



UniNews



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IN THE NEWS

A selection of University staff and students who provided expert commentary in the media recently. Let us know! Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz.



OUR TECH TIPPING PROBLEM

Professor Alex Sims (Business School) featured in *North & South* on the topic of New Zealand's electronic waste. Alex discussed options for reducing the sheer volume of waste and the need for a new Right to Repair Act, requiring durability and reparability labelling, and parts to be available for items sold for a fixed period.

Link: tinyurl.com/north-south-alex-sims



INSIGHTS INSIDE TUATARA

PhD candidate Cam Hoffbeck told *New Zealand Geographic* tuatara were even stranger than we knew. In tests of the microbiomes of 161 tuatara, 70 percent of the bacteria couldn't be identified – showing they had a “unique and strange” gut community. The tuatara diverged from its closest living relatives 250 million years ago.

Link: tinyurl.com/nzgeo-cam-hoffbeck



PRESCHOOLERS EATING JUNK FOOD

Under fives are eating concerningly high amounts of processed foods high in sugar, fats and salt, according to a large study out of the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences. Professor Clare Wall, Head of Nutrition, told the *NZ Herald* these patterns tend to persist through school years and worsen in adulthood, leading to chronic diseases.

Link: tinyurl.com/nzherald-clare-wall



TACKLING THE CAUSES OF CRIME

The Three Strikes Law won't reduce crime, criminologist Emilie Rākete (Ngāpuhi) told *Te Ao Māori News*. Emilie (Faculty of Arts), who is a spokesperson for People Against Prisons Aotearoa, argues a punishment-based approach won't reduce crime or improve public safety, as it doesn't address the causes of crime.

Link: tinyurl.com/te-ao-news-emilie



MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE FIND

Dr Emma Scotter told *Newshub* of her lab's breakthrough in identifying harmful versus harmless mutations of a rare gene that can cause the deadly Motor Neurone Disease. The scientists assessed brain tissue samples from New Zealand and overseas. “I would say it's a breakthrough in understanding the genetic code,” said Emma.

Link: tinyurl.com/newshub-mnd-emma



BREATHING LIFE INTO LANGUAGES

Bringing dying languages to life has been done before, said linguistics lecturer John Middleton (Arts) on RNZ's *The Detail*, and digital tools for preserving and spreading languages are now readily available, but that's not enough. “We do still need languages to be spoken and to be written and to be used,” he said.

Link: tinyurl.com/rnz-languages-john

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Photography: Elise Manahan, Chris Loufte, William Chea
Design: Mariyam Poonawala
Production: University of Auckland
Volume 54 – Issue 4 – June 2024
Published by: Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland
Communications Office,
Alfred Nathan House, 24 Princes Street,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142
Web: auckland.ac.nz/UniNews

Something to share? The next *UniNews* is July 2024, copy due 14 June.
Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz

For the fortnightly Whaimōhio The Loop newsletter, email: staff-comms@auckland.ac.nz.
Deadlines are on the intranet under News, Events and Notices, The Loop.

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SHINING A NEW LIGHT ON NITS

Busy staff member, entrepreneur and mum Kate Ricketts has launched a business that tackles the scourge and stigma of headlice.

After turning a novel idea into a business, professional staff member Kate Ricketts is encouraging others working at the University to scratch their entrepreneurial itch.

Kate is the University's Schools and Community Outreach Manager – a role that involves attracting high-achieving high school students to study at the University. She's also the founder of ISpy Nits, a company that helps parents get rid of nits from their children's hair, while sparking kids' interest in science and removing the stigma of head lice.

Juggling her own business, a full-time job and parenting duties can be pretty hectic, admits Kate, who says "there's just not enough hours in the day" but she wouldn't have it any other way. And although she's always had an entrepreneurial bent, the true motivation for her business was born from frustration.

"I have two boys and they were constantly getting head lice," she says. "And, because I'm a single mum, it was a real challenge to afford treatment all the time."

Kate developed a non-toxic hair powder that makes nits glow in the dark when viewed under UV light. Although nits can be treated with a special shampoo (which ISpy Nits also sells), if any eggs remain, the lice can return weeks later. Kate's ISpy Nits Glo-Powder makes it easier to find and remove any lingering eggs that might be lying latent to avoid another outbreak. It also shows a nit outbreak in a new light for children.

The nit-busting kits also help get kids excited about science.



Kate encourages other staff to take advantage of the opportunities the University offers aspiring entrepreneurs.

Photos: Elise Manahan

"It helps destigmatise the idea of head lice, reframing it by highlighting the science, fun, and glow-in-the-dark aspects of the experience. So children are able to have real conversations and try to reduce some of the ostracism and stigmatisation that happens as a result of head lice."

Kate came up with the idea after reading an article stating that anti-theft powder could cause insect exoskeletons to biofluoresce. Kate remembered using a similar technique to search for ringworm in animals when she previously worked as a vet nurse, and wondered if it could be applied to nits. After ordering some powder online and giving it a whirl on her children's hair, she knew she was on to something.

That instinct was confirmed when she entered her idea in the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship's (CIE) Velocity \$100k Challenge. After making the final and taking out the social category in 2022, she earned a place in CIE's VentureLab, a half-year incubator programme that helped Kate take her idea from pie in the sky to viable business.

"Children are able to have real conversations and try to reduce some of the ostracism and stigmatisation that happens as a result of head lice."

– Kate Ricketts, ISpy Nits founder

"You might have a great idea, but it doesn't mean you're going to wake up and be an expert in logistics, freight forwarding, importing or anything like that."

Kate says CIE – as well as UniServices, which provided seed funding – made a "world of difference" and she credits the centre for giving her the skills and confidence to bring her idea to life. She wishes more University staff – both professional and academic – would embrace the opportunities CIE offers: "It should be one of the perks of working here, right?"

But launching her business was only the start for Kate, who now has to focus on the nitty-gritty aspects of running a company, such as wading through the red tape associated with selling a medical-related product.

She is also working with schools to make the product more accessible to vulnerable communities, and to use a nit outbreak as a learning opportunity for students through its science education packs.

The product has been recognised with a UN Sustainable Development Goal innovation award. And with ISpy Nits' expansion into Australia on the cards later this year, it's unlikely things will get quieter for Kate any time soon.

■ James Fyfe

The refurbishment of B201 has been recognised for raising the mana of surrounding buildings. Photo: Jasmx



BABIES IN STUDY REVISITED, 50 YEARS ON

New research reveals that, half a century later, the very pre-term babies involved in a groundbreaking Auckland study are doing just fine.

The Auckland Steroid Study was a first-in-the-world randomised controlled trial of antenatal steroids carried out at National Women’s Hospital between 1969 and 1974. It involved 1,200 women at risk of giving birth early receiving corticosteroids, or a matching placebo, before their baby was born.

Researchers believed steroids given to mothers could boost development of a premature baby’s lungs – enough to give the newborn a fighting chance.

The study wanted to find out whether the babies whose mums got the steroids had better survival rates and health outcomes versus the ones whose mums got the placebo. They also wanted to find out if giving steroids to mums was safe for them and their babies.

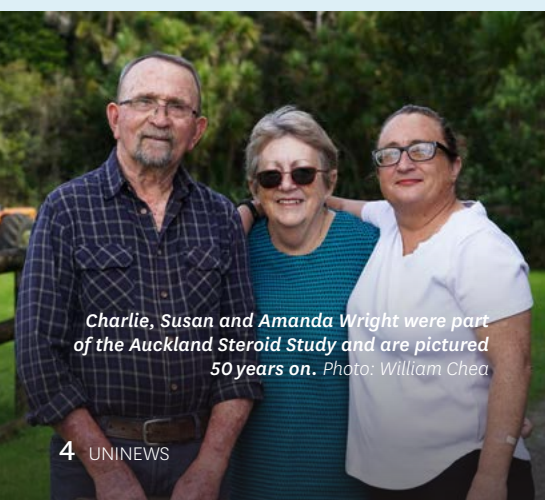
New research, just published in the respected journal *PLOS Medicine*, follows up the now 50-year-old children of the mothers involved in the study to see if the steroids have had any long-term impacts on their health, particularly in terms of heart disease and related conditions.

Anthony Walters, a doctor at the Green Lane Clinical Centre and a PhD researcher at the University’s Liggins Institute, carried out the research and found no adverse consequences.

“We’ve proven we don’t need to worry. We are confident that although pre-term babies have a whole range of health problems as they grow up, these are not caused by the steroid,” says Anthony.

■ Nikki Mandow

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/steroid-study



Charlie, Susan and Amanda Wright were part of the Auckland Steroid Study and are pictured 50 years on. Photo: William Chea

ARCHITECTURE AWARDED

The University’s reinvigorated B201 building is proving a hub for students and staff, but its redevelopment is also gaining wider local and global attention.

In May, the revamped building won the education section at the New Zealand Architecture Awards for the Auckland region. It will now go forward to the national awards.

With design by Jasmx and engineering by Beca, the building has been hailed as a shining example of sustainable refurbishment and achieved a 6 Green Star rating for its design.

However, the Auckland Architecture Award judges highlighted another, equally important feature.

“The repurposed structure has elevated the

mana of the adjoining Waipapa Marae and Fale Pasifika, and recentred the Ngāti Whātua whenua on which the University stands,” they noted.

“Once hidden from view by the blocked hulk that was the former School of Social Sciences, B201 brings the University’s key Indigenous spaces into view.”

B201, which is nine floors and 41.5m high, also recently won two International Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat awards: the Repositioning Award of Excellence, reflecting its sustainable refurbishment, and the Systems Award of Excellence.

Waipapa Taumata Rau Chief Property Officer Simon Neale says global recognition of the University’s most significant sustainable building project is heartening.

“Every day we are seeing people really enjoying the spaces we’ve created, but it’s great to know it is being recognised by industry bodies as well,” says Simon.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/b201-awards

EMERGING LEADERS RECOGNISED

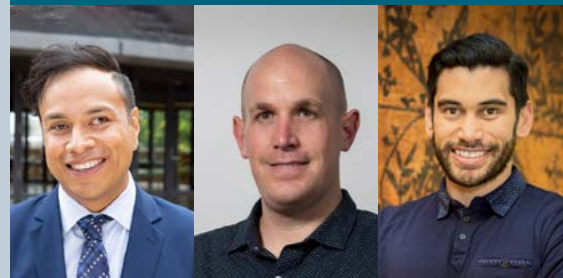
Three University of Auckland Māori and Pacific health researchers have gained significant funding to help them become leaders in their fields.

Seuta’afili Dr Patrick Thomsen (Faculty of Arts), Dr Sam Manuela (Faculty of Science) and Dr Kimiora Henare (Ngāti Haua, Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri) have been awarded 2024 Māori and Pacific Health Research Emerging Leader Fellowships from the Health Research Council (HRC).

They are among nine researchers nationally to collectively gain more than \$5.6 million in funding through the fellowships.

Patrick, who along with Sam is one of the University’s two Pacific recipients of the fellowships, receives \$645,799 over 48 months for his research ‘Manalagi: Addressing discrimination in healthcare for Pacific Rainbow+’. Sam receives

Dr Patrick Thomsen, Dr Kimiora Henare and Dr Sam Manuela.



\$551,786 over 48 months for his research into ‘Enhancing Cook Islands mental health practices, knowledge, and research’.

Kimiora (Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences) receives \$649,412 over 48 months. His research is focused on addressing a potential workforce challenge related to the delivery of precision oncology, where doctors and patients choose treatments based on the DNA signature of an individual patient’s tumour.

HRC Chief Executive Professor Sunny Collings says the emerging leader fellowships have enormous potential to advance Māori and Pacific health through innovative and impactful research.

“People-focused funding opportunities help build and shape a highly skilled, diverse, and responsive research workforce,” she says.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/hrc-2024-leaders

GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER LANDS AT SPACE INSTITUTE

On her first visit to New Zealand, Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock touched down at Auckland's Space Institute, Te Pūnaha Ātea.

The focus of Minister Baerbock's visit was the University's space research, supporting one of the country's fastest-growing and transformative sectors.

Minister Baerbock was the guest at a showcase on research and innovation in the sector, and described the institute as "a special place, combining campus life with cutting-edge research".

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Professor Frank Bloomfield, hosted the minister and her delegation of members of the Bundestag on 4 May, along with the German Ambassador to New Zealand Nicole Menzenbach and German media.

Professor Bloomfield outlined the range of research partnerships the University has with German and European research programmes. Researchers participate in several significant projects with the German Aerospace Centre, Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt

(DLR), and the European Space Agency.

Associate Professor Nicholas Rattenbury, for example, is working with DLR on technology to enable Free Space Optical Communications (FSOC), with the goal of using an optical beam to transmit data in space.

While at the institute the minister was also briefed on other research projects, ranging from space debris and space situational awareness, to viewing space activity more sustainably and from a 'lifecycle perspective'.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/foreign-minister



Professor Frank Bloomfield hosted Minister Annalena Baerbock.



The minister's delegation included members of the German parliament.



The minister was briefed on research projects during her visit.

COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING RURAL HEALTH

Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS) Associate Dean, Rural Health Dr Kyle Eggleton has been awarded the prestigious Peter Snow Memorial Award for longstanding service and dedication to rural healthcare.

The award was presented by Hauora Taiwhenua Rural Health Network at the recent National Rural Healthcare Conference 2024.

Kyle is also a Hokianga GP, and his contributions reflect a commitment to improving healthcare access and outcomes for rural communities, embodying the spirit of service and leadership in the healthcare sector, said Hauora Taiwhenua chair Dr Fiona Bolden.

After graduating with a medical degree from Waipapa Taumata Rau, Kyle returned to Northland to work as a rural GP, driven by a deep understanding of the impacts of rurality

and social deprivation on community health.

His commitment to addressing these disparities led him to join a Māori health provider, where he spearheaded community-led projects focused on improving health equity.

Kyle's clinical practice informs his academic roles. These include as a teacher for medical and health students, as a researcher leading medical education and rural health projects, and as a leader. The latter culminated in his appointment as Associate Dean (Rural).

Through this role, Kyle's achievements include establishing a rural stream for medical students and implementing admission schemes to professional health programmes for students from rural areas.

His dedication to rural healthcare extends to designing curricula and interprofessional programmes aimed at enhancing healthcare delivery in underserved areas.

When nominating Kyle for the award, FMHS Deputy Dean Dr Matire Harwood said the feedback from Kyle's students is always incredibly positive, with many speaking about his advocacy, compassion and hope for rural health workforce development and its



Dr Kyle Eggleton has won a major rural healthcare award.

potential impact on rural communities.

As well as his medical degree, Kyle holds masters degrees in medical science and public health, and a PhD, which explored the concept of measuring the quality of Māori health providers using a kaupapa Māori-aligned methodology.

GRADUATES

TAKE THE STAGE

Here's a taste of some of the amazing stories that emerged from the Autumn graduation.

Dr Patelisio Na'a Patelisio, Master of Public Health, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences

Dr Patelisio Na'a Patelisio's own post-traumatic stress following the large eruption of Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai inspired his masters research on PTSD in Pacific children.

Patelisio was running an outpatient clinic at Tonga's Vaiola Hospital when the eruption occurred. When he and his colleagues formed a team to assist in the weeks following, most of the help requested related to mental health.

Then, a few weeks later, rain and thunderstorms hit. "I was feeling like it was traumatic, it was like PTSD. It made me think, as an adult, I'm feeling this way, imagine what the kids are feeling."

So, at the University Patelisio did a systematic review of existing scientific literature on PTSD in children in Asia-Pacific. His masters research found a lack of Pacific research, and his recommendations included conducting research in each Pacific nation to assess the state of PTSD among children, and educating clinicians on its common symptoms.

Bethany Forsythe, PhD in Forensic Science, Faculty of Science

Forensics graduate Bethany Forsythe is using her expertise to help identify human remains from war in Vietnam.

Bethany has joined the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) to lead the development of tools for the large-scale

identification of human remains, including more than 300,000 people still missing after the Vietnam War. In particular, she is helping the ICMP to establish DNA sequencing methods for highly degraded bone samples.

Bethany works with scientists and officials in both Hanoi, Vietnam, and at the commission's headquarters in The Hague in the Netherlands, where she is based. She credits the forensic science programme at Waipapa Taumata Rau and the government's Institute of Environmental Science and Research for the skills that enabled her to take on the challenge.

Bernard Sama, PhD in Social Work, Faculty of Education and Social Work

Languishing in a Cameroonian prison, Bernard Sama could never have imagined he'd end up graduating with a PhD in New Zealand.

The lawyer, asylum-seeker advocate and father-of-three's PhD thesis focused on improving health and well-being in New Zealand refugee law and legal processes – something he was particularly qualified to write about after arriving here as an asylum seeker in 2006.

Originally from the anglophone region of Cameroon, he says Southern Cameroonians have been marginalised and oppressed as a minority for over 63 years since joining East Cameroon to form what is now known as Cameroon.

After completing a law degree in 2003, Bernard worked in human rights law. Arrested under suspicion of insurgent activities in 2005, he spent six months in prison. However, thanks to interventions by charitable organisations, Bernard was eventually released, and he gained asylum in New Zealand.

Bernard's next goal is to get postdoctoral funding to look at the best ways of operating the legal system to be sensitive to the well-being of already traumatised people seeking refuge; and pushing for law reform on detention seekers who arrive in groups of more than 30.

Sarah Knox, PhD in Dance Studies, Faculty of Creative Arts and Industries

"There's a saying that dancers die twice," says Sarah Knox. "They die when they retire, and when they really die. For many people, being a dancer is their identity."

But even after retiring from 12 years as a professional dancer, Sarah's dance career has lived on. Encouraged by friend and colleague Professor Rosemary Martin, Sarah returned to tertiary education to pursue a postgraduate diploma (PGDip) in dance studies.

"I never planned to teach, and I didn't want to go to uni to study, but the PGDip totally transformed my life," she says.

After completing her PGDip, Sarah progressed onto a masters degree and taught undergraduate students. Teaching, in turn, inspired Sarah's PhD thesis, which examined the complexities of teaching choreography in tertiary education, as well as the role of identity.

Paul Koraua, conjoint Law and Commerce, Faculties of Law and Business

Juggling law and commerce with a permanent finance role meant Paul Koraua left university with five years' professional experience.

Paul was in his second year of a conjoint law and commerce degree when he was offered a role with Heartland Bank.

"I was initially interning two or three days a week before I was offered a permanent position. Juggling the role and university work was challenging," he admits.

Paul, who is of Papua New Guinea and Kiribati descent, applied for the bank's Manawa Ako internship programme, which provides opportunities for Māori and Pacific rangatahi to work in finance.

That real-world experience, he says, helped him land his current full-time role as an associate equity analyst at Forsyth Barr.

Full stories: auckland.ac.nz/grad-stories



Dr Te Piere Warahi describes himself as
“73 with a PhD”. Photo: Elise Manahan

CARING FOR KAUMĀTUA

His research on Māori caregiving led Dr Te Piere Warahi on a journey of deep self-discovery.

Dr Te Piere Warahi (Ngāti Maniapoto), who cuts a striking figure with an immaculate silver topknot, cobalt blue suit and red snakeskin shoes, begins our interview with a hongī and his pepeha.

He wouldn't have considered doing either before starting his doctorate on caring for kaumātua. However, his research on Māori caregiving, born out of his own experience caring for his mother, led to him rediscovering his Māoritanga, changing his name at the age of 71 and further personal growth.

Now, he describes himself as “73 with a PhD”, graduating in May with a doctorate from the University's School of Population Health.

“I started off rather arrogantly thinking I didn't want too much of the Māori stuff. I wanted to appeal to a wider international audience,” he says.

“I decided that I was going to look at the absence of law that protected the rights of caregivers and so I did infinite research on that.

“And then I wrote a chapter which focused solely on the voices of the carers.”

The theme that came through all the stories was ‘care means love’, rather than the usual narrative of ‘care means burden’. When Associate Professor Marama Muru-Lanning, director of the James Henare Māori Research Centre, read it, she

said, “This is perfect, this is what it's all about.”

The 13 invisible voices were all kaumātua looking after elderly kaumātua, so the cultural element became important. And the topic changed to the value of caregiving to the carers.

The topic changed again in 2022, when Marama suggested he anchor his thesis in cosmology. Te Piere had to research tales of the atua, or gods, and found they became his work's anchor stone.

However, along with his findings of aroha and service were grittier ones of elder abuse among wider whānau, and the impacts of colonisation and marginalisation. Carers were frequently an unpaid workforce as they carried out acts of service required by tikanga, or culture. Hospitals were also culturally unsafe places.

“All the interactions, all the aroha, all the antagonisms, all the strife between the gods and their families – I used those as an explanation of the things that were happening, both positive and negative, in my carers' experience,” says Te Piere.

This was important, because Māori are a spiritual people who value connections, he says, especially to tūpuna, or ancestors.

It was at this time that Te Piere says his own tūpuna tapped him on the shoulder, compelling him to change his name from Edgar TPW Wallace to that gifted to him by his grandfather.

“In the middle of my name was ‘TPW’, which was my Māori name. It was an invisible voice tucked away there between these two colonial pillars.”

From there Te Piere retrieved his te reo Māori, which he had heard spoken growing up in the chilly valley settlement of Nihonihi near Taumarunui.

When his family moved to Hastings, his parents encouraged their children to abandon their culture to get on in the Pākehā world.

“They didn't want us to go through what they had been through.”

Young Edgar Wallace passed UE but in the absence of encouragement or information about attending university, he went to work as a clerk for New Zealand Rail. He moved into its property team and transferred to Wellington, where papers in planning led to a bachelors and a masters degree in property and planning from Waipapa Taumata Rau.

It was back into the workforce, working as a broker for an export merchant house, before retiring 20 years later. It was at that point he took up the care of his mother, which he did for more than a decade until her passing.

“I just think it's such a privilege to have served to the end. I just loved it,” he says.

“And then of course, that same year, I received *Ingenio* and this began my journey toward a PhD.”

On its cover was Marama Muru-Lanning. Te Piere read her story and was impressed, and a fortnight later, she turned up at his tennis club.

“I told her I had been looking after my mother and she said, ‘You would be a perfect fit for my research at the University.’”

Te Piere protested that he was too old, but Marama told him age was no barrier.

With the tautoko, or support, of Marama, Te Piere had a successful meeting with Professor Ngaire Kerse, a gerontologist in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, who readily agreed to become Te Piere's lead supervisor. Now, years later, Te Piere has proven Marama right.

He is considering a role as a researcher in the James Henare Research Centre, while enjoying the freedom of writing a novel, free from the need for scholarly citations.

■ Jodi Yeats

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/grad-te-piere



Removing kina from the barrens has helped restore kelp forests, but the long-term solution is to foster the return of the creature's natural predators. Photo: Chris Loufte

KELSEY MILLER: BATTLE OF THE BARRENS

Marine scientist Kelsey Miller is fighting on the frontlines against the kina barrens that are taking over large swathes of our coastal rocky reefs – but kina, she says, are not the enemy.

In the battle with kina barrens, underwater deserts where the sea urchins have taken over, Dr Kelsey Miller has more hands-on experience than just about anyone.

Donning her scuba gear, the marine scientist led colleagues and supporters in hundreds of dives to remove kina from the barrens on shallow rocky reefs in the Hauraki Gulf during the spring and summer of 2020 and 2021.

When Oceans and Fisheries Minister Shane Jones cites the presence of 400,000 kina on just 7.1 hectares (0.07 square kilometres) of reef as an illustration of an “industrial-sized, industrial-grade” problem, he’s talking about Kelsey’s PhD project, which involved laboriously removing those urchins one by one.

Happily, her work showed that removing kina was extremely effective in rapidly restoring lush

forests of the brownish kelp *Ecklonia radiata*.

“That just wasn’t expected,” says Kelsey. “The seaweed grew back naturally without anyone’s help; there was no need to ‘seed’ it. Simply removing the kina achieved so much.”

Now, Kelsey, a research fellow based at Leigh Marine Laboratory, and Dr Nick Shears, who supervised her PhD, are advising policy makers, iwi, fishers and local communities on how best to tackle barrens. The pair were among the scores of people at a hui hosted by Jones at the historic Awanui Hotel in the Far North on 10 May.

Kelsey and Nick say increases in recreational catch limits for kina alone would achieve little; instead, special ‘restoration’ permits are better for large-scale, systematic, effective removal. However, overfishing of kina predators like tāmure (snapper) and kōura (spiny lobster), is

“It’s not easy diving. You’re huffing and puffing, it’s really hard work.”

– Dr Kelsey Miller, Faculty of Science

the underlying problem, and addressing this is the long-term solution.

For Kelsey, the kina work is the latest phase in a life devoted to the natural world, particularly the ocean.

Living at Ōmaha, within earshot of the waves, she spends as much time as possible in the water, including as a free diver, ocean swimmer, surfer and an underwater hockey player.

Growing up, her family spent half of each year on the remote and sparsely populated Quadra Island in British Columbia, home to wolves, otters, deer and cougars, and visited occasionally by black bears, which would swim from a neighbouring island to steal apples.

Nature minded and mobile, the family also lived in the US, Central and South America and Southeast Asia.

As a young woman, Kelsey operated a US-based family wholesale crabmeat business, dealing with crab boats in Thailand. She went on to become a fisheries observer on fishing boats in the Pacific Ocean, along the coast from California to Washington, and in the Maldives, recording information on bycatch, fuel use and species interactions.

After becoming a marine scientist, Kelsey was drawn to New Zealand by our high-quality research into the kelp problem, which she knew from North America, where urchins have destroyed almost all of California's coastal kelp.

Around the world, kelp forests provide homes for marine life, limit the erosion of coastal land, produce oxygen and food, and sequester carbon. They're like an underwater Amazon forest. But they are disappearing at an estimated rate of 1.8 percent per year – twice as fast as coral reefs and four times quicker than tropical forests, Kelsey points out.

Laborious kina removal work for Kelsey's PhD project involved cracking and crushing kina with metal pipes or hammers, leaving their roe to be eaten by other sea creatures. A small portion were able to be harvested for iwi.

"It's not easy diving," Kelsey says. "You're huffing and puffing, it's really hard work."

A repetitive strain injury requiring a wrist brace resulted from her biggest single daily removal of 10,000 kina. All up, the project took 900 hours of diving by Kelsey and her colleagues and supporters: 450 hours for removal work and 450 hours of monitoring.

"I don't like killing kina; I don't like killing anything. It was very unpleasant," she says. "But seeing the recovery from a barren to a huge kelp forest made it seem worthwhile. It just blew me away."

Iwi have mixed views on culling a taonga species, but in this case Ngāti Manuhiri and Ngāti Tai ki Tāmaki supported the research, which was carried out under a government scientific permit, to understand how the mauri of the rocky reefs might be restored.

In Aotearoa, declines in large snapper and spiny lobster, capable of cracking open a mature kina for a meal, have seen kina take over an estimated 14 percent, or 30 square kilometres, of the coastal rocky reef in the north-eastern upper North Island, from Tāwharanui in the south to Maitai Bay in the north.

"The seaweed grew back naturally without anyone's help; there was no need to 'seed' it. Simply removing the kina achieved so much."

– Dr Kelsey Miller, Faculty of Science

This seems to be the worst-affected area, but barrens are dotted around the country.

With everyone keen to help, Kelsey is flagging that the solution isn't as simple as rushing to the sea to grab a feed of kina.

For one thing, kina from barrens are often not good eating; smaller and somewhat starved, living on in a kind of hibernation once the kelp is gone, their roe doesn't taste as good.

This limits the potential to harvest them for kai. (There are ambitious plans to harvest malnourished kina then feed and fatten them in land-based facilities.)

Haphazard removals of kina won't achieve much without long-term and systematic planning, since, until lobsters and large snappers stage a revival, continued removals by culling or harvesting will be needed – a one-off burst won't do it.

And dropping 'green gravel', small rocks seeded with kelp, into barrens will feed kina rather than rebuild kelp forests unless kina are cleared first.

"The long-term solution is for the big predators, the snapper and the spiny lobsters, to

return, which would require more restrictions on fishing," says Kelsey.

"For the short-term, however, we now know we have an extremely effective method for restoring these beautiful forests."

Next, she plans to create a guide book for community groups, hapū and iwi on kina removal, and to research the detail of why kelp recovers better in some places than others.

One thing she knows: kina are not the enemy.

They're remarkable creatures, responsible for underwater coastal choruses at dusk and dawn like those of birds in a forest.

The noises are the sound of the urchins eating by scraping algae off rocks with their protruding teeth. The noises are amplified by the creatures' hard, dome-shaped bodies.

In the right numbers, they are not a problem and are an important part of the ecosystem.

"We've demonised them," says Kelsey, "but it's not their fault – they're just out there trying to live their best lives, eating when they are hungry."

■ Paul Panckhurst



*Kelsey now plans to research why kelp in some areas recovers better than others.
Photo: Paul Caiger*

OBITUARY

Sir Vincent O’Sullivan 28 September 1937 – 28 April 2024.

Emeritus Professor Mac Jackson pays tribute to his old friend, poet Vincent O’Sullivan.

Vince and I arrived as students at Auckland University College, as it then was, in the same year, 1956. We both majored in English, entered the MA class, had short stints as temporary junior lecturers, and went on to do postgraduate work at Oxford, where we became close friends.

It had probably been in 1958 that Jonathan Hunt, who was editor of *Craccum*, asked me to review a university literary magazine and I singled out a poem by Vincent O’Sullivan (whom at that stage I didn’t know) for special praise. This turned out to be one of my better calls.

While an Auckland student, Vince gave another hint of his later literary achievements, with a Capping Revue script sparkling with puns on cigarette brand names. This was hardly *Shuriken*, but I can still recall some of the one-liners.

Vince’s Oxford thesis was on two representative figures of the fin de siècle, the poet Ernest Dowson and Oscar Wilde. Rumour that the young New Zealander was working on Wilde gained him occasional unwanted attentions, but his interest in Wilde was, of course, in his brilliant wit and his range of literary and critical talents. Vince’s supervisor was J.I.M. Stewart, a fine Scottish novelist and scholar-critic, who published crime fiction under the pen name Michael Innes. He commented on Vince’s finished thesis, that it “read like a good detective story”. I doubt that Vince told that to anybody else.

During our Oxford years, the Professor of Poetry was Robert Graves, whose poems we both admired. I remember Vince – who was always a fund of anecdotes – recounting, with amusement at Graves’s aplomb, the tale of his knocking at the door of some university dignitary and announcing: “It’s the poet Graves here”.

I always knew Vince would be ‘the poet



Sir Vincent O’Sullivan, pictured in 2014.

O’Sullivan’. But it was a while before he also became a splendid writer of fiction. When his first short stories appeared, Frank Sargeson wrote to congratulate him. Vince wouldn’t have noised that abroad either, but how generously and effectively he himself later encouraged poets and prose writers whose abilities he recognised is obvious from recent tributes. Vince could soon do so as O’Sullivan the novelist, the playwright, the biographer, the librettist, while always remaining the Mansfield scholar.

His many awards included an honorary doctorate from the University of Auckland and culminated in the knighthood which, despite initial reluctance, he eventually accepted for the sake of family and in homage to his migrant Irish forebears.

When Vince was gathering material for his biography of Ralph Hotere, he remarked to me that everybody tended to claim Ralph for themselves. It is natural that we should do this when remembering Vince. He was a vital presence in so many lives – certainly in mine for 65 years.

My admiration for his writing increased with each new book. Vince’s range, even within his last collection of short fiction, *Mary’s Boy, Jean-Jacques and other stories* (2022), is exceptional.

Who else could have had the imaginative daring to make the crew of a nineteenth-century vessel sailing in the Arctic discover Frankenstein’s creature clinging to an iceberg, and take him on board; and in the same volume imagine with such empathy and so movingly the lives of ‘The Walkers’, special needs lad Eric and his father Tommo, seen walking the streets of Dunedin.

But Vince could also do so much in a few lines of verse. ‘No harm in hoping’, the last poem in *Lucky Table* (2001), stands for me as his memorial.

No harm in hoping

At the end of the story I want you to say, ‘I’ve forgotten the plot entirely. It’s no use asking which character was which, What name she used, what his job was. Or where the bridge crossed the canal.’

At the end of the story I want you to remember only the important things that walk between the congregations of print like a bride you’ve read of between the torches of the story you thought you read.

OCKHAM NZ BOOK AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Several books associated with the University and its people were winners at the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards on 15 May.

Don Binney: Flight Path – Gregory O’Brien’s biography of artist, alumnus and former Elam staff member Don Binney – won the award for illustrated non-fiction.

It was one of two winning titles published

by the University’s publishing house, Auckland University Press (AUP); the other was *Te Rautakitahi o Tūhoe ki Ōrākau*, written by Tā Pou Temara KNZM (Ngāi Tūhoe), which won Te Mūrau o te Tuhi Māori Language Award.

Alumnus and former Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific, Professor Damon Salesa’s *An Indigenous Ocean: Pacific Essays* took out the general non-fiction award.

And as part of the programme’s Mātātuhi Foundation Best First Book Awards, Ryan Bodman, who completed his MA in history at the University, won the illustrated non-fiction category for *Rugby League in New Zealand: A People’s History*, while alumna Emma Wehipeihana (Espiner) (Ngāti Tukorehe, Ngāti Porou) won the general non-fiction section for *There’s a Cure For This: A Memoir*.



James S. Watson's award-winning work *A Quiet Place to Rest*.

FINDING COMFORT IN CREATIVITY

Elam School of Fine Arts student James S. Watson's touching tribute to his late mother, *A Quiet Place to Rest*, captured the hearts of judges at the NZ Painting and Printmaking Awards in April, earning him first place in the print category and a \$15,000 prize.

The drawing, which took a year to create, depicts the view from his mother's final resting place at Eden Gardens in Auckland, where her ashes were buried.

"I was struck by how quiet the place is, and wanted to try and capture its essence," says James.

"It was more of a marathon than I thought it would be, but the work was a final chapter and a chance to say goodbye properly to Mum in the only way I knew how."

James's mother passed away unexpectedly in 2022 following a stent operation that led to a fatal blood clot.

"She was always so supportive of my art practice and was never shy in giving me her honest opinion. She would constantly share the latest artwork I would create with her friends and neighbours."

Art has become a refuge for James and a means for him to navigate the complexities of life. He has battled with chronic depression, and turned to drawing after his therapist suggested he try something to distract himself.

As his skills improved and his confidence grew, James began to view art not just as a distraction, but as a potential career path.

"Drawing always gives me a sense of peace. I can relax and everything else drifts away. Everything that happens, every hurdle

I have overcome, I have processed it through drawing or illustration."

James says he was so overwhelmed with grief and frustration when his mother passed away that he drew a portrait of American chef and documentarian Anthony Bourdain titled *Fuck you, Anthony Bourdain*.

"His suicide deprived a daughter of more time with her father, and all I wanted was more time with my mum."

James would often turn to his mum for support during challenging times.

"I felt lost when she died because if I was struggling with something, I would talk to Mum about it. It's quite a comfort sitting in the spot where I took the photograph that was the basis of my print and having a chat with her."

The recognition for *A Quiet Place to Rest* surprised James. Unable to attend the award ceremony in person, he watched the livestream and was overcome with emotion on hearing his name called as the winner.

"I had to rewatch it in the morning, just to make sure I didn't dream the whole thing. I cried; I was overwhelmed, to be honest. Even now, it's still hard to believe. I still find it surreal."

To bring his vision to life, he used the intaglio printmaking method Drypoint.

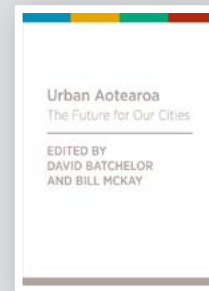
"The rest is just time, patience and more patience," he says.

James is studying towards a Master of Fine Arts at Elam and considers the award as validation of his decade-long career.

"Calling yourself an artist is one thing. But it's another thing entirely to say you're an artist and have won an award."

■ Hussein Moses

ART AND BOOKS



Urban Aotearoa: The Future for Our Cities

Bill McKay (School of Architecture and Planning) co-edits this critical look at our cities' evolution with SoAP alumnus David Batchelor. Contributors (including Lama Tone

and Professor Anthony Hōete, also SoAP) share insights on issues relevant to urban dwellers.

David Batchelor and Bill McKay (eds), Bridget Williams Books, \$18



Hopurangi - Songcatcher: Poems from the Maramataka

Alumnus Robert Sullivan (Ngāpuhi, Kāi Tahu) wrote and posted a poem each day over two-and-a-half months after rejoining social

media. Those poems, inspired by the Māori lunar calendar, are collected here.

Robert Sullivan, Auckland University Press, \$30

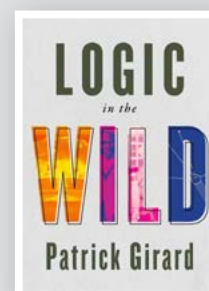


Why Memory Matters: 'Remembered Histories' and the Politics of the Shared Past

Historian Dr Rowan Light, a lecturer in the Faculty of Arts, explores why certain

aspects of our past are remembered over others – and why this matters. To do this, Rowan draws on case studies of local debates about history in New Zealand.

Rowan Light, Bridget Williams Books, \$18



Logic in the Wild

Logic can be a powerful tool, says Patrick Girard. The senior lecturer in philosophy (Faculty of Arts) delves into topics from complex scientific laws to large philosophical

questions, but in a way that he says makes logic relatable and accessible.

Patrick Girard, McGill-Queen's University Press, \$40

Read more: auckland.ac.nz/logic-in-the-wild



“In short, female employees working in companies with mandated family leave were relatively worse off.”

– Dr Asha Sundaram, Business School

BEARING THE BRUNT

The gender pay gap is a well-known and stubbornly persistent characteristic of our economy.

And in tough economic times, as we’re currently experiencing in New Zealand, certain factors can cause this divide between what men and women earn to widen further.

This was a finding of research that I recently co-authored with Fariha Kamal and Cristina Tello-Trillo, both of the US Census Bureau. It showed that, contrary to what you might expect, female employees with access to family leave policies are disadvantaged relative to their male counterparts during economic downturns.

Our study focused on the impacts of the US Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) – a federal law related to parental leave in the US that provides new parents with 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave.

In particular, our research examined how the Act impacts employment-related outcomes for women relative to men when there is a negative shock to the economy.

This work leveraged wide-ranging data on US private-sector businesses, as well as rigorous econometric estimation techniques. And from doing this, we were able to show that an increase in imports from China, associated with a decline in US manufacturing, decreased the female share of earnings, employment and promotions at businesses mandated to provide job-protected family leave under the FMLA, compared to other businesses.

In short, female employees working in companies with mandated family leave were relatively worse off.

Obviously, our study employed US data, but its findings are globally relevant.

Countries the world over have instituted mandated parental leave policies designed to allow individuals to balance family and career responsibilities. In Aotearoa New Zealand, employees can take parental leave if they satisfy certain eligibility criteria, and this can range from 26 to 52 weeks.

And while New Zealand businesses are not required to pay an employee on parental leave, the leave entitlement policy impacts them in numerous ways. They may have to hire new employees to replace those on leave, for example, or reallocate their tasks to existing employees.

These impacts on businesses can be particularly felt when a country faces negative economic shocks. Being small and globally integrated, New Zealand is frequently subject to global headwinds, some of which lead to economic downturns. The current recession, triggered by the aftermath of the pandemic and geopolitical tensions, is a case in point.

When the economy is under stress and opportunities in the workforce are scarce, women may prefer to focus on caregiving responsibilities at home, rather than work for a low wage. Employers may anticipate this and respond by employing fewer women and investing less in them, exacerbating gender inequality.

In fact, in the presence of rigid gender norms that assign caregiving responsibilities primarily to women, an employer’s belief that women will not return to work from leave during periods of economic stress would generate the same outcome. Our research showed that such negative effects on the gender gap are relevant for women in prime childbearing ages and without university degrees.

Importantly, these effects are stronger in businesses with no female managers.

So, what can be done to address this widening inequity?

Several implications emerge from our findings. First, increasing representation of women in top management can mitigate negative impacts on the gender gap. This is possibly because female managers are less inclined to adhere to rigid gender norms while making employment decisions.

Second, raising awareness among businesses and their managers on gender stereotypes and how they might be driving hiring, retention and promotion procedures at their institutions could be crucial.

Finally, offering flexible work arrangements for parents, or those with other caregiving responsibilities, can ensure that the trade-off between time at home and work is not as stark.

New Zealand consistently ranks high internationally in prioritising gender equality, ranking fourth out of 156 countries in the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index 2023. And our parental leave policies, among the most generous in the world, were put in place to help employees balance family and career goals.

However, as our study shows, such policies can influence business employment decisions differently for men and women when our economy encounters headwinds. So, it is crucial that employers, including business leaders and managers, play a strong role in ensuring that women are not disadvantaged in the workforce during these troubled times.

■ Dr Asha Sundaram is a senior lecturer in the Department of Economics at the University of Auckland Business School.

The views in this article are personal opinion and not necessarily those of the University of Auckland.