



I'M VERY PLEASED to report that the \$50M capital grant the government awarded us last year is finally in our hands. This injection of capital will allow two things to happen at AUT. The first is that we can increase our annual spend on research activities – supporting staff in various ways to undertake research, and supporting graduate students to do the same. The second is that we can continue advancing our redevelopment

and expansion of AUT facilities – providing the required infrastructure to maintain the highest standards of university education.

Unfortunately there have been a number of staff reviews this year, and I appreciate that this is always unsettling and undesirable. It is pleasing that there have been fewer positions affected than anticipated and they have mainly been managed through voluntary severance. The reason for the reviews is that the university's student and programme profile has fallen out of kilter with our staffing profile as we have developed. By making adjustments to get the right staffing in place, we are able to deliver teaching on new programmes, and consolidate our cost base to support the things we need to develop, such as facilities, administration services and effective systems. This is one of the ways we maintain the currency and relevance of AUT programmes – supported by the best possible mix of academic expertise.

AUT has one of the country's best marine science teams. In this issue of *Inside AUT*, two of our science staff are profiled – Dr Lindsey White who is carrying out research in Fiji on an unsightly seaweed problem; and Dr Kay Vopel who is an aquatic systems expert and new to the Earth and Oceanic Sciences Research Institute. Welcome, Dr Vopel. Welcome also to three new Te Ara Poutama staff: Ella Henry, Colin Knox and Teena Brown-Pulu, and to Dr Rahul Sen who has joined the Business School.

Other news in this issue features some of the strong relationships AUT has with external organisations. For example, last month we hosted the launch of Auckland Disability Law, a community service designed to better meet the legal needs of people with disabilities. AUT's Kate Diesfeld led the research which laid the foundations for the service's establishment. Another strong community partnership is with the Methodist Mission, which has been relaunched as 'Lifewise'. In this edition you'll find out what their new focus is and AUT's involvement in it.

And on the creative side, AUT's Textile Design Lab is working with the Auckland Theatre Company to create costumes for one of their productions. Already used by prominent fashion designers, the Lab is establishing a strong name for itself in the industry.

Derek McCormack

Eye on aquatic

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His research focus is the functioning of aquatic ecosystems. "I use microsensor techniques to investigate how interactions between aquatic organisms and their physicochemical microenvironments affect mass transfer and reaction processes," he says.

During the past 15 years he has applied this research to diverse marine and freshwater systems worldwide including the Arctic Deep-Sea, perennially ice-covered lakes of Antarctica, the Mediterranean Sea and tropical Barrier Reefs.

His current research focuses on New Zealand coastal ecosystems.

"I am looking at how the transformation of organic matter in coastal sediment changes under various scenarios and what consequences such changes have for ecosystem

functioning," he says. "For example, changes which occur in sediments under mussel or fish farms or in estuaries that receive wastewater. As part of this, we are developing a new seafloor monitoring tool which assesses risks involved with marine aquaculture, agriculture and urban development in coastal regions."

Dr Vopel collaborates with overseas colleagues and New Zealand organisations such as SCION and NIWA.

"I came to AUT because I enjoy working with students and believe in the success of AUT's practical and hands-on approach. The recent advances of EOS's research are exciting and I will encourage students to be involved in all research stages and develop valuable skills in field and laboratory techniques to explore natural aquatic systems."

Idealog wins

AUT UNIVERSITY-PRODUCED *Idealog* magazine has garnered major success at the Qantas Media Awards 2008. *Idealog*, which is produced by the university's press, AUT Media, took the prize for Best Feature Website (www.idealog.co.nz/) and writer Hamish Coney was named the Best Arts Columnist. *Idealog* was also a runner-up for Best Magazine (Trade/Professional) category.

