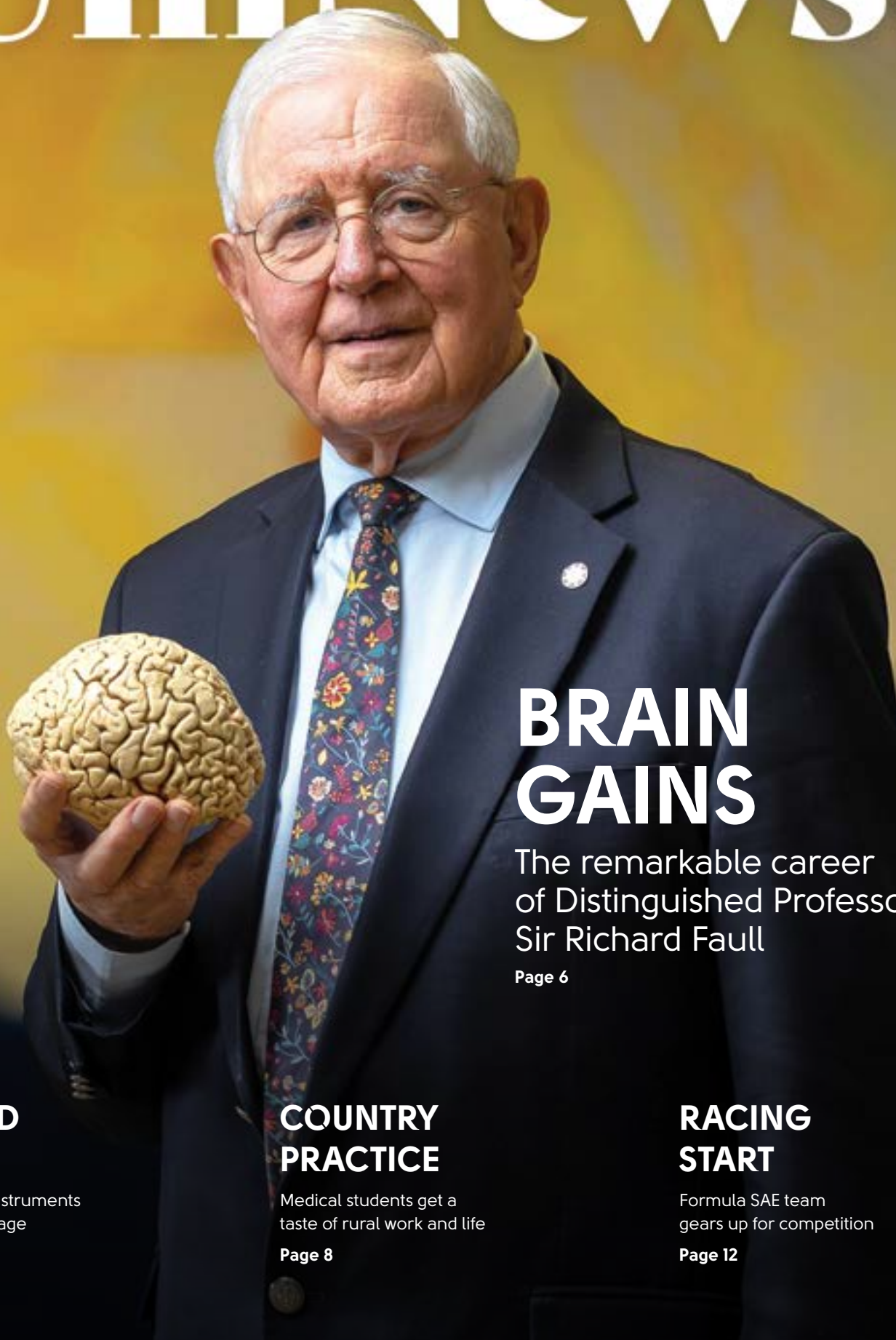


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Waipapa
Taumata Rau
**University
of Auckland**

UniNews



BRAIN GAINS

The remarkable career
of Distinguished Professor
Sir Richard Faull

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A BAND APART

3D-printed instruments
take to the stage

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COUNTRY PRACTICE

Medical students get a
taste of rural work and life

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RACING START

Formula SAE team
gears up for competition

Page 12

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



Sue Ira

TURNING SOIL INTO SOLUTIONS

Doctoral candidate Sue Ira (Engineering and Design) didn't have to dig far to uncover her research focus: how tightly compacted soil limits water absorption and stunts tree growth. She told RNZ's *The Detail* that the key to better stormwater management could be right under our feet – in the soil, nature's rain sponge.

Link: tinyurl.com/ira-rnz-soil



Kelly Burrowes

FUMING OVER VAPING

Three months after the government's ban on disposable vapes kicked in, little has changed in terms of the harm for young people from vaping, Associate Professor Kelly Burrowes (Auckland Bioengineering Institute) told RNZ. Burrowes is urging the government to make vapes prescription-only.

Link: tinyurl.com/burrowes-rnz-vaping



Cindy Farquhar

MOST DONOR-CONCEIVED KIDS TOLD

New research shows 86 percent of children conceived through donor sperm, eggs or embryos have been told of their origins. Professor Cindy Farquhar (FMHS) told RNZ's *Nights*: "Children's long-term mental health and well-being will be improved if they have total transparency."

Link: tinyurl.com/farquhar-rnz-donor



Vili Nosa

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

New professor Vili Nosa (FMHS) has been promoted for his work in Pacific public health and more than 120 published papers. He told *Samoa Newshub* he set out to change the narrative on Pacific health: "I thought, 'Man, these Palagi are writing about us – why can't we write about us?' I knew in my heart I had to do something."

Link: tinyurl.com/nosa-samoa-newshub



Bronwen Connor

HOPE FOR HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE

Professor Bronwen Connor (Centre for Brain Research) told *NZ Listener* about her work developing transplants that might grow new brain cells for those with Huntington's. "If we go in at an early stage with new healthy cell replacements, then potentially they [Huntington's sufferers] might have 10 to 20 years of healthy function."

Link: tinyurl.com/connor-listener-huntingtons



Susanna Trnka

TURNING LIFE INTO HEALTH

Professor Susanna Trnka (Arts and Education) and her new book, *Healthization: Turning Life into Health*, featured in a number of outlets including *NZ Herald*. The book examines how young people in New Zealand are viewing health as a moral and social responsibility, rather than simply a case of not getting sick.

Link: tinyurl.com/trnka-nzherald-health

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

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A BAND APART

A jazz quintet with a difference entertained at this year's Golden Graduates lunch.

On the morning of 25 September, five School of Music jazz students – pianist Cedric Charles, bassist Marianne Montes, drummer Matthew Tibbitts, guitarist Dylan Hadfield and vocalist Lexie Buchanan – arrived at the Pullman Hotel to a familiar set-up.

At first glance, the piano, guitars, drumkit and microphone seemed ordinary, but their crosshatched filament patterns revealed their secret: everything except the strings and drumheads was 3D-printed – the work of additive manufacturing expert and Faculty of Engineering and Design Professor Olaf Diegel.

The ensemble was rehearsing to perform at the Golden Graduates lunch, honouring alumni aged 70-plus or who graduated from the University 50 or more years ago. For weeks the band members had rehearsed their setlist – ‘Rhiannon’ by Fleetwood Mac and ‘Reminiscing’ by Little River Band – but the morning of the event was the first time they laid hands on these futuristic instruments.

“At first I was worried there was going to be weird weighting, maybe it would be neck or body heavy,” says Dylan. “But it was perfectly balanced and felt, surprisingly, really good to play. Any reservations I had were shot down the second I picked up the guitar.”

The quintet started jamming about a year-and-a-half ago, eventually solidifying into a band after a gig for Cedric’s end-of-semester assessment. When they saw a social media call for performers for the Golden Graduates event, they filmed audition videos and put themselves forward. They got the gig almost immediately.

Their sound draws from jazz, rock, funk and soul, inspired by the electric fusion of Herbie Hancock, the groove of Philly Joe Jones, the guitar mastery of George Benson, and the soulful voice of Erykah Badu. For this set, Matthew wanted songs that would resonate with the 1975 graduating class.

“The event director suggested ‘Reminiscing’, then I landed on ‘Rhiannon’, which fits that 70s soft-rock, easy-listening feel,” he says.

Matthew found the 3D-printed drumkit comparable to a standard high-end kit, though tuning presented familiar issues, with cracks during rehearsal.

“I was concerned about how the material would absorb sound differently than wood, but that didn’t end up being a problem,” he says. “It

sounded and played like a normal drumkit.”

Lexie hadn’t realised the set-up would include a 3D-printed microphone – let alone one shaped like a skull.

“It was so cool. Maybe the skull wasn’t the vibe for this particular performance,” she laughs. “When Olaf mentioned the point of reception was on top, I was like, ‘How am I gonna do that?’ But it was actually fine. It’s not something a lot of people can say, that they’ve sung into a 3D-printed skull.”

For most of the band, jazz wasn’t their first musical love. Marianne was classically trained in violin and piano before switching to bass in Year 9 to fill a gap in her school music group. Matthew came to jazz after years of playing pop and rock drums. And Dylan didn’t discover the genre so much as stumble into it.

“I was six, and my mum had bought me the cheapest guitar she could find online. It was a piece of junk, but I stuck with it for a year, so she ended up giving me classical lessons,” he says.

“Then as a joke, my guitar teacher, because I struggled so much with classical, said, ‘Oh,

you should try jazz because you’re playing so many wrong notes’. At the time I sort of ignored it, then I was like, you know what, ‘jazz is pretty cool, I’ll give it a go’.”

Cedric fell for jazz early, after hearing his primary school orchestra play ‘The Pink Panther’. From that point, he was intent on joining the School of Music’s jazz specialisation.

His enthusiasm was what prompted Lexie, originally studying a Bachelor of Arts, to pursue a Bachelor of Music (Jazz Vocals) as well.

“I met Cedric through some courses in my arts degree, and jamming with the band made me realise what an important facet of my life music is, and that I could pursue it professionally,” she says.

“I’ve been singing since I could talk, and jazz really suited my voice. It was like a piece of my life that was missing.”

She auditioned for the jazz specialisation – and was thrilled to be accepted.

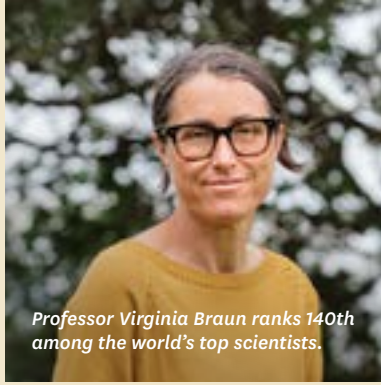
“It feels like what I’m meant to be doing.”

■ Jogai Bhatt

More: auckland.ac.nz/3D-printed-band



(Top) Vocalist Lexie Buchanan and bassist Marianne Montes rehearse. (This image) Detail of the guitar played by Dylan Hadfield. Photos: William Chea



Professor Virginia Braun ranks 140th among the world's top scientists.

TOP-RANKED RESEARCHERS LISTED

The University has again confirmed its position as New Zealand's research powerhouse, with its academics making up one quarter of all New Zealand researchers recognised among the world's top two percent.

A total of 292 University of Auckland researchers feature in the prestigious Stanford-Elsevier Top 2% Percent Scientists rankings for 2025.

The annual update to a publicly available database lists the top 100,000 scientists worldwide based on their 'c-score' – a composite indicator of research publications. According to the Stanford-Elsevier database, these are the scientists who are in the top two percent in their field.

The 2025 result reflects the University's broad research strength across disciplines, from health and engineering to social sciences, the arts and humanities.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation, Professor Frank Bloomfield says the results reflect the depth of talent and dedication across the University's faculties.

"Our researchers' efforts to ensure their work has real-world benefit and contributes to the advancement of knowledge globally is reflected in the strength of their performance internationally."

Both he and Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater feature in the Stanford-Elsevier Top 2% Scientists rankings.

This year's analysis highlights a vibrant research environment within the University, with 56 new entrants, 113 improved rankings and 122 maintaining or slightly declining from last year's positions.

Leading the way is Professor Virginia Braun, who climbed to 140th in the world overall, up from 178th last year. She is joined in the global top 500 by Honorary Professor Kevin Trenberth, and Associate Professor Fan Zhu (367), all from the Faculty of Science.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/2025-elsevier



Members from the three winning teams celebrate at the \$100k Challenge awards on 15 October. Photo: Sav Schulman

START-UPS REACH FOR THE STARS IN VELOCITY \$100K CHALLENGE

An AI-powered tool to improve pregnancy outcomes and experiences of patients undergoing in vitro fertilisation (IVF) has won the \$25,000 first prize in the Velocity \$100k Challenge.

The start-up competition is run in partnership between the Velocity student leadership committee and the Business School's Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE). Winners also get to join the Venture Lab – a five-month incubator that provides mentorship and other support to help get team's ideas off the ground.

Doctoral candidate Hooman Misaghi is one of three researchers behind the IVF support tool, which uses data and cycle analysis to rank embryos, reducing transfers and costs. The tool has been developed with fertility specialists Fertility Associates.

Hooman says the initial concept was developed by his supervisors in the Faculty of

Medical and Health Sciences, senior lecturers Dr Lynsey Cree and Dr Nicholas Knowlton, who received MBIE Smart Ideas funding to explore work within the area.

Later, the project evolved into the core of his PhD research.

Since then, the trio has advanced the original idea into an active development, building and innovating new deep-learning systems for embryo assessment.

Runner-up in the challenge was Deployable Space Optics (\$15,000), which is working on a compact, lightweight telescopic baffle designed to boost satellite imaging and cut launch costs.

Third place and \$5,000 went to the team behind Pollsport – an interactive app that lets viewers play live prediction games during sports broadcasts, winning prizes from sponsors.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/100k-challenge-2025

ALUMNI NAMED ARTS LAUREATES

Three University of Auckland alumni have been named 2025 Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi Laureates.

Elam School of Fine Arts alumna Kate Newby has received the Gow Family Foundation Sculpture Award, while fellow Elam alumnus Reuben Paterson has received the Toi Kō Iriiri Queer Arts Award. A number of Reuben's works are part of the University of Auckland Art Collection.

Young Alumna of the Year in 2014, arts and science graduate Roseanne Liang has received the Dame Gaylene Preston Filmmaker Award.

A total of eight Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi Laureate Awards were given in 2025, recognising practising New Zealand artists, working anywhere in the world, with significant achievements – and the potential to continue as high-achieving artists.



Reuben Paterson. 'Relax with Frankie's Whānau' (2002). Glitter on canvas. The University of Auckland Art Collection, Faculty of Education Collection.

WORLD-BEATING BLUES OF 2025

The world's best young choristers, Olympians and a neurodiversity champion were among the winners of the 2025 Blues Awards, announced on 3 October.

The awards recognise University of Auckland student achievements in four categories: arts and cultural, business and innovation, service and leadership, and sports. In 2025, 116 Blues and 18 major awards were presented.

Eleven student members of the New Zealand Youth Choir (NZYC), which was named Choir of the World at a major competition in Wales, collectively won the Most Meritorious Performance (Arts and Cultural). They were joined in the world-beating NZYC ranks by ten young alumni, and were led by vocal coach Dr Morag Atchison (School of Music) and choir conductor and alumnus David Squire.

Sportswoman of the Year and Sportsman of the Year were respectively awarded to two-time Olympic gold medallist Black Ferns Sevens star Theresa Setefano and sailor George Lee Rush, who won gold in the 49er class at the 2025 European Championships in Greece.

Law student Kartini Clarke won the Blues Award for Most Outstanding Contribution in Service and Leadership. As CEO of the



Blues Award winner for Most Outstanding Contribution in Service and Leadership Kartini Clarke (left) with Chancellor Cecilia Tarrant.

Young Neurodiversity Champions, she mentors young leaders, lobbies MPs, and works with government agencies to improve access to ADHD diagnosis for thousands of New Zealanders.

Diagnosed with ADHD at 19, the fifth-year law student joined the Young Neurodiversity Champions to improve the education system to ensure “no neurodivergent kid gets left behind”.

Full winners list: auckland.ac.nz/blues-2025

FIRST REPAIR CAFE A HIT

An electric guitar, jewellery and a bicycle were among items brought along to the first-ever Repair Cafe event hosted by the University.

Held at the Unleash Space on 17 October, the event attracted around 50 students and staff, and saw skilled volunteers work with visitors to diagnose and fix broken household items.

The volunteers successfully repaired about 80 percent of items, with each successful repair diverting waste from landfill, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and giving items a new lease on life.

The initiative was run in collaboration with Repair Network Aotearoa and the University's Faculty of Engineering and Design Sustainability Committee, the Sustainability Hub, the Circular Innovations Research Centre (CIRCUIT), Ngā Ara Whetū – Centre for Climate, Biodiversity and Society, and the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Professor Saeid Baroutian, CIRCUIT executive director and chair of the University's Engineering and Design Sustainability Committee, says the success was proof that sustainable thinking can be turned into action.

“I also think the interactions people had with our volunteer repairers were really important,” he says.

“People enjoyed learning the design aspects of items, which helps them to be more conscious when purchasing.”

Alumna Brigitte Sistig, founder of Repair Network Aotearoa, described the event as a “fantastic collaboration”.

She says organisers will now be able to estimate the total waste diverted from landfill, measured in kilograms, along with the greenhouse gas emissions avoided, as a result of the day.

“I’m really grateful that so many people took the opportunity to come along and just get things checked out, and to hopefully expand the lifetime of their belongings.”

Saeid says organisers are now discussing whether the event can become a regular fixture at the University.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/repair-cafe



Volunteers successfully repaired about 80 percent of the items brought into the University's first Repair Cafe. Photo: Saeid Baroutian



After 16 years as the founding director of the Centre for Brain Research, Distinguished Professor Sir Richard Faull will move into a new, part-time role at the centre. Photo: Chris Loufte

SIR RICHARD FAULL: A TRAILBLAZER IN BRAIN RESEARCH

The milestones in a long and celebrated career continue for the pioneering researcher, who next month moves into a new role at the Centre for Brain Research.

Distinguished Professor Sir Richard Faull remembers 1966 as the year he met “the two loves of my life”: his future wife, Diana, and the human brain.

He first spotted Diana across the room at a student party.

“It was love at first sight. I got her phone number from a friend who knew her – that was the best decision of my life,” recalls Sir Richard. “That same year, I saw the human brain for the first time as a third-year medical student, and I thought ‘that’s just incredible.’”

This year has brought more milestones for the internationally renowned scientist, who was knighted for services to brain research in 2017.

Last month he celebrated his 80th birthday and next month he will shift into a part-time role at the University’s Centre for Brain Research (CBR) after serving as its founding director for 16 years.

For Sir Richard, leading the centre that now houses more than 100 research groups and a team that has published more than 300

articles on a range of human brain disease breakthroughs, has been “a dream come true”.

Humble beginnings

Sir Richard grew up in rural Taranaki, the second of five sons for Wilfred and Phyllis Faull, neither of whom had a university education.

His earliest memories include pitching in at the family’s general store, helping with home deliveries and connecting with many people in the community.

“We would go into their homes and see the diversity of the families – Māori, Pākehā, some had money, and some were extremely poor and had dirt floors,” he recalls.

“My mum and dad were very socially conscious and taught us that we were placed on this earth to help people.”

Although his father was of Ngāti Rāhiri and Te Āti Awa descent, Sir Richard didn’t identify as Māori during his childhood. His close, Anglican family taught him strict Christian values and he still holds that faith.

His lifelong love of maths, science and biology also began in his childhood: “I was a bit of a nerd and a bookworm,” he laughs.

He enjoyed learning about cars and was thrilled when the electrician across the road taught him electronics and how to build a radio – practical skills he would later draw on to build lab equipment.

The excitement of scientific discovery

After the three-room Tikorangi School, he attended Waitara High School where he was dux in 1962, then university, supported by a Taranaki scholarship.

He began at the University of Auckland, before heading to the University of Otago to become the first in his family to study medicine.

“I worked in the freezing works at Waitara in the holidays and with my scholarship that was enough to pay my way through – otherwise I couldn’t go to university,” he says.

After that fateful year of falling in love in 1966, Sir Richard decided to take a year out

to research the basal ganglia (which control movement) in rat brains for a Bachelor of Medical Science. He built a machine with electrodes and developed tissue-staining techniques to carry out his experiments.

It led him to discover a new pathway from the basal ganglia to the thalamus.

"The excitement of scientific discovery turned me on," he recalls. "My research was published in a top journal of the day and I got requests from experts around the world for a copy of my paper – all the big names. I couldn't believe it."

After completing that degree in 1967 and a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery in 1970, he married Diana and spent a short time as a house surgeon in Auckland. Then a fellowship from the former Medical Research Council allowed him to do a groundbreaking PhD in neuroanatomy at the newly established medical school in Auckland.

Using rat brains, he discovered new connections between the cerebellum and spinal cord. His findings were celebrated, because they helped neuroscientists understand the motor pathways in rats and humans.

In 1975, he gained his PhD then set off with Diana to the US. Initially funded by a Harkness Fellowship, he undertook postdoctoral studies working with brain experts at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and NASA's Ames Research Centre.

However, the money ran out before his research was completed and, seeking help back home, he was offered \$1,000 from the Taranaki Māori Trust Board. Initially, he was reluctant to accept the grant, because he says he didn't feel "Māori enough".

"They said 'You are Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Rāhiri. We want to help you and one day, you will come home to Taranaki and look after the people.'"

A life-changing gift

In 1978, Sir Richard returned to New Zealand and became a senior lecturer in anatomy at the University of Auckland, where, a few years later, Huntington's disease expert Professor Arthur Veale asked him to help develop a definitive way to diagnose the genetic disease. Sir Richard was able to do this by examining the brains of people after they died.

"Families were so grateful to have that final word. Mostly it [the Huntington's diagnosis] was 'yes', but occasionally it was 'no' and they were ecstatic."

It also led to a development that Sir Richard says "changed my life": the families involved said he could keep their loved ones' brains for ongoing research.

"I had been studying the rat brain and they were giving me the brain of their mum or dad – and that was the most valuable gift they could give to science."

Sir Richard discovered a high level of variation in the brains of people who had died with Huntington's, which was at odds with widely held understandings of the time. Colleague and neuropsychologist Professor Lynette Tippett suggested gathering the life stories of the people with Huntington's whose brains had been donated, to try to understand the variation.

By putting together symptom histories from families and clinicians and patterns of cell death in the brains, the team was able to make a revolutionary discovery: "We showed what parts of the basal ganglia are involved in mood and which parts are involved in movement."

"That was the most valuable gift they could give to science."

*– Distinguished Professor Sir Richard Faull,
Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences*

By the early 1990s, Sir Richard had gathered about 50 brains and asked the Neurological Foundation if it might fund a human brain bank, which it did in 1994; the Neurological Foundation Human Brain Bank now holds tissue from more than 1,000 brains, which has become an invaluable resource for scientists researching neurodegenerative diseases.

Around the same time, he helped introduce the whakanoa – a ceremony to lift tapu and bless the brains – so Māori medical students could feel more comfortable working with human tissues from cadavers. It was a first for a human anatomy laboratory in Aotearoa.

Centre of the action

Over the years, Sir Richard developed a multidisciplinary research team that used tissue from the brain bank, and which included Lynette and neuropharmacologist Professor Mike Dragunow, geneticist Professor Russell Snell and neuroscientist Professor Maurice Curtis.

In 2007, the team was the first to discover that adult stem cells proliferate in the brains of people with Huntington's disease, in an attempt to repair the brain.

"No one had realised that the human brain could make new brain cells," he says. "We were the first to show that in the human brain there were adult stem cells which could multiply."

That same year, Sir Richard won the Rutherford Medal, New Zealand's highest scientific accolade.

In 2009, CBR was launched as a platform for national and international academic

collaboration, working with neurologists, neurosurgeons and other hospital staff, community organisations and families. Alongside its research breakthroughs, the centre attracts \$5 million annually in philanthropic and donor research funding.

Community outreach has been another focus. Alongside CBR's deputy director Māori, Dr Makarena Dudley, Sir Richard has visited 17 marae, from Kaitia to Invercargill, discussing the best ways to look after people with mate wareware (dementia) and other brain diseases.

The work has allowed him to fulfil the prophecy of the Te Āti Awa kaumātua who, all those years ago, had said he would one day return to help their people. A whānau from Te Āti Awa affected by Huntington's asked for his help and Sir Richard was overjoyed to find a way to give back to his community.

"I started to come home to my Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Rāhiri roots and began to help the people."

Sir Richard's contributions to Māori and neuroscience were recognised again in 2023, during a ceremony at the University's Waipapa Marae, when he received a korowai and a tokotoko – the latter crafted by Te Āti Awa master carver Rangī Bailey.

"They said 'Now you are a rangatira'. It was so humbling, it made me cry," he says.

■ Rose Davis

Learn about CBR's new director, Professor Hanneke Hulst, in the December issue of UniNews.



Sir Richard pictured at Waipapa Marae at the 2023 ceremony recognising his contributions to Māori and neuroscience. Photo: Sav Schulman



Dr Neil Anderson with Wellsford-based RMIP students Phoebe Wilson, Ryan Semmens and Raphaella Rae.
Photos: William Chea

MEDICAL STUDENTS DIG RURAL TRAINING

A new programme is giving trainee doctors a taste of life in a country practice.

From being first on the scene of a car crash to attending a birth, medical students on a new rural medical programme have had everything thrown at them – and thrived.

The University's inaugural Rural Medical Immersion Programme launched in 2025 and has involved a dozen fifth-year medical students flatting, working and learning together in a rural community for the full academic year.

One group has lived in a large Wellsford house, owned by Coast to Coast Health Care.

Phoebe Wilson is only half-joking when she says free rent was one of her motivations for joining the scheme. More seriously, she saw an opportunity to hone a range of skills.

"It's been helpful, especially for our clinical examination skills and confidence with patients," says Phoebe.

"We will be the first one to see the patient. We get to ask all the questions, do an exam, and then often we'll present to the doctors.

"So, we get to practise our presentations, which is definitely one of my weak points.

"Then the doctor will do another consult and send through the plan. We can see how accurate we were and what we missed. It's instant feedback."

The biggest challenge has been the variety of medical conditions she has seen.

"You have to be ready to tackle anything. And over the year you really do build up your skills."

Dr Neil Anderson is an honorary senior lecturer in general practice at the University and a GP and clinical director at Coast to Coast Healthcare. As academic coordinator of the Wellsford RMIP site, he holds a weekly tutorial with the students, which offers them an opportunity to debrief complex cases.

Usually, fifth-year students cover their curriculum in blocks through a series of hospital placements. But that had to be adapted for the rural medical immersion students.

"We soon realised that is not how medicine presents in general practice; it very much comes through the door in any order. It can be a mental-health case, followed by a child

case or a complicated obstetric-related case," says Neil.

"So, we have had to build those key relationships with providers in our community, as well as visiting specialists."

He found they were keen to support the students.

"You have to be ready to tackle anything."

– Phoebe Wilson, Rural Medical Immersion Programme student

Dr Tim Malloy, a specialist GP at Coast to Coast Health Care, has been a long-time supporter of student training.

"For those of us who practise in rural New Zealand, you actually learn to make it up as you go along," says Tim. "I think we've had to learn to do that in this particular domain."

Associate Dean (Rural) Dr Kyle Eggleton says the students will have the same, if not better, learning outcomes than those who undertook traditional hospital-based placements.

“There is also significant evidence that rural medical immersion programme students are up to six times more likely to return to work as rural clinicians compared to students who don’t do a rural medical immersion programme,” says Kyle.

Another of the Wellsford students, Raphaella Rae, was attracted to the programme for the opportunity to enjoy living in a rural community, after spending her early years in Tasman. Flatting with the other students on the immersion programme was also an attraction.

“I’ve never lived with medical students before, so it’s been a new experience. It has been good being able to come home and discuss cases or teaching and have that moral support at home,” says Raphaella.

She particularly enjoyed supporting a woman who had previously experienced a traumatic birth. She attended the birth, which the new mother reported was “so much better than last time”.

“It was nice, because I felt like I had contributed, because I knew her and the family so deeply that I knew how to reassure her to make that experience better.”

Ryan Semmens grew up in Northland and came to medical school through its Regional Rural Admission Scheme. So he knew about the programme and was keen to be part of the first Auckland intake.

While on the programme, Ryan had an alarming experience that, in hindsight, was tinged with black humour.

He was working in the emergency care resuscitation area, known as ‘resus’, taking a patient’s history. Ryan noticed they were on a common asthma medication and asked whether they had the condition. The patient didn’t reply, so he asked again if they had an allergy or an inhaler.

“Connection and rapport building is much more important, because of the community values.”

– *Ryan Semmens, RMIP student*

There was still no response, so he glanced over, only to see the patient was unconscious. Ryan wondered how long the person had been in that state and whether they had had an asthma attack.

He commenced chest rubs, and the person started to come around. A nurse arrived to assist and it transpired the patient occasionally had episodes of fainting.

Nonetheless, for Ryan, it provided a valuable lesson: “You have to make sure you are watching them,” he says.

Ryan also found it a positive experience, albeit

traumatic for all involved, to be early at the scene of a serious car crash and able to help.

Phoebe was pleased to discover a heart arrhythmia in a patient while checking their vital signs as part of a routine visit.

“I put my finger on their pulse, and to me it was irregular, but I’ve got a terrible sense of rhythm, absolutely horrible.”

The doctor trusted Phoebe’s ‘terrible sense of rhythm’ and ordered an ECG, which a cardiologist then confirmed was a heart arrhythmia, albeit one that was unlikely to cause problems in the foreseeable future.

The other groups of three students on the programme were based in Thames, Te Kuiti and Hāwera. They’ve similarly reported enjoying the wide variety of medical training experiences and being part of the community, from being invited onto the local marae for a special occasion, to joining the local quiz night.

Meanwhile, the Wellsford students say they gained an appreciation of rural communities’ culture, meaning they would treat patients from the country differently in future.

“I feel like connection and rapport building is much more important, because of the community values,” says Ryan.

“And, if you are trying to risk-manage someone, you need to think about things like how far they are from a hospital, how long would an ambulance take to reach them, and do they have mobile coverage or live alone? You have to think about these things.”

■ **Jodi Yeats**



The RMIP students flat, work and learn together in a rural community for a full academic year.

Juli Gaviraghi Mussoi wears a record of the birds she has studied on her skin.

Photo: Chris Loufte



in Brazil and a symbol of her home state, Rio Grande do Sul. Her short thesis looked at its behaviour in environments with and without human activity. After that, Juli started her masters degree at Lund University in Sweden. She volunteered on a research project looking at the problem-solving skills of urban and rural great tits, which led her to focus on the common European bird species for her own thesis.

A scholarship then drew her to the University of Auckland to undertake a PhD, supervised by Professor Margaret Stanley and Associate Professor Kristal Cain from biological sciences.

Her PhD began investigating piwakawaka song and cognition, but predation of the population she was researching affected her experiments. A collaboration with researchers in Melbourne on the impact of sleep on Australian magpie cognition led her to shift focus to that topic and look at the impacts of sleep on common mynas' communication.

The research found that common mynas sang fewer and simpler songs after a night of disturbed sleep, caused by factors such as noise and light pollution. The sounds of their calls were also longer and lower pitched, potentially affecting their social interactions, reproductive success and survival.

"I see it as an expression of who you are and the things that are important to you."

– Juli Gaviraghi Mussoi

SKIN DEEP

When animal behaviour academic Juli Gaviraghi Mussoi completed her PhD at the University of Auckland, she continued a tradition of honouring her research subjects in a distinctive way.

A southern lapwing, great tit, budgie, piwakawaka, Australian magpie and common myna flock together on the inked arms of Dr Juli Gaviraghi Mussoi, illustrating her love of nature and birds.

But her tattoos also tell another story: of her research.

A specialist in animal behaviour, particularly birds, Juli marks each species she's researched with a tattoo.

"I remember first thinking I wanted a tattoo

when I was around 15 years old, but obviously my parents were like 'no!'," she says, "but that interest stayed. I see it as an expression of who you are and the things that are important to you."

Juli grew up in a largely rural area of Brazil where she spent lots of time on her grandma's farm, immersed in the natural world. "Throwing myself in the pond to play with frogs", was a favourite past time, but the idea of hanging out in their cold, mosquito-ridden habitats put her off studying them. As a biology undergrad in Brazil, she gained a scholarship to study in Canada for two semesters, where she was exposed to the field of animal behaviour, and was a research assistant for a study of mountain bluebirds.

"I fell in love with birds, and I wanted to continue working with them because they're weird and funky, but they also have a lot of different, interesting behaviours."

Her first tattoo represented her first independent research project, completed as an undergrad, on the southern lapwing – common

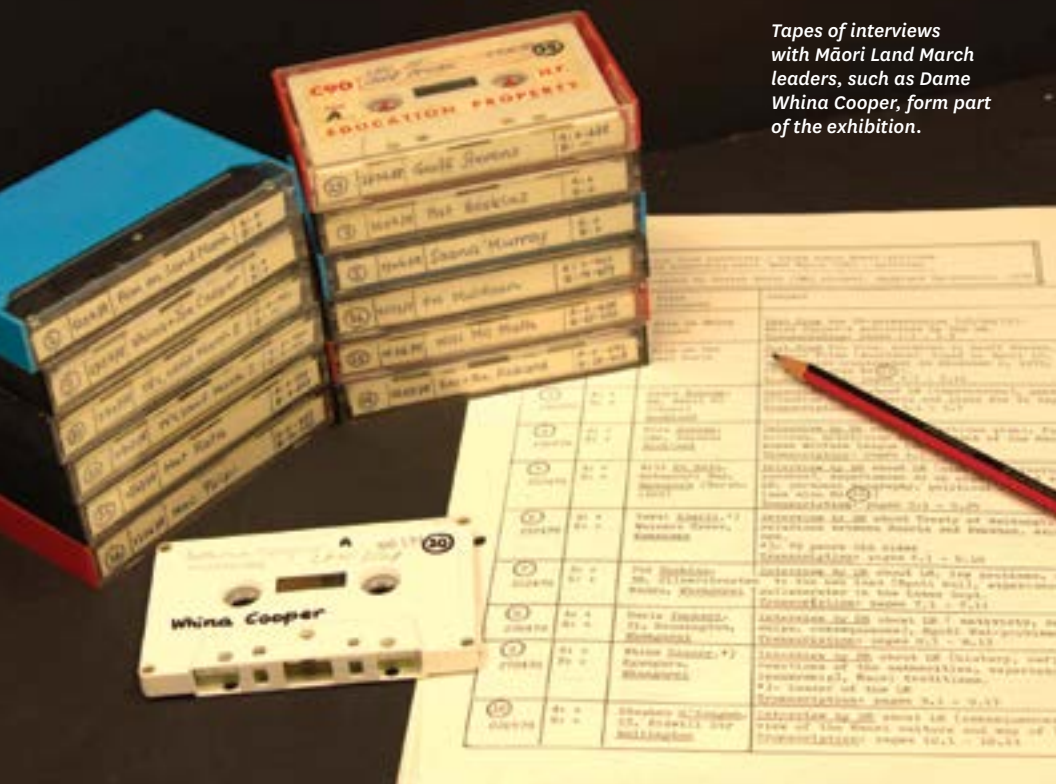
In keeping with Juli's tradition, the research also made its way onto her skin, with tattoos of a piwakawaka, Australian magpie and common myna added to her arms, as well as the subject of a pre-PhD research project: a budgie.

Juli is now a lecturer in animal behaviour at the University of Waikato but continues to supervise research at the University of Auckland into the impact of sleep disturbance in juvenile zebra finches, who learn their songs within the first three months of life. (A highly communal species, the zebra finches will probably be represented by a perching pair in her next tattoo, she says.)

And birds aren't the only subjects of her tattoo collection: there are figs, mushrooms, insects, a ginkgo leaf and the beloved frog of her childhood.

"Nature is such a part of me and my research is not only something that I work with, but something that I'm passionate about," she says. "I doubt that the tattoos will ever be something that I regret."

■ Caitlin Sykes



Tapes of interviews with Māori Land March leaders, such as Dame Whina Cooper, form part of the exhibition.

EXHIBITION MARKS MĀORI LAND MARCH

On 13 October 1975, marchers arrived at Parliament after walking 1,100km from Te Hāpua in the Far North, carrying a petition of 60,000 signatures demanding 'Not one more acre' of Māori land be taken by the Crown.

Beginning with just 50 members of Te Matakite o Aotearoa, the Māori Land March grew to more than 5,000 people.

This landmark event is now the subject of an exhibition, *For the Record: Documenting the 1975 Māori Land March*, held in the He Māra Mahara Cultural Collections space in the General Library. The exhibition focuses on how the protest was captured through film, photography and audio by those who were there to witness and document, rather than actively participate.

Bringing together photography, documentary footage, rare audio and news coverage, the exhibition gives visitors the opportunity to see and hear the voices of some of those who took part. It also highlights the efforts of a handful of committed individuals who had only limited resources and bulky, analogue technology to document the hīkoi.

Exhibition highlights include audio research interviews conducted in 1978 by University of Auckland-affiliated anthropology student Dieter Meyer with key hīkoi figures, including

Dame Whina Cooper, Eva Rickard and Saana Murray; Christian Heinegg's photography; and extracts from Geoff Steven's landmark documentary *Te Matakite o Aotearoa*.

Curators Alitia Lynch and Ian Brailsford, from He Māra Mahara Cultural Collections, say the exhibition draws attention to people 'behind the lens', and the enduring value of this primary source material.

They note that the quality of what was captured was remarkable and, 50 years on, they particularly wanted younger generations to see how events like the land march were documented – and to reflect on the differences between then and now.

The exhibition also draws connections to contemporary hīkoi. In November 2024, when Auckland Law School lecturer Eru Kapa-Kingi retraced Dame Whina's steps to lead a march against the Treaty Principles Bill, its messages were amplified by global media and shared instantly across social media.

In 1975, however, the curators note that documentary makers carried heavy 16mm reels, which each allowed approximately ten minutes of recording, meaning every decision to film came with the risk of missing something later.

■ Te Rina Ruka-Triponel

For the Record: Documenting the 1975 Māori Land March runs Monday to Friday, 11am–4pm, until 25 February 2026 at He Māra Mahara Cultural Collections, Level M of the General Library.

Join the curators for a tour of the exhibition on 6 November 2025 or 12 February 2026 (10–11am). Book through Eventbrite.



Chris Knox: Not Given Lightly

This biography by Craig Robertson charts Chris Knox's journey from 'the obscurity of punk rock to the heart of New Zealand culture'. It traverses a life and multifaceted career that emerged out of Dunedin's punk rock scene and evolved into roles as diverse as cartoonist, columnist and the voice on the Vogel's ads.

Craig Robertson, Auckland University Press, \$60

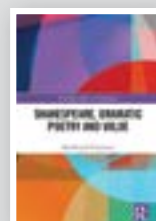


Pill-Rolling Fingers

Researcher, poet and health advocate Tara Coleman was awarded a Marsden grant in 2022 to study the lived experience of Parkinson's. This book, which brings together personal poems

from Tara's own experience of early-onset Parkinson's and research poems crafted from the stories of 48 other New Zealanders living with the condition, is an outcome of that project.

Tara Coleman, Atuanui Press, \$35



Shakespeare, Dramatic Poetry and Value

Emeritus Professor Mac Jackson's latest book examines the relationship between Shakespeare as playwright and as poet. It explores diverse means

by which Shakespeare's poetry enriches his drama, illustrating how particular words in a particular order render his dialogue distinctive and create literary and dramatic value.

MacDonald P. Jackson, Routledge, \$254; ebook \$70



The Way to Spell Love

Alumna and staff member Nina Nola has released this memoir, which focuses on Auckland's Dalmatian community. It recounts her family striking out from the orchards of Henderson

to forge a new life on a vineyard in Pukekohe. However, their story becomes one of crippling silences and possessive love that can only be redeemed by facing their Croatian past with honesty and rewriting their New Zealand lives.

Nina Nola, The Cuba Press, \$38

NEED FOR SPEED

Lighter, faster and stronger, the University of Auckland Formula SAE Team's racecar is now on its way to Melbourne for the FSAE-Australasia competition, which runs from 11-14 December.

The Society of Automotive Engineers competition involves student teams designing, building, managing and racing their own car. Over the four days, teams are judged on everything from their design and engineering knowledge, to the cost of their car and its performance on the racetrack.

In Auckland's case, 68 team members – mainly engineering students, but also from business and computer science – have collectively put in more than 50,000 hours to produce what team CEO and fourth-year mechatronics student Macgregor Jones reckons could be their best car yet.

The University's team won the 2022 competition, was a leading contender in 2023 until its car suffered a catastrophic failure, and came second last year. Macgregor says there are a few factors that give the team an edge: its purpose-built workshop, named after motorsport icons Sir Colin Giltrap and Bruce McLaren, is without peer among global SAE teams, and the team also has strong wider University support and a culture of nurturing student talent, he says.

Then there's 'moke'. "Basically, years ago someone quickly mocked up a dashboard, and 'mock' was misspelt as 'moke'," he explains. "It stuck, and now it's an everyday term we use that means something you quickly cobble together to get something done. As much as possible we're aiming for high-level engineering, but 'moke' also embodies that number-eight wire mentality of just making something that works."

Here Macgregor talks about his involvement with the team, and life in the Newmarket Campus-based workshop.

How long have you been involved in FSAE?

I joined in my first year at uni and this is now my fourth year. We're lucky, and little bit different, because a lot of teams around the world will only take third- or fourth-year students, or they'll do it as a masters project. We have a philosophy that if people join early, by the time they get to their fourth year, they're going to be insanely knowledgeable and experienced, and they'll also be able to pass that on to upskill others.

What do you enjoy about being involved?

When we won in 2022, that was great, but it's the smaller things that stand out to me, like the first time the car runs. It's literally just



Formula SAE CEO and engineering student Macgregor Jones in the electronics room at the team's workshop. Photo: William Chea



The University of Auckland Formula SAE Team at the launch of its 2025 car in October.

crawling around the car park, but it shows the accumulation of all your work. We expect a minimum of 15 hours a week per team member, but a lot of members will be doing many times that on top of their studies.

I've been quite heavily involved in the technical side of things; I spent three years in the electrical team, partly because that's where my interest, knowledge and experience lie. One of our team's values is to take ownership of our projects, so I get focused on keeping going with anything I'm working on, and I feel guilty if I stop.

What parts of the workshop are most familiar to you?

I've spent the most time over the years in the electronics room, especially when we've been locked in trying to find some gremlin that's hiding in the car.

The workshop, more generally, is always a place where you get work done. You can design something at home, but your productivity is a whole lot higher here because you collaborate with others.

A lot of us in the team have gone through university together, so we help each other out here and with our study.

How will this year's car go in competition?

Our number-one goal all year has been to win and I think we have as good a chance as any team. This car is going to be faster than any we've had before, so it will come down to our racing strategies and decisions.

Fortunately, some of the fundamentals of the car are relatively transferable from previous years, so we had a good baseline to start with, but we've made some good iterations. We've reduced the car's mass by about 15 percent, mainly through the battery.

There's always that question: will it survive? You can't get rid of that no matter how much testing you do and, ironically, more testing can lead to more failures. But we have an incredible team going over to the competition, and hopefully we can get it dialled in.

■ Caitlin Sykes
fsae.co.nz