Good energy

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In the next few decades, a number of New Zealand’s provincial regions are going to face a major demographic challenge. The challenge arises from the particular age profile of their populations: too many people at or near retirement age and too few young people choosing to stay near home once they have finished their schooling.

In Oamaru in the south of the South Island, you can see the problem in miniature. In 2013, the median age here was 49.1 - 15 years older than in Auckland – and while the population rose slightly between 2006 and 2013, the only reason for this was the arrival of migrants from within New Zealand and from overseas.

Oamaru is no stranger to migration. Those famous stone neoclassical buildings, with all their columns and pediments, were built by first-generation British migrants.

British migrants named the town’s streets after British rivers, and it is their descendants, along with later European arrivals, who make up most of the population today.

In 2013, 91 per cent of people in the Waitaki District – of which Oamaru is part – identified themselves with the European ethnic group, compared with 74 per cent for New Zealand as a whole.

So while Oamaru is the product of migration, traditionally it has come from a restricted geographic range.

What makes today’s migrants different is diversity. Yes, some of today’s migrants come from Europe, but many more come from non-traditional source countries – countries like Sri Lanka, Brazil, India the Philippines, China, Tonga and Tuvalu – bringing with them unfamiliar languages, customs and cuisines.

Oamaru needs these people. It needs them to be health workers, engineers, food technologists and business owners. It needs them to operate the local milk and meat processing plants.

More largely, it needs them to participate fully in the life of the community. It needs them to lead prosperous, fulfilling lives and to raise confident and successful children.

And the only way this will happen is if Oamaru itself reaches out to make newcomers – with all the diversity and difference they represent – feel welcome and included.

In this issue of ACTIONZ we visit Oamaru to see how well the town is doing.

We came away impressed. We hope you do too.

Steve McGill
General Manager, Strategy, Education and Engagement Branch
A career spent making a difference

Judi Altinkaya gives new meaning to doing work that makes a difference for new Zealanders. After 30 years in settlement work, Judi steps down in December this year as Immigration New Zealand’s National Manager, Migrant Settlement. In this time she has held settlement roles at every level from community volunteer to international Integration Group Chair. We asked Judi to reflect on her career.

How did you get started in settlement work?
I returned to New Zealand in November 1987 with experience from abroad and international English language teaching qualifications, including in the new specialised field of Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) from the University of Lancaster.

Interestingly, I faced the same barriers to getting a job that many migrants faced. I was told by one tertiary institution that they preferred New Zealand qualifications.

The other difficulty in finding a job was that I’d returned at summer break time. I found temporary work teaching an intake of Cambodian refugees that summer and we were all finding our way in a new place, as I’d never lived in Wellington. I still come across some of the students from that time. They never forget that first support they received and I’ve never forgotten the privilege of teaching them.

I saw the role of Home Tutor Coordinator matching these newly arrived refugees with volunteer tutors and thought that I’d love to have that job. By the end of the year, I’d been selected for the role.

When I left, four years later, to take up the inaugural Chief Executive role for what is today called English Language Partners, I had trebled the Wellington service’s client base and its funding.

So what are the highlights of your career?
Essentially, I’m a leader and a developer, and I’ve been able to use my experience and creativity to design strategies, structures and resources, and, in doing so, making the most of the talents and skills of others. It’s hard work to lead well, whatever the context, but the reward of achieving a common purpose through the supportive collaboration of multiple players is a challenge I have always embraced.

The first highlight was setting up the national office for English Language Partners – few people get to experience the privilege of setting up an organisation from scratch, and I’m really proud of the job I did.

The organisation then comprised 28 member schemes that I had to convince to support the national direction – that’s a challenge for community-based groups that themselves needed income and were used to steering their own direction.

Some came willingly, some reluctantly, and only one refused. The benefits of national body membership included NZQA recognition of volunteer training, funding growth from $30,000 per annum to $3 million, and the production of high-quality teaching and learning resources that sold well throughout the country. These achievements continue to underpin English Language Partners’ position as the country’s lead settlement NGO to this day.

Following a two-year stint as the Chief Adviser to Government for Adult and Community Education, I had the opportunity to set up Immigration New Zealand’s Settlement Unit. Again I was drawn to the path of leading strategy development and implementation, convincing others (government agencies) to collaborate and commit their support, developing resources that support newcomers to settle, and seeking new funding for programmes.

There was about $2 million allocated for annual Settlement Unit activity when I started out. There is now about $11 million allocated, and staffing has increased from three to 21.

This reflects the growing
After being successfully piloted by ten councils across five regions over the past two years, the Welcoming Communities – Te Waharoa ki ngā Hapori programme is to be extended nationwide.

Designed to create thriving regions and inclusive local communities, the programme is led by Immigration NZ in partnership with the Office of Ethnic Communities.

More than $6.6 million has been allocated to the programme over the next four years, with additional councils to be invited to submit expressions of interest in joining the expanded programme later this year.

“Evaluation findings show that the programme is starting to deliver economic, social and cultural benefits. That is why it is being rolled out to other parts of the country,” said Immigration Minister Iain Lees-Galloway.

“For newcomers, getting involved and feeling included in a new country can be a challenge. Making newcomers feel welcome by linking them with locals is a great step. Anything that can ease the process, build understanding and enable everyone to participate in the life of their community and the local economy fully deserves to be supported.”

To find out more about Welcoming Communities, visit the Immigration NZ website.

importance placed on retaining migrants with the skills New Zealand needs.

Finally, my leadership as Chair of the Integration Working Group for the Geneva-based Inter-Governmental Consultations has provided me with the opportunity to set an agenda for settlement discussions across 17 member states twice each year.

I’m pleased to report that meeting attendance has almost trebled during my time as Chair, and the final meeting of my tenure is in November 2019. I’ve really relished the opportunity to lead discussions with global experts on some of the more challenging aspects of migrant settlement.

And the experience has opened my eyes to how different nations have differing views of Settlement and Integration work. Some have entire Ministries devoted to it, others may have half-a-dozen staff at most. On balance, I think we had it about right in New Zealand’s Settlement Unit, and the strong knowledge of staff and their connections to the settlement sector are second to none across international jurisdictions. The Settlement ACTIONZ magazine is a good example of this.

Has anything from your international connections benefited settlement work in New Zealand?

International exchanges are always of benefit. The Settlement Unit has hosted three USA Ian Axford exchange researchers, and our staff have visited other countries.

One of the most valuable visits was to the USA Welcoming America Interactive Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, in April 2017. Seeing how transformational the welcoming approach is for achieving settlement outcomes, we used it to underpin the development of our own Welcoming Communities programme.

We quickly set up the two-year pilot co-designed with five regions, with quality resources and support staff in place. And the research shows that we weren’t wrong about the positive outcomes the programme could achieve – for newcomers and for locals. The Government’s approval to expand the programme throughout New Zealand places the settlement of migrants in New Zealand in a great position.

And this is what nations are coming to realise – good settlement is not solely about support and services for new migrants. It’s also about supporting us as New Zealanders, as we embrace the growing diversity that immigration brings to the make-up of our workplaces and communities.

What lies ahead for you, after such a busy career?

I do plan to travel and spend more time with my family. But I’m also keen to return to where I started and contribute to settlement as a volunteer, welcoming and settling refugee families.

In the past 30 years I’ve met wonderful people throughout New Zealand who contribute to settlement at the grass-roots level, and I’ve told one of them to expect me in their team some time next year. I can’t wait!
Former Gisborne mayor Meng Foon has been appointed Race Relations Commissioner, succeeding Dame Susan Devoy. Meng Foon is fluent in Māori, Seyip, Cantonese and English and is learning Mandarin. He is also a singer-songwriter and has released an album of Māori waiata. Meng Foon wants to see New Zealanders “tell all of our stories so we can understand more of each other’s ethnicities, our cultures, the way that we do things”.

Ashburton District Council has a new Welcoming Communities Advisor, Janice McKay. Janice has a Bachelor of Communication Studies degree and has worked in public relations with a strong community focus. She has also been a volunteer for the Mid Canterbury Newcomers Network. Janice’s mother migrated to New Zealand from the Philippines.

English Language Partners is merging two Auckland centres. The merger means easier coordination of programmes across the Auckland region and better support for learners needing English for work and daily life. Murali Kumar is the new manager of the merged ‘Auckland Central & West’ centre. Murali is from Singapore and has worked for local and central government, managing Auckland Council community facilities and programmes.
The New Zealand Newcomers Network (NZNN) website has had a facelift. The NZNN is an alliance of regional networks around New Zealand that support newcomers to find social connection and belonging. NZNN was founded in 2006 and has 40 networks around the country. The regional networks organise social activities and connection opportunities and are free to join. Visit www.newcomers.co.nz.

In October, Mae Chen, Chair of the Superdiversity Institute for Law, Policy and Business, led the launch of the report National Culture and its Impact on Workplace Health and Safety and Injury Prevention for Employers and Workers. To find out more, visit www.superdiversity.org.

In August, the Northern Football Federation partnered with Harbour Sport ActivAsian to deliver a New Zealand Football Referee Level One course tailored to the Chinese community. This included Chinese-assisted delivery and translated materials. This is the second time the two organisations have joined forces to increase the uptake of football qualifications in North Harbour’s Chinese community.

The members of a bushwalk sign-making workshop outside the Albany Community Hub. At the workshop, people painted rocks and made multilingual information panels featuring native plants, which were later installed in the local bush. ActivAsian ran the workshop in collaboration with Placemakers and the Upper Harbour Local Board.

In July, Sport Auckland and Drowning Prevention Auckland organised three water safety workshops for Asian students and adults. Among the range of skills the workshops taught were recognising rips, the importance of wearing life-jackets, and the four rules of the Water Safety Code.
2018 National Migrant Consultations: stakeholder observations

In early 2019 Immigration New Zealand invited a group of Settlement Stakeholder Organisations (SSOs) to share their observations on the findings from the 2018 National Migrant Consultations. The observations have now been collated into a separate report, available for download from Immigration New Zealand website.

In summary, SSOs:

• Agreed that the majority of recent migrants are able to readily access settlement services and information.
• Emphasised that both online information channels and in-person settlement support play an important role.
• Agreed that the promotion and provision of settlement information could be strengthened in some key areas.
• Provided perspectives on the challenges highlighted in the Consultations report and also highlighted the following challenges:
  - access to advanced English Language classes to support employment outcomes;
  - access to English language classes for temporary migrants;
  - experience of isolation for some partners.
• Emphasised that volunteering is a way that many recent migrants engage with their community.
• Emphasised the importance of a whole of society, two-way approach to support recent migrants’ inclusion, and reducing the occurrence of unfair and biased behaviour.

Download: tinyurl.com/yyhojhj4

Measuring New Zealand’s settlement performance

How well is New Zealand doing at helping new migrants to feel at home in their new country? Every year, as part of the New Zealand Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy (NZMSIS), Immigration NZ measures New Zealand’s performance against 16 indicators in five outcome areas. This year’s findings, published in the 2018 NZMSIS Outcome Indicators Dashboard Report, show that steady progress has been made.

Download: tinyurl.com/y5gn9dq9

Ashburton District Council has released the first episode in a series of videos called Welcoming Workplaces. The videos, hosted on YouTube, show how local businesses are embracing diversity. In the first episode, Tony McNeill speaks to Tony Corbett, the owner of Ashburton’s Subway Restaurant.

yout.be/rb5rtGHI9Jw

The OECD Indicators of Talent Attractiveness is the first comprehensive tool to capture the strengths and weaknesses of OECD countries regarding their capacity to attract and retain three specific categories of migrants: highly educated workers (those with master and doctoral degrees), foreign entrepreneurs and university students.

Download: tinyurl.com/y2cnnoc5
Palmerston North Intermediate Normal School’s Multicultural Assembly is a highlight of the school year. The assembly marks the publication of the annual First Voice publication, a compilation of stories written by students in the languages they speak at home with their families. Each year the stories have a different theme. This year the theme was ‘Festival’. For as many as half of the students, the experience of writing in their first language is new; these are languages they speak rather than write. Fortunately, they have help. Each child has the assistance of a migrant mentor who shares their language. The mentors are recruited by the Manawatu Migrant Centre. Later in the year, an exhibition of the students’ work will be held at the Palmerston North City Library. This is the twentieth year First Voice has run. Palmerston North is part of the national Welcoming Communities programme.
Katikati Multicultural Festival

On Saturday June 29, the town of Katikati, near the northern end of Tauranga Harbour, celebrated its first-ever multicultural festival. With a thriving horticultural industry, a sunny climate, and bush and beaches on its doorstep, Katikati is an attractive place to make a home. In 2013, 29.5 per cent of people in the Katikati community were born overseas, compared to 18.5 per cent for Western Bay of Plenty District as a whole. The festival was presented in association with Katikati Community Centre, Welcoming Communities Western Bay of Plenty, Katch Katikati, rūnunga from Rereatukahia, local schools and packhouses.

Recognised Seasonal Workers performed at the event, supported by their employers. This Samoan group represented the Aongatete Packhouse.

Over 30 different cultural groups took part in the parade of cultures.

Led by mana whenua – Te Rereatukahia Marae and supported by Tuapiro and Otawhiwhi Marae – newcomers and locals alike were welcomed by a powhiri.
The recipients of the 2019 Volunteer Connect Awards with, at right, Wellington Deputy Mayor Jill Day.

Left to right: Volunteer Wellington Board Chair Ming-Chun Wu, and volunteers Aarti Naier, and Julia Cerqueira Melo

Volunteer Connect
To see the good that volunteering does for migrants and the community, you cannot go past Wellington’s annual Volunteer Connect Awards convened by Volunteer Wellington.

The Awards, which celebrate the contribution of migrant volunteers, have become a local tradition.

This year Wellington Deputy Mayor Jill Day presented the volunteers with their certificates of recognition, in front of a receptive audience of family members and community representatives.

Before the presentation, the Deputy Mayor talked about her childhood memories of her mother teaching English as a Second Language to new migrants.

“Our family met so many amazing people – and we were invited to some amazing dinners,” she said. Nowadays, one of her favourite roles is taking part in Wellington’s citizenship ceremonies.

She praised the voluntary sector for the immense good it performs within the community and for the place it holds in the lives of volunteers. Her own experiences as a volunteer, she said, had helped her to push her personal limits and had led to enduring friendships.

Volunteers Aarti Naier, originally from Kerala in India, and Julia Cerqueira Melo, a recent Brazilian newcomer, also spoke.

Aarti described how valuable volunteering had been in helping her find her place in the community at a time when she was at a personal low. “Once I started volunteering, I never looked back.”

Julia described how a volunteer role as the Digital Media Coordinator for Kate Sheppard Place Women had given her new communications and social media skills and led to a network of friendships.

Today Julia works for the National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges and as well as volunteering as Social Media Manager for Youth Arts New Zealand.

The Volunteer Connect Awards are supported by English Language Partners’ Job Mentoring Service and Wellington Central Citizens Advice Bureau.
Immigration New Zealand’s Settlement Unit is leading the development of an online learning programme called Mana Aki: Building intercultural competence in New Zealand’s public service. Developed in collaboration with the Open Polytechnic, New Zealand’s largest online learning provider, the programme is currently being piloted by up to 600 public servants from MBIE, the New Zealand Police and the Department of Internal Affairs. The pilot comprises a number of innovative, interactive, foundation-level modules. These are designed to build public servants’ intercultural competence when interacting with their colleagues and customers. The long-term vision is to roll out the programme across multiple agencies.

English Language Partners at work around New Zealand. From top: Fostering Migrant Art, an exhibition held by English Language Partners North Shore; New Kiwis Health and Well-being, a programme run in partnership between English Language Partners Palmerston North, Sport Manawatu and the MHT Diabetes Trust; Women’s Self Defence Network – Wahine Toa Inc trainer Karen Millane delivers a Women’s Self-Defence course to English Language Partners Palmerston North learners; a workshop about how to vote in the local body elections is delivered by English Language Partners Porirua in partnership with the Electoral Commission.

Staff at the Ranui Resthome with a petal carpet made during a pilot inclusive workplace programme.
Addressing Temporary Migrant Worker Exploitation

The Government is undertaking a review to better understand and address temporary migrant worker and international student exploitation in New Zealand. We want to know your thoughts on how we can better prevent exploitation, protect migrant workers and strengthen enforcement action.

What impact will our proposals have for you?
Head to mbie.govt.nz/ExploitationReview to learn more and to tell us your thoughts.

Please make your submission before 27 November 2019 by one of these means:
› By online survey
› By filling in the answer fields in the online document at: mbie.govt.nz/ExploitationReview
› Email your submission to: MigrantExploitationReview@mbie.govt.nz
› Post your submission to:
  International Labour Policy
  Labour and Immigration Policy Branch
  Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment
  PO Box 1473
  WELLINGTON 6140

Please send any questions to:
MigrantExploitationReview@mbie.govt.nz

IMPORTANT
To report migrant worker exploitation, contact the MBIE Service Centre on 0800 20 90 20
To report anonymously, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or fill out a form on crimestoppers-nz.org
To report people trafficking, call New Zealand Police 105 or 111 (if it is an emergency)
Southland launches Welcoming Communities plan

On a mild winter’s day in September, people gathered outside the gate of Invercargill’s Murihiku Marae for the launch of the Southland Murihiku Welcoming Plan. It was a varied crowd. Members of the local Filipino and Colombian communities mingled with councillors, kaumātua, kuia, school-student performers from Te Wharekura o Arowhenua, and visitors from Dunedin and further afield.

Southland has not, traditionally, been a popular migrant destination or a very ethnically diverse region. Across New Zealand, around one in four people are overseas born. In Southland, it is about one in 10, and 89 per cent of the population identifies as European.

An ageing workforce means that the region needs to attract new workers, and just as importantly, Southland needs them to settle happily and successfully. This is why Southland chose to become one of the five regions participating in the pilot of the Welcoming Communities programme.

The publication of a formal plan setting out the actions and outcomes the region will work towards is a key Welcoming Communities commitment.

Following a formal welcome on to the marae and a move to the whare kai, launch was celebrate with food, speeches and performances.
Launch of Te Rautaki mō Whanaungatanga: A National Strategy to Support Volunteering for New Migrants

Launch of Te Rautaki mō Whanaungatanga: A National Strategy to Support Volunteering for New Migrants

Launching the Strategy in Parliament’s Grand Hall during Volunteer Week in June 2019, the then Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector, the Hon Peeni Henare, emphasised the role of volunteering in creating diverse, inclusive, caring and kind communities. He talked about the core value of whanaungatanga – a concept that embraces connection and kinship – and the importance of the values expressed in the song Te aroha: aroha, whakapono and rangimarie (love, hope and peace).

“If there is one thing I have learned about the ethnic communities across this country, it is that they already have a firm grasp of these concepts.”

Johann Go, who led the strategic review and writing of the Strategy, described it as the product of research with “hundreds of migrants who participated in our workshops, focus groups and online survey”. At its core, he said, the Strategy expresses the belief that “meaningful volunteering – where meaningful means it is inclusive, ethical and impactful – can be a powerful way of helping migrants to achieve a sense of belonging in New Zealand, to connect to their fellow New Zealanders, to enrich their communities and to develop skills along the way”.

Below: Dr Katie Bruce, Chief Executive Volunteering New Zealand, addresses the gathering.
Thuy Tran came from Vietnam with her husband and daughter to pursue a postgraduate degree at Victoria University. In Vietnam, she had volunteered at a local religious charity, and in New Zealand she volunteers with English Language Partners, which she has loved. Volunteering, she said, connects, empowers, and lifts people up when times are hard.

Takunda Muzondiwa, from Mount Albert Grammar School, was a guest speaker, delivering the speech that won her a place in the finals of the Race Unity Aotearoa speech awards in May. A web-hosted video recording of her speech, delivered in ‘spoken word’ poetry style, has been viewed more than half-a-million times.

Download the strategy at www.volunteeringnz.org.nz

Below: Wellington musician Sean O’Connor leads the gathering in a song he had composed for the occasion.
Making a mark

Associate Professor Kate McMillan and Senior Lecturer Fiona Barker have a longstanding interest in voting and representation among New Zealand’s migrant and ethnic minority communities. One noticeable pattern is that Asian New Zealanders are under-represented as MPs and have a generally lower electoral turnout. So should we be worried?

Whatever her reputation at home, Jacinda Ardern is held in high regard by the Uber and taxi drivers of Washington DC. “Almost all of them wanted to talk about our Prime Minister. They really admired her response to the Christchurch shootings,” says Fiona Barker.

Fiona and Kate have just returned from this year’s American Political Science Association Conference. This year, befitting the times, the theme was Populism and Privilege.

“There were lots of papers on Brexit, on Trump, and on populism in all of its manifestations around the world,” says Kate.

Kate McMillan is an associate professor, and Fiona Barker is a senior lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington.

In their panel – one of 75 simultaneous panels convened every hour-and-a-half over the three-day, 6,500-attendee conference – Kate and Fiona took part in a discussion about populism and New Zealand political culture.

Will New Zealand follow in the path of Britain, the US and Brazil, where populism and anti-immigrant sentiments are intimately linked, the panellists asked, or are there factors that set this country apart?

Time will tell. But some things stand in our favour, says Kate, one of them a non-citizen voting policy that gives residents who have lived in the country continuously for 12 months or more the right to vote in general elections.

“Along with Chile, Uruguay, Ecuador, and Malawi, New Zealand is one of five countries that allow resident non-citizens to vote.”

And among these countries, New Zealand is unusual in how soon after gaining residence a new migrant becomes eligible to vote.

Non-citizen voting was introduced in 1975. Until that time, the New Zealand Electoral Act 1956 required an elector to be “a British subject ordinarily resident in New Zealand [who] had resided in New Zealand continuously for at least 1 year”.

As Kate and Fiona write, the 1975 legislation simply dropped the British subject requirement while retaining the residency requirement.

By contrast, Australia and Canada reworded their legislation at about the same time to stipulate national citizenship.

In the short term, New Zealand’s legislation was a quick fix, preventing British subjects, who had up until then been entitled to vote, from being suddenly disenfranchised.

It did not hurt that most migrants at the time came from nations like Britain, Holland and Australia, countries that were seen as kin.

In its deliberations, the Electoral Act Committee suggested that the decision might be revisited, yet it did not happen, and in 1986, the Royal Commission on the Electoral System came out in support of the non-citizen franchise:

... permanent residents have been granted permission to live and work in New Zealand and usually make a full contribution to the community and its future. In this sense, they can be said to have earned full membership of the community and to be entitled to vote. Although the extension of voting rights to permanent residents is unusual, we are disinclined to suggest the removal of rights which have long been enjoyed and which may help integrate new members into our community.

This broad franchise is positive in a number of ways. One is that, as the Electoral Commission noted, it acknowledges migrants as valued.

PhD student Jie Huang and Associate Professor Kate McMillan with the flip cards Kate and Senior Lecturer Fiona Barker used in the migrant workshops to prompt discussion. The cards show a reason to vote on one side and a corresponding reason not to on the other. Jie’s PhD is investigating electoral participation levels and patterns among Chinese New Zealanders and some of the factors that influence their levels of political engagement.
Who votes?

Around the world, the right to vote has often been hard won. In New Zealand, it took years of campaigning for Kate Sheppard to win the vote for women, a feat she achieved in 1893 – though it would not be until 1919 that women achieved the corresponding right to stand for Parliament.

How then would Sheppard – or Meri Te Tai Mangakāhia, who campaigned for women’s suffrage in front of the autonomous Māori Kotahitanga Parliament – feel to learn that in 2017, 124 years later, upwards of one in five eligible New Zealanders would not exercise that right?

In New Zealand, the Electoral Commission, which is charged with promoting participation in parliamentary democracy and with helping people understand the electoral system, analyses voting and enrolment patterns after every election.

According to the Commission’s figures for the 2017 general election, 79.8 per cent of enrolled electors voted. This figure drops to 72.4 per cent when the measure is valid voters – a category that includes everyone entitled to be on the electoral roll whether they were or not.

By international standards, this rate of participation is high – better than that of the United Kingdom, Canada or the United States. And if Australia has a higher turnout, this may be because voting is compulsory, with non-voters sometimes fined.

Nonetheless, New Zealand’s rates of voting have been undergoing a slow decline since the 1960s.

Alongside this decline is another worry: how representative of the general population are the people who vote?

A number of factors correlate with the likelihood that someone will vote. For example, in the general population, income and education are positively associated with voting. Women are more likely to vote than men. And there is a distinct ‘age gradient’: older people are more likely to vote than younger people.

Ethnicity seems to be a factor too. People with Māori and Asian backgrounds are less likely to vote than the general population.

Although people are more likely to vote as they grow older, in the longer term, the earlier that voting becomes ingrained as a habit, establishing a voting ‘footprint’ for the population, the better.

While there are likely to be a number of factors in low turnout, significant difficulty in voting does not seem to be one of them.

In its post-2017 election analysis, the Electoral Commission found that most people find the process of voting easy, achieving a 94 per cent satisfaction rate.

Anecdotally, this also applies to Asian voters. In their qualitative research with focus groups of Asian voters, Kate McMillan and Fiona Barker found that their participants largely agreed that it is easy to enrol and vote in New Zealand.

Votes cast in most recent election as % of voting age population
Source: www.pewresearch.org
members of the community, encouraging them to integrate.

Another is that these newly enfranchised voters are recognised as valuable by political parties, and this, together with the nature of mixed-member proportional representation (MMP), is a reason for parties to reach out to minority constituencies when making policy or selecting candidates.

Non-citizen voting should, in other words, lead to a more representative form of democracy.

AND REPRESENTATION MATTERS
more than ever, for New Zealand’s demographic profile is undergoing far-reaching changes. One of these changes is in the ethnic mix of its population.

The percentage of the population who are European is falling, while the percentages of Māori, Pacific peoples and – most dramatically – Asian, are rising.

In 2018, 15.1 percent of New Zealanders identified with one or more Asian ethnicities, up from 11.8 per cent in 2013 and 9.2 percent in 2006.

In Auckland, the percentage is considerably higher. It has been forecast that the proportion of Aucklanders who self-identify as Asian will grow to 27-28 per cent in a little over a decade.

In Auckland’s Botany and Mt Roskill electorates, the percentage of the population identifying as Asian was already approaching 40 per cent at the time of the 2013 Census.

Yet just 5.8 per cent of MPs – all of them list MPs – identified as Asian in Parliament in 2017.

Another problem: Asian New Zealanders have the lowest electoral turnout of any of the ethnic categories used by Statistics New Zealand.

WHY, ACCORDING TO work that has been done using New Zealand Election Survey data, are Asians 25 per cent less likely to vote than non-Asians? And how much does where in Asia someone has come from influence their behaviour?

For Asia is, after all, not some pan-ethnic bloc, but embraces a
A hugely varied range of cultures. In 2017, Kate and Fiona, set out to begin to find out.

In their study, Kate and Fiona brought together 72 first-generation migrants in focus groups held in Auckland and Wellington. They came from South Korea (three groups), India (two groups), China (two groups) and Cambodia (one group).

The focus groups discussed a series of opposing propositions set out on double-sided cards. “It is my duty to vote in New Zealand/I am too busy to vote,” ran one.

“One or more candidates contacted me/No candidate or party contacted me,” ran another.

For Fiona, despite a long record in qualitative research, this was her first experience of focus groups. “You get different voices around the table, and people feed off each other. Someone will say something, and someone else will pick it up or say that they hadn’t thought of it that way before,” she says.

Theories about how cultural and ethnic differences (as distinct from socio-economic differences) apply to the voting behaviour of migrants abound.

For example, it has variously been suggested that the likelihood of a migrant voting is tied to how well acculturated they are to their new country; that residential concentration empowers migrant communities’ voting blocs and creates incentives to vote; and that migrants who have grown up in democratic countries are more likely to vote than those who have not.

With such a small sample size, Kate and Fiona hesitate to generalise, yet the responses they recorded reveal how culturally nuanced voting behaviour can be.

Among the Koreans, one of the reasons given for not voting was a belief that voting is a weighty responsibility, one to be exercised only if you are fully informed.

“The Koreans were an interesting group,” says Kate. “A number of them could remember Korea’s switch to democracy in 1987.”

Some of the Chinese gave deference to authority as a reason for voting, and some were sceptical about the value of their vote, believing that one government was much the same as the next.

There was good news in Kate and Fiona’s findings. Most people found it easy to enrol and vote, and many remembered the enrolment information mailed to them by the Electoral Commission.

Most had a high degree of trust in the New Zealand electoral system, sometimes, in the case of the Chinese and South Koreans, contrasting it with the systems they had left behind.

Most felt a sense of duty to vote – including those who had yet to do so.

“If we aren’t seeing an increase in turnout in two or three elections’ time, that’s when we should start being concerned.”
AS TO THE reasons why people haveyet to vote, two sets of factors dominated the responses.

One was simply time. The longer a migrant has been in New Zealand, the more likely it is that he or she will vote.

“You need to give people time to get settled, to organise somewhere to live, to get their children into school, to feel comfortable in the community. Plus there’s the time it takes to get know the system – and, let’s face it, there are a lot of New Zealanders who don’t understand MMP.”

This is why Kate and Fiona are of the view that it is perhaps too soon to begin to worry about the lower voter turnout among Asian New Zealanders, many of whom have been in New Zealand for less than a decade.

“If we aren’t seeing an increase in turnout in two or three elections’ time, that’s when we should start being concerned,” says Kate.

The other reason for not voting was a lack of political information in their native languages.

STACKS OF MAGAZINES and newspapers rest against one wall of Kate’s office. They include copies of the Chinese Herald, the Indian Weekender, and Korea Town. This is part of the raw material of a paper-in-progress, which will analyse coverage of the 2017 election in the ethnic language media.

Who do you turn to first for information and support when you move to another country? Most likely, it will be to people who share your background and experience and who speak the same language you do.

Indeed, for many Chinese and Korean migrants, who have varying degrees of English fluency, ethnic language media is their main source of information.

There are many options on offer. In the case of Chinese migrants to New Zealand, the options include the Chinese Herald and other national and regional newspapers, websites like SkyKiwi, and social media platforms like WeChat and Weibo.

All of this is laudable, says Kate. The ethnic media are vital to the health of the communities they serve, bonding their members together.

“People need to be able read about themselves and see the sorts of stories that aren’t carried by the mainstream media,” says Kate.

But whether the ethnic language media does as good a job at bridging the gap with the concerns of society-at-large is another question.

Many of Kate and Fiona’s respondents said that their ethnic media provided little in the way of explanation about the political process or about political affairs in general.

This is one problem: a lack of information.

The other is that the information that is presented may be biased or untrustworthy. There is no mechanism to ensure that the political coverage given by ethnic media is accurate, fair and balanced.

Most of New Zealand’s well-known mainstream media – from papers to magazines to news websites to broadcasters – belong to the New Zealand Media Council, which has a set of common principles and formal processes for lodging and adjudicating complaints.

This isn’t the case with New Zealand’s ethnic media – and if bias does creep in, it is easily amplified within the enclosed world of social media.

Freedom of the press is fundamental, says Kate, and within very broad bounds people are free to write or broadcast as they choose.

But other considerations also apply.

“I think everyone should have access to unbiased, comprehensive, factual information about the candidates and the parties, and I think you could make a case that this is where the government could step in,” says Kate.

In Australia, this role belongs to the Government-funded multicultural and multilingual broadcaster SBS. In New Zealand, the nearest equivalent to SBS is Radio New Zealand. Perhaps, says Kate, a Radio New Zealand with an extended mandate should be part of New Zealand’s future.

New Zealand’s migrants, Kate and Fiona write, are eager to learn more about the New Zealand electoral and political system, about the policies proposed by different political parties and about candidates.

All of us – migrant service providers, electoral agencies, political parties and media providers – need to help them do so.
Taking to the air

In Christchurch, Plains FM is turning international students into broadcasters as part of an initiative it calls STeudaemonia.

As a sign of pride in her culture, Cinthya Meza likes to include Peruvian textiles and crafts in her daily dress. When I ask about her scarf – a splash of colour on a drab winter day – she tells me that it comes from Cusco, high in the Andes, and the motifs are Incan.

Cinthya embraces life. As listeners to her radio show have discovered, she loves Peruvian food, she loves the Peruvian national sport of football, and she loves her adopted city of Christchurch, which she first visited on a working holiday before deciding to come back to study.

In Peru, she lived in Lima, a crowded lowland city of nearly 10 million people. Christchurch, with around 400,000 people, is a much more manageable size, and it is home to a vibrant Latin American scene. Cinthya is an enthusiastic member.

In her first show, she interviewed event organiser Javier Chavez. A local celebration of the Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) drew more than 300 people, Javier tells her, and every three weeks there are Latin festivals. Cinthya invites listeners to come along.

“We Kiwis like to drink, Cinthya loves to dance,” explains Plains FM STeudaemonia Coordinator and radio host Lana Hart.

LANA, CINTHYA AND I are sitting in the lunch room of Plains FM, one of New Zealand’s 12 Access radio stations. At other tables, people of varied ages and ethnicities are preparing their shows or waiting for their allotted times in the studios and technicians’ booths.

Lana and Cinthya first met at Christchurch’s Alpha Educational Institute. Lana was there to talk to the students about how to become a community broadcaster as part of the Plains FM STeudaemonia Programme. Cinthya, who has degrees in law and commerce, was there completing a business diploma.

“I think I talked to about 50 students,” says Lana, “and about 19 signed up.”

Cinthya was one.

STeudaemonia began in 2018 with a conversation between Plains FM Content Coordinator Laura Gartner and Hagley College Diversity Manager Thi Phan.

“We were brainstorming how to give former refugees and migrants a greater voice on air, because that’s what we are about, when Thi mentioned the Ministry of Education’s International Student Well-being Strategy,” remembers Laura.
“We thought, well, we have a lot of international students in Christchurch [about 11,000] and it fits with our purpose. We are all about supporting people in the community who don’t have great access to mainstream media, and expressing different voices, different languages. Let’s see what we can come up with,” says Laura.

Plains FM successfully put a proposal to the Ministry of Education for funding for a two-part project to be called STeudaemonia, with the tag line International Students Living Well.

“The first part was research-based – we set out to identify the communities we should target. The second part was producing those radio shows and podcasts along with all of the training,” says Laura. Expectations were modest. “We thought if we could get maybe ten to 14 students from different cultures involved and maybe one 25-minute programme a week, that would be good.”

But STeudaemonia took off. During the four months it ran in 2018, STeudaemonia broadcast three or four shows every week and involved more than 60 students from 11 countries. Each show was live-streamed or downloaded on average 566 times per month.

STeudaemonia was, says Laura, “a raging success”.

CINTHYA, WHOSE SHOW goes by the name Latina en Aventura – the adventuring Latin American – first went on air in early April 2019. “I asked my sister, who is studying communications, about what I should do. She said, ‘You cannot go in there and talk about whatever you are thinking at that moment, you need to prepare.’ So I had everything written out, even my ‘ha ha’s.’”

Meanwhile, other events were unfolding. On the afternoon of Friday 15 March, a gunman opened fire in two Christchurch mosques, killing 51 worshippers and injuring a further 50.

The atrocity shook Christchurch’s close-knit international student community. A place that had seemed so safe, suddenly felt insecure.

For Cinthya and her classmates at Alpha Educational Institute, the connection was personal. A much-admired lecturer, Mian Naeem Rashid, and his son were among the dead.

“I heard about the shooting from friends, but I couldn’t believe it until I read the news. My teacher tried to stop the shooting, and that was how he died, and I thought, that was the man we knew,” says Cinthya.

That Saturday, Cinthya and her classmates visited the hospital and the mosques. Later, they visited the cemetery.

At one point, driving in to the Alpha Educational Institute from her Lyttelton home, she felt so overwhelmed that she called the Institute to say that she did not...
think she could make it in that day. The Institute told her to take the time she needed and offered counselling.

“The school supported us the whole time,” she says.

In April, she took part in a panel broadcast with three other international students to discuss how they were feeling after the 15 March tragedy, and in early May she interviewed the Chilean photographer Peter Adones, whose photographs of the aftermath of the shooting were featured in international media.

CINTHYA IS not necessarily representative of Steudomonía as a whole. The students – and the topics their programmes cover – are extraordinarily varied.

When Laura Gartner proposed Steudomonía, she was also thinking about another type of student.

“We wanted to reach students who didn’t mingle, that maybe felt a bit isolated and lonely and awkward.”

In particular, she thought Steudomonía had the potential to enrich the lives of students from less individualistic and outgoing cultures,
Fabio Silveira came across STeudaemonia at an Interpreting New Zealand celebration. Fabio was there in his capacity as a Portuguese–English interpreter. Laura Gartner from Plains FM was another of the guests.

“Laura and I ended up chatting and I mentioned that I was a student. That’s how things started,” he says.

It was not that he needed another commitment. Fabio is currently studying a PhD in storm water management, with an emphasis on surface water quality. He is also a research and teaching assistant, a partner and a recent father.

So far, Fabio has recorded three STeudaemonia shows, the first about a humanitarian engineering diploma programme and the second and third about outdoor activities and well-being. All have been in English.

His guests are usually locals. One is an office colleague, who took part in the Godzone adventure race. Another is a former manager of the Temple Basin ski field in backcountry Canterbury.

Lana Hart, who trains and mentors the student broadcasters, says that most are more interested in learning how to structure their broadcast content and conduct an interview than in the details of sound production and editing.

Fabio, on the other hand, knows how to edit video and is looking forward to learning how to edit sound using the studio’s software. For his next broadcast he will be taking a portable recorder into the backcountry.

In the future, Lana thinks the students will increasingly record programmes to their mobile phones.

“I love the idea of taking the studio out into the world. We just need to meet the challenge of getting good enough sound quality.”
including Christchurch’s contingent of Japanese English-language learners.

This has turned out to be the case, with Japanese students eagerly signing up to become STeudaemonia broadcasters.

“You have these 15- or 16-year-olds who have come here to learn English, and within two months of their arrival they have their own show.

“They really enjoy it. It gives them confidence, and they are broadcasting in English, which is quite brave,” says Lana.

In one broadcast, three Japanese students discuss in English the educational differences between Japan and New Zealand, mostly talking about how much less regimented the New Zealand environment is.

The conversation bounces back and forth, broken by giggling as each student picks up the thread.

The theme of STeudaemonia shows is well-being and safety, with the content ranging from the practical (dealing with exam stress) to the fun (why food is amazing) to the deeply serious.

“Two of our students who have been at it for a year-and-half are doing a series on youth suicide and why people in this country have a higher rate of youth suicide compared to people in more stressful countries, such as Korea,” says Lana.

As the students gain experience, she is increasingly able to leave them to it.

“We issue them with security cards so that they can get in after hours, and they can book whatever time they need. We want to give them the freedom to be independent broadcasters.”

WHAT HAVE THE students gained from STeudaemonia? Last year, Plains FM put together a questionnaire to find out.

“The three top responses were contributing to New Zealand life and helping other people, developing English skills, and feeling more a part of New Zealand society,” says Lana.

There are benefits for listeners too. STeudaemonia reassures them that are they not alone in finding it difficult to understand Kiwi slang, or balancing study and work, or keeping warm during the Christchurch winter.

It provides evidence that other people are leading rich and fulfilling lives in this strange, new country.

“It’s a wonderful project, and we are so grateful to the Ministry of Education for supporting us,” says Lana.

This is the first time a specific programme has been supported by the Ministry of Education for a targeted student community, and Plains FM is developing a resource guide for other radio stations that are interested in setting up their own projects.

AS FOR CINTHYA, she has begun letting people know about her show using social media.

“My focus is to let people know how I live here in New Zealand, about my studies, about everything.”

Her listeners span the globe. “I have friends from Europe or Peru who say ‘I listened to you.’ They say, ‘Your voice is lovely on the radio.’”

### Community Access radio stations

1. Planet FM (Auckland)  
   www.planetaudio.org.nz

2. Free FM (Waikato)  
   www.freefm.org.nz

3. Radio Kidnappers (Hawke’s Bay)  
   www.radiokidnappers.org.nz

4. Access Radio Taranaki  
   www.accessradiotaranaki.com

5. Access Manawatu  
   www.accesismanawatu.co.nz

6. Coast Access FM (Kapiti/Horowhenua)  
   coastaccessradio.org.nz

7. Arrow FM (Wairarapa)  
   www.arrowfm.co.nz

8. Wellington Access Radio  
   accessradio.org.nz

9. Fresh FM (Nelson/Tasman Region)  
   www.freshfm.net

10. Plains FM 96.9 (Christchurch)  
    plainsfm.org.nz

11. Otago Access Radio (Dunedin)  
    www.oar.org.nz

12. Radio Southland  
    radiosouthland.org.nz
Christine Dorsey likes to be methodical. Whenever the Waitaki Newcomers Network Coordinator is contacted by a newcomer to Oamaru, she adds them to her database. Over time the number adds up.

Today her database lists 420 families and 43 different ethnicities, and every Monday, everyone who has signed up receives an email newsletter itemising the events of the week ahead.

In this not-so-unusual July week, there is an IELTS English language class on Monday; a walking group and conversation English classes on Tuesday; a meet-and-share for migrants on Thursday; casual coffee and end-of-week drinks on Friday; and a call for people willing to volunteer to help the local organisation that runs the vintage train around Oamaru’s Victorian precinct and harbour.

Born and raised in Oamaru, Christine went on to teach in Mid-Canterbury, before the pull of family brought her back. Initially she taught at Kakanui School, just down the coast, before taking up the position of Waitaki Newcomers Network Coordinator in 2012, and, a few years later, adding the role of Migrant Support Coordinator as well.

Christine likes Oamaru: the beaches and harbour, the high-country lakes an hour’s drive away, and the progressive and increasingly diverse local community she and her family interact with daily.
Many of the houses in Waitaki were built before the arrival of double glazing, good insulation and home ventilation systems.

Over the winter months, they need to be periodically aired out to prevent mould and condensation build-up.

Migrants are often unsure of this – or of that staunch old-school energy-saving Kiwi tradition of staying warm by adding layers of clothing, even when indoors.

This applies to migrants from regions with warmer climates – the Pacific Islands, say, or South East Asia – and from temperate places like Europe or North America, where the housing is more climate-appropriately built.

“I am forever visiting houses where the heat pump is absolutely blasting, and everyone is in shorts and T-shirts,” says Christine.

When couples arrive with infants, she will often take them to the local Plunket for advice on how to dress children warmly. If a house has a wood-burner, she will emphasise the need to put aside plenty of wood in time for it to dry before winter.

Even maintaining a garden can pose challenges. If there is a rose bed, when and how should the plants be pruned? If the terms of a property agreement specify spraying the weeds, how and when do you go about this?

“I am a bit of a gardener, so I can usually help,” says Christine.

In her Migrant Support Coordinator role, Christine Dorsey tries to reach families soon after their arrival, often working with migrant women who are dealing with social isolation.

“The husband comes and gets a job, and the partner is stuck at home with small children, limited language skills and no transport, because they don’t have a licence.

“That’s where a lot of my time goes – making sure that they and their children are enrolled with a doctor before they get sick and that they do know about the local play groups.”

Once she has formed a relationship, families often turn to her for help – regardless of the hour – making her 15-hour-a-week position something much more.

That help might be talking to a property manager or dealing with a medical emergency.

“Last week I ended up sitting outside Accident and Emergency at the local hospital, supporting a family with sick child.

“You end up doing all sorts of things.”

Christine is currently working on a welcome pack containing information for new arrivals.

This being a Friday, she has just returned from the coffee group, an older group, many of them retirees.

Yesterday she was part of the meet-and-share for migrants.

“We had people from Hong Kong, Korea, the UK, Hungary, China and Brazil. It was a real spread.”

THE OAMARU CHRISTINE and her generation grew up in was a very different place. Oamaru has a long-established Chinese-Kiwi population associated with market gardening, so she remembers Chinese-Kiwi classmates. Otherwise the local community was overwhelmingly European.

Only in quite recent times has Oamaru become noticeably more multicultural and cosmopolitan.

Helen Algar, who heads the Waitaki Safer Communities Network – a coalition with more than 144 community organisation members – and who has lived in Oamaru since age seven, says that the presence of more migrants in the community became noticeable in the early 2000s and has become more so in the past decade.

WHEN THE WAITAKI Multicultural Council formed in 2008, it was an organisation whose time had come.

A year later, it won the supreme award at the TrustPower Oamaru community awards, following up with a New Zealand Diversity Award in 2012.

The Council was founded by a Filipino migrant – and like that migrant, many other newcomers have proven more than willing to help out later arrivals.

They are people like Linton Winder who runs Confident Kiwi Conversations, an initiative to
When migrants to Oamaru tell Christine Dorsey about their concerns, they largely fall into three categories: employment, making friends, and mastering English, both the formal and colloquial varieties.

It is with the last of these that Oamaru has faced problems. The nearest English Language Partners centre is in Timaru and the services of Literacy North Otago, which Christine praises, are only available to migrants who, often after some years in New Zealand, have been given New Zealand residence.

Christine has addressed this in a number of ways. First, with the assistance of Lottery Grants funding, she arranged for classes that teach the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) curriculum. (Currently, 16 students are undertaking the eight-week series of Tuesday night lessons run by Stephanie Black.) Second, she pioneered a programme that buddies locals with newcomers who want help with their English.

“I really didn’t know how that would go,” she confesses. “I thought I might get five or six people; I got 22.”

Christine acts as matchmaker, buddying-up mentors and migrants she thinks will hit it off.

“For the most part, it has worked well, and some real friendships have formed.”

Another spin-off has been Confident Kiwi Conversations, an initiative to improve non-residents’ English skills led by UK migrant Linton Winder, a former ecologist and entomologist who now runs a high-end watch repair business in what he has called “the best town in New Zealand.”

“We have quite a few young Asian people who work in the shops in town, and they would say to me, ‘We want to communicate with the locals in the community, but they say these weird things that we don’t understand,’” says Christine.

“That’s where Linton comes in. In Linton’s weekly gathering, the group discusses the event of the week and how to make sense of colloquial Kiwi English.

“Linton says it is the most fun he has all week,” says Christine.

These three initiatives provide for a range of needs, says Christine. “If you need to do IELTS you sign up for classes, if you need to cover slang, you go to Linton’s, and if it’s one-on-one work we’ll get you a buddy.”
The play ran over two nights. Frances had worked with the Pacific community to promote the production, and the first night included a buffet meal.

To coincide with the play, the Forrester Gallery ran an exhibition called Pasifika Treasures, which included items from private collections, artists, weavers, local schools and a collaborative installation from a local rugby team.

“Your could visit Pasifika Treasures, have a meal, and then go in and see the show. It was fantastic,” says Sandra.

“A lot of people came along who had never been in the Opera House.”

AS THE LOCAL demography changes, Oamaru is working hard to keep pace.

“One thing I have learned is that everything takes time,” says Helen Algar of Safer Waitaki.

“All of us – Safer Waitaki, the Multicultural Council and the Waitaki District Council – are determined to make inclusion part of everything we do.”

Oamaru seems to sit at a sweet spot: small enough for people to know and trust one another; large enough to make things happen.

“We are good at identifying and filling gaps,” says Sandra Tonkin of the Multicultural Council.

“We are the little community that could.”

Launching during Mental Health Awareness Week in 2018, New Nesters is a short documentary exploring the lives of newcomers to the Waitaki district. In a series of interviews, it addresses themes of acceptance, social anxiety, and how, by overcoming cultural barriers, migrants are creating new lives for themselves and their families.

The documentary was produced by Maria Buldain of the Waitaki Multicultural Council, who runs Oamaru’s Migrants Meet-and-Share Group, and made by locals Gamel O’Brien and Bridget Ellis.

The documentary premiered before a packed audience in the Oamaru Public Library.

View the movie at youtu.be/zHoJ7-DfWrMwatch?v=zHoJ7-DfWrM
For large parts of its existence, Oamaru has been a town of migrants. In the 1870s and 1880s, when those grandiose whitestone buildings the town is known for were being built, the migrants were mostly British, with a concentration of lowland Scots.

Today Oamaru’s migrants are coming from a broader range of source countries, including Pacific nations like Tuvalu and, in particular, Tonga.

By some estimates, somewhere between one in six and one in four of this small South Island town’s 14,000 inhabitants identify as Tongan.

Why would someone choose to move from a tropical island like Tonga to Oamaru?

At first glance, the proposition does not seem that attractive. To take Tonga as an example, the average temperature in July is a balmy 21°C; in Oamaru, it is a nippy 5.7 °C. In Tonga, the beaches are golden, and the water aquamarine.

In Oamaru, a grey-green sea surges against grey sand and shingle. But Oamaru has other merits.

In 2017, Tonga’s GDP per capita (purchasing power parity) was $5,900; in New Zealand, the equivalent figure was $39,000.

In Tonga, unemployment and underemployment is high. In Waitaki, workers for the meat processing plants and dairy factories are in high demand.

In comparison to other parts of New Zealand, Oamaru is affordable. In the South Auckland suburb of Otara, the median house price is around $550,000. In Oamaru, the median house price is around $320,000.

It has a tightly-knit and supportive Pacific community, one that on weekends finds expression on the rugby fields and in the 11 or more Pacific church congregations.

But New Zealand is far from a land of milk and honey, and some Pacific families struggle.

The wages may be higher than in places like Tonga, but so are the expenses. Rent, transport, food, and heating eat into income. Many migrants will be sending money to family back home.

And New Zealand lacks the sort of informal exchange economy or extended family support network many migrants will be used to.

Some migrants will find it hard to understand and speak Kiwi English.

New Zealand winters are cold, and the available housing is often cold, damp, overcrowded or inadequate.

Then there are those unfamiliar basics to come to grips with: enrolling the children at school, signing up with a Primary Health Organisation, or getting a driver licence.

Alongside the support of the Pacific community, the support of employers and the wider community is vital to helping these migrants and their families settle successfully.
The Pacific Access Category

One of the ways first-generation Pacific migrants arrive in New Zealand is through the Pacific Access Category (PAC) ballot.

Set up to recognise the special relationship New Zealand has with its Pacific neighbours – and modelled on the similar but separate Samoan Quota – the PAC sets aside 250 places for Tonga, 250 people from Fiji, 75 from Tuvalu and 75 from Kiribati.

The PAC ballot – known locally as the ‘lulu’ in Tonga – is open to anyone between the ages of 18 and 45, regardless of qualification, and is conducted as a random draw.

The ‘winners’ of the ballot are invited to apply to migrate to New Zealand with their immediate families on the condition that they secure a job offer – which does not always happen.

Each family member who migrates to New Zealand counts against the quota.

Tongans in New Zealand

60,336 people identifying as Tongan lived in New Zealand in 2013

- 59.8% were born in New Zealand
- 77.8% lived in Auckland
- 19.4 years median age (half were younger and half were older)
The Pacific community is well and truly settled and very much part of Oamaru, but to see it clearly, you need to visit the town’s workplaces, churches, sports fields and, best of all, its schools.

At Waitaki Boys’ High School and Waitaki Girls’ High School, about one in ten students identify as Pacific people.

At Pembroke School, which caters for around 250 year-1-to-6 (ages 4 to 10) students, the figure is about one in five.

And at tiny Oamaru North School, another year-1-to-6 school, it is around one in two.

Many are the children of Pacific newcomers who have arrived in Oamaru over the past decade in search of a better future for their families.

On the success of these children hang the hopes and dreams of their families and the Pacific community.

HANA HALALELE WAS a rarity when she arrived in Oamaru in 1985 with her mother and her siblings. At that time, she says, it was not an easy town to grow up in if you looked different.

“This was a town with a lot of white privilege. I experienced racism and racial profiling, and I grew up with quite negative feelings about the place.”

Nonetheless, she did well, studying at Waitaki Girls’ High School and going on to complete a degree in family and community studies at Otago University. Many of her classmates would have then moved north to pursue career opportunities. Hana didn’t.

“I reflected on my childhood and my journey, and I think that’s what brought me back – I felt that I really needed to come back and serve the community.”

She began what would become a 17-year career as a probation officer in Timaru, commuting from Oamaru, married, and had two daughters.

This is how she found herself a member of a school board of trustees and in Christchurch at an Education Summit.

At the Summit, “I could see that there was a need to encourage more Pacific parents to take part in their children’s education and learning,” she says.

ALSO ATTENDING THE Summit was the Hon Jenny Salesa, the Minister of Ethnic Communities and New Zealand’s first Tongan-born, Tongan-speaking Member of Parliament. Hana asked her for support. As a result, officials...
from the Ministry of Education and Otago-based Ministry staff visited Oamaru to meet with the Pacific community.

Soon afterwards, a group of Oamaru Pacific parents who were passionate about the value of education established Tālanga a’ Waitaki.

Later that year, Tālanga a’ Waitaki ran the first PowerUP programme under the umbrella organisation of Literacy North Otago.

In 2019, the umbrella organisation for the Tālanga a’ Waitaki PowerUP programme is the Oamaru Pacific Island Community Group.


PowerUP was designed to educate parents about the New Zealand education system and how to support their children in their learning journey.

It launched in 2013, beginning with sites in Auckland and Wellington and gathering momentum as it went.

Today there are 39 PowerUP PowerStations and the programme includes hundreds of schools, from Whangarei in the north to Invercargill in the south.

This year, the Ministry of Education is also trialling a 10-week parent-only programme in Auckland and Wellington delivered by key churches called PowerUP Au Lotu.

Justin Kaufana grew up in Oamaru, then moved to the United States of America, where he married and set up a successful business, before eventually deciding to return home. Justin Kaufana is first counsellor in the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. He is also on the Board of Trustees for Fenwick Primary School. Justin is currently setting up a new business in Oamaru.

Justin is the Chair of Tālanga a’ Waitaki.
Silou Temoana is Secretary of the Oamaru Tuvalu Community, the Deputy Treasurer and former Chair of Oamaru’s Pacific Island Community Group and a member of the Board of Trustees for Waitaki Boys’ High School. Silou and her family moved to Oamaru in 2008 from Auckland, feeling that it would be a better place for the children to grow up. At the time, there were three or four Tuvaluan families in Oamaru. That number has since grown to about 20 families and 100 people today. This is tiny compared to the local Tongan population – but then Tonga’s population is ten times larger than Tuvalu’s.

“One way or other, we are all related to one another,” she jokes. “I have a passion to help our people, because I have been there, and it was not easy,” she says. “My garage is full of stuff for people who need help, especially new migrants.”

When local employers conduct Skype interviews with Tuvaluans, Silou will sometimes be asked to sit in on the interview, and when families first arrive, she will sometimes host them.

Silou is committed to the value of education. In May, she graduated from Massey University with Bachelor of Arts majoring in Social Policy, a degree she studied for paper-by-paper over a number of years.

She lets her children know: “I have never missed a parent-teacher interview.”

Two of her sons are at high school. A third is at university.

Silou is a Tālanga a’ Waitaki Power Up Parent Programme Facilitator.

This will draw on the strength of church pastoral care, inter-faith connections and networks.

IN THE SCHOOL hall at Oamaru Intermediate School, Tālanga ‘a Waitaki PowerUP 2019 begins to take shape. This is the second year the programme has run. Fourteen more evenings like this lie ahead.

Troops of children have been sent off to gather chairs, and, at the door, greetings and hugs are being exchanged. People have come from as far away as Timaru, an hour’s drive north, and Dunedin, an hour-and-a-half’s drive south.

There are parents, children and other whānau, teachers, members of the wider school community and Ministry of Education staff.

No one is quite sure how many people will come, but come they do, padded up against the crisp winter evening, and gradually packing out the sports stands.

At the back of the hall, set out on tables, a feast awaits: chunks of ham on the bone, potato salads, pots of sapasui (chop suey) and slabs of banana cake. Every PowerUP session starts with a lotu or prayer and a shared meal.

Parent Programme Facilitator Justin Kaufana introduces the steering committee. “It has been said that people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care,” he tells the audience.

“And one thing I know about these guys is that they care deeply, they care for your families, they want you to succeed.”

Hana Halalele leads a call-and-response from the gathering.

“Talofa Lava.”

Talofa Lava a chorus of children’s voices comes back

“Mālō e Lelei...”

The evening has begun.

AFTER A SHARED meal, the gathering breaks out into groups and disperses into the classrooms. The under-five children interact with Early Childhood Education teachers; the primary school students are given tips on study preparation and time management; the year 9 and 10 students are given guidance about goal setting and subject choice; and the secondary school students are...
Siesina Latu moved to Timaru in South Canterbury from Japan with her professional-rugby-player husband 14 years ago. She works for Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, dividing her time between Timaru and Oamaru. Outside of work, she is the President of the Tongan Society of South Canterbury.

Siesina and the Society are very active in South Canterbury’s schools, holding events during Tongan Language Week and running two homework groups, one for primary school students and the other for secondary school students.

“We want to help children develop a sense of identity and belonging,” she says.

In 2018, three local schools took part in a School Pacific Day, and 12 schools are taking part in 2019. Siesina and the Tongan Society also work alongside the South Canterbury Rugby Board and local rugby clubs to ensure the well-being of Pacific players – whether they be students on sports scholarships or workers who have come to New Zealand under the Pacific Access Category or the Samoan Quota.

“As a society, we have a duty of care,” she says.

In 2019, a Pacific Talanoa Day held at a local stadium and featuring New Zealand Rugby ambassador and former All Black Keven Mealamu, brought together the clubs, the Rugby Board and the players to talk about expectations, commitments and behaviours.

“I heard one man say, ‘I have learned more today than I have in the 15 years I have spent working with Pacific Islanders,’” she says.

Siesina is an active Tālanga a’ Waikato PowerUP supporter.
given an array of help in everything from study tips, to subject-specific tutoring and career advice.

A walk-through of the classrooms reveals PowerUP in action as a series of moments: a ukulele group being taught chords, strumming fingers at the ready; a student and teacher talking intently in sign language; a student pursing her mouth in concentration as she writes.

It is back in the school hall, where the parents’ group is gathered, that the focus is most intense.

What is the NCEA? What are the educational opportunities for their children once they leave school? What should parents do if they feel the school is not meeting their child’s needs?

ODDLY ENOUGH, ONE of the measures of Oamaru PowerUp’s success is that following the 2018 programme, parents proved more willing to voice complaints.

Another measure may be the increasing number of Pacific parents who have been elected to school boards.

This is why they are in New Zealand. Like those who came to Oamaru before them, they want better lives for their families. They are committed to seeing their children do well. So is Oamaru.

The night closes with speeches, performances, celebrations of student performance and a lotu or prayer. Next week, it all begins again.
Local Settlement Networks bring together local settlement stakeholders to share information and best practice and to work together towards shared goals. If you want to find a local settlement network, would like to help set up a network yourself, or have other questions, contact a Regional Relationship Manager or the Pacific Skills Relationship Manager.