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Waipapa Taumata Rau
University of Auckland

UniNews

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IN THE **NEWS**

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


Arne Nieuwenhuys

CHOKING ON A DART

Dr Arne Nieuwenhuys (Exercise Science) talked to the *NZ Herald* about dartitis, where a player freezes and is unable to throw a dart. As with other examples of 'choking', pressure may lead a player to revert to a step-by-step scrutiny of movements that would normally be automatic and, in an extreme case, totally freeze up, he said.
Link: tinyurl.com/nieuwenhuys-nzherald


Deidre Brown

FINDING FORGOTTEN HISTORY

A chance find of forgotten Māori housing history by Professor Deidre Brown (MĀPIHI) was covered in the *NZ Listener*. A box of papers handed to Brown uncovered notes from former University staff member and architect Gerhard Rosenberg from the 1950s and 1960s, which included housing plans to meet the needs of Māori communities.
Link: tinyurl.com/brown-listener-housing


Shohil Kishore

POLICING SOCIAL MEDIA RULES

Business School lecturer Shohil Kishore discussed the government's proposal to restrict social media use for those aged under 16 on RNZ's *Morning Report*. Kishore said it would be unsafe, from a data privacy perspective, for social media companies to be tasked with age-verification processes.
Link: tinyurl.com/kishore-rnz-social-media


Asaad Shamseldin

SOAKING IT UP

Living roofs could play a key role in managing stormwater, improving air quality and cooling cities, Professor Asaad Shamseldin (Engineering and Design) told RNZ. A trial atop Auckland's Central Library found green roofs could absorb up to 80 percent of rainfall. Researchers hope the findings will encourage wider living-roof uptake.
Link: tinyurl.com/shamseldin-rnz-roofs


Dr Martin Stiles

DOCTOR WINS RESEARCH GOLD

Credited with saving the hearts of several Olympians, cardiologist and newly minted professor Martin Stiles spoke to RNZ's Kathryn Ryan about bringing ablation treatment to the Waikato. Sportspeople need it more than most because of the extreme pressure they put their hearts under, he said.
Link: tinyurl.com/stiles-rnz-ablation


Dr Anna Brooks

CHRONIC FATIGUE IGNORED

The Covid-19 virus has driven up New Zealand cases of myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome 15-fold compared with pre-pandemic levels. Immunologist Dr Anna Brooks (Liggins Institute) told a TVNZ *Re:* documentary this should be considered an emergency, but the condition is still not taken seriously.
Link: tinyurl.com/brooks-tvnz-me-cfs

THIS ISSUE

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Editor: Caitlin Sykes
caitlin.sykes@auckland.ac.nz
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Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz

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

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ACADEMIC WINS MAJOR MUSIC AWARD

Fresh from winning the prestigious Taite Music Prize, Dr Tiopira McDowell, also known as Mokotron, will perform his first international gig this month – at Glastonbury.

Dr Tiopira McDowell pictured with the Taite Music Prize, which he won for his Mokotron album **Waerea.**

Most of the thousands of students who have attended Dr Tiopira McDowell's Māori Studies lectures over the years have no idea he is also the electronic music producer known as Mokotron.

Described as 'dark, Māori bass', his music finds its audience in underground clubs, and Tiopira has never courted a profile beyond the music's authentic followers.

"I want a real support base; I want a real community," says Tiopira (Ngāti Hine).

But since April, when he won the Taite Music Prize, one of New Zealand's most prestigious music awards, his cover has been well and truly blown.

Named after legendary music journalist Dylan Taite, the prize recognises an album, released in the past year, for its artistic merit, creativity, innovation and excellence.

Winning the prize for his album *Waerea*, Tiopira says, was "a dream".

"I wanted to make an album that could cut it on the dance floor, that could play in the clubs, underground on K Road, but that was also critically reviewed and treated as a piece of art," says Tiopira, who is co-head of school at Te Wānanga o Waipapa.

"With this project, the point was to do something that hadn't been done; to do something completely original, that could only come from Aotearoa. For that kind of project, this is the prize."

Written in te reo Māori, Mokotron's music features traditional Māori instruments such as taonga puoro and draws on oral traditions. In te ao Māori, a waerea is a protective incantation used to clear negative energy; as the name of the award-winning album and its title track, it references the passing of his father two years ago and the accompanying personal tensions and their release.

Tiopira says his music has always been personal and has become increasingly political. The album was written between 2022 and 2024 and reflects an increasingly tense political period for Māori, he says.

So how does a successful and busy academic, who teaches Māori history and culture, end up as an award-winning underground electronic music producer?

Music has always been there, he says. He learnt piano as a child and later moved on to guitar. He was also bitten early by the electronic music bug, discovering a love of drums and bass guitar while at intermediate school. But he was discouraged at home from following music as a full-time career, he says, and while he DJ'd for years, focusing primarily on his academic career won out.

Despite the success of Mokotron, it's very much a side project, juggled with work and family (he has two daughters, aged nine and 17), which he works on in the evenings and weekends. But there's a strong interplay between his academic and music careers.

"Music's always been the escape from academic work. And academic work has always been the escape from music. I did try once to be a full-time musician, and I just couldn't do it. It turns out that I'm using music as a release for stress. So, as soon as I took the stress of work away, I couldn't write music, and I write my best tunes when I'm most stressed out."

Each also provides creative fuel for the other. Lectures in the Māori 230 course he teaches, focused on Māori history from the colonial period through to today, share their themes and names with Mokotron songs.

The course also has a creative component, where students use media – anything from *Minecraft* models to weaving to jewellery – to express ideas explored in the course, and these feed his own creative expression. When many students chose to reflect on the death of Queen Elizabeth II in their projects, for example, he created his own response, which resulted in the track *Ōhākī* on *Waerea*.

Mokotron's music is produced out of the garage of his west Auckland home, and the $12,500 cash that comes with the Taite prize will help bring his dream of creating a portable music studio closer to reality.

He's now focused on writing the next Mokotron album and later this month he'll perform at Glastonbury, as part of a Pacific collective brought together by internationally renowned Māori DJ Lady Shaka.

Mokotron's music may still be underground, but the time for Māori electronic music, he says, has come.

"The fact that I'm going to Glastonbury probably tells you something that I've been saying for the past four or five years, which is that this kind of music is going to blow up. And you've got to listen, because you don't want to miss that moment."

■ Caitlin Sykes

SPOTLIGHTING VAPE STORES **AND SCHOOLS**

Ronan Payinda
Photo: William Chea

A research study led by a fourth-year University of Auckland medical student has found almost half of schools across New Zealand have a specialist vape store within a 10-minute walk.

This is despite recent legislation aimed at preventing this.

The research, which overlays the locations of vape stores with the locations of schools, shows 44 percent of schools have one or more vape stores within a one-kilometre radius and 13 percent have one or more stores within 300 metres.

Ronan Payinda, the student who led the study, says: "That means a lot of our young people are getting multiple exposures on a daily basis to vape stores and vape marketing, to the attractive window displays and to the omnipresence of vaping, as a constantly available and easy thing to engage with."

Ronan says he saw the explosion of vaping while he was at school in Northland and felt that, as a society, New Zealand was failing to grapple with its potentially serious health effects.

Since 2020, it has been illegal to sell vapes to people under 18. However, in 2021, more than a quarter (26 percent) of secondary school students reported having vaped in the previous week.

In 2023, the government passed legislation banning specialist vape stores from opening within 300 metres of schools and marae. However, existing vape shops were allowed to continue operating.

The law was a response to reports of teens, parents, schools and teachers struggling with the epidemic of vaping.

Ronan says the study, which was published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, shows that New Zealand needs stronger regulations.

"We are not putting the right protections in place to ensure that a whole new generation of young people aren't chained to addictions for the rest of their lives," he says.

auckland.ac.nz/vape-shops-schools

RURAL MARAE HOSTS **WATER SCIENCE LAB**

Whānau of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Hinemanu me Ngāti Paki at Winiata Marae.

Winiata Marae in Taihape will become the country's first marae to host a dedicated water science laboratory.

The lab has been established through a partnership between mana whenua Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Hinemanu and Ngāti Paki, the University of Auckland and Downer New Zealand. It will provide a space for mana whenua and rangatahi to learn, research and protect their awa.

A prefab building to house the lab was donated by Downer and welcomed onto the marae during a pōwhiri on 16 May, followed by a wānanga for mana whenua and rangatahi.

The initiative builds on years of mātauranga development work by mana whenua, who have been gathering and revitalising their historical knowledge of rivers, streams and puna wai.

Through collaboration with researchers from the University's Faculties of Science, and Engineering and Design, the community has been growing rangatahi capability, blending ancestral narratives with modern water science.

Project investigator Associate Professor Doug Wilson (Faculty of Engineering and Design) says the lab is a place where mātauranga Māori meets Western science.

"It's about working together to protect the lifeblood of the region: the Mangaone, Hautapu, and Rangitīkei rivers," says Doug.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/marae-water-lab

Leith Macfarlane, Matt Liggins and Julie Stout, School of Architecture and Planning.

FROM STUDENT PROJECT TO COMMUNITY BUILDING

A new community and education base nestled in the Bay of Plenty's Pāpāmoa Hills has officially opened, the result of a collaboration between the University's School of Architecture and Planning, and Summerhill Charitable Trust.

The building was designed by Leith Macfarlane, an architectural graduate who also teaches at the University. Leith's original concept was developed as part of a live design studio during her third year of studies. What began as a student project has since evolved into a fully-fledged, community-focused facility.

The 100 square-metre space is designed to be used by groups ranging from schools and kindergartens to youth and recreational organisations. Built almost entirely from timber grown and milled on site, the hub reflects a commitment to sustainable, community-focused design.

"The trust's commitment to support learning and education provided a unique opportunity for me to oversee my student project through to build," says Leith.

"The architecture seeks to push the boundaries in a number of areas – in particular the cross braced cassette walls, which showcase the building's wool insulation and directly reference the project's woolshed heritage."

Leith developed the final design with support from Matt Liggins from the School of Architecture and Planning, and oversaw the project from concept to completion. She says four guiding principles shaped the work: reimagining traditional woolsheds, showcasing locally grown timber, ensuring flexibility for different users, and creating a warm and accessible space.

Since opening in April, the building has already hosted several community events, including the North Island Secondary Schools Mountain Bike Championships and the Summerhill Skedaddle, a local endurance running event.

For more on Leith's story: auckland.ac.nz/grad-leith-macfarlane

SPORTING LEGENDS VISIT HIWA

Dame Lisa Carrington was at Hiwa to film an announcement for the Kāhu women's basketball team. Photo: Lynne Cameron

Famous faces have been turning heads at Hiwa, the University's new rec centre.

Black Caps spinner Ajaz Patel couldn't get through his recent tour of the facility without being stopped by a cricket fan for a chat. He was at Hiwa with White Ferns bowler Bree Illing and New Zealand cricketer Aditya Ashok – both students who are part of the High Performance Support programme. The trio were shown around the facility by Toby Batchelor, team leader high performance sport, and Sean Smith, associate director of sport and recreation.

Ajaz rated the whole gym as top class: "The facility is unreal," he says. "More people should definitely make use of it."

A couple of weeks later, in early May, the Kāhu women's professional basketball team filmed a secret (at the time) announcement at Hiwa. Kayaker Dame Lisa Carrington, New Zealand's most successful Olympian, was there to talk about the team's lineup of all-female co-owners.

Albie Eaton, sport development manager, says the University wants to attract more people to play basketball and become more competitive in the sport.

"We haven't done as well as we are capable of in basketball against other universities, but with our amazing new facility, which is great for spectators as well, we're hoping to up our game.

"We want to become the university of choice for top Kiwi basketballers."

Part of the reason for Dame Lisa's Kāhu announcement at Hiwa, was to champion and support women in sport. "The BNZ Kāhu is the first franchise to have all women owners, and we want to tautoko that," says Albie.

Sean says it makes sense to show top athletes what's available at the facility, especially during non-semester time.

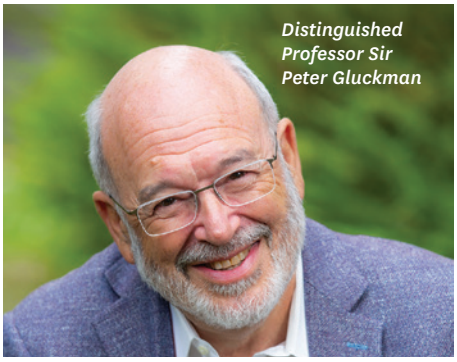
"We have always envisaged this place to be something for the public, as well as staff, students and alumni to be able to use," says Sean.

"That's one of the reasons we are connecting with Auckland athletes and sports teams – to show them what's here."

Read the full stories: auckland.ac.nz/lisa-carrington-hiwa and **auckland.ac.nz/ajaz-patel-hiwa**

National Tertiary Basketball Champs are being held at Hiwa, 12-14 September.

ACADEMICS JOIN **PEAK SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY BODY**



Distinguished Professor Sir Peter Gluckman

Professor Merryn Tawhai

The University's Distinguished Professor Sir Peter Gluckman and Professor Merryn Tawhai have been appointed to the Prime Minister's Science and Technology Advisory Council.

Prime Minister Chris Luxon says the council will provide advice on long-term priorities for government-funded science and innovation, helping identify areas of focus that will have the greatest benefit for New Zealanders and the country's economy.

The council is one of the key recommendations of the Science System Advisory Group's (SSAG) review of the country's science, innovation and technology system.

Sir Peter, who chairs the SSAG, is delighted the Government has acted on the group's advice. "The committee is an important step in developing a strategic and whole-of-government approach to using science and innovation to advance the country," he says.

Professor Merryn Tawhai, who is director of the Auckland Bioengineering Institute (ABI), says: "It is a privilege to have this important opportunity to contribute to the future of New Zealand's science, technology and innovation sector."

Her roles brought experience in balancing applied research outcomes with discovery science to generate deep-tech innovation. She said Medtech-IQ, the national medtech network led by ABI, was a template for collaboration across universities, industry and the healthcare system that could be replicated for other sectors.

Dr John Roche, the Ministry for Primary Industries' chief science adviser, has been appointed as the Prime Minister's chief science adviser. Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology, Hon Dr Shane Reti, will chair the body.

The council's other members are Craig Piggott, alumnus and founder of agritech company Halter; Malcolm Johns, chief executive of Genesis Energy; and Komal Mistry-Mehta, chief innovation and brand officer at Fonterra.

Dr Jade Le Grice is co-director of Te Pūtahi o Pūtaiao – a Faculty of Science research centre that bridges mātauranga Māori and science. Photos: Chris Loufte

JADE LE GRICE: SEXUALITY, SOVEREIGNTY AND SCIENCE

Making space for Indigenous science to flourish and promoting inclusive research that benefits communities as well as academia are part of the Māori health leader's big vision.

Marking the dawn of a new year, Matariki is a time for reflection and setting goals in pursuit of a vision.

And for Dr Jade Le Grice, the vision is, and always has been, big: to reclaim "our stories, our tapu and our ways of being".

Associate Dean Māori in the Faculty of Science, Jade (Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa) is a senior lecturer in psychology, whose research focuses on what it means to decolonise sexuality, reproduction and gendered identity in Aotearoa.

Her research challenges colonial norms that have dictated perceptions of the bodies, sexualities and places in the world of Māori.

It's not just about reclaiming Māori knowledge, says Jade, but reclaiming the essence of who Māori are.

She also supports a wider vision for Māori in science, as co-director of Te Pūtahi o Pūtaiao – a Faculty of Science research centre that bridges mātauranga Māori and science. It aims to make space for Indigenous science to flourish, promoting inclusive research that benefits not only academia but also Māori communities.

Seeing the systems

Jade was recently recognised among 100 Māori leaders in health by Te Rau Ora, an organisation providing a range of programmes to improve Māori health outcomes.

Leadership and a history of resistance run deep in her whānau.

Jade was born in Rawene in the Hokianga where, in 1898, her great-great-grandfather, Hōne Tōia, led the Dog Tax rebellion. Jade also recounts how her great-great-great kuia, Rihi Hancy, was jailed for removing pegs from government-surveyed land that was being stripped from her whānau, and carried the same rebellious spirit.

However, these were not just acts of protest, says Jade, they were assertions of mana motuhake, or sovereignty – something she carries into her research work today.

"I fell in love with kaupapa Māori because it gave me a way to compassionately understand how Māori experiences are shaped by social oppression," she says.

"That had powerful implications for me because it shifted my way of thinking about myself in deficit terms to instead recognise the social norms that shape and constrain opportunities, behaviours, or other people's expectations of me.

"So, from that basis my research has focused on deconstructing colonial discourse and racialised understandings of Māori reproduction and sexuality. I also focus on how we as Māori understand ourselves, and sometimes participate in our own marginalisation."

Resistance and restoration

In essence, Jade's research involves peeling back layers of social norms and assumptions to rediscover who Māori were prior to colonisation and using that understanding to reimagine the future; it's an act, she says, of resistance and restoration.

With the issue of abortion, for example, she explains: "For years there was an assumption that Māori were inherently pro-life, or anti-abortion. But dichotomies like this tend to mask a fuller picture of complexity, inviting questions like: what informs Māori perspectives on abortion? What are Māori experiences of abortion? How do we hold space for those who have had abortions, and allow for diverse views in our theorising?"

Another example relates to the ages of childbearing.

"Western models see early reproduction as a deficit," she says. "But from a Māori perspective, having children younger can make you rich. Not in wealth, but in whakapapa, legacy and love."

Through the voices of her research participants, Jade highlights how young Māori parents view themselves as carrying forward ancestral lines, raising tamariki within whānau systems, and tapping into intergenerational wisdom. She recalls one participant telling her, that although he might not be rich in money, he was rich in whakapapa, with his legacy carried through his tamariki and mokopuna. Yet, these are truths that Western frameworks often fail to recognise, says Jade.

Another focus of Jade's work is critiquing persistent stereotypes of Māori as violent or hyper-sexual, which she says are harmful and lead to the criminalisation and over-surveillance.

Rather than internalising these stereotypes, however, Jade's research encourages Māori to "reclaim how we see ourselves through our mātauranga and tikanga".

"Young people are telling us that becoming a sexual being today means having to contend with challenging ideas about who they are as Māori women and men – some deeply racialised, some inherited. So we ask: how do they understand their own mana and tapu? How do they understand their responsibility to uphold the mana and tapu of others when they are in relationships? How do they understand what it means to be wāhine or tāne within te ao Māori?"

Looking to the future

Jade will play a role in bringing together wider Māori perspectives in science this September, when Te Whare Pūtaiao, Faculty of Science will host its second Pūtaiao Research Symposium, celebrating mātauranga Māori in science.

This year, the event will be held in the North, Jade's home turf. For her, it represents more than an academic gathering; it's also an opportunity to build community connections and foster the next generation of Māori scientists.

The symposium is a collaborative effort between Te Whare Pūtaiao, Te Pūtahi o Pūtaiao, and Ngā Motu Whakahī. The latter is a Faculty of Science initiative that offers mentoring to Māori and Pacific undergraduate students, helping them gain research experience and develop career skills in academia.

The symposium aims, she says, to bring more Māori voices into conversations about science.

"We will hear about initiatives that are empowering communities to advocate for the preservation of our taonga and sustain our natural world," she says. "These efforts also address urgent issues like community health, pūtaiao education, and Māori development."

Jade is especially passionate about expanding Indigenous science networks and bringing communities along on the journey. She sees the integration of Māori knowledge with a range of science disciplines as key to solving contemporary problems.

"We have incredible Māori minds working and innovating in science, and bridging mātauranga with their disciplinary knowledge. We want to showcase the work of our scholars to spark the enthusiasm of the future scientists in our whānau," she says.

"There's a growing number of scientists who speak te reo Māori and are comfortable and familiar in Māori contexts. They're working to uphold the integrity of our mātauranga in the discipline of science and creating pathways to share that with our students, including the recent creation of a stage 2, Pūtaiao 200 course."

This approach, says Jade, is not just philosophical; it's practical. It's about harnessing Māori potential to solve real-world problems affecting the human condition.

Jade is optimistic that initiatives like Te Pūtahi o Pūtaiao will continue to develop, creating long-term research projects that benefit not only the academic community but Māori whānau and communities across Aotearoa and beyond.

Jade is also involved with Ngā Motu Whakahī, which she says encourages Māori and Pacific students to explore their cultural identities while pursuing their academic careers.

"It's about giving them a space to cultivate their identities as future scientists and as tangata whenua."

■ Te Rina Triponel

Pūtaiao Research Symposium will be held in Whangārei over three days in September.

"We want to showcase the work of our scholars to spark the enthusiasm of the future scientists in our whānau."

– Dr Jade Le Grice, Faculty of Science

Dr Jade Le Grice, speaking at the inaugural Pūtaiao Research Symposium in 2023.

GRADUATION

Alice McSherry, PhD in Geography, Faculty of Science

Inspired by the book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, herbalist Alice McSherry's PhD involved creating a literary account of engaging with plants via ceremony, ritual and reflection.

As with Robin Wall Kimmerer's bestseller, the graduate's overarching goal is to heal humanity's relationship with nature through ancestral and Indigenous knowledge.

Descended from the Naxi, Indigenous people in the southwest of China, Alice was born in New Zealand and learned herbal lore from her Chinese mother and grandmother.

In an unusual experimental project in the field of earth (environmental) humanities, the School of Environment geography student devoted herself to ten plant species over ten cycles of the moon. Nine were found near her Waiheke home – mugwort, kawakawa, nettle, dandelion, chickweed, motherwort, yarrow, plantain and common mallow – and one was sourced elsewhere: cannabis.

She elevated "old ways" of knowing plants, drawing on the pre-colonial and non-Western practices of the likes of healers, shamans, witches and her herbalist grandmother.

Chewing on chickweed, meditating beside plantain, drinking cannabis-leaf tea, and watching dandelion leaves unfurl day by day, Alice recorded her responses to each plant – physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and in her dreams – to learn directly from the plants, just as generations of healers have done before her.

The process, which also involved prayers, invocations, and plant altars, inspired creative (reflective) stories relating to each plant, which feature as vignettes in her thesis.

Esther Caljé, PhD in Perinatal Science, Liggins Institute

Esther Caljé (pictured with daughters Eva and Trudy) describes herself as a "late, early-career researcher". But the senior midwife has harnessed her extensive life and clinical experience to produce groundbreaking research into treating new mothers with anaemia.

Esther knew from her work as a midwife that anaemia impacts about a third of women after birth (and she'd been anaemic herself after her second baby was born).

But that wasn't translating into care: "We aren't consistent in the care we provide, within and between hospitals. There are no national guidelines in management of iron deficiency and anaemia for these women, and a number of key evidence gaps."

Esther wondered, could she be the one to provide that evidence? That's when her postgraduate study was born.

Four years later, the clinical researcher's work, including a "challenging but useful" systematic review on interventions for post-birth anaemia, has provided a critical foundation for a full clinical trial of optimal treatment options.

"I would love to see more midwives getting involved in research not just around professional issues, but around big-picture clinical issues," says Esther.

"Clinical research is a truly rewarding path and I hope I can inspire others."

Jonathan Everett, PhD in Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Design

What if ocean waves could power our seafood farms? Engineering graduate Jonathan Everett is working on the answer.

Jonathan's PhD research tackled a growing problem in the aquaculture industry: remote seafood farms, like those for mussels and salmon, often lack access to clean, reliable energy. Salmon farms typically rely on diesel generators, which are costly and carbon intensive. Mussel farms often don't use electricity at all, but with a steady power supply, they could adopt tools like cameras, lights and sensors to boost efficiency and productivity.

His solution? A wave energy converter (WEC) that harnesses the vertical and horizontal motion of ocean waves to generate electricity, even in calm conditions.

"The device consists of a buoy that's magnetically connected to a generator. The waves lift the buoy up and down, which then drives the generator and produces electricity," says Jonathan.

After extensive design work, numerical modelling and physical testing in the lab, Jonathan deployed a prototype at a mussel farm in Aotea Harbour, off the coast of Waikato, during his PhD. The results were promising: the device was able to produce and store electricity using only wave energy, with no need for diesel or solar panels.

That lay the foundation for AMES NZ, a start-up company Jonathan co-founded with his PhD supervisor, Dr Vladislav Sorokin, which is now refining the device and exploring commercial applications with aquafarmers around the country.

Bree Illing, Bachelor of Science (Exercise Science and Biology), Faculty of Science

It has been a cracking year for science graduate Bree Illing.

A couple of months ago, Bree (full name Breearne) made her debut for the White Ferns, the New Zealand women's cricket team, against Sri Lanka. In her first one-day international at Napier, she took two for 18, including the scalp of the Sri Lanka captain.

"To play against any international team is amazing, but to get the wicket of their captain, a world-class batter, was pretty special."

Bree has been part of the High Performance Support Programme at the University, which offers some flexibility around her studies.

"The people in the programme make it much easier for me. If I am going to a New Zealand training camp or have a game, they work with me to request some leniency in coursework such as an extended deadline, so that I can focus on my sport when I need to."

When Bree came to the end of last year, she realised she wanted to add more to her academic portfolio, so she decided to do forensic science for her postgraduate studies.

Does she fancy herself in a *CSI*-type career?

"What I've gathered is that if there's a crime committed, we're the people who collect the evidence, and then take it back to the lab for analysis and provide results to police. It's a far less glamorous version of *CSI*, but it's really interesting so far."

Sione Roberts, conjoint Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Music, Faculties of Law, and Arts and Education

A conjoint music and law graduate, Sione Roberts started a full-time role this year as a law clerk with MinterEllisonRuddWatts. And when he has time, he's also playing with his new band Tūī, an eclectic mix of soul, soft rock, jazz, indie and RnB.

But the juggle is nothing new for Sione (who's pictured with sister Willa, dad Robert, mum Shelley and Uncle John). He completed his conjoint degree while performing with his band, debating, travelling internationally, and modelling for the likes of Zambesi, Superette, and Hallensteins.

"Modelling was such an awesome and rewarding side hustle while at uni. I was able to travel all over New Zealand and to Canada and the US."

He also travelled to the US, Vietnam and South Korea through University of Auckland programmes focused on innovation and entrepreneurship.

Sione says his whānau and Māori whakapapa lent drive and a deeper purpose to his legal studies.

"Aotearoa's history has been riddled with the oppression and discrimination of Māori, driven primarily by instruments like the legal system. One of my key reasons for studying law was to understand how the law has caused inter-generational harm to Māori and how we, as Māori lawyers, can change the law. These changes can prevent this chain of harm and provide remediation so Māori can one day be free from the consequences of colonisation."

Penni Wolfgramm, PhD in Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Science

Penni Wolfgramm researched a topic close to her heart – the experiences of Tongan leitī in Aotearoa – for her PhD in clinical psychology.

Penni herself proudly identifies as leitī – a Tongan whose gender identity and/or expression is additional or different to their assigned sex at birth. Her PhD looked at the development of the sense of self and mo'ui lelei (well-being) among leitī and in relation to others.

Her research was grounded in Tongan research methods and practices, including the Kakala (garland) research framework, and talanoa with the use of koloa (valued objects and treasures).

"My doctoral research was so close to home, being leitī myself. Hearing and sharing our life experiences has been the most rewarding part of this academic journey."

The need for more comprehensive Pacific Rainbow+ data within academia has been acknowledged by scholars. With a strong presence in the Pacific Rainbow+ community, Penni advocates for change through her research.

"It has been an incredible journey. I came into this at the sprightly age of 33, truly committed to where I wanted to engage my head, heart and hands – that is with people of colour and particularly, Māori and Pacific communities."

Sam Mackay, PhD in International Human Resource Management, Business School

Dr Sam Mackay's surreal experience in Afghanistan inspired research that uncovers the hidden toll of expat life in conflict zones.

Sam lived in Kabul between 2018 and 2019, working as a senior consultant for the United Nations.

"One moment, I was running to a bunker during a terrorist attack; the next, I was part of meaningful work helping to reshape a country's education system. It was a mix of extremes, and no two days were the same."

He noticed how life and work in fortified compounds affected people, and this complex and often bizarre experience inspired his doctoral research examining life inside Kabul's compounds.

Drawing on interviews with 36 expatriates, including three New Zealanders and two Australians, his thesis, 'Sexcapades, Drug Hazes and Terrorist Attacks: Exploring Expatriate Work and Well-being in Fortified Compounds in a Hostile Environment', provides insight into a world most people know little about.

Sam says the compounds, while designed to protect employees from external threats, often became sources of harm in their own right.

"I found that although they sheltered inhabitants from the risks outside, compounds generated additional threats on the inside, particularly in the inescapability of toxic bosses and colleagues, sexual harassment, racism and social exclusion," he says.

Sam hopes his research can inform how aid and development agencies operate in conflict zones and contribute to improving the experiences of expatriates living and working in these extreme contexts.

Julie Biuso, Master of Creative Writing, Faculty of Arts and Education

Well-known cookbook author and food journalist Julie Biuso has added a dash of extra creativity to her repertoire after graduating with a Master of Creative Writing.

Julie's successful food writing career has included extended stints on breakfast TV and as editor of *Cuisine* magazine; she's now the creator of the food website Shared Kitchen, alongside her daughter Ilaria.

But writing fiction, she says, has always been her dream.

The masters requires participants to progress and refine an existing writing project, and Julie says she liked the rigour of the one-year programme.

"I've stuck with my original project, a work of fiction, although I changed it along the way," she says.

Julie found non-fiction food writing similar to writing fiction in some ways, but "a different beast" in others.

"A book is a book; that's the easy part. You need a concept, an idea to sell to a publisher that they believe will sell to the public, then there are the logistics, timelines, deadlines and research.

"But with a cookbook, there are recipe formulas to work out, recipe testing to do and photography. These days, you don't even have to be a good cook to have a successful cookbook, but you do need a following. But with a work of fiction, you can't take someone's scone recipe, jazz it up and publish it as your own."

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

Associate Professor Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere says our progressive animal welfare laws aren't backed up with enforcement and funding. *Photo: Chris Loufte*

GIVING ANIMALS A VOICE

Law expert Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere says a commissioner for animals could speak up for this vulnerable population.

Some people are cat people while others prefer dogs. Animal law expert Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere, however, is a goat person.

The associate law professor is an animal welfare and administrative law expert, a popular lecturer, keen tramper, film buff and vinyl collector. He's also president of the New Zealand Animal Law Association.

Marcelo says his love of goats evolved while living on a Dunedin property where, in lieu of a lawnmower, the neighbours' goats and sheep kept the grass under control.

"I did some general TLC for them, fixing a bit of footrot," he says. "That was an education."

He ended up far more attached to the goats than anticipated.

"They're the best companion animals. They have the personality of a dog combined with the independence and self-sufficiency of a cat."

Marcelo grew up on the Kāpiti Coast and was drawn to debate, articulating big ideas and "really thrashing them through". His family would agree he is "pretty adept at arguing", he says.

He studied law and arts, majoring in philosophy, politics and economics at the University of Otago, where he later taught. In LAWS101, his teacher was Professor Mark Henaghan, now a close colleague at Auckland Law School.

"I was inspired immediately," he says. "That's a pretty common story for people who have Mark as a lecturer."

Marcelo's interest in animal welfare grew gradually: first, from a desire to reduce his environmental impact; then, living in what was "basically a vegan commune" during his masters studies in Canada; and, finally, attending a talk at Otago University by retired Australian High Court Justice Michael Kirby, a staunch animal advocate, who encouraged Otago to introduce an animal law paper. Marcelo took up the challenge in 2013.

Today, Marcelo's research and teaching at Auckland Law School straddle public, administrative and animal law – the latter, a topic he helped revive after a hiatus of around 15 years.

His doctoral research argues that enforcement of our animal welfare legislation is failing to meet animals' needs; it compares New Zealand and Alberta's animal welfare systems and shows the worst-case scenario of under-enforcement: systemic failure.

"We have some progressive legislation," he says. "But we haven't followed through with enforcement and funding."

The enforcement of our Animal Welfare Act should be a joint effort between the police, SPCA and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), says Marcelo. However, in practice, SPCA and MPI are generally left to shoulder the burden – and neither is sufficiently resourced to do so effectively.

"Not only does this directly harm animals, but it weakens the deterrent effect of the law, allowing a cycle of neglect and cruelty to continue. In this way, animal welfare under-enforcement frustrates the rule of law."

In a recent think-piece for *Newsroom*, he pointed out the contradictory nature of this country's animal welfare laws and international animal imports.

"It's highly likely the 83 tonnes of liquid eggs we imported from China or the 4,600 tonnes of dairy we import from the US each year come from animals that likely did not have a good life. The animal welfare standards in these countries are woefully deficient, and while New Zealand is far from perfect, those standards would be far below what we require of our own farmers."

He would like to see the role of a commissioner for animals created.

"We have one for children and for the environment. The common denominator is giving voice to vulnerable populations. A commissioner for animals could do that. It wouldn't cost the earth, and it would show we actually mean what we say about animal welfare."

Marcelo is equally passionate about administrative law, the legal frameworks that hold governments accountable.

"It has a terribly unsexy name, which is unfortunate because it's crucially important.

"It's about making sure the government, despite its significant power, stays within the limits set by parliament. Power isn't unconditional; it must be exercised lawfully, with respect for human rights, due process and public engagement. Without those guardrails, the rule of law breaks down, and we risk a constitutional crisis.

"We can see the importance of this area of law at play in the US, and closer to home, there has been a lack of proper community engagement and abuse of urgency rules when enacting legislation, which disrespects the institutional safeguards we have in this country."

Looking ahead, Marcelo is considering interdisciplinary work exploring New Zealanders' complex relationships with animals – from national treasures like kiwi to introduced species such as stoats.

"I'd like to work with sociologists exploring how we relate to animals in New Zealand, not just through legal regulation, but through a sociological lens."

As for his career highlight so far? It wasn't finishing his PhD while teaching full-time, although that was "enormously satisfying". It was surviving a live interview with veteran journalist Kim Hill for RNZ "and not looking like an idiot", he laughs.

"Easily the scariest moment of my life."

■ Sophie Boladeras

ALL THAT (NEW ZEALAND) JAZZ

"Long before there was sex, drugs and rock 'n roll," says Dr Aleisha Ward, "there was sex, drugs and jazz."

Aleisha (left), a music historian from the School of Music, says jazz started spreading around the world, including to New Zealand, in 1917, as World War One servicemen sought respite from the horrors of war by going out to "dance, drink and have some fun".

They poured into London, Cairo and particularly Paris, for rest and rehabilitation, where they heard popular American band leaders like James Reese Europe and his Harlem Hellfighters – one of the earliest bands whose style moved from ragtime to what would become jazz.

Aleisha is currently writing a history of 'the long jazz age' (1917–1935) in New Zealand.

"Jazz wasn't a specific genre," she says. "I like to say it was a verb and an adjective. You could jazz anything up using improvisation, swing rhythm, and jazz effects, like talking mute sounds, to make any music jazz.

"Jazz was also dance and comedy. Before jazz became known for the virtuoso improvisations of artists like Louis Armstrong, jazz was the popular social dance music of its time, and it influenced other things like fashion and nightlife."

Jazz came to New Zealand via sheet music, radio (from 1921) and the gramophone recordings that became the new "tech toy" of the middle classes.

And New Zealand, despite being far from music hubs in the US and Europe, had a vibrant entertainment scene in the 1920s and 30s. This was despite strict drinking laws, which were routinely flouted by clever tricks such as female patrons hiding wine bottles under their dresses in special garter belts, says Aleisha.

"Our tabloid *The NZ Truth* [1905–2013] had so many articles about young people, particularly young women, 'taken off the right path' by jazz; falling into drugs and alcohol and pre-marital sex … all because of jazz."

Global vaudeville circuits also revived after World War One, she says.

"The most famous was The Red Line, a circuit that started in Britain, went across Europe, the Middle East and Asia, then to Australia and New Zealand on a three or four-year tour, and performed in our main cities."

While the acts often brought their own musicians, in some cases they used the venue's musicians – some of whom became the first jazz artists in the country. These included percussionist Bob Adams, says Aleisha, the founder of the first local jazz band.

A New Zealand jazz pioneer was band leader Walter Smith (Ngāti Kahungunu), who moved to Utah around 1890 where he studied music. He later performed 'Hawaiian' music on the US vaudeville circuit. On his return to New Zealand, he became an influential teacher and performer, advocating for jazz as a modern expression of music.

About a third of jazz musicians and leaders in the 1920s were women, adds Aleisha. "There was a Miss MacDonald in Christchurch who led several types of ensembles and was also an accompanist to singers on the recital stage."

These early artists, she says, are the forerunners of great New Zealand jazz acts like Quincy Conserve, The Rodger Fox Big Band, Dr Tree, Nathan, Kevin and Joel Haines, Mark de Clive-Lowe and Phil Broadhurst.

■ Julianne Evans

Hear Aleisha Ward discuss the history of jazz in Aotearoa on the Faculty of Arts and Education's *Research and Reason* podcast. Link: spoti.fi/3Ql0jqa

LANDMARK BOOK WINS OCKHAM AWARD

Professors Ngarino Ellis (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou) and Deidre Brown (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu) and were named winners of one of New Zealand's top literary prizes on 14 May for their book *Toi Te Mana: An Indigenous History of Māori Art*.

Published by Auckland University Press, *Toi Te Mana* won the Illustrated Non-Fiction category at the 2025 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards.

Librarian Chris Szekely, convenor of judges for the category, described *Toi Te Mana* as a book of enduring significance with international reach. Spanning 600 pages, it was 12 years in the making.

"It is dedicated to the late Jonathan Mane-Wheoki (Ngāpuhi, Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Kurī), one of the three authors responsible for this magnum opus," says Chris. "Congratulations to Professors Deidre Brown and Ngarino Ellis for carrying the baton to completion, a herculean task akin to the mahi of Maui himself."

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/toi-te-mana

The Origins of an Experimental Society: New Zealand, 1769–1860
Described as a new account of the origins of New Zealand, this book looks at the country as one of the few post-Enlightenment experiments in creating a new nation anywhere in the world. It ranges across intellectual and cultural history, and is written by Otago University Emeritus Professor of History Erik Olssen.
Erik Olssen, Auckland University Press, $65

AUP New Poets 11
Three contemporary voices are introduced in this poetry volume. It features Xiaole Zhan's essay-poem 'Arcadiana', which explores their Pākehā-Chinese family; Margo Montes de Oca's 'intertidal', which combines imagery related to water, light and colour; and J. A. Vili's 'Poems Lost During the Void', paying tribute to family and friends.
Xiaole Zhan, Margo Montes de Oca and J.A. Vili, Auckland University Press, $30

Groundwork: The Art and Writing of Emily Cumming Harris
Emeritus Professor of English and Drama Michele Leggot co-authors this book about the little-known New Zealand botanical artist Emily Harris (1837–1925). The book includes almost 200 images of Harris's artworks and also pays close attention to her work as a poet.
Michele Leggott and Catherine Field-Dodgson, Te Papa Press, $60

SOUND AND SILENCE

In a busy world, many of us crave some silence.

But spending a few minutes in the anechoic chamber at the University's Acoustics and Vibration Research Centre, perhaps the quietest place in New Zealand, can actually feel a little unsettling.

Every surface of the chamber is lined 1.2 metres deep with foam wedges, including the ground, which has a trampoline-like wire mesh floor suspended above. The chamber is designed to reduce the reflection of sound, and its silence is eerily deep.

And as the centre's Dr Andrew Hall and Gian Schmid start to explain how the chamber is used to pinpoint exactly where a sound is coming from – the exact location of the whir within a machine, for example – you literally hear the point. Never does a voice sound so connected to its speaker.

The chamber is one of four housed within the research centre, which is part of the Faculty of Engineering and Design. At its heart is a control room (pictured bottom left), dominated on one side by panels for plugging in various cables, giving it the appearance of an old-fashioned phone exchange; loudspeakers, monitors, computers and other acoustic gadgetry occupy the rest of the room.

The centre isn't flashy, but appearances are deceptive. Andrew, who is a senior lecturer and senior research fellow who specialises in acoustic metamaterials, explains that the facility was designed by renowned architect and acoustics engineer and designer, the late Emeritus Professor Sir Harold Marshall. It was a groundbreaking, state-of-the-art facility for acoustic research and testing when it was built in 1981–82, and it remains so.

"It's world class," says Andrew, who currently has a Royal Society research fellowship to investigate materials to reduce noise and improve ventilation for healthier homes.

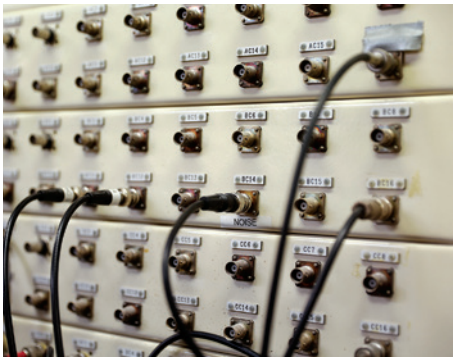
"I haven't been to a better one than this anywhere in the world."

Essentially, it's a large concrete box, which the control room and acoustic chambers sit within. There are three reverberation chambers; two are adjacent and one sits underneath, and they can be configured to separate or connect via massive steel doors and a drop-down floor.

A massive rotating sound diffuser – a kind of upside-down merry-go-round – hangs from each ceiling of the adjacent reverberation chambers, where all surfaces sit at odd angles to bounce sound around.

Dr Andrew Hall (left) and Gian Schmid in one of the centre's reverberation chambers.
Photos: Chris Loufte

The anechoic chamber



Two of the chambers sit on base isolators (the kind of seismic engineering system on which Te Papa is built to withstand earthquakes), which are designed to reduce sound from entering through the ground or between chambers.

As well as operating as a centre for academic research, the facility is used for commercial acoustic testing. Gian, who is the centre's senior technologist and runs its acoustic testing service, says because the facility is unique in New Zealand it is in high demand. It is used by everyone from the makers of construction materials to drones, to test their products' acoustic performance.

The anechoic chamber is eerie and impressive, but Andrew says his favourite spaces in the centre are its reverberation chambers.

"When there's the opportunity to have all three connected, it's pretty impressive," says Andrew, who is an accomplished jazz saxophonist. "Especially if you go in there and play the saxophone, hearing how long the sound lasts is just incredible."

■ Caitlin Sykes