Uni NEWS

auckland.ac.nz/UniNews

JUNE 2020

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

STEVEN DAKIN

Good eye healthcare for everyone is in his sights: 'The current system is flawed'

Page 6

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

When the Business School received calls for help from businesses as a result of Covid-19, Antje Fiedler made connections

Page 9

ROUGH JUSTICE

Tamasailau Suaalii's research exposes inequities in the justice system for Māori and Pacific youth

Page 3

TALES FROM LOCKDOWN

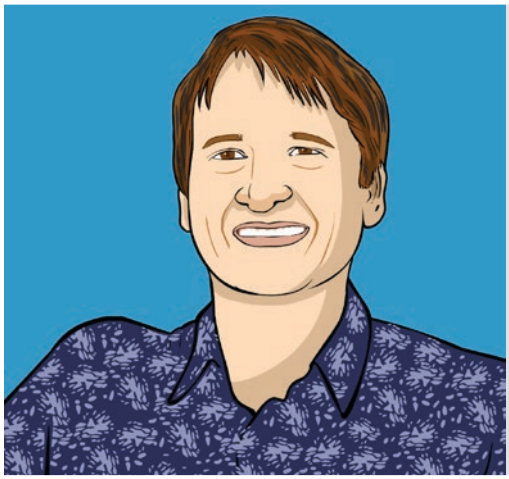
Merryn Gott says the voices of people 70 plus weren't heard during lockdown. Now she wants their tell-all letters.

Page 5

SNAPSHOTS

QUALITY EDUCATION HUB

As well as the University holding onto its No. 1 spot in the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings, there's more recogniton. Auckland is one of only 17 universities worldwide to be made a hub for the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) in the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) group, being assigned SDG 4: Quality Education. Auckland will lead a group of 1,300 UNAI member institutions in more than 130 countries to develop new ideas for achieving the SDGs. See: **tinyurl.com/UNAI-hub-SDG4**



BAR OPENS AT 8AM

Regular bars may be open again but you probably won't be there at 8am. But the final three Raising the Bar events are still being held online, and the presentations are given at 8am and 8pm. Remaining speakers for June are Professor Darl Kolb (10 June), Professor Richard Easther (17 June) and Dr Deb Shepherd and Dr Jamie Newth (24 June). You can read about their subjects at **rtbevent.com/rtb-auckland-home-edition**. Pictured is Richard Easther in his cartoon form, created by Toby Morris.

KATE CALLING FOR CONTENT

Kate is a feminist-focused magazine featuring submissions from students, staff and alumni. It's published annually by AUSA, for Women's Suffrage Day. This year's theme is 'Celebrating Connections'. People can interpret that how they want and send art, photos, prose, poetry, essays and articles to KATE@ausa.org.nz with your name and contact details. The deadline is 31 July, but the earlier the better. Any queries ask Emma Rogers, Education Vice-President. Email: EVP@ausa.org.nz

BIG RECYCLING EFFORT

Nearly 80 tonnes of surplus furniture was rehomed by the University just prior to lockdown. When around 220 School of Medicine staff and students moved from Auckland Hospital to their new building in Grafton, their old furniture was saved from the landfill. Nearly every desk, table and bookcase was rehomed in a mammoth effort, most going to community groups and charities. As well as the lifting, movers had to work around only being able to use the lifts at the hospital between 6pm and 5am.

THIS ISSUE

The April and May issues of *UniNews* can be downloaded as PDFs at **auckland.ac.nz/UniNews-archive**

EDITOR: Denise Montgomery
denise.montgomery@auckland.ac.nz
DESIGN: Mike Crozier
PHOTOGRAPHY: Elise Manahan
PRODUCTION: The University of Auckland
Volume 50/Issue 4/June 2020
PUBLISHED BY: The University of Auckland
Communications Office
Alfred Nathan House, 24 Princes Street
Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142
Web: auckland.ac.nz/UniNews
Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz
UniNews *is printed on sustainable stocks and, where posted, uses biogradable wrap. If you'd rather just receive a PDF, email us.*

TAMASAILAU SUAALII

Associate Professor Tamasailau Suaalii specialises in Indigenous jurisprudence and criminology in the Pacific.

Tamasailau (Sailau) Suaalii says Māori and Pacific people face challenges in the youth justice system.

What's your role at the University?
I lecture in the criminology programme. I teach a stage three paper called Indigenous and the Global. It's one of the reasons I returned to Auckland – because we have the only criminology programme in the country that deliberately foregrounds Indigenous criminological issues.

Where had you been?
I had a number of roles here from 1998-2008 before becoming a senior research fellow at the University of Otago until 2011, with the Centre for International Health. I was based in Apia at the National University of Samoa. Prior to returning to Auckland in 2016, I was a senior lecturer at Victoria, in Pacific Studies and Samoan Studies.

You also studied elsewhere, didn't you?
That's a funny story. My dad always wanted me to study law. Actually, he would have been a better person to have done law than me. Anyway, we made a pact I could study away from home to get into law school. I did my intermediate year at Waikato, qualified and came back and did law here. He hoped I would become a lawyer. Many years later, I was graduating with my PhD and he said to one of my good friends, who's now a senior lawyer 'Do you think Sailau will become a lawyer now?' Poor dad, it was always his dream.

What is your heritage?
I was born in Samoa in a village called Saoluafata. I came here with my parents in the early 1970s when I was about three. It was at the time when most Pacific people who came here moved to Herne Bay or Grey Lynn. We moved south because of the Ōtāhuhu freezing works and I went to primary school in Otara. Then the government had a policy allowing families to utilise their family benefit payments as a deposit on a house so my parents bought one out west. I spent most of my formative years in Henderson living near vineyards and orchards and walking to school.

Do you have siblings?
I'm the oldest of six. The next are my twin sisters and then there are three brothers. I'm the only one to have gone to university.

You're undertaking a lot of research as well as related service work. Tell us about that.
I'm on the Pacific advisory group to the District Commander of Central Police and it's a good connection into what happens on the frontline. The police are the gateway to the justice system for a lot of young people. To their credit, they do what they can to address the over representation of Māori and Pacific in the youth justice system, which is my research focus, but could do more.

I'm also on an expert advisory panel for the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, Professor Juliet Gerrard, for the cannabis referendum. And on the Establishment Advisory Group for the Criminal Cases Review Commission. It's all really interesting work and it's important to have Pacific criminological input into both.

My main research has been as co-principal investigator on a three-year Marsden-funded research project looking at Māori and Samoan experiences of youth justice in New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

What kind of methods did you use for that?
It's qualitative research so one of the ways we've done it is to have young people articulate their stories through talanoa sessions, which are similar to semi-structured interview sessions. It's a methodology that could be described as 'Pacific specific' or Pacific values-led. The principles resonate with qualitative research methodology.

What are your concerns about youth justice for Māori and Pacific?
The youth justice system recognises young people will make mistakes, and you allow for that. Their cases aren't open to the public and once they've done their time, or gone into a diversion programme, that's supposed to be it. If they were to offend again, as an adult, they would start all over again. But unfortunately it doesn't always work like that. Sometimes the youth justice record gets mentioned after being closed. So their mistakes are *not* forgiven.

Māori and Pacific youth are then faced with social scripts that can contain unconscious or systemic biases that constantly tell them, in subtle and not so subtle ways, that certain parts of society believe they are not so good. So when their record is mentioned, the forgiveness factor can get put to the side. You know, 'the youth has x y z background' so 'their behaviour is typical', and it becomes self-fulfilling.

So while we need to make people accountable, we also need to understand the context around what led to the behaviour in the first place to get deeper understanding. We can actually learn from Māori and Pacific young offenders, their families and communities about this, but that work hasn't been done yet.

What do you like to do to relax?
I love tennis and play socially. I also love music and can sort of play piano … I used to play it at church. When my parents let me go to Waikato, it was on the condition that I would come back on the bus every weekend to play piano for the church! I was a good Samoan girl so there wasn't *too* much grumbling.

Associate Professor Siouxsie Wiles is happy to have received funding for her studies into antibiotic resistance. Photo: Elise Manahan

SIOUXSIE **VS** SUPERBUGS

For several months Associate Professor Siouxsie Wiles has been neck-deep in Covid-19 queries and communications.

So you might not think there'd be much celebration when your next important task is to be knee-deep in the proverbial.

But the fact that Siouxsie has won funding for a pilot study to explore the bacterial wonderland that is Auckland's sewer network is, in fact, great news. In May she told *UniNews* she'd had to resort to crowdfunding much of her research. Shortly after, she won an Explorer Grant from the Health Research Council to explore Auckland's sewers for antibiotic-resistant superbugs.

"It came at just the right time as I was about to abandon the project because of a lack of funding," she says. "The issue of antibiotic resistance is such an important topic though, so it's great we can go ahead. At the moment we monitor antibiotic-resistant bacteria by analysing samples collected at hospital and community laboratories. But that fails to capture information about resistant bacteria carried by healthy people who don't have symptoms, so we don't have a clear idea of what superbugs are out there in the general public."

She says healthy people can have superbugs in their nose or gut and not be unwell. "But one day they might need surgery and that organism could end up in their bloodstream where it will be very difficult to treat. Or they could inadvertently pass it on to someone else. Our study aims to understand what organisms are out there in communities without taking a swab or sample."

Researchers will test hospital effluent and compare it to samples from wastewater treatment plants serving 'healthy' communities without a primary care facility in their area.

■ **Eight other University of Auckland researchers also won HRC Explorer grants.**

CHECK OUT THE **KUPUTAKA**

Ever wondered what your job title is in Māori but didn't quite trust the dictionary enough to translate it? Then Kuputaka is all you need.

A new glossary of Māori terms for use at the University, including many job titles, is now available online. It has been created by Te Mātanga Reo, the University Māori Language Advisory Committee, and can be found at **auckland.ac.nz/kuputaka-translations** as a PDF file.

The kuputaka includes Māori language translations of campus, service and faculty names, roles and job titles, website terms, signage, student-related terms, greetings and sign-offs as well as days and months of the University calendar, and much more.

The Office of the PVC Māori is responsible for the kuputaka and it has taken into account the dialectical nuances of relevance to the University of Auckland located in Tāmaki Makaurau, Te Tai Tokerau and Waikato.

If you are disappointed not to find your title there and want to add it to your email signature, just email cathrine.taylor@ac.nz and a translation will be on its way to you.

THEIR **OWN DEVICES**

Students who didn't have access to a laptop for online studies in Semester One weren't left to their own devices.

The University coordinated a major IT relief effort to ensure all students had access to laptops, so they could attend virtual lectures and complete assignments online. That has involved the loan of around 600 laptops to students in need.

In May the Government announced a support package to help extend and sustain the scheme. The University has received more than $800,000 from the $20 million Government package to assist eligible tertiary learners to get digital devices, modems and internet connections. Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific Damon Salesa says the funding is extremely welcome as students continue to seek support to stay connected. "When Level 4 lockdown was announced, the University was aware that a significant number of students would be disproportionately disadvantaged," Damon says. "We knew some did not have laptops, WiFi or a quiet space to work. We've been committed to supporting students as best we can, and providing a free laptop on loan was one initiative we could introduce quickly."

Once it was allowed, the University also opened up study spaces at the new South Auckland campus Te Tai Tonga.

Renee Motion, the University's desktop asset manager, tagged and dispatched hundreds of devices from a makeshift distribution centre in a garage at her home. She is part of a team quickly set up just before lockdown to manage the logistics of supplying devices.

"All 250 laptops we had set aside went in the first two weeks of Level 4, so we ordered 400 more to meet the ongoing demand. I was dealing with between 10 to 45 requests for devices every day," she says.

Under Alert Level 2, the University has been able to resume a wider range of activities, including reopening study spaces, with social distancing and cleaning regimens in place. All students and staff have to record their presence on campus using **checkin.auckland.ac.nz** Teaching remains online until Semester Two.

Renee Motion dispatches laptops from her home garage.

LETTERS FROM **LOCKDOWN** TO TELL A **STORY**

Professor Merryn Gott and a team of researchers are investigating how the lockdown affected older people.

Professor Merryn Gott is calling for letters from people over 70 about their experience of lockdown.
Photo: Elise Manahan

One pernicious idea mainstream society seems to latch onto, even before the Covid-19 lockdown, is that over 70s are incapable of making their own good decisions and therefore need to be protected.

True, the over 70s were the group most vulnerable to Covid-19 and ended up being the hardest hit by the virus, but almost all of those who died had underlying health conditions.

So what else is going on?

Professor Merryn Gott, from the School of Nursing, is leading a team from the Te Ārai Research Group who recently won funding to look at the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on those aged 70 plus.

The year-long study, *Social Connectedness Among Older People During Covid-19*, funded by the Auckland Medical Research Foundation, will consider whether the voices of those 70 plus are heard or even represented in decisions about their well-being.

"The over 70s tended to be lumped together and collectively characterised as passive and vulnerable," says Merryn.

"Te Ārai Research Group has a commitment to putting the voices of people most directly affected by experiences at the heart of public debate. What was really clear when we were reading through news reports and looking at the broadcast media, was that there was a lot said about older people, but very little actually reported that was said by them."

The study will build on the team's National Science Challenge funded study exploring social connection among culturally diverse older people. They will feed older people's experiences and perspectives to government and other relevant organisations.

"We know that older people are making massive contributions to their communities and that was almost completely invisible in the rhetoric," says Merryn.

"We are really interested in what the experience was actually like for older people themselves, across diverse cultural groups. Our previous work has found there's a lot of heterogeneity ... we tend to lump them together as 'the elderly' or 'old' when in reality there's a lot of variation."

As part of the study, older people from across New Zealand will be invited to write letters recounting their experiences over lockdown. They can submit these via the project website (**haveoursay.org**) or they can use traditional letter writing. There are also interviews being done by phone and video and these were begun earlier, while the situation was fresh in people's minds. The plan is to partner with an archive to ensure their voices are kept for posterity as part of New Zealand's social historical records. The letter-writing project will be open until the end of this year.

> ***"The over 70s tended to be lumped together and collectively characterised as passive and vulnerable."***
>
> – Professor Merryn Gott

Age Concern NZ is a partner in the project and will help publicise the study among its members, and through aged care homes. Researchers are also working with kaumātua to reach Māori.

"We're putting a lot of effort into trying to get those voices we seldom hear," says Merryn.

There are three key phases to the study, with an over-arching goal of getting older people's perspectives and experiences into the public domain. "In the first phase, we're interviewing older people who worked with us on a previous project because they were experiencing loneliness so we really want to see how lockdown has affected them.

"We're also doing a media analysis, looking at the way the media has reported on older people. We hope that what we find out will be useful for them – and the government – for framing messages in the future. One message we're hoping to get across is that it's key first to speak to older people if they then want to speak about them."

Merryn says something kept leaping out to her when reading about Covid-19 in the news. "The people who have the voices are the politicians and the service providers, but very few older people are actually foregrounded in stories."

The final phase is a survey of service providers.

"We're talking to groups like Age Concern NZ and other NGOs to see what they've been doing during this time, what they think the barriers have been and how they could be helped in the future. If there were to be a second wave, what do we need to know to be prepared and also for future pandemic situations? One of those aspects is around public health messaging. Are they spoken about in a way that engages with them?"

Merryn is also part of a separate project led by her Te Ārai and School of Nursing colleague Dr Jackie Robinson that focuses on the impact lockdown has had on rest home residents.

"We want to find out what the impact has been on those residents, on their functional and mental well-being. Because they haven't been able to leave the facility or have visitors who keep them socially stimulated and mentally active."

Merryn says something interesting out of early discussions is how much older people do for their community.

"For example, we interviewed one of our kaumātua and her main concern on lockdown was how on earth was she going to be able to carry on with her mahi in this situation. But she's incredibly resourceful so she found ways to do her work remotely. That's just completely contrary to the framing of 'these poor older people; we must do everything we can to protect them'."

■ Denise Montgomery

To take part in the study see: haveoursay.org
Read more at tearairesearchgroup.org

INEQUITY IN HIS SIGHTS

Professor Steven Dakin says New Zealand needs a national eye-health survey to create a baseline from which to work. Photo: Elise Manahan

Professor Steven Dakin, Head of the School of Optometry and Vision Science, says New Zealand has an issue with eye-health inequity.

One of the more unexpected moments in Professor Steven Dakin's career as Head of the School of Optometry and Vision Science (SOVS), came when he found himself in the office of the University of Auckland's legal counsel discussing ducks.

The duck in question was an eye chart symbol created by SOVS as part of a Cure Kids project to improve eye tests for schoolchildren.

"We had received the equivalent of a 'cease and desist' letter by the maker of another eye chart, claiming our duck was too similar to their duck!" says Steven.

"But pretty much all the popular eyesight testing charts for kids contain a house or a duck. There are only so many simple symbols that children can name. I think the real problem was probably that we do not charge optometrists to use our test.

"Usually eye charts are expensive because they're the result of a lot of background testing and normative data. We're taking a different approach, making the charts free and asking optometrists to share data to improve the test."

The situation was resolved with no waddles of cash involved. And the duck remains. Still looking like a duck. Still helping test children's eyesight.

Steven is best described as a visual neuroscientist, working on the parts of our brain that let us see the world. He became head of the School of Optometry and Vision Science in 2015, moving to New Zealand from the UK with his Kiwi wife and young children.

Steven's driving concern right now is the issue of eye-health inequity in New Zealand which he says many don't realise the extent of.

"I would say the most important research in the School of Optometry and Vision Science is related to eye-health inequity. Innovation in treatment is, of course, very important, but right now our priority needs to be getting the treatments we already have out to people everywhere in Aotearoa New Zealand. This isn't always happening."

Concerns about this inequity are increasingly driving the research of many SOVS researchers and have led to a recent appointment.

"We're really lucky to have Jacqui Ramke joining us as Associate Professor in Public Eye Health, thanks to the support of the Buchanan Charitable Foundation. She's a world authority in equity and eye health."

One of Jacqui's projects involves mapping the distances people need to travel to get to their nearest eye-health specialist.

"If you go to Northland, people can be driving three hours to get a pair of glasses. If you're on a limited budget, maybe taking care of kids, you're not always going to do that. And although we suspect this is a particular problem in Māori communities, we don't have clear data to help us understand the barriers people face."

Steven says New Zealand needs a national eye health survey to create a baseline from which to work. He says that's something he'll push for in his new role as chair of Eye Health Aotearoa, a trust comprising representatives of ophthalmology, optometry and New Zealand's sight charities. Eye Health Aotearoa's mission is to advocate to reduce the inequities.

"One in ten children in New Zealand needs glasses and doesn't have them. The current system is flawed. Children are screened right before starting school which is good but there's a long gap to the next screening – it's not until Year 7. So there are a lot of kids who could do with a check in the interim who aren't getting it."

Children aren't the only group slipping through the cracks.

"One in ten children in New Zealand needs glasses and doesn't have them. The current system is flawed."

– Professor Steven Dakin, Head of School of Optometry and Vision Science

"In 2017, Winston Peters made a promise of free eye health tests for the over 65s and the government has finally committed funds to this in their recent budget announcement," says Steven.

"It's an important initiative though because such checks lead to earlier detection and treatment of eye disease, which results in patients keeping more of their vision. I just hope the Government gets the testing right and consults with clinicians and sight charities about what tests are needed."

Student optometrists at the School of Optometry and Vision Science check the vision of around 5,000 children a year in greater Auckland schools. But if the student identifies a problem with a child's eyesight, they have to refer them to an optometrist. "We can't currently do a full eyesight test on-site. So we have to refer the children and hope they're eligible for subsidised glasses and the eye exam will be free through a Community Services Card.

"Even if they do, it's still a barrier for some people. They see optometrists as being expensive, and won't take their child along."

What Steven would like is funding for New Zealand's first mobile eye clinic – based on a modified St John ambulance – to allow students to give the children a full exam on site.

"The children could then get a proper prescription at the end of it. The ideal would be if we could partner with a local optometrist to get glasses delivered to the children. This would really help lower the barriers preventing children from getting their vision corrected.

"We want to run the bus for five years, and we're asking for about $1.5 million to do that. It's not that big an ask so we really hope we can get someone on board with that too once we get out of the Covid-19 restrictions. And while it's the children who benefit, it's also really good training for the optometry students."

He says early intervention in all aspects of eye-health care, from children with amblyopia (lazy eye) to adults with glaucoma or cataracts, is vital. One area in which University researchers are making a big difference is amblyopia. It's a condition that begins as a physical problem but as the brain adapts to seeing with one eye, it goes from "being an eye thing to being a brain thing".

"The treatments for it are varied. You can have surgery for the actual muscles, but you still need some form of treatment to deal with the fact that the child's brain has developed differently."

What the School of Optometry is doing is developing binocular therapies where, instead of the traditional treatment (of patching one eye), they give both eyes something to do to bring the 'lazy' one up to speed.

"The treatment involves children watching special movies on a 3D game console. The movies effectively reduce the vision in the good eye to be the same as the vision in the bad eye. It's called 'binocular balancing'.

"Because there's no patch and no glasses it makes it easy for parents to have their children use it, even in the backseat of the car."

Rotary has provided some funding and there's a phase two clinical trial being undertaken in the UK at Moorfields Eye Hospital where Steven worked before coming to New Zealand.

Another innovation that's gone worldwide is for treatment of myopia – short-sightedness. Late last year, the FDA approved the use of a special kind of soft contact lens first developed at the School of Optometry by Dr John Phillips and former PhD student Nicola Anstice.

The MiSight contact lens is the only approved contact lens treatment for myopic children that corrects the short-sightedness as well as slowing its progression.

"People think of myopia as a benign condition, but severe myopia can cause other issues," says Steven. "It's caused by the eyeball being too long and that causes the retina, the cells in the back of the eye that sense light, to get stretched which makes them more vulnerable to damage.

"So if you have severe myopia, it can predispose you to conditions like glaucoma. Severe myopia is the single biggest risk factor for going blind in later life."

It would be short-sighted not to do something about that.

■ Denise Montgomery

ABOUT OPTOMETRY AND VISION SCIENCE

Read the newsletter of the School of Optometry and Vision Science (SOVS): **sovs-newsletter.blogs.auckland.ac.nz**
About SOVS: **auckland.ac.nz/en/fmhs/about-the-faculty/sovs.html**
Read about fundraising for SOVS projects: **auckland.ac.nz/SOVS-projects-donate**

DON'T BE SHY

UniNews welcomes your ideas on staff members to feature in profiles, as well as any news and research stories. We're also always looking for people to feature in our My Story, the Q and A.

Email your ideas to the editor: denise.montgomery@auckland.ac.nz

Robert Burnie, doing a Bachelor of Optometry, helps with testing a child's eyesight. Photo: Charlotte Turner.

THE NOSE KNOWS

Loss of the sense of smell – our remarkable ability to detect and memorise millions of odours – is called anosmia. We see it in nasal infections, at early stages of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's – and now, in Covid-19.

This symptom of Covid-19 is giving researchers a unique opportunity to investigate the nose to pinpoint triggers for disease and determine if prompt detection of anosmia enables effective treatment early in the disease process, says Professor Maurice Curtis, from the University's Centre for Brain Research.

"We are using these same concepts in our work on neurodegenerative diseases such as fronto-temporal dementia. Because the nose contains the only brain cells exposed to the world, the olfactory neurons responsible for our sense of smell, it can tell us if disease is beginning in the brain or body," explains Maurice.

"This research will help us understand the scientific and medical challenges of brain disease, and understand global pandemic diseases which affect the olfactory system."

■ Read the full story: auckland.ac.nz/nose-window

VIRTUALLY AN INTERN

One of the University's business school students is one of six selected worldwide for a virtual internship to gain work experience without leaving the house.

Elizabeth Ejiwale, in her final year of a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in international business and marketing, has been awarded a scholarship to intern remotely for a UK-based company, which she will be matched to later this year.

"It's an incredible opportunity to gain international work experience in the middle of a global crisis, while balancing studying from home and working part-time," she says. "The world is increasingly operating in a virtual manner and is reliant on online workspaces. An online internship means I can get ahead of this trend by gaining experience across continental barriers."

The scholarship was awarded by Virtual Internships, which connects students worldwide with remote work experience, usually for a fee. Elizabeth's scholarship means she doesn't have to pay and she is the only recipient from outside the UK and the US. Her internship comes with a dedicated career coach, weekly online company meetings and discussions with other interns.

Elizabeth has already studied in the US and China as part of the University's inaugural Global Business and Innovation Cohort, funded by the Sir Owen Glenn Study Abroad scholarship and the Prime Minister's Scholarships for Asia. She also worked as a 360 International adviser in the International Office, helping other students take advantage of overseas learning opportunities.

Ainslie Moore, Deputy Director of International Programmes and Services, says there has been a rise in opportunities for students to gain virtual international experience.

"We place a high value on providing students with opportunities to learn abroad, with the aim of reaching a 25 percent participation rate in overseas study, research or internship," she says. "While our students can't travel overseas, the rise of virtual internships and learning opportunities is a great way to overcome the barriers."

Bear and Alligator's lockdown adventures reflected what was going in Carol Mutch's bubble.

BEARING UP WELL IN LOCKDOWN

A lovable bear attracted an international following when his adventures during lockdown were shared on social media.

Bear is the co-star of a four-part homemade picture-book series alongside partner in crime, Alligator. They're the invention of Professor Carol Mutch, from the Faculty of Education and Social Work. She says the idea came as a way to entertain family – and distract herself. Bear's story ended up mirroring what was going on in Carol's own 'bubble'.

"Those first weeks were so stressful, getting all my courses transferred to online and learning about Zoom and recording podcasts and YouTube videos. And I just found myself out with my phone camera taking photos of Bear, who is actually my son's old toy, in a variety of settings around our rural property near Christchurch."

What she wasn't prepared for was the snowballing response after she posted Bear's latest adventure on Facebook each day at 8am.

"He developed a worldwide following, people sent in bear pictures and videos introducing their bears, and adults engaged as much as children; they talked to him as if he was real and poured out their hearts."

However after four sets of adventures that take Bear and Alligator through several weeks of lockdown, she says she needed to get her life back so Bear had to go into 'hibernation' in the toy box. "Some of his Facebook followers actually cried, it was so therapeutic for people on their own and he became their daily companion."

But Bear's fame has lived on, and a primary school class in West Auckland were so inspired by his adventures they made a sequel, *Bear Comes Back to School*, using a teacher's bear, Angus, who had to adjust to life at school during the level 2 response to Covid-19. Other schools from all over New Zealand have also been sending her their Bear stories.

Carol says the series is not just a story about a toy bear. "It contains many aspects of life under lockdown that readers will resonate with, and it also provides parents and teachers with an opportunity to discuss Bear's adventures with their children and relate them to their own experiences." – *Julianne Evans*

Full story auckland.ac.nz/lockdown-bear

Dr Antje Fiedler organised workshops with Business School academics for business industry body members.

TAKING CARE OF **BUSINESSES**

Antje Fiedler has organised Business School staff to lend a hand to business if they can.

As well as getting to grips with Zoom and other forms of online-only teaching, staff at the Business School have been sharing their expertise with Auckland businesses.

There have been a number of requests made by small to medium enterprises (SMEs) facing challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. With future projections thrown out the window, they've needed to recalibrate. Not long after lockdown, Dr Antje Fiedler, a senior lecturer at the Graduate School of Management, set up a pro-bono business advisory group, comprising Business School experts keen to lend a hand.

"We set it up to give business consultancy advice but we soon decided to run webinars as well to reach more people.

"We worked with industry bodies and facilitated these sessions for their members."

Dr Cristiano Bellavitis, senior lecturer in innovation and entrepreneurship, covered subject matter including the entrepreneurial finance markets and the impact of Covid-19 on venture funding around the world.

He says one of the biggest concerns for SMEs is uncertainty. "It's so difficult to understand what will happen, both economically and with the virus. If a second lockdown is implemented, how will governments and consumers react? These risks are magnified by the global nature of the situation, making investments very risky."

Global venture funding has already fallen 50 to 70 percent on last year. "There's not much entrepreneurs can do if they are highly exposed to international immigration or tourism. If borders remain closed, the only way to survive is to hibernate the business. Long-term we need to invest in research and technology, aiming to create world-leading companies with resilience. We should have a project similar to Vision 2025 (in China) that leverages our potential and resources for a better future."

Antje says where staff haven't been able to help with an enquiry, the group has directed them to organisations who could. "We are not claiming we are necessarily the experts, but we can share best practices and tips to tackle these challenges and think collectively."

And there's a bit of quid pro quo. Some businesses are now collaborating with masters students. "At least one Masters in International Business student now has a project out of it," says Antje. "Another student who has experience in marketing through working overseas is providing advice to a company."

Dr Deepika Jindal's knowledge of human resource management has been vital in the face of many businesses having to restructure, and Dr Doug Carrie (marketing) and Dr Steve Leichtweis (Head of the Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education) are providing tips on engaging people in an online environment to support Private Training Establishments (PTEs).

Antje plans to organise ongoing online workshops in coming months, and more staff have offered their expertise. Future webinars are planned on subjects such as negotiation (Andrew Patterson, management and international business), the importance of effective digital business models (Professor Julia Kotlarsky, information systems and operations management), and SME resilience (Dr Bridgette Sullivan-Taylor, Graduate School of Management).

■ Disclaimer: Businesses who seek guidance from University staff accept responsibility for making an independent assessment of guidance provided, and may need to seek further advice from professional services firms in respect of legal, accounting and tax issues.

THAT TIME WE WERE **LOCKED DOWN** ON **CAMPUS**

Virtual events kept students in University accommodation supported and engaged, thanks to creative thinking by staff.

Living in Level 4 lockdown posed challenges for students, with disruption to regular lectures, study, social interactions and club activities. But students who chose to hunker down in their accommodation will certainly have tales to tell their grandchildren.

Accommodation staff needed to maintain the health, safety and well-being of their residents – to keep them connected but also having fun. The first move was for Resident Advisers to use Zoom to host one-on-ones and floor meetings with residents to ensure everyone was OK.

Then online inter-residential events came to the party. Students participated via live streams on social media, including online gaming, debating and quizzes. There were TikTok challenges and Netflix 'watch parties' and a hilarious evening of Facebook broadcasts of 'WPH TV' at Waipārūrū Hall, in which staff and residents found ways to keep physically distant but socially engaged.

Jacob Waitere, head of operations for accommodation, says the short time students had spent together before lockdown didn't seem to affect how they came together.

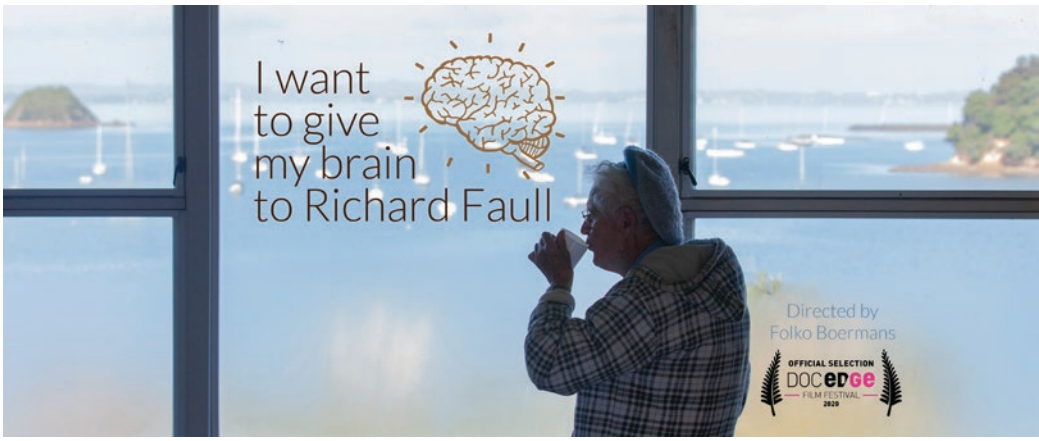
"Our residents only had a month together beforehand but the bonds that were forged have been strong. Our lockdown digital engagement through our Zoom tea and talk drop-in sessions, online streaming of events, webinars and more have been so well-received.

"Covid-19 highlighted the power of community and what it means to be at home," he says. "Our residents have proven home is where the heart is, even if it's away from home, online!"

It's also been a time to reflect. The 'Green Your Room' challenge, which started in March and finishes in June, encourages residents to form sustainable living habits. Students are asked to choose actions they pledge to follow for the academic year, such as switching off lights when they leave a room, turning off the tap while brushing teeth, and taking their own container when purchasing lunch on campus.

By mid-May, 42 percent of residents had enrolled for the challenge, on track to beat last year's 60 percent.

USING HIS **BRAIN**



When Waiheke Island resident Brently Ford attended an open day at the University of Auckland around 30 years ago, he had an almost spiritual moment.

"I went to an open day at the Med School and there was such enthusiasm of all these students with the organs and brains. I can remember holding a brain in my hands ... something changed. It was a life-changing event. I thought 'this is where I belong... but not yet!'"

He decided he wanted his brain to go to science, specifically to University of Auckland neuroscientist Sir Richard Faull, head of the Centre for Brain Research (CBR).

Folko Boermans, who for six years has been Creative Director in the University's Media Productions team, has a background in directing music documentaries, art magazine programmes and historical documentaries. The former editor for BBC Scotland, who won an editing BAFTA for a documentary about Mark Everett of The Eels, heard about Brently's wish from an academic staff member. He was intrigued by the story and decided to meet him.

"I was working on a teaching video project for Anne O'Callaghan and she explained the story about a man who fell in love with the brain. He made it his mission to donate his brain after he's passed away to the Centre For Brain Research. She said he was an interesting character."

Brently is now the subject of a documentary, *I Want to Give My Brain to Richard Faull*, that's taken two years of Folko's spare time outside of work. It will screen at the online-only Doc Edge festival on 22 June and again on 3 July. (The festival runs 12 June to 9 July)

Brently, who is 80 years old and lives alone, says in the documentary that he's worried his brain won't get where it wants to go in time.

"One of the issues he's really worried about is that he could die overnight, and nobody's going to notice he's dead," says Folko. "But his brain needs to be at the CBR within a few hours to be of use, which is a little tricky if you are on Waiheke."

Professor Sir Richard Faull says while it's important that the Human Brain Bank receives the brain as soon as possible after death, there's a bit of leeway.

"It's preferably within 12 hours and certainly within 24 hours," says Richard. "That's why it's important to make sure the donor's next of kin know of their intention and can notify us immediately after the death."

Folko spent ten days filming with Brently and says they've since become friends.

"Every morning Brently gets up and makes a cup of tea and sends an email to let people know he's still alive," says Folko. "He wants to let them know that his brain is still here!

"His life story is actually very interesting ... fascinating. So it's been a project I've enjoyed on top of my day job. But in a way, it doesn't matter how long it's taken because time doesn't seem to matter to Brently ... he's in his own time zone!"

Brently, who is passionate about music, composed most of the music for the documentary and also plays piano in it. Folko's son Miles, who is doing a Bachelor of Music in jazz performance at the University, also plays piano in the documentary.

The film is beautifully shot, mostly by former Media Productions videographer Jethro Martin, capturing the minutiae of Brently's life. Filming was done at Brently's home on Waiheke and Folko says he thinks the somewhat reclusive character decided to let him do the film there because they had got to know each other.

"I still go visit him once in a while when I'm on Waiheke. He's happy on his own, in his own home. But deep down I guess he didn't mind the attention. It's a bit sad he won't get to walk down the red carpet for the premiere of the film. I think he would have quite liked that."

■ *I Want to Give My Brain to Richard Faull*, Doc Edge, 22 June, 6pm, featuring a Q and A with Folko afterwards. Repeat screening on 3 July at 11am. See: **festival.docedge.nz/film/i-want-to-give-my-brain-to-richard-faull/**

■ See trailer: **tinyurl.com/brain-to-faull-doco**

"Brently's really worried he could die overnight, and nobody's going to notice he's dead."

– Folko Boermans, director of *I Want to Give My Brain to Richard Faull*

DONATING GREY MATTER

Professor Sir Richard Faull says anyone wanting to donate their brain to the Neurological Foundation Human Brain Bank in the Centre for Brain Research (CBR) can email **brainbank@auckland.ac.nz.**

CBR will reply with the details and procedures that need to be followed. He says the CBR receives around 25 brains a year and has recently had a lot of interest in donations to its Neurological Foundation Sports Brain Bank. "We're also undertaking studies on the mechanisms and genetics that cause brain cell death in Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's and motor neuron disease, as well as epilepsy and brain cancer, to develop new treatments.

"And we've developed world-leading techniques for growing human brain cells in culture in the laboratory so we can trial and develop new drug treatments for brain diseases."

ZOOMING THE **DANCE MOVES**

Dr Alfdaniels Mabingo is teaching dance from his lounge in West Auckland. Photo: Elise Manahan

Dr Alfdaniels Mivule Basibye Mabingo is recognised as Uganda's foremost dance educator, critic and choreographer but has been teaching East African-style dance from his living room in West Auckland.

When Mabingo took up a role as lecturer in the Dance Studies Programme this year, he didn't expect to be teaching dance from the confines of his West Auckland lounge. He'd arrived in New Zealand a few weeks before the country went into lockdown so has had to adapt.

He has lived in Auckland before. Alfdaniels did his undergraduate and masters degrees in dance at Makerere University, Uganda, a second masters degree in dance education at New York University, and completed his PhD at the University of Auckland in 2018.

Having choreographed, taught and danced around the world, teaching remotely from his lounge has presented particular challenges, given that dance is something we learn about by doing, usually with other people.

"When you're in a studio, you use all your senses – sight, touch, sound, smell and it deepens the connections. On Zoom it feels like each student is in their own world. The lack of embodied connection makes it difficult."

There have been plus sides though. He's paying more attention to technique, both his own and his students and has "discovered more about the technique of the dances that I've been teaching for years and years".

Mabingo teaches the indigenous dances of Uganda, but it's not only about the technique or the moves. The dances are a framework to teach the meanings of dance and its historical, experiential, cultural and social heritage.

"While I can't bring my village into a studio, I can cultivate the experience of my ancestral village, Mbuukiro, in central Uganda. I'll bring my drums and my instruments, and I get the students to tell stories, sing, chant, clap, do body percussion, dance, and create a sense of ritual. That helps students feel and understand what dancing means for people in my village.

"People are also gradually embracing the value of dance as a tool of empowerment, a vehicle to raise awareness, as a medium of expression of marginalised voices, and to enhance physical, emotional, spiritual and mental well-being."

Teaching dances from African cultures is a way of showing students the complexities of dances.

"That requires unpacking the dance, looking at the body posture, the attitude of the dancer, their emotional expression, the dancer's movement in response to music. You have to also understand the context in which a dance is performed and how it intersects with people, society and history as well as the values it represents.

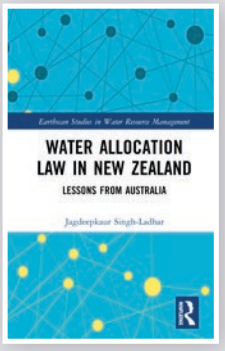
"This is why I left my country. I wanted to share the art and culture of Africa with a wider world, one that often thinks of Africa as a single country, a place with one single story."

Teaching and learning dances that are co-opted from other cultures can create dilemmas for students that relate to 'cultural appropriation'.

"For our dances, it's not appropriation if the original source of that material is acknowledged. I tell students, 'I'm teaching you this, but if you teach it somewhere, never claim a moral latitude that you represent that community. Acknowledge the source of the dance material and understand the ideas and meanings behind it'.

"But we borrow from each other. We're human, we're all products of the intersection of different histories and experiences. So I think it's fair to acknowledge what you have learned from somewhere else in this world of constant cultural flux and exchanges." – *Margo White*

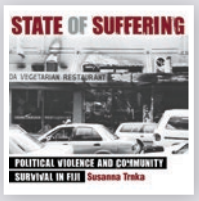
BOOKS



Water Allocation Law in New Zealand: Lessons from Australia

Dr Jagdeep Singh-Ladhar, a lecturer in the Department of Commercial Law, has written a book that shows New Zealand needs comprehensive water reform to address the whole system of water allocation.

Water Allocation Law in New Zealand, Jagdeep Singh-Ladhar, Routledge Press Ebook now through Routledge and CRC Press, hardback due July



State of Suffering

A vivid personal account of the 2000 Fiji coup from the viewpoint of the Indo-Fijian community has been republished to mark the coup's 20th anniversary in May. University of Auckland anthropologist Susanna Trnka and her family were living in Fiji in a predominantly Indo-Fijian community. She was doing field research for her PhD and immersing herself in the culture, but following the coup, her research abruptly changed direction. The result was an in-depth look at how people coped with the social and political upheaval caused by the coup.

Read more: auckland.ac.nz/fiji-coup

State of Suffering, Susanna Trnka, Cornell University Press, 2008 (republished May 2019, The Institute for Pacific Studies Press)

SUPPORT FISHER ART **GALLERY**

The University's Fisher Art Gallery is open again. Because of lockdown it has extended its exhibition *Queer Algorithms* until 27 June. The large group exhibition of both international and local LGBTQIA+ artists is the first in Aotearoa for some time. **gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz/queer-algorithms/**

The gallery will also host associated events in June, including *A Queer History of Coding: Web Development Workshop* which will explore the LGBTQIA+ history of computers while upskilling people from the queer community in web development, poetry readings and panel discussions.

Fisher Art Gallery, 74 Shortland Street, open Tuesday to Saturday.

"Voices across the nation clamouring for a 'return to normal' were matched by pleas to 'reset' the world."

Professor Robin Kearns isn't rushing back to the likes of Ponsonby from his home on Waiheke Island, left. Ponsonby photo: Hannah Lees

LEAVING LOCKDOWN

Places, like people, never stay the same. Places are always in a state of becoming. How did the places familiar to us change over the time we came to know as 'lockdown'?

On Waiheke Island where I live, 'quieter,' 'friendlier' and 'cleaner' were three common responses. With all but essential vehicles off the roads, pedestrians turned back the clock. We walked the way people did before the hegemony of cars. When a vehicle did pass, we waved. But we noticed the odour of exhaust emissions more acutely than when immersed in the miasma of Auckland's rush-hour.

It was a time of noticing the non-human life with which we share the planet. We heard more birdsong. With roads quiet and the engines of industry silenced, the air and the sea seemed to have a rare clarity. At the beach, the horizon seemed sharper and we saw fish in the shallows.

Of course, this wasn't a universal experience. Some households struggled with reduced income, and many workers laboured on, whether they wanted to or not. Others missed the consolation of extended family gatherings, most acutely at tangihanga. The rest of us re-learned the meaning of 'essential'. It was a time of appreciating doing more with less. Our attention was sharpened by relative confinement and fewer preoccupations. When out walking or cycling, we offered greetings in a way usually reserved for those we already know. There was distancing but it was sociable distancing. Many found they didn't need to be buying or travelling so much.

Voices across the nation clamouring for a 'return to normal' were matched by pleas to 'reset' the world and take stock of priorities. And now that we have left lockdown behind and moved down a level, we face a question: With this descent from the heights of emergency, do we also risk losing the perspectives that Levels 3 and 4 offered?

The experience of recent weeks presented us with many paradoxes: essential workers were suddenly valued yet remained poorly paid; there was a close engagement with others by Zoom, despite our home-based isolation; we felt conviviality with 'strangers', despite walking a wide berth around them.

A further paradox surrounds our understanding of health. While government responses to the virus have been based on a biomedical disease model, the lockdown has given us glimpses of another model at work: Mason Durie's Te Pae Māhutonga framework. Named for the Southern Cross, Durie's model uses the constellation to symbolically bring together key elements of personal, community and environmental health. While developed with Māori health in mind, this framework suggests a way forward for all of us. The four central stars represent the essential tasks of health promotion: mauriora (strong cultural identity), waiora (healthy environment), toiora (healthy lifestyles) and te oranga (participation). The two 'pointer' stars represent the pre-requisites for effectiveness: ngā manukura (leadership) and te mana whakahaere (autonomy).

How can this model help us perceive the lessons of lockdown differently? The enforced slowdown enhanced waiora with cleaner air and water, encouraged toiora with walking and cycling, and saw new expressions of te oranga with expressions of neighbourliness and what some called a 'pandemic of kindness'. Elements of mauriora perhaps lie in the feeling of us all having been 'in it together' during lockdown, a loosely held identity within 'the team of 5 million'. And none of this would have occurred without a strong commitment to ngā manukura (partnership between political and public health leadership), and a national expression of te mana whakahaere (asserting autonomy and 'going hard and early').

What can we take from this vision of healthier places and people? Over lockdown we experienced time, as well as place, differently. For many of us, we 'lost track of time' even as we reappreciated place. Ordinarily time is marked out by minutes and hours, and closely accounted for. Lockdown rendered time more fluid. 'What day is it?' I often heard people say. Perhaps during this unprecedented experience we moved, temporarily, from one type of time to another – from the metrics of what the Greeks called chronos, meaning measured chronological time, to what they referred to as kairos: a critical moment in which to rethink how we want to live.

Of course, this has been an imperfect kairos moment. Academics who write commentaries such as this one invariably have the privilege of salary and security. Social inequities run painfully deep in the experience and outcomes of the recent lockdown. And we cannot escape the knowledge that as we exit lockdown with the virus held at bay, the climate crisis remains an equally elusive wolf at our door. Yet under the Southern Cross – it's comforting presence in our night skies and its symbolic suggestion of integrated health – let us continue to unlock a vision of a kinder society, people-friendly places and cleaner air, water and land.

■ Professor Robin Kearns, School of Environment

This article reflects personal opinion and is not necessarily that of the University of Auckland.