



**How does an organisation the size and prominence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) ensure that it hires and promotes staff without fear or favour? Surprisingly, instead of commissioning a report from a human resources specialist, it asked an economist.**

AUT University Professor of Economics Tim Maloney was given the job of seeing whether the IMF's 2600 employees reflected the organisation's diversity aspirations.

That wasn't out of a belief that only someone steeped in finance could be trusted to pore over the records of a body at the centre of the world monetary system.

It was an acknowledgement of Maloney's expertise at big-data analytics, the technique by which he was able to look for patterns in IMF administrative data that would betray any gender or nationality bias in its staff treatment. For Maloney, this proved a great challenge.

"The IMF was interested in whether or not there were any inequities in its pay and promotion processes by gender and country of origin," says Maloney.

"It's a very international organisation. It attracts people from all over the world and there were concerns that its promotion process, for instance, might be biased, that people from certain regions might be disadvantaged by the system."

The organisation, which has an emphasis on international trade and finance, has 188 member countries, aims for balance in gender and nationality representation among its staff, but it doesn't set quotas. Rather, it recognises that its understanding of member needs is helped by employing people who reflect the IMF's diversity.

Maloney's approach was to take the IMF's staff records — data on country of origin, sex, age, education, job type, experience, pay and advancement through the ranks — and subject it to intensive computer-based analysis.

"I said to the IMF, 'You've got really good administrative data. It's just a matter of using it to estimate whether or not there are any biases in your pay and promotion outcomes.' So that's what I did for it.

"There was enough historical data that I could go back decades and show that the promotion systems have changed and that some of these inequities that were probably there in the past may have largely disappeared."

Maloney has applied big-data analysis in a number of areas that on the face of it have little to do with economics.

With AUT health economist Professor Rhema Vaithianathan and US collaborators, he is in the process of developing tools for predicting a child's risk of maltreatment and a variety of other outcomes based on data from social welfare and other state agencies.

Another tool he has developed can be used to predict the chances of a student successfully completing a university course.

"We took university administrative data and came up with a tool that is highly predictive. Early identification means you can intervene and give students special assistance to hopefully prevent some of these poor outcomes."

Maloney says a new emphasis on evidence-based social policy development is giving impetus to the use of big-data analytics in research.

"The big shift has been the move away from survey data to the use of data that is collected for other purposes. It might be from the income tax system, welfare programmes, hospital records or the prison and court systems. "In the past these data types were never linked and associated with particular individuals, but that is now happening around the world."

But it's a long game. Although the data is available, being able to relate it to actual policy shifts is still some years away.

"In New Zealand we're just getting started in this area and I think we'll be able to tell in another five to ten years what longer term effects these studies will have on policy development. In the past we would create programmes with the expectation that they would have positive effects in different areas.

"But, to be honest, policy-makers often had no way of knowing whether these programmes were working or where these positive effects might be occurring, or what effects alternative policies might have had.

"What we're seeing now is that as policy-makers begin to debate new programmes, they're thinking about the sort of outcomes that they want to see and how to measure them. They're putting in place evaluation programmes for assessing the ultimate effects of these programmes, and I think that's a positive step for society." ●



## *A focus on diversity at work*

**Fulbright alumnus, Professor Edwina Pio is New Zealand's first Professor of Diversity. Pio is the research leader of the Immigration and Inclusion Group within the AUT Business School's New Zealand Work Research Institute. Her work has focused on the interweaving of three key elements of diversity in the workplace and in education: gender, ethnicity and religion.**

"I approach my work from a positive organisational psychology point of view," says Pio, who believes employers and employees must work together to form the basis of a harmonious work environment.

"I ask 'what are you putting back into the kete for the privilege of living in this country and for the future of New Zealand?'" Pio says we are all products of our history and country of origin and

that is often reflected in how we approach issues like diversity, immigration and inclusion.

"Workplaces are embedded in societies and are reflections of these societies. New Zealand is one of the most diverse countries in the world and also one of the most peaceful. In her recent book *Work & Worship*" Pio suggested that workplaces can reap diversity rewards by focusing on: crafting policies, talent management, engaging voice, learning and development, and augmenting media.

"In a rearranged world where demographic diversity has resulted in the blending of the sacred and secular, and where new markets such as Halal markets beckon, it is critical to craft holistic policies that address the minds and hearts of individuals."

Pio shared her diversity expertise with a range of audiences in 2015, including delivering keynote speeches at the Human Rights Diversity Forum and Diversity Business Breakfast. ●



## Boosting Pacific health



**Dr Glenn Doherty has spent 16 years helping Māori and Pacific people with health and wellbeing initiatives.**

When Dr Glenn Doherty runs his weekly Auckland clinics you can bet your life his patients don't realise they are being treated by one of the city's more influential primary healthcare professionals – especially when it comes to Tongan health outcomes.

Dr Doherty is CEO and Medical Director of the Tongan Health Society (THS), where he runs an integrated primary health service for 6000 registered clients and approx. 2000 non-registered ones (largely Tongans without residency or visiting from the Pacific Islands).

Over the last two years, Doherty has rescued the

THS from financial collapse, and boosted services at its health centres in Onehunga and Panmure to include dentistry, midwifery, podiatry, psychiatry and dietician services. THS also has an ECE preschool in Manurewa and a Community Centre and garden in Onehunga.

Dr Doherty has recently implemented a new Integrated Outcomes Unit focused on justice, housing, immigration, education and employment and community initiatives as well as clinical issues under a new model of care for families.

The Society surgeries now have Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioner Cornerstone and CYFS accreditation and are teaching practices for General Practice Registrars who are completing their fellowships. Dr Doherty is the practice teacher for the College. He is also on the Royal College Education Advisory Group that overseas General Practice Fellowship training and examinations. More recently he has begun an international strategic collaboration in the Kingdom of Tonga, working with the Tongan

Government and Royal Family on a Tongan Outreach Project, and looking at setting up a satellite clinic in Tonga. He is also a key figure in advocating to improve hepatitis B programmes in Tonga and early screening, diagnosis and treatment of largely undiagnosed chronic conditions. And he is working with a number of NGOs, including the Hepatitis Foundation of NZ, the Blind Foundation of NZ and Arthritis NZ on this initiative.

It is a far cry from the medical student who completed his qualifications as a solo dad, on the DPB, and later found himself working 12-14 hour days in hospitals. "I knew hospital life wasn't for me and I felt a major drive to go into primary care," he says.

Over a 30-year career Doherty has worked on Australian HIV screening and immunology programmes, New Zealand strategic health policy development and diabetes prevention and other initiatives.



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