WAIPAPA TAUMATA RAU | UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Ingenio

auckland.ac.nz/ingenio

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

SPRING 2024

CLEAN & GREEN

SMART TECH FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Alex Kendall: making Wayve

Defending the right to repair

Fresh ideas for Auckland's CBD

BIG PICTURE

NEW HEIGHTS

The University's new state-of-the-art Recreation Centre will open on 25 November. The 26,000 sq m home for sport and recreation will become an important social hub for the University community. The rooftop has panoramic city views and a multi-sport turf as well as track, workout and hangout zones. Among its indoor features are the gym, a swimming pool, two sports halls, squash courts, bouldering wall, café and retail. Read more: auckland.ac.nz/rec-centre
Photo: Mark Scowen

this issue

SUSTAINABLE
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Ingenio
Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland Alumni and Friends magazine
Spring 2024
ISSN 1176-211X
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Cover image:
Illustration by Jericho Jayme

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
Waipapa Taumata Rau
NEW ZEALAND

Editorial

LOFTY GOALS

Excellence is inherent in the pursuits of the staff and students at the University of Auckland, but in our changing times, what does excellence actually look like?

It's a question we ask ourselves as we live through a time of extreme change in our social, economic and environmental systems. These are changes that the tertiary education environment is not immune to.

It is, therefore, not surprising that expectations of what a university education should be and do are changing, and students, employers, professions, communities and academics require those expectations to be met. Digitisation of information has not only fundamentally altered its distribution, but also the depth of how it is analysed, understood and responded to. In addition, the long tail of Covid-19 continues to impact many of our students' preparedness for study.

However, by building on both the University's ambitions and our outstanding history of excellence and commitment to the development, dissemination and impact of knowledge, we can play a vital role in addressing the unprecedented challenges of our times.

This requires us to keep pace with the global rate of change, and the increasingly diverse needs of our communities here in Aotearoa. As a world-class, globally recognised research institution, we have an opportunity to respond to these conditions and what they mean for our students, researchers, academics and communities at large – whether in Auckland, the wider Pacific region, or globally.

It has been exciting to see how the University has adapted what it delivers in its teaching, as well as how it teaches, to help meet these challenges head on. Mainstream access to generative AI is creating exciting opportunities for workplaces, but is not without its challenges in the teaching environment. Despite this, we are seeing some excellent examples of how teaching staff are incorporating these tools into authentic assessment tasks.

There is already strong evidence of the excellence and quality of our teaching and research. The University ranked 65th in the world in the most recent QS World University Rankings – our highest-ever ranking and confirming our position as New Zealand's highest-ranked university.

In addition, the University of Auckland ranked within the top 50 of the 2024 QS World University Subject Rankings for ten subjects. These achievements speak to the leadership, vision and dedication of our excellent staff.

The University's position globally is also strengthened as a member of three leading international networks of research-led universities, providing a strong platform for collaborative, world-leading research.

In addition, our graduates tell us they feel well placed to succeed. In our most recent Graduate Destination Survey (2023), most respondents considered their programme of study had contributed to their personal development and was helping them make a positive contribution to society.

Overall, an impressive 96 percent of graduates were in part or full-time work or postgraduate study. Among those with a postgraduate degree, the proportion was higher again, at 98 percent – evidence of the 'value-add' of a University of Auckland education.

The University's aspirations for the education and experience it provides its students are myriad: to provide accessible, equitable, lifelong higher-education opportunities and student-centric learning; and support co-curricular and extra-curricular cultures. It also aspires to offer education that is research-informed, transdisciplinary, relevant and with impact for the world; and produce graduates who make the world better tomorrow than it is today.

These are lofty goals, but ones that we are committed to delivering on in our drive to provide an excellent education experience for the students we have the privilege to teach.

PROFESSOR BRIDGET KOOL
Pro Vice-Chancellor Education
Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland

THE WORLD'S 'BEST LITTLE BRAIN BANK'

Three decades on, the University's brain bank continues to offer hope through advancing research.

Distinguished Professor Sir Richard Faull became visibly emotional when he described the 'incredible gift' of a human brain to the University of Auckland.

Sir Richard was addressing a lecture theatre packed with 240 guests at a panel discussion in July to celebrate 30 years since the beginning of the Neurological Foundation Human Brain Bank – aka the 'best little brain bank in the world'.

"Those families have put their faith in us to be the custodians of the brains of their partners, their aunts, their uncles, their fathers, and their mothers, after death," said Sir Richard, who established the brain bank in partnership with families and clinicians.

"It's the most precious gift you can give to research. You couldn't pay for it – it's a priceless treasure.

"When we get a brain, the family comes with it… We go back to the family to get more information, talk to the doctors to get the person's clinical history. And we are starting to put together the three pillars of research: community – family, whānau – in the centre; clinicians and hospital doctors; and the researchers. All those groups work together in brain research."

When Sir Richard received the first brain in 1981, he could never have guessed that the donations would continue to trickle in from families who were hoping researchers would find out what was going on in the diseased cells of those donated brains and use those findings to offer their children a better future.

In 1993, Sir Richard went cap in hand to the Neurological Foundation, and in 1994 it funded the Human Brain Bank, which later became an integral part of the University's Centre for Brain Research (CBR).

Sir Richard expressed his surprise and delight that the brain bank now employs five people and contains more than 40,000 blocks of brain tissue, all carefully catalogued, from more than 1,000 brains.

As part of succession planning, Professor Maurice Curtis has been appointed co-director of the bank alongside Sir Richard. Maurice also spoke at the panel event, alongside CBR research fellow Dr Helen Murray, and Lillian Hanly, granddaughter of artist Pat Hanly. Lillian's documentary, *Fifty Percent*, explored the decision of whether to get a genetic test to find out if she carries the Huntington's gene that Pat carried.

"It's the most precious gift you can give to research."

– Distinguished Professor Sir Richard Faull

The final comment of the night also came from Sir Richard, and it clearly resonated with the audience. He talked about the importance of going back to communities and talking about advances in dementia care, which gives people hope and supports them to continue with the most important work of all.

"We may not have a cure, but we know, for people with dementia, that care and support – love – is one of the magic bullets for fighting anything," he said.

"And never underestimate how important that is."

Jodi Yeats

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/brain-bank-birthday

Panellists (L–R) Lillian Hanly, Distinguished Professor Sir Richard Faull, Mark Crysell (MC), Professor Maurice Curtis and Dr Helen Murray.

News

SUSTAINING AN IMPACT

Significant sustainability focus recognised in global rankings

The University's commitment to creating sustainable impact has been recognised in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings 2024, which placed it in the top one percent of universities globally.

The rankings are a key measure of how universities are working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They also recognise the positive social impact created through a university's partnerships, research, teaching, operations, community engagement and knowledge transfer.

The University ranked 13th in the 2024 THE Impact Rankings, among 1,963 institutions.

The SDGs were also a major focus for a delegation from the University that attended the Global Sustainable Development Congress in Bangkok in June. University representatives, including Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater, joined more than 3,000 global thought leaders and innovators to discuss urgent solutions to the world's sustainability crisis.

The Vice-Chancellor played a central role in discussions, participating in multiple panel sessions. In one session, she emphasised how academic leaders in science, innovation and industry can enhance research resources, optimise collaboration and build trust in science for a sustainable future.

The discussion highlighted the need for those in universities to transition their mindsets from a return on investment to a return on values by working with industry, government agencies, community organisations and international partners.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/the-rankings-2024

Left: The University's delegation at the Global Sustainable Development Congress in Bangkok.

FAREWELL TO FORMER VC

Sir Colin James Maiden
5 May 1933 – 31 July 2024

Former vice-chancellor Sir Colin Maiden – the Commonwealth's youngest VC when he was appointed in 1971 and its longest serving when he retired in 1994 – died in July.

Sir Colin had a significant impact on the University of Auckland, spearheading the transformation of campus facilities, driving administrative reform, and supporting cultural, sporting and engineering success.

The Auckland Grammar old boy gained a Master of Engineering in 1955 from the-then Auckland University College. A Rhodes Scholarship took him to the University of Oxford, where he completed his doctorate in 1957. He then took up research posts in Canada and California, broken by a brief period lecturing at the Engineering School. His area of research was hyper-velocity in flight.

Over more than 20 years as vice-chancellor, he drove major changes at the University and instigated a building programme that transformed the campus and its facilities. The old Maidment Theatre, the original recreation centre and the sports fields at Tāmaki that carry his name, Colin Maiden Park, all owe their existence to his desire for better facilities for an ever-increasing student roll and for the city in general.

Sir Colin maintained contact with the University even after retirement, and had a long association with the Auckland University Rugby Football Club and university sports in general.

He also became a generous donor to the University, and many hundreds of engineering students have benefited from the Dean's Leadership Programme, which he helped to found.

Former Dean of Engineering Nic Smith, now vice-chancellor at Victoria University of Wellington, said Sir Colin had a big impact on him and University of Auckland engineering students over many years.

"Sir Colin had an extraordinary life and he will be missed by so many of us," says Nic.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/sir-colin-maiden

Below: Judy Cassab's Portrait of VC Colin Maiden.

ARCHITECTURE AWARDED

The University's B201 project has gained local and global attention

The refurbished B201 building on Symonds Street is proving a hit with students, staff – and awards' judges.

In May, it won the Education section of the Auckland regional New Zealand Institute of Architects Awards, putting it in contention for the national awards in November.

In June, the project achieved Excellence in every category of the Property Council New Zealand Property Industry Awards it entered, as well as Best in Category for Sustainability. Hailed as a shining example of sustainable refurbishment, B201 uses a third of the energy of equivalent-sized New Zealand buildings.

The project has also gained offshore attention, including two wins at the International Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat awards.

Also in June, a large-scale commission by Distinguished Alumna artist Lisa Reihana was unveiled in B201's atrium. You can read more on Lisa's work, called *Māramatanga*, on page 43.

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

B201's design was carried out by Jasmax, and its engineering by Beca. Photo: Jasmax

NEW DEANS ANNOUNCED

Academic leaders revealed for science and new faculty

Immunologist Professor Sarah Young became the University of Auckland's new dean of science in October, replacing Professor John Hosking, who retired after a decade in the role.

Sarah joined Waipapa Taumata Rau from the University of Canterbury, where she was executive dean in the Faculty of Science and a member of the senior leadership team.

Prior to this, she headed the University of Sydney's School of Medical Sciences and she has also held a range of other leadership positions, including deputy dean of the Dunedin School of Medicine at the University of Otago, where she gained her PhD in immunology in the year 2000.

Another major academic leadership announcement was made at the University in August, with Professor Nuala Gregory named to head a new faculty launching next year that combines the faculties of Arts, Education and Social Work and parts of Creative Arts and Industries (CAI).

The professor of fine arts has 27 years of experience as an academic and has been the dean of CAI since 2022. Nuala is also a notable artist whose work has been widely exhibited.

Full stories: auckland.ac.nz/young-science-dean
auckland.ac.nz/gregory-new-faculty-dean
auckland.ac.nz/hosking-retires

Professor Sarah Young (left) and Professor Nuala Gregory (right, Photo: Billy Wong).

Illustration by Jericho Jayme

A GREEN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Now, more than ever, we need to develop new, 'clean' technologies that help create a more environmentally sustainable future. So, who are the innovators in New Zealand's fast-growing cleantech sector? Owen Poland meets University of Auckland academics and alumni doing everything from creating high-value products from waste hospital gases to finding fresh alternatives to fossil fuels.

The reality behind New Zealand's 'clean green' image might be questionable, but there's no doubting the emergence of New Zealand's rapidly growing and ambitious cleantech sector. And among its ranks are University of Auckland researchers and alumni developing high-value solutions with significant potential global reach.

With a core aim to improve environmental sustainability, 135 registered New Zealand cleantech companies have raised more than $535 million in private capital over the past two years.

Among them is Daisy Lab, co-founded by Business School alumna Irina Miller, which aims to reduce the nation's dependence on the $26 billion dairy industry. The startup believes it can dramatically reduce dairy-sector greenhouse gas emissions, by 60-90 percent, using precision fermentation to produce proteins such as whey and casein.

"What it also offers is huge reductions in water and land use," says Irina. "We have way too many cows here in this country. We are much better off farming less."

In essence, Daisy Lab takes a gene from a cow and uses it to modify yeast, which in turn produces protein as part of its life cycle. And the business wants to lean into the country's reputation as one of the world's most efficient protein producers.

"New Zealand is a great place to be, because we have so many talented food technologists," says Irina. "That's really the knowledge that we want to package alongside our technology, and that's what we want to ship out and license to global dairy processers."

Left: Irina Miller is a co-founder of Daisy Lab, which aims to reduce dairy-sector greenhouse gas emissions. Photo: Daisy Lab

Above: Professor Saeid Baroutian is exploring more sustainable solutions to deal with medical waste. Photo: Chris Loufte

"The challenges in sustainability and circularity are very complex, and that requires multiple skill sets."

– Professor Saeid Baroutian, Department of Chemicals and Materials Engineering

Gaining Environmental Protection Authority approval to use genetically modified yeasts, which are eliminated in the final liquid, will allow Daisy Lab to increase production 100-fold, scaling from a lab to a pilot plant.

By refining its yeast strain design and solving some engineering challenges for continuous fermentation, Irina believes there's a "very strong case" for scalability of the technology to achieve cost parity or even undercut dairy on price. And the dairy industry is also playing its part after the Tatua Co-operative signed up as a minority shareholder.

"They've been, in many ways, instrumental to our success, particularly in developing this downstream processing and purification of our proteins," says Irina. "And I can only hope that this relationship will continue."

TACKLING MEDICAL WASTE

For Professor Saeid Baroutian, in the University's Department of Chemicals and Materials Engineering, forging close relationships, in his case with the health sector, is also crucial as he develops environmentally ▶

friendly solutions for the disposal of medical waste.

Anaesthetic gases released every year by a single New Zealand hospital create an environmental impact equivalent to 500 return plane journeys from Auckland to London – but a cost-effective solution may be in sight after a promising desk-top evaluation.

Through a start-up called Gaiatech, Saied has partnered with Southern Cross Healthcare to test a proof of concept. It involves the design of a canister system that will be filled with a functionalised adsorbent (a porous solid material often used to extract pollutants) sourced from a waste stream to capture waste anaesthetic gas.

"Our technology is zero waste; we are not generating any waste through our processing. It's chemical free, which means it's safe and is sustainable, and there's a low energy requirement."

While some more expensive overseas solutions claim to recover and recycle anaesthetic drugs, Gaiatech will destroy them and then extract elemental forms of carbon, fluorine and hydrogen as value-added products.

One challenge will be to navigate the regulatory requirements for the introduction of new medical technology, but the concept won't require any capital expenditure for hospitals and will represent "a small percentage of the total cost of surgery", says Saeid.

With support from UniServices, Saeid has co-founded another start-up, called Nurox Hydrothermal, which uses pressurised hot water and compressed air to destroy hazardous medical waste like pharmaceuticals and toxic chemotherapy treatments. These would otherwise end up in landfill or be sent overseas for incineration.

"Our technology can convert those waste materials into value-added platform chemicals like acetic acid, which has lots of industrial applications."

In conjunction with New Zealand healthcare providers, pharmaceutical manufacturers and waste management companies, Nurox aims to commercialise a scalable process that could be used for other challenging and hazardous waste streams from sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY SOLUTIONS

As the executive director of the recently launched Circular Innovations Research Centre (CIRCUIT), Saeid also leads a cross-disciplinary group of more than 60 researchers from five University faculties whose goal is to accelerate the transition from a linear to a circular economy by eliminating waste and pollution.

"The challenges in sustainability and circularity are very complex, and that requires multiple skill sets from academia, industry, communities and government to get together and provide a holistic solution."

"Sometimes, chemistry is seen as a dirty, polluting science, so we're trying to redress that perception."

– Dr Cameron Weber, Centre for Green Chemical Science

Among numerous projects on the drawing board is an initiative to recycle waste from the rapidly growing medicinal cannabis industry into biofertiliser. Another is to identify new recycling loops for metallic and composite waste (made from a mix of materials).

In partnership with Business School senior lecturer Dr Kiri Dell (Ngāti Porou), Saeid is also involved in a Māori-led circular economy project to transform East Coast kānuka into high-value products. Backed by a $1.9 million grant from the Government's Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures, the Nuka Charitable Trust will commission a pilot plant at Ruatoria at the end of 2024 to produce 'liquid smoke' and juice for food flavouring and preservation from the hardy, scrubby tree.

"The aim is to create jobs for small Māori communities in Tairāwhiti/Gisborne," says Saeid, who has also formed a team of researchers from different faculties to help develop resilient and sustainable energy and infrastructure systems for these isolated communities that are vulnerable to climate change.

Dr Cameron Weber says cleantech companies are important to the future of our economy.
Photo: Chris Loufte

WASTE HEAT TO WHIRLWINDS

The East Coast has also become the crucial testing ground for a radical new way to generate electricity by using waste heat from industrial processes to drive turbines.

Co-founded by Faculty of Engineering alumni Professor Richard Flay and Dr Neil Hawkes, Vortex Power Systems has built a pilot plant north of Gisborne – safely away from airline flight paths – to prove a concept that involves sending artificial whirlwinds into the atmosphere.

"We need a diverse range of green power sources, and one of the things that makes our idea attractive is that this works when the wind's not blowing. So that's obviously commercially useful," says Neil, who was inspired by the whirlwinds he observed while flying a gyrocopter.

The second stage involves the design of a turbine and generator for the likes of steel mills or power stations where nearly half the energy is lost through thermodynamic limits.

"If we attach our technology to an existing power station, heat that was otherwise going to be completely wasted is repurposed to increase the overall efficiency of the station."

Initially funded by the University of Auckland Inventors' Fund and supported by UniServices, Vortex started out as Neil's PhD project. However, it now consists of what he describes as a "wider coalition of expertise and commitment" to navigate the commercial universe.

Describing the project as "an enormous opportunity" to turn waste heat into something useful, Neil says "we can't turn back the tide with respect to global warming, but we can at least make a contribution in that direction".

GREEN CHEMISTRY'S POTENTIAL

With a core mission to advance scientific research, the Centre for Green Chemical Science is focused on finding safe alternatives to chemicals derived from fossil carbon sources. It's also promoting the value of green chemistry.

"Sometimes, chemistry is seen as a dirty, polluting science, so we're trying to redress that perception," says the centre's director, Dr Cameron Weber.

As well as running a globally unique undergraduate programme, the centre is working with industry to recycle waste from the forestry and seafood sectors, and from winemaking, which produces a large amount of waste known as grape marc.

Backed by a $9.8 million MBIE Endeavour Fund grant, researchers have successfully established a proof of principle and are working to build a pilot plant at the University's Centre for Goldwater Wine Science on Waiheke Island.

"They're looking at making antimicrobial packaging materials from some of the tannins," says Cameron, by way of example.

The huge amount of forestry waste produced by the timber industry is also being scrutinised. Rather than using bark to decorate gardens or as boiler fuel, scientists are trying to extract chemical components in a joint project with the Crown Research Institute Scion.

"We can pull out a lot of the tannins from the bark waste and end up with a residue that's mainly lignin and cellulose, which can then be taken forward for different types of applications," says Cameron.

Looking ahead, he points to the need for more government support for R&D.

"Cleantech companies are really important to the future economy in diversifying away from the reliance on a few larger industries as the bulk of our national economy."

Dr Erin Leitao is seeking safer alternatives to 'forever chemicals'. Photo: Chris Loufte

"I would argue that we're doing really well on the international stage."

– Dr Erin Leitao, School of Chemical Sciences

SO LONG FOREVER CHEMICALS?

In the somewhat scary world of petrochemicals, PFAS (per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances) are widely recognised for their ability to keep food from sticking to frypans – and invade the bloodstream of an estimated 97 percent of Americans.

But Dr Erin Leitao is on a mission to put the so-called 'forever chemicals' out of business. Backed by a $941,000 Marsden Fund grant, the senior lecturer in chemistry is leading a ▶

A GRADUATE'S JOURNEY

According to the *New Zealand Cleantech Report 2024*, New Zealand needs to educate a lot more highly versatile and technically skilled graduates like Nancy Zhou (above). The University of Auckland Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship alumna has a conjoint degree in commerce (commercial law and marketing) and engineering (with honours, in mechatronics) – a combination that gave her different career options.

"There's so much out there that I don't even know I don't know," she says. "But my studies have equipped me with a skill set to think creatively, explore different avenues and bring my ideas to life."

After three years in the workforce as a mechatronics engineer, she was hired in 2023 as an instrumentation and control engineer at OpenStar Technologies – the cleantech start-up that's raised US$12 million in seed funding for its pioneering research into harnessing fusion as a carbon-free global energy source.

"There are lots of ambitious people who work here who are very smart. It's great to be in a work environment where I'm surrounded by people like that because it really pushes me to be a better version of my professional self."

Working in the uncertainty of a start-up adds to the challenge and excitement, and while she's in a minority when it comes to gender, Nancy says "we're quite a young team, so there is a lot of awareness surrounding the gender imbalance". Nevertheless, she'd like to see more role models for women in engineering.

OpenStar also ticks another box in its quest to reduce carbon emissions and generate abundant and affordable power, says Nancy.

"It's that push to do social good, where I want everyone to have the same rights and living conditions, and the ability to live their life as any human really should."

"There are lots of ambitious people who work here who are very smart... it really pushes me."

– Nancy Zhou, alumna and OpenStar Technologies engineer

team with considerable global reach to find safer alternatives.

"If we can target some of the essential use applications, in the electronics industry for example, then we could make a real difference overall."

Given that there are upwards of 10,000 PFAS on the market, Erin is quick to admit that they're "not going to solve all of the problems", but says "if we can find even one alternative that could work for one essential application, that's a huge environmental saving".

Developed in the 1940s, PFAS consist of unique and incredibly durable carbon-fluorine bonds that will be challenging to replicate, and Erin's three-year project will adopt a 'safe-by-design' approach so that any substance they produce is understood from cradle-to-grave.

"Just making these alternatives isn't sufficient; we need to do our due diligence. We need to figure out how they're going to degrade. We need to have product stewardship."

Reflecting on her almost nine years at the University of Auckland, and her role as an associate investigator at the MacDiarmid Institute, which has helped create dozens of start-ups, the Canadian-born scientist says that academics starting businesses are much less common overseas.

"One of the things that actually attracted me to moving here and doing research was that you have a much shorter route to creating a company," she says. "I would argue that we're doing really well on the international stage."

CONVERTING WASTE CARBON DIOXIDE

One sustainability-driven researcher gaining international attention is Dr Ziyun Wang, whose childhood passion for Lego and computer games has played a role in potentially solving one of the world's greatest environmental challenges – how to convert waste carbon dioxide into useful products.

"You see so many great works from Lego, you can build almost everything. And we think CO_2 is another space where we can do everything."

In his role as a computational chemist in the School of Chemical Sciences, Ziyun has led a team of researchers who designed a catalyst derived from waste lead-acid batteries that

successfully reduced CO_2 into formic acid for potential use as a fuel.

Describing the ability to operate the catalyst continuously for more than 5,000 hours as "a big step toward commercialisation", Ziyun says that in the long run "what we are hoping for is to convert CO_2 in air everywhere".

Kickstarted with a Marsden Fund grant and Royal Society Catalyst Fund Seeding, Ziyun is now on the lookout for private-sector funding to engage "smart people" and buy consumables to build systems similar to batteries. "The beauty of electrochemistry is that there is normally no scale-up problem."

And his catalysis model could also revolutionise the development of rechargeable aqueous zinc-ion batteries for grid-scale energy storage. "With our knowledge, we aim to design the most efficient aqueous zinc battery ever."

Describing sustainability as "the driving force" behind his research, Ziyun draws on his Chinese cultural heritage of creating harmony with nature.

"I think Māori culture has a very similar thing; we need to find a sustainability with nature," he says. "There must be a way to close the circle so that we can solve climate change or greenhouse emissions."

TRANSPORTING ENERGY AS A LIQUID

Few people in the cleantech space have a CV that reads like Sean Molloy's, who spent four years at the industry unicorn LanzaTech before moving on to co-found two start-ups of his own: Avertana and Ternary Kinetics.

"I love the very early stage where you start an idea and it's almost entirely without form or shape, and you have to start taking it from something quite amorphous and adding definition to it," says the University of Auckland mechanical engineering alumnus.

"I always had a strong interest in cars and environmentalism, and I guess the challenge that I was trying to answer was how you could make those two things compatible," says Sean, who, in 2020, was named a winner of a 40 Under 40 award recognising inspiring young alumni.

Although he's no longer directly involved with Avertana, which uses innovative chemistry to refine industrial waste streams into valuable minerals and chemicals, Sean says it has been "incredibly satisfying" to watch the business secure its first commercial client in China.

Along with LanzaTech's Dr Sean Simpson and Rocket Lab's Sir Peter Beck as fellow directors at Ternary Kinetics, he's now working on a bench-scale demonstration of a process that aims to transport energy as a liquid.

"You can provide energy for zero-emission electric vehicles like aeroplanes, trucks, ships and cars through all of the existing infrastructure for moving liquids around."

Cleantech serial entrepreneur and alumnus Sean Molloy, with Ternary's electro-catalytic 'liquid electricity' device.
Photo: Chris Loufte

As its research ramps up in 2025, Ternary will be looking to hire more graduates, albeit in a market where "smart people and good ideas are free to move". This underscores the importance of continued research and development support for the cleantech sector, says Sean.

"The support that we can get from the government and from NZTE and Callaghan Innovation helps provide some basis for why New Zealand is a good place to do this."

It's a sentiment that's shared by the New Zealand Cleantech Mission, led by Callaghan Innovation and representing academia and industry, which believes that New Zealand can lead the world in developing clean technology.

"The time is ripe for New Zealand to drive a green industrial revolution," it noted in its *New Zealand Cleantech Report 2024*, "leveraging the excellent scientific, engineering and entrepreneurial talent that our cleantech company leaders believe we possess." ■

Guest Columnist Wilhelmina Shrimpton

THE NEW PIVOT

When I get asked about my decision to take the bold step of starting my own business, there's often the assumption it was an intentional move, and all part of a bigger plan to forge my own path.

Truthfully, however, it didn't stem from some profound moment or sudden craving for change; it stemmed from necessity. I was in survival mode after the seismic shift in the media landscape meant I lost not one, but two jobs in just two years. First, there was a redundancy from the now defunct Newshub, and then the sudden closure of Today FM.

The irony is that right before my first redundancy I released a podcast series that explored 'the pivot', which followed the experiences of around ten Kiwis who were forced to move into a different industry or role after losing their jobs during the pandemic.

Their stories were not too dissimilar to mine. Their lives had suddenly changed, and they had no choice but to adapt and change to survive. That was back in 2020, and as the dust settled on the string of lockdown-related job losses, then came the tsunami of economy-related ones.

There have, of course, been the highly publicised closures of some newsrooms, and cuts at multiple government agencies. But that barely scratches the surface. Unemployment rose to 4.6 percent in the three months ended June, and every week it feels like there's another business closing, another legacy brand calling it quits or a restaurant shutting its doors.

It's a confronting reality, but once you peel back the layers of shock, fear, confusion and anxiety, underneath I believe there's a lot of opportunity. The reality is, the only constant is change. Lockdowns have gone, and the economy will get better, but there will always be something new that emerges to force our hands, whether it's driven by changes in our environment, resources or technology.

Right now, there's a lot of chatter about how AI and machines are replacing people. That might be true in some industries and may mean the end of some roles. But what about the new ones that pop up in their place? Who develops those machines? Who markets and sells them? Who decides what it is that they'll create and generate?

A buzzword of our time has been 'pivot', but for me it's been more about diversification. Yes, I left the comfort of the newsroom to do something different, but it was the skills I learned there that gave me the tools to launch my business. I didn't forget how to be a journalist in favour of something else; I evolved those skills into not just one but seven different services and income streams.

At the same time, I didn't forget everything I learned while studying for my Bachelor of Commerce when I became a journalist. I used that knowledge to become a better one and now, through running my business, the skills I learned in the lecture theatre are more valuable than ever.

Adding more strings to my bow also means that if one breaks, I have others to draw on.

So, for those facing their own pivot – or, as I like to call it, 'a move to diversify' – I see you. Grieve what once was and know that a fear of change and the unknown is completely natural. I felt it too, but I've learned to embrace and harness it to see the next exciting thing around the corner.

Like I said, doing something new and different doesn't always stem from a profound moment of inspiration; it's often bred from a need to survive and evolve the skills you already have. I'm still a BCom graduate and a journalist, but now I'm the 2.0 version and in a few years' time, I'm sure I'll need to diversify into Wilhelmina 3.0.

Today, the ability to adapt is key. I firmly believe there are so many opportunities out there, and ones we don't yet know exist.

The reality is, the only constant is change.

This article reflects the opinion of the author and not necessarily the views of Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland.

Broadcaster and journalist Wilhelmina Shrimpton has a BCom from the University of Auckland and recently launched her own media business, Wils & Co. Media.

LSD AND HEALING THROUGH NATURE

Dr Lisa Reynolds is venturing into new territory to help alleviate the distress experienced by those facing their mortality due to cancer.

Drawing on her deep desire to help the cancer patients she has worked with clinically for almost two decades, Dr Lisa Reynolds is exploring new therapies involving microdosing of psychedelics.

"I would like to support people with the big questions that come up for them and the enormous challenges when they are facing their own mortality," says Lisa, who is a health psychologist and senior lecturer in the School of Psychological Medicine.

"These are not straightforward or easy things to help people with. Perhaps it's partly around my own life stage and my own losses, but it feels like fundamentally important work.

"If you can support people to connect in some way with what's important and purposeful to them, then that's a real gift, supporting them to live a life that is meaningful to them."

Her initial interest in the psychedelic LSD came from reading Michael Pollan's book *How to Change Your Mind*, which had a chapter on early research showing the benefit of its use in cancer patients to alleviate feelings of existential distress, isolation, depression and anxiety.

During the course of her own research, she discovered two independent studies from 2016. In one study, patients reported enduring benefits from a psychedelic called psilocybin four or five years later.

Lisa's current microdosing trial offers LSD, or a placebo, alongside meaning-centred psychotherapy that has already proven to be beneficial. It is a feasibility study involving 40 participants with late-stage cancer and now, part-way through, some patients are already reporting real benefit from it.

"It is still unclear how LSD works, but some theories suggest it works on neurotransmitter pathways and increases connectivity within the brain," says Lisa.

It also fosters a sense of connection with others at a time when people commonly feel isolated.

Another University of Auckland trial Lisa is currently working on is testing high doses of MDMA, or ecstasy, in people with advanced cancer.

Lisa says her mother's illness and death from breast cancer was a foundational experience for her future career.

(L–R) Doctoral student Alesha Wells, and health psychologists Dr Lisa Reynolds and Eva Morunga will write up the study's results in 2025. *Photo: William Chea*

"I remember very vividly how unsupported and isolated she was. But also, we, her family, having our own grief and loss, felt very much left to our own devices. I remember, at that time, thinking I wanted to become a psychologist. But I knew I wasn't ready."

She did other things instead, including an MBA and working in marketing.

When her two children were very young, she decided to return to university to realise her long-held dream.

In 2005, Lisa gained a Master of Science in health psychology with first-class honours.

It was while working towards that degree that her young nephew developed a brain tumour and died.

"These two pivotal losses really informed my desire to work in the area of cancer generally, but specifically with people at the end of life."

A doctorate followed in 2008, researching a mindfulness intervention for cancer patients.

Lisa has long had her own meditation practice and these days being in nature is her biggest form of meditation. The sense of wonder inspired by being in nature is something Lisa is exploring in both the LSD study, and one involving virtual reality.

"We are using virtual reality to induce a sense of awe in people, particularly through experiences of New Zealand nature.

"One of the things we know about awe is it can help you shift perspective."

For people going through the challenging experience of cancer treatment, where their focus has become narrower than usual, she says these therapies could help shift their focus.

Jodi Yeats

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/reynolds-lsd-trial

"I would like to support people with the big questions that come up for them."

– Dr Lisa Reynolds, School of Psychological Medicine

Research

SERIOUS EATING DISORDERS SPIKE

Eating disorders up by 50 percent during Covid-19 lockdowns

A study by researchers from the University of Auckland and Te Whatu Ora has shown that more Kiwis, especially those aged ten to 19, ended up in hospital for eating disorders during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The researchers looked at hospital records from 2017 to 2021 to compare how many patients were admitted before and during the pandemic. The research, led by Dr Sara Hansen, found that, while hospital admissions for other mental health issues stayed about the same or declined slightly, admissions for eating disorders increased by nearly 50 percent.

Most of the increase was seen in girls aged ten to 19 with a diagnosis of anorexia nervosa.

"Our main hypothesis is that disturbed social relationships during the pandemic drove the increase in severe eating disorders," says senior author Associate Professor David Menkes of the University's School of Psychological Medicine.

"You may be isolated from people you want to be with or stuck with people you don't – both of these can be stressful," he says. "Young people vulnerable to eating disorders may respond to this stress by attempting to control something else, namely their eating, which can be very risky if they starve themselves."

The findings were in line with research overseas but, due to New Zealand's very low levels of infection early in the pandemic, they suggest social disruption was to blame, not the virus.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/covid-eating-disorders

Left: Senior study author Associate Professor David Menkes, of the School of Psychological Medicine.

SPACETECH INNOVATION

Trans-Tasman researchers unite to advance technology

Two recently funded research projects will see the University collaborate with Australian researchers to foster innovation in space communication and the responsible use of space.

As part of the research efforts, Waipapa Taumata Rau is teaming up with the University of South Australia to develop a system for managing an international network of optical ground stations. This network will help transmit large volumes of data between Earth and space, addressing a critical need in modern space exploration and communication.

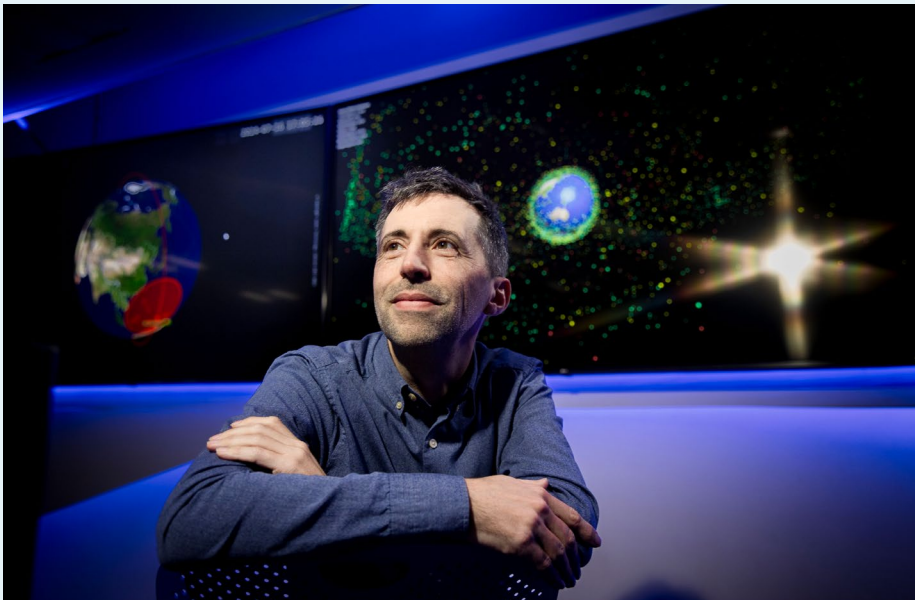
Optical communication, using laser light, offers much higher data transmission rates than traditional radio frequencies. A network of interconnected ground stations spread out across different locations also helps overcome challenges related to atmospheric interference.

Another project will see Te Pūnaha Ātea Space Institute at the Faculty of Engineering collaborate with Curtin University and Nova Systems to support development of the SatPing initiative. The project, led by Professor Roberto Armellin, seeks to enhance the responsible use of space by improving the management of space traffic, which has become a challenging issue.

Effective management requires precise information about the location of objects in orbit, traditionally from ground- and space-based sensors like radar and optical devices.

The SatPing initiative plans to use small tracking beacons on objects in orbit. These chips will send radio signals to Earth, allowing precise tracking of their location.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/trans-tasman-space



Below: Professor Roberto Armellin, of Te Pūnaha Ātea Space Institute.
Photo: Chris Loufte

BOTS DO BATTLE

AI 'urchinbot' will find the sea urchins ravaging our coasts

Scientists at Leigh Marine Laboratory are developing a tool for quickly tracking the spread of sea urchins.

The longspined sea urchin is increasing in numbers in north-eastern New Zealand waters after already decimating areas off south-eastern Australia. Worldwide, increasing sea urchin populations are turning large areas of coastal ecosystems into underwater deserts called 'urchin barrens'.

A New Zealand and Australian cross-disciplinary team, led by Dr Arie Spyksma of the Leigh Marine Laboratory, is developing algorithms to rapidly assess underwater imagery covering up to hundreds of kilometres of coastline impacted by sea urchin expansion.

Dr Kelsey Miller, a University of Auckland marine scientist and project team member, says: "We have a large coastline and conducting science underwater is slow. With the changes happening so quickly, utilising AI tools to speed up this process is invaluable."

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/urchinbots

Dr Kelsey Miller, of the Leigh Marine Laboratory.
Photo: Chris Loufte

FOOD COSTS' TOLL ON KIDS

Many low-income families cannot afford healthy, low-cost foods

The cost of groceries has risen at historically high rates over the past six years, making it virtually impossible for families on benefits to feed children healthily, new research finds.

Lead researcher Dr Joanna Strom, of the University of Auckland School of Population Health, developed a tool in Excel that could model weekly grocery prices for children aged one to 18 and an adult male and female. In the paper, the tool was used to model costs for a family with two children.

She found food-basket prices increased by 35 percent in the six years from 2018 to December 2023. The largest annual increases in food prices were 11.7 percent in 2022 and 13.6 percent in 2023.

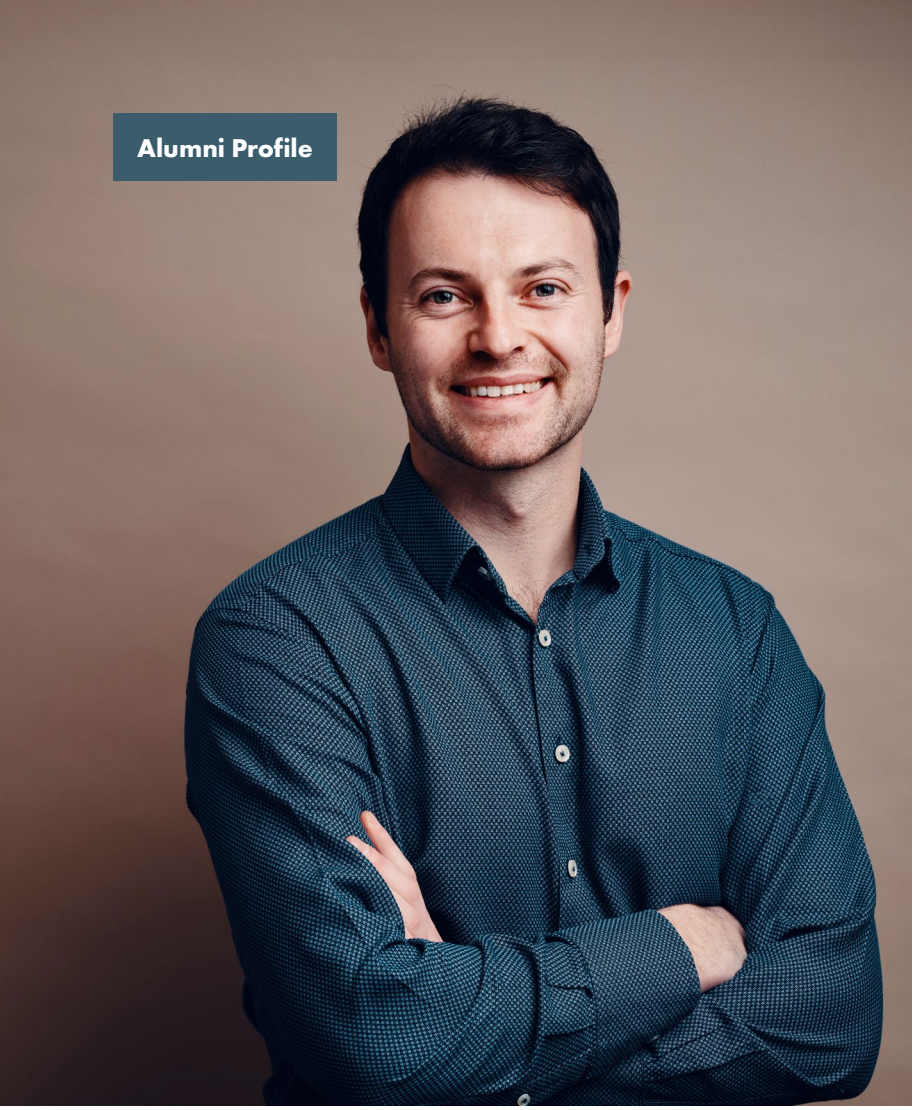
However, she also worked out the costs for an example family whose children were growing over that time, with their additional food needs compounding the price increases, so that the costs of groceries increased by more than 50 percent, from $10,420 in 2018 to $16,083 in 2023.

Joanna focused on the lower-cost foods in the food price index produced by Statistics New Zealand. She created healthy food baskets that would meet the nutritional needs of children, according to Ministry of Health guidelines, for a family of four with children aged seven and 14.

"Generally, there has been a year-on-year increase in these lower-cost healthy foods, over the past six years, which is higher than the food price index overall, and that is concerning."

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/healthy-food-costs

Dr Joanna Strom, of the School of Population Health.
Photo: William Chea



Alumni Profile

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

Alex Kendall traces Wayve's origins back to engineering projects on his family's farm and his early University of Auckland days.

Taking a different direction is paying off for driverless-car pioneer and engineering alumnus Alex Kendall. By Peter Griffin.

Dr Alex Kendall has had a marvellous year. He's closed a $1.7 billion funding round for his autonomous vehicle startup Wayve and been welcomed at 10 Downing Street as one of the UK's rising stars of artificial intelligence (AI).

But for Christchurch-raised Alex, who went straight from high school into the second year of a mechatronics engineering degree at the University of Auckland in 2011 (later graduating first in his class), it all feels like "crossing the start line".

"It represents a special moment where we are transferring from being a research and development focused company into a product company," he tells *Ingenio* from his London flat, where friends visiting from New Zealand have been sleeping on his couch.

"We've got a lot to do ahead of us and we're excited to get stuck in."

The goal of Wayve, which Alex founded in 2017 after completing his doctorate at the University of Cambridge as a Woolf Fisher Scholar, is to finally make the promise of driverless vehicles a reality.

A handful of companies – Tesla and Waymo most prominent among them – have been testing driverless cars for years. But they are tackling a particularly tricky technical problem: how to allow vehicles to safely navigate the real world on our behalf, dodging all the hazards that go with driving, like road conditions, weather, wayward pedestrians and other drivers.

Alex admits it's a complex challenge. But 2017 marked a watershed moment in the field of AI that allowed new machine learning methods and use of neural networks to supercharge how AI systems are trained.

"We don't program rules that say 'red light, stop' or 'green light, go'; rather, we just feed the system a lot of data and let it learn those patterns in the data," explains Alex. "We don't need armies of engineers that program the exact rules the robot or self-driving car needs to follow."

Alex has set out with Wayve not just to create self-driving cars that rapidly learn from the world around them rather than respond to pre-defined instructions; his approach harnesses embodied AI – intelligent systems capable of performing tasks in the physical world. It's technology that could help power manufacturing or domestic robots, as well as vehicles.

In May, Japanese venture capital firm SoftBank Group led Wayve's massive fundraising round, with tech giants Microsoft and NVIDIA also participating. The funds will allow Alex and his 300-strong team to accelerate R&D, and also move into production in collaboration with automobile makers. Alex says his approach to using AI to control driverless vehicles was largely rejected back in 2017.

"Even a year ago, we couldn't even get a meeting with car executives," he says. "Now we have CEOs of all the major car companies around the world lining up to come experience this technology."

Alex traces the genesis of Wayve back to those early University days and to his homegrown engineering projects on the family farm in Canterbury.

"I ended up doing mechatronics, because it was the intersection of pretty much everything electrical, mechanical and software related.

Two vehicles (foreground) fitted with Wayve's AI software being tested on public roads in London.

"There's no such thing as eureka moments. It's a sustained effort over many, many years that allows you to solve hard problems."

– Dr Alex Kendall, Wayve CEO and co-founder

"I spent most of my time in the mechatronics lab, 3D printing robots and building drones and all these kinds of things, and some late nights sleeping under the desks there. It was just a lot of fun, and the friends and memories I made were invaluable."

There were plenty of setbacks along the way. Entering the University's Velocity Challenge in his final year of mechatronics study, Alex's ambition to win the competition with a drone capable of measuring pasture growth on farms came crashing down – literally.

"I flew the drone up and I must have had a few too many sleepless nights because one of the rotors fell off mid-flight. It spiralled and crashed in front of that whole crowd."

He credits his role as a resident adviser at O'Rorke Hall and involvement in the University's hockey teams with helping him develop early leadership skills. They're skills he says he's had to refine as Wayve has grown, and for which he was recognised with a 40 Under 40 award from the University in 2020.

Alex credits his success so far to having a "problem-driven mindset", one that saw him take a contrarian approach to driverless cars seven years ago.

"There's no such thing as eureka moments. It's sort of a sustained effort over many, many years that allows you to solve hard problems," he says.

That effort now looks set to pay off, with massive implications for the world of transport.

"Very soon you'll be able to buy a new car, and it will have Wayve's AI on it," says Alex.

"The awesome thing that will do is improve safety. It'll mean that the vehicle will anticipate and prevent a number of collisions that might have happened otherwise.

"Everyone was telling me this was crazy; this would never work. And I had the resilience and belief to stick with it."

Feature

THE CENTRAL IDEA

Retail downturn, restaurant closures, construction disruption – negativity dominates recent news about Auckland's city centre. So, what can be done to address the downbeat vibe? Anthony Doesburg asks University of Auckland experts and alumni for their ideas to inject positivity and vibrancy into the heart of the city.

Auckland's road-cone-plagued and allegedly crime-infested central business district, or CBD, has been deluged by gloomy headlines.

As the name implies, the area of 433 hectares – bounded by the Waitematā Harbour in the north, Parnell in the east, Grafton in the southeast, Mt Eden in the south, Newton in the southwest and Freemans Bay in the west – is the city's commercial heart.

Contained within it are thousands of businesses employing tens of thousands of people, and Auckland's biggest concentration of shops.

But to some – particularly retailers and hospitality businesses – the heart of the city is on life support, a condition exacerbated by Covid. To others, the CBD is in a predictable period of flux, the result of which will be a more vibrant city.

What's certain is Auckland's CBD is vital for the region and the country. It's the location of key educational and cultural institutions, including the University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology, Auckland Museum, Auckland Art Gallery and the Central City Library.

Downtown's Waitematā Station, formerly Britomart, is the city's transport hub that's soon to be much busier when the City Rail Link project ends. Up the hill in Grafton is Auckland City Hospital, the country's biggest.

Commercial and cultural importance aside, the number of people with a home address in the central city has surged in recent decades, reflected in Auckland Council's preference for the term 'city centre' rather than 'CBD' to describe the area.

Today, it has about 38,500 residents, more than double the number of two decades ago, roughly a quarter of whom are students.

Figures from economics consultancy Infometrics indicate that in 2023, the city centre's population had a higher proportion of those of working age (15–64) when compared with New Zealand overall, and lower proportions of both young people (0–14) and those aged 65 or older.

The City Rail Link build and associated disruption, which still has about a year to run,

is a key triggering feature of life in the big city. With what some might consider masterful understatement, regional transport overseer Auckland Transport says on its website, "If you visit the city centre you will know that construction has changed the way vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists move around". Or don't move around, many people would argue.

For hard-hit businesses, the result has been a crippling reduction in foot traffic. In July, the owner of Wellesley Street's Remedy Cafe told RNZ he wondered if the shop's days were numbered as he contemplated 18 months' more work in the street. Around the corner on Queen Street, 144-year-old department store Smith & Caughey's will downsize in the new year.

Traffic management – a code everyone now knows means orange cones galore – will remain in the vicinity of the new Te Waihorotiu (Wellesley Street) and Karanga-a-Hape (K' Road) railway stations as the job wraps up towards the end of 2025.

Where, then, to find relief from the city centre's downbeat vibe? Aucklanders might take heart from the fact that according to some global measures the city actually stacks up pretty well. An international comparison by *The Economist* magazine, for example, has ranked Auckland in the top ten of the world's most liveable cities in all of the last ten of its annual surveys, judged on stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education and infrastructure. Covid commission of inquiry take note: during the 2021 pandemic peak, Auckland topped *The Economist* list. So, it's not all doom and gloom.

TALKING ABOUT AN EVOLUTION

Jenny Larking, head of Auckland Council's city centre programmes and a University of Auckland Bachelor of Architecture alumna, thinks decline – and trying to turn back the clock – is the wrong way to characterise what's happening in the city centre.

"To me, it's about the next stage of the city centre's evolution. We're seeing a global trend towards a different way of working and shopping that hasn't been created by Covid, but that Covid has accelerated – it was always coming.

"So, it's not so much about decline as being part and parcel of a societal shift."

Rather than a CBD populated by office workers, she foresees one that is the centre for a high value-add economy of technology and professional services businesses that want to be in close proximity to each other to benefit from agglomeration and trust building.

"I think the city centre needs to offer that and create more emphasis for gathering and entertainment and experience rather than being dependent purely on the need to be in the office."

"It's not so much about decline as being part and parcel of a societal shift."

– Jenny Larking, Auckland Council

Jenny Larking says the central city is evolving to cater for more than office workers. Photo: Bryan Lowe

Work to that end is happening apace and, according to Jenny, is being well received. One milestone was the completion in July of *Waimahara*, a light and sound art installation that is part of the revitalisation of Myers Park.

"We're getting fantastic feedback," says Jenny, who oversaw the park project.

Waimahara, by Ngāti Whātua ringatoi (artist) Graham Tipene, in the Mayoral Drive underpass at the northern end of the park, responds when triggered by the singing of particular waiata. Passersby can learn the purpose-written waiata 'Waimahara' and 'Waiora' using QR codes that link to online recordings of the songs.

Graham, whose iwi affiliations also include Ngāti Manu, Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Hine and Ngāti Hauā, says it's "an awesome responsibility" coming up with *Waimahara* and designs for other artworks around Te Waihorotiu CRL station.

"What we're doing is creating for generations we may never meet – that's the sort of thinking that is going into it," he says.

Jenny says Te Hā Noa Victoria Street linear park is another key element of the council's city-centre masterplan, featuring new planting for a green link between Albert and Victoria parks, along with artworks.

"The idea is that it creates a respite for people entering and exiting the new station," says Jenny. ▶

Artworks like Waimahara *will endure for future generations, says artist Graham Tipene.* Photo: *David St George for Auckland Council*

BACK TO NATURE

That's right up urban designer Zoë Avery's alley. The associate director of design in the University's School of Architecture and Planning is a believer in nature as an integral part of the city.

"Nature should be woven into the very fabric of our cities. Green spaces foster social interaction, promote active lifestyles and enhance the appeal of urban centres."

And it needn't strain the city coffers, says Zoë.

"It can be achieved with relatively low-cost interventions, like pocket parks and green roofs."

Green, or 'living', roofs should be mandated to help absorb the heavy rains increasingly hitting the city. CBD runoff contributed to the inability to swim at Auckland beaches for a quarter of last summer, says Zoë.

She also advocates improving pedestrian and cycling infrastructure to make the central city easier to get to, and more appealing for residents, workers and visitors.

"Giving people choices and accessible spaces has been proven to work well. The addition of pedestrian-only zones and adding bike lanes is key."

"Nature should be woven into the very fabric of our cities."

– Zoë Avery, School of Architecture and Planning

More ambitiously, Zoë says daylighting (the term for getting waterways flowing again) the Waihorotiu stream that flowed down Queen Street until around the mid-1800s, and transforming Queen Street into a bush walk could restore a sense of how Auckland was in pre-colonial times.

"It would take significant investment and careful planning, but the unique blend of historic cultural values and urban revitalisation would help create a vibrant and sustainable city centre."

It's an idea that resonates powerfully with Graham, whose inspiration for *Waimahara* was the Waihorotiu.

"For me personally, absolutely – to bring back those historic waterways that meant so much in the old days is just on a wish-list level," he says.

OUT OF OFFICE

For Zoë's colleague Bill McKay, a senior lecturer in the School of Architecture and Planning, the conversion of commercial buildings into residential is the best bet for reviving the CBD.

When workplaces emptied out during Covid lockdowns, city centre offices were deserted. With the virus panic now over, it's still not quite business as usual for many employers.

In many instances, says Bill, former office dwellers have decided they'd rather work from home, leaving their cubicles unoccupied.

"There's a trend away from big offices, plus a move by those that still need them to leave Queen Street for flasher buildings in more fashionable areas. That's an opportunity to take empty office buildings and turn them into apartments."

Conversions done well – he knows of several, including the World War I-era Guardian Trust building on Queen Street – can create quality living spaces.

"I think there's demand, particularly from students and young people looking to get on the property ladder."

Empty-nesters are also a prime market for lock-and-leave CBD dwellings.

When Bill was a student in the city in the early 1980s, fewer than 1,000 people lived in the CBD, and he can see apartment conversions bringing about a similar population explosion from today's 38,500 to double that in a decade.

ART OF ATTRACTION

If nature is one way of improving urban liveability and attracting people, nourishing their appetite for cultural experiences is another.

Pianist Dr Sarah Watkins, a senior lecturer at the University's School of Music, graduate of New York's Juilliard School and NZTrio founding member, says performances in public places can help counter the emptying-out of city centres, which she has sensed as contributing to a "slightly lost feeling" in Queen Street and downtown Auckland.

Concerts can be spontaneous – as when people passing a street piano in Wynyard Quarter sit down and play – or organised, as during the annual Auckland Arts Festival.

"From my experience, downtown Auckland has been at its most energised during recent arts festivals, with numerous performances in outdoor public spaces and a real audience buzz. It can't really happen year round, but it offers a glimpse of what a vibrant city might feel like and the vital contribution the arts can make."

Music isn't the only drawcard. Sarah is also struck by *Waimahara* as a great example "of musicians and artists engaging with the public in unexpected ways". Another example, she says, was Opera in the Strand – a NZ Music Month collaboration in May between the New Zealand Opera School and Te Pae Kōkako the Aotearoa New Zealand Opera Studio in the Strand Arcade.

WHERE THE HEART IS

The city centre's charms may be lost on some people. But Helen Robinson, leader of Auckland City Mission – Te Tāpui Atawhai, which calls the CBD home, isn't one of them.

The University of Auckland Master of Social and Community Leadership alumna has no trouble tapping into the positivity reflected in *The Economist*'s liveability survey. She says: "I want to acknowledge how good Auckland city is to us," insisting she is "not being Pollyanna-ish".

For more than a century, the mission has provided support to those in greatest need. Now, with its 80-apartment HomeGround building on Hobson Street and a leased property off Karangahape Road, it also offers permanent housing. The organisation is supported by businesses, Auckland Council, government agencies and individuals.

That support exemplifies the side of Auckland that Helen says deserves headlines.

Her plea is that the people who populate the CBD continue to show "compassion, curiosity and empathy" for those around them. And she counsels those businesses fed up with the aftermath of Covid and the rail-link disruption to look forward to more footfalls in the city in the future.

"I think the city gets a bad rap. But the promise of what tomorrow may bring isn't far away," she says. ■

Above: Cultural experiences can help counter an 'emptied out' feeling in city centres, says Dr Sarah Watkins.
Photo: Chris Loufte

Below: The support received by Auckland City Mission exemplifies the central city's spirit, says Helen Robinson.

"I want to acknowledge how good Auckland city is to us."

– Helen Robinson, Auckland City Missioner/Manutaki

Opinion

NO NEWS IS NOT GOOD NEWS

Dr Gavin Ellis says, given journalism is an indispensable part of the engine that drives our democracy, more must be done to convince the public to care about it.

It is painful to picture a world in which there are no journalists.

It is a world in which the powerful are accountable largely for those things they are prepared to reveal; the things that show them in the best light. It is a world populated by PR people whose job it is to place their clients or employers in the best light.

It is a world in which disinformation goes unchallenged and its perpetrators can distort both the beam and public perceptions. It is a world in which aggregators can put all of that focus in the best light with the twiddle of an algorithm.

It is a world in which no light is shone on those things people may not want you to know, but which you need to know and have a right to know.

Journalism has served society for hundreds of years. Daniel Defoe was doing it well before he created *Robinson Crusoe*, perhaps after reading an article about the rescue of marooned privateer Alexander Selkirk in the newspaper *The Englishman* in 1713.

Like most human endeavours, journalism is a mix of the virtuous and the venal, of fortune and folly. Now, however, it faces the prospect of death, and society would be guilty of culpable homicide: the corpses of the people whose jobs we were prepared to see abolished will be interred in caskets made from the media organisations we allowed to collapse.

Of course, there will be pleas in mitigation. The optimists among us will look to the digital universe and claim there is now so much information in free flow that we no longer need reporters to collect news or editors to scrutinise it before publication. We can find what we want to know without 'outside help', thank you very much.

There is no denying that the world is awash with more material than at any other time in human history, and it is more accessible than ever before. Theoretically, we have direct access to sources of information where previously we relied on news media as intermediaries.

Two attitudes have developed from this 21st century reality, particularly among what we must alphabetically assume to be the final two generations of Homo sapiens – Y and Z.

The first is that, in informational terms, volume equates with value. The second is that journalists are like cartwrights – artisans making quaint products we no longer require.

In May, the University's Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures published a position paper that I co-wrote with the somewhat rhetorical title of *If Not Journalists, Then Who?* that painted a possible future in which reporters followed in the footsteps of the artisans who built horse-drawn coaches and wagons.

However, cartwrights were replaced by automobile assembly-line workers doing a better job in meeting the same need – creating a means of transport. In the position paper we were unable to identify another institution or occupation that would be able to fulfil the public interest role of journalists, let alone do it better.

The paper painted a grim picture, stating: "News media and the provision of reliable news to citizens in Aotearoa New Zealand are suffering a form of ecosystem collapse. A combination of predation, changes to the media, destructive behaviour, and adaptive limitations are pushing the environments in which journalism is produced to the point where their effective extinction may be measured in years rather than decades.

"Like any ecological loss, this extinction will have consequences that extend beyond the disappearance of the interacting organisms that form the news ecosystem. Just as the disappearance of Amazonian rainforests affects world climate, the loss of professional, institutional journalism has profound implications for democracy and social cohesion."

We identified a broad spectrum of issues that must be addressed if journalism is to survive – from financial sustainability and technological challenges to settings that govern its contribution to democracy and to social cohesion. The options and recommendations in the paper were aimed at both media organisations and government.

One of our observations was that much more needs to be done to persuade the public that journalism is an indispensable part of the engine that drives democracy. In other words, the public need to understand that allowing journalism to wither will have a direct effect on their ability to function as a cohesive society.

The paper painted a grim picture, stating: "News media and the provision of reliable news to citizens in Aotearoa New Zealand are suffering a form of ecosystem collapse."

I do not believe the average New Zealander understands that reality and, as a result, places little or no value on journalists or the organisations that give weight to their endeavours. It may be part of the reason two-thirds of us are ready to distrust news media well beyond their actual shortcomings. It may be why we are more inclined to critique its faults than to highlight its merits.

The most persuasive way to demonstrate journalism's worth would be to observe the impact of its death, but that, to put it mildly, would be counterproductive. Even a day without news – no newspapers, radio and television bulletins, or updates to digital platforms – would make the point, but I doubt that news media managers, driven by the bottom line, would cooperate.

Instead, you could carry out a mental exercise. Ask yourself if you could find the information contained in the first six stories of today's newspaper, news website, or broadcast news bulletin. And if so, how? Now calculate how long it would take you to gather it.

Finally, think about having to do that every day if you wish to be part of a functioning society. Or perhaps you would be happy to leave it to the daily scrapings of some large language model, aggregated 'on your behalf' by a transnational's secret algorithm.

Media consultant, commentator and researcher Dr Gavin Ellis (ONZM) is an honorary research fellow at Koi Tū. He has more than 50 years of experience in news media and lectured on media and communications at the University for a decade.

Hear Gavin discuss insights from the paper as part of the 2024 Raising the Bar event on Spotify (tinyurl.com/rtb-spotify-ellis) or SoundCloud (tinyurl.com/rtb-soundcloud-ellis). To learn more about the paper, visit: informedfutures.org/if-not-journalists-then-who//

Dr Gavin Ellis

IN A FIX

Why has it become so difficult for us to fix things when they break or break down? Donna Chisholm meets those championing the right to repair our everyday household items and keep them out of landfill for longer.

University of Auckland academics and alumni whose advocacy has helped bring proposed right-to-repair legislation before parliament say such a law is only the start of the changes needed.

The Consumer Guarantees (Right to Repair) Amendment Bill, a member's Bill from the Greens, was drawn from the parliamentary ballot in April and is due to have its first reading in Spring. It's a big win for campaigners who've fought for years for better consumer protections. If the Bill is passed, it would be mandatory for manufacturers to ensure that repair facilities and spare parts are available in New Zealand. It would also mean information, software and other tools necessary for repair are made available upon request.

At the forefront of the campaign for change have been alumna Brigitte Sistig, a psychotherapist who co-founded Repair Café Aotearoa New Zealand in 2021, and professor of commercial law Alex Sims.

Alex says while the Bill is necessary and an overdue first step, more meaningful change requires many other statutes to be altered. These changes include the need for a wider range of products to be covered, in addition to those for personal and domestic use – for example, tractors and other agricultural equipment. It also includes the ability for lawmakers to require changes in product design to prevent 'planned obsolescence', and that information about the repairability and durability of goods is provided to consumers at the point of sale.

"Goods used to last for decades," says Alex. "Now we're expected to accept that appliances like fridges will last only ten years."

Last year, she bought a 60-year-old Husqvarna sewing machine second-hand, which still goes well and is "super easy to fix and looks amazing. The people we bought it from had got it at least second-hand." They're attributes difficult to find in machines sold today.

Alex says planned obsolescence can be traced back to 1925 when lightbulb manufacturers agreed to roughly halve the lifespan of their bulbs and increase prices. A century on, she says, we have "obsolescence on steroids".

Alex wants more power given to the Commerce Commission to take manufacturers to court over such practices and other breaches of the Consumer Guarantees Act.

"It is not sufficient to provide rights only to consumers and not also allow regulators to bring actions. Due to the cost and time of litigation, consumers and businesses rarely attempt to enforce their legal rights, even in low-cost tribunals."

But, she says, the Bill, if passed, would represent a big step forward for New Zealand, which has so far lagged right-to-repair moves in Europe and the US. One immediate benefit would be creating more jobs through a potentially large repair industry.

Alex says manufacturers employ several tactics to limit the life of their products, including intentionally designing products that are difficult, if not impossible, to repair; 'weaponising' intellectual property to prevent repair by applying copyright to repair manuals and other documentation; limiting repairs to authorised repairers; and not manufacturing spare parts. During the pandemic, there were calls in the US to pass legislation to allow technicians and hospitals themselves to repair their equipment without waiting for expensive authorised repairers.

Planned obsolescence strategies have become even more sophisticated in recent years, with manufacturers developing software enabling them to remotely control their goods after sale. Examples include rendering printers unable to print when the monthly ink subscription has not been paid or making a Tesla owner unable to tow a trailer after installation of an unauthorised tow bar.

Alex advocates a "carrot rather than stick" approach for solving the problem and says the government can also take the lead in procurement, by requiring standards of repairability in the goods it buys. "Vendors will meet those demands."

Although manufacturers have been the main drivers of planned obsolescence, consumers, swayed by marketing tactics, have also contributed, with a desire for cheaper or more fashionable products. Alex says she's not immune to this either.

"Although we try to buy as much as we can second-hand and my partner is good at fixing things, we have unfortunately got used to buying new appliances rather than spending more money trying to fix something that may not work. People must be prepared to pay more for things that last longer and for which repairs are cost effective."

Brigitte Sistig's campaign to encourage conscious consumption shares parallels with her psychology studies – she obtained a Master of Health Science degree at the University of Auckland in 2014, specialising in mindfulness in mental health.

"The connection is about awareness. Recognising our impact, whether on ourselves, others or the planet is the initial step towards behaviour change," she says.

"Caring for our belongings and keeping them out of landfills isn't just about the environment, it's about cultivating a more mindful and empowered approach to life, benefiting both ourselves and the planet."

Brigitte describes growing up with a father who was a tinkerer. When he built an electric train set, she spent hours helping with the wiring, a passion that sparked her own love of problem solving. "Now as a psychotherapist, I work to 'rewire' neurons … healing hearts and minds."

The Repair Cafés are powerful tools for consumer education, she says. By providing the opportunity to mend rather than replace, they foster a deeper understanding of product lifecycle, style and design. Many visitors who seek repairs at the community hubs discover the planned obsolescence inherent in many products. Brigitte says successfully repairing

Professor Alex Sims with the 60-year-old sewing machine she bought last year, which goes well, looks great and is easy to fix. Photo: Chris Loufte

"Goods used to last for decades. Now we're expected to accept that appliances like fridges will last only ten years."

– Professor Alex Sims, Department of Commercial Law

an item can boost self-esteem and confidence. "It's a tangible reminder of our abilities and resourcefulness."

In 2021, as co-founder of Repair Café Aotearoa New Zealand, she launched the Make it our Right to Repair petition, which went to then-environment minister David Parker and became the catalyst for the new legislation. She's also founder and chair of the charitable trust Repair Network Aotearoa, dedicated to cultivating a robust repair culture.

An advisory board member of Repair Network Aotearoa is L'Rey Renata, a water engineer pursuing a PhD at the University of Auckland. Her studies aim to "redefine engineering best practice through a te ao Māori lens".

L'Rey (Tainui, Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Te Rangi) says understanding the interconnectedness of all living things and the impact of waste on the environment is vital for developing sustainable practices that not only reduce, reuse and recycle waste, but also consider the cultural, spiritual and environmental implications of waste disposal. Kaitiakitanga (guardianship and protection of the environment) means reducing the harm of hazardous waste, and old and existing landfills.

She says three principles of te ao Māori – whakapapa (lineage), tiakitanga (guardianship and environmental protection) and rangatiratanga (autonomy and self-determination) – align with the right to repair.

Whakapapa, for example, emphasises the interconnectedness of all things, recognising the lineage and relationships that bind people, objects and the environment. "By advocating for the right to repair, we acknowledge the history and value of our possessions, respecting their place within our lives and communities, fostering a sense of continuity and connection."

Together, these principles create a holistic framework that supports sustainability, community well-being, and the respectful stewardship of resources, she says.

L'Rey has been teaching her six-year-old daughter these principles and weaving their values into their daily lives. "It's heartwarming to see her embrace these teachings; whenever something needs fixing, she proudly exclaims, 'Mum's an engineer, she knows how to fix it so it doesn't hurt Papatūānuku!'"

While electrical appliances tend to get most of the publicity around the right to repair, the policy also covers clothing. And despite the resurgence of vintage clothing and recycle boutiques, we still have a long way to go, says Karen Fernandez, associate professor in the department of marketing.

Of all the textiles manufactured annually, about 85 percent end up in landfill or are incinerated, with just 12 percent donated or recycled, and less than one percent regenerated into fibre for new clothes.

Karen says the pandemic made some people realise they had to be more self-reliant. "I think it scared everyone. Repairing was part of that because we had to make do and we realised what would happen if we couldn't repair."

She says if manufacturers were forced to offer a repair service, it would discourage them from selling fast fashion, because it needs repair more quickly.

Karen concedes that we cannot all afford to buy luxury, vintage or sustainable fashion, but neither can we continue to thoughtlessly dispose of unwanted items.

She has her own experience of refurbishing a much-loved vintage denim jacket she bought from the Hard Rock Café in 1985 – removing and resurrecting the original logo to stitch on to a new jacket (and donating the original jacket to a woman who turns old denim into handbags to sell at markets). It cost her twice what she paid for the original item. "But saving a treasured memory from landfill? Priceless."

Keen to learn more about Repair Cafés, or volunteer to get involved? Visit: auckland.ac.nz/viw-repair-cafe

Above: There are cultural and spiritual implications to waste disposal, as well as environmental ones, says L'Rey Renata.
Photo: Chris Loufte

Below: Associate Professor Karen Fernandez wearing the denim jacket she customised, while saving a treasured memory in the process.
Photo: Dean Carruthers

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

Ever wondered what it's like to work for one of the world's most beloved toy companies? Jun Lim has been at Lego South Korea for seven years. And, as he tells Nikki Addison, it doesn't disappoint.

Picture an office where bright yellow is the feature colour, Lego minifigures dominate, and meeting room tables are topped with plastic bricks for employees to play with. Imagine having an annual event called Play Day, where staff around the world stop work and spend the next eight hours constructing Lego sets, engaging in team-building activities and sharing delicious meals.

This is the norm for Jun Lim, senior digital promotions manager in the Lego Group's global e-commerce team – but a future in Lego wasn't something he had planned.

Born and raised in South Korea, he moved to New Zealand with his family when he was ten. Hoping to start his own business one day, he enrolled in a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in finance at the University of Auckland in 2009.

When the opportunity arose to complete a semester abroad as part of the University's 360 International semester exchange programme, he jumped at the chance to revisit his homeland as a young adult.

Six months at Seoul National University gave him a taste for life in the metropolis.

"It sparked my dream to live here," he says, naming the city's constant energy as a big attraction. "Everything is 24/7. The city never sleeps; it's always active. When you go out at night, there's lots to do."

Taking time off from his degree, Jun had a brief stint working for an Australian shipping company before completing a three-month internship back in South Korea for the Dutch health technology company Philips. The company offered him a full-time position and, after graduating in 2013, he returned to Seoul – for good. Four years of e-commerce experience with Philips was the perfect preparation for shifting from tech to toys.

Enter Lego, a brand needing no introduction, instantly recognisable and as iconic as Barbie or Hot Wheels. Jun is responsible for managing content for Lego's global online stores.

It's a big but rewarding job, which involves targeting content for specific countries and working a broad range of hours to collaborate with offices in different time zones. For someone who grew up with the toy juggernaut's presence in his home, it doesn't get much better.

Lego's appeal is enduring and intergenerational, says Jun Lim.

"As a child, I played with Lego. I used to love it and I still love it," he says, noting that the brand's audience stretches from toddlers to adults.

Its enduring and intergenerational appeal, he says, can be attributed to two key factors: mindfulness – "building Lego sets gives you time to focus on something. It makes you calm and relieves stress" – and agility: "Lego continuously invests into new, innovative franchises, making it unique among other companies in the toy industry and relevant to shoppers." Said franchises encompass everything from *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* to *Animal Crossing* and *Minions*.

Jun is grateful for his unexpected career path. Not only did he wind up with a job he loves, but he also learned a valuable lesson in being receptive, which he says could help current students grappling with their future.

"When I was a student, I was stressed, thinking I needed to find a good job right after graduating," he says.

"But life is long. Don't worry about landing a job you need to do for your entire life. Anything can change. Be open minded and do as many different things as you can while you're young."

And don't forget: play is for adults, too.

"As a child, I played with Lego. I used to love it and I still love it."

– Jun Lim

Creating space

Curator Nina Tonga has helped elevate the work of our artists on the international stage. Now, in Hawai'i, she's fostering the next generation of Pacific curatorial talent. By Janet McAllister.

Nina Tonga, pictured alongside Nan *(2012), an artwork by her sister Ane Tonga, which is part of the University of Auckland Art Collection.* Photo: Chris Loufte

For a moment in April 2024, Dr Nina Tonga is in three places at once: Hawai'i, Venice, Aotearoa.

Technically, she's sitting at a computer at the University of Hawai'i in Mānoa, where she's an assistant professor of art history, fostering the next generation of Pacific curators and academics. But – thanks to a message from Mataaho Collective suggesting she jump on the livestream – she's at the Venice Biennale, witnessing the Māori art collective receive the Golden Lion for Best Participant in the International Exhibition.

The award, one of the most celebrated in the global art world, is for a momentous woven installation that Nina helped make a reality on another land, in another job, in another life. Called *Takapau*, the work was originally commissioned for the exhibition *Mataaho Collective: Te Puni Aroaro*, which Nina curated when she was curator of contemporary art at Te Papa.

Her lesson from the Venice experience was to trust her gut. It was her gut, she says, that told her Mataaho Collective "were creating a work that needed to be seen not only by Aotearoa but by the world".

Curating such a major exhibition is a complex exercise. Part of a curator's varied job includes building trust with the artists; researching history; getting and keeping the institution on board; and ensuring the artists' processes are honoured. In this case, among other things, Nina and Te Papa supported a wānanga art-making process, and had a whole new wall in the gallery built.

"While I love exhibition making, I think how you get there matters. It matters so deeply," says Nina.

'Getting there' involves building trust and honouring relationships – across life, not just projects. For example, Nina built relationships in Hawai'i when curating the 2019 Honolulu Biennial (today called the Hawai'i Triennial). Now, working in Mānoa, "feels like I'm returning to tend to those relationships again".

From a family "very proud to be from the villages of Vaini and Kolofo'ou", Nina visited Tonga several times in her childhood. She also played with dozens of cousins at her grandparents' house in Mt Wellington, where her grandmother would turn the TV off and forbid English. Now Nina speaks Tongan as much as she can.

"There are ways of thinking I can't quite translate [from Tongan]. English fails me so many times. So there's some comfort in being able to process my thoughts in another language."

Nina talks about "the places where you sleep well" – where she feels connected and at ease: Tonga, Hawai'i. While aware of "the realities of living on land illegally occupied by America", she loves that "the Pacific, our place in it, is so embedded in Hawai'i. Culturally, linguistically, this notion of our connection to the Pacific at large isn't a question there."

Nina approaches curating Kānaka Maoli (Hawaiian) art in Hawai'i in similar ways to curating Māori art in Aotearoa.

"I think for everybody, it's our role to be in service, particularly when we're not on our own islands, to create space for Indigenous voices."

Nina was the first Pacific person to be Te Papa Curator Contemporary Art, but after five years in that role (and nine years at Te Papa), she has returned to teaching.

One motivation, she says, was "creating space for somebody else" at Te Papa; another pulled her back into academia: lifting the number of Indigenous people working in the arts across the world.

It's an urgent goal for Nina, who is the sole Pacific art historian in her department, as she was at Te Papa.

"I'm not interested in being 'the one' or 'the first'. With each new role, the job becomes ensuring that I'm not the only one or the last."

In this, Nina is following her own University of Auckland lecturers, "pillars in our community", such as associate professors Caroline Vercoe (the main supervisor of Nina's doctorate, completed in 2021) and Ngarino Ellis.

"When you see a Māori or Pacific lecturer in the front of your classroom, I cannot say how validating that is," says Nina. "That's quite special about the University of Auckland – the way they've really brought through Pacific and Māori academics who have also then gone on to teach others who are now in the field."

Nina was drawn to study art history at Epsom Girls Grammar, as a graphics student interested in architecture history. She soon loved discovering how to decipher meaning by analysing colour, form and mark-making.

"It unlocked for me this ability to understand what I'm looking at, and I realised it could apply almost to everything … I was using my full vision in a way, and it opened up worlds."

Ngarino was the first teacher Nina ever had who discussed Pacific art – a ngatu (tapa cloth) – in class. Now, coming full circle, Nina is writing about tapa-making collectives of Tongan women.

Usually such collectives "are given a name and on the rare occasion members are listed", she explains, "but no one really talks about the journey".

Again, Nina is honouring Māori and Pacific collectives and Pacific art processes in new ways – this time on the page, after recognition on the Venice stage.

"With each new role, the job becomes ensuring that I'm not the only one or the last."

– Nina Tonga, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

AN ENDURING CONNECTION

The organisation that has amplified the voices and aspirations of University of Auckland alumni for decades has wound down but, as Megan Fowlie discovers, its legacy – and the University's alumni relations office – lives on.

Above: Christine Keller Smith says the society was driven from its inception to support high-potential students. Photo: Chris Loufte

Right: Professor Raewyn Dalziel with Paul Newfield, one of the first five postgraduate scholars, pictured in 1996.

Vision, hard work, and passionate, boundless commitment: they're words Christine Keller Smith uses to describe the spirit of the University of Auckland Society.

Christine was the first alumni relations manager of the Alumni Association, which operated thanks to numerous volunteers from 1990 to 2004. In 2004, the association became the University of Auckland Society and, this year, has wound up its operations.

"The University of Auckland Society has always given its funds back to the University in significant areas," says Christine. "Now, even in its dissolution, the society continues to support talented young New Zealanders."

Between the '90s and now, the society's executive committee created scholarships and studded the University calendar with events that recognised the value of those who arrived as students, left as graduates, and remained connected as alumni.

It instigated the high-profile Distinguished Alumni Awards. It shored up support for the exposé of frenetic talent through years of Three-Minute Thesis competitions. It launched and funded the Golden Graduates lunches for many years before the University took over as main supporter, sponsored the University Strings and started the Graduation Gala Concerts with funds and continued support before the University, again, took the reins.

Notably, it also paved the way for the University's inhouse Alumni Relations Department, which took on and formalised many of the roles, functions and events established by the association.

"Unequivocally," says Christine, "the society's proudest achievement is the alumni scholarships, starting in 1995 with highly regarded potential students who could benefit from financial support to complete postgraduate degrees."

As a 20-year-old in an op-shop jacket, part-time dishwasher and full-time philosophy student, Paul Newfield was one of those first postgraduate alumni scholars.

"The society's proudest achievement is the alumni scholarships."

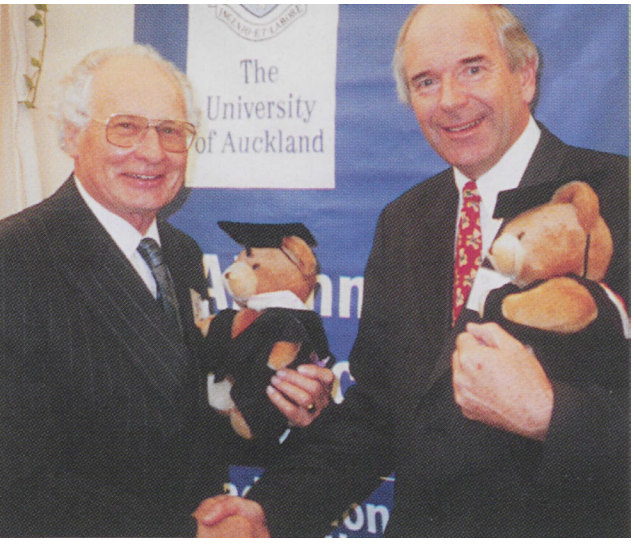
– Christine Keller Smith, first alumni relations manager, Alumni Association

"I'm not really sure what the scholarship selection committee saw in that, but I'm so very grateful that they took a chance on me," says Paul. "I didn't entirely give up the dishwashing job, but the scholarship gave me the freedom to spend a lot more of my time on my masters thesis – perhaps an even more absurd idea, it was on Nietzsche's philosophy of love."

Paul is now CEO of investment firm Morrison, working with brilliant people dedicated to investing in ideas that matter, like decarbonising the global energy sector.

Undergraduate alumni scholarships were created in 1996. These were fee-paying grants for the minimum length of an undergraduate degree. Schools nominated candidates with merit in their final secondary year who needed a hand-up to undertake tertiary studies.

The Alumni Association raised money, mainly through an alumni Visa card and merchandising, with its policy being to return every cent made from sales to the University. Its first range of merchandise was produced in 1991. The 1994 addition of Warwick Bear – affectionately named for the then Registrar Warwick Nicoll – was a particular hit with graduands as a memento of their university days. Through this, the association provided a lifeline of funds to ameliorate critical financial



struggles and aided extension opportunities for hundreds of students.

Kirsten Strom is one of many whose aspirations were propelled in part by the society. In 2019, the music honours student attended the Etchings Festival – a leading international music festival offering a week of private lessons, masterclasses and workshops in Auvillar, France – supported by the society.

"My dream was to become a professional composer. The financial support from the society to attend the Etchings Festival certainly helped me on that path."

Above: (L–R) Linda Smith, Reina Whaitiri and Albert Wendt at the 2001 Autumn Pacific Graduates Ball.

Left: Association President the Hon. George Gair and Registrar Warwick Nicoll celebrating the launch of the alumni Visa card in 1995, with Warwick Bear.

The pinnacle of that experience, she says, was meeting renowned contemporary composer Kaija Saariaho, who provided encouragement on Kirsten's original scores.

Now a composer, arranger and mentor, Kirsten is working with the Auckland Philharmonia and mentoring at Avondale College as part of a Creatives in Schools residency. Her latest commission, *The Heavens Declare the Glory of God*, was performed in September in an Auckland Philharmonia collaboration with the StarDome, *Strings Under the Stars*.

For many years to come, the society's remaining funds will be distributed through the Student Emergency and Well-being Fund and the Campus Life Student Support Fund.

They will also support Kupe Leadership scholars for five years.

The inaugural Kupe Leadership Scholarship recipient, James Corles, is a School of Architecture and Planning masters student, who is exploring housing approaches that create quality spaces and encourage sustainable living.

James says the mentorship offered through the scholarship has been the most significant aspect of the support.

"I was paired up with Pip Cheshire, which has given me great exposure and insight into the world of architectural practice, one-on-one tutoring and brought context to my years of study," says James.

"Lately, I have worked on increasingly complex projects with suppliers, engineers and other architects. Increasing my leadership skills will help me collaborate with the many members of my industry, and becoming a better leader will help me become a better architect."

Interestingly, the catalyst for forming the Alumni Association was neither financial nor ▶

Left: *(L–R) Dame Robin White and University of Auckland Society Patron Dame Cath Tizard, pictured at the 2012 Distinguished Alumni Awards.*
Right: *The society's final executive committee (L–R) Neil Pollock, Rachel Yang, Richard Northey, Amy Malcolm, Janet Copsey and Karen Thompson, pictured in 2023. Absent is Eva Tollemache.*

event focused, but to rally alumni voices against a threat to the University's sustainability.

"The association formed in the wake of the Education Amendment Bill of 1989, which threatened and codified the role and structure of Aotearoa's universities," says Christine. "The government attacked academic freedom and autonomy. Alumni fought back – and won."

At that time, Richard Northey, who was the society's final president, was chair of the Education and Science Select Committee, which heard the submissions from universities and alumni organisations on the bill.

"I was most impressed by the University graduates' submissions. They concentrated on the public good with no hint of self-interest."

The association, and then the society, continued its legislative advocacy, making submissions against increasing government encroachment on academic freedom and autonomy of universities, such as the 2014 Education Amendment Bill, which Richard worked on with society members Emeritus Professor Nicholas Tarling and Alison Roberton Scott.

Richard also points proudly to the entity's commitment to promoting important public conversations by supporting 'society salon' events on vital issues, culminating in an event recognising the 50th anniversary of Halt All Racist Tours, as well as debates during election years between political parties' tertiary education spokespeople, and Auckland mayoral debates.

"The major challenge ahead is to retain the commitment of the University of Auckland's alumni to come to the aid of the University."

– Richard Northey, final University of Auckland Society president

Now that the society has dissolved, Richard says it is vital alumni retain an independent voice, especially for advocacy.

"The major challenge ahead," says Richard, "is to retain the commitment of the University of Auckland's alumni to come to the aid of the University when it is under challenge in terms of academic freedom, independent scientific and medical research and learning, inclusiveness and financial viability in the future."

An alumni advisory panel has been proposed to preserve this legacy. ■

7 TIPS...FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

Glossophobia, or the fear of public speaking, is one of the most common phobias, affecting around 75 percent of people. Experienced director and producer Richard Smith shares his tips to take the edge off getting up in front of a crowd.

Richard Smith practises presentations while driving with his faithful dog Frank.

1 Know your audience
The more relevant your material, the more engaged your audience will be, so tailor your content. You want to communicate in a way that's interesting, entertaining and easily understood. As a guide, no sentence should be longer than 21 words, otherwise your audience may start pulling out a packed lunch and forgetting why they embarked on this road trip with you to begin with.

2 Organise your content
Your speech should have a logical narrative, including a clear introduction and conclusion. Beware of using jargon and use bullet points (rather than reading directly) to give a more impromptu, dynamic performance. Using analogies, painting pictures with words and sharing elements of your own life experience will make you appear more human and confident at the podium. An audience will always remember a good story and not the Venn diagram your daughter helped you create the night before.

3 Practise, practise, practise
Rehearse your speech multiple times. Like an athlete, this will help you develop muscle memory of what it feels like to be in control and relieve nerves. I often practise a speech while driving, using the dog as my audience. Record yourself, or present to a friend to refine your delivery and timing. Treat your voice as a musical instrument and consider the punctuation in your speech as part of the musical notation you're playing.

4 Use visual aids wisely
Less is more and visual aids should complement your speech, not compete with it. Death by PowerPoint is never humane. Sometimes a phrase, photo or a single word can have a much greater impact than that spreadsheet of red type on a green background. Even a picture of you drunk at graduation, or of the family dog, may generate humour, empathy and a way into your topic. It goes without saying, however, that the Comic Sans font and pictures of cats must be avoided.

5 Manage your nerves
If possible, practise your presentation at the venue so you can learn how to 'own' the space. Use a microphone if provided, as it offers more control over your sound. Before taking the stage, practise some relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or visualisation, but remember some adrenaline is normal and can be channelled into active listening, voice projection and careful sentence formation. Slow down. Pauses, rather than 'ums', will convey a sense of control. Oh, and always ask where the toilets are.

6 Engage with your audience
Seek out eye contact and small nods, which provide feedback about how the talk is being received. Invite interaction to keep your audience involved; this also helps build a connection and makes you seem more edgy and dynamic as a presenter. Regard the interaction as if you are playing a game of verbal tennis and remember, given half a chance, the audience really does want to love you. Above all, have fun.

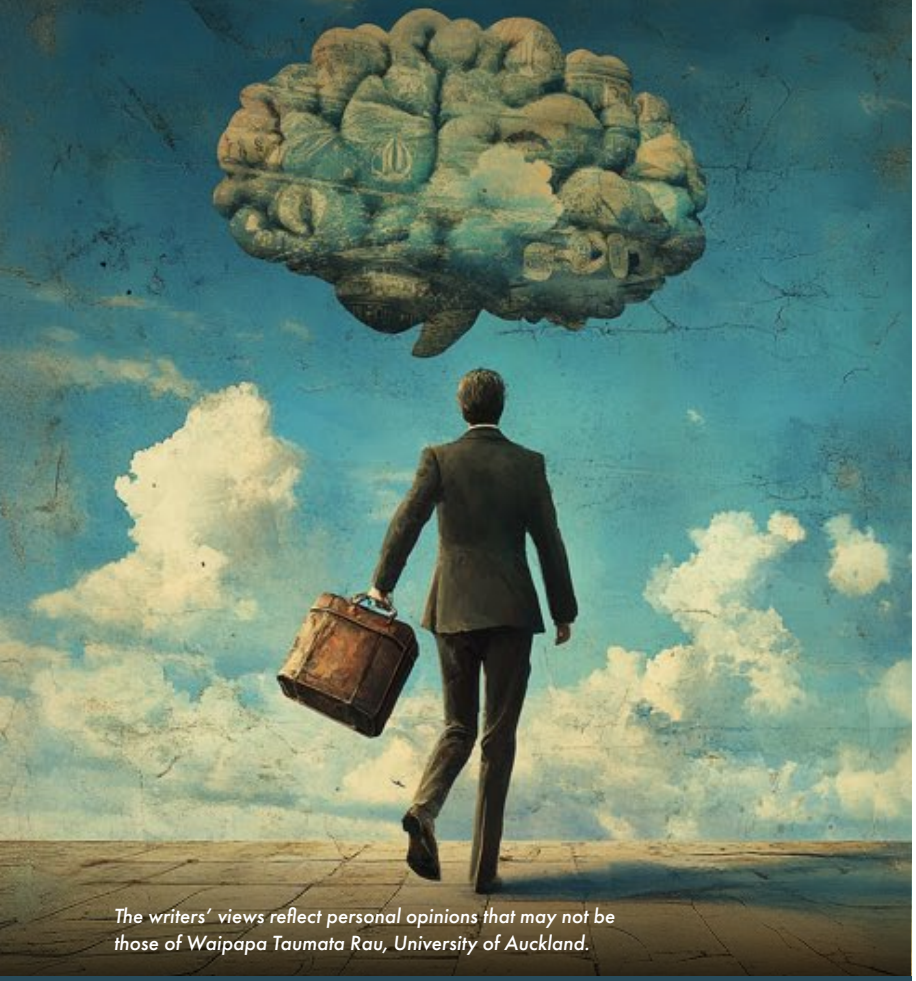
7 Provide a strong conclusion
Summarise your main points and present a clear call to action, closing thought or personal vision. Providing a memorable ending in the form of a story or quote can reinforce your message, leaving a lasting impression – and the possibility that someone could even shout you dinner afterwards.

Richard Smith is a senior content producer with the Media Productions team at the University of Auckland. He has produced educational programme material for more than 40 years and was a lecturer at the University in broadcast communications.

Taking Issue

SHOULD WE BE WORRIED ABOUT A **BRAIN DRAIN?**

The global ebb and flow of our educated, skilled citizens is a perennial discussion topic in New Zealand. But in August, Stats NZ reported a record net migration loss of 55,300 New Zealand citizens for the year ending June 2024, so we asked University experts if a 'brain drain' is currently cause for concern.



The writers' views reflect personal opinions that may not be those of Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland.

What do you think? Have your say.
Facebook: *UoAAlumni* | **X:** *@AucklandAlumni*

Asha Sundaram

CAPTURING THE GAINS FROM EMIGRATION

Figures released earlier this year showed the biggest net loss of New Zealand citizens from Aotearoa since 2012, sparking concerns we're losing tertiary-educated, skilled citizens to opportunities overseas, resulting in a brain drain.

This departure, called emigration, is likely driven by superior labour market opportunities and living standards abroad. While this prompts a hard look at our rising living costs and weak prospects of securing a lucrative job, emigration of skilled workers is not always bad for the economy.

A large diaspora of skilled New Zealanders can confer numerous benefits to Aotearoa. Emigrants repatriate funds to family back home, and these are typically spent in New Zealand, stimulating the local economy. Emigrants are known to generate trade and investment links between their home and host countries, opening new export markets for our businesses.

Besides, there is significant potential for transfer of knowledge from emigrants to their networks back home, which can spur innovation in New Zealand.

Finally, many emigrants do return to New Zealand, bringing new skills, experiences and ideas that can be leveraged for the benefit of the economy. The Indian and Chinese diaspora have been credited with playing a crucial role in establishing innovation hubs in their respective homes, sparking a technology revolution in these countries.

However, emigration of skilled New Zealanders isn't without costs. Aotearoa loses tax revenue that these people might have contributed (though this is tempered by them not using public services), not to mention the high-paying jobs that the presence of skilled workers generates (though evidence suggests these losses are likely outweighed by the benefits).

What about the skills that New Zealand loses from a brain drain? New Zealand continues to attract international students and skilled migrants from overseas, many of whom struggle to find jobs commensurate with their skills.

Rather than worry about a brain drain, New Zealand is better served by focusing on policies that promote quality higher education, leverage immigrant talent, capture the gains from emigration and generate productive, dynamic jobs for those in the country.

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

Merryn Tawhai

MOVING ON IS A GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

What editor doesn't love a good brain drain headline? You've got rhyme, disaster and any number of potential culprits.

I beg to present an alternative. First: brain drain only happens when there's not enough to keep the best people around. Second: brain drain done right can be a positive, not a negative.

Build it (right) and they will come (not leave). The Auckland Bioengineering Institute (ABI) was founded in 2001 by one of New Zealand's brightest scientists – Peter Hunter, now Distinguished Professor Sir Peter Hunter. After gaining engineering degrees at the University of Auckland, he went to Oxford for his DPhil, then chose to come home and foster globally acclaimed bioengineering research from Aotearoa.

Sir Peter gathered bright minds around him. ABI started with 21 staff and students; we now have 146 academic and professional staff, of which a third are ABI alumni. We also have 125 first-class postgraduate students who choose to make New Zealand their home.

Every departure represents new connections and an expanding network.

Our researchers come from 24 countries, attracted by impactful research alongside internationally regarded colleagues, a collegial culture, an enviable success rate attracting funding, and a deliberate policy of encouraging innovators to bring their research into the real world.

More than 25 ABI medical spin-out companies over almost 25 years have provided jobs, clinical impact and entrepreneurial challenges for our academics.

It is inevitable some staff leave academia (even the ABI!) for a more stable career, or stay in academia, but are attracted to opportunities overseas. But that's also a sort of brain gain. These researchers maintain their links with ABI, fostering a dynamic flow of knowledge and expertise that refreshes innovative thinking and maintains competitiveness.

We are proud of everyone who moves on, and every departure represents new connections and an expanding network, which create new opportunities for collaboration and access to global networks and funding. Many of our alumni who go overseas return to ABI.

Of course we worry. Despite our success, sustaining a research programme in a highly constrained funding environment is a continual and increasing challenge.

But it's one we're up for.

Professor Merryn Tawhai is director of the Auckland Bioengineering Institute.

Nicola Gaston

TERTIARY EDUCATION CREATES VALUE

Should we be worried about a brain drain?

Absolutely, yes. But that doesn't mean for a second that an OE is a bad idea, or that thinking of working overseas after your studies is to be discouraged – it's just a question of the magnitude of the trends we are seeing right now.

We recently hit a record for the number of New Zealand citizens leaving the country. Luckily, immigration from elsewhere reduces the total loss – and I'm a solid believer in international mobility and migration being a good thing, so I think that is a win – but the net consequence still leaves us in the red.

It's not just about numbers of people, but their potential contribution to our economy that we lose. Especially when those who leave New Zealand are predominantly young people with university education. That's a loss for all of us.

We're probably all too familiar with narratives around the cost of tertiary education, and so think first of the loss to Aotearoa based on that lost investment. But the thing is, funding for tertiary education creates real value.

Each graduate returns, on average, two to three times the public investment to the economy, according to OECD data. So we shouldn't just be seeing it as a lost investment, but as an opportunity cost in terms of what those graduates could have contributed here.

The New Zealand economy has been and still is changing and diversifying. The technology sector that we have now was nothing I could have imagined when I graduated.

In my own area of the physical sciences, for example, I see both deep-tech and cleantech start-ups providing exciting jobs for graduates passionate about what they can do for the economy and the environment. And, indeed, many of these start-ups are being driven by graduates who are motivated to create the jobs that they want to do, for themselves, here in Aotearoa.

So yes: we should be seriously worried about a brain drain. But we don't need to accept it as an inevitability. Our universities can and must be part of the solution.

Nicola Gaston is a professor of physics in the Faculty of Science.

For other opinions on the subject see auckland.ac.nz/taking-issue-brain-drain.

James Fyfe catches up with three alumni living in the Middle East, the US and Australia.

ANTHONY KIDD

The Red Sea, Saudi Arabia

"A change keeps you on your toes and keeps you grounded."

When Anthony Kidd graduated with a Bachelor of Property in 1987, he never dreamed his degree would one day lead him halfway around the world to the stunning Red Sea.

Based in Saudi Arabia for the past two years, Anthony works for Red Sea Global, a real estate development company building one of the world's largest clusters of hotels. He originally joined the project as a commercial manager looking after contractors' accommodation and is now head of hotel branded and non-branded rental management for the company. He is also associate director and head of the owners' associations – akin to body corporates in New Zealand – where he is preparing the legal structures and budgets for mixed-use developments before they open or are handed over to new owners.

Looking back on his time at the University of Auckland, Anthony says his studies provided a great stepping stone into a property industry career that has spanned more than 30 years.

"The degree provided me with a lot of theory," he says. "And we also had quite a lot of practical interaction with the industry, so it certainly equipped us with the tools to go forth."

Anthony moved to Saudi Arabia following five years as general manager of NAI Harcourts in Auckland. Prior to that, he'd spent almost a decade working in the United Arab Emirates, mainly in Dubai, so "had a good idea of what to expect when moving to Saudi Arabia".

The biggest adjustment is being based on-site, in a remote part of the country an hour away from any city. Being surrounded by nature has its perks, though, and in his time off he enjoys walking in the nearby mountains and snorkelling in the pristine Red Sea. With his wife and two teenage daughters still living back in Auckland, however, he says the hardest part of being away is missing his family, although he visits them regularly.

Despite this, he relishes life in the Middle East.

"A change keeps you on your toes and keeps you grounded, so while I do miss some things, I enjoy the challenges and different culture of being in a foreign country," he says.

"It's stimulating and exciting."

Anthony Kidd and his wife Inge at Turtle Bay beach at the Red Sea.

MANU SHARMA

Mountain View, US

Despite living in the heart of the US tech world, New Zealand is never far from Manu Sharma's mind.

Manu grew up in India and Canada and moved to New Zealand as a teen, going on to complete a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in 2005 and a Bachelor of Commerce in 2007 at the University of Auckland.

After working in roles around the globe, and earning an MBA from the prestigious MIT, he's now based in the city of Mountain View in the San Francisco Bay Area, where he works as a product planner for Google. There he oversees the thermostat and WiFi portfolios for Google's Nest business, a role that makes the most of his skill set.

"My core focus is people. My main goal is to understand what the various teams I work with want and how I can best respond to that."

Another passion is golf. After dropping his handicap from 12 to scratch in a couple of years, he now volunteers as a coach for a local college's team. He also runs a YouTube channel dedicated to the sport, called The Upbeat Golfer.

He says he wouldn't be where he is today without his studies in New Zealand.

"The University was an incredibly supportive environment," he says. He credits his engineering degree with "fundamentally changing how I think" and his commerce degree for "giving me an appreciation for the other side of engineering".

He also fondly remembers his time in the University of Auckland Management Consulting Club (MCC).

"I still use what I learned in the MCC in some of the stuff I do on a daily basis – in terms of how to structure problems and communicate effectively what's important."

Just before the pandemic, Manu returned to Auckland to talk with students in the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE). He also connects annually when CIE students visit Silicon Valley, and he supports MCC and Velocity alumni.

He does miss "the people, the accent and the humour" of New Zealand, however. "I also miss the air and the quiet. It's a different pace of life that I really like. Every time I land in New Zealand, it's like my shoulders relax."

Manu Sharma pictured at the Googleplex, Google's corporate HQ.

"The University was an incredibly supportive environment."

TRUDY PARKIN

Melbourne, Australia

After receiving a mid-life ADHD diagnosis, Trudy Parkin is now coaching and empowering others with the condition.

Based in Melbourne, where she lives with her husband and two children, Trudy is the founder of Thriving Minds Coaching. As an ADHD life coach, she helps people of all ages navigate the challenges of ADHD and reach their potential.

After graduating from the University of Auckland in 1997 with a Bachelor of Education, Trudy taught in New Zealand and the UK before moving to Melbourne 14 years ago.

Trudy admits she was "terribly homesick" when she initially moved to Auckland from New Plymouth to attend the University. But the city soon became her second home and she made some lifelong friends during her studies.

Her decision to switch careers after 25 years of primary school teaching followed her ADHD diagnosis a few years ago.

"Other than my children, it was honestly the best thing that has ever happened," she says.

Trudy Parkin is helping others like her navigate life with ADHD.

Encouraged to seek support from an ADHD coach, Trudy was astounded at the impact it had. She then dedicated herself to training as a coach before founding Thriving Minds Coaching in January 2023.

Central to her coaching is her belief that self-compassion is key. She now teaches her clients strategies to connect with their brain, be more self-compassionate and reframe their situation in a positive light.

"I want to help people live their best life and make each day lighter and brighter and easier. It's about them understanding themselves, taking baby steps and setting themselves up for success," she says.

"If you've got these challenges and you think you've got ADHD, seek support because the weight it can lift and the awareness it can bring are really life changing."

"I want to help people live their best life."

Golden Graduate

A WIDER STORY

Shirley Horrocks talks to Janet McAllister about a life spent capturing lives on film.

A scary moment for prolific documentary-maker Shirley Horrocks ONZM: sitting beside Allen Curnow at the 2001 premiere of her film about the influential poet.

"I looked at him partway through and he had tears. So, I thought, 'I don't know if he's crying because it's so bad or whether it's reaching him!' I hadn't shown it to him before the first screening. I never did that again."

Allen turned out to be happy enough to repeatedly attend *Early Days Yet*. It includes beautiful visual interpretations of his poems: as he reads, we see swimmers (aka "free-standing engines") and the "spinifex's incontinent seed vessels bowling downwind".

Shirley says she felt cheeky attempting these poem videos. But "a lot of people were a little bit scared of his poetry. And afterwards people said, 'oh, this poetry is not so scary after all'."

Enabling the nation's creative people to be more widely known or more deeply understood is a key motivation for Shirley. Her subjects include many University of Auckland staff and graduates: Merimeri Penfold (mostly in te reo Māori, with great help from the late Lucy Kapa), Lisa Reihana, Albert Wendt, Dame Juliet Gerrard, Merylyn Tweedie, John Reynolds, Alison McLean, Richard von Sturmer, her own stepson graphic novelist Dylan Horrocks – the list goes on.

Often, Shirley thinks well-known talents deserve more thoughtful attention; she's currently filming musician Don McGlashan. She doesn't want to make a "hagiography" – a biography that idealises its subject – she says, but "I just want to show them as they are. People fascinate me. It's a real education each time."

Her stand-out moments: following photographer Marti Friedlander around London's East End, where Marti insisted her orphanage childhood was lucky, given the alternatives; and realising, during filming, that another photographer, Peter Peryer, was dying. Poignantly, "he was trying to get everything done before he passed away … he said he wasn't ready to die."

Shirley has also made documentaries about disabled people, and Deaf culture, even staying at the Deaf community's Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. where the tables were turned. Not knowing how to sign, "you walk into the cafeteria for breakfast as somebody with completely no language, no idea. Everybody there is signing."

The only child of a Dominion Road pharmacist, Shirley flies under the radar by choice. Yet her success stands out: she has shown more films in the New Zealand International Film Festival than any other local filmmaker.

She wouldn't have believed that possible when she first studied at the University of Auckland as a young mum with two children (unusual in the early 1970s). She juggled childcare and lectures, thanks to three fellow students – nuns – who would kindly save her a seat when she was late.

Shirley majored in Italian – a beloved grandfather had enjoyed singing Italian opera – and continued into postgraduate study. Impressively, she successfully lobbied the University Senate to allow students to complete masters degrees part time. This flexibility was a feminist win: useful for people who were employed or looking after children (or both).

Then, after three years' high school teaching, she left to do a Diploma of Drama, for which she made a documentary about the former Theatre Corporate. She never looked back. "I just really wanted to tell a wider story, like somebody's life," she says.

By now, she was divorced and had met academic Roger Horrocks (the University's media and screen pioneer). The couple still edit each other's work.

They spent 1980 in New York where Shirley helped ambulance-chasing news camera teams. But when she offered her skills to TVNZ, the response was, 'Oh, thank you, dear, but no.'

"I'm glad it didn't work out, because I think this way's been much more rewarding."

The news room's loss; documentary's remarkable gain.

"I just want to show them as they are. People fascinate me."

– Documentary maker Shirley Horrocks

Shirley Horrocks has documented the lives of some of our best-known creatives. Photo: Chris Loufte

THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

A work by artist and Distinguished Alumna Lisa Reihana has been unveiled at the University's refurbished B201 building.

Lisa Reihana recalls the University's Waipapa Marae being built during her years studying at Elam in the late 1980s, and the development providing fertile ground for the young artist.

"There was this free flow of information between the carvers and Elam art school," recalls Lisa (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngai Tūteauru, Ngāi Tūpoto).

"We were all across it and a lot of discussion was happening. The opportunity really opened my eyes to what was happening within Māoridom. All these people who had been pushing to make things happen, their work was coming to fruition. It was an amazing point in time.

"And there was this real flourishing of Māori arts and a thirst for it in a way that hadn't happened previously, which was emerging not only nationally but internationally."

Lisa has gone on to become one of New Zealand's most celebrated artists, whose work is exhibited and commissioned globally. She was awarded an Arts Laureate in 2014, represented New Zealand at the Venice Biennale in 2017 (the same year she was named a Distinguished Alumna) and was made a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2018.

Now, in something of a homecoming, the multidisciplinary artist has created a large-scale artwork for the University called *Māramatanga*, which she has described as a "love letter" to that time more than three decades ago.

The video installation, housed in the atrium of the University's refurbished B201 building on Symonds Street, was unveiled at a dawn ceremony in June. Lisa was selected from among four leading artists invited by the University of Auckland Art Acquisition Committee to submit proposals to create a site-specific artwork for the space, after an initial expression of interest was sent to a wider group.

Māramatanga, which translates as 'enlightenment', is the first video work by Lisa acquired by the University of Auckland Art Collection (it already holds several of her static photographic works). Running on a 20-minute loop, it features six performers embodying ātua, and other ancestral figures, many inspired by carvings in the whare whakairo of Waipapa Marae, Tāne nui a-rangi.

Lisa Reihana, pictured alongside Māramatanga at its unveiling in June. *Photo: Dean Carruthers*

"I thought it provided a profoundly beautiful model."

– Lisa Reihana, artist and Distinguished Alumna

The meeting house's walls feature captains and priest-navigators of the waka that brought the ancestors of the different iwi to Aotearoa, as well Tangi'ia, an ancestor who connects the major islands of the Pacific with New Zealand.

The performers in *Māramatanga* embody the diversity represented in the pan-iwi, pan-Pacific meeting house – a diversity that also reflects the University's students today, says Lisa.

"I thought it provided a profoundly beautiful model," she says.

Many of the performers featured in the work are students, including dance studies PhD candidate Chas Mamea (Matautu Lefaga, Upolu Sāmoa; Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine). Chas says working with Lisa, and other collaborators the artist brought into the project such as professional dancer and choreographer Maaka Pene, was the highlight of her involvement.

"Working with Maaka and Lisa was helpful, because they're part of a generation that built the foundations for us to be artists, Indigenous creators," says Chas.

"They talked a lot about how back in their day it was quite hard to be a Māori artist working in Auckland. Hearing their stories about what that looked like for them and having them give me advice about my own journey as an artist was insightful."

Caitlin Sykes

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/reihana-maramatanga

Rose Carlyle changed careers, from lawyer to author, after completing a Master of Creative Writing. *Photo: Jane Ussher*

Thrill ride

Alumna Rose Carlyle's first novel, *The Girl in the Mirror,* was snapped up by international publishers, translated into eight languages and optioned for screen. She talks to Caitlin Sykes about 'overnight success' and the impact it had on writing her second thriller.

Your second novel, *No One Will Know*, was released in October. What is it about?
It's about a young woman who finds herself completely alone in the world and unexpectedly pregnant. Then she receives what seems like the dream job offer to move to a remote, windswept island off the coast of Tasmania to work for a wealthy couple as their nanny. It all seems too good to be true, and obviously it is because this is a thriller, but what I love about this book is I feel the twist is really unguessable.

***The Girl in the Mirror* was described as an overnight success. Did it feel like that?**
The joke is that you slave for years to achieve overnight success so, no, it didn't feel like that, but compared with how long it takes most writers to get published, I think it was pretty quick.

I actually wrote a novel while I did my creative writing masters in 2017, then I stuck it under the mattress and never looked at it again. I started writing *The Girl in the Mirror* almost immediately afterwards. It was written in six months, I spent another six editing it, then foolishly sent it to one publisher. They didn't read it because anyone who knows what they're doing gets an agent, but I didn't know anything about publishing.

At the time, I was doing a mentorship through the New Zealand Society of Authors, and my mentor was a retired agent who said, 'I might send it to my old agency'. I let the publisher know and next thing they've read it and they wanted it.

From that point on, things really started happening. They sold it to HarperCollins in New York and then to other publishers in other countries in the English-speaking world, and then in translation. I was just learning as it happened. I would get an email saying, 'you have a book-to-film agent' and I would think, 'Oh, there's such a thing as a book-to-film agent?'

How did that success impact the experience of writing your second novel?
There's a lot of pressure. Nobody cares if you succeed or not with your first novel; if you sell 500 copies then people probably think that's more than you might have sold. But when your first novel is a success, then people expect that of your second.

I only ever wanted to be published, so that goal is achieved and it's not enough to just get published anymore – and I understand more about how my publisher is banking on me.

On the other hand, I've learned that all I can do is write the book, then it's up to other people to design the cover, do the audio book and the marketing strategy. I leave that to the experts, and I just write the books.

What did you most gain from doing your Master of Creative Writing?
When you start writing, you're entering a profession, and most professions require three years of study for a degree before you can start practising them. Whether you do a degree to become a writer or you find other ways to learn the craft, you've got to put in the time to learn.

It's fantastic that creative writing is recognised as a degree course because it gave me an opportunity to make a career shift at quite a difficult time in my life, and to do that with a sense of validation and motivation. The course is taught by acclaimed, published authors and there's also great companionship because you're a group of 12 on this rollercoaster together. It's been great to have people around who are on the same journey.
rosecarlyle.com

CERTAIN FLUIDITY

University art adviser Madeleine Gifford takes a look at *Fruit and Flowers* by Gabrielle Hope, which is part of the University of Auckland Art Collection.

Born in Lower Hutt, watercolourist Gabrielle Hope moved to Auckland where she first heralded an interest in painting at high school. Although she studied intermittently at Elam School of Fine Arts around 1946, she was largely a self-taught painter. Adept in watercolour and gouache, in which she produced much of her oeuvre, Hope's style can be characterised by a certain fluidity that features in her landscapes, still lives and animal studies.

Though her painterly treatment is reminiscent of Frances Hodgkins, Hope often interprets her subjects with a more sparse and gestural hand. *Fruit and Flowers* demonstrates a quiet confidence in her technique, straying away from a strictly figurative still life to one decidedly more undone. A cascade of foliage and sinuous strokes flow outward from the focal point of the painting and dance across the surface.

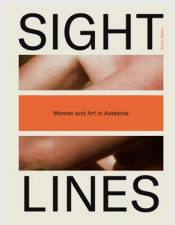
The colours are equally expressive, as swathes of cerulean and moss green swirl around a pair of recognisable fern fronds and the central group of golden florals.

Throughout the composition there is an intentional use of blank space and barely there floral forms, as though they have been sketched quickly as impressions. The extra breathing room makes way for a feeling of movement between the swirling lines, giving focus to the evocative shapes themselves. The effect is calligraphic, undoubtedly inspired by Hope's noted keen interest in Chinese ink-brush landscape painting.

Less than a decade later, Hope was considered a leading watercolourist and was included in the important exhibition *Five New Zealand Watercolourists* at Auckland City Art Gallery (1958) organised by Colin McCahon. Tragically, she passed away suddenly only four years later, at age 46, cutting short her creative exploration and life yet to be lived. ***Fruit and Flowers* is on the Lower Ground Floor of Building 507, Grafton Campus.**

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/art-collection-hope

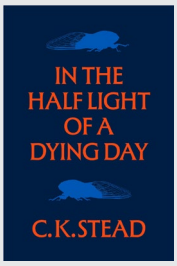
Gabrielle Hope. Fruit and Flowers (1951). Watercolour on paper. The University of Auckland Art Collection.



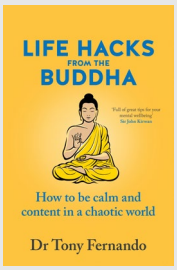
Sight Lines: Women and Art in Aotearoa
The story of art made by women in Aotearoa, *Sight Lines* gathers the work of artists including alumnae Maureen Lander, Fiona Clark, Ruth Buchanan, Imogen Taylor and Ngahuia Harrison. With more than 150 images and essays, its contributors include Associate Professor Ngarino Ellis and alumna Lana Lopesi.
Kirsty Baker, Auckland University Press, $70

Becoming Tangata Tiriti
University of Auckland honorary associate professor in sociology Avril Bell analyses the complicated journey of today's partners of te Tiriti o Waitangi. *Becoming Tangata Tiriti* brings together 12 non-Māori voices who have engaged with te ao Māori and have attempted to bring te Tiriti to life in their work.
Avril Bell, Auckland University Press, $30

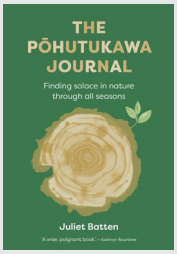
Resetting the Coordinates: An Anthology of Performance Art in Aotearoa New Zealand
Dedicated to the late Jim Allen, former head of sculpture at Elam School of Fine Arts, *Resetting the Coordinates* offers a 50-year survey of performance art.
Edited by Christopher Braddock, Ioana Gordon-Smith, Layne Waerea and Victoria Wynne-Jones, Massey University Press, $70



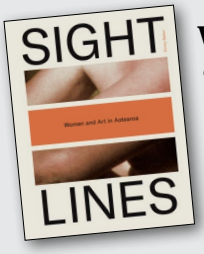
In the Half Light of a Dying Day
Emeritus Professor of English and novelist, literary critic, poet and essayist C.K. Stead turns to the poetry of Catullus in this collection, which is structured in two parts. The first moves from classical Rome to modern-day Aotearoa, while the second addresses a character, Kezia – a lover and friend recently lost.
C. K. Stead, Auckland University Press, $25



Life Hacks from the Buddha: How to be Calm and Content in a Chaotic World
Former senior lecturer in psychological medicine at the University of Auckland and practising psychiatrist and sleep specialist Tony Fernando distils wisdom from the Buddha in this book, containing 50 hacks to help foster the likes of mindfulness, generosity and compassion.
Tony Fernando, HarperCollins NZ, $40



The Pōhutukawa Journal
The third book in the 'Seasons of Life' trilogy by Juliet Batten, who has a PhD in English from the University of Auckland, where she taught English, women's studies and environmental studies. In *The Pōhutukawa Journal*, Juliet, a long-time psychotherapist, is reawakened into activism, eldership, and greater connection with nature.
Juliet Batten, Ishtar Books, $42



WIN! We have one copy of *Sight Lines: Women and Art in Aotearoa* to give away, thanks to Auckland University Press. Email: ingenio@auckland.ac.nz with the book name in the subject line and your postal details in the body. Entries close 1 December 2024.

CONNECTION POINTS

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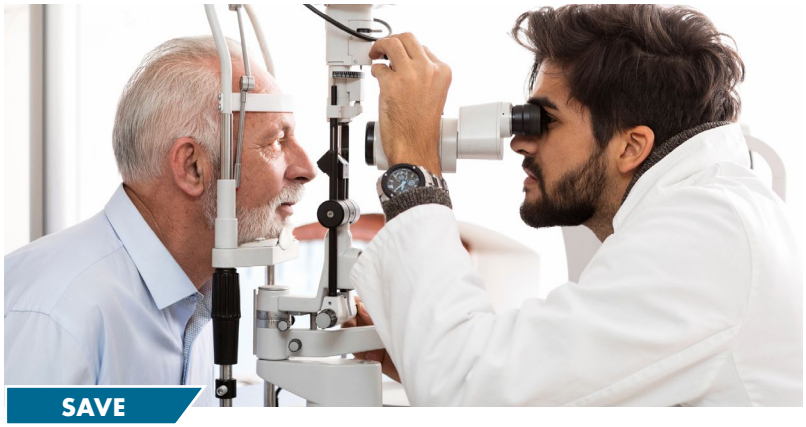
TAKE PART

IN A CLINICAL STUDY

The Liggins Institute's overarching goal is to turn research into reality. By following people at every age and stage of life, the institute is identifying what determines a healthy start to life and investigating the diet and exercise factors that influence health and disease in adulthood. By taking part in one of its clinical studies, you could improve health outcomes for you, your family, and the next generation: **auckland.ac.nz/connection-points-clinical-studies**



SAVE

WITH UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND CLINICS

If you're having trouble with your hearing or sight, need to consult a psychologist or speech language therapist, or want access to the latest research in exercise and cardiac rehabilitation, check out the University of Auckland Clinics. Providing great care and facilities, the clinics offer expert advice at an affordable price. Supported and guided by highly experienced tutors, the clinics also provide a valuable real-world opportunity for students to put into practice their classroom learning. You can find out more and make an appointment by visiting **auckland.ac.nz/connection-points-uoa-clinics**.

LISTEN TO

RAISING THE BAR

Every year, Raising the Bar brings academics out of the lecture theatre and into bars across Auckland city to give talks for one night only. But wait – there's more! Now you can listen to their presentations, both from this year and previous years, whenever you want on Spotify. Learn the secrets of the electric stomach, explore whether aliens exist and find out how we can achieve harmony with our planet: **shorturl.at/quQRN**

HELP OUT

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

If you're based in Auckland, and have at least three years' experience working in Aotearoa, you can support our international students through the University's Workplace Insights Programme. By sharing your career journey, you provide a deeper understanding of the New Zealand work environment and culture. And with a commitment of just ten hours over the course of the programme, it's a perfect opportunity to give mentoring a go. Fill in the form at **auckland.ac.nz/WIP** and we'll be in touch with details of the Semester One 2025 programme.

CONNECT

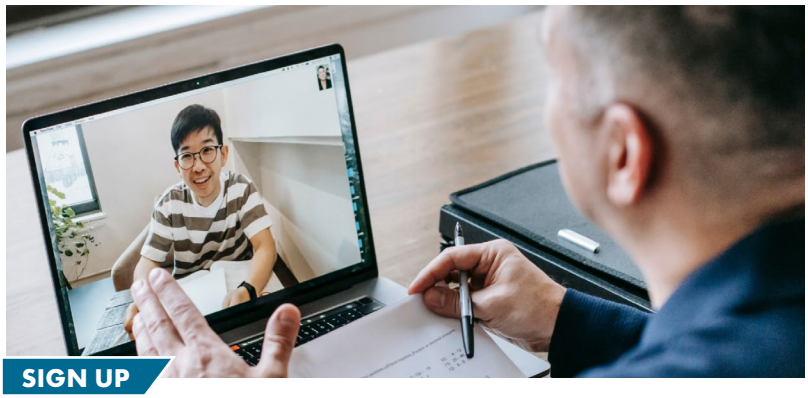
WITH ALUMNI IN YOUR CITY

Planning to start the new year in a new city? The University of Auckland community is truly global, with more than 180,000 alumni spread all over the world. So to connect with other graduates, and relevant opportunities, contact your local Volunteer Alumni Coordinator: **auckland.ac.nz/connection-points-vac**

NOMINATE

STAND-OUT ALUMNI

In 2025, the University will recognise another 40 alumni aged under 40 across six categories: business leaders, entrepreneurs, influencers, disruptors and innovators, performers, and humanitarians. Candidates are judged on their contributions to their community, profession and the University. So, if you know an exceptional alumni, you can nominate them (and find out more about past 40 Under 40 awardees) by visiting **auckland.ac.nz/40-under-40**.



SIGN UP

TO ALUMNI CONNECT

The University's easy-to-use, online mentoring platform, Alumni Connect, brings together nearly 3,000 current students and alumni for career support. Sign up now to take the next step in your career, grow your network and have a significant impact on current students: **auckland.ac.nz/alumni-connect**.

WIN

WHEN YOU UPDATE YOUR DETAILS

Make sure you stay in the loop and get invited to alumni events in your hometown – no matter where that may be – by keeping your address and email details updated. If you update before 28 February 2025, you'll automatically go in the draw to win one of five $500 travel vouchers from House of Travel! To update, head to **alumni.auckland.ac.nz/update**.

ENGAGE

WITH THE *UNFILTERED* SERIES

Hosted by the University's Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies (CAPRS), *Unfiltered* focuses on issues that impact the lives of those who have been forcibly displaced. Hosted by CAPRS co-founder and co-director Rêz Gardî, this podcast shares perspectives and solutions from a range of people, including refugees, researchers and practitioners. *Unfiltered* can be found on Spotify and Apple Podcasts: **auckland.ac.nz/connection-points-unfiltered**

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