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NZFGW Fellow 2008 at the University of St Andrews, Scotland

Nō Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whātua, Hunga Vava'u



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Research: The Capability Approach and Global Justice.

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I could not have imagined what the University of Saint Andrews was going to be like when I left New Zealand almost a year ago today. As I near the end of my first year as a PhD student, I realise that I am very fortunate to be able to experience such a magical place. The town is a lively and unique centre, which sees pupil and professor, research centre and student flat, tradition and innovation interwoven.

This fusion creates an environment in which learning really is just part of what it means to be alive.

My research sees me working within an approach to well being and development that focuses on what individuals are able to do and be with their lives. The approach is motivated by a concern for real-world change, and asserts that what matters is that we are able to live the kinds of lives we value and have reason to value. Posing the question of whether a particular theory and policy will make a real difference to the kinds of lives individuals are able to live, while a simple strategy in many ways, is incredibly valuable. It is not hard to see how using a capability-centred lens to view issues of justice helps us to make progress in important areas including, though not limited to, social and global inequalities, cultural and intergenerational justice, the meeting of basic needs, and the importance of agency – all of which I feel incredibly passionate about.

My research is progressing particularly well, with drafts of my first four chapters on course to be completed by the end of my first year (September 2008). My annual review was very positive, with my reviewers both agreeing that my research was progressing at an extremely impressive rate. My main supervisor has been especially helpful. Professor Mulgan has been very patient, and has given me the space to gather my own thoughts, and has allowed me to spend time developing my project.

Furthermore, the community of moral philosophers here at Saint Andrews is very supportive and engaging. There is no better place to present work than amongst peers who will go out of their way to ask you the most challenging questions. (*The Departments of Moral Philosophy, and Logic and Metaphysics*)



I have always enjoyed the challenges associated with tutoring, and have always believed in the benefits of philosophical enquiry. Therefore, I was pleased to be offered tutoring in the Candlemas semester in an undergraduate political philosophy course '*Authority, Society, and Freedom*'. The course engages with concepts that are central to the kinds of lives we

live, the values we have, and to the kinds of communities we create; and enables me to lead small group discussions on issues that are very important to my own research.

Undoubtedly, an important part of the reasons why my first year has been so fruitful is because the University of Auckland provides such a solid foundation, and because I arrived here having had some of the best guidance as far as Philosophy is concerned. Completing a Master's thesis with the Philosophy department at the University of Auckland has made the PhD transition and journey less difficult than it could have been; and my involvement in the Tuakana Arts programme, as a mentor, and at the Maori and Pasifika branches of the Student Learning Centre, as a learning advisor, helped to shape the way I approach research, learning, and teaching. My passion and enthusiasm for philosophy and for facilitating tutorials that engage with and encourage the sharing of ideas is a tribute to great philosophy teachers, and to some of the most passionate academic learning specialists.

As I have been unable to secure full funding, without the support of various people and institutions, including all of my family, the University of Auckland Faculty of Arts; Maori Education Trust; Ngāpuhi; Ngāti Whātua; and especially the New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women, my first year at Saint Andrews would not have been possible. Not only have I been able to pay my fees, and purchase important books, but I have been able to pay for a good part of my living and accommodation costs. Also, as an NZFGW Fellow, I will be able to travel to the University of Oxford to present a paper entitled, 'Should Freedom be central to our Understanding of Culture?' at a conference on *'Multiculturalism, Conflict, and Belonging'*, in September 2008. Furthermore, I will be able to remain in Oxford for the full duration of the conference. This experience will be invaluable.



My first year has been both exciting and daunting. As a student, I have found St Andrew's to be inspirational. My experience as a tutor here has reinforced how the sharing of ideas is able to create the kind of discussion that breaks down social and cultural barriers. Most importantly, I know that the support I have received as a NZFGW Fellow has contributed to making my first year possible. For this I am extremely thankful.