

definingnz

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JULY 2009



Huia: Putting Māori
authors in print

The rookie minister: Paula Bennett
on preparing for politics

Sheba

Collaborating with a cabaret queen

Working style: Designing a
world-class wardrobe





Steve Maharey

“It is the students who go on to make contributions to the worlds of work, community, sport and family that tell the story of a university.”

Reinvigorating links with alumni

I recently had the opportunity to talk with the “Class of 59” during their reunion at Massey’s Manawatu campus. Each of the former students was asked to speak briefly about their life and the contribution a Massey qualification had made. It was fascinating to listen to the widely ranging careers people had followed despite receiving much the same degree. Everything from farming to politics, business to arts, public service to consultancy, management to science – the list grew with each story.

All the speakers saw their time at Massey, for one reason or another, as defining. It had shaped the direction of their lives and given them a knowledge base from which to operate. They made particular mention of the multidisciplinary breadth of a Massey degree which allowed them to feel equipped to deal with a wide range of situations – many of which they could never have anticipated.

I was struck by the point many people made about the way that out-of-class activities had been important to their development. Whether it was the debating club or just the experience of living with others on campus – learning took place in a wide variety of settings.

It was inspiring stuff and reminded me of just how important the years spent at Massey are to the future lives of our students. Since Massey started as a University in 1964 hundreds of thousands of students have taken papers or graduated with a diploma, certificate or degree. Today they are all over New Zealand and all over the world. During my travels to many countries I have become aware of just how many Massey alumni fill positions of responsibility in public and private organisations. Massey has formidable alumni.

I made the point to the Class of 59 that Massey understood that a great university was known by its alumni. It is the students who go on to make contributions to the worlds of work, community, sport and family that tell the story of a university. If the research and teaching we undertake have any meaning it is that they provide the knowledge, competencies and values people need to accomplish great things.

Students are defined by the university they attend and the university is in turn defined by those students. It is a close and important relationship for both parties. It is for this reason that Massey has begun a programme of reinvigorating its links with alumni. I have been to a number of alumni events around the country in recent months. I am aware of many more meetings. The University is keen to learn what our alumni would like from the relationship.

In this issue of *DefiningNZ* you will find businesspeople, politicians, artists, teachers and others who have come to Massey and applied what they learned here in their careers and communities.

The University would love to hear from alumni and there is an open invitation for former students to join the alumni network. If you have not heard from us, we may not have your current contact details. Just email: alumni@massey.ac.nz or phone 06-350-5865.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Steve Maharey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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Cabaret Queen

Sheba Williams is making waves as one of the country's most innovative new performers.



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COVER: Sheba Williams

Photograph: Amelia Handscomb



Sheba

Queen of calypso, cabaret and avant-garde artistry

Performance artist and avant-garde cabaret queen Sheba Williams has made waves as an onstage sensation, and offstage as a writer, musician, photographer and filmmaker. Jennifer Little meets the self-styled, eclectically talented Wellington-based artist known for her exuberant cosmopolitan style, who has been collaborating with fellow Massey design and jazz alumni – as well as current students – in her creative adventures as one of the country's most innovative new performers.

Sheba Williams released her debut double CD solo album *Sheba* last November, fusing her Caribbean heritage with her New Zealand upbringing in a unique sound composed of funk, calypso, jazz, afrobeat, acoustic and electronica she calls Calyptro.

On Radio New Zealand last year Williams shared her experiences as a cabaret artist in Shanghai, reading a five-part adaptation of her novel *Shanghai Sheba: the China Monologues*. She sings in 12 languages – Swiss German, Mandarin, Japanese, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Patois, Hebrew, Maori, Turkish and English, and speaks four – English, German, Mandarin and Swiss-German.

Adorned in glamorous, edgy and inventive costumes, she regularly enchants Wellington audiences with her band and back-up dancers as she cavorts, struts and shimmers on stage in her many glittering guises, invoking the spirit and verve of her muses, from 1920s Parisienne sensation Josephine Baker to Eartha Kitt, Nina Simone and Grace Jones.

She is the daughter of acclaimed Guyana-born storyteller mother Mona Williams, who lectured in Reading and Language Development at Massey's College of Education in Palmerston North for 12 years, and whom she credits as a major inspiration. She grew up in Karori, Kelburn and Khandallah but is just as at home performing abroad – Shanghai, London, Turkey, Berlin and New York – as she is in the capital.

Williams says she relishes the chance to collaborate with other musicians, artists, photographers and designers, including many she met at Massey doing a Bachelor of Design majoring in photography at the College of Creative Arts in Wellington, and later on, a year studying jazz at the New Zealand School of Music, jointly run by Massey and Victoria universities.

"I enrolled at Massey straight out of high school, and graduated with a design degree majoring in photography," she says. "My seventh form art teacher suggested I go to design school. It gave me a chance to experiment and harness my creativity. It gave me the skills to be able to produce my own music videos, website, album artwork and more importantly understanding how to achieve what I want when working with other people."

Before that, voice lessons in Zurich during an American Field Scholarship student exchange had switched her on to singing as a serious pursuit.

"I went on to study vocals at jazz school for a year. I had by this stage finish my degree and had worked internationally as a singer, but I wanted to spend more time training my voice and learning about producing music".

"The biggest thing I got from going to jazz school was getting to meet and jam with so many fantastic musicians, because that is, in essence, what it's all about." "I think learning styles are very personal and everyone needs to find what works for them. Music to me is about finding mentors, living and dead, and pushing beyond what has already been done to find your own path."

Williams' creative ventures have owed much to her time studying at Massey and ongoing collaborations with Massey tutors, as well as past and current students.

"At design school I was inspired by Terrance Handscomb who was always pushing boundaries in everything he did, and [former Massey lecturer] Luit Bieringa, a walking encyclopedia of art and design history. At jazz school I most enjoyed jazz lecturer Norman

Meehan's history lectures, where I learned so much about the lives of such incredible artists.

"I went to Shanghai with Massey jazz school graduates pianist Tim Solly and drummer Richard Wise. My bandleader is trumpet player Alexis French, who plays in Harbour City Electric, and teaches at jazz school. I recorded with drummer Myele Manzanza who studied at jazz school and plays in Olmecha Supreme and a thousand other projects, and currently uses drummer Jean Pompey, also a jazz school student.

"My album cover was shot by Massey photography graduate Amelia Handscomb (daughter of Terrance), who also shot hundreds of photographs for my music video *Philistines* which I animated entirely out of photographs. As well as alumni, I love working with up-and-coming students, such as Sam Lee, who currently shoots photographs for me."



"Music to me is about finding mentors, living and dead, and pushing beyond what has already been done to find your own path." – Sheba Williams

She describes her mother, a former Massey staff member who is currently teaching in Kuwait, as "my biggest influence as a performer. I learned so much from watching her as a child, when she took us on tour around New Zealand. She has always been a big believer in creating your own culture."

Williams has followed in her mother's example, albeit in her own inimitable way with tracks such as *Paekakariki* (where the boys are so freaky, and the girls get cheeky) – a love story set in the 1920s in which she invokes a playful, flirtatious Josephine Baker character in a black-and-white music video she produced herself and filmed on the Kapiti coast.

Being true to herself and not compromising or "sugar coating" her artistic vision are pivotal to her notion of success. "To me success is in creating opportunities and growing. I want to keep learning and evolving."

Dubbed by various media reviewers as "a powerful persona", "risqué" and "in your face," she thrives on live performing most of all.

"I am focusing on the summer festivals both here and abroad. Performing is my forte and I love travelling. I am motivated by whipping the audience into a frenzy. I want them to completely lose themselves in the music. It's such a high to see everyone enjoying themselves." ❖ www.myspace.com/shebawilliams



Marketing a world

Andrew Cole, Chris Dobbs and Tim Dobbs – *Photograph Mark Smith*

When Chris Dobbs finished Massey in 1987 with a BBS in marketing, he moved to Auckland. Jobs were scarce. The stock market had just crashed, and the economic outlook was dire. It was difficult to find a job, let alone a career, and he needed an income.

Dobbs had always liked good clothes, and holiday jobs spent working in a fabric warehouse and an upmarket clothing store sparked an idea – made-to-measure shirts. He already had fabric contacts, so, through his mother, organised a co-operative of sewers in his home town, Marton, and Working Style was under way.

His flatmate, Tania Nevill, had also graduated from Massey with a BBS in accounting. They knew each other from Marton, and Nevill had a job with an accounting firm, but was keen to try something different, and so she became “The Shirt Girl”, selling Working Style made-to-measure shirts direct to people in offices.

“We had no idea at the beginning,” says Dobbs. “We didn’t know what we were doing, but we were hungry. We said ‘let’s just do it’ and started selling to people we knew.”

Dobbs and Nevill proved to be excellent sales people, utilising their direct sales channel effectively. “Our shirts started out at \$49, then went to \$59 and then up to \$69 each. We were selling 100 shirts a week, and driving around in unreliable cars to get to our customers.”

Once sales took off, they set up an office at the bottom of the Downtown building in Customs St, and in 1989, they opened the Parnell shop. “We got a loan from the bank – a \$20,000 overdraft at 20 per cent interest. We got the money to do the shop fit-out, painted the shop at night, and sold shirts during the day. It was hard work.”

With the Parnell shop in place, Working Style now had a sales base. Word of mouth spread and they found themselves doing a nice trade from the outset. “We could make stock and sell it from the display,” says Dobbs. “We no longer had to make and measure shirts, and it became easier to manage. We built up a nice business. But then with that came tax, commissions, increasing stock, and it became quite hard again from 1989-1990.”

In 1992, with his own Massey BBS in marketing, younger brother Tim Dobbs joined the business, initially selling shirts door-to-door in Wellington. The sales were good and the decision was made to invest in the capital. Working Style opened an architecturally-designed store on Woodward St off Lambton Quay. “The store went well from day one, and we’re still there today,” says Dobbs.

The Working Style empire has expanded to include six stores across the country – Parnell, The Chancery in central Auckland,

outlet stores in Dressmart malls in Onehunga and Tawa, Woodward St and Colombo St in Christchurch.

“We haven’t been aggressive in opening stores,” says Dobbs. They have, however, experimented with their range over the years, dabbling in a women’s clothing range before deciding to refocus on their core men’s product.

Ten years ago, the Nevill-Dobbs connection changed momentum when Nevill gave birth to twins. Her husband, Andrew Cole (a Massey BA graduate) stepped in as a director, and Nevill turned her focus to motherhood and the infinite challenges that arise in that role.

Working Style’s newest sales outlet – an online store – has been in operation for two months expanding their potential customer base to the world. Dobbs is delighted with the initial response. “In one week, we’ve had sales from Hong Kong, Scotland, Australia and even Dunedin. The company has also developed a suit loan service, with a number of style options available.

“We didn’t know what we were doing, but we were hungry. We said ‘let’s just do it’ and started selling to people we knew.”

– Chris Dobbs



Dobbs’ education in marketing has been put to good use in the business. “We’ve always invested a lot of money in branding,” he says. “We tend to build on what we’ve got. We’re pretty focused on profitability and liquidity.” Working Style dresses a number of television sports presenters to add profile to the brand, and has an envious number of corporate relationships, dressing the Hyundai sales force, and providing suits for Air New Zealand’s Gold Elite Frequent Flyer programme.

“We’ve got good brand partnerships with Mercedes Benz, Penfolds Grange and Air New Zealand,” says Dobbs. “I’m a Brand Ambassador for Mercedes, and we all work together with joint client promotions. We have joint logo placement and they feature in our showrooms. Brand partnerships are becoming increasingly important.” ❖

d-class wardrobe

Sonia Yoshioka-Carroll meets the marketing graduates who have turned hunger for success into a high-profile clothing brand.

Huia taking on the world of indigenous publishing



Lana Simmons-Donaldson meets Robyn and Brian Bargh, the Wellington-based publishers who have published more than 150 books by Māori authors in just two decades. – Photographs: Mark Coote

Walking in the doors of Huia Publishers in the heart of the public service precinct in Wellington is more like visiting friends at home than a business meeting. Huia headquarters is a two-storey Victorian villa in Pipitea St, Thorndon, with double sash windows, native timber joinery and a large Moreton Bay Fig tree outside – part of the stark contrast between historic homes, churches, pubs and Parliament, and the modern high-rise offices, apartments, courts and shops that make the suburb so fascinating.

Co-founders Robyn and Brian Bargh established the business in 1991. They met as students at Massey 16 years earlier and married the same year. In recent years Huia has branched into publishing Pasifika writers and subjects, and the company's vision is definitely global: They aim to be the world's leading indigenous publisher.

The company is one of a handful of independent commercial publishers in the country and has a strongly indigenous focus. In

the past two decades it has published more than 150 books largely about Māori or by Māori authors, including Hirini Moko Mead, Keri Hulme, James George, Briar Grace-Smith, Professor Mason Durie, Maria Bargh (Robyn and Brian's daughter) and, most recently, Massey researcher and student Malcolm Mulholland.

Mr Mulholland, whose book about the history of Māori rugby, *Beneath the Māori Moon* was published in March, says Huia is a very supportive and family-friendly business, understanding of the personal circumstances of writers. "It's really good to deal with a Māori kaupapa focused organisation that is very focused on delivering a high quality product for Māori."

When they met in 1974, Brian was completing a Master of Agricultural Science and Robyn a Bachelor of Arts. She had trained as a teacher in Hamilton, and he had worked in Australia after graduating with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science in 1971.

After they graduated, Brian worked for the Marlborough Catchment Board while Robyn stayed at home with their two young children. In 1980, they decided to do something “different” and moved to Papua New Guinea for three years. Brian had a job with the PNG government and Robyn worked as a researcher and editor at the University of Papua New Guinea, where she had her first introduction to publishing. “Back then it was really basic; computers had just come in so we were working with electronic typewriters. I’d have little dreams that one day I would like to be a publisher. It was always in the back of my head as something I would like to do.”

On their return to New Zealand, they moved to Wellington. Brian worked for State Coal Mines, then the Ministry of Energy and the Department of Māori Affairs in the Treaty Issues Unit in 1987. “I’m just a Pākehā – our family came from Yorkshire. Before I met Robyn, I didn’t have much contact with Māori people, only learnt what you did at school. Now I’m very comfortable on the marae. The Treaty Issues Unit was a great group; it was at the cutting edge of treaty settlements, we also took part in the review of the Resource Management Act.”

For seven years Robyn was also working in the public service, with roles at the State Services Commission, Justice Department and Women’s Affairs Ministry, until she decided it was time for a new direction. “I was coming up to my 40th birthday,” she recalls. “I thought ‘God, I’m not going to be doing this for the rest of my life’. I couldn’t cope with not having control over what happened. I could only give advice – which could be ignored. It was 1991 and it was a recession, the public sector was being restructured. I didn’t want to be part of it.”

Her plan to be a publisher was still there. “The main reason was because I am a reader. I read a lot and in New Zealand there just weren’t the books about Māori people. I grew up in a Māori community in Horohoro, just south of Rotorua – a rural community, on a farm, where there was a marae, church, school and we all lived on farms. I grew up going to stuff at the marae, with aunts coming over to yack to mum about land issues.

“I was sent to a pākehā school in Rotorua to get good at English things and broaden my horizons. I caught the bus every day, I was living in a bicultural world that my classmates didn’t know anything about. Everyone else lived around the school. Some days I would come home and there was a tangi on so I’d go to the tangi to see if mum was there. I never talked about it at school. I just had a sense they wouldn’t know what I was talking about.”

Robyn, who is of Te Arawa descent, discovered that there were a lot of Māori children in similar situations, but they were largely

ignored by New Zealand literature. “Our books didn’t talk about the bicultural interface that we all knew. Māori kids have to cope with a whole lot of things that are not well understood. My dream was to get people to write books about the tragedies, dramas and joys.”

In 2002 Robyn was singled out by Massey as one of only eight recipients of the University’s 75th anniversary medals in recognition of her commitment to making te reo an important part of New Zealand life and using innovative approaches to connect with and engage young Māori.

Today Huia employs 20 staff. As well as the commercial arm, managed by Brian for the past 10 years, the company has a successful Māori language educational publishing arm managed

by another Massey graduate and former lecturer, Brian Morris. Established in 1997, it produces about 50-60 books and resources each year, which keeps the overall business profitable.

“Essentially the educational publishing profits are ploughed back into the losses in commercial publishing,” Brian Bargh says. “Over the 18 years we have been going, we have lost a lot of money on books that have never paid for themselves. You never know when you are going to have a winning author or book that is a blockbuster. We have had winners of the Montana and New Zealand Post children’s book awards and they have always sold well, but we have a lot more flops than books that break even.”

It is not for want of trying, Robyn says. “If you get a book that sells, you can do all sorts of things. Otherwise it’s pretty hard going and you have to plan carefully. But we have set ourselves this kaupapa and we are making progress – we have published a whole lot of books and educational resources that tell a Māori story. It’s not like running a shop; you have to develop writers. It takes a long time for some of the writers to come through to be really great writers.”

Nurturing writers is one of the things Huia has been focusing on since 1995 with the establishment of the Pikihiua Awards for Māori writers held biennially, attracting more than 300 entries in each of the seven years it has been run.

“There is no limitation on the subject matter that has been published to date for children and adult readers from novels, poetry, plays, sport, cooking and collections of academic papers to waiata, children’s books, and dictionaries,” says Robyn.

“What we are trying to do is capture stories and ideas by Māori writers – books that harness and store knowledge to be accessed by people in the future.” ❖



“What we are trying to do is capture stories and ideas by Māori writers – books that harness and store knowledge to be accessed by people in the future.”

– Robyn Bargh

Massey alumnus Commander David Wright is working to ensure the navy's new museum will be a draw-card not only for naval history buffs but the local community, tourists and especially, navy personnel.

As director of the navy museum since he was appointed director of Naval Excellence in 2003, Wright has become a passionate advocate of the museum's major redevelopment and relocation project.

"I feel really strongly, as the museum director, that what the museum needs to do is to tell the very important story that is the navy story. It is such an integral part of our nation's story and we need to do this through the eyes of our sailors."

He admits he underestimated at first the enormity of the task of shifting from the museum's current location in a small wooden building at the entrance to Devonport Naval Base, which displays only 5 to 10 per cent of its entire collection, to refurbished 1890s navy buildings.

His lack of background in museum management prompted him to enrol extramurally in Massey's Postgraduate Diploma in Museum Studies in 2005.

Keeping up with course work and assignments was a struggle for the busy, hands-on museum director in the midst of getting a major project off the ground, says Wright, who joined the Royal New Zealand Navy in 1985 as a Sub-Lieutenant specialising on construction engineering.

He graduated this year, and says the programme – based at the Manawatu campus – gave him theoretical foundations for running a museum as well as practical skills in collection management and understanding traditional Māori values in relation to tāonga (treasured artefact).

Among the navy museum's stored taonga is a piupiu (Māori flax skirt) repatriated in 2005 from London and first given to the HMNZ Captain Lionel Halsey, the Commanding Officer of HMS New Zealand in 1913. With the piupui came a prophecy that if the captain wore it, his ship would be protected from harm during three major sea battles of World War I.

The captain wore the piupiu and his ship survived sea battles at Jutland, Heligoland Bight and Dogger Bank where accompanying vessels directly behind and in front of the ship were sunk by torpedoes.

It's an example of the kind of poignant story Wright wants the museum to showcase more abundantly in its new incarnation due to open at Torpedo Bay at the foot of Devonport's historic military site North Head next March.

"We want to challenge the traditional idea of museums just being full of old stuff. Museums are about stories, and people. We want to put a greater emphasis on personal stories of people in the navy. Education has to be linked to exhibits that tell stories."

The museum's researcher is Massey graduate Michael Wynd, who did his Masters' in History at the Albany campus and is completing his PhD ❖



Photograph: Doug Cole



Roll-call for Massey teaching graduates

Kereama Beal chats to Roy Sye, a Napier-based Principal leading a staff with its fair share of Massey graduates, and finds out what he thinks makes a good teacher.

Principal Roy Sye with 12 of his staff, from left: Paul Lowes, Kirsten Morrison, Dean Quate, Lomi Schaumkel, Alastair Richards, Kerri Thompson, Jude Lineham, Franz Groom, Alister Gear, Jude Cheer, Cheryl Pohlen and Gareth Howard

Having a staff near full of Massey graduates was not a conscious decision for principal Roy Sye, but he says it possibly was not a total coincidence either.

Fifteen of his 22 teaching staff at Tamatea Intermediate School in Napier are Massey graduates (as is he) and he points out that another two are on parental leave. For four of them, working together in the same school is a daily class reunion.

“Having so many Massey graduates on staff inevitably means a few shared stories and experiences, and of course a bit of healthy debate about ‘quality’ with those of our colleagues who were educated elsewhere,” Sye says.

“Regardless of where you’re from, the key roles of a teacher as I see them are the ability to enthuse, engage and excite students about learning.”

He also believes that getting staffing right in a school is a like preparing a complex menu. “Everyone can’t be the same – you need to have a variety. However, you still have to use high quality ingredients and make sure they are compatible and complementary too.”

His school maintains a close association with Massey’s College of Education. “Annually, we host students for literacy teaching with year-eight pupils, and we also have trainee teachers with us

during the practical components of their studies.

“It gives them the opportunity to see our school in action, and at the same time, we can see them. I hope it encourages them to apply for any position we may have going, now or sometime in the future.”

Sye also gives advice to students about preparing themselves for seeking their first post. He has also provided some relief lecturing assistance to Massey staff on leave.

“Massey provided me with a good base from which to grow professionally. I started off at the old Palmerston North Teachers’ College but did extra Massey papers too,” he says.

“Right from my first year teaching I carried on with extramural study, first earning my Bachelor of Education then my Master of Educational Administration with Honours.”

According to Sye, one of the biggest challenges facing today’s teachers is achieving personal and professional balance.

“You can spend all day, every day preparing, planning, teaching and coaching, and never ‘finish’ the job. This takes its toll. Making sure you continue to get enjoyment out of what you do is essential. While having fun is not mentioned anywhere in any national curriculum documents, it is essential for engaging pupils.” ❖



e-centre a springboard for market research company's success

Five years ago Chris Pescott started his business from a desk at Massey's e-centre. Sonia Yoshioka-Carroll meets the man who is now managing director of New Zealand's largest independent market research company, Perceptive.

Market research company Perceptive employs more than 40 people, including a fieldwork team that often includes Massey students gaining practical experience, and 10 marketing and research professionals, four of whom are Massey graduates. It has more than 150 clients and a multi-million dollar annual turnover.

Accountancy rather than market research was what Chris Pescott, 28, had in mind when he enrolled at the University's College of Business in Albany, but a first-year marketing paper changed all that. He enjoyed the paper so much that he went on to complete his BBS with honours majoring in marketing, and then his Master of Business Studies in marketing.

"I was inspired by the late Brian Murphy, who was so passionate, and decided I wanted to start up my own market research company."

He credits the start-up and success of Perceptive to its three years in the e-centre, the college's business incubator unit. "It was fundamental to the success of the business, in particular the board of governance, with Kevin McCaffrey and Steve Corbett. The board was absolute gold because it prevented some major mistakes being made."

The e-centre was established to nurture and grow entrepreneurial technology companies on the North Shore using Massey research and expertise.

Two years ago Pescott moved the company – 5 per cent of

which is still owned by the University – to Bush Rd in the heart of the burgeoning commercial and light industrial zone that is fast turning the North Shore into a hub of New Zealand business innovation.

Perceptive defines itself as an innovative market research company that uses methodology that provides insights beyond traditional research, and is proud of its close industry links. "We don't just deliver research," Pescott says, "we play an important role in advising clients. Market research is not a system – it's a style and approach, an experiential gathering of knowledge."

Perceptive's recently-released inaugural Attitude New Zealand report is an example of that. It provides a snapshot of the opinions and feelings of 1000 New Zealanders aged 15+ from all income brackets. The report includes a Stress Index showing what factors are causing New Zealanders most anxiety in the current economic climate. It revealed that people are most stressed about their saving ability and retirement security. Women reported higher stress levels than men in all areas.

Over the next two years Pescott plans to continue to grow the business, with new service lines soon to be launched, while retaining the current structure and culture of the company. "Growth has got to be a culture, not an idea," he says. "We have a very entrepreneurial vibe here, with high calibre people who really want to come to work each day." ❖

A full-page photograph of Paula Bennett, a woman with dark hair, smiling and wearing a long, dark, patterned coat. She is standing in front of a large, modern building with a curved facade and many windows. The building's architecture features a series of repeating, angled concrete elements that create a rhythmic pattern. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

The direct approach

It has been a testing time for rookie cabinet minister Paula Bennett, but, as she tells Paul Mulrooney, her years at Massey helped prepare her for the tumult of national politics. – Photographs: Mark Coote

It was while washing dishes at a rest home in 1994 that Paula Bennett first conceived of the idea of going to university.

The young mother's curiosity was piqued by the progress she could see daily, as the new Massey University took shape across the road at Albany. She credits the women she worked with at the rest home, who included professional nurses and social workers, for encouraging her toward a university education.

Her decision to study social work was the beginning of a thread that has culminated with the National Government minister being put in charge of the multi-billion dollar social development portfolio.

The view from her Beehive office window over the government departments, Wellington railway station, waterfront and harbour, is a far more established one to what she saw while doing the dishes.

Her office is adorned with colourful paintings by Megan McLay, a student friend from Massey, that incorporate Pasifika, Maori and English phrases reflecting Bennett's wide sphere of community engagement.

Bennett's ties to the University and Albany campus remain. Her return in April to be guest speaker at the ceremony to honour Albany's Māori graduates rekindled memories of her time as an undergraduate.

"It was an unusual time for me. There were a whole lot of circumstances about how I ended up at that time – right time right place, but I would certainly say that tertiary education changed my life.

"It gave me confidence, it taught me that a lot of the life experiences I had, had a theory behind them, but I could actually apply them practically pretty easily."

Albany campus regional registrar Andrea Davies recalls Bennett as someone who learned quickly how to achieve her aims. "She came in quite naive but soon found her way," Davies says. "She was adamant as to what her role was and wasn't scared to advocate on behalf of students but she always did it in a measured and considered way, but when she felt that people weren't moving quick enough she'd thump the table."

The direct approach resurfaced in January when the Waitakere MP stepped in and broke up a brawl involving up to 30 people at a shopping mall in Henderson.

Bennett has refused to back down in the face of controversy over her appointment of the four times-married Christine Rankin to the Families Commission. Before that she was criticised by some for offering a home – while he was awaiting sentence – to her daughter's partner (and father of Bennett's granddaughter), Viliami Halaholo, who is currently serving jail time for grievous bodily harm.

Bennett, 40, says she is used to having to battle for her beliefs. One of her earliest successes was securing a crèche for the Albany campus.

"There weren't many student services and there was no crèche and so because it was all so new I started thinking about what was needed and that was my introduction to politics.

"Student politics is certainly a way to find your voice, to be managing budgets to be thinking about the issues of the day and how you advocate on people's behalf, so in some respects if, like me, you thrive on it and all of a sudden discover a part of yourself you didn't know you had, who knows where it will lead you."

Bennett measured her progress in results. A bar, common room and gymnasium were all opened on her watch.

The crèche involved a battle against those who held the purse strings. Tactics for that campaign included organising an on-campus protest in which parents brought their children onto the university grounds as well as more traditional ways of achieving the desired outcome.

"You know, it was the first time I'd sat on a formal committee and had that rationale of arguing for and against something, and recognising the cost implications and how you share them. It was very much my first introduction to anything like that."

That included encountering opposition of those running the campus – a role she now has some sympathy with. "From their perspective, they had a whole lot of conflicting costs and services that need to be done and they were trying to prioritise it. I'm probably a bit more reasonable about that now than I was then," she laughs.

"Then, I thought there had to be a crèche and that's all there is to it. I felt they had an obligation to be supporting these mature women."

Bennett says the experience marked a significant bend in her learning, which had seen her leave school without any

qualifications and became a mother while still a teenager, then only a couple of years after enrolling, emerge as the Albany campus student president in 1996.

She told the graduation ceremony this year that Massey was also where she connected with her Tainui heritage through interaction with other students and staff.

"Towards the end of my time at Massey, I realised that my own life had been one that I had built around individual responsibility and taking responsibility for myself, and when I really sat down and thought about the values that would really change other people's lives for the better, I believed that long term dependency on the state was not a way out of hard times and poverty for anyone.



"And when I got to the bottom line of those sets of values I certainly went in the direction of National."

Equally at home with the business students as the liberally minded young mothers on campus, she retains friendships from her student years. Until recently she flatted with Derek Quigley, the first Albany students' association president, while another friend is Labour MP Grant Robertson, an Otago alumnus who was a fellow member on the New Zealand University Students' Association executive.

The two MPs share a running joke about "serviette sandwiches" involving the night they decided to barbecue up some fast food for some students who had been indulging themselves with drinks across the bar.

"I was providing the bread as he added the steak and sausage but did not notice they had run out of bread and I was unwittingly serving the intoxicated students with serviettes!"

Such frivolity must now seem a world away from the responsibility of her new role where the minister is faced with the loss of around 200 jobs at her own ministry as part of cuts to the public service.

Bennett acknowledges in the current economic climate some of those redundant staff could form part of the growing queue wanting to start or continue tertiary education.

"There are a lot of people that are going to be looking to study now. You know, there are just a number of people that must be looking at tertiary and will soon be asking that question as well as what do they get out at the end of it?"

From her own perspective, hitting the books proved a turning point. ❖



Massey and the Mayor

Palmerston North Mayor and Massey Alumnus Jono Naylor talked to James Gardiner about his days as a student and the lessons in discipline he subsequently learnt. – Photographs: Graeme Brown

Only an extremely generous person would say Jono Naylor hit the ground running when he arrived at university. The Palmerston North Mayor sits back in a leather armchair in his office above the Square and reels off results from his first year as a horticultural science student in 1985: “Eight subjects – four Cs, four Es.”

It had been promising seventh form at Wairarapa College for the son of a Presbyterian minister who grew up in Upper Hutt, Henderson and Masterton. He took maths, applied maths and three sciences and thrived in getting involved in everything, from drama to 1st XI hockey.

But looking back on the year he left home and moved into Ferguson Hall, he admits the only lasting achievements were making friends and learning to play guitar. “It was an interesting period in my life. I probably hadn’t learnt the discipline of applying myself to study. I just allowed myself to get too carried away with the social aspects of being there. It was just before I came to Massey that my parents had split up. Whether that had an impact on me, I don’t know – probably it was that I was just having too good a time.”

The next year, he made a spur of the moment decision over a weekend to enrol in a BA in social sciences. He had Steve Maharey as his sociology lecturer but his recollection of what he learned from the current Vice-Chancellor is limited.

"I didn't get to too many of his lectures, unfortunately, because they were at 4 o'clock on a Thursday afternoon and during the winter months I had no other classes after lunch...so I didn't always make it back."

The year ended with three Cs, a C+ and an E and young Naylor contemplated a career in nursing. He spent 1987 working as an orderly at Palmerston North Hospital, was put off nursing by the "less pleasant stuff" nurses had to deal with, so decided to put his guitar playing to use by joining a rock band and hitting the road.

The band, called Y1, was run by Ian Grant's Youth for Christ organisation. It spent the year touring New Zealand, playing 200-odd concerts in secondary schools, auditoriums and large concert halls. Naylor was a singer-guitarist, one of the front men, so, naturally, he got the girl: His wife-to-be Karen was a dancer in the 30-member troupe.

six years. I'd been working with young people and doing things a certain way because it seemed like the natural thing to do and finding out it was called something and there was a theory behind it was fascinating."

After that Naylor worked briefly with the Child, Youth and Family Service, moved to a role as a counsellor at Palmerston North Hospital's child, adolescent and family mental health service for three years, then spent three years as a guidance counsellor at Rangitikei College in Marton. Before becoming Mayor he worked fulltime for the Christian Community Church in Palmerston North in various roles including conducting church services and operations management.

In 2001 he stood for the Palmerston North City Council in the Hokowhitu ward. He was re-elected in 2004 and then successfully challenged the sitting mayor, Heather Tanguay, in 2007.



But mullets and skinny jeans notwithstanding, this was Youth for Christ, delivering wholesome, clean-living, danger-avoidance messages to teenagers. Relationships between performers were not part of the script. "That would just complicate matters. We were very patient and waited till the end of the tour."

He spent six years as a youth worker for Youth for Christ in Palmerston North, married Karen in 1990 and the first of their three children, Chloe, was born in 1993. He worked part-time for a period while Karen completed nursing studies at Manawatu Polytechnic, then decided he needed a degree to "get paid properly" for the type of work he was doing on a "pseudo voluntary" basis and support his family.

In 1995, while she worked part time, he returned to Massey and enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Work programme. Fortunately the papers he had passed so narrowly were cross-credited and the practical experience he had gained helped him complete the four-year degree in three and graduate with honours.

"I really enjoyed being in a learning environment. I was 28 with one child and another on the way and I really appreciated the opportunity to learn. I had some better work habits, learnt to apply myself, Cs were no longer acceptable.

"It was a mixture of learning new things and learning the technical names for the things I'd actually been doing for the last

"I love it, I truly do," he says. "I think I am fortunate to be in a role where we have an opportunity to make a difference. Without doubt there are frustrating moments, but you get that in any job. I have an opportunity to meet some really extraordinary people. It's a real privilege to be invited into all sorts of circumstances, events. People want to share their special occasion with you – 100th birthdays, school prizegivings, that kind of thing. It can be really time-consuming and achieving the work-life balance is challenging at times."

Naylor is enthusiastic about building connections between the city and the University. "Massey does help define Palmerston North. It's crucial that the city and the University have a close relationship." He cites the Food Innovation Centre, which the council, the University, Fonterra and the crown research institutes are committed to developing in the region.

He was in Fiji recently wearing his Massey "defining" T-shirt when an Australian man came up to him and was able to tell him where the University was based and the fact it was involved in agri-food research and teaching. "In that moment, I thought 'yes – Massey University and Palmerston North are inseparable'. I've certainly been excited by what has started to happen over the last year or so and believe it can keep going further." ❖



“Recognition of te reo Māori as an official language will not by itself guarantee its survival and continuing use.”

– Professor Taiarahia Black

Ko au, tō reo It is I, your language

Te reo Māori is about people, and people advancement and progression. It is essentially about Māori and Pākehā defining their own priorities for te reo Māori, then weaving a course to realise shared, collective aspirations.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of te reo Māori is that it requires an understanding of the philosophical, and cultural parameters, and the ability of the people to plait together the dynamics that influence te reo Māori wellbeing and status. Recognition of te reo Māori as an official language will not by itself guarantee its survival and continuing use.

More important is the actual use of te reo Māori by Māori across all domains. Here the state has a role to create favorable circumstances from teacher to learner, schools, government work places, tertiary and wānanga institutions, iwi authorities, parliament, the production of quality reo resources, broadcasting and of course within the home. Māori themselves must target these domains.

Notwithstanding the fact that te reo Māori is cradled in the protocols of iwi or policies of the state, it must be in the hearts and mouths of whānau in their homes. Our most recent research at Te Pūtahi-ā-Toi in association with Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Ātārangi together with completed Master's and Doctorate theses are all saying if te reo Māori is to survive it must be revived and used in the home as a language of everyday use.

This year we celebrate 35 years of Māori language week. While this aspect is important, what is much more important is to remind ourselves that we must continue to draw on the directions and issues of reo Māori epistemologies, sustained pedagogy achieved in the past three decades, so that te reo Māori is a language of continuity, not merely confined to one week in the year.

Te reo Māori teaching at undergraduate, and postgraduate level at Massey is finding traction with a number of Masters and Doctoral studies presented in te reo Māori. These theses are grounded as a point of difference for teacher training, Māori research epistemologies, innovation and creativity to support te reo Māori.

These theses present a live analysis and scholarly themes bringing a high level of articulation of te reo in Masters and Doctoral studies. Embarking on this new academic focus provides us with the necessary innovation to tailor our activities and reo functions to explore new domains for te reo Māori.

Taiarahia Black is Professor Te Reo Māori at Massey University.

EVENTS

JUL

JULY 18

Massey University Alpine Club 80th Anniversary

18 Jul 09 6:00 PM Broadway Function and Conference Centre, Palmerston North RSA

2009 sees the 80th Anniversary of Massey University Alpine Club (MUAC). To mark the occasion the club are organising a celebration involving an evening of dinner and entertainment along with special guest speakers including FMC Bulletin Editor, renowned photographer, author, and former club member Shaun Barnett.

The club invites all current members, past members and anyone else interested to help us celebrate this historic milestone.

More info: <http://www.studentcity.net.nz/muac80thanniversary.html>

JULY 27

School Science Symposium

Albany Campus – Gate 1 Albany Expressway (SH17), North Shore

The School Science Symposium, currently in its fifth year, is like an Academic Sports Science day where college-aged students get the opportunity to demonstrate their scholarly prowess in the topic areas of Sport, Wellness and Health. Students are required to conduct and present a research project in an exciting and dynamic topic area and, in doing so, share their knowledge with peers, teachers and staff at Massey University.

AUGUST 5 9am-2pm

Open Day

Manawatu Campus – Palmerston North

Open Day provides an opportunity for prospective students and their families to visit each campus, meet Massey staff and see first-hand what study at Massey is all about.

Choosing a university and a course of study is a big decision to make. At Open Day a wide and diverse range of courses are profiled along with on-campus accommodation, student services and the vibrant student life.

Prospective students of any age are welcome.

AUGUST 28

Open Day

Wellington campus – Entrance A, Wallace Street; Entrance D, Buckle Street; Entrance E, Tasman Street

SEPTEMBER 12

Open Day

Albany Campus – Gate 1 Albany Expressway (SH17), North Shore

AUG

SEP



definingnz

A monthly publication profiling research, success and innovation from New Zealand's defining university.

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The Space Between is a collection by Massey Scholar Samara Vercoe (Ngāti Mutunga) that will be shown at the Miromoda showcase of the 2009 Air New Zealand Fashion Week to be held in Auckland in September.

Vercoe's collection was a finalist in the emerging designer category of the inaugural Miromoda Māori Fashion Design Awards held at Massey's Wellington campus last month and earned her a place at fashion week.

The collection expresses the concept of grief through fashionable mourning etiquette. Using clothing as a means of protection and disguise, to hide emotions behind in times of vulnerability. Each outfit is joined together to create one whole garment. Vercoe graduated with a Bachelor of Design (First-Class Honours) from Massey in May.

Photograph: Lisa Wilson; models: Upper Hutt College students Tamara Donnelly, Courtney Kauika-Stevens and Carma Bell.