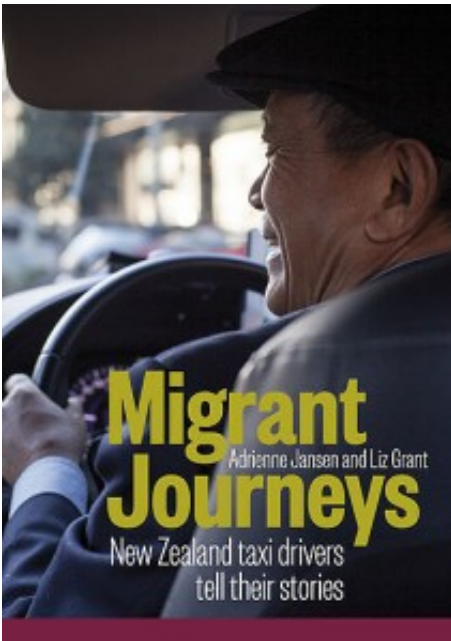




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Migrant Journeys is more than just a new book launched

Dec 1st, 2015 | By [Keenan May](#) | Category: [Editor's Picks](#), [Features](#), [Front Page Layout](#), [Latest News](#), [Most Popular](#), [News](#)



After reading the book Migrant Journeys, taking a taxi is never going to be quite the same again for Wellington Mayor Celia Wade Brown

“I promise not to mumble, I promise to speak clearly, say where I need to go, and remember to say thank you,” Ms Wade Brown says.

She was speaking at the launch of the book Migrant Journeys, at the National Public Library in Wellington last week.

Written by Adrienne Jansen and Liz Grant over the course of three years, the book examines, in their own words, the lives of 14 taxi drivers who migrated to New Zealand from 10 different countries.

Speaking to the crowd of about 60, Ms Wade Brown acknowledged Adrienne and Liz for their efforts and Bridget Williams Books for publishing the book.

She says many taxi drivers are qualified in other fields of work, and she would love to be advised on economics and politics during her cab rides.

One of the drivers was Helmi Al Khattat.

Helmi, an immigrant from Iraq who considers himself lucky to be alive, says “New Zealand is a beautiful country, not beautiful as in green, beautiful in everything”.

“But, and this is the big but, it’s about the jobs.”

Helmi says that when he arrived to New Zealand, he focused on improving his English and gaining qualifications.

He took a mechanics course, passing easily because he already had experience as a mechanic.

“Everyone else from that course found a job. I wanted to work hard, but couldn’t find anything, so that’s why I became a taxi driver.”

He did not enjoy driving taxis, so three months ago he moved to Australia to search for work.

Roger Heale, executive director of the New Zealand Taxi Federation, described how difficult it was to find work when he came to New Zealand, and how difficult it still is for migrants to find work due to the country’s slack when it comes to workforce integration.

“How did I get into taxis?.

“Like many people in this book, it was one of the few places that were prepared to give me a go, and as a result, I am very grateful.

“The current humanitarian crisis in Syria witnessed New Zealanders calling for an increase in our refugee quota.

“What a wonderful sentiment,” Roger says.

“We should be proud of this, however the government is right to be cautious if we are not prepared to be more welcoming when it comes to employing and giving people a chance.”

Roger says being true to this sentiment requires improvements to the country’s workforce integration.

He says driving a taxi is not all about taking drunks home at night.

“The industry is the biggest carrier of both disabled, and the elderly in the country. We carry 3000 special needs children to school every day as well as carrying able children and single females home alone, at night.

“All New Zealanders should be aware of the messages that this book contains, there’s some really really powerful stuff in here.”

You can purchase a copy of Migrant Journeys from BWB’s website [here](#)

Migrant Journey is a call for understanding

Migrants do not get it easy in New Zealand, and the authors of Migrant Journeys hope the book will help Kiwis understand.

Co-authored by Adrienne Jansen and Liz Grant, Migrant Journeys takes a look into the lives of 14 taxi drivers, all of whom are migrants to New Zealand.

“It’s about their lives in the countries they grew up in, coming to New Zealand, their experiences becoming employed here, and of course driving taxis,” says Adrienne.

The drivers come from 10 different countries, 12 men and two women, each currently living in Auckland, Wellington, or Christchurch.

What first inspired Adrienne to write the book was the number of drivers who were well qualified, but not working in their own professions.

Adrienne says there are cab drivers who are doctors, architects, scientists, and she doubts many people think about why that is the case.

The subject widened out, to being about a broad range of experiences by migrant taxi drivers.

Adrienne hopes the stories give people a better understanding of a group of people who have come here as migrants, of the kinds of lives that they’ve had, of their experiences since they have come here, of their views of New Zealand.

“I hope this book really challenges people to think about employment opportunities in New Zealand.

“About some of the barriers we put up to people being able to follow their own professions here, about whether we make it easy for migrants who come here.

“I don’t think we do.”

Adrienne says the two crucial things to successfully re-settling into our country are learning English and gaining employment.

“When people can’t get jobs, and they want to work, and they’re qualified, and are used to working hard, it’s very destructive.”

The struggle to integrate often does not end once a migrant gains employment.

Every taxi driver in the book speaks of receiving some sort of racial abuse.

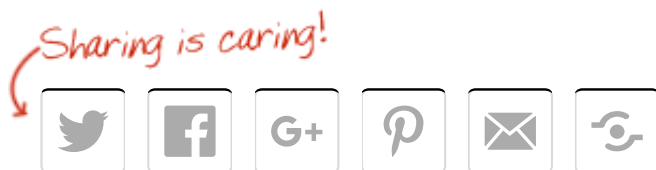
“But I don’t think they would say that they’re mistreated.

“They say that once they have cameras in the cabs, it really cuts down a lot of the bad behavior.”

Adrienne has written several other books about the experiences of immigrants coming to New Zealand, one of which (I Have In My Arms Both Ways) was re-published and launched on

November 19 with Migrant Journeys at the National Library in Wellington.

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Tags: [Celia Wade-Brown](#), [education](#), [employment](#), [immigrant](#), [immigrants](#), [integration](#), [journalism](#), [Migrant Journeys](#), [migrants](#), [new zealand](#), [newswire](#), [NZ](#), [refugees](#), [taxi](#), [wellington](#), [Wellington City Council](#), [Whitireia Journalism School](#), [Whitireia Polytechnic](#)



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