

Textile lab takes to the stage

AUT'S TEXTILE and Design Laboratory (TDL) has branched out into theatre, creating unique lavalava for the cast of this year's critically acclaimed theatre production *Where We Once Belonged*.

Where We Once Belonged was adapted from Sia Figiel's Commonwealth Prize-winning novel and is a coming-of-age story set in 1970s Samoa, a country coming to terms with the contradictions of independence and increased Western influences.

Costume designer Nic Smillie was looking for a way to incorporate more of the story into the costumes, while maintaining the simplicity of the traditional lavalava.

"The TDL was recommended by a colleague in the textile industry and they were able to use their digital printing technology to make custom-designed lavalava reflecting the story of the play.

"It seems like such an indulgence to have original fabrics printed up but it worked really well."

Smillie says working with the TDL was a brilliant experience. "They were fast, friendly and very helpful."

Where We Once Belonged
(Auckland Theatre Company, 2008)



PHOTO: TONY RABBIT

Fairer deal for disabled

PEOPLE WITH disabilities in Auckland will get a fairer deal from the law with the launch of a new community law service, Auckland Disability Law.

In 2005, the Legal Services Agency commissioned a research team, led by Director of AUT University's National Centre for Health and Social Ethics Kate Diesfeld, to identify the unmet legal needs of disabled people in Auckland.

The research team consulted widely among disabled people, their advocates and disability organisations, and with lawyers and community law centres.

Diesfeld says in many ways, New Zealand is at the forefront of rights for disabled people.

"But it is also essential that disabled people have full access to the legal system, participating in its development and reform," she says. "During our research project and others, disabled

people have expressed that within the legal system there is a need for greater awareness of the impact and diversity of disabilities."

Their findings are the foundation for Auckland Disability Law, established by the Legal Services Agency and Auckland's Community Law Centres.

The service will help disabled people to access legal services and support lawyers to understand the needs of disabled clients.

The launch was held last month at AUT, with distinguished guests attending, including the Hon. Judith Tizard. AUT's Associate Professor Pare Keiha, who is a member of the Legal Services Agency board, took part in the welcome.

Clinics are planned for Waitakere Community Law Service in Henderson, AUT's North Shore Campus and at Te Rooopu Waiora in Papatoetoe.



Director of AUT University's National Centre for Health and Social Ethics Kate Diesfeld (left) and Auckland Disability Law solicitor Dr Huhana Hickey.