

# Uni NEWS

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**MAY 2021**



## HELOISE STEVANCE ASTROPHYSICIST

The space junkie who reckons being out of your depth is a good thing

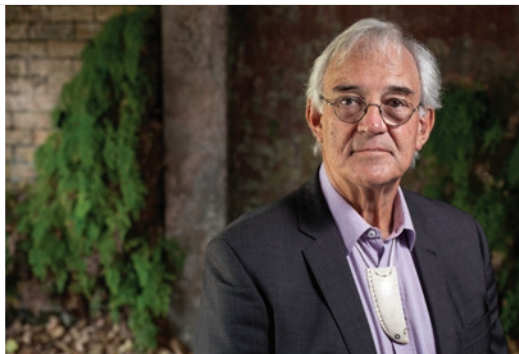
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### MYNA INFORMATION

Student Annika Beesley has trawled through historic records to track down when myna birds arrived in New Zealand

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### THE STORY OF THE PEN

David Williams reflects on his 1978 notoriety and why a stunt he pulled then still conveys a powerful message in 2021

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### JAIME KING

American healthcare law professor talks about her new academic life in New Zealand, and the simple joy of a cupcake

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Just a few of the University of Auckland staff and student achievements in the media recently. Email: [uninews@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:uninews@auckland.ac.nz)



## COVID-19 BLOOD TESTS REVEALING

Associate Professor Nikki Moreland (Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences) talked to various media about her Covid-19 antibody survey. The study, which tested the blood of almost 10,000 people, found a very low rate of Covid-19 antibodies in the population (0.1 percent) but also – using serology testing – evidence of eight previously undetected cases.

**Link:** [tinyurl.com/herald-nikki-moreland](https://www.tinyurl.com/herald-nikki-moreland) and [tinyurl.com/stuff-rnz-moreland](https://www.tinyurl.com/stuff-rnz-moreland)



## ARCHITECTURE INSIGHTS

Professor Deidre Brown (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu), head of the School of Architecture and Planning, was recently elected a Fellow of the Royal Society Te Apārangi. She talked to RNZ about what Māori architecture reveals about the past and how it could inform the housing of the future. She was also interviewed on Māori Television's *Tapatahi*, Radio Waatea, *e-Tangata* and the *Sunday Star-Times*. **Link:** [tinyurl.com/deidre-brown-rnz](https://www.tinyurl.com/deidre-brown-rnz)

## SAMOA ELECTION 'SEISMIC'

Associate Professor Damon Salesa, Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific, told RNZ's *The Detail* that for the first time in more than 30 years the Samoan election has been a "truly competitive election". "This is the equivalent of still having the remnants of a Muldoon government in power," he said. "It's been that long that this party has been there, and this prime minister has been in place since 1998."

**Link:** [tinyurl.com/damon-the-detail](https://www.tinyurl.com/damon-the-detail)



## THE ART'S IN THE POST

Alys Longley (Creative Arts and Industries) has been collaborating with artists around the world in these pandemic-disrupted times. The Associate Professor of Dance Studies talked to RNZ's *Standing Room Only* about managing three projects that involved artists around the globe, including a project that relied on the old-fashioned postal service. Artists sent each other envelopes, made as individual works of art, with artworks inside. The finished project will be shown in exhibitions in Melbourne and Santiago.

**Link:** [tinyurl.com/alys-longley-rnz](https://www.tinyurl.com/alys-longley-rnz)

## NUTRITION CLUES FOR TINY BABIES

Dr Barbara Cormack from the Liggins Institute was interviewed on RNZ about her investigations into nutrition for very small pre-term babies. She has found the babies can suffer 'refeeding syndrome', the same potentially fatal condition that can occur in extremely malnourished people who suddenly start eating more. She has also found a lot of variation between hospital neonatal units in what nutrition is given to babies and will work on developing national nutritional guidelines.

**Link:** [tinyurl.com/rnz-barbara-cormack](https://www.tinyurl.com/rnz-barbara-cormack)

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Dr Jingwen Mu did her PhD in accounting. These days she makes sure our research is counted. Photo: Billy Wong

## JINGWEN MU

The Strategic Planning Manager spends a lot of time cleaning, but not in the traditional sense.

### What's your role?

It has recently changed slightly as I've taken up a broader role in the Planning Office, but a key responsibility is to ensure all University of Auckland research endeavours are adequately recognised by all the university ranking systems.

### How do you do that?

It involves a lot of cleaning! For example, I log into the system and check how our researchers have listed their work, to make sure the words 'University of Auckland' are listed every time, for every piece of research, and spelt accurately.

### And what do you find?

It's alarming. When people publish their research, just one simple mistake will lead to their work being omitted from our research count. It could make their work go nowhere. Here are some examples: the spelling of Auckland as Anukland (!), the address listed as Waikato Campus or just ABI or just the Business School. The ranking agency won't have a clue where ABI is. I'm not picking on ABI, they're pretty good, these are just examples. It's faculty-wide.

### What happened in 2018 when you corrected a pile of research affiliations?

I went into the programme we use to make sure all the sub profiles, for example Auckland Business School, go under the University of Auckland profile. I also corrected the order of the address and spelling on so many. We rose from 88 to 83 in the QS rankings as a result, but it was a long and difficult negotiation as it's very hard to get things changed after the event.

### Why do you think these mistakes happen?

People have spent so much time doing their

rigorous research and are just so happy to get it published in a reputable journal. Sometimes affiliation is an afterthought or rushed. It might be a 100-author paper, and somehow our university gets left off. I can show you that every day we publish, errors are generated. I go in and clean up what I can, but ideally it would be part of the checks by the faculties and researchers.

### What's the importance of listing the University of Auckland affiliation?

It directly affects our rankings and therefore the number of students who want to study here. We all know the names Harvard and Cambridge. They don't have to worry, being long-established. But as we go down the bands, people's impression of the universities gets more uncertain and they wonder, 'is the University of Auckland better than Auckland University of Technology?' They may have heard the names, but if they have questions about which to choose, higher rankings help.

### What trends did you see in 2020?

Recent work I've been doing is to look at the impact of Covid-19 on research. Other universities have done a lot of Covid-19-related research, but ours is quite low. One of my jobs is to give early warnings to people to say, 'Hey, this is an area with very fast growth and one that will attract citations'. If other universities do Covid-19 research and we don't, the implications could go into the next decade. Rankings look at publications over a period of time, usually five years. So if 2020 is bad for us, that affects rankings for the next five years.

### But we're a small university; we can't be expected to match overseas universities?

We compare ourselves to the Group of Eight universities in Australia. Covid research doesn't just have to be science – it can be sociology, arts, law. Take the contact tracing app for example, what are the ethics behind collecting people's data? Our research can reveal a lot.

### What is citation all about?

It's when other academics around the world cite

a University of Auckland researcher's paper as something influential to their own research. Our highest last year was 268 publications citing one of our papers. It would be good to improve.

### Academic freedom includes freedom to research anything. Is that a problem?

Not at all, but when it comes to something like Covid-19, this is research that is going to be cited for a very, very long time. I predict a decade. If we look at the University of Sydney, almost all its top-cited research in 2020 was Covid-related, attracting thousands of citations. No, we're not as big but by every single measure you apply, New Zealand is the global No 1 in dealing with Covid. There's a story to be told, through research.

### How do we get our name out there more?

Academics know that getting published in high-quality journals is key. But don't complicate things when listing the address on your research. I can understand why you might want to put Business School but if you do, it needs to be University of Auckland Business School or Business School, University of Auckland. Not Auckland Law School, University of Auckland, Law School. It's just about getting into the habit. The risk is that attributing your academic institution incorrectly is one less opportunity to enhance our research reputation. People don't mean to do that.

### What's one step to make sure?

Check 'University of Auckland' is in the form's address line, with the name of the city it is in, and the country (Auckland, New Zealand). Don't mix up the institution with the name of the city. For researchers with more than one affiliated institution, such as the University and a DHB, include all affiliation addresses.

### What about research related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The SDG framework is really important, especially for the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. Universities and researchers are increasingly paying attention to the SDGs. We've seen that with the massive increase in the number of universities submitting to the 2021 Impact Rankings. It's also a helpful way for researchers to find like-minded collaborators.

### Is there any good news in all this?

Definitely! We just don't want all our fantastic research to 'go missing'. As well as rankings, it's important our staff are credited for all the work they do. We have excellent research going on every day and just need to improve a bit on our publishing strategy. This is a good thing for early-career researchers to know from the outset.

Contact: [rankings@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:rankings@auckland.ac.nz)

## TOP TEN FOR IMPACT



The University of Auckland has retained its place in the top ten of the international Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Rankings 2021.

The rankings, launched in 2019, measure the achievement of universities around the world against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater says these rankings are unique in that they measure achievement and impact against targets that the world has collectively agreed are crucial for the future of our planet and societies.

“The Impact Rankings demonstrate how universities like Auckland can play a key role in thought leadership, in germane research, and in sustainable operations,” she says.

Dawn says the University is very proud of this year’s overall 9th= position, despite not retaining the top place it held for the first two years of the rankings (2019 and 2020).

“For the first two years, Auckland led the world. We have taken a leadership opportunity and shared our work with colleagues internationally, helping many universities with their own work to measure progress against the SDGs. We are thrilled by the growth in participating universities and delighted that we have retained a spot in the top ten,” she says.

She says it’s inspiring to see that more universities see the rankings as a valuable tool to measure their international contribution. “This is an area being increasingly taken very seriously in strategic planning around the world. Certainly, the SDGs are one of the driving influences behind Taumata Teitei, Auckland’s new strategy and vision.”

The rankings were announced on 21 April at the THE Innovation and Impact Summit, an online conference hosted by the University of Auckland in partnership with Pennsylvania State University.

Full story: [auckland.ac.nz/THE-top-ten](https://auckland.ac.nz/THE-top-ten)



Sixteen of the 17 Kupe Leadership Scholarship winners. Below right: Jazpah Tata

## KUPE SCHOLARS ANNOUNCED

Seventeen top students have become the third cohort to receive a prestigious Kupe Leadership Scholarship.

One of those students, Jazpah Tata, aims to investigate the way history is being taught in schools.

“With New Zealand history becoming compulsory in schools from next year, it’s a great time to look into how teachers are feeling about teaching it,” Jazpah says.

The Kupe Scholarships were founded by Canadian philanthropists John and Marcy McCall MacBain, who gifted more than \$1 million to the University to launch the initiative, aimed at developing great leaders. It is supported by local donors, and open to high-achieving postgraduate students. There were 117 applications this year.

Jazpah did her undergraduate degree in education, studying at the South Auckland



Campus Te Papa Ako o Tai Tonga, before doing her masters. Her hard work, good grades and commitment to making change through education won her the scholarship, which includes a \$22,000 stipend and mentorship.

“I’m looking forward to meeting my mentor, Hoana Pearson,” Jazpah says. “She has a QSM for service to Māori and education and her work focuses on culturally responsive leadership and supporting Māori in leadership roles.”

Full story: [auckland.ac.nz/kupe-scholars-announced](https://auckland.ac.nz/kupe-scholars-announced)

Jazpah’s story: [auckland.ac.nz/jazpah-kupe](https://auckland.ac.nz/jazpah-kupe)

Full list: [tinyurl.com/2021-kupe-winners](https://tinyurl.com/2021-kupe-winners)

## SIGNS OF STRESS BUT PROGRESS

New analysis shows stigma and discrimination are still being reported by New Zealand LGBTQ+ students, but there are improvements.

Youth19 has released the latest in a series of surveys featuring young people in Aotearoa. It asked 7,721 secondary school-aged students about their experiences of school, home and community.

Co-investigator Dr John Fenaughty, from the Faculty of Education and Social Work, says that around half of the Rainbow students in the study are coping well, and a sizeable number report positive environments and experiences.

However some, especially transgender and diverse-gender students, face stigma and stress. “Increased mistreatment and stress ... are

known drivers that underpin the increased mental health challenges we are seeing.”

While schools are becoming more welcoming for this group, with seven out of ten students saying they felt part of their school, nearly a quarter (23 percent) said they had been bullied there, weekly or more often, in the past year.

Only three out of ten (32 percent) said they “always felt safe” in their neighbourhoods. Full story: [auckland.ac.nz/rainbow-results](https://auckland.ac.nz/rainbow-results)



Dr John Fenaughty

# TE PŪNAHA ĀTEA SET TO TAKE OFF

Auckland Space Institute is teaming up with Rocket Lab and key agencies to go where no New Zealand space mission has gone before.

**Te Pūnaha Ātea Auckland Space Institute, based at the University, is joining with Rocket Lab and a team of the country's leading researchers on New Zealand's first government-backed space mission.**

Research, Science and Innovation Minister Dr Megan Woods announced on 23 April the partners who will work with the New Zealand Space Agency and leading global environmental NGO, the Environmental Defense Agency, to collaborate on the MethaneSAT mission.

Rocket Lab will establish and operate the Mission Operations and Control Centre (MOCC), for the mission's first year. Te Pūnaha Ātea will then take over hosting the MOCC, working closely with Rocket Lab during the transition.

The satellite can stay in space for up to a decade, from where it will provide valuable data and insight into methane emissions.

"The partnership between academia and industry is key to the growth of the New Zealand space sector," says Te Pūnaha Ātea director,



Professor Guglielmo Aglietti.

Inset: The MethaneSAT.

Professor Guglielmo Aglietti. "This is great recognition of the capability to develop and operate space missions that we are establishing here in New Zealand."

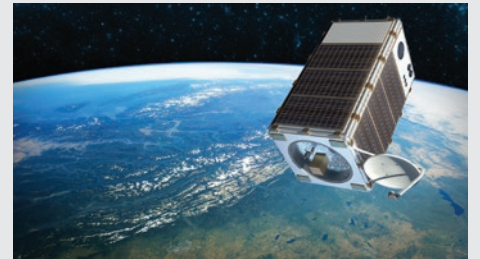
He says hosting the MOCC at the University also allows educational activities and training programmes. "That will build important capability for the national space-sector workforce."

Professor Jim Metson, the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), says it's great to be involved in the venture with colleagues across the country. "The research has far-reaching impacts in areas such as climate science," he says. "One of the most exciting aspects of the MethaneSAT is that we do not fully know the range of impacts this work will enable."

The mission will use the MethaneSAT's state-of-the-art capabilities to measure and map methane from oil and gas facilities and agriculture

sources, data that is needed to track and reduce those emissions. A multi-institution, multi-disciplinary team of leading researchers, led by Dr Sara Mikaloff-Fletcher of NIWA, will use the MethaneSAT to show the potential for satellites to accurately measure methane emissions from agriculture, both in New Zealand and around the world. MethaneSAT is expected to be launched in late 2022.

■ Full story: [auckland.ac.nz/methane-satellite](http://auckland.ac.nz/methane-satellite)



## SCIENCE THE **WINNER** ON THE DAY

Te Pūnaha Matatini has been acknowledged for its contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand's Covid-19 response.

**Te Pūnaha Matatini has won the 2020 Prime Minister's Science Prize in recognition of its researchers' work around Covid-19, developing mathematical models, analysing data and communicating the results.**

Te Pūnaha Matatini's information helped inform the government's response to the global pandemic. Several of its researchers have been prominent science communicators during the crisis, including Professor Shaun Hendy (Science) and Associate Professor Siouxsie Wiles (Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences).

The transdisciplinary team working on Covid-19 that received the award brought together researchers from this University, the University of Canterbury, Victoria University of

Wellington, Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, Market Economics and Orion Health.

Te Pūnaha Matatini is a Centre of Research Excellence funded by the Tertiary Education Commission and hosted by the University. Over the past six years, it has grown from the kernel of an idea into a diverse national network of more than 100 investigators and students who are tackling the interconnected and interdisciplinary challenges of our time.

Siouxsie Wiles was also recently named the Kiwibank New Zealander of the Year and Shaun Hendy, director of Te Pūnaha Matatini, was invested as a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year Honours.

■ Full story: [auckland.ac.nz/TPM-PM-Science-Prize](http://auckland.ac.nz/TPM-PM-Science-Prize)



Te Pūnaha Matatini team members.

Photo: Royal Society Te Apārangi

## SPACE JUNKIE ON WHEELS

She's a coder, gamer and an astrophysicist who's smashing down gender stereotype walls, as well as smashing people in roller derby. Denise Montgomery meets Dr Heloise Stevance.

**If the astronomy world was looking for a name for a new brightly coloured, effervescent supernova, they should look no further than 'Heloise'.**

Dr Heloise Stevance is a computational astronomer (more on what that involves later) but essentially she's an astrophysicist brimming with excitement about her field of research.

When we meet, she bounces to the door barefoot, grinning, excited at the prospect of talking about astronomy and her favourite supernovae. One of them is in the background of the photo we take – it's called Cassiopeia. Her other favourite is called the Crab.

"These are supernovae a few 100 to 1,000 years after they've exploded. You can see the star material that exploded ... you see a flash of light," she says enthusiastically. "Over time, that material spreads and you can take pictures of it with telescopes. The photo on the screen behind me was taken with multiple telescopes in space.

"The Crab was given its name when people only had those little telescopes. It has an actual pulsar and you can see that and a pinwheel formation in the middle. In x-ray images, it's just beautiful! It looks fake, but it's real. It's just that the universe is so much more creative than we are."

Heloise, pronounced with a silent H, is French but went to University in England before coming to New Zealand in 2019. She is one of a growing group of science communicators who explain their science in ways we can understand.

"I try to bring my science to people's level and not expect them to meet me somewhere," Heloise says. "I don't like the term 'dumbing it down' because you're not dumb just because you don't have the same level of knowledge about this subject. You just haven't spent as much time looking at it as I have."

Heloise's role in the Faculty of Science is 100 percent research but she does teach, mentor and gives talks to schools or groups either via Zoom or in person. "I have first and second-year students who get in touch and I make sure they're okay. Otherwise, it's honours students who work

with me and my boss Jan 'JJ' Eldridge on specific research projects."

She has also been contacted by teachers who see her on Twitter and book her to talk to classes. Twitter is also where she met her future boss.

"Jan had a position she was advertising. We'd also talked at a conference she'd done a few years back. When I finished my PhD, I was hired."

Heloise tries to keep a lid on her social media interactions. "Science communication is just an aspect of my science, not a job I want to do on its own. Deep social media shenanigans aren't great for my mental health so I'm happier to just work with real-life humans – live events with schools and stuff. On Twitter, not everyone is interested in what I have to say anyway."

Heloise's role is for three years. When she took it, she left behind a fiancé, also an astronomer, in the UK. The plan had been to rendezvous once every four to six months, through research trips or conferences. That plan has been eclipsed by the pandemic. It's the only point in our conversation where Heloise is less than ecstatic.

"I just miss him so much and I miss simple things like just being on the couch with my husband, that's what I call him. We were meant to get married in April 2020 but we've not seen each other for more than a year.

"Covid-19 has kicked our plans a little bit but it's a rough time for everyone. We can't make plans so may as well just ride the wave." Fortunately, both have shared interests other

always had more masculine tastes. For most of my life I've been surrounded by men, so being in a more diverse crowd is really interesting and opened my eyes to how gender roles really penetrate the workplace. The competitiveness is so very different with women and non-binary people. It's more wholesome, in my experience, than in groups dominated by men."

Despite the risk of injury, the sport actually helped heal Heloise.

"I was never a sporty person and roller derby is the first time I've enjoyed a sport. Running isn't particularly fun but now I do a bit more just to keep fit for roller derby.

"What roller derby has done is help heal my relationship with my body. I had an eating disorder when I was younger until I was about 22. Growing up, there were tremendous issues in the representation of the ideal body type all around me. It's still awful but at least it's not images of literally dying skinny bodies in low-cut jeans.

"This sport has completely shifted my perspective. Instead of looking at my body for what it looked like, I look at it for what it can do. That was a huge mindset change. This is a physical activity I enjoy and can pride my body in."

She has also had issues of self-doubt that you could not possibly recognise were you to meet her in person, where she's confident, eloquent and outspoken. She has been known to vent on Twitter, TikTok and in her blog, and has written some mainstream pieces for *Newsroom*.

***"It's a job where you're always out of your depth. If you're not, then you're not doing it right."***

***– Dr Heloise Stevance, computational astronomer, Faculty of Science***

than space. "We're gamers so at least we can play games online together."

Online gaming isn't the only game she's into. "I started playing roller derby a few years ago – it's a full-contact sport on wheely shoes! Like rugby, but you're the ball."

She trains at least a couple of times a week and plays in a competitive league.

"When I found out about it, it was like 'this is a sport for me'. It's so much fun skating and smashing into people. As it turns out, it's a nice place for me to fit in, because I have always struggled with gender roles and my place within that. Roller derby is pretty much a queer environment so there is no judgement on me as a femme-presenting person.

"Sometimes the rest of the world is oppressive, but in roller derby you're valued. You're just hitting your friends hard, in a consensual way! It's such a breath of fresh air."

She says it's the first time in her life she has been surrounded by a majority of women. "I've

One recently was in response to a widely published piece by astrophysicist Avi Loeb under various headings such as 'Astronomer Avi Loeb Says Aliens Have Visited, and He's Not Kidding'. She's not afraid to take on the Harvard University professor for presenting his opinions on alien life as fact.

"I think he genuinely believes in what he says, but it's still problematic behaviour for him to put that stuff out into the universe. When you're part of an establishment like Harvard, your words have an incredible weight.

"People think you represent a certain part of science because you're a scientist and you've got a title, and you're putting your opinion out there. But he doesn't represent even a fraction of scientists. It's Avi versus everyone else. So it's problematic for him to do that but it's even more problematic for news editors. They should ask other scientists rather than run clickbait headings.

"Find me an astronomer who does not believe there is life somewhere else in the universe



*Dr Heloise Stevance in front of a screen showing a favourite supernova, Cassiopeia. Photo: Elise Manahan*

because statistically speaking there probably is. It's just not going to be Avi's little green men sending a spaceship to wander Earth."

Heloise gets fired up on this subject and has also voiced her opinions on the way women scientists are treated.

"I wrote a piece titled, 'You're too pretty to be a physicist'. Those are the kinds of comments I've received that irk me.

"I came out of university with a masters in Physics and Astronomy with first-class honours, obtained a PhD by the time I was 26, I speak three languages, and I'm always there for my partner and my friends. My physical appearance does not add or take away value from who I am," she wrote.

Despite her extraordinary brain and talent as an up-and-coming scientist, Heloise admits to feeling 'imposter syndrome'.

"I suffer from it tremendously. It's very common because science is hard. You're pushing the boundaries of human knowledge, and sometimes you just don't know an answer. It's problem-solving and when you finally solve a problem, you move on to the next one.

"It's a job where you're always out of your depth. If you're not, then you're not doing it right."

Despite this, she loves academia.

"I love interacting with students and it sounds weird but I'm better at telling people what to do, then I am doing it myself. Because of the imposter syndrome, in my head I'm saying 'you can't do this'. That can be paralysing and really slow me down. I'm much better at encouraging people and giving them the means to succeed."

In turn, she finds students help her, sparking her curiosity on days when it's low.

"If I have a meeting with a student who asks loads of questions, you feel helpful. It gives a sense of achievement. When your code is not working, it really helps."

She says sitting by herself doing research eight hours a day, five days a week, can be lonely and isn't effective for problem-solving. That's where interaction with students and her colleagues is beneficial.

"They make me feel useful, and that improves my productivity."

Coding is one of her strengths but it's still a challenge. "I was a terrible coder and really scared of it for a long time. But I probably got hired for this job because of my coding skills.

"Here's the thing about coding. In education, you're not rewarded for failure. Failure is bad. But the problem with coding is that you fail most of the time. Most of the time there's a bug in your code and you have to fix it. About 80 percent of coding is debugging. It's hard not to take it personally when the computer keeps screaming error.

"I had to shift my mindset to become comfortable with that and it's something a lot of students struggle with too, so I can be good at helping them."

Heloise says there was never a eureka moment that led to choosing astronomy but she always loved astronomy documentaries.

"I was interested in how stars work, how black holes work. I loved to hear about that over and over again.

"At school, I was very curious and I still am. When I went to England to study, there were subjects like chemistry, physics, astronomy. I was like, 'oh my god, I can pick a degree in astronomy'.

Now she's a computational astronomer.

"Traditionally there are two main categories of astronomers – observers and theorists. The theorists use physics and maths to predict what the universe should do; the observers take pictures and analyse them to see what the universe actually does. Sometimes they meet in the middle. I'm neither one nor the other and

also a little bit of both. I used to be more of an observer, but now I don't even take pictures. I take data from people who do it better than me. But there's so much data out there, both in the models and from the telescopes, that bridging the gap between theory and observation is a full-time job.

"I bring observations and theory together using the power of modern technology, with modern statistical and computational skills.

"People don't expect astronomers to code that much. People imagine us behind a telescope but I code most of the day, all day, every day. I just love finding things that I didn't expect."

When she's out in social situations and is asked what she does for a job, her response can vary.

"I say astronomy or astrophysics but if I say astrophysics people are like 'whoa' because they don't like physics. If I say astronomy, people usually find it cool. What irks me is that people usually say they are too dumb to do what I do – this comes from the idea that to be a scientist you have to be some kind of genius. Those stereotypes put unnecessary limits on people."

That said, she's limiting herself to Earth – she wouldn't venture into space.

"I'd do the vomit comet, to experience zero-G, but space is a dangerous place."

She's happier on terra firma, such as in a roller derby game where she's the one whose hair matches her skate wheels. "I picked my hair colour and then looked at my wheels and I was like, 'wow I'm colour coordinated'."

One of her masters students describes her as the "crazy but brilliant yellow-haired space lady".

"He loves quoting stupid stuff I say. He was preparing a talk recently and told me he was going to quote me saying something like, 'you could do it in principle, but it's f\*\*\*ing hard'."

She laughs. And it's one of those laughs that makes you laugh too. Brilliant. ■



Annika Beesley

## MYNA INFORMATION

### Student delves into history of myna birds in New Zealand

**You'd be hard-pushed to find anyone with a good thing to say about myna birds but if they weren't around, student Annika Beesley might not have had a summer job.**

Annika, a third-year science student of biology and anthropology, had a summer scholarship doing archival research to investigate the introduction of common mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*) to New Zealand. The work included a literature review and a breakdown of how and where mynas were introduced to various districts.

Her research was supervised by Dr Heather Battles (Anthropology) with Dr Anna Santure and Dr Annabel Whibley (Biological Science). Anna and Annabel will use Annika's findings as a resource for their Marsden project that's investigating the genomic adaptation of the common myna since its deliberate introduction to New Zealand. Anna and Annabel are comparing the genetics of birds in different regions, and having a good historical record of where they were present is useful to help explain genetic differences.

Annika spent almost three months trawling through books, documents and newspaper archives held in the online database Papers Past, looking for mentions of the birds.

"Most of the research was done online but I also went to Wellington to look at paper records in Archives New Zealand and the National Library, Alexander Turnbull Collection."

Annika tracked mentions of the birds to determine when they came here. She found different spellings of myna, mynah, miner in the documents she researched, and confusion over whether the birds were from India or Australia.

"The common myna wasn't known as the common myna back then. It was usually written as minah, or Indian myna or Australian myna. There are other myna birds in Australia, one of which was probably introduced to New Zealand, but it's hard to know because Indian myna birds were all introduced to Australia where they acclimatised and were then brought to New Zealand. Even if someone from the Wellington Acclimatisation Society wrote that they'd imported 80 Australian myna, you can't know for sure.

"In the National Library, I found really

interesting information from original 1870s records held by various acclimatisation societies."

These societies, the forerunner to Fish & Game, were initially motivated by a wish for the New Zealand countryside to feel more like 'mother England'. They were involved in importing European birds such as sparrows and starlings.

"It was a bit of a trend to bring familiar birds and animals to New Zealand," says Annika.

"But there are a number of reasons they wanted to import animals. As the 19th century progressed, people started focusing more on hunting and fishing and wanted to bring in game animals and fish too."

In the 1870s, about two decades after the setup of such societies, there was a push for insectivorous birds to be introduced, including the myna, because of a big problem with pest insects.

"In the 1850s there are reports of caterpillars, crickets and other insects that would normally have been controlled by native birdlife, but that had dwindled with the clearing of forests."

Mynas were seen as a way to control the problem using biology, not really thinking of wider long-term effects.

Annika collated historical mentions of mynas and their introduction, including how the public's opinion grew against the birds as they became established.

It wasn't until around the 1940s that mynas really made Auckland home and in the mid 1960s they reached the tip of the North Island. Today they are common across farmland and urban areas in the northern half of the North Island. Despite being introduced largely to the South Island, they soon died out there and today are rarely seen below Whanganui.

"They're not very migratory, so the South Island is largely spared, and there are only sporadic sightings in Wellington."

"I haven't exhausted all sources of information. One of the things I'm trying to find out, is if there's information out there held in families as part of their history. I'd love to hear about it."

■ **Annika would like to hear from anyone whose family was involved in acclimatisation societies or the independent importation of birds in the mid-to-late 19th century, and who may have original documents mentioning myna birds.**

Email: [abee834@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:abee834@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

## LAW PROFESSOR EMBRACES CHANGE

It's been a slow journey but Professor Jaime King is finally here in her role as the inaugural John and Marylyn Mayo Chair in Health Law.

**When Professor Jaime King started teaching law at her previous workplace, UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, her name was emblazoned in lights.**

On a massive billboard, just outside the building where she was teaching, was Jaime King wearing knee-high boots, a mask and cracking a whip.

"It was pretty funny, a billboard with Jaime King demanding 'Get on your knees!' for the first month I was teaching."

It was the other Jaime King, the actress, promoting the movie *Sin City*.

"The way I spell my name is uncommon. It was 2004 and I was young and nervous. All I could see was this billboard running down the side of the building as I was about to teach."

Her arrival to work in New Zealand as the inaugural John and Marylyn Mayo Chair in Health Law at Auckland was more comforting than confronting. There were cupcakes.

In January, Jaime, husband James (yes, to add to the name confusion) and their sons Otis and Asa arrived in New Zealand for their quarantine stint. They had been due to arrive in June 2020, but the pandemic put paid to that. It was Asa's seventh birthday the day after they arrived. At the Holiday Inn MIQ, staff noticed his date of birth and sent a signed card ... and a giant cupcake.

"We had packed streamers so we could have a little MIQ party for him," says Jaime. "But this was so thoughtful. It made him feel really special and welcome in his new country."

She says people from the University were brilliant in connecting with her straight away and giving her advice on everything from where to get cupcakes to how to find accommodation. She sings the praises of the University's Connect team who sent her laptop straight to her and set her up to work in ISO.

"My Law colleagues and IT were so helpful and it made those two weeks go pretty smoothly. The boys were in one room enjoying Netflix and we got on with our days, but could also go for MIQ walks as we weren't in the city."

It was more than they'd been able to do for a period back home in California.

"The wildfires in California were especially bad in





Professor Jaime King is a specialist in healthcare law. Photo: Elise Manahan

2020,” says Jaime. “We couldn’t walk outside at all for about three weeks and we couldn’t go to inside places because of Covid. My older son has asthma so that was just like a non-starter.”

When the family got out of quarantine, they headed straight to a restaurant for breakfast.

“None of us had been in a restaurant in almost a year so the kids were pretty excited, as were we.

“They kept asking ‘are you sure it’s ok, can I really take my mask off?’ So in photos from that time all four of us are grinning. We went to the beach, the weather was beautiful, we could walk around in stores.

“It felt otherworldly to be here in comparison to the US and then to have them go to school, that was an incredible thing as well. They hadn’t really been around kids their age for ages.”

The family stayed in temporary housing for about three weeks but are now happily ensconced in Devonport, avoiding Auckland’s traffic chaos by travelling by ferry. They did experience another Auckland lockdown but didn’t find it too bad because they could still get outside.

“It was really good for the children to recognise how fragile that freedom is and we all have to do our part to make sure everybody here stays safe.”

Jaime technically started her role with the University of Auckland on 1 July 2020 but had to work remotely.

“I joined Law faculty meetings on Zoom and the University was wonderful in allowing me to continue my research because I had a lot of ongoing research projects.”

Jaime’s research has focused on some of the most complex challenges facing healthcare systems, particularly in the US. She has

investigated the drivers of healthcare costs, and the impact of market consolidation and healthcare prices and competition.

She is teaching second-year torts and in the first week of the course was assigned to teach about ACC.

“I had to read up about it and I just kept saying to my husband, ‘you’re not going to believe this; if you’re injured, they just take care of you!’ In the States, it’s not designed to help the person who’s injured, regardless of fault, or to immediately get them rehabilitated.”

While still in the US, Jaime collaborated with Professor Jo Manning, also an expert in health law.

Covid-19, mental illness and substance abuse.

“Having them combine their expertise was a great opportunity,” says Jaime.

While Jaime’s past research has been around the US healthcare system, she is eyeing research in New Zealand healthcare even after a few months here. “I’ve been in discussion with different scholars who are looking at the vaccine response here and thinking about some of the ethical, legal and social issues that arise out of vaccine allocation, for example, and incentivising certain people to get the vaccine.

“The longer I’m here, the more I’m excited and invested in local research projects.”

**“I think the pandemic has changed the way we work, where we work and the way we teach.” – Professor Jaime King, Faculty of Law**

“My old university, UC Hastings, wanted me to give a lecture about Covid-19, and I said, wouldn’t it be interesting to bring in Jo, because she can talk about what’s happening with the New Zealand response to Covid-19 because it’s been such a contrast to the United States. So we did the lecture together.”

Jaime says that kind of collaboration could lead to others. She joined up with professors at Auckland, UC Hastings, University of New Mexico and the University of Tasmania to create the first International Law and Medicine Day. This brought law and health science students and faculties together in April for an online discussion of controversial issues arising at the intersection of law, medicine, ethics including privacy rights,

James has been able to keep his job with a US financial services company called Square, which was set up by Jack Dorsey, CEO of Twitter. “It’s not in New Zealand yet but I think they are planning to come here.

“The fact he can work here shows how efficient it can be to work from home, anywhere. I think the pandemic has changed the way we work, where we work and the way we teach,” says Jaime.

“Covid brought a lot of tragedy and hardship around the world, but it has also taught us some interesting lessons around remote working and the value of online education. There had been so many discussions about ‘can it really work?’ and ‘can people really connect?’, and the answer is yes.”

■ Denise Montgomery



Joy Tong and Cybella Maffitt in English 252.

Right: Saraïd de Silva in the MCW class.

## EVENTS REFLECT NEW NAME

**On 29 May, the four people named as University of Auckland Distinguished Alumni in 2020 are being honoured together in a special ceremony.**

There will also be an additional Distinguished Alumni Award given for 2021.

Last year's event was cancelled because of lockdown. This year, the DAA celebration has been renamed 'Taumata', to reflect part of the University's new name in Māori, Waipapa Taumata Rau, meaning 'Waipapa: place of many peaks'.

The new Māori name is due to officially replace the current University Māori name this month. Waipapa Taumata Rau has been gifted by local iwi, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, and inspired by Waipapa, on the shoreline of Te Tōangaroa (Mechanics Bay), from which Waipapa Marae takes its name.

Taumata Rau relates to the many 'peaks' within the University and is an exhortation to achievement and excellence.

A tikanga process involving the iwi and the University community will take place prior to Matariki to confirm the name, with an unveiling to mark the occasion.

## WEALTH OF TALENT ON SHOW

Associate Professor Paula Morris reflects on the importance of a landmark collection of Asian New Zealand writing.

**On Wednesday 21 April, I carried a package wrapped in brown paper to class.**

The package was from Auckland University Press and I could guess what was inside. But I wanted to open it in front of English 252, a big creative writing class, so they would all see the moment I did. In particular, I wanted to open it in front of two students – Cybella Maffitt and Joy Tong.

Cybella and Joy are our class reps, but that's not the reason I wanted them to see the small unveiling. The book is *A Clear Dawn: New Asian Voices from Aotearoa New Zealand*. It's the first-ever anthology of Asian New Zealand writing, gathering 75 emerging writers of poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction. Cybella and Joy are two of those writers.

I co-edited the anthology with Alison Wong, which is why I received an advance copy. The book is published this month and launched at a public event at the Auckland Writers Festival on Saturday 15 May.

Alison is flying over from Australia, where she lives, to attend events in Auckland, Napier, Wellington and Dunedin. We're hoping to add special events in June – Wanaka, Arrowtown, Invercargill and Riverton – funding, Covid levels and weather permitting.

Alison was a great collaborator: thoughtful, engaged, passionate. She was the tortoise and I was the hare, she joked, which made us a good team.

The anthology represents two years of reading, research, writing and editing, and endless hours spent on phone calls, in Zoom meetings, sending emails, spreadsheets and Dropbox folders.

Wrangling 75 chosen writers wasn't easy, especially as many were publishing in print

for the first time. As well as Cybella and Joy, the anthology includes current University of Auckland students Russell Boey, Saraïd de Silva, Isabelle Johns, Sarah May and Han May Nguyen, as well as a number of Master of Creative Writing alumni.

*A Clear Dawn* is a landmark book, as various first readers pointed out. In the introduction, Alison and I marvel at the wealth of talent emerging from our various Asian New Zealand communities and lament how little has been recognised to date. Alison remains the only Asian New Zealand winner of our top national fiction award – for her 2009 novel *As the Earth Turns Silver*. One of our selected poets, Nina Mingya Powles, was shortlisted for this year's Ockham New Zealand Book Awards (the winners were due to be announced just after this magazine went to print). If she wins, she'll be the first Asian New Zealand poet to take home the poetry award.

In class, I took a photo of Cybella and Joy with the book and sent it to Alison. We were all excited and happy. I've published a number of other books – novels, story collections, essays – and edited two previous anthologies, including *Ko Aotearoa Tātou* (OUP, 2020). But I don't think I've ever felt this proud of a book, and so eager to see it go out into the world.

■ The Auckland Writers Festival runs 11-16 May.



***A Clear Dawn: New Asian Voices from Aotearoa New Zealand***  
Paula Morris and Alison Wong, eds, Auckland University Press, \$50

## GIBBONS LECTURES

In May, the University hosts four lectures aimed at 'dissolving the interface between humans and computers'. Bring your human self along to the **General Library, LibB10 / 109-B10 at 6pm** on the following dates:

**6 May: Augmenting reality – From augmented paintings to augmented perceptions**

Associate Professor Tobias Langlotz, University of Otago

**13 May: Tikanga A.I. – Enabling mātauranga Māori in the future of A.I. development in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Potaua Biasiny-Tule, Director, Digital Basecamp, Rotorua

**20 May: Digital well-being – From human factors to mixed-reality rehab**

Dr Danielle Lottridge, School of Computer Science, University of Auckland

**27 May: Assistive augmentations – Creating new human computer interfaces that integrate with our body, mind and behaviour**

Associate Professor Suranga Nanayakkara, Auckland Bioengineering Institute, University of Auckland

In partnership with Dr Beryl Plimmer, University of Auckland Foundation. Hosted by the School of Computer Science. See: [cs.auckland.ac.nz/gibbons-lectures](https://cs.auckland.ac.nz/gibbons-lectures)



Murray Edmond

## AUCKLAND'S CULTURAL REVOLT

Recently retired Associate Professor of English, Murray Edmond, has a book out this month, *Time to Make a Song and Dance: Cultural Revolt in Auckland in the 1960s*. He provides some insights.

### Did Auckland have a culture to revolt against?

That has always been Auckland's problem – both real and perceived. Dunedin had Robert Burns and Christchurch had *Landfall* and a cathedral and Wellington had the Literary Fund, a Symphony Orchestra, the National This-and-That and then an Arts Council, but what did Auckland have? Auckland just kind of grew. Rip-offs, war, stolen land, trade, commerce, sport, beaches, yachts and immediately another joke – 'City of Sales/Sails.' That was its culture, real and perceived. But in the 1960s, this changed.

### You mean sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll?

No. That was the 1970s and later. Deeper changes than those. In the 15 years after the Second World War, Aotearoa grew richer and the population increased. But these changes were greatest in Auckland. A large part of the 'Second Great Migration' – the movement of Māori to the cities – came to Auckland. It was a 'co-opting of an urban working class,' as Donna Awatere-

Huata describes it. By the beginning of the 1960s, those born during and after the War were turning into adults. Their connection with the War and the world before it was weak. They were looking for a new world to invent and their outlook became more international. They looked around and saw they were living in an almost-city, no longer just a glorified small town. At the same time, we had stirrings of Pākehā waking up to a bicultural world. Some people set out to change things. The book tells a number of different tales of success and disaster, and of resistance from the Auckland bourgeoisie. The Auckland City Art Gallery we now have begins with director Peter Tomory's conflict with the Auckland City Council.

### The book opens with the moving stories of Arapeta Awatere and Bob Lowry, both of whose lives ended tragically. Were you aware of the details before you began writing?

Yes, I was. In some ways, those sad stories are well-known. Those men both belonged to the world before the War and of the War. That first chapter looks at the accounts written by their daughters, Donna Awatere-Huata and Vanya Lowry, about their fathers. I wanted to write about the writings of these daughters, who were children of the 1960s. The daughters' writings are as moving as the tales themselves.

### Ronald Barker comes across as a fascinating figure and his dismissal from the Community Arts Service distasteful. Allen Curnow emerges from that story impressively, as Barker's defender. Was that intended?

Yes, Barker's story has been buried and forgotten. His loss had a profound impact that resulted in the very conservative development of theatre in Auckland for a long time. Also buried and forgotten has been Allen Curnow's two decades of playwriting and involvement with theatre, from the late 1940s to the late 1960s. Now you'd think he'd only ever been a poet. So there was certainly an intention to 'restore' in that chapter.

### Was there a sense of collectivity and movement for change among young people in the 1960s you haven't seen since? Was counter-culture a more popular stance?

It's hard to measure one era against another. The collective opposition to the Pākehā All Blacks tour to South Africa in 1960 – No Māoris No Tour – was vocal, but still very small. A larger collective movement for change in Aotearoa only begins to form at the end of the 1960s.

By 1970 the anti-Tour movement can march 10,000 down Queen Street on Friday night. The Young Māori Conference in 1970 defines the direction of future protest 'Hold fast to your language' and 'Not one acre more'.

In 1968, 75 brave citizens sign a petition for Homosexual Law Reform which is ignored. But what surprised everyone, and hasn't been seen before or since and has also been rather forgotten, was the series of 13 political protest bombings that took place in Auckland from April 1969 to July 1970.

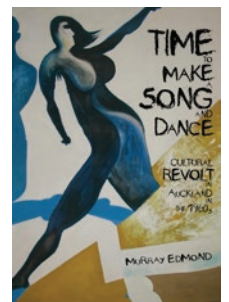
### And you cover this in the book?

Yes, the final chapter looks at the bombings. Other chapters look, variously, at moments of decisive revolt for women, for the fine arts, for music, for festivals, and for film and television, and how Auckland of the 1960s was being depicted in novels written at the time.

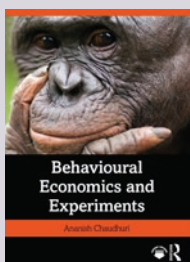
### There was a lot happening, wasn't there?

There was indeed. In the 1960s, led by a process of cultural revolt, Auckland was inventing a new self.

■ *Time to Make a Song and Dance: Cultural Revolt in Auckland in the 1960s* (Atuanui Press, \$38) will be launched on Thursday 27 May, 5.30-7.30pm at Old Government House. Free event. All welcome.



## BOOKS

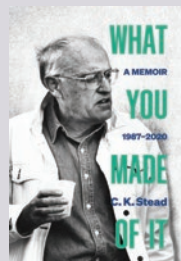


### Behavioural Economics and Experiments

Ananish Chaudhuri is Professor of Experimental Economics at the University. His book explores behavioural economics and questions around decision-

making and human nature, with examples from literature, film, sport and neuroscience.

Ananish Chaudhuri, Routledge, \$85



### What You Made of It: A Memoir 1987-2020

The third and final volume of C.K. Stead's memoir, from leaving the University to write full-time until today. Stead establishes his international

reputation as novelist, poet and critic in a period when his fearless lucidity on matters literary and political embroil him in argument – from *The Bone People* to the Treaty.

C.K. Stead, Auckland University Press, \$50



### Burst Kisses on the Actual Wind

Alumna Courtney Sina Meredith's new book of poetry is out. It's her second poetry book, following 2012's *Brown Girls in Bright Red Lipstick*. It's a

collection of shifting verse, focusing on connection and displacement and longed-for realities. *Burst Kisses* is edited by her mother, Kim Meredith, who is also a poet and an alumna.

Courtney Sina Meredith, Beatnik Press, \$30

**“Two-thirds of all victims of fatal police shootings have been Māori or Pacific. Is this pattern ‘random’ like the checks on 1970s ‘overstayers’?”**



David Williams at Wai Ariki, the sacred spring near the Law School. Below: The newspaper article from 1978.

## MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

**In 1978 I achieved some notoriety in attempting to have myself arrested for the theft of a ballpoint pen from my employer – the University of Auckland.**

The action was intended to highlight racist policing policies affecting people from the Pacific in that era of the Dawn Raids and ‘random’ immigration status checks. This was a period of rising unemployment as the economy faltered. Neither employers nor the government had bothered to enforce the immigration laws on temporary visas for many years when the economy was booming. Employers were eager to fill labour shortages with migrants from a number of Pacific nations. In the 1970s, however, the police were called upon by successive Labour and National governments to round up ‘overstayers’.

The ‘random’ checks conducted by the police were not particularly random. A large proportion of ‘overstayers’ at the time were young people from Europe and North America, but it was Pacific people who were targeted on the streets of Auckland and whose homes were raided. Caught up in such a random check was a 17-year-old worker walking home along Karangahape Road. A police officer asked to see a work visa. Being from Niue, and thus a New Zealand citizen, the young worker didn’t have one. He didn’t need one. Then, as reported in the *Auckland Star*, the officer asked about three combs that were protruding from his pocket. They were handed over to the officer with the explanation that one was his own and two were from his work. He was arrested immediately and convicted of theft from his employer.

It transpired that police had failed to contact the Symonds Street employer. When they did so,

after the employee’s conviction, they were told that taking combs (worth 20c each) from the reject bin at the factory was a common practice among employees and one that management allowed.

Meanwhile, being incensed by the *Auckland Star* report, I arranged with then newspaper reporter, Donna Chisholm, to go to the police station where I would confess to the crime of theft from my employer of a pen, valued at about 20 cents, that I had at home.

My efforts to get arrested failed. I informed the Watch House officer that I had committed the crime of theft from my employer. The officer suggested I might have been doing work with the pen at home. No, I insisted – quite truthfully. ‘Well’, the officer replied, ‘We’d better ring your employer and find out whether they want you prosecuted’.

The Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Law were contacted. They advised, “don’t arrest him, that will give him the publicity he seeks”. In fact, though, Donna’s reporting (and subsequent television news items) provided considerable publicity that highlighted the discrepancy between the police treatment of an educated Pākehā man brazenly confessing to a crime, and of a young Pacific worker walking along the street who was not an ‘overstayer’ and whose employer did not view his actions as theft.

The story of the pen incident has had a number of retellings. The pen itself is now a material object in the Auckland Museum’s collections and was the subject of a story by Madeleine Chapman in 2018 ([tinyurl.com/spinoff-chapman](https://tinyurl.com/spinoff-chapman))

On Tuesday 11 May 2021 the story of the pen and the impact of racism on the lives of Pacific Peoples at the time will feature in the final episode of *The Single Object*, a new video series from *The Spinoff*, funded by NZ on Air. I am sure that the story’s recent retellings can be explained by the

fact that, though set in 1978, it draws attention to ongoing issues of contemporary importance relating to policing, and the focus of policing activities on Pacific and Māori.

Racial profiling and police bias are issues leading Māori scholars such as Dr Moana Jackson and Khylee Quince (Dean of Law, AUT) have been drawing to our attention for many years.

Compared with Pākehā, Māori are six times more likely to be handcuffed, 11 times more likely to be subdued with pepper spray, six times more likely to be batoned, nine times more likely to have dogs set on them, ten times more likely to be tasered and nine times more likely to have firearms drawn against them by police.

Over the past decade, two-thirds of all victims of fatal police shootings have been Māori or Pacific. Is this pattern ‘random’ like the checks on 1970s ‘overstayers’ were supposed to be? Or does it illustrate institutional racism at work – both then and now?

■ Dr David V Williams, FRSNZ, is Professor Emeritus and Honorary Research Fellow in the Faculty of Law.

■ See: [thespinoff.co.nz/tag/the-single-object/](https://thespinoff.co.nz/tag/the-single-object/)



*The views in this article reflect personal opinion and are not necessarily those of the University of Auckland.*