One of the strengths of a university is its ability to bring together talented people from a variety of fields.

An outstanding example is the original opera based on the life of artist Len Lye that premieres at the Maidment Theatre on 5 September.

“Len Lye was a multi-media artist,” comments the librettist, Emeritus Professor Roger Horrocks. “So it’s appropriate that the opera combines music, poetry, drama, moving images and dance.”

He adds: “Specialisation is important in a university but so is collaboration. This project started with two people – composer Eve de Castro-Robinson and myself as writer – but there are now over 70 others, with many different areas of the university involved.”

Naturally the Music School is central to this project, with Professor Uwe Grodd as Artistic Director and conductor, Te Oti Rakena as one of the cast, Dean Sky-Lucas as repetiteur, and many others from the School involved, such as senior students in the chorus.

Drama expert Associate Professor Murray Edmond has come from the English Department to act as stage director. Emily Campbell, a lecturer in Dance at the National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries (NICAI), is in charge of choreography. Roger Horrocks was the former head of Film, Television and Media Studies. And there are specialists from Fine Arts, from NICAI’s Jazz programme, and from other areas of the University.

“It’s the value of a campus, and of a cluster like the National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries,” remarks Roger. “Different enthusiasms rub together, and new projects result. I think there is more interaction between disciplines today than ever before.”

Not that everyone involved in the Len Lye opera is from the University. There are also graduates, like singer James Harrison who plays the title role. He has been leading a distinguished opera career in the UK, but he was sufficiently intrigued by this project to return to Auckland for it. Another graduate is singer Lilia Carpinelli who has been first prize-winner in three Italian opera competitions. The striking moving images which represent another dimension of the opera, are by Shirley Horrocks, a graduate of English and Italian who has gone on to become a leading New Zealand film-maker.

The large team for the opera say they have had great pleasure working together. Roger adds: “It takes a whole creative village to make something like an opera. It’s the arts equivalent of a big science team. It’s also very relevant to its subject – the great New Zealand artist Len Lye – because he saw all the arts as linked, and he moved easily from one to another.”

Composer Dr Eve de Castro-Robinson calls this “a 21st century opera,” and it will certainly be a highly original and colourful experience for both eyes and ears.

Len Lye the opera premieres at the Maidment Theatre on 5 September. Bookings at the Maidment www.maidment.auckland.ac.nz
The NICAI Dance project is a collaborative event between Auckland Art Gallery Toi O Tamaki and the Dance Studies Programme at the National Institute of Creative Arts & Industries. The project’s aim is to get primary and tertiary students to engage deeply with the visual and dance arts by investigating them in combination.

Twenty-two dance students from The University of Auckland choreographed a piece in response to an artwork on display at the gallery. These were performed in 30-minute sequences throughout the space over three mornings. The dancers’ responses to the works are framed by the architecture of the gallery and create moments of delight and curiosity for the children,” says project initiator Dr Carol Brown, senior lecturer at the Dance Studies Programme at The University of Auckland

Third-year dance students Salote Nita Latu and Santana Schmidt approached their artwork backwards, swinging each other around and reaching for the stars as they circumnavigated Filipe Tohi’s “Makamata Kupenga (Eyes Net)” stone sculpture, dancing rhythmically to a captivated audience. The Fala weave of their costumes correlated to the etching in the sculpture.

Dancer Maeling Davids writhed like pouring liquid, mimicking Daniel von Sturmer’s “Painted Video”, while Lindsay Clements hid coyly behind her arms in response to Annette Messager’s artwork called “Secret”.

The NICAI Dance Project is an accumulation of four weeks work for the third-year students, who developed the dance pieces specifically for their audience. The small groups of primary school children had all taken part in dance workshops led by Masters student, Sarah Knox, at their schools prior to the event.

A very positive outcome of the conference, attended by 250 people, was the chance it gave participants to extend their networks and to gain understanding of the perspectives of others. Said Ian Lambie, “It was a very good illustration of the way the University can be strongly networked into the community.”

Ian sees this conference as the first step for him towards holding regular youth justice forums, likely to take place four times a year at Tamaki Campus. The focus will be on a broad range of areas that include consideration of practical or ethical issues arising in the planning or delivery of programmes, and will provide a showcase for research and a means of disseminating its findings to practitioners who work in the Youth Justice Sector across the Auckland region.

The first youth justice forum will be held on 14 September, 1.45pm, Tamaki Campus. For further information, contact Sheryl Robertson on s.robertson@auckland.ac.nz.
Staff from The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Auckland gathered with guests from the local Taiwanese community and with University staff, students and librarians at a ceremony held in the University Library for the donation of a very special publication.

Lincoln Ting, Director General of TECO, presented the University Library with this important collection of reproductions of treaties between the Republic of China and Western powers since the mid-nineteenth century.

Entitled A Century of Resilient Tradition: Exhibition of the Republic of China’s Diplomatic Archives, the book is a valuable reference for people who are interested in the Republic of China’s diplomatic history and the international relationships between the Republic of China and other countries during this period.

The publication contains photomechanical copies of 88 treaties and diplomatic documents with descriptions and brief introductions. These treaties were signed by the Chinese governments, both Ch’ing Dynasty and the Republic of China, with many other countries such as Great Britain, United States, Japan, France, and Portugal, dating back to 1842.

This important collection of diplomatic documents also reflects the experiences of China in its transition from an old empire to a modern nation. The first treaty in the collection is the Treaty of Nanking between China and Great Britain, which was the first international treaty signed between China and a Western power, and signalled the beginning of a new phase in the Chinese history.

The appendices of the book include a list of the Ch’ing Dynasty’s treaties and agreements that have been preserved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China.

The Associate University Librarian, Hester Mountifield, gratefully acknowledged the generous donation from TECO.

Poetry award

Shift, a collection of poems by Rhian Gallagher, published by Auckland University Press, has won the 2012 NZ Post Book Award for Poetry.

Shift encompasses a departure from London, where Rhian Gallagher lived for 18 years, and a return to the pines and paddocks of her native South Island. It was described by convenor of judges Chris Bourke as an example of lyrical poetry at its very best.

Rhian’s editor at AUP, Anna Hodge, says: “Shift is a book of slow burn and quiet intensity that reveals Rhian as a writer of huge talent, craft and warmth.”

Best design

The finalists for New Zealand’s Best Design Awards have been announced and Auckland University Press features in two categories.

Athfield Architects, designed by Spencer Levine and Katrina Duncan, is a finalist in the Editorial and Books section.

The new Auckland University Press logo and identity, designed by Alit Group and launched in April this year, is a finalist in the category Identity Development (Small Scale).

The annual New Zealand Best Design Awards are an initiative of the Designers Institute of New Zealand to showcase excellence in graphic, spatial, product and interactive design.

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I am very pleased to advise that, at its meeting of 20 August, the University Council approved the final version of the Strategic Plan 2013-2020.

The creation of this Plan, which will guide all major decisions in the University over the next eight years, is the culmination of two years’ work. Throughout 2011, Council addressed strategic issues facing the University in a series of workshops. This led to the development of a draft Plan, which in March was approved by Council for consultation.

Over the next four months, some 900 staff, student representatives, alumni and friends of the University attended over 30 meetings to be informed about and provide comment on the draft Plan. Our Strategic Plan website attracted about 5,700 page views and some 79 formal submissions were received.

Those submissions have led to numerous changes to the Plan, but particularly around four major themes which were the subject of multiple comments:

- Whether equity groups (particularly Māori and Pacific) were sufficiently emphasised and targets specified for their participation and success in the University
- Whether the way the research objectives were structured protected or exposed the arts and related disciplines, and whether sufficient emphasis was given to the importance of multi-disciplinary research groups
- Whether there was a need for specific targets around fundraising
- Whether sufficient emphasis had been placed on a target for the University in regards to its place in international rankings

These have been addressed in the final version of the Plan, a copy of which is available at http://bit.ly/draftsp together with a list of those who made submissions and a summary of submissions.

The new Strategic Plan plots a very ambitious course for the University over the next eight years, one that if achieved will rank us among the best universities in Australia, the UK and Canada. This will not be easily done, but as the last seven years have shown, we are able to rapidly bring about positive change in the University. In the meantime, my thanks go to all those members of our community who have contributed so positively to this important process.
The study may provide evidence for the role that biomechanics plays in the development of gout and provide justification for future studies assessing gait modification and foot stress re-balance as strategies in the clinical management of gout, says Justin.

Others who received AMRF awards are Associate Professor Alan Davidson and Dr Teresa Holm (Molecular Medicine and Pathology), Dr Justin Dean (Physiology), Associate Professor Geoffrey Krissansen, Glenn Bel, PhD Student, and Yi Yang, technician (Molecular Medicine and Pathology), Dr Trecia Woudies, Associate Professor Linda LaGasse and Professor Barry Lester (Psychological Medicine), Dr Julie Lim, Dr Angus Grey and Professor Paul Donaldson (Optometry and Vision Science), Dr Euphemia Leung and Professor Bruce Baguley (Auckland Cancer Society Research Centre), and Dr Peter Huggard (Graduate Unit).

Funding has been provided for visiting academic, Professor Christina Puchalski, Director of the George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health, University of Washington. The Sir Douglas Robb Memorial Fund Award has been given to Dr Jennifer Utter (Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Population Health), and Dr Siouxsie Wiles (Molecular Medicine and Pathology) has received the Sir Douglas Robb Memorial Fund Award.
University of Auckland research published last week in the journal Science tackles a 200-year-old question and supports the controversial hypothesis that Indo-European languages originated in Anatolia 8,000 to 9,500 years ago and spread with the expansion of farming.

Using methods developed to trace the geographic origin of viral outbreaks such as HIV and H1N1, the research shows that the spread of the languages is consistent with an origin in Anatolia in present-day Turkey.

“If you know how viruses are related to one another you can trace back through their ancestry and find out where they originated,” explains lead researcher Dr Quentin Atkinson from the Department of Psychology. “We’ve used those methods and applied them to languages.”

Dr Atkinson worked with researchers from Europe and North America as well as with computer scientists Dr Remco Bouckaert and Associate Professor Alexei Drummond and fellow psychologist Professor Russell Gray, all from The University of Auckland.

The study examined basic vocabulary terms and geographic information from 103 ancient and modern languages. The location and age of the languages’ common ancestor supported the Anatolian hypothesis.

The findings are consistent with the expansion of agriculture into Europe via the Balkans, reaching the edge of Western European 5,000 years ago. They are also consistent with genetic and skull-measurement data which indicates an Anatolian contribution to the European gene pool.

The work follows a 2003 Nature paper from the same research group, which first used methods from evolutionary biology to build the languages’ family tree. The age of the tree was consistent with Anatolian origins as opposed to the more conventional view that the languages emerged thousands of years later near the Caspian Sea.

“The two competing theories imply two different ages and locations for the origin of the language family. We initially used the age of the family to test the theories,” says Quentin of the original work.

While the findings made a strong case for the Anatolian hypothesis, some members of the research community remained unconvinced.

The current research, which includes both geographic and historical data, confirms the languages’ Anatolian origins. “It reinforces our earlier findings, and applies exciting new methods from epidemiology to study languages,” says Quentin. “We’ve developed an entirely new methodology for inferring human prehistory from language data. It allows us to place these language family trees on a map in space and time and play out histories over the landscape.”

The Indo-European languages, a family of several hundred languages and dialects, are spoken by almost three billion native speakers and include languages such as English, Spanish, French, German, Hindi and Bengali.

The conventional “steppe hypothesis” posits that the languages originated in the Pontic steppe region north of the Caspian Sea, and were spread into Europe and the Near East by Kurgan semi-nomadic pastoralists beginning 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. The “Anatolian hypothesis” argues that the languages spread with the expansion of agriculture from Anatolia, beginning 8,000 to 9,000 years ago.
From the collection

With her husband the eminent psychiatrist Fraser McDonald, Jacqueline Fahey lived her married life in hospital houses until 1984.

Moving to French Bay in Titirangi after a decade living at Carrington, where Fraser was Medical Superintendent, Fahey continued to use her domestic life as the subject matter for her work. Often, fraught family relationships directed her pictorial narratives, with the artist invoking classical mythology to give her imagery resonance.

In this instance, the three figures depicted are her elder sister, Barbara, who wears the hat in the foreground and gestures through a patch of sunshine yellow; the artist’s youngest daughter, Emily, sitting back on the couch with her feet up on the Victorian deal table, and the matriarch Margaret Fahey, seen in profile at right, seated in a roll arm chair. In the recently-published second volume of Jacqueline Fahey’s autobiography, Before I Forget, there is an explanation of the greater significance of this grouping: “Mum had stayed with us at Carrington after a fall once, and I’d done a lot of drawings of her. Back in Carrington then I’d had a lot to do looking after her and I didn’t want to stress myself out, so I had stopped painting. But I could not control my looking and seeing and took to drawing again, often random and on-the-hoof stuff. Now in Titirangi, seeing more of Mum, those drawings come back to me.”

This explains the sketchy, seemingly unfinished aspect of this work, where black outlines predominate and the colouring has been abandoned. A shallow interior space gives on to two large picture windows at the back, with fluffy clouds in a blue sky and a flash of green bush visible, the serenity of nature beyond the living room contrasting with the chaos within it. With its profusion of diagonals and tangle of lines, the scene spills toward the viewer like a tilting stage set.

Aspects of the tableau are recognisable as symbols of the traditional realm of the unrelenting tasks of housewifery: the basket of unfolded washing in its wicker basket and the skins of wool on the floor. Flitting birds, found elsewhere in Fahey’s work where female characters are shown speaking, animate the air in concordance with the gesturing of Barbara’s left hand. Central to the composition is the three-legged Victorian gypsy fortune-telling table, topped by letters, with its silken fringe placating, soothing, and distressed in its profusion of diagonals and tangle of lines, the scene spills toward the viewer like a tilting stage set.

“MUM” is writ large, but indistinctly, and similarly, the mother figure is almost indecipherable, hidden beneath foliage and scribbled lines. Only her stoic profile seems consistent: a sort of Greek tragedy-cum-King Lear rendering of my mother’s decline. Her handmaids in her travails were my daughter Emily and my sister Barbara. They were placating, soothing, and distressed in themselves. A grieving Greek chorus. Now in Titirangi I was able to resolve the compositions and carry those ideas to fruition...The maiden, the mature woman and the hag. A female holy trinity, an eternal cycle. Her shrines had been established at waterfalls in Ireland. Later the new priests of Christianity replaced her with the Virgin Mary.” Typically, Fahey loops back from her own relationships through Catholicism to invoke her Irish ancestry, giving a political and religious twist to her narrative of connection, while noisily dispelling the ideal of intergenerational familial harmony.

Jacqueline Fahey, Barbara Speaks to Mum, 1986, 510 x 1040mm, mixed media on paper

Before I Forget

In the tradition of romance novels, Jacqueline Fahey brought the curtain down after her marriage to Fraser McDonald at the end of her first memoir, Something for the Birds.

In Before I Forget she continues the story from this happy-ever-after moment, charting her life since 1960.

While raising three daughters and many dogs, handling the deaths of her parents and battling the politics of mental hospitals, the expectations on doctors’ wives and the perils of a boozy culture, Jacqueline Fahey remained committed to her painting life – “the art world where I could be something like myself”.

From Porirua Mental Hospital to Melbourne (where Fraser trained as a psychiatrist), and from Kingseat Hospital to Carrington (where Jacqueline had a run-in with Titewhai Harawira), she describes a brimming, shifting life of family, politics, ideals and art.

A distinguished artist, especially known for her paintings of domestic and suburban life, Jacqueline Fahey is also a writer. She was one of the first New Zealand artists to work explicitly from a woman’s perspective and in the late 1980s became an influential lecturer at Elam School of Fine Arts.

Books
THURSDAY 30 AUGUST

**Pukena Arts**
9.30am-3.30pm, venue tba.
Pukena Arts exposes Māori and Pacific students who are nearing the end of their undergraduate degree or just beginning postgraduate studies to academic, scholarships and employment possibilities.
Queries to Peni Fa’alogo, Arts Equity Coordinator, p. faalogo@auckland.ac.nz

**Innovation in Practice series symposium**
Whānau Ora in the social service landscape.
1-4pm J1 Lecture Theatre, Gate 3, 74 Epsom Ave, Epsom.
Hosted by the School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work.
RSVP to ma.barnett@auckland.ac.nz

**Technique+: Teaching technical writing**
3-5pm, CAD Seminar Rm, 2nd Floor, 18 Waterloo Quadrant.
We will discuss and practise techniques for working technical writing micro-lessons into our teaching. Further, we will think about ways to “customise” our technical writing: to individualise and personalise it; this is technique+. Register at www.cad.auckland.ac.nz/workshops or phone CAD reception at ext 88140 for assistance.

FRIDAY 31 AUGUST

**Inaugural lecture**
By new professors at The University of Auckland
Prof Bernd Krauskopf, Mathematics: Geometry of chaos .3pm Large Chemistry Lecture Theatre, 23 Symonds Street.

**Exhibition opening**
Douglas Wright: Body of Work.
5.30pm Gus Fisher Gallery, 17 Shortland St. Until 20 October.
Visit www.gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz

SATURDAY 1 SEPTEMBER

**Film screening**
1pm Gus Fisher Gallery, 74 Shortland St. Screening and discussion of dance film Forever (1994) with Douglas Wright, Jo Randerson, filmmaker Chris Graves, rehearsal assistant Ann Dewey and Dr Keren Chiarioni. Visit www.gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz

THURSDAY 6 SEPTEMBER

**Convita Science Symposium: Engaging Science**
8:30am-4:30pm Owen G Glenn Bldg, 12 Grafton Rd.
Join us for our fourth annual science symposium to hear from industry leaders as they share new findings and latest publications. Share innovative ways of making the science of natural products consumer-friendly. Explore collaboration opportunities for natural products. Visit www.convita.co.nz/science-symposium

**Excel introduction workshop**
9am, 2nd Floor, Fisher Bldg, 18 Waterloo Quadrant. Phone 923 7951 for more information or to enrol.

**Migrant youth symposium**
The experiences and perceptions of Asian migrant youth: A ‘Kowi’ (Korean migrant) perspective. 1:30-3:30pm J1 Lecture Theatre, Gate 3, 74 Epsom Ave, Epsom. Hosted by the School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work and the Korean Community Wellness Society (KUCWS). RSVP to hj.park@auckland.ac.nz

**Fermota lecture**
Ross Hendy, Managing Director, Promethean Editions: Promethean unbound. 5.30pm Music Theatre, School of Music, 6 Symonds St.

FRIDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

**2012 Asia-Savvy student conference**
Decima Glenn Rm, Level 3, Owen G Glenn Bldg. 12 Grafton Rd. Runs until 8 Sept.
For more information or to register visit www.asia-savvy.com or www.facebook.com/asiassavvyconference

**Department of Computer Science seminar**
Dr Michael Withbrock, UoA: Opportunities in good, old-fashioned, AI. 12-1pm Rm 303S.561, City Campus.

SATURDAY 8 SEPTEMBER

**Exhibition talk**
Photographer John Savage talks about collaborating with artists and capturing movement, including his work on Douglas Wright’s Black Milk and rapt. 1pm Gus Fisher Gallery, 74 Shortland St. Visit www.gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz

**Songwriter of the Year schools competition grand final**
6.30pm Studio One, Kenneth Myers Centre, Shortland St. Free admission. Visit www.creative.auckland.ac.nz/songwriter

**TUESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER**

**Applied Language Studies and Linguistics seminar**
Ghil’ad Zuckermann, University of Adelaide: Sleeping beauties awake: Towards the establishment of revival linguistics. 1pm Room 315. 13s References. Queries to jason.brown@auckland.ac.nz

**NZ Centre for Environmental Law public lecture**
Carl Chenery: Rights of nature and the NZ constitutional review. 2:45pm Northey Lecture Theatre, Law School, 9 Eden Crescent.

**RSVP to lawevents@auckland.ac.nz**

**Bioengineering PhD exit seminar**
4.50pm Ground Floor Seminar Rm G010, UnServices House, 70 Symonds St.

**2012 Asia-Savvy student conference competition grand final**
5.30pm Music Theatre, School of Music, 6 Symonds St.

**AUPiSA cultural day**
The Auckland University Pacific Island Association will be sharing their Pacific flair with the University. Visit www.auckland.ac.nz/adventure

**Applied Language Studies and Linguistics seminar**
Tan Bee Tin, The University of Auckland: Keep checking back for more information. Researching the peripheral other and learning English of Karen students in Burma (Myanmar). 7 noon DALSFL Meeting Rm 206-408, Arts 1.

**Fermota lecture**
Ross Hendy, Managing Director, Promethean Editions: Promethean unbound. 5.30pm Music Theatre, School of Music, 6 Symonds St.

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**Whitianga beachfront property**
AUT members special rate, $140 per night, book at specials@admiralty-lodge.co.nz

**looking for a housesitter over summer?**
Retired UK couple visiting their grandchildren in Auckland are looking for house sitter’s over late November-January. Housepride, reliable, honest and mature; contact masels20@btinternet.com

**FOR SALE**
Handmade diamond engagement rings and jewellery - personally designed for you by Julian Bartrom. Winner of ‘The People’s Choice Award’ NZ Jewellery Competition 2011. We are continuously striving to provide a service that is superior; fine gemstones and workmanship in gold, silver, platinum, offered at affordable prices. Phone 5125 3935, email workshop@julianbartrom.com or visit www.julianbartrom.com

**Subaru Impreza 2.0 GX AWD 2005, manual 5 speed, NZ new, one owner.**
Owner has taken up a position in Dubai. The car has done 109,700km and has been regularly serviced by the dealer since new. All receipts available. It is in very good condition, a very nice light blue in colour, and has all the extras including: power windows, central locking, ABS, air con, driver and passenger air bags, cruise control, factory stereo, good tyres and a brand new WOF. Price is negotiable around $9,500-10,500 Contact ext 87230, or (021) 072 8701 (David).

**MISCELLANEOUS**

City Legal Services Rainey Collins
Wright is a small law firm centrally located at L.t Princes Court, 2 Princes Street. We are near the University, with good parking. We can assist with property transactions, trusts, wills, administration of estates, enduring powers of attorney and legal agreements. If you need someone please phone our senior solicitor Nichola Christie on 379 5828 to discuss your needs, or email nchristie@rainey.co.nz
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Travel. I have 12 years experience in booking all aspects of personal travel for university staff and lecturers. I pride myself in ensuring that your travel plans are sourced at the lowest possible costs and are tailor-made to your requirements. Contact Karen on karen.embleton@mandortravel.co.nz or 940 0064 (wk) or (021) 188 7781.
The youth justice system in Aotearoa/New Zealand is internationally recognised as an example of best practice in dealing with young people who offend.

International youth justice instruments require that young people accused of crimes are subject to specialised laws and procedures. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) requires ratifying states to “promote laws, procedures, authorities and institutions specifically applicable to children” alleged to have infringed the law. Aotearoa/New Zealand ratified UNCRC on 13 April 1993.

Aotearoa/New Zealand’s youth justice system has several specialised aspects. Special youth justice principles govern decision-making. These include diversion, retaining young people in their communities, whanau involvement in decision-making and age as a mitigating factor. Second, there is the specialised restorative justice forum at the heart of the system – the Family Group Conference (FGC). This involves victims of the crimes and seeks consensus on what young people should do to restore the harm they have caused.

Specialised procedures require specialist personnel. One of the key roles in the system is that of the Youth Advocate. Youth Advocates are specialist lawyers appointed by the Youth Court to represent young people in youth justice proceedings. The legislation requires that those appointed are, so far as is practicable “by reason of personality, cultural background, training and experience, suitably qualified to represent” young people. A Youth Court Protocol contains additional criteria for appointment. These include the ability to relate to and communicate with young people and their families, and understanding of restorative principles and processes.

It is essential that young people understand the charges they face and the consequences of involvement in Youth Court and FGC processes. I wanted to explore the work of Youth Advocates and, with financial help from the New Zealand Law Foundation, was able to conduct interviews with 34 Youth Advocates in four randomly chosen sites throughout Aotearoa. I have just published my research report “Youth Advocates in Aotearoa/New Zealand’s Youth Justice System”. The research findings support the claim that youth justice personnel are carrying out a complex, specialised role.

Youth advocates demonstrated highly skilled practice in engaging with their young clients and ensuring that they understood the charges. The lawyers encouraged the young people to use free recall, to tell their stories without suggestion or pressure. They had sophisticated techniques for communicating with young clients’ whanau and for protecting the clients from whanau pressure, if that were required. The interviews revealed Youth Advocates going to extraordinary lengths to explain the importance of participating in FGCs and the consequences of agreeing to carry out FGC plans.

The success of a youth justice system can be judged by the extent to which young people are able to understand and engage in the process and achieve successful outcomes. My report indicates that the specialised Youth Advocate role is a key element in this. It is therefore extremely concerning that the Legal Assistance (Sustainability) Amendment Bill is before Parliament. The inappropriately named Bill proposes to replace the present Youth Advocate court appointment process with approval by the Secretary of Justice. At a stroke, the specialist eligibility criteria would be replaced with generic criteria in the legal services regulations, which do not acknowledge the complexity of the Youth Advocate’s role.

The assumption in the Bill seems to be that any criminal lawyer can be a Youth Advocate. That is a dangerous and misguided assumption. Young people face many barriers to understanding and participating in the youth justice system. They need specialised lawyers to guide them through the system to successful outcomes. Our youth justice success is based on the principle of specialisation. The Bill must not be allowed to undermine that principle. Failure to sustain the quality of our Youth Advocates will inevitably result in failure of the system to engage with our young people and to give them a second chance.

Alison Cleland
Faculty of Law