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# Podcast series explores immigration in NZ

Sociologist Distinguished Professor Paul Spoonley hopes New Zealanders will eventually drop the word ‘immigrant’ and use ‘neighbour’, ‘friend’ or ‘colleague’ instead.

His hope is tagged to a podcast series, Slice of Heaven, on immigration – a partnership between his research team and RNZ National.

The four-part series, launching on RNZ’s Sunday Morning with Wallace Chapman this weekend, is the work of well-known broadcaster Noelle McCarthy and colleague John Daniell, from the independent media production company Bird of Paradise Productions Limited. It is a comprehensive investigation of immigration in New Zealand, asking when it comes to our ‘slice of heaven’, is there enough to go around?

As a contributor to the series, Professor Spoonley, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, says it will offer a more informed and human side to the current immigration debate to balance media coverage largely focussed on statistics, political posturing and often negative knee-jerk reactions from the public.

The context for the series, named after Dave Dobbin’s iconic song remixed as its theme tune, is that with record migration and a fast growing population, Aotearoa/New Zealand is changing.

How that will look depends upon the interplay between people already here and those who want to come, according to the series outline. “So who is coming and does it matter? What is the ideal number of people, what benefits will we see and where are the potential flash points? Can we rely on political leadership to steer us in the right direction?” the series asks.

Professor Spoonley says the series will be an antidote to a tendency to reduce the complexities of immigration to simplistic sound bites. It will bust some of the myths around immigration and residency – such as the idea that it is easy to get residency in New Zealand and that immigration is primarily an Auckland issue, he says.

“I’m hoping the series will generate a more informed and respectful debate,” he says. “Too often there is a tendency [in the media and public debates] to put New Zealanders on one side and immigrants on the other.”

In the first podcast, Ireland-born interviewer Noelle McCarthy – who shares her own immigration story as part of the series – interviews people from South Auckland to Southland, including in Invercargill where a number of Filipino families have settled through working in the dairy industry.

When communities become established, they bring their own culture, values and food, adding to and enhancing the diversity of the wider community, he says. This all contributes to the emergence of a “new” New Zealand, one we should all feel proud to be part of, he adds.

Professor Spoonley is one of many interviewed for the series, which covers the following topics:

Have You Come Far? (history and context); Borderline (tensions); Theory and Practice (how immigration works); Choices (where to from here), with an epilogue in the form of an immigration panel at Auckland Museum in August.

A research programme he helps to coordinate, called Capturing the Diversity Dividend of Aotearoa/New Zealand ([CaDDANZ),](http://www.caddanz.org.nz/) worked with RNZ executive producers Justin Gregory and Tim Watkin to create the Slice of Heaven series, which is also available on iTunes, Spotify and at [www.radionz.co.nz](http://www.radionz.co.nz/).

**Caption: Professor Paul Spoonley; and Slice of Heaven logo.**