

# Men target of suicide campaign

by Britton Broun

Men of all age groups have been targeted by a print and TV advertising campaign this month to promote depression awareness and fewer male suicides.

As part of the Mental Health Foundation's Out of the Blue depression awareness campaign, the ads show ordinary New Zealand men sharing their dark experiences.

The foundation's chief executive Judi Clements says society pressures often stop men from seeking help and the campaign is designed to alter that.

She says the campaign provides information to recognise

the signs of depression – like sleeping badly, unhappiness or loss of sexual potency – and show men they can do something about it.

"The ads are designed to show men they are not alone and it's not uncommon or unusual to have negative feelings. There's no magic answer. We just have to get the information out there so it feels like a more normal thing."

Although there has been a 25 per cent drop in suicides since 1998, 220 more men than women killed themselves in 2002.

Teenage suicide has been emphasised in recent years but statistics show that the group most at risk are aged between 20

and 45, which has prompted the focus on men in general.

Suicide Prevention Information New Zealand director Merryn Statham says part of the problem is that a lot of men are socialised into believing they are not coping unless they can solve problems themselves.

"They're supposed to be protectors and feel they're not fulfilling their roles. They shoulder their problems, bite down and hope it gets better," she says.

She says the old physical "hammer and nails" approach men typically use to solve problems doesn't work in today's community so suicide support agencies are trying to challenge men to find a different approach.

Statham says often the way to

get to men is through the women in their lives who are more naturally willing to share their health needs.

"Women are articulate about their physical and emotional health, but men aren't socialised to do that at all. But it's not just a men's problem. There are courageous men who articulate their problems but they get harassment from other men and even some women who have this image of what a man should be."

Former director of Lifeline Bruce Mackie says that the socialisation of men is a factor, there are also important biological differences.

"It's not just a case of testosterone. We have to recognise men and women are a different

species, with different genetics and different brain chemistry."

He says, taking this into account, we have to stop suggesting men should be like women.

"It's not just a case of suggesting to men that they talk more. Men do talk but many of the traditional talk therapies that are very effective for women are not as effective for men."

He says in New Zealand men traditionally blame themselves when things go wrong and this will have to change.

"We need to move away from the blame mentality and look much more closely at the way men deal with life. We need to meet men where they are," says Mackie.

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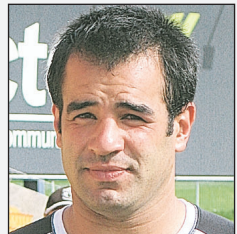
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## The house that Trade Me built

by Duncan Greive

Online auction site Trade Me has risen into our national consciousness over the last few years, but one Avondale woman might be taking it too far.

Emily White's casual interest in buying online has blossomed into a full-blown obsession, and her list of purchases is impressive.

"We bought the car, the fridge, a table, chairs, bookshelves, desk, blender, kitchen utensils, pots and pans. Oh, and the house."

The 25-year-old lawyer and her partner Damon Stenhouse cemented their relationship with Trade Me when they bought their home online earlier this year. She says it came down to value.

"We had been looking at 12 houses a day and hadn't found one we really liked, but the main thing was avoiding real estate agent's fees," says White.

She believes she is attracted to Trade Me's format and spends at least an hour a day browsing the auctions.

"I think I'm a bit addicted to it. I love it because it makes shopping into a competition. And you win things instead of buying them!"

White says she realised things might be getting out of hand when she took a laptop to a



PHOTO: MICHELLE WHITEFORD  
AUCTION ADDICTION: Emily and Damon with their winnings.

friend's engagement party.

"There was an auction for chairs which was closing at five to midnight, and we really wanted them. I don't think I'm a weirdo though; I think they were weirdoes for having an auction at such a strange time."

It's not an experience she is likely to repeat however, as the combination of alcohol and an auction was not ideal.

"The problem was that I was quite drunk by the time the auction finished, and when I went to put in an auto-bid up to \$400 I missed the button. The reserve was only \$350, and when I sobered up on Monday I worked

out a deal with the guy so we ended up paying \$375."

David Russell of the Consumers' Institute believes Trade Me is just a new way of bringing buyers and sellers together.

"In the old days we had pages and pages of for sale ads in the newspaper. Trade Me is just a new conduit for the same process."

He says he has heard of people becoming addicted to the website, but believes such people would always be vulnerable to the lure of junk.

"There has always been a vehicle for this."

## AUT journo takes top prize at PIMA conference

by Sarah Kaci

Two AUT writers won awards at the Pacific Island Media Association (PIMA) conference this month.

Associate professor David Robie won the top prize – the Pacific Media Freedom Award – for his contribution to the growth of journalism development in the Pacific.

Judges recognised Robie's role in teaching Pasifika journalists, both in the South Pacific and in New Zealand as crucial to fostering journalistic writing talent.

He co-ordinated the journal-

ism schools of the University of Papua New Guinea from 1993, for five years and the University of South Pacific in Fiji for another five years from 1998 till 2002.

At the same time he edited *Pacific Journalism Review* and co-convened the Pacific Media Watch group.

"I felt it was an honour and I was quite humbled by the experience," Robie says of the awards.

"In the Pacific there is a climate of uncertainty and it is definitely a risky profession."

"I had personal threats but nowhere near as bad as the students themselves: on many occasions students have been

assaulted and attacked.

"In a way this award is for the students – those who had the courage to stick with journalism despite threats and all the unsavoury incidents they might have faced."

Third-year Bachelor of Communications student Kennedee Jeffs won the Young Media Achiever award for her television report of the 2005 Fresh Ed expo produced for TVNZ's *Tagata Pasifika* programme.

"To receive this award was a big boost for me. Having this kind of achievement makes me feel good about my work."

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