from introductory journalism to supervising masters students.

He believes that students who feel their lecturers have gone the extra mile for them are much more likely "to put their shoulder to the wheel in response".

"I believe in dethroning the teacher. The idea that teaching is the passing of a strictly defined curriculum from the privileged and autocratic



classroom leader to the under-privileged audience is ridiculous and out of date.

"The strongest influence in this area was a marvellous teacher in the education faculty called David Giles, who taught me more about transformative education than all the other influences on me put together."

Treadwell is staggered and thrilled at his win and says it is particularly pleasing that in a world increasingly dominated by spin and marketing, AUT is genuine in its claim of valuing excellence in teaching. Having grown up mostly in Africa and

Vanuatu, he has lived for the past 14 years on Waiheke Island with his wife and two daughters.

Stand-out advertising team

A DYNAMIC TRIO of advertising creativity lecturers from AUT's Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies has won the Vice Chancellor's award for excellence in team teaching.

Paul White, Jane Berney and Dave Brown having been passing on their knowledge, nous and enthusiasm to advertising students for many years, teaching a range of papers including creative principles, copywriting, art direction, campaigns and creative strategy.

Programme leader Paul White says the three have worked together in the industry for quite some time. "The whole programme is designed by the three of us. We look at our different strengths. We all still work in the ad business to a greater or lesser extent and we've all worked together at various times in the past. Dave Brown and I were a creative team in the advertising industry for nearly 10 years so we were literally the art director/copywriter. We knew Jane as a colleague in the industry and as the founder of the then Creative Circle Ideas School."

It's their ongoing links with the industry that make the programme a stand-out

course, says White. "All the assignments are set by real clients, agencies or are part of international competitions. We never do things that are theory only. It makes for a hectic academic year and it's a big shock for students.

"We think of all classes as meetings not lectures or tutorials. It makes it fantastically fresh because we don't ever know what we're going to be working on and we don't churn out the same stuff year after year."



Dave Brown, Jane Berney and Paul White

Vice Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Teaching



A digital future

AT TE ARA POUTAMA, they teach things a little differently. An understanding that the world is changing and that the future is digital has seen them take advancing technology and integrate it into their teaching resources. They have been rewarded with a special Vice Chancellor's team award for excellence in teaching.

Te reo Māori has been revolutionised with a blended digital platform for the teaching and assessment of New Zealand's indigenous language.

Initially developed in 2006 and tested through a pilot in 2007, the digital platform is now fully commissioned and operational at AUT and available to all NZ universities and polytechnics at no cost.

A number of TAP's staff members have contributed to the drive that has seen the faculty introduce new technology and learning methods; Hohepa Spooner was instrumental in imagining the original idea for digitising learning and forged the relationship with Apple technology to make learning with iPods and iPhones a reality. Professor John Moorfield developed the Te Whanake series. The Reo team persevered and championed the implementation of m-learning and digital learning; Professor Paul Moon has led e-learning initiatives in the faculty through the development of the Certificate in Treaty Studies and a new on-line history paper. Professor Tania Ka'ai, Director of Te Ipukarea: The National Māori Language Institute, developed and led the application to the Tertiary Education Commission to trial the delivery of postgraduate papers where te reo Māori is the language of communication using Smart Board and video-conferencing technology.

TAP has embraced e-learning and will continue to be innovative in its delivery to students and the communities it serves.



Top and above: Members from Te Ara Poutama receive their award from Vice Chancellor Derek McCormack

■ BRIEFLY

Gallery departure

AUT farewelled ST PAUL St Gallery director Leonhard Emmerling and assistant director Catherine Garet last month. Emmerling has been appointed International Arts Adviser at the Goethe Institute Headquarters, Munich, Germany.

Highlights of his four years at ST PAUL St include curating the New Zealand pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2009 as well as bringing a diverse range of national and international exhibitions to the gallery.

AUT-Waikato case-writing team second in world

A BUSINESS analysis of an Auckland-based drinks company by AUT researchers has won second place in a prominent international competition.

The annual Oikos-Ashoka Case-Writing Competition promotes the development of best practice case studies of real-world businesses working in the field of corporate sustainability and social entrepreneurship.

New Zealand company Good Water uses PLA plastic bottles that are completely biodegradable. The company has plans to create a total biomass loop using local materials for the bottles and then recycle them into forestry seedling pottles to grow trees for future biomass to close the loop and continue the process.

The prize-winning analysis was undertaken by AUT's Professor Kate Kearins and Dr Helen Tregidga, and University of Waikato Management School academics Dr Steve Bowden and Dr Eva Collins.

This is the fourth time the case-writing team has reached the finals of the Switzerland-based Oikos competitions, beating more than 30 other cases submitted from Asia, Australia, Europe and North America.

Professor Waring to take up posts for UN and AusAID

PROFESSOR MARILYN WARING has a busy schedule ahead of her as she takes up major posts with AusAID and the United Nations.

Both contracts allow her to remain in New Zealand and continue her research and work at AUT's Institute of Public Policy, but they also offer her the chance to flex her gender analysis skills and practice.

Gender has always been a specialisation for Professor Waring, who started in international development work in 1978. Since then she's worked in Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, Kenya, the Pacific, for the Pan-American Health Organisation, Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, UNIFEM and for the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

"I've got years of experience in the gender research and policy fields. Ideas about gender should be changing but unfortunately they aren't. Gender policy and research is still treated in a silo. Somehow people think that any woman will do and any woman can do gender analysis, but it's like anything, you have to practise it. I've been practising in the gender area for about 30 years now."

AusAID is responsible for managing the Australian government's official overseas aid programme and is an autonomous body within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Professor Waring has been asked to join both the Gender Equality Training Panel and the Gender Equality Support Services Panel to provide gender equality training, facilitation and other capacity development services.

Professor Waring says AusAID has a new gender policy and it's very strong.

"It's more than words on paper. Even in 2010 gender can be a word on a page measured in terms of output, but it doesn't tell you much about what's been going on. In my 30 years of experience I've seen agencies consistently get better at putting words on the page but consistently fail to implement.

"There's still a lot of gender discrimination, it's still really blatant in some cases but much more subtle, but equally as damaging, in others. I want to be able to show people incremental steps they can take to stop the discrimination. This is about having a 360 degree radar and just examining the framework all the time."

For UNDP Waring takes up a position as a technical expert consultant on gender and poverty. UNDP Administrator Helen Clark has said she wants UNDP to provide dedicated interventions that empower women and promote gender equality.

Specifically Professor Waring's role will be to provide advice on policy drafts, project proposals and evaluation, review UNDP documents to ensure gender dimensions are suitably integrated, provide training for UNDP staff, and provide advice to governments on gender issues in response to the global economic and financial crisis.



Third year in a row for advertising creatives

AUT advertising creativity graduates Martin Sutcliffe and Deborah Bull have won the TVNZ/AXIS Student Creative of the Year award at the advertising industry's 2010 AXIS Creative Awards. This is the third year in a row that the prize has been won by AUT students.

Of the five campaigns shortlisted for the award this year, three were AUT entries. Sutcliffe and Bull won with a mixed media campaign for Coronation Street, in answer to a brief from TVNZ for a campaign that would attract new and younger viewers as well as re-engage lapsed Coro fans. Their winning campaign comprised billboards, online gaming and ambient environmental executions. The judges said it was the scope of their thinking, the quality of their ideas and the high standard of execution which most impressed.

Sutcliffe, a digital media graduate who returned to AUT last year to study the Graduate Diploma in Advertising Creativity, also picked up an award for TVNZ copywriter of the year at the AUT School of Communication Studies prize giving. Bull is still studying the Graduate Diploma in Advertising Creativity diploma part-time. Other AUT graduate finalists for the AXIS Awards were Jennie Ko, Pip Perkins, Suze Ashford and Kate Gamble.





Kiwis visit Gallipoli to mourn war dead

NEW ZEALANDERS and Australians setting out on annual pilgrimages to Gallipoli may have somewhat different motivations, according to joint research from academics at AUT and Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University.

AUT senior research lecturer Dr Ken Hyde and Serhat Harman of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in Turkey explored the meaning of the Gallipoli site and Anzac Day for Australasians, surveying 400 people about their reasons for making the journey.

Dr Hyde says World War I had an enormous impact on New Zealand society, and today's connection to Gallipoli for Kiwis is a current-day reflection of that.

"At the start of World War I, New Zealand was a small country of around 1 million people and half of the age-eligible young men were sent to war," says Dr Hyde. "Many thousand were killed and their bodies were never returned home for mourning and they were either buried on foreign soil or, more often, never recovered at all."

He adds that there is evidence in every town in New Zealand of the impact this had.

"At a huge financial cost to each small community, war memorials were built as a way to grieve together," says Dr Hyde. "This was one of two ways to mourn their dead; the other was Anzac Day."

"For Australians however, it may be more about national identity and patriotism and whereas for New Zealanders it seems it may be more about remembering our war dead."

Dr Hyde and Harman believe they have identified five motives for the pilgrimage to Turkey.

"These are nationalism, spiritualism, family pilgrimage, friendship and travel," says Dr Hyde.

"For the young Anzacs on their OE in London, it may be about catching up with fellow Ozzies and Kiwis as well as getting to see Turkey."

"Today, Gallipoli represents a place of legend that until recent years, Kiwis couldn't visit to mourn and now they can."

The survey was carried out at the 2009 commemorative events in Gallipoli.

AUT research to boost mussel yields

RESEARCH into natural chemical cues that increase mussel settlement rates in hatcheries could substantially boost yields for New Zealand's commercial seafood industry.

Bringing in over \$200 million each year, mussels are the top export species in the New Zealand aquaculture industry, but farmers of the shellfish struggle with losses of up to 90% when the mussels detach from the rope they are settled on.

Research into the positive chemical cues being undertaken by AUT University's Aquaculture Biotechnology Group (ABG) has attracted industry attention and a grant of \$150,000 over two years. The grant is part of a larger \$2 million research project on hatchery production being conducted by four major New Zealand mussel companies.

AUT senior lecturer in Marine Ecology and Aquaculture, and member of the ABG, Dr Andrea Alfaro, says the group's research has the potential to increase mussel settlement by 30-60%.

"If we can translate the results we are having in the lab into a commercial setting, that's a fantastic boost for seed production, which directly translates into economic gains for the industry as a whole," says Dr Alfaro.

Dr Alfaro's research arose from observations of mussel larvae, or spat, coating the seaweed at 90 Mile Beach.

Her research led her to discover that the seaweeds were not only providing chemical cues, but bacterial biofilms on the seaweeds also were influencing settlement.

"We have been able to show that some biofilms are specific to different seaweed species and some of them induce settlement while others kill the larvae. The bacteria in the biofilm use a form of communication with the larvae to tell them which seaweeds to settle on."

