

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO | JULY 2024

Magazine

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Photo: Alan Dove

“While I did not study at Otago, I have learned much from my 24 years here ... I would like to thank my colleagues, students and the wider Otago community for their unwavering support and friendship.”

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE this edition of the *University of Otago Magazine*, my last as the University's Acting Vice-Chancellor. After a full international search, the University Council has appointed the Hon. Grant Robertson as the next Vice-Chancellor of the University of Otago. We are very much looking forward to his arrival in July 2024 and are excited to share his journey from being OUSA President to Vice-Chancellor (see pages 6 to 9).

As the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus is credited with saying, “the only constant in life is change”. This is certainly true within the university sector. The Government has recently established two advisory groups under the leadership of Professor Sir Peter Gluckman: the Science System Advisory Group and the University Advisory Group. The two groups will be considering the role of universities in the research and knowledge system and how the science, innovation and technology

system can be strengthened. We look forward to their deliberations.

On 1 May 2024, the University changed its te reo Māori name to Ōtākou Whakaihū Waka. The English name remains as the University of Otago. The te reo Māori name metaphorically means ‘A Place of Many Firsts’ and reflects our proud history of being the first university in Aotearoa New Zealand. It also points to the many firsts in education, research and student experiences that we have achieved and will deliver in the future. We also launched a new tohu (symbol) that draws inspiration from the Ōtākou channel in the Otago Harbour. The channel has brought life to and from the region, just as the University brings and shares knowledge across Aotearoa New Zealand and the wider world. We will retain the existing crest for ceremonial documents, for example graduation certificates.

Changes have also been happening within the University's senior leadership team. As you will read in this issue of the

Otago Magazine, in addition to appointing a new Vice-Chancellor, we have also appointed three new Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs). In March we welcomed Professor Jacinta Ruru as our inaugural DVC Māori. Jacinta is Professor of Law and was awarded the University's Distinguished Research Medal in 2022. Professor Stuart Brock joined Otago from Victoria University of Wellington, Te Herenga Waka in January 2024 as DVC Academic, and in August Professor Jessica Palmer will become our new DVC External Engagement. Additionally, at the end of April, Associate Professor Megan Gibbons took up the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) of the Division of Health Sciences and on 1 October Trish Oakley will become the University's new Chancellor, replacing Stephen Higgs who will retire from the University Council at the end of September.

In the previous edition of the *Otago Magazine* I explained that we, and other New Zealand universities, were facing challenging

financial times. We have had to make some difficult decisions but are now on target to save the approximately \$60 million required by the end of 2025. I would like to thank all our staff for their support in achieving these savings.

Otago is proud to have many incredible members of staff achieving at the highest levels. In May, Professor Parry Guilford and his Hereditary Diffuse Gastric Cancer Research Group won the Prime Minister's Science Prize for life-saving stomach cancer work; while in January, Wellington campus-based Associate Professor Tristram Ingram received a New Year Honour for his work as a disability advocate. You can read about them on pages 26 to 27, and pages 30 to 31 respectively.

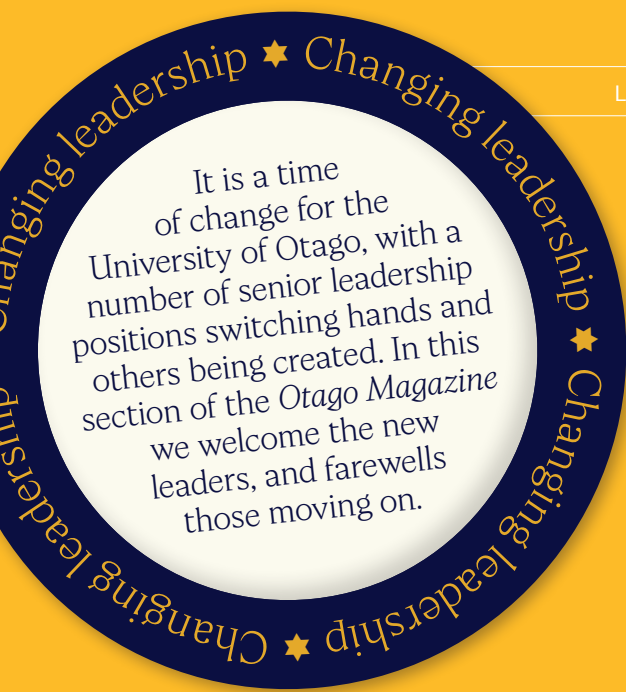
Next year we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Medical School and we look forward to alumni from across the world joining us for this special occasion (see pages 20 to 25).

As I mentioned earlier, this will be my

final introduction to the *Otago Magazine*. I will be retiring when Hon. Grant Robertson takes the helm in July. While I did not study at Otago, I have learned much from my 24 years here and the University has provided me with many opportunities to grow. I would like to thank my colleagues, students and the wider Otago community for their unwavering support and friendship.

Noho ora mai,

**Acting Vice-Chancellor
Professor Helen Nicholson**



Nau mai, hoki mai – welcome back Grant



As 1993 OUSA President, Grant Robertson carries the mace for graduation.

The University of Otago has welcomed a new Vice-Chancellor, New Zealand’s former Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Grant Robertson, who took up this top leadership position in early July. His Otago journey has taken him full circle – from a student in our philosophy and politics classrooms to the forefront of student and national politics, and back to lead the institution where it all began.

GRANT ROBERTSON IS UNDER NO ILLUSIONS about taking on the leadership of the University of Otago.

“It’s a big job. Everyone knows that there are financial stresses but there is also so much opportunity.”

Robertson is the first Vice-Chancellor appointed from a non-academic background, but his Parliamentary roles as Leader of the House, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister provide plenty of experience to tackle the challenges facing not just Otago but the education environment in general.

“The funding system needs to change. We need long-term certainty in funding – not just being tied to the number of students enrolling each year.

“We have to value tertiary education and the amazing work that is done by our researchers and teachers. We also need to improve connections between the tertiary sector and the business sector. Bringing people together can have great outcomes.

He says collaboration could play an important part in addressing problems such as falling rolls across the sector.

“It’s a changing world and universities need to revise their relevance to continue to attract students and provide for their needs.”

Robertson believes Otago could lead responses to global issues such as the recent rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and the

increasing pressures of climate change.

“AI isn’t going away. The whole University needs to have a wide understanding of it and learn to work alongside it. Our job is to focus on how we create great human beings who are going to be able to use AI for good.

“With climate change the University can and should contribute guidance. It is a classic example of an issue where across all the divisions of the University we have staff and students who can provide insight and leadership.”

Robertson himself is no stranger to leadership. “I’ve found over many years that good leaders learn to look at the people they are working with, look for people who can do things better than they can and form them into a useful team.

“My job is to make decisions – consult, listen, talk to people, but then make decisions. And in leading and governing you have to balance both head and heart in making those decisions.”

Robertson’s decision to take on Otago reflects lifelong connections with Dunedin and the University.

He grew up in South Dunedin, where his parents were both Presbyterian elders. His grandfather once stood as a Labour candidate and although his parents were not particularly party political, they cared deeply about social justice.

Robertson and his two older brothers were raised amid wide-ranging discussions on issues of the day, sowing seeds of ambition to make New Zealand a fairer and more equal place.

He took an interest in politics at school and followed his academically successful brothers to Otago, keen to study anything he hadn’t tried before.

“I found Otago to be an enormously stimulating environment. I originally considered doing a law degree, and that led me to philosophy and politics, which I absolutely loved. I had great teachers such as Professors Jim Flynn, Ramesh Thakur and Robert Patman.”

Robertson’s social life followed a popular geographical progression from home to Castle Street, Queen Street and High Street, enjoying the music scene at the Empire, the Crown Hotel and Sammy’s, and even managing a couple of bands.

But student politics took centre stage when he was elected President of the Otago University Students’ Association (OUSA) and first tasted serious responsibility.

“It was an extraordinary opportunity to be able to take on those student roles. In my early 20s I was running student organisations and million-dollar budgets – Radio One, Unipol, University Bookshop. You had a chance to do things that most people at that



HON. GRANT ROBERTSON: “It’s the only university I would have applied to because of our long association. After politics I wanted another job that I could really care about, and I’ve always cared a lot about Otago.”

Photo: Graham Wārman



Back where it began ... Hon. Grant Robertson outside OUSA during a visit to Otago ahead of beginning the Vice-Chancellor's role.

Photo: Graham Warman

age would never have an opportunity to do.”

Following his Political Studies BA with first class honours, he became Vice-President and then Co-President of the New Zealand University Students' Association and a member of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee on University Academic Programmes.

“While politics can be robust, I like to think that I have respectful and professional relationships with ministers in the government. I'm sure I can advocate for Otago in such a way that also supports the government's goals for tertiary education.”

“It was an era of significant student protest, involving organisation, campaigning and handling the media. We pushed for policy changes and ways to get improvements as well as supporting students with things

like accommodation. We did make some good changes and I gained a lot from the experience. It set me up for what I wanted to do.”

He wanted to join the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but feared his student activism might have also set him up to fail.

“I applied but genuinely did not think I would get in because of my student past.”

He did get in, working in Samoa and at the United Nations (UN) in New York.

“Running overseas development programmes was one of the best roles I've ever had. I loved Samoa, where we made a tangible difference to people's lives.

“New York was the busiest, craziest city in the world but the UN was, and is, an extraordinary organisation, although it was hard work.”

Returning to New Zealand, Robertson became a Senior Ministerial Advisor for Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Helen Clark.

“Helen is an extraordinary individual. She was the hardest worker, reading everything she needed to, taking it on board and retaining it. She set very high standards, stuck to her progressive values and put so many things in place. I learned very important lessons and her work ethic stuck with me.”

During Robertson's time with Clark, expanding the team saw him at the Beehive

Café offering a position to a new young advisor – future Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Jacinda Ardern.

The University of Otago came back into Robertson's life when he was shoulder-tapped for a newly created position as Senior Research Marketing Manager in Wellington for the Research and Enterprise Office.

“They needed someone to work on commercial development, working with the University and largely the School of Medicine. It involved influencing policy and creating spaces for turning research into action.”

Politics called again when local Wellington MP Hon. Marian Hobbs, a mentor and friend from Robertson's Students' Association days, suggested he should run for her seat when she retired. By then Robertson had a strong association with the Labour Party, so he threw his hat into the ring. He won, going on to hold the seat for 15 years.

“That first election was trial-by-fire for me. I didn't enter politics to become the leader of a party. I came to get things done. I wanted to improve social justice in the fields of education and finance.

“But as I came into Parliament, Labour went out of government. In opposition you have the important role of holding the government to account, which can be a bit of a grind after the nine years we had to do that.

“It was an extraordinary opportunity to be able to take on those student roles. In my early 20s I was running student organisations and million-dollar budgets – Radio One, Unipol, University Bookshop.”

It was tough.”

Talent and personality saw Robertson rise through the opposition ranks, having a couple of cracks at the leadership. In 2013 he had caucus support, and in 2014 the party was also for him, but Hon. Andrew Little had the support of the unions. It was close, and at the time Robertson's open status as gay may have made the difference. Some attitudes are slow to evolve.

“New Zealand has changed a lot in the last 10 years but there's still a way to go.”

Following Jacinda Ardern's sudden elevation to leader, Labour was back in power.

“In government the pressure ramps up when you have to get things done. You have to balance a lot of things. You have to compromise and you have to do trade-offs to make things happen. Of course, if you want to make a difference, you aim to be a minister.”

Robertson became Finance Minister, agreeing to it if he could also handle Sport and the Arts. He has never lost his appreciation of music (honed in Dunedin), and he has always been a strong supporter of sport if not particularly sporty (short of a stint with the Crazy Knights, the Wellington gay rugby team where he met his partner Alf 25 years ago).

Two terms of government threw up unexpected and unwelcome horrors, from a massacre to a pandemic and the rise of unprecedented personal vitriolic attacks, largely online.

There were death threats. “It wasn't easy to handle that, and it was very hard on my family, especially during the occupation of the Parliamentary lawn.

“When Jacinda stood down we talked about what we wanted to do. I still wanted to contribute but, through Jacinda, I knew what

her job really entailed and I didn't want it.

“Going back into opposition, it was time to give someone else a go. What happens in Parliament matters a lot, and people should be a part of it, but it's a tough business. I had mixed feelings, but after 15 years it was my time to finish.

“Politically, I'd like to be remembered as someone who stuck to their values, worked hard and looked after the people who needed it the most.”

Robertson knew Otago was looking for a new Vice-Chancellor but only applied after talking to friends in Dunedin.

“It's the only university I would have applied to because of our long association. After politics I wanted another job that I could really care about, and I've always cared a lot about Otago.

“I come with an ability to understand balance sheets and the financial challenges they may pose. I also understand the work of academia and I will always be a champion for our staff and their work.”

Major changes in the University's senior management team preceded Robertson's arrival. “I've looked at the recent appointments and they are outstanding individuals, which gives me great confidence. It's my job to bring the team together and build on their strengths. I have a strong belief in the value of all University staff.

“Part of the job of Vice-Chancellor is to be the public face of the University – both here in New Zealand and around the world. I want to be a strong advocate for all that we do – particularly in research and teaching. This means working with our researchers on how we can enhance our collaboration with other universities, business and the community.”

It also means working with a coalition government that used to be the opposition.

“While politics can be robust, I like to

think that I have respectful and professional relationships with ministers in the government. I'm sure I can advocate for Otago in such a way that also supports the government's goals for tertiary education.”

Returning to Dunedin, Robertson looks forward to watching cricket at the University of Otago Oval and supporting the Highlanders. “Alf and I are excited. We've spent a lot of time in Dunedin over the years and have lots of friends there. I think we'll enjoy being close to my mum, finding our favourite coffee places and exploring the wider Otago region.”

He is confident that at heart he is still the same person as the student who enjoyed his time at Otago. “But life since then has given me different perspectives on how other people think and on how to make change while appreciating those different perspectives.”

He is still pursuing social justice. “I was very pleased to see the University's Pae Tata strategic plan on improving equitable outcomes. These are ambitious goals and ones that I will be focusing on.

“Beyond the University's outcomes we continue to have an important role in working towards equality and equity in society. We can do this through the focus of our research and the way it translates into action.”

Grant Robertson – a son of Dunedin who has always strived to make a difference – has come home.

NIGEL ZEGA



Grant Robertson speaks during a Budget Day protest outside the National Party offices in Dunedin in 1993.

Photo: Supplied

Helen Nicholson: An accidental leader

With the arrival of new Vice-Chancellor Hon. Grant Robertson in early July, Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Helen Nicholson has been able to step into a well-deserved retirement. The *Otago Magazine* speaks to this impressive leader who has held the fort twice in recent years, steering the institution through challenging times.

IT WAS MANAWATŪ SHEEP THAT FIRST LURED ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR

Professor Helen Nicholson to Aotearoa New Zealand's shores in 1998. She only intended to stay for three months to work with a former Bristol colleague who was researching sperm transport in sheep at Massey University. Two years later, she was firmly ensconced in Otago's Department of Anatomy.

Bodies and their hidden mysteries were always in her career sights. Of her teenaged self, Nicholson says: "She was going to be a surgeon and not get married or have any

children." (This staunch singledom resolve was later upended by one husband and two kids.)

The first in the family to attend university (her parents left school aged 14) Nicholson graduated as a medical doctor from the University of Bristol in 1979. Surgery was her first love: "I liked the fact that you could do something tangible that would make a difference to a patient." Her dad, noting the high stakes involved in this path, cheerfully suggested a less jeopardy-laden field: "My father jokingly said he thought I should go into pathology because everybody would be dead already."

After working in community and hospital settings for several years, Nicholson hung up her scrubs and returned to academia. "It was a difficult decision to leave but I was a bit bored and needed a new challenge." Having trained in urology, she chose male reproductive health as her research specialty and returned to her alma mater to complete a Doctor of Medicine.

She was happily settled as a senior lecturer at the University of Bristol – New Zealand fading in the rearview mirror – when a contact she had made at Otago's Department of Anatomy (Professor Gareth Jones) alerted her to a newly established professorial position. "We'd just bought our forever house in Bristol and the kids were 12 and 14 so not an ideal time to move. But at that stage, getting a promotion in the UK was not easy." Career advancement trumped the forever home; they upped sticks to Dunedin.

Nicholson has been here 24 years now. During that time, she has become exceptionally well respected in the global anatomy community. Her CV is cluttered with anatomy involvements such as founding/life member of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Clinical Anatomists. To date she has published more than 100 journal articles and book chapters and supervised upwards of 50 dissertations.

Alongside her research, she has been heavily involved in clinical anatomy and medical education. One of her proudest

achievements is the documentary she made with Dr Paul Trotman called *Donated to Science*. "That film has made such a difference. We've been able to show it to people who were thinking of donating their bodies, but it's also used internationally to prepare students for the dissecting room."

Nicholson has loved her time in Anatomy and, according to Professor Stephanie Woodley, Anatomy has loved its Nicholson time. Aware that her colleague would struggle to toot her own horn, Woodley was happy to step into the breach: "Helen is very humble, exceptionally calm, pragmatic and forward thinking. She's able to challenge people so that they can reach their best potential and knows when to advise and guide, but also when to push a bit harder. She has been (and still is) an amazing mentor to me and many other anatomists, medics, budding students and academics."

Prior to her appointment as Acting Vice-Chancellor, Nicholson held a variety of leadership positions: Dean of the Otago School of Medical Sciences, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

In the normal scheme of things these leadership positions would have been ideal preparation for the role of Acting Vice-Chancellor. But there was nothing normal about the messy and emotionally charged periods Nicholson steered the University through. She was at the helm through ongoing COVID-19 pandemic issues in 2021 and stepped up again in 2023 following the illness and resignation of former Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Murdoch. This second stint has played out against a bleak backdrop of financial deficit and redundancy news.

Could there have been a worse time to be in the VC seat? "Not really! I was aware that it wasn't going to be an easy ride, but it was a privilege to be asked to take on the role. It has been physically and mentally challenging, but I've had a good team around me, and people have been very kind."

It has been bone-breaking too. On a

dread-filled day in April 2023 on which she had to front up and deliver news of imminent staff cuts, Nicholson slipped on some moss while walking to work, fell backwards, and broke a rib. "I was in a lot of pain, but the message needed to be communicated. Moving was very difficult so I stood very still whilst I delivered the painful news to staff at the forum."

Asked if she's a bit of an accidental leader, she says, "Very much so. I'm naturally quite a shy person so I've had to learn to cope with that." Not for her a strident, voluble brand of leadership: "I guess I've just tried to be me and not adopt someone else's views of what leadership means. Identifying the gaps in your skillset and being able to pull alongside people who fill those gaps is an important part of being a leader. I see my role as enabling others."

After passing the Vice-Chancellor's baton to Hon. Grant Robertson in July, Nicholson planned to head to her decompression chamber – the family crib in Naseby – and ready herself for some serious retirement duties: singing (she belongs to the City Choir Dunedin), sewing small clothes (her first grandchild was born in late May) and pondering the surprising power of Manawatū ruminants to alter the course of a life.

CLAIRE FINLAYSON



Professor Helen Nicholson with 2024 Hyde Street Party attendees (from left) Harrison Black, Finn Saint and Isaac Lester.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ALAN DOVE
PROFESSOR HELEN NICHOLSON: "I guess I've just tried to be me and not adopt someone else's views of what leadership means ..."

Otago's new Deputy Vice-Chancellors

Alongside a new Vice-Chancellor, the University of Otago also welcomes three new Deputy Vice-Chancellors this year.

Professor Stuart Brock took up the established position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in late January, Professor Jacinta Ruru took up the newly-created role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori) in April, and Professor Jessica Palmer will take up the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement) in August.



Photo: Dave Bull

PROFESSOR STUART BROCK: "I've been really struck by how welcoming and warm everybody across the University has been ... I've been given lots of great ideas for positive changes to processes and systems that can be made fairly easily."



Photo: Sharron Bennett

PROFESSOR JACINTA RURU: "It's a real moment for the University of Otago ... it will really help us as a place of learning and research excellence to be the very best that we can be."



Photo: Alan Dove

PROFESSOR JESSICA PALMER: "The prime objective of Te Ringa Toro is to champion Otago. I will continue the important work of connecting the University externally to our wider communities ..."

A philosophical leader

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Stuart Brock tells the *Otago Magazine* his plans for the position and why he believes the ancient art of philosophy might be the answer to a very modern problem.

INVITING THE ENTIRE UNIVERSITY TO EMAIL HIM with their advice and complaints could easily have backfired on Otago's new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) (Academic) Professor Stuart Brock. Instead, the experience has been overwhelmingly positive, he says.

"Many people come into a job with a plan of all the things they want to get done in the first 90 days. My plan was about listening. I invited people to email me directly to give me their thoughts, their concerns, their complaints, their advice and just to outline anything they thought I needed to know before I made any plans for the future.

"If I'm responsible for overseeing learning and teaching at the University – and potentially asking people to do things differently – I want to be the first one doing it myself."

"I've been really struck by how welcoming and warm everybody across the University has been. Staff and students at Otago are very engaged and I've been given lots of great ideas for positive changes to processes and systems that can be made fairly easily."

Brock, who joined the University of Otago at the end of January, was previously

DVC (Academic) at Victoria University Te Herenga Waka, but that doesn't make his role at Otago business-as-usual, he says.

"There are obvious similarities but there are obvious differences as well. On the one hand I'm absolutely struck by the fact that Otago is performing so well on so many metrics that we care about, like achievement rates for all our students and, in particular, equity groups such as Māori and Pacific students.

"But I'm also finding that people are looking for an opportunity to unblock barriers and I'm keen to do that where I can."

Brock has a BA (Honours) in Philosophy from Monash University in Melbourne, an MA from the Australian National University in Canberra and a PhD from Princeton University.

His first job was at Western Washington University, in Bellingham, in the northwest of the United States. He went on to spend more than 20 years at Victoria University Te Herenga Waka, where he held a range of roles, including Philosophy Programme Director, Associate Dean of various different portfolios, Vice-Provost (Academic) and DVC (Academic).

As well as taking on the DVC (Academic) role at Otago, Brock will join Associate Professors Heather Dyke and Zach Weber in teaching PHIL417: Advanced Issues in Foundational Philosophy, an honours-level Philosophy paper.



Photo: Dave Bull

The University's new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Stuart Brock.

"Wherever I am, it's a personal requirement that I continue teaching in some way. If I'm responsible for overseeing learning and teaching at the University – and potentially asking people to do things differently – I want to be the first one doing it myself."

Brock has previously taught courses in critical thinking, epistemology, metaphysics and the philosophy of literature. He recently stepped down as CEO of the Australasian Association of Philosophy to take on the role of editor of their new journal, *Philosophical Exchange*.

"What I love about philosophy is the way it teaches you critical thinking," he says. "In this information-rich age, students probably have access to at least as much information as their professors or lecturers do. So, what they need much more urgently is a way to critically evaluate all of the information that's available to them."

In the midst of taking on a new job, teaching, and balancing other professional commitments, Brock is mindful of safeguarding time for life outside of work.

"First of all, I'm the kind of person who actually enjoys a little bit of stress because it's a real motivator for me and it's a real buzz for me to get things done.

"But getting that work-life balance is so important. I want to spend time with my family and to be really present when I'm there. The other thing I do to de-stress, when I get the opportunity, is tramping. The outdoors here is the best in the world so anytime I can get on a Great Walk, I jump at it."

LAURA HEWSON

Making a difference together



Professor Jacinta Ruru's whānau joined her at a special pōwhiri at Ōtākou Marae in April, held to welcome her to her new role as Otago's Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori).

Photo: Poia Rewi

Distinguished Professor Jacinta Ruru MNZM (Raukawa, Ngāti Ranginui) tells the *Otago Magazine* the creation of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori) position at the University of Otago is a dream come true.

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR JACINTA RURU HAS STARTED AS SHE MEANS TO GO ON when it comes to her new role as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) (Māori).

On the day she was welcomed into the role at a special pōwhiri at Ōtākou Marae in April, she also held a public seminar titled *Koinei Tātou: This is Who We Are*, which featured a strong line-up of Otago alumni, staff and students.

"I wanted this new office to open with a clear demonstration of my commitment to working collectively as we draw inspiration from some remarkable people connected to Otago. It was wonderful to co-chair the event with Ōtākou kaumātua Edward Ellison and together host an amazing line up of speakers including impressive alumni Judge Rachel Mullins, Emeritus Professor Poia Rewi and Professor Tangiwai Rewi.

"It's really important to me to set up the DVC (Māori) office in a way that makes sense to Māori staff and students. The University's core values of manakitaka/ respect, pono/integrity, mahirahira/curiosity, and whakawhanaukataka/community are driving my collaborative leadership style."

Ruru joined Otago's Faculty of Law in 1999 and went on to become New Zealand's first Māori Professor of Law and one of the first Māori women to be recognised as a Fellow of the Royal Society Te Aparangi.

She has also received numerous awards,

including the Prime Minister's Supreme Award for Tertiary Teaching (2016) and the University of Otago's Distinguished Research Medal (2022). In 2022 she was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Māori and the law.

The creation of the DVC (Māori) office is something Māori academic staff have been seeking for a long time, Ruru says.

"It's a real moment for the University of Otago. To have this investment into a Māori academic voice at this senior level is highly significant and it will really help us as a place of learning and research excellence to be the very best that we can be."

One component of this is ensuring all graduates are ready for the Aotearoa workforce of today and tomorrow, she says.

"That workforce is going to be engaging more and more with Māori clients. With iwi, with whānau, with hapū. So, whether they're working in dentistry, education, marketing – whatever area it is – all our graduates will be more equipped to succeed in their careers if they've had opportunities to learn more about the Māori world, about the Māori language, about tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori."

As she settles into the role, one of Ruru's first priorities will be to conduct a rapid review of the different University initiatives that are already in place to support Māori taura and kaimahi to succeed.

"There are some amazing things happening at Otago but there's also much more to do.

"We'll be able to have a look at what's working well, what's not, what we can scale up and what new initiatives we need. It's basically supercharging the things that we're already doing really well and ensuring there is strategic and structural infrastructure and support to flourish."

Having a seat at the senior leadership table – which also includes the Director of the Office of Māori Development – will ensure that Māori contributions are front and centre, she says.

"There are some amazing things happening at Otago but there's also much more to do ... We'll be able to have a look at what's working well, what's not, what we can scale up and what new initiatives we need."

"It can be there right from the beginning to help support and enable our whole University to have the confidence around our Māori academic agenda and around our Māori students and staff flourishing here. That's the key thing I see for this position."

LAURA HEWSON

A passion for Otago



Otago's new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement) Professor Jessica Palmer brings leadership skills and personal experience to the role.

Photo: Alan Dove

Otago's newly appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement) Professor Jessica Palmer is looking forward to contributing to the University's next chapter.

PROFESSOR JESSICA PALMER SAYS BECOMING THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO'S DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT) represents both a significant opportunity and a significant responsibility.

This position is one of Otago's strongest outward facing roles – and Palmer says she is looking forward to working alongside Vice-Chancellor Hon. Grant Robertson to strengthen Otago's relationships with alumni, local and international partners, government agencies and future students, and alongside the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori) on Otago's growing relationship with mana whenua.

The External Engagement Division – Te Ringa Toro is made up of Development and Alumni Relations, the Centre for Asia-Pacific Excellence, Communications, International, Marketing, Schools Liaison, Undergraduate Entrance Scholarships, and the Auckland Centre. It has a strategic focus on raising the profile of the University and student recruitment.

"The prime objective of Te Ringa Toro is to champion Otago," she says. "I will continue the important work of connecting the University externally to our wider communities so that they see and understand the value of what we do, but also to ensure that we are listening and engaging with our communities to be responsive to their needs.

"I will also have the privilege of getting to know our alumni and stakeholders across the

world who care about Otago just as much as I do."

And she will be a great champion. She is a loyal member of the University (though her own degrees are from the Universities of Auckland and Cambridge), having spent the past 19 years here.

She joined Otago in 2005 as a lecturer in Law, being promoted to Associate Professor in 2015, and Professor in 2018. In 2018 she was also appointed to the position of Dean of the Faculty of Law, the first woman to hold this role. In 2021 she became Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) of Humanities – Te Kete Aronui.

"I will also have the privilege of getting to know our alumni and stakeholders across the world who care about Otago just as much as I do."

As well as being a Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand, she is a Chartered Member of the New Zealand Institute of Directors and has been a recipient of the Otago and Southland Emerging Director Award. She has also won several research awards from the University of Otago and nationally as well as multiple teaching awards.

She is an outstanding legal scholar, gifted and popular teacher, and well-respected

leader. Her colleagues call her a "great citizen" and also cite her "joyous loud laugh".

While this isn't a role she ever imagined holding, she says that during her time as PVC Humanities she began to see just how instrumental the External Engagement Division is to the University.

She says the Division's tasks are incredibly important right now, playing a crucial role in one of the immediate priorities – building back Otago's domestic and international student numbers after domestic demographic decline and the fallout from COVID.

"In the first few months, I will be focusing on increasing collaboration internally across the University and identifying key connections and responsibilities to ensure our programmes are getting good exposure and that prospective students find our systems easy to navigate."

She gets it. Her eldest daughter (she has four children) is in her final year of high school, and is currently deciding what to study and where.

"The experience of being a parent of a school leaver is certainly giving me added perspective for the role."

Raising her children also gives her a strong perspective on the next generation of students.

"They are 17, 15, 13 and 11 and have all experienced schooling through the COVID years, and are members of the social media generation. These two elements make them and their peers quite different from the generations before them and I sometimes feel like I am living in a science experiment."

LISA DICK

History in the making



PROFESSOR TONY BALLANTYNE: "I'm excited to get back into the undergraduate classroom ... My own academic journey started as a History undergrad here, so I'm delighted to be heading back to where it began for me."

After three years as the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement), Professor Tony Ballantyne has stepped down from this senior leadership role and returned to his first love – History.

IT HAS BEEN A BUSY FEW YEARS FOR PROFESSOR TONY BALLANTYNE.

As Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) (External Engagement), Ballantyne was involved in some of Otago's most important projects of recent times. He was also responsible for building and maintaining key relationships outside of the University – part of the role he particularly enjoyed.

"One of the biggest highlights was the everyday interaction with our institutional partners, our alumni and the friends of the University – having the opportunity to talk to them about developments here and hearing their reflections on their time as students or former staff and their aspirations for the University in the future.

"That's a pretty amazing part of the job and it is really at the heart of the role."

Ballantyne stepped into the DVC role in 2021, a time that was far from business-as-usual, he says.

"The University has been going through deep-seated and multi-faceted change for the past three to four years. Some of that change is very difficult but some dimensions of it are very exciting."

One particular challenge was restoring international connections after COVID-related border closures.

"I led the International Reset and Recovery Project, which is about rebuilding our international network and recruitment pathways for international students. This has been about developing new approaches, new partnerships, new ways of doing things and I hope they're going to bear some very significant fruit in the years to come.

"Our international students greatly enrich our classrooms and our campuses and they're going to be vitally important in the future."

Ballantyne also led the University's Web Transformation Project, helped establish the Six60 scholarship programme and championed the Tuakiritaka rebranding project, which was officially launched in May.

"I understand that people care really deeply about the University and that there

are some very strongly held views about this project, but for me Tuakiritaka is special because in part it's about the history of the University and our location in the world, but it's also about our aspirations for students and staff for the future."

In terms of his own future, Ballantyne decided to step down from the role due to health concerns.

"I have a condition that has become challenging and, in particular, it is going to significantly compromise my eyesight in the medium term. Against the backdrop of that, I've decided to return to History to complete some outstanding projects.

"I have been working on a book on Captain Cook – how New Zealanders have made sense of him and how we have argued about him for the last 200 years."

Another major project is an intellectual biography of Herries Beattie, a popular historian and journalist, and a collector of Ngāi Tahu tradition.

"But most of all, I'm excited to get back into the undergraduate classroom. I love teaching and exploring the past with students. My own academic journey started as a History undergrad here, so I'm delighted to be heading back to where it began for me."

LAURA HEWSON



Photo: Graham Warman

Spying space

Scientists and engineers from nine African countries have had the universe of radio astronomy opened to them, thanks to a University of Otago initiative to develop a small, affordable radio telescope.

DR TIM MOLTENO:
"We have accidentally made the world's cheapest radio telescope ..."

DR TIM MOLTENO SAYS THE TRANSIENT ARRAY RADIO TELESCOPE – now affectionately known as TART after a tongue-in-cheek acronym ended up sticking – was conceived in the wake of New Zealand's involvement in the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project, a huge intergovernmental radio telescope initiative.

Although invited to be part of a joint Australia-New Zealand bid, the Physics Senior Lecturer felt he would rather work on building something from inexpensive parts and, over the next eight years, he and a handful of students set about doing just that.

"We have accidentally made the world's cheapest radio telescope, without ever trying to make it good. We were trying to make it so you could understand how they work, so that you could make better ones," Molteno explains.

"The problem with the SKA, now they have built this huge telescope, is that it costs \$1 million a day to run, and you can't experiment or try something different because the machine is too precious. It also has a 10-year queue of people waiting to use it."

Molteno and his colleagues came up with what, on the surface, seems to be a pretty simple solution. The TART contains an array of antennas that pick up signals. The array is made up of five spiral arms with an overall diameter of about three metres. It can be set up on concrete blocks on the ground, or on a roof.

That signal data is then fed through to a box of electronics they have designed and developed. Its open-source design means others can build their own TARTs.

The box then connects to the Internet and users can look at the images on a browser. It can be run constantly, and the data collected and archived.

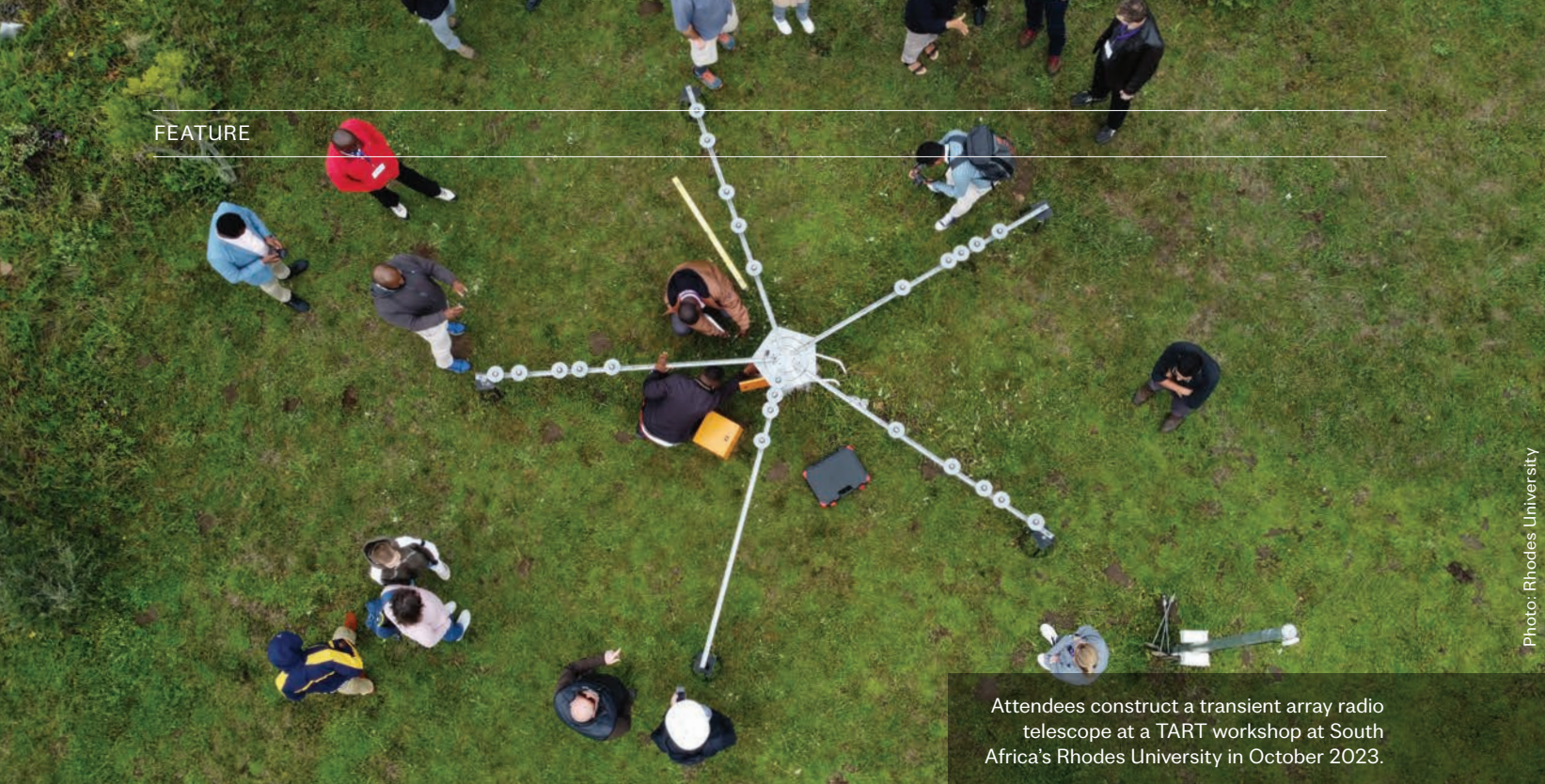


Photo: Rhodes University

Attendees construct a transient array radio telescope at a TART workshop at South Africa's Rhodes University in October 2023.

What is radio astronomy?

Dr Tim Molteno explains:

Radio astronomy is a field of astronomy that studies objects in space by detecting and analysing radio waves that they emit.

Our usual telescopes focus on visible light, which is only one part of the electromagnetic spectrum. Radio waves are another part of this spectrum, and they can reveal a lot about the universe that visible light can't.

Unlike optical telescopes that capture images, radio telescopes collect radio waves from arrays of antennas that astronomers then translate into images.

This allows us to see objects that are invisible in visible light, like certain clouds of gas and dust, or even the faint afterglow of the Big Bang.

"The TART looks at the whole sky. It offers a 180-degree view, a bit like a fisheye lens, which makes things a bit distorted," Molteno explains. "You have all the same problems as a fisheye lens."

Fortunately, a computer programme can take that and work out the actual coordinates of what is being observed. If there are several TARTs working together from different locations the data gathered can be merged.

Molteno praises what he says is a wide range of contributors, mostly from New Zealand, who helped in the TART's development.

"There are some really talented people who chipped in their time and helped with parts of the project, from writing code to design," he says.

Molteno's day-to-day existence currently involves designing the electronics and then, with the help of a departmental technician, putting them together.

"We try to use open-source components in our design, because it allows us to adapt them to suit our needs."

One of the modules they used initially had been designed purely for electronics teaching.

"They stopped making it but, as it was open-source, we were able to use their design files to keep making the module – even improving it to suit our needs. It means

you have a kind of robustness to supply disruptions because all components have their schematics public.

"With open-source it's viral. If you take that design, you are free to use it, but any changes also have to be released as open-source."

In terms of making the cards with the electronics on them, there are many components to source and organise.

Molteno says the antenna array is the hardest part, because when you arrange them you need to know exactly where they are, and how they are positioned, within a few millimetres.

"It's quite a tricky challenge."

In the true spirit of open-source design, Molteno is quite happy to see it taken and improved further, perhaps by a university with an engineering school.

"By improving the design in this way, everyone can use the better one," he says. "The technology that's behind this is the same technology that is used in ultrasound machines and medical imaging devices. That means if we make advances in radio imaging technology then these could well lead to improvements in medical imaging as well."

As is sometimes the case in research, a little bit of serendipity came into the equation. In 2019, a research group in

"The problem with the SKA, now that they have built this huge telescope, is that it costs \$1 million a day to run, and you can't experiment or try something different because the machine is too precious. It also has a 10-year queue of people waiting to use it."

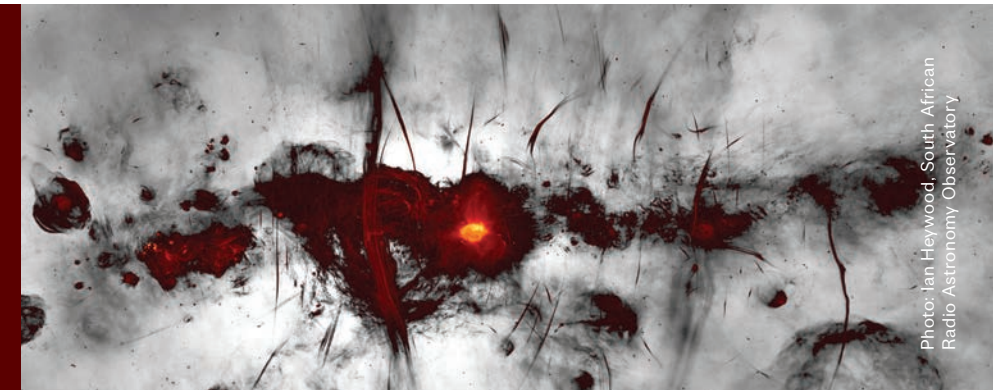


Photo: Ian Heywood, South African Radio Astronomy Observatory

A radio image of the region around the centre of our galaxy captured using the MeerKAT telescope of the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory. The glowing region in the middle is the very centre of our galaxy which contains a black hole four million times as massive as our sun. The TART image is not this good – but it does give an idea of what's out in space.

taking some of the people from the earlier country with you so that you build links between the groups."

The first workshop was held in October 2023, and included two people from each of the eight partner countries in Africa. Each of those people then became the core back in their own country, gathering resources and finding a location for the TART.

"... if we make advances in radio imaging technology then these could well lead to improvements in medical imaging as well."

A new series of workshops is now underway, including Mauritius, Malta, Bangladesh and Fiji. They have also been asked to hold one in Morocco.

There have been requests from governments to buy TARTs, but Molteno says that was never the idea.

"You can't. It's open-source and we were making them out of love. The moment you're trying to sell them, people aren't going to volunteer anymore," he says.

"My main focus now is creating the next version, with volunteers from all over the

world who want to help out."

They have an arrangement with South Africa that they will cover the cost of parts, while people continue to put it all together voluntarily. They are also funding workshops and travel to workshops for volunteers who can teach how to put the TARTs together.

"The volunteers spend hundreds of hours of their own time. It's amazing. And they're so skilled."

When the volunteers who have worked on earlier telescopes contribute to future workshops, they often make excellent teachers, says Molteno, and there are now about 10 people from around the world fulfilling that role.

"It's a lovely community because no one is making money out of it, and they are genuinely appreciative of any help they get."

Down the line there is the possibility of putting TARTs into high schools. One of the great things about radio telescopes is that they work both through clouds and during the day, so can be operated during a normal school day.

Another challenge will be to set up a non-profit organisation to look after what is a growing phenomenon and allow them to access other sources of funding.

MARK WRIGHT

150 years of Medicine

The Otago Medical School will next year celebrate 150 years. Established in 1875, as the first medical school in Aotearoa New Zealand, it has produced generations of doctors and led the way through innovation and research. The *Otago Magazine* examines its history and meets some of its many incredible graduates ahead of the anniversary celebrations planned for King's Birthday weekend 2025.

ONE PROFESSOR AND FOUR ANATOMY STUDENTS. So began New Zealand's first medical school. Next year it will celebrate its 150th anniversary.

Until the 1870s, every registered doctor in New Zealand was trained overseas, mostly in Britain. That gradually changed following the establishment of the University of Otago in 1869 (the country's first university) and the opening of the first medical school in 1875 (just the third medical school in Australasia, after Sydney and Melbourne). [A]

A sole professor of anatomy and physiology, Dr Millen Coughtrey, recruited from Britain, was the only full-time staff member, and he only lasted a couple of years before going into private practice in Dunedin.

Although four students had enrolled in anatomy in 1875, it was not until the following year that Coughtrey could make a more serious attempt at teaching prospective doctors. This was after a medical preliminary

examination was in place and a law passed permitting the legal dissection of human bodies.

Just two students – Saul Solomon and Charles Low – passed the preliminary exam, but Solomon soon switched to law, reducing the Medical School to one professor, one student, one classroom and one cadaver.

The medical classes commenced in the University's original building in Dunedin's Princes Street (on the site of John Wickliffe House) but shifted in 1878 to what is now the Geology Building. [B]

Medical School buildings then gravitated towards the Great King Street block opposite the Dunedin Public Hospital, starting in 1917 with the Scott Building, followed by the Lindo Ferguson Building (1927), Hercus Building (1948), Sayers Building (1972) and Adams Building (1973): named after the first five deans.

A timeline of Medicine at Otago



A | 1875

The Otago Medical School opens.

The Otago Medical School began six years after the University of Otago was established with powers to grant degrees in arts, music, law, and medicine. Its first, and only, professor is Millen Coughtrey.



B | 1878

The Medical School moves into its first purpose-built accommodation.

The anatomy and chemistry block incorporated a lecture room, dissection room, preparation room, morgue, laboratory, anatomy room and professor's office.



C | 1887

Ledingham Christie becomes the first graduate.

Ledingham Christie went to England in 1892 to obtain advanced qualifications in surgery with the intention of returning to New Zealand but never did.



D | 1888

The Otago University Medical Students' Association is formed.

Among the OUMSA's later activities was the publication of the annual *Medical Digest*, from 1934, followed by *Borborygmi*, *Enema* and the more sedately-titled *New Zealand Medical Student Journal*.



E | 1896

Emily Siedeberg becomes the first female graduate.

Emily Siedeberg completed postgraduate training in Europe before setting up a private practice in Dunedin and running a maternity hospital in the city.

F | 1904

Te Rangihīroa becomes the first Māori graduate.

Te Rangihīroa, was the first New Zealand-trained Māori doctor; he went on to become a Member of Parliament and renowned anthropologist. The University has named a residential college after him.



G | 1926

The Medical School introduces a Bachelor of Medical Science degree.

The BMedSc degree produced a steady stream of graduates who entered clinical, teaching and research careers.



H | 1938

Branch faculties are established in Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland.

Each branch faculty had a sub-dean and worked closely with local hospital boards.



I | 1973

The Christchurch Clinical School is established.

The Christchurch Clinical School began taking fourth-year students in 1973, followed by the Wellington Clinical School in 1977.



J | 1975

The Medical School celebrates its centenary.

During its first 100 years, the Medical School graduated 4,623 students, most of whom had gone on to practise medicine in New Zealand.



2025

The Medical School will celebrate its sesquicentenary.

Former staff and students from around the world are expected to travel to Dunedin to attend the 150th anniversary celebrations next year.



For the first decade, medical students undertook a two-year course in Dunedin, and completed their Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB) degrees overseas, usually at the University of Edinburgh. It effectively restricted medical school entry to those who could afford to travel and study abroad.

From 1885, medical students were able to complete the required four years of study at Otago (extended to five years in 1894), and the first fully-Otago trained doctor, Dr Ledingham Christie, graduated in 1887. Even after a complete course became available at Otago, some students continued to transfer to Edinburgh to finish their undergraduate years. [C]

The comparatively low number of medical students at Otago did not deter the undergraduates from forming their own students' association in 1888, two years before the establishment of the Otago University Students' Association. [D]

In 1891, Dr John Scott was appointed as the inaugural dean, after the Medical School formed an official faculty of all hospital and medical staff who lectured to medical students. Scott was another young British import who succeeded Coughtrey in 1877 and continued as the professor of anatomy and physiology until 1914.

For the first 16 years, the Otago Medical School was an exclusively blokey place, initially in part at least because Edinburgh refused to accept female medical students. Dr Emily Siedeberg (McKinnon) was the first woman admitted to the Otago Medical School, in 1891, two years before women were allowed to vote. Siedeberg was joined the following year by Dr Margaret Cruickshank, who became the first New Zealand woman to register as a medical practitioner. [E]

Other notable firsts include the first Māori medical students, Te Rangihīroa (Sir Peter Buck) (Ngāti Mutunga) and Dr Tūtere Wi Repa (Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāti Porou), who entered the Medical School in 1899 as the first in a succession of pupils from Te Aute College in Hawkes Bay. Te Rangihīroa was not just the Medical School's but also

the University's first Māori graduate. Wi Repa graduated four years after him. [F]

From the 1920s, the Medical School slowly became more cosmopolitan. The first non-European woman and the first person of Chinese descent to study medicine at Otago, Dr Kathleen Pih (Chang), enrolled in 1921 and graduated in 1929.

The Medical School also began to assume responsibility for training doctors from other countries, particularly from the South Pacific. Dr Tom Dovi (Ratu Dovi Madraiwiwi) from Fiji entered the Medical School in 1929 as the University's first Pacific Islands student.

Eminent Pacific leaders who have since studied medicine at Otago include Sir Tom Davis, who was the first Cook Islands-born medical graduate and served as the country's chief medical officer and prime minister. Another Pacific medical student, Sir Ratu Kamisese Mara, led Fiji to independence and served as its first prime minister.

The arrival of full fee-paying students from the 1980s from Malaysia and then from other countries in Asia and in the Middle East further broadened the student ethnic demographic.

While teaching was at the heart of the Medical School, the distinguished research tradition dates back to Coughtrey's successor, Scott. From his arrival in 1877, his research papers began to be published in the prestigious *British Journal of Anatomy and Physiology*.

In 1926, the Medical School introduced a Bachelor of Medical Science (BMedSc) degree that involved students taking a year out to complete a supervised research project in one of the medical sciences. This was extended in 1945 into a Master of Medical Science (MMedSc) degree as a part of a focus on medical research following the Second World War. [G]

Arguably the Medical School's highest-profile staff member has been Sir Jack Eccles, after whom the research support facility – the Eccles Building – is named. Born and educated in Australia, Eccles was the professor of physiology at Otago from 1944 to 1951. Along with physicist, Jack Coombs,

and physiology lecturer, Dr Laurie Brock, Eccles made a breakthrough discovery in brain research that would ultimately lead to his sharing the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine back in Australia in 1963.

More recently, the Medical School's public profile has been greatly enhanced by media-go-to experts such as Professors Philippa Howden-Chapman (housing), Janet Hoek (smoking), Chris Jackson (cancer) and Michael Baker (epidemiology).

Beyond the University, outstanding graduates who have made significant contributions to medicine and health include nutritionist, Dr Muriel Bell (1922); plastic surgeon, Sir Archibald McIndoe (1924); heart surgeon, Sir Brian Barratt-Boyes (1946); and ophthalmologist, Professor Fred Hollows (1956).

“The Otago Medical School has been a place of standing for all of us. It has enabled unique opportunities for learning and personal growth, and become the point from which we have launched our research and clinical careers.”

The Otago Medical School was very much of Dunedin for nearly 40 years, during the early period of which it was the largest and wealthiest city in New Zealand. The School tentatively made its first move beyond its traditional Dunedin base in 1924.

Forty medical students in Dunedin failed their final examination the previous year and needed to gain more clinical experience before they resat the exam. As there was no room for them in Dunedin Hospital, Christchurch Hospital offered to host them, and so they headed north.

This heralded a more permanent presence

in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, prompted by the Medical School phasing in a new programme involving a sixth year of entirely clinical work, and the further strain this placed on Dunedin Hospital. The Medical School started sending some of the final-year class to Christchurch in 1926, and to Wellington and Auckland in 1927.

These arrangements were formalised in 1938 with the establishment of branch medical faculties in the three northern centres. [H]

The Auckland Branch Faculty closed in 1972, following the opening of the country's second medical school at Auckland University in 1968 and the end of Otago Medical School's 92-year monopoly on medical training.

Christchurch and Wellington meanwhile became full clinical schools in the 1970s. All medical students continued to spend their first three years studying in Dunedin; some were then allocated to Christchurch and Wellington for their final three years of training. [I]

The two northern clinical schools then evolved into schools of medicine in the 1980s and the University of Otago, Christchurch; and University of Otago, Wellington in 2007. Their roles have greatly expanded from the training of doctors to also embrace a broad range of mainly postgraduate health science qualifications and research, reflecting a similar evolution in Dunedin.

Such was the gap between graduates and demand for doctors that anyone who qualified gained entry to the Medical School for its first 65 years. In 1941, the intake was limited for the first time: set at 100 students entering the second-year class, mainly because of wartime staff and accommodation shortages. This was soon increased to 120 and has gradually grown to the current cap of 302 set by the Government.

Policies for selection and admission changed during the second half of the Medical School's history. What was called a preferential system, first introduced in 1951, offered priority entry to two Māori and two Pacific Island students.

The latest incarnation, aimed at ensuring a health workforce that represents the society it seeks to serve, has seen significant increases in the numbers of medical students with Māori and Pacific, low socio-economic, refugee and rural backgrounds.

This is reinforced by the Medical School's education programmes, which “emphasise equitable health outcomes and a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi” and support “the health of Pacific communities through leading research programmes and the training of Pacific health professionals”.

The Medical School's acting Dean, Professor Tim Wilkinson, says he is really proud of the work in developing curricula in Māori and Pacific health, and other major developments over the past few decades.

“We've strengthened exposure to medicine in the community. The rural immersion programme has been shown to increase interest in people practising rurally, plus our students get some rural experience. Students get more exposure to clinical contexts and to learning clinical skills at an earlier stage in the curriculum.

Another major change has been the dramatic shift in the gender balance in the Medical School, including the flagship MB ChB degree, which has gone from exclusively male to more than half the students being female: just over 57 percent this year, while six students identified as gender diverse.

This has been accompanied by a substantial shift in attitudes towards female students. Siedeberg was initially asked to absent herself from two anatomy classes on the grounds of decorum.

Looking ahead to the 150th anniversary, the Otago Medical School has much to commemorate, including having graduated a total of 14,357 MB ChB students since 1887, with a further 1,510 current students working hard to join them.

As Dorothy Page wrote in her history of the Medical School: “The Otago Medical School is proud of its graduates, as they are of the school. Many have pursued remarkable careers, achieving at the highest level in widely different fields, in New Zealand and

overseas, as medical academics, specialist researchers, surgeons and physicians, humanitarian activists, war heroes, political leaders or general practitioners playing a vital role in their various communities.”

The 150th anniversary is being celebrated in Dunedin over an extended King's Birthday weekend next year (29 May to 2 June). [J]

The organisers say the chosen theme of *ko tōku kainga waewae* (my place of standing) “is inspired by the concept of homecoming and of reconnecting with a place of great personal meaning and significance”.

“The Otago Medical School has been a

place of standing for all of us. It has enabled unique opportunities for learning and personal growth, and become the point from which we have launched our research and clinical careers.”

Packed into the long weekend will be informal and formal welcomes, class and decade get-togethers, presentation sessions, a celebration dinner, church service, great debate, and a “humerus 150 medical review”.

Coughtrey and his four anatomy students could scarcely have imagined that they were the genesis of a Medical School that, nearly 150 years on, would comprise

approximately 3,700 students, across three cities, studying medicine and health sciences at such a comparative level of complexity and cleverness.

Mind you, what would we make of the Otago Medical School 150 years from now, let alone the role of the doctor, the demography of the patients, and the nature of health care delivery in the year 2175?

IAN DOUGHERTY

Medical markers

LEDINGHAM CHRISTIE AND LINCOLN NICHOLLS are separated by 119 years and 9,998 other graduates.

Dunedin-born Dr Ledingham Christie was the Otago Medical School's first graduate. He taught at primary schools in Otago before studying medicine at Otago University, where he was capped with an MB ChB in 1887, followed in 1890 by the first MD to be awarded to a New Zealand medical graduate.

Christie briefly set up in general practice in Outram and Milton, then spent the rest of his career overseas.

He worked as a locum, house surgeon and clinician in England, notably campaigning for nearly two decades to improve life for children of impoverished families in Bristol.

He then served as a medical officer in Borneo, a British Army surgeon during the First World War, locum in Singapore, and head of a private hospital in Malaya.

His widow, Ethel Christie, funded the Medical School's William Ledingham Christie Prize in applied anatomy and

presented a portrait of him to the Medical School Library.

Dr Lincoln Nicholls became the Medical School's 10,000th graduate when he was capped in December 2006.

Nicholls (Ngāti Raukawa) shares Christie's teaching and army background. He taught physical education, human biology and te reo Māori in Palmerston North before entering Medical School.

Interviewed on graduating with an MB ChB, Nicholls spoke of his sense of responsibility to uphold the legacy of earlier Māori doctors trained at Otago, and to work in and with Māori communities.

A captain in the Army, he served as a medical officer at the Linton Defence Health Centre in Palmerston North for many years, during which he was deployed to Afghanistan. He then switched to orthopaedics and is currently employed at Wellington Hospital but has plans to work with his wife's iwi in Whangārei.

A keen multisport athlete, he also aspires to complete his 10th (and final) New Zealand Ironman next year.



OTAGO MEDICAL SCHOOL'S FIRST GRADUATE, LEDINGHAM CHRISTIE.

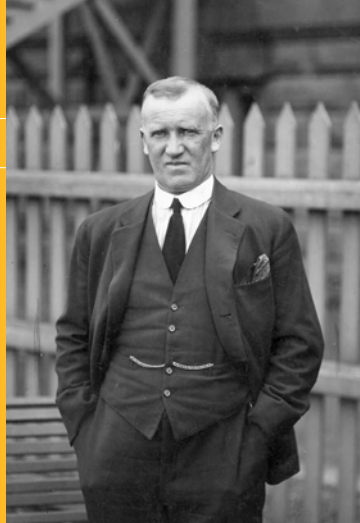
Photo: University of Otago Medical Library Historical Collection, MS-1643/011/002, Hocken Collections - Uare Taoka o Hākena.



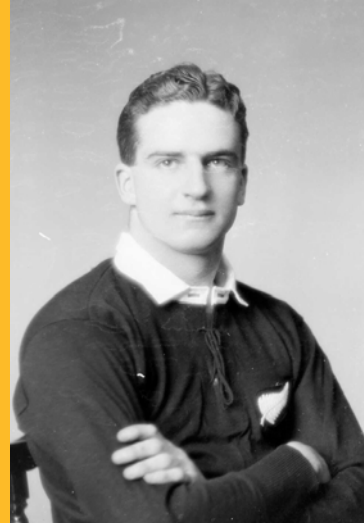
OTAGO MEDICAL SCHOOL'S 10,000TH GRADUATE, LINCOLN NICHOLLS.

Photo: University of Otago Division of External Engagement records, MS-5279/343, Hocken Collections - Uare Taoka o Hākena.

Family medicine



MICHAEL HERBERT WATT



JIM WATT

MICHAEL WATT AND HIS SONS AND GRANDSONS are among the Otago Medical School's inter-generational graduates.

Dunedin-born Dr Michael Watt graduated with an MB ChB in 1910, followed by an MD in 1912. He gained clinical experience in Britain as a recipient of the Medical School's second travelling scholarship, set up in private practice in Ngāruawāhia, and returned to Otago to teach physiology and anatomy.

Recruited to the Department of Public Health, he served as the first district health officer to be born and trained in New Zealand. He was the first director of the Division of Public Health, and then became deputy director-general and then director-

general of health in 1930, setting up the New Zealand Medical Research Council in 1937.

Michael Watt's two sons both studied medicine at Otago. Dr Jim Watt graduated with an MB ChB in 1937. He served in the New Zealand Army Medical Corp during the Second World War, studied child health in England, specialising in paediatrics in Wellington, and became Otago's and New Zealand's first professor of paediatrics in 1967.

Michael Watt's second son, Dr Malcolm Watt, graduated from Otago with an MB ChB in 1940. He served as a medical officer with the Royal New Zealand Air Force in the Pacific during the Second World War, undertook postgraduate study in England,

and worked as a physician and medical officer in the Hutt Valley.

Father Michael and sons Jim and Malcolm all played rugby for New Zealand Universities, and Jim, who was also a talented track athlete, played two tests for the All Blacks in 1936.

Jim Watt's three sons – Michael (1968), Peter (1969) and Richard (1975) – are also Otago Medical School graduates.

Pic 1: Michael Herbert Watt. New Zealand Free Lance : Photographic prints and negatives. Ref: PAColl-6388-33. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. / records/23087675

Pic 2: J. M. Watt. Crown Studios Ltd :Negatives and prints. Ref: 1/2-205549-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22842807

raise three children with her husband, fellow Medical School classmate, Dr Chris Rumball.

Dr David Kirk completed an MB ChB in 1984, while pursuing a rugby career that had seen him play for the University Club, Otago and the All Blacks the previous year.

The half-back played 34 matches for the All Blacks, including captaining the national team that won the inaugural Rugby World Cup in 1987.

Kirk then took up a Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University and became one of the Medical School graduates who opted to pursue a profession outside of medicine, in his case in the corporate world in New Zealand and Australia.



All Black captain David Kirk with the Webb Ellis Cup at Eden Park, Auckland.

Dominion Post (Newspaper): Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post and Dominion newspapers. Ref: EP/1987/2998/22-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



Medical alumna and netball star Lesley Nicol plays her 100th test – the 2003 World Championship semi-final match against Jamaica (the team won, and also the final against Australia making them the 2003 World Champions).

Words and pictures

EILEEN MERRIMAN AND JOHN GILLIES are among the Medical School graduates who have mixed medicine with the creative arts.

Dr Eileen Merriman (Thompson) is the clinical director of haematology at Auckland's North Shore Hospital, a university lecturer, mother of two school-age children, and an acclaimed fiction writer.

Merriman graduated with degrees in medical laboratory science in 1996 and medicine in 2001; she later completed a PhD at Monash University. She has worked in Nelson, Christchurch, Melbourne and Auckland.

While working full-time at North Shore Hospital since 2011, she has become a prolific writer of young adult and adult novels, short stories and flash fiction, for which she has been short-listed or placed in various literary awards.

"I was stressed. As a consultant, the buck stops with you, so there was pressure, and I was going home and mulling over my patients," Merriman explains. "Then I started to write. It was like a form of meditation. When I wrote, I stopped mulling and stressing."

Her latest whodunit novel, *The Night She Fell*, is about the death of a student who fell from her three-storey Dunedin flat.

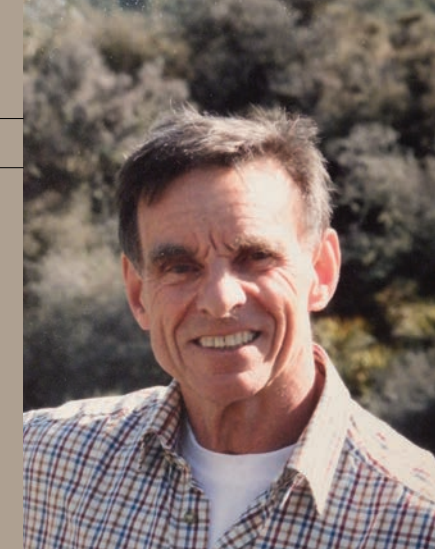
Dr John Gillies is a retired physician and full-time artist.

Gillies graduated in 1971, underwent specialist training in respiratory medicine, and was the clinical director of respiratory medicine with the former Canterbury District Health Board for nearly 30 years before retiring in 2008.

Gillies developed an interest in painting while still at school, and continued to paint throughout his training at Otago, busy medical career, and helping to raise four children. Fittingly, he has painted eight of the life-size portraits of Otago Medical School deans that adorn the walls of the Colquhoun and Barnett lectures theatres.

In 1979, Gillies formed the New Zealand Association of Artist Doctors, aimed at fostering visual and performing arts activities among doctors. "It's one healthy way to provide balance in one's life and a sense of fellowship," Gillies says. He is the current vice-president and helps organise the Association's annual concert and exhibition in Christchurch.

His latest book, *Portrait of a War Artist*, illuminates his medical student experiences in the Otago University Medical Company during the Vietnam War.



JOHN GILLIES



EILEEN MERRIMAN

Sports medicine

SOME MEDICAL SCHOOL ALUMNI HAVE COMBINED MEDICINE AND INTERNATIONAL SPORT, including athletes Sir Arthur Porritt and Dr Jack Lovelock; rugby player, Dr Ron Elvidge; and swimmer, Emeritus Professor Dave Gerrard.

World champions Lesley Nicol (Rumball) and David Kirk are among the modern sporting greats who fitted sporting commitments into the demands of the medical course.

Dr Nicol completed degrees in

physiotherapy in 1998 and medicine in 2002, while juggling a domestic and international netball career.

She captained the champion Southern Sting netball team, won a world age-group championships title, and captained the Silver Ferns national team, with which she became the most capped player at the time – on 110 games – and won a World Netball Championships title in 2003.

Nicol went on to specialise as a sports and exercise physician in Christchurch, and to

150th anniversary celebrations

King's Birthday Weekend | 29 May–1 June 2025

Medical alumni are invited home to celebrate 150 years of medical teaching, clinical training, research and innovation across the three Otago University campuses – Ōtepoti/Dunedin, Ōtautahi/Christchurch and Pōneke/Wellington.

Enjoy a range of events including academic sessions and tours of the current facilities, including:

Formal welcome
Presentation sessions with CME
"Humerus" 150 Medical Review
Celebratory dinner
Time for class catch-ups

See events.otago.ac.nz/2025-oms-150th for more.



AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S SCIENCE PRIZE AWARD CEREMONY (from left): Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Christopher Luxon, Associate Professor Karyn Paringatai, Maybelle McLeod, Professor Parry Guilford, Erin Gardiner, Dr Jeremy Rossaak and Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology Hon. Judith Collins.

Prized science

Life-saving University of Otago stomach cancer research has won the prestigious Prime Minister's Science Prize.

THE ANNUAL PRIZE – FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE SCIENTIFIC ADVANCE

– was presented in May 2024 to five members of the University's Hereditary Diffuse Gastric Cancer Research Group on behalf of the wider team.

The prize has been three decades in the making. It began in 1994, when one of the prize recipients, Maybelle McLeod, a nurse, was alarmed at the large number of her extended Bay of Plenty Māori whānau who

had died from stomach cancer: the youngest a 14-year-old boy.

"I knew that something wasn't right," McLeod recalls.

She dismissed a belief the deaths were caused by a māku or curse, and instead sought a genetic explanation, which led her to Otago's expertise in genetic research.

Meanwhile, prize recipient and Research Group leader, Professor Parry Guilford, had just returned to Otago, where he had completed his MSc prior to a PhD in virology from Cambridge University and research at the Pasteur Institute in Paris on the genetic causes of human deafness.

Guilford's mentor, Emeritus Professor Tony Reeve, put McLeod and Guilford together.

"We built a relationship which was based on trust," Guilford says.

McLeod and other whānau arranged for blood and tissue samples from more than 100 family members; Guilford and colleagues discovered the gene causing the inherited form of stomach cancer and devised a simple test to determine the family members who carried the wayward gene – information they shared with the medical world.

"By using linkage analysis followed by DNA sequencing, we were able to show that a mutation in the gene called CDHI was the cause of cancer in this family," Guilford says.

The mutant gene was subsequently identified in other New Zealand families – most with Māori ancestry – and in many more families around the world.

Guilford says there is a 50 per cent chance of one parent passing on the gene to a child; 67 per cent if both parents carry the gene. Without intervention, there is a 70 per

cent lifetime risk of the carriers developing fatal stomach cancer.

Guilford says some people choose surveillance, through annual endoscopies, although most sooner or later opt for a total gastrectomy or stomach removal operation to eliminate the risk. A McLeod whānau member, singer Stan Walker, chose the latter, and courageously spoke publicly about the procedure to widen understanding of the condition.

Many of the gastrectomies have been performed by another of the prize recipients, Dr Jeremy Rossaak, a consultant surgeon at Tauranga Hospital, who is involved in surgical and health delivery research within the Research Group.

"The gastrectomy is a big operation, and it's a difficult operation for patients," Rossaak says. "However, it is the only chance of cure or prevention of stomach cancer." Without this food storage bag, smaller but more frequent meals are the order of the day.

Another of the prize recipients, Otago University Associate Professor Karyn Paringatai, has a professional and personal involvement. The Māori academic had her

"So, it is a story which has gone from one small whānau just outside Tauranga to a global story affecting thousands and thousands of people. And I have been privileged to have been part of this for most of my working life."

stomach removed after discovering she had inherited the gene. She is now involved in kaupapa Māori research within the Research Group.

"At that time, there was barely any information out there about how to best support Māori whānau going through this process," Paringatai says, "and so I have incorporated Māori knowledge, te reo, tikanga, to provide better services in care."

McLeod has an ongoing involvement as a whānau/community researcher within the Research Group, working out of the Kimihauora Health and Research Clinic in Tauranga, which was set up early on to help the family.

She has been joined by prize recipient and McLeod whānau member, Erin Gardiner, who is the Kimihauora clinical coordinator.

"We do what we do like we would do it on the marae," Gardiner says. "We cater for the whole whānau, and the clinical team have been really great about embracing how we like to work."

The genetic testing, surveillance and stomach operations have led to a dramatic decrease in deaths. Guilford says that instead of a 70 per cent mortality rate, most people who have the operation go on to lead near-normal lives.

He estimates that around 450 people alive in New Zealand today have had, or will have, their lives saved thanks to the Otago research; for Europe and the United States, the estimate is around 28,500 people.

One email the Research Group received last year from the United States is typical of the international response: "It is a remarkable thing to feel saved by strangers on the other side of the planet."

"So, it is a story which has gone from one small whānau just outside Tauranga to a global story affecting thousands and thousands of people," Guilford says. "And I have been privileged to have been part of this for most of my working life."

The prize is the latest accolade for Guilford related to the stomach cancer research. The internationally-renowned cancer geneticist has previously been awarded the Beavan Medal, the Hercus Medal, and the University's Distinguished Research Medal. He was also elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2016.

Te Pūiaki Putaiao Matua a Te Primia Prime Minister's Prize for Science, which is administered by the Royal Society, comes with a handsome trophy and half a million dollars: \$100,000 is being used by the five recipients for their own projects; and \$400,000 will go towards the ongoing stomach cancer research, including an online hub, better care, improved surveillance methods and drugs that prevent the cancer developing in the first place.

"On a pragmatic level, the prize means money to keep our research going," Guilford says, "but it is also a validation of the whānau and community focus of the research."

He adds that applied health research represents not a cost but a vast saving for the country in the long run, and this stomach cancer research is a good example of why we should not confine our research to problems that are peculiar to New Zealand.

IAN DOUGHERTY

Game on

The University of Otago has this year appointed a game studies and game writing teacher – after successfully piloting New Zealand’s first creative writing paper dedicated to video games. The *Otago Magazine* meets the stereotype busting Lisa Blakie.

LISA BLAKIE: “When I was playing video games as a kid, I had no idea that it was someone’s job to make them.”

LISA BLAKIE (KĀI TAHU, WAITAHA, PĀKEHĀ) IS THRILLED SHE FAILED FIRST-YEAR LAW. Had it not been for that fortuitous academic hiccup, she may never have landed on a gleaming alternative path – one that allowed her to indulge a childhood passion for video games.

If you’d told the teenaged Blakie that, one day, she’d be Professional Practice Fellow in game studies within an English and Linguistics Programme, she would have thought it a highly fanciful prospect.

“When I was playing video games as a kid, I had no idea that it was someone’s job to make them. I loved writing stories so English was always my favourite subject.

But, growing up in Timaru, I didn’t think that being a writer was an attainable career.”

Blakie’s first taste of gaming involved watching her brother play *Sonic the Hedgehog*. The frenetic running pace of that blue spiny mammal didn’t ensnare her though. Blakie’s gaming gateway drug: *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*.

“I used to have dreams about it. *Zelda* was this epic fantasy tale that spanned all these different worlds. I was a big reader and loved watching movies, but games just hooked me in. It was immersion that I had not really felt before.”

When she was a student at the University of Otago, that hunger for story-

led immersion led Blakie to run from Law into the arms of Communication Studies. It was there that she stretched towards a relatively new field of enquiry – game studies – and did an Honours thesis on indigenous storytelling in video games.

“There wasn’t any game theory taught in my degree so I thought I’d just read as much as I could. I was so fascinated about it.”

In 2015, before the ink was even dry on her dissertation, Blakie googled herself into a shiny career.

“I searched ‘game companies in NZ’ and up popped a company called Runaway. I thought, ‘Oh my gosh, they’re based in Dunedin – that’s wild!’”

Even wilder – Runaway was a small female-led games studio creating the sort of games Blakie loved – non-violent and inspired by nature.

She was offered a position as Runaway’s Community Manager before inching her way to a story-forward role: Narrative Designer. She spent seven nourishing years there.

“It was an amazing place to grow. I was really curious about game design and writing and they let me explore that.”

That curiosity was rewarded in 2020 – a corker of a year for Blakie. She won Te Maunga Kai Kapua Teina/‘Rising Star’ at the New Zealand Game Awards for bringing new knowledge and enthusiasm into gaming (“It was a big shock. I cried a lot! I’d never won a prize except for ‘player of the day’ in school sports!”); she received a 20Twenties Young Alumni Award for her contribution to creative and ethical video game development; and she started up an indie video game studio called Atawhai Interactive with her partner and two close friends.

Atawhai Interactive owes its existence to the support of the New Zealand Centre of Digital Excellence (CODE) which was established in Dunedin in 2019 to respond to the gaming industry boom. (Data from the New Zealand Game Developers Association (NZGDA) report an average of 26 per cent growth for the last five years. In 2022 its revenue figure was a whopping \$407 million.)

CODE provided kickstart funding to Blakie and her team from its government-funded purse. This allowed her to prototype *Toroa: Skycall* – a flight-based albatross game due out this year.

In its bid to grow the entire gaming ecosystem, CODE was also keen to forge university partnerships to support curriculum development. Associate Professor David Ciccioricco, Head of Otago’s English and Linguistics Programme, saw a golden opportunity here – a chance to establish the paper that Blakie now teaches: ENGL 251: Creative Writing for Games and Interactive Media. He’d long been interested in the role literary imagination can play in an

increasingly digital culture, but when he first proposed the idea of a paper on video game narratives over a decade ago, conditions were not favourable enough.

“When CODE rolled into town,” says Ciccioricco, “we had the combination of top-down and bottom-up momentum.”

Winning CODE’s favour was relatively straightforward.

“It was just a matter of getting our own track record in front of the CODE people and persuading them to look beyond the usual suspects of Computer and Information Sciences. When they realised that Otago’s English and Linguistics had a longstanding record of teaching and research on games as cultural artefacts – things that draw on our proclivities for both story and play – then we became a major player in the CODE mission. The next step was finding the right people to join that mission, and that’s where Lisa came in.”

Blakie, who also teaches game design and production at Otago Polytechnic Te Pūkenga, says her new University role will help signpost the off-piste path from writing to gaming.

“People think you have to be good at drawing or programming to make games but those are only small parts – there are other roles that are just as important and accessible to people with a humanities and creative writing background.”

The old perception of video games as ‘low culture’ has been on the wane for a while. The first academic journal for game studies launched over two decades ago now, and there is no shortage of universities that teach games in an expressly humanities context.

Blakie thinks that positioning a games studies paper within an English and Linguistics context will further rehabilitate gaming’s reputation.

“Playing games is just as valid as reading a classic novel or watching a classic film. The industry has moved on from only making those arcade-type shooter games. Seeing game studies taught in a more academic environment will help.”

She also sees her appointment as a way of rupturing the stereotype of the typical gamer and increasing diversity within the industry. In the most recent NZGDA figures, only 22 per cent of game developers identified as female and only 5 per cent as Māori.

“When I started out, everyone else in the game scene was largely white cis male. Runaway was an exception in terms of gender parity. The more diverse our industry is, the more diverse our games will be.”

“Playing games is just as valid as reading a classic novel or watching a classic film. The industry has moved on from only making those arcade-type shooter games. Seeing game studies taught in a more academic environment will help.”

While Blakie’s experience in the Dunedin game industry scene made her a perfect choice for this new role, it wasn’t her only strong suit: “There are only a handful of accomplished game developers with solid narrative design chops in Aotearoa”, says Ciccioricco. “But even more rare is one who has a clear penchant and passion for teaching in the field.”

Here’s a whiff of that infectious Blakie passion: “I remember telling my partner that it would be so cool if I could do indie game development and research at the Uni – that would be my dream career set-up. And now I’m living it. It’s so great to be academic and creative – those are the two things that I love the most. Every day is amazing.”

CLAIRE FINLAYSON

Honour for disability champion

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR TRISTRAM INGHAM: “Instead of being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, my academic passion has been to actually move the fence back from the cliff face.”

Being made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year Honours list has reassured Tristram Ingham that he must be getting the balance right in his role as a ‘critical friend’ to the Government.

TRISTRAM INGHAM (NGĀTI KAHUNGUNU KI HERETAUNGA, NGĀTI POROU) was honoured for services to the disability community and for his work on the COVID-19 response.

Ingham, the Deputy Head of the Department of Medicine at the University’s

Wellington Campus, is aware he is walking a fine line in his advocacy work with Government officials.

“Much of the work I have been doing has been holding the Crown’s feet to the flames around health service delivery and public policy and that has involved challenging conversations and passionate debate, with academic rigour at its heart. But there is quite a narrow line to walk in terms of being a critical friend, with equal emphasis on being a critical partner and a trusted friend.

“You have to maintain a really good relationship with Crown officials so they build trust and confidence in you, but you can’t let them get away with stuff.”

Ingham graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB) from Otago in 1997. His epidemiological and clinical research work focuses on the areas of respiratory health, Māori health and wellbeing and disability. As a disabled person himself, he was acutely aware of the high stakes involved in getting the COVID-

19 response right.

“Failure on the part of the public service to grasp the importance of protecting our community from the virus could have decimated our population. Already, despite the efforts that were made, the mortality rates from COVID were significantly higher among disabled people.”

Ingham was seconded to the Disability Directorate of the Ministry of Health in the early days of the pandemic and was able to bring in community and other NGO partners to assist. He was joined by two of his Otago colleagues, his wife Bernadette Jones (Ngā Wairiki, Ngāti Apa), a Research Fellow in the Department of Medicine, and Associate Professor Meredith Perry, from the School of Physiotherapy.

Together, they achieved a lot.

“We came up with the ‘bubble’ to explain the concept of physical distancing, we managed to get statistics on disability brought into national databases and we got communications and policy development

fast-tracked into hours rather than weeks, and so I think that saved lives.”

His honours’ citation details his long-standing work for the disability community, including his contributions to the establishment of the new Ministry of Disabled People, Whaikaha. Aside from his work during COVID-19, he is proudest of representing his community on national and international organisations.

He has been a member of the Disabled Persons Organisations’ Coalition since 2018 and chairs Te Ao Mārama Aotearoa Trust, which represents the interests of tāngata whaikaha Māori (Māori with lived experience of disability) and their whānau.

Internationally, he represents New Zealand on the Independent Monitoring Mechanism for the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. His involvement in developing the measures by which the Government’s implementation of the Convention is monitored was key to getting data on Māori disability included.

“I managed to get some key recommendations built into our UN country monitoring report about Māori disability that I know came from me because I was the only voice that spoke about Māori disability. Indigenous disability is very under-

“Interventions in health policy ... have to resonate with people and that lived experience is a critical element that is often missing from public policy.”

recognised, globally.”

As tāngata whaikaha Māori he feels a deep responsibility to be a voice for the disability and Māori disability communities.

“It is a driving force, which is good, but you don’t escape unscarred at the same time. A number of national disability advocates over the last three years have had their own health and wellbeing suffer considerably because of the internal pressure to keep going. There is very limited capacity and capability to drive change, and advocate for the 1.1 million disabled people in the country.”

His work is grounded by the awareness that any policy must work in practice.

“Interventions in health policy need to be based on more than just the theoretical concept. They have to work in the real world. They have to resonate with people and that lived experience is a critical element that is often missing from public policy.

“Instead of being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, my academic passion has been to actually move the fence back from the cliff face.”

If there has been a silver lining to the past few years, it has been the normalising of working from home, having groceries delivered and attending virtual medical appointments.

“For decades, disabled people with physical mobility issues have been unable to secure jobs because of systemic barriers like transport and the lack of reasonable accommodation in work environments. What was really interesting is that almost overnight, when it suited the mainstream population to have work-from-home policies, they were implemented.

“All three of those kinds of flexible, inclusive services were real positives to come out of COVID. I am really excited by those kinds of possibilities as a kind of silver lining from the last three years of turbulent change.”

Ingham is uncomfortable with being signalled out for personal recognition. But with so few people in the disability community being honoured, he’s taking this one for the team.

He says the honour shows the Crown recognising the efforts of community partners in being partners to achieve the outcomes everyone wants.

“To me, that is the greatest element of satisfaction.”

CHERYL NORRIE

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR TRISTRAM INGHAM WITH THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND HER EXCELLENCY THE RT. HON. DAME CINDY KIRO at the investiture ceremony for his New Year honour in May.



Photo: Government House

EMERITUS PROFESSOR JAMES MACLAURIN: "So, for all that we must also tackle the most difficult of topics, we must learn to do so as a community that is tolerant of difference and intent on making a better world."

"These are all good reasons for developing a Free Speech Statement, but they are secondary to a more fundamental idea, namely that free speech is the lifeblood of a university."

THIS YEAR, THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO | ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA IS DEVELOPING A STATEMENT ON FREE SPEECH. Why free speech? Why now?

Many universities have such statements. Some famous examples like the Chicago Declaration have been adapted and adopted widely by other institutions. This trend is being driven in part by increased political polarisation felt in many countries including Aotearoa New Zealand. In a polarised society, dialogue becomes both more difficult and more important. Also, our government plans to introduce legislation requiring all universities to have a free speech code of conduct. So, the University has wisely decided that long before having to develop such guidelines we need to consult widely and think carefully about what free speech is and why it matters to us. These are all good reasons for developing a Free Speech Statement, but they are secondary to a more fundamental idea, namely that free speech is the lifeblood of a university.

Whakaihu Waka means "a place of firsts". The discovery and communication at the heart of what we do is driven by māhirahira (curiosity) and bounded by pono (integrity). To make good on these commitments, our community must tackle controversial subjects, challenge assumptions, and look with clear eyes at the variety of theories and ideas in the world.

So, in January, I was asked to convene a small working group with diverse experience and expertise: Professors Tamlin Conner (Psychology), Andrew Geddis (Law) and Patrick Vakaoti (Te Tumu), Associate Professors Craig Marshall (Biochemistry) and Diane Ruwhiu (Management), and Otago University Students' Association President Keegan Wells. We were tasked with

developing a short, clear statement that would tell any member of the University community, including invited visitors, how and why the University champions free speech and what responsibilities come along with that commitment.

As part of this process, we invited any staff member or student to come and talk to us in person or to write to us about their concerns or ideas about the nature and value of free speech at Otago. All meetings and communications were strictly confidential, reported only in aggregate. It was a daunting task. Dozens of people came to talk to us at meetings in Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington. Others wrote to us, sometimes brief notes, sometimes detailed essays. I gave seminars in Dunedin and Wellington, at which more of our community asked searching questions and offered good advice.

We have learned a lot. While some people proclaim themselves to be free speech absolutists in reality everybody, including the absolutists, favours sensible legal restrictions on speech. In New Zealand speech cannot defame. It cannot threaten. It cannot incite racial disharmony. Indeed, it soon became apparent that the legal restrictions on speech in Aotearoa are so many and so complex they cannot be adequately described in a short free speech statement. Nonetheless, the statement we draft will necessarily address legal speech, not all speech.

We also learned that many people think universities don't need free speech because the Education Act grants them academic freedom. But academic freedom is both more and less than free speech. It is the right to teach and research in areas that we, as experts in academic disciplines, see

as important. That right is bounded by our expertise and by the scientific and scholarly standards of our disciplines. Conversely, free speech as granted by our Bill of Rights Act is the much broader freedom to say what you believe, to be authentic, and to ask challenging questions. The sources of these rights in legislation turn out to be important because it means that Otago cannot simply import a free speech statement from overseas, not only because New Zealand is culturally unique, but also because the legislation granting such rights in New Zealand is quite different from corresponding legislation overseas.

Many people told us that universities ought to be places where the most challenging ideas can be expressed and debated. Universities are relatively free from political and commercial influence and they are packed full of expertise. If there is any place where good ideas will be discovered and bad ones refuted, it is surely a university.

Finally, many of our conversations gravitated back to the idea that free speech isn't just about what subjects we can discuss. It's also about how we talk to one another. Universities are not just about discovery and study. Our University is built on whanaungatanga (our sense of, and respect for, community) and manaakitanga (our care and respect for one another).

So, for all that we must tackle the most difficult of topics, we must also learn to do so as a community that is tolerant of difference and intent on making a better world.

Why free speech?

The University of Otago has convened a working group to develop a Statement on Free Speech. The group's Convenor, Emeritus Professor James Maclaurin, discusses free speech and why it matters.

Spiritual wellbeing in healthcare

Everyone in a healthcare setting deserves the opportunity to have their spiritual needs met, says Dunedin School of Medicine researcher Associate Professor Richard Egan.

He is co-leading a bicultural study which aims to create a national action plan for spiritual care in the health system, believed to be a first for Aotearoa New Zealand.

There is growing evidence that looking after spiritual wellbeing has a positive impact on the wellbeing of patients and their whānau. Research shows 69 per cent of people have spiritual needs when they have a serious illness.

In December 2023, Egan and co-lead Associate Professor Natasha Tassell-Matamua from Massey University, received almost \$1.4 million of Health Research Council funding for their three-year project.

"I've been working in this field for almost 25 years and this is the first time I've received a large grant in this area, so it feels like people are saying the time has come, that it's important we know more about this and how to improve things," he says.

"We'll be asking what spiritual care looks like in the 21st century in a bicultural, multicultural, multi-faith and no-faith Aotearoa New Zealand."

Egan emphasises that chaplains and other spiritual care experts do valuable work. However, "this project aims to better understand and improve spiritual care in an evolving landscape".

Depending on the findings, this may include bolstering policy,

resources, capacity and training for specialists in this field, such as chaplains and spiritual care experts, as well as for healthcare generalists like doctors, nurses and physiotherapists.



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RICHARD EGAN: "... it feels like people are saying the time has come, that it's important we know more about this and how to improve things."

Photo: Eugene Yee

Have Tonga's food taxes improved public health?

Public health experts at the University of Otago, Wellington, have begun a major research project to study the impact of Tonga's world-leading system of taxes on unhealthy foods.

The three-year study is led by Dr Andrea Teng of Public Health who will look at how effective the taxes have been.

Dr Teng and colleagues Dr Viliami Puloka, Professor Nick Wilson and Dr Alice Kim, will look at the changes to Tonga's tax system between 2013 and 2018 and analyse their impact on food imports, food prices and household spending.

The team will examine the effect of the excise taxes which have been imposed on unhealthy foods like fatty meats and sugary and high-carbohydrate foods such as biscuits, chocolate, ice cream and instant noodles, as well as the impact that removing tariffs from healthier foods and exempting fruit from consumption tax have had on food choices.

Tonga, which has one of the highest rates of obesity in the world, is one of five Pacific countries seeking to improve the health of their people by taxing unhealthy foods.

Dr Teng says the research findings will have implications for countries all over the world, because so few have introduced food taxes in the systematic way Tonga has.

"It will be really interesting to see how and what the effects have been in Tonga over this period."

She also hopes the research may persuade the New Zealand government to consider introducing similar measures.

"We are falling behind," she says. "About two thirds of countries in the Pacific have put taxes on sugary drinks, for instance. It really is time for us to take some action."

The research project is supported by a grant from the Marsden Fund.



DR ANDREA TENG: "We are falling behind. About two thirds of countries in the Pacific have put taxes on sugary drinks, for instance. It really is time for us to take some action."

Photo: Luke Pilkinton-Ching

Unravelling the mysteries of Parkinson's Disease

When Dr Toni Pitcher first joined the University of Otago, Christchurch's Department of Medicine, no research data existed indicating how many people were living with Parkinson's disease in Aotearoa New Zealand, making allocation of patient support services and resources more challenging.

Pitcher and her colleagues at the New Zealand Brain Research Institute (NZBRI) set about filling this knowledge gap. Their research mined pharmaceutical, hospital and mortality datasets to deliver an answer – that approximately 1,200 people are newly diagnosed with the disorder annually, and around 12,000 are currently living with it.

This study led on to exploring why people develop Parkinson's, with a Health Research Council-funded project, the New Zealand Parkinson's Environment and Gene Study (NZPEGS).

Pitcher says our understanding of the genetics of Parkinson's has come a long way in recent years.

"Close to 100 genes are known to contribute to our genetic risk of developing Parkinson's but, in most cases, genes alone are not enough to cause the disorder," she says.

"There is an interplay between genes and the environment with things like pesticide exposure and lifestyle factors also being important, so the aim of NZPEGS is to better understand the balance between these factors."

Pitcher's research activities also include involvement in the New

Zealand Parkinson's Progression Programme, a local face-to-face longitudinal cohort, started in 2007, to monitor how Parkinson's progresses and investigate potential biomarkers. Pitcher coordinates the collection, storage and use of biological samples within this cohort.



DR TONI PITCHER: "There is an interplay between genes and the environment with things like pesticide exposure and lifestyle factors also being important, so the aim ... is to better understand the balance between these factors."

Photo: Neil Macbeth

Te reo Māori in the University

Te Manaakitia te Reo: Identifying practices and aspirations of staff and students for a te reo-positive university is the research project of Dr Julia Wilson (Te Arawa) and Tautemaria Silva (Waikato, Ngāpuhi).

"We are both in the first generation in each of our families to learn te reo Māori following the active repression of te reo in the past. Hence, for us, this project is a way to contribute to the broader language revitalisation efforts," Wilson says.

These co-primary investigators are both Teaching Fellows with Mātai Tikaka Takata – Social Anthropology, within Te Kete Aronui – the Division of Humanities. Their work includes roles with Health Sciences First Year – teaching the Indigenous content of a Population Health paper and supporting the staff to improve cultural safety and include more mātauranga Māori in their papers.

Wilson and Silva have many questions related to the kaupapa of a te reo-positive University and will be talking with staff and students about what is currently happening and what they would like to see happening. Flynn Macredie (Waikato) is an Associate Research Fellow with the project, and Associate Professor Karyn Paringatai (Ngāti Porou) a mentor.

"In te reo Māori, the word 'māori' means 'ordinary, normal or

common'. So, long-term, we would like to see the use of te reo normalised, so that te reo Māori is also te reo māori," Wilson says.



DR JULIA WILSON AND TAUTEMARIA SILVA: "We are both in the first generation in each of our families to learn te reo Māori ... this project is a way to contribute to the broader language revitalisation efforts."

Photo: Alan Dove

Who behaves charitably?

New research by academics from Otago's Department of Economics has yielded fresh insights into global patterns of charitable behaviour.

Prompted by curiosity about charitable behaviours (specifically: donating money, volunteering time and helping a stranger), three Otago academics drilled down into a global sample to see what patterns might emerge.

Professors Stephen Knowles and Ronald Peeters and Associate Professor Dennis Wesselbaum (along with Michael Smith, Supervisory Research Economist, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, USA) sleuthed altruistic activity in data from the Gallup World Poll. This dataset (which informs the World Giving Index) yielded a sample of 134 countries and 388,602 individuals.

The findings, published in the journal *Applied Economics*, showed that charitable behaviours varied across countries and cultures.

Wesselbaum says: "From the generosity of Indonesia to the resilience of rural areas, our world's charitable spirit knows no bounds. In the symphony of global giving, income isn't the soloist; it's the chorus. Every voice counts – from the urban internet users to the rural neighbours lending a hand.

"Our research sheds light on global giving patterns, showing how income, trust and religiosity influence charitable behaviour across borders. By dissecting altruism worldwide, we reveal intriguing trends:

income's U-shaped impact on giving, the surprising effect of internet access and, more, offer fresh insights into human generosity."

This research has implications for policymakers, non-governmental organisations and charities. Knowing which factors influence charitable behaviour will aid in the development of targeted communication and fundraising initiatives.



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DENNIS WESSELBAUM: "...we reveal intriguing trends: income's U-shaped impact on giving, the surprising effect of internet access and, more, offer fresh insights into human generosity."

Photo: Graham Warman

Targeting breast cancer

Triple-negative breast cancer is more aggressive, harder to treat, and more likely to come back – but that hasn't stopped Dr Sarah Diermeier from tackling it head on.

Based in Otago's Department of Biochemistry, Diermeier has been awarded a grant from the RNA Development Platform to improve a therapeutic molecule that appears to work better than some currently used chemotherapeutics in preclinical testing.

While there are some delivery limitations to tackle, Diermeier and her interdisciplinary team will trial different ways of modifying and packaging the therapeutic to make it specifically target tumour cells and further improve its anti-cancer efficacy.

Analytical synthetic chemistry techniques have already been developed for making this therapeutic, as well as modifying it, and they plan to test the new formulations in the lab before moving towards their first in-human trials.

Diermeier's team includes Associate Professor Greg Walker from Otago's School of Pharmacy, Professor Gavin Painter from Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka, and Dr Nick Green from Otago's Division of Sciences who will work on enhancing the chemistry of the therapeutic.

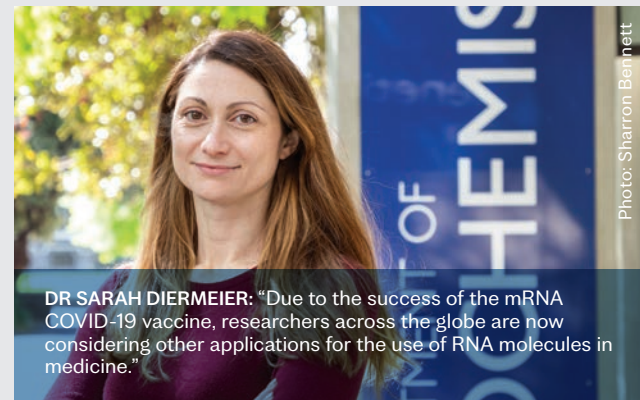
"Due to the success of the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, researchers across the globe are now considering other applications for the use of RNA molecules in medicine," Diermeier says.

"Aotearoa isn't falling behind either, having established the RNA

Development Platform in 2023 to build the domestic capabilities of these technologies.

"That platform announced grant funding for eight Fast Start Projects across New Zealand, one of which I was grateful to have received for the mahi we're doing on triple-negative breast cancer."

Ultimately, she hopes that this work generates valuable intellectual property regarding the use of RNA-related treatments for cancer.



DR SARAH DIERMEIER: "Due to the success of the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, researchers across the globe are now considering other applications for the use of RNA molecules in medicine."

Photo: Sharron Bennett

Extremely rare bird photographed

A University of Otago Zoologist made headlines this year after spotting a striking and extremely rare half female, half male bird.

Sesquicentennial Distinguished Professor Hamish Spencer was holidaying in Colombia when an amateur ornithologist John Murillo pointed out a wild Green Honeycreeper with distinct half green (female) and half blue (male) plumage.

"Many birdwatchers could go their whole lives and not see a bilateral gynandromorph in any species of bird. The phenomenon is extremely rare in birds. I know of no examples from New Zealand, ever," Spencer says.

Photographs of the bird make the discovery even more significant as they are "arguably the best of a wild bilateral gynandromorphic bird of any species, ever".

A report on the find, only the second recorded example of gynandromorphism in the species in more than 100 years, was published in the *Journal of Field Ornithology*.

Spencer says gynandromorphs – animals with both male and female characteristics in a species that usually have separate sexes – are important for our understanding of sex determination and sexual behaviour.

"This particular example of bilateral gynandromorphy – male one side and female the other – shows that, as in several other species, either side of the bird can be male or female.

"The phenomenon arises from an error during female cell division to produce an egg, followed by double-fertilization by two sperm."

Spencer also received international recognition earlier this year, being named as a new Fellow of the International Science Council (ISC) – one of just three New Zealanders to be recognised as Fellows by the ISC to date.



The extremely rare half male, half female Green Honeycreeper.

Photo: John Murillo

Impacts of drug and alcohol harm

Dr Rose Crossin has a passion for reducing the negative impacts of drug use, reducing stigmas and advocating for better national drug policies to reduce harm.

The University of Otago, Christchurch, Department of Population Health researcher believes research-policy translation is at the heart of her work.

She was lead author of a widely disseminated drug harms ranking study released last year, which brought together a diverse panel of experts to challenge preconceptions and norms about drug harm.

The findings showed alcohol is the most harmful drug for the total population – when separately considering harm to those who use it and harm to others – followed by methamphetamine, synthetic cannabinoids and tobacco.

"It might challenge people to learn this, but alcohol isn't the most harmful because it's the most widely used drug in Aotearoa New Zealand, but because of its association with a huge number of diseases, cancers, psychological disorders and other medical conditions, and also because it causes more harm to others, including whānau, friends and communities as a whole, than other drugs," Crossin says.

She next hopes to investigate how young people define and experience drug harm, to help amplify their perspectives and voices, so that services can better meet their needs.

"I care deeply about harm reduction, and decreasing stigma and

inequities for people who use drugs," Crossin says.

"I also feel strongly that we need evidence-based drug policies in New Zealand, which are effective and equitable, so I'm aiming to do research that fills knowledge gaps, then connect that research with policy makers."



DR ROSE CROSSIN: "... alcohol isn't the most harmful because it's the most widely used drug in Aotearoa New Zealand, but because of its association with a huge number of diseases ... and also because it causes more harm to others..."

Photo: Neil Macbeth

New Chancellor appointed

An Otago alumna with a passion for education has been appointed to the role of University of Otago Chancellor.

Trish Oakley (pictured below), the current Pro-Chancellor, will take up the role from 1 October and describes it as a “privilege” to be appointed.



“I have seen first-hand the impact of education and its ability to change lives. Giving back to the community of which I am an alumna is important to me.”

An Executive at Forsyth Barr, Ms Oakley has been a Council member since 2018 and Pro-Chancellor since 2022. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Otago, is a member of the New Zealand Lotteries Commission, and Global Women. She is also a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Directors (IoD), Vice President of the IoD’s National Council, and Director of the IoD’s board.

Ms Oakley replaces Stephen Higgs who will retire from the University Council on 30 September, at the end of his 12-year constitutional maximum term.

To fill Mr Higgs’ vacant seat on Council, Minister for Tertiary Education and Skills Hon. Penny Simmonds has appointed Ross Jackson, from October 1.

New brand launched

The University of Otago officially launched its new brand on 1 May at ceremonies on the Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington campuses.

The bold change includes a new te reo Māori name and tohu (symbol), created in collaboration with mana whenua.

About 300 members of the University community and mana whenua gathered as

the new signage was revealed on the Dunedin campus’ St David St plinth (see photo below).

The name University of Otago remains but the reo name has changed to Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka – a metaphor meaning ‘A Place of Many Firsts’.

The new tohu draws inspiration from Ōtākou channel, in Otago Harbour, which brings water, kai and life to and from the region – just as the University brings and shares knowledge across Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. It emphasises the importance of relationships, reciprocity and the transmission of knowledge between generations.

The University Council adopted the changes in July last year, following extensive stakeholder consultation.



Funding success

Thirteen Otago projects have received a total of \$3.7 million in the latest Health Research Council’s funding rounds announced in May, which included Emerging Researcher, Pacific Health Research Emerging Leader Fellowship and Explorer Grants.

The funded projects range from an investigation of the role of antidepressants in promoting antibiotic resistance led by Dr Sam Wardell, a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, to a project looking at the drivers of poverty and whether they vary across Pacific ethnicities in Aotearoa New Zealand led by Dr Jesse Kokaua of the School of Biomedical Sciences.

New college wins awards

The University’s new college, Te Rangihīroa, has been winning awards - taking out the “Housing - Multi Unit” category of the 2024 Southern Architecture Awards and an

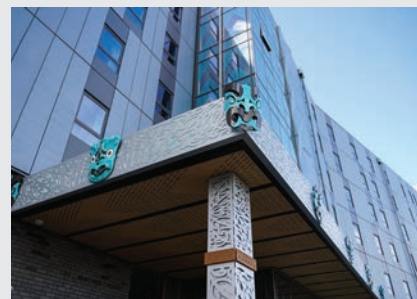
Excellence award at the 2024 Property Council of New Zealand Industry Awards.

Te Rangihīroa (pictured below) is the University’s first new purpose-built residential college in more than 50 years. It was officially opened in October 2023 and is now home to 450 first-year students from across Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond.

Te Rangihīroa, located on the corner of Albany and Forth Streets, consists of four wings each made up of seven floors including a ground level, five accommodation levels and a plant room.

The college is named after Otago alumnus Te Rangihīroa (Sir Peter Buck), the first Māori medical graduate from a New Zealand university (1904). The name ‘Te Rangihīroa’ was gifted to the University in 2013, following permission granted from his iwi (Ngāti Mutunga) and surviving family members. The original Te Rangihīroa College on Castle Street has been renamed 192 Castle College.

Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Helen Nicholson says in opening Te Rangihīroa College the University maintains a strong commitment to its residential colleges.



Ranking result

The University of Otago is the only New Zealand university to secure a placing in the world’s top 20 subjects in the latest QS World University Rankings by Subject announced in April.

Otago’s sports-related subjects have continued their climb to 12th in the world in the past year.

Overall, Otago has more top-50 subjects than last year, and also more in the top-100 and top-200 than in 2023, to maintain its position as one of New Zealand’s two top-ranked universities.

As well as sports-related subjects sitting at number 12, three other subjects made the global top 50: Anatomy and Physiology (30th), Dentistry (40th) and Hospitality & Leisure Management (44th).

The Dean of the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences, Associate Professor Elaine Hargreaves, is extremely proud of the outstanding result.

“This ranking demonstrates that we have an international reputation for impactful, cutting-edge research. It also shows that through the learning experiences we provide to students, our graduates have the skills and knowledge that are highly sought after by employers.”

First Pharmaceutical Science graduates

The University of Otago’s first-ever Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Science graduates walked across the Town Hall stage in December 2023.

Angela Ding, Baxter Blair and Julia Moy were the first students to graduate from the programme, launched in 2022, which is the first of its kind in New Zealand.

The Director of the degree, Associate Professor Arlene McDowell, describes it as “the science behind medicine”.

She says the degree is not just about innovating new formulations and improving current ones, but has applications in the cosmetic and agriculture industries amongst many others.

“The skills they have acquired are invaluable in the development of medicines. I look forward to seeing where they go.”

The degree is based in the School of Pharmacy.

Valuing volunteering

The University of Otago held Good Mahi in early May – a student and staff community volunteering day – which was offered to give anyone at the University of Otago’s Dunedin campus the chance to volunteer.

The event was created by the Social Impact Studio’s UniCrew team and Otago University Students’ Association.

One of the aims of Good Mahi was to

simplify the process of volunteering – as sometimes the administration and logistics associated with volunteering can be a barrier that puts people off.

The day came on the back of the University making social impact leave official last year, offering staff a day of paid leave to volunteer.

MOU signed

A second memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the University of Otago and Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) aims to expand new horizons of service in the Pacific region.

The MOU, signed in March 2024, builds on a 2018 MOU between the University and VSA, and will create further opportunities for the University to directly respond to emerging aspirations and needs in the Pacific region by attracting volunteers with skills in a variety of fields, including business and economic development, environmental sciences, health and education.

Head of Pacific Community Engagement, Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai, says the partnership is a great opportunity for both the University and VSA.

“This partnership is ultimately about making a real difference and working together with organisations in the Pacific.”

Next stage for Dunedin Study

The University’s world-leading Dunedin Study began its age 52 assessments in April, delving into an understudied but important period of life and time of change.

The longitudinal study follows the lives of 1,037 babies born in Dunedin’s Queen Mary Maternity Hospital between 1 April 1972 and 31 March 1973, assessing them regularly. It is the most detailed study of human health and development in the world.

The Study’s new Director, Professor Moana Theodore (pictured next column), says midlife is an understudied period of time when it comes to understanding health and wellbeing. Research often focuses on childhood or old age, leaving a gap in information about people in the middle part of their lives and how their health is shaped by their early lives and will affect how they age.



“Not only is it a time of change – people’s children may be leaving home and their parents are getting older – but it’s also when significant health issues can arise,” she says.

By adding the new age-52 data to the information gathered from Study members in their 30s and 40s, researchers will be in a rare position to understand how people age.

Professor Theodore was named Director in October 2023, after the untimely passing of former Director Emeritus Distinguished Professor Richie Poulton.

Milky Way photo wins



An Otago Medical School Teaching Fellow has been recognised in the 2024 Milky Way Photographer of the Year competition announced in May.

This annual international competition, run by travel photography blog *Capture the Atlas*, features images of the galaxy taken from around the world.

Kavan Chay’s photo ‘Starlight Therapy’, taken at about 5am in the Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park in February made the top 25.

One of three people from New Zealand showcased in the competition, he is thrilled to have the photo recognised globally. It has also appeared on a wide range of websites including the *BBC*, *Daily Mail* and *Forbes*.

Appointments:

There have been a number of new staff appointments at the highest levels of the University of Otago, including:

Trish Oakley as Chancellor
Hon. Grant Robertson as Vice-Chancellor
Professor Jess Palmer as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement)
Professor Jacinta Ruru as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori)
Professor Stuart Brock as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Associate Professor Megan Gibbons (pictured below) as Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Health Sciences



Professor Maree Thyne as Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Commerce, and Dean, Otago Business School

Ms Tanya Syddall as Director, Property and Campus Development

Professor Rose Richards as Acting Director, Office of Pacific Development

Professor Moana Theodore as Director, Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study

Awards and achievements:

Otago staff have been recognised by the University, and with regional, national and international awards, including:

Five wāhine scooped the titles in the 2024 University of Otago Excellence in Teaching awards: Associate Professor **Antonie Alm** (Languages and Cultures Programme), Dr **Gillian MacKay** (Genetics), Associate Professor **Lara Friedlander** (Dentistry), Associate Professor **Naomi Ingram** (College of Education) and Dr **Mihiata Pirini** (Law).

Commitment to climate change, student support, a safe environment, teaching and learning were recognised at the University's 2023 Staff Awards held in November. Four Awards for Exceptional Performance

by Professional Staff were presented to: **Samantha Campbell** (Client Services – Operations); Dr **Rachel Elliot** (Research and Enterprise); **Danella King** (Student Services) and **Claire Ramsay** (Organisational Development – HR). The Vice-Chancellor's Award was presented to Claire Ramsay.



The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Award (Individual) was awarded to **Martin Jones** (University Union), and the Team Award went to the **Psychology Pastoral Care Team**. The Award for Sustainable Practice by Staff (Team) was presented to the **Department of Botany**.

The University's highest honour, the Distinguished Research Medal, went to the University of Otago Wellington's Poutoko Taiea Sesuicentennial Distinguished Professor **Philippa Howden-Chapman**, the Co-director for He Kāinga Oranga | Housing and Health Research Programme in 2023.

The 2023 Rowheath Trust Award and Carl Smith Medal was awarded to Professor **Jemma Geoghegan** (Microbiology and Immunology), the Webster Family Chair in Viral Pathogenesis.

Seven researchers received Early Career Researcher Awards in 2023: Dr **Hemakumar Devan** (Medicine, Wellington), Dr **Simon Jackson** (Microbiology and Immunology), Dr **Matt Jenkins** (Psychological Medicine, Wellington), Dr **Matthew McNeil** (Microbiology and Immunology), Dr **Sara Miller** (Chemistry), Dr **Kimberley O'Sullivan** (Public Health, Wellington) and Dr **Stephen Young** (Law).

The inaugural winner of the Tofā Sāili Pacific Early Career Awards for Distinction in Research was Dr **Troy Ruhe** (Va'a o Tautai – Centre for Pacific Health); Dr Alana Alexander (Ngāpuhi: Te Hikutū, Pākehā)(Anatomy) and Dr **Erica Newman** (Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi)(Te Tumu – School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies) were the inaugural recipients for Māori Early Career Awards for Distinction in Research.

Te Pokapū Mātai Taiāki Iaia, the **Centre**

for **Neuroendocrinology** (CNE), which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2023, won the 2023 Otago Research Group Award. Based in the School of Biomedical Sciences, the CNE has approximately 60 members across 11 key research groups that all produce internationally recognised research in the field of neuroendocrinology.

Helen Morrin, the curator for the cancer research unit at the University of Otago, Christchurch, He Taonga Tapu Cancer Society Tissue Bank was awarded a Kiwibank 2024 New Zealand Local Hero of the Year Te Pou Toko o te Tau medal for her 23 years of unwavering service in transforming the campus' tissue bank into an internationally renowned facility. She also won the 2023 New Zealand Society for Oncology Bridget Robinson Award in October for her exceptional career in translational cancer research.

Kirsty Barltrop, a Professional Practice Fellow in the Bachelor of Oral Health was awarded New Zealand Dental Hygienist of the Year 2023. The annual New Zealand Oral Health Association awards recognise oral health practitioners who go above and beyond to raise the bar for oral healthcare.

A strong focus on ensuring projects deliver their expected benefits has helped Otago's **Enterprise Project Management Office** (PMO) become national PMO of the Year for 2024.

Professor **Niels Kjærgaard** (Physics), a Principal Investigator of the Dodd-Walls Centre, was awarded the prestigious 2023 Hector Medal by The Royal Society Te Apārangi, for his contribution to experimental studies of atomic collisions and light-scattering using ultracold gases.

Professor **Michael Baker** (Public Health, Wellington) and his research team received the Health Research Council's 2023 Liley Medal in recognition of two recent papers highlighting a major development in understanding the causes of acute rheumatic fever and the role of preceding Group A Streptococcal infections.

The University of Otago's **Campus Watch** team (pictured next page) won a Risk Reduction Award from Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) for the hard work put into reducing the number of nuisance fires and fire safety initiatives in North Dunedin – the first organisation outside of FENZ to receive this award in the Te Kei (Southern Region).

Professors **Siân Halcrow** (Anatomy) and



Peter Fineran (Microbiology and Immunology) have been awarded two-year James Cook Research Fellowships, which recognise researchers at the height of their careers who have achieved national and international recognition in their area. Professor Halcrow will study anatomical skeletal legacy collections in Aotearoa and the United States. Professor Fineran will develop a novel method for generating random mutations in phage genomes.

Faculty of Dentistry Dean Professor **Paul Cooper** received the International Association for Dental, Oral and Craniofacial Research (IADR) Distinguished Scientist Award (DSA) in Pulp Biology and Regeneration, at a ceremony in New Orleans, Louisiana in April.

Sustainability Office Engagement Team Lead **Jes Triscott** was joint winner of the staff sustainability champion category at the 2023 Australasian Green Gown Sustainability Awards streamed live from Melbourne in November. Highly commended awards were also bestowed on Sustainability Neighbourhood Tētékura/Student Lead Demi Lawrence in the student sustainability champion category, and on the Sustainability Office's summer scholarship programme Te Pūhau ana te Rā in the next generation learning and skills category.

University of Otago, Christchurch, Dean and Head of Campus Professor **Suzanne Pitama** (Ngāti Kahungunu/Ngāti Whare) won a prestigious award from an Australasian Indigenous medical education network in November. She was one of seven members of the Australasian LIME Network (Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education) presented with an inaugural Life award at the 10th biennial LIME connection meeting in Canberra.

Dr **Mei Peng** (pictured right), a senior lecturer in the Department of Food Science, has won a Fulbright New Zealand 2024 NZ Scholar Award. Dr Peng will spend four months at the University of California, Davis, and Washington State University, Pullman, where she will study parental decision-making on plant-based food choices.

Obituaries:

Dr **Ruth Toumu'a**, Associate Dean Pacific and Lecturer in Higher Education on the Wellington campus, died suddenly at home in May 2024. She was a highly valued and much-loved colleague, mentor and friend to both staff and students at Otago.

Former Chancellor, distinguished Otago alumna and prominent Dunedin lawyer Dr **Judith Medicott** CNZM is remembered as a trailblazer in her profession, a strong advocate for women and for her dedicated service to the community. She died in May 2024.

Emeritus Professor Sir **Vincent O'Sullivan** was an Associate Member of the University of Otago's Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies and the 9th New Zealand Poet Laureate. He died in April 2024.

Emeritus Professor **Robin Fraser** was an anatomical pathologist who began his career at the University of Otago, Christchurch when it first opened its doors 50 years ago, influencing the careers of generations of medical students and researchers. He died in March 2024.

Professor **William (Bill) Harris** was a much respected colleague in Politics – a great scholar, an excellent colleague and a lovely person. His expertise on the Middle East was of great significance to the University and he was an important source of knowledge and insight for students. He died in January 2024.

Emeritus Professor **Martin Ferguson** (Oral Medicine/Oral Surgery) died in December 2023. With both medical and dental training, he was appointed to the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2007 for his services to dentistry and palliative care.

Emeritus Professor **R. Ewan Fordyce** (FRSNZ), passed away in November 2023, leaving a huge legacy for his field of paleontological research and his 40-year association with the Department of



Geology. Recognising Professor Fordyce's enormous contributions to marine vertebrate paleontology, several fossil species have been named *fordycei*.

Professor **Kypros Kpyri** (Injury Prevention Research Unit) died in a cycling accident in Dunedin in October 2023. He was a behavioural scientist with expertise in epidemiology and prevention of alcohol-related injury and harm. Since 2004 he held joint appointments at the University of Newcastle and Otago.

Emeritus Distinguished Professor **Richie Poulton** (CNZM,FRSNZ), Director of the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit, known as the Dunedin Study, died in September 2023. The energy, vision and dedication Professor Poulton demonstrated through his career has inspired countless others and left an invaluable and important legacy.

Emeritus Professor **Donald Evans** (Bioethics Centre) was a former director of the University's Bioethics Centre, and former president of the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) of UNESCO. He died in September 2023.

Emeritus Professor **Basil Jones** (formerly of Surveying) spent 17 years at the University, including serving as assistant Vice-Chancellor, Sciences, before retiring in 1993. He died in September 2023.

Emeritus Professor **Anthony Molteno** (Dunedin School of Medicine) was a pioneer in the field of ophthalmology and glaucoma treatment. He joined the University of Otago in the 1970s, retiring from clinical and teaching work in 2014 and continuing to research to 2017. He died in August 2023.

Mark Wilesmith (Academic Division) was a staff member of the University since 2008, most recently holding the role of Specialist, Academic Committees and Services supporting the Division of Sciences. He was a highly valued, respected and loved member of staff. He died in August 2023.

Emeritus Professor **Martin Purvis** was Professor in Information Science, starting at Otago in 1992 and being made Emeritus in 2015. He died in July 2023.

Celebrating Janet Frame

THE HOCKEN'S JANET FRAME

COLLECTION BEGAN IN THE 1970s when she deposited some literary drafts and a sealed suitcase of papers for safekeeping.

Now it is one of the Hocken's most significant collections, giving an incredible insight into the life and writing process of one of New Zealand's most famous writers.

Frame's clear intention, from that initial deposit, was that her papers would be acquired by and cared for by the Hocken, explains Head Curator, Archives, Anna Blackman.

"She was in periodic correspondence with Hocken staff on this topic from the early 1970s when she deposited those first drafts and suitcase. She was later prompted to offer the bulk of her papers for sale to the Hocken when Michael King was researching and writing his biography, *Wrestling with the Angel* in the late 1990s. The papers were purchased in 1999 and transferred to the Hocken in several batches in the early 2000s."

The archive of Frame, who died in January 2004, is a wide-ranging collection. It includes book manuscripts and literary drafts, travel planning and arrangements, grants and residencies, business records such as publishing contracts and financial

records, correspondence with friends and family, diaries and notebooks, copies of reviews, photographs, papers relating to literary festivals, talks and conferences, library membership cards and papers relating to the film *An Angel at My Table*.

As well as Frame's own papers, many of her correspondents and friends have donated their papers relating to Frame including Michael King, Sheila Natusch, Ruth Dallas, Charles Brasch, John Money, Alan Horsman, Mildred Surry, Lila Hamilton and others – enriching and complementing the resource even more.

"The book manuscripts include editing notes and annotations, and for some works we have draft versions that show the progression and development of the work," says Blackman. "The correspondence complements the book manuscripts as the correspondents express their views on Janet's work, but also give context about what was happening in their lives."

"The collection is very significant. The University is honoured that Janet decided to make the Hocken the permanent repository of her papers."

To celebrate the centenary of Frame's August 1924 birth, the Hocken is applying for New Zealand UNESCO Memory of the

August 2024 marks 100 years since the birth of renowned New Zealand novelist, poet and short story writer, Janet Frame. As the kaitiaki of Frame's archives, the University of Otago will celebrate the centenary of this "daughter of Otago" in August with the opening of an exhibition and an application for Frame's papers to be granted New Zealand UNESCO Memory of the World status.

World registration for this collection. If successful, the collection will join the likes of the Katherine Mansfield Literary and Personal papers, the Treaty of Waitangi, the Women's Suffrage Petition and the Marti Friedlander archive, on the register.

"The Hocken Collections currently holds eight registrations, the largest number from any New Zealand research institution. We hope the Janet Frame papers will be our ninth registration," says Blackman.

Alongside the UNESCO application (the result will be known in August), the University will also celebrate Frame's 100th birthday with an exhibition at Special Collections (in the de Beer Gallery, level 1, Central Library), curated by Head Curator, Published and Special Collections, Kirstie Ross.

With the working title *Janet Frame's Bookshelf: A writer's reading life*, the exhibition will highlight how books were embedded into the fabric of Frame's creative and domestic life; how they furnished her work and living spaces and provided her with a sense of belonging.

Based on Frame's non-fiction writing, autobiographies and personal papers, the exhibition will explore the importance of reading to Frame over the course of her



Janet Frame in a Dunedin garden, 1998.

Reg Graham photograph, P2013-015/2-022, Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hakena.



Hocken Head Curator, Archives, Anna Blackman and Head Curator, Published and Special Collections, Kirstie Ross with some of Janet Frame's papers and books.

Photo: Alan Dove

The UNESCO register:

If successful, Janet Frame's papers will join these other Hocken collections on the New Zealand UNESCO register. They are listed here by their register number and the year they were added.

- 11 Charles Brasch Literary and Personal Papers | 2013
- 14 Dr Hocken's Church Missionary Society Records | 2014
- 15 Pickerill Papers on Plastic Surgery | 2015
- 19 Lance Richdale Papers | 2016
- 25 Salmond Anderson Architects Records | 2017
- 34 Herries Beattie Papers (1848–1972) | 2018
- 37 Dr Muriel Bell Papers | 2019
- 44 Colin and Anne McCahon Papers | 2020

LISA DICK

writing life. It will feature a curated selection of books that were important to Frame.

Apart from a handful of exceptions, very few books owned by Frame have survived. This means that items displayed will be drawn from other sources, explains Ross.

"*Janet Frame's Bookshelf* will be a reconstituted library of materials brought together to celebrate how her reading life meshed with her writing one. As she noted in her autobiography, whilst writing *Owls do Cry* in the army hut behind Frank Sargeson's Takapuna bach, 'My writing was accompanied by reading: I had many books to read'."

Ross says another prompt for the exhibition is the poem *The Clock Tower* written by Frame when she was the Burns Fellow at Otago, which begins:

I have settled now in my flat.

I have arranged my favourite books on the bookshelf.

I have moved the table for working in privacy and light.

Frame's long association with the University of Otago began in the 1940s when she studied part-time at the University while training to become a primary school

teacher. She was Burns Fellow in 1965 and was awarded a University of Otago degree in 1978.

Ross says it is exciting to curate an exhibition that presents Frame's life and work in a fresh light, grounding the exhibition in primary research using the published and archival collections held by the Hocken.

"I am also eager to see how visitors respond to the exhibition and this reframing of Janet Frame's life. And it is a privilege to contribute to the Otago region's commemorations of Frame's birth."

The exhibition will open in mid-August 2024 and run through to early 2025. The University will celebrate the centenary of Frame's birth in other ways including a one-day symposium hosted by the English and Linguistics programme on 30 August, and the 2024 Margaret Dalziel lecture on 29 August.

Books by Otago alumni

Congratulations – you have dyslexia! Great minds think differently by Mike Styles, independently published, 1 January 2022.

The Kitchen of Somewhere by Anna Kelly McLeod, Carswell & Bain, 2022.

How to Grow an Athlete: From Playground to Podium by Lea Stening, Quentin Wilson Publishing, 2022.

Fungi of Aotearoa: A Curious Forager's Field Guide by Liv Sisson, Penguin, May 2023.

Safe Food: Food Safety Practices for the Food Worker, 5th Edition by Pip Duncan and Julian Jensen, Food Advisory Services, July 2023.

How to Be a Scientist: Critical Thinking in the Life Sciences by Roslyn A. Kemp and Deborah M. Brown, CRC Press, 1 October 2023.

Interkulturelle Dialoge: Exil- und Gegenwartsliteratur, Europa- und Kunstdiskurse. Festschrift für P. M. Luetzeler zum 80. Geburtstag by Michael Kessler, Stauffenburg, 4 November 2023.

Memories of the Royal Family: A Kiwi Collection by Angela Robertson, independently published, November 2023.

Future Normal: 8 Questions to Create Businesses Your Children will be Proud Of by Nick Barter and Christopher Fleming, Routledge, 2023.

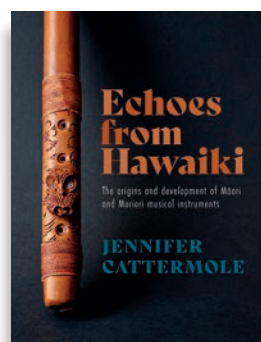
The Back Fix: The Back Pain Crisis and How to Beat the World's #1 Disability by Antony Bush, independently published, 1 April 2024.

Environmental Defenders: Fighting for our natural world, by Raewyn Peart, Bateman Books, May 2024.

Dubious cures and frauds: Quirky objects in the Cotter Medical History Museum by Claire Le Couteur, The Cotter Medical History Trust, June 2024.

The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup: Politics, Representation, and Management, edited by Adam Beissel, Verity Postlethwaite, Andrew Grainger, Julie E. Brice, Routledge, July 2024.

Alumni: if you have recently published a book please email mag.editor@otago.ac.nz



Echoes from Hawaiki: The origins and development of Māori and Moriori musical instruments

By Jennifer Cattermole
Otago University Press, June 2024

Echoes from Hawaiki is a comprehensive account of taonga pūoro ancestral musical traditions and instrument-playing techniques.

In this thoroughly researched and beautifully illustrated book, Jennifer Cattermole traces the origins and development of taonga pūoro, the stories they carry and how they connect present-day iwi with ancestral knowledge and traditions. She shows how traditional Māori and Moriori musical instruments have developed in response to available materials and evolving cultural needs, from their ancestral origins through the suppression of their use in 19th and early 20th century Aotearoa New Zealand, to their revival in the present day.

An essential resource for all who are interested in taonga pūoro as treasured objects and as voices through time and place.



Meantime

By Majella Cullinane
Otago University Press, May 2024

During the Covid-19 pandemic, 18,000 uncrossable kilometres lay between poet Majella Cullinane in Aotearoa New Zealand and her mother in Ireland, a distance unbridgeable even by phone as Cullinane's mother's language was lost to dementia. *Meantime* calls and keens across this terrible distance.

With attentiveness, tenderness and extraordinary vulnerability, these poems speak directly to personal experience while also addressing a wider world shadowed and altered by illness, where everything once familiar and coherent is disintegrating, in flux, uncertain and strange.

These poems are works of vigil and devotion, breathed into existence by a daughter who could not be at the bedside of her beloved, dying parent. Personal and universal in its themes, the poems in *Meantime* possess a gravitas born of sorrow, steeped in love.

A warm and loving conversation about memory and forgetting, and a celebration of the power of voice to connect and heal, this is a collection for our times.

For further information:
Otago University Press
oup.nz | publicity@otago.ac.nz

Two journeys, one destination

Dr Rebecca Rice and Dr Katie Cooper
at Te Papa.

Kōrero with Te Papa curators Katie Cooper and Rebecca Rice

In conversation with Dr Katie Cooper, Curator New Zealand Histories and Cultures, and Dr Rebecca Rice, Curator Historical New Zealand Art, two alumnae, who talk about their very different paths from Otago to Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand.

Q What drew you to Otago, to study History and Physiotherapy?

Katie: I grew up in Gore and was always a bit of a home girl, so I didn't want to go too far. My mum, who is a history teacher, also went to Otago and my older brother had been as well, so we had that family tradition. I did my four years of undergrad and then I worked for a year at Otago Museum. I came back to Otago full-time to do my PhD. I valued and loved my time there.

Rebecca: I had a slightly different journey. I was born in Oamaru and moved to Dunedin in my fifth form, attending Otago Girls' High School. My mother and my uncle are also Otago graduates, so we were a Dunedin family really.

I guess I'm someone that always held the arts and sciences in tandem.

At that certain crunch point where you're figuring out what to do, I was doing a lot of singing, dance and drama, and physio felt like a place where I could pursue a path that reflected my interest in movement and the body.

I made a lot of wonderful friends that I have absolutely kept for life through that degree.

Q What are some of the most important things you took away from your degree?

Rebecca: I've been researching 19th century botanical women artists over the last few years and recently met a woman who is a botanical artist, who was also a lecturer at the Physio School. She said: 'But Rebecca, don't you think there's something about those observation skills that we drill you on in physiotherapy and the way you learn to look at art works?' I thought: 'You're right'. Physio is also a practice that is about relationships, and a lot of our work here is about relationships, whether it's about collaborating curatorially, or engaging with people on sensitive issues. Those communication skills are fundamental to physio, so I would say that is the main thing that I've carried from that career through my various roles.

The other thing that I hold onto about Otago University is its art collection. There were good days and bad days at university, but one of my favourite places was to go and hang out with Ralph Hotere's *Rain*



Photo: Yoan Jolly

DR REBECCA RICE: “There were good days and bad days at university, but one of my favourite places was to go and hang out with Ralph Hotere’s *Rain* (1979) ... That was amazing, that power of having art on campus was really important.”



Photo: Yoan Jolly

DR KATIE COOPER: “I think I was just so lucky, the teachers I had were wonderful, the History Department was so supportive ...”

(1979), displayed at the time in the original Hocken Library building. That was amazing, that power of having art on campus was really important.

Katie: As a postgraduate student, of course you develop research and writing skills, but some of the other jobs I did like tutoring and research assistant work where I was pulling together images and copyright permissions, those have been so helpful in this job.

I think I was just so lucky. The teachers I had were wonderful, the History Department was so supportive, and I never felt any kind of gatekeeping. I’d love to give a shout out to my supervisors Angela Wanhalla and Mark Seymour. They were, and continue to be, incredibly kind and insightful mentors. (Katie’s PhD thesis on the *Rural New Zealand Kitchen* is due to be published later in the year.)

Q **Rebecca:** How did you leap from physiotherapy to art history?

It kind of grew. My mother studied Botany at Otago and she was the scientist in the family. My father, even though he worked in the traffic and road safety industry, was the artist, the constant doodler. So, I had these oscillating things in my DNA.

Physio wasn’t where I wanted to be for the rest of my life. I went back to Vic [Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka]. I thought I wanted to do music but ended up falling in love with art history. I’ve worked a lot on the relationship between art and science in my curatorial research – I don’t see them as two binary opposites.

Q **How did you both find your way to Te Papa?**

Rebecca: I had a very long academic journey! I spent a few years when I arrived in Wellington working as a physiotherapist and then went back to uni. Alongside that, I was doing all the art history tutoring and teaching jobs, working at art galleries, while still doing the physiotherapy gig at Wakefield Hospital. In 2011 the opportunity to work at Te Papa came up, and in 2012 I was appointed to the position I still hold.

Katie: This is going to sound so obnoxious because I was interviewing for this job as I finished my PhD, which is so lucky. I just know that is not the reality for most people. I wasn’t sure what I was going to do once I’d finished my thesis, I was just looking to that finish line and then I would figure it out. But this job came up and it sounded wonderful, it sounded like just what I was looking for because it does have that mix of academic research and public engagement.

A couple of days after I handed in my PhD, I flew up to meet the team and do the final interview. I was very nervous because I thought: ‘What if I don’t pass, what if I don’t get my PhD? Then I’m going to lose my PhD and the job!’ Thankfully it all worked out.

Q **What does a curator do?**

Katie: It’s different every day. Every day a question will be put to you by the public which is always really interesting. Obviously, we do have our specialties, but you need to be able to do a range of different things. My first project when I got here was to redo the label for the Britten motorcycle, and despite my rural upbringing, I didn’t know anything about

motorcycles! So that was a bit of a crash course. Then you’ll get an enquiry about a war medal, or you’ll need to write something about a cannon, so you’re always learning.

Our job is both to research and share stories of the objects in the collection but also to build the collection through acquisitions. We get offered things almost every day by members of the public who are looking for homes for their precious objects, or we go out and look at things proactively.

Rebecca: The way we engage with the public is across multiple formats. You’ve got your more popular end of things – blogs or exhibitions where you’re really trying to reach a broad generalist audience – and then we’re still maintaining our academic credentials so continuing to publish in those contexts is important.

Q **You co-authored the recently published *Te Ata o Tū The Shadow of Tūmatauenga: The New Zealand Wars Collections of Te Papa*. Can you tell us how the book came about?**

Rebecca: I have been interested in the visual culture associated with the New Zealand Wars since my honours year, when I looked at a small collection of watercolour drawings of Māori flags that were brought together by an amateur historian who was also a draughtsman and artist.

In 2017, the Government announced the dedication of a day to remember the New Zealand Wars. I’d been working a lot with my colleague Matiu Baker, Curator Mātauranga Māori, and we got the go-ahead to pull together a small exhibition to coincide with that first Rā Maumahara. Then Te Papa Press became interested. We were really conscious that day had been inaugurated to recognise the importance of that particular period of history and to address its absence from our landscapes, from our curriculum, from our social memories. This book represents the first step towards addressing the silences in Te Papa’s own collections and histories.

Q **Why focus on objects?**

Rebecca: Matiu and I argued away from a text heavy book to something that was much more visually driven, because we wanted it to be interesting and useful to a general and education audience. We’re in this business because we believe in the power of taonga, artworks and objects to open up stories. I think when you’re dealing with really difficult histories, having something that mediates the conversation, that offers up different perspectives about the people, the places, or events, is incredibly powerful.

Katie: We’ve had such rich conversations, with the objects as a starting point. They have such complicated, tangled histories. And they also take you right there to that moment; these are the weapons of war, these are the trophies of war, these are the reflections of war. There’s an immediacy to the objects that I think gives the book a particular poignancy.

One of the major challenges to us was to bring more life and

personality to the stories because of the nature of the topic and the nature of some of these objects. Descendants encouraged us to think about the person’s whole life and to bring a bit more of that to the book to give it a little bit more heart, which was wonderful. We felt so privileged to be gifted those reminiscences and to have those conversations.

Rebecca: There were people that said this was the first time they’d been asked to share their kōrero about their tipuna, which in some instances was quite shocking, given the scholarship that exists around some of these people.

It’s not to say we’ve done it perfectly – this is just the beginning of us as an institution trying to reckon with those objects, with our collections. Because we are a colonial museum, most of our collections were built through the lens of the Pākehā collector, usually male, and were often acquired through dubious circumstances.

Q **Which of the objects are most powerful to you?**

Katie: It’s so hard to pick because all the objects have amazing stories. We’ve been researching the collection for quite a long time now, but we saw the power of the objects all over again on the day of the launch. We had the pōwhiri, the launch, the blessing and then we had a session in the storeroom where attendees could come and see the taonga. To see people interacting with those taonga in that space, with song and such rich conversation, that has really given me a new perspective on those objects. We hope the book is just the first step in a lot of work that we as an institution need to do, building on those relationships.

Rebecca: I’m really pleased that we included taonga from artists, activists, photographers and makers working right up to the present moment. These works reflect our histories in different ways, reminding us of the ongoing relevance and legacies of the New Zealand Wars in our contemporary moment.

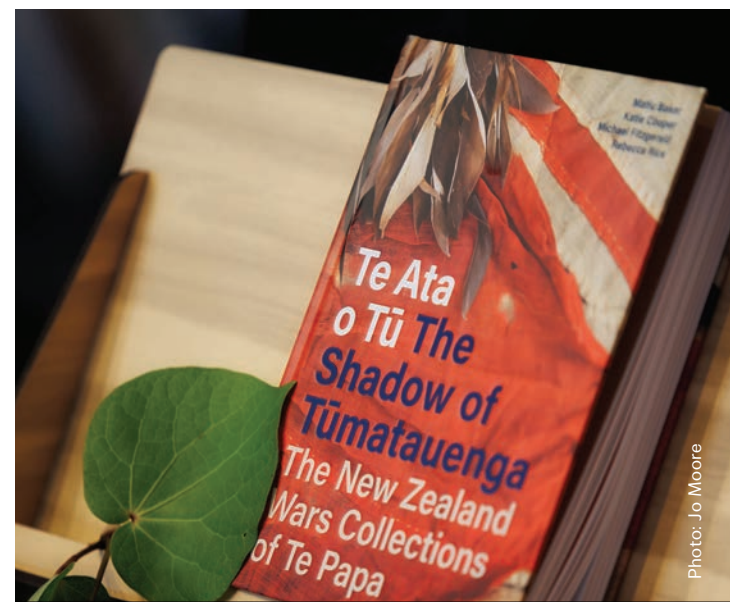


Photo: Jo Moore

Te Ata o Tū, edited by Otago alumnae Dr Katie Cooper and Dr Rebecca Rice, with Matiu Baker and Michael Fitzgerald.

PhD research at Otago leads to Australian Life Scientist of the Year Award

World-leading research that began in a lab at Otago has led to Monash University Professor Chris Greening being awarded the Australian Prime Minister's 2023 Frank Fenner Prize for Life Scientist of the Year.



AUSTRALIAN LIFE SCIENTIST OF THE YEAR AWARD, PROFESSOR CHRIS GREENING: "It wouldn't have been possible without the amazing experiences I had during my PhD at the University of Otago. That period of my life was truly formative both personally and professionally."

THE PRESTIGIOUS AWARD, ANNOUNCED IN OCTOBER, IS ONE OF SEVEN annual Australian Prime Minister's Prizes for Science, which recognise outstanding achievement in scientific research, research-based innovation, and excellence in science teaching.

Greening graduated from the University of Otago with a PhD in 2014, and the award recognises research he began as a PhD student in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology.

"It's surreal to receive this honour," he says. "It wouldn't have been possible without the amazing experiences I had during my PhD at the University of Otago. That period of my life was truly formative both personally and professionally."

"I came to the University of Otago very green (excuse the pun!). Through the visionary leadership and supportive mentorship of my supervisor Distinguished Professor Gregory Cook, I grew into a fully-fledged scientist and a more confident, pragmatic and optimistic person.

"I've continued to work extensively with Professor Cook and another key mentor, Dr Sergio Morales, in the years since."

The Prime Minister's Award recognises

Greening's research which has redefined life through his world-first discovery that microbes live on air. His work has shown that atmospherically-powered microbes are highly abundant and active throughout soils and waters.

Moreover, he has discovered new ways that microbes help regulate climate change and air pollution. Microbes remove 350 million tonnes of gases such as carbon monoxide from the atmosphere each year.

Professor Cook says he was delighted to see Greening honoured in this way.

"Chris was a PhD student in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology from 2010 to 2014, where he first demonstrated that microbes could produce energy from the oxidation of atmospheric hydrogen.

"Chris was an outstanding PhD student and showed an extraordinary ability to expand lab-based studies into major ecosystem-level concepts that are now paradigms in microbial ecology. We are extremely proud of his achievements, and it is a real honour for our department and university to have played a part in his journey to becoming a global leader in this exciting field of research."

Continuing the Otago connections with the Frank Fenner Prize, Professor Fenner was the PhD supervisor of distinguished Otago alumnus and virologist Professor Robert Webster.

Greening leads the One Health Microbiology Laboratory at Monash University in Melbourne, and is also a Chief Investigator of Securing Antarctica's Environmental Future (SAEF). He uses his discoveries to understand climate responses and inform conservation efforts in Antarctica.

He has held several prestigious fellowships including an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Early Career Researcher Award in 2016. In 2020, Greening received \$1.45 million as part of his National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Fellowship, which supports him with developing a world-class medical research programme focusing on how microbial gas cycling contributes to the development of tuberculosis and dysentery.

Greening received the Jim Pittard Award for Early Career Researcher from the Australian Society for Microbiology in 2019 and the Fenner Medal from the Australian Academy of Science in 2022.



Successful first year for Public Health Communication Centre

Members of the Public Health Communication Centre (from left) Marnie Prickett, Professor Michael Baker and Dr John Kerr.

It has been a busy and successful first year for the Public Health Communication Centre (PHCC). Launched in February 2023, the Centre is funded by a philanthropic endowment from the Gama Foundation, and is hosted by the Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington.

LED BY DIRECTOR PROFESSOR MICHAEL BAKER AND CO-DIRECTORS PROFESSORS NICK WILSON AND SIMON HALES, the PHCC team also includes Science and Communication Leads, a part-time administrator, a tangata whenua editor, reviewing editors and an Advisory Board. Working alongside the team is Research Fellow Marnie Prickett whose research focuses on freshwater quality.

The PHCC's aim is to effectively communicate public health research evidence and improve the health, wellbeing and equity of the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and the health of the environment. It is dedicated to increasing the reach and impact of public health research, making it more accessible to the public and decision-makers.

To help achieve these goals, the team published 70 *Public Health Expert Briefings* in the first 12 months since the Centre's launch in

February 2023. The *Briefings* feature expert analysis and commentary and are regularly covered by the media.

Baker says it is exciting to be collaborating with researchers from across Aotearoa New Zealand to get the latest evidence-informed commentary out more widely on issues affecting New Zealanders.

"The increasing number of *Briefings*, contributing authors, subscriber numbers, and media coverage indicates to us that there is a role for the PHCC's independent voice."

Baker says universities play an important role as critic and conscience of society and are vital in maintaining a dynamic democratic society.

"The PHCC provides a platform to share evidence produced by researchers on public health and the social determinants of health that shape our communities now and for future generations."

Science Lead for the PHCC and University of Otago Senior Research Fellow Dr John Kerr previously studied risk perceptions and misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic as a postdoc at the University of Cambridge.

"By making public health research and evidence accessible to a wider audience we are contributing to a healthier information landscape in Aotearoa. This makes it harder for false or misleading information to gain a foothold. Making sure that clear and credible public health information is available to everyone doesn't solve the problem of misinformation – but it is a vital first step."

One area of focus for the PHCC is research undertaken by Marnie Prickett on water quality in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Gama

Foundation has supported Prickett to work as a Research Fellow with PHCC, with a specific focus on communicating the importance of maintaining and improving freshwater and drinking water standards to the public.

"Access to safe drinking water is a basic human right and yet an estimated 34,000 New Zealanders get sick from poor drinking water each year. Through the *Briefing* and the PHCC we have been able to highlight the gaps between our environmental and human health policies for drinking water that leave our drinking water supplies vulnerable," she says.

Prickett points out that it is now almost eight years since Havelock North experienced the largest campylobacteriosis outbreak ever recorded.

"Memories can fade, and the advice of the Outbreak Inquiry may be forgotten. It's essential to keep drinking water issues in the public conversation so that our politicians are reminded and, if necessary, pushed to keep public health as their priority."

Other topics covered during the year include rapid responses to emerging public health issues such as Cyclone Gabrielle; the repeal of the smokefree legislation; the future of healthy school lunches; and the controversial Fast-Track Approvals Bill. Other issues covered in the *Briefing* include tax justice; tackling child poverty; improving Māori health equity; preventing Long COVID; and responding to the biggest health crisis of our time, climate change.

To find out more about the *Briefing*, subscribe and/or become a contributing author go to: phcc.org.nz

Major gift to help pave the way for better health outcomes

A passion for education and helping others is the motivation behind a major gift to support students and research at the University of Otago.

UNITED STATES-BASED MEDICAL ALUMNUS AND RADIOLOGIST Dr John M. Stewart left a generous bequest of \$3.8m to the Alumni of the University of Otago in America (AUOA).

The first initiative established through the gift is the John M. Stewart Scholarship, which supports undergraduate Health Sciences students at Otago and was awarded for the first time in March 2024.

"We're incredibly grateful to the late Dr Stewart for this major bequest and also his family for support of this legacy," says AUOA President Jono Wong. "It's the single largest donation our American alumni association has ever received, and we're committed to maximising the academic opportunities and impact the donation will have for many years to come. This scholarship is just the first initiative."

Dr Stewart's family describe him as a wise and extremely humble man throughout his life. Following a cancer diagnosis in 2004 he participated in several cancer research trials. They say their father always had a dream of doing his part, with the hope of seeing a cure for cancer one day.

"Dad was very passionate about education and research, and about cancer research in particular. This was a main reason for wanting to donate to the University of Otago."

The family says their father had "no desire to buy expensive clothes or cars, he just wanted his money to go on education, learning experiences and items that lasted. I know he would be happy to know that his gift would be going towards students of any background

who are hard-working, studious and focused on their study.

"He would love to see students of the University of Otago continue to pave the way for future research and better health outcomes for all people."

The inaugural recipient of the scholarship is fifth-year Medical student Gina Searancke (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Tukorehe). Gina has previously worked as a healthcare assistant and a medic within the military, and she and her husband are completing their medical degrees whilst also raising a young family.

Gina says receiving the scholarship has provided "such an overwhelming sense of relief for my family, knowing it will help alleviate some of our financial burdens whilst still allowing me to pursue my dream and continue to 'whaowhia te kete mātauranga' (fill the basket of knowledge)."

Gina is passionate about working within her community to seek better health outcomes and help address disparities and inequities, especially for Māori patients.

"I hope to honour the legacy that this scholarship represents by using my education and experiences to make a positive impact on future generations and others within my community, just as John M. Stewart has done."

The Director of Development and Alumni Relations at Otago, Shelagh Murray, says: "The University is grateful to the late Dr Stewart for this generous gift, and to AUOA for establishing this scholarship which will make such a difference to a worthy student."

Dr Stewart graduated MB ChB from Otago in 1966. After completing residencies in New



GINA SEARANCKE: "I hope to honour the legacy that this scholarship represents by using my education and experiences to make a positive impact on future generations and others within my community, just as John M. Stewart has done."

Zealand, his first position was at the PW Verco Practice in Adelaide, Australia.

He then moved with his family to the United States, accepting a dual position at the Medical College of Wisconsin and at the Milwaukee County General Hospital. Two years later he moved his family to Caribou, Maine, accepting a position at Cary Medical Center.

Dr Stewart worked in Caribou for 35 years, experiencing many radiological changes in technology and equipment, which prompted him to attend additional training and education in CT scanning, MRI, and advanced ultrasound throughout the country. He died in 2015.

AUOA is a registered charity that allows US-based alumni to network, support each other, and contribute financially to the University of Otago to fund initiatives.



The late Dr John M. Stewart

New Year Honours shared with colleagues and mentors

An inspiring group of alumni and Otago academics were recognised in the 2024 New Year Honours list for their outstanding contributions to their communities and professions.

FROM ACROSS AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND and as far afield as the United Kingdom, the 15 Honours' recipients have provided exceptional services to a range of health specialties, workplace safety, the trade union movement, exercise sciences, social work, the disability community, curling, education, Pacific health, arts, music and rural health.

Among the alumni honoured are social worker Rose Henderson and exercise sciences and neuroscience academic Associate Professor Greg Anson.

Henderson was named an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to social work and health. She graduated from the Dunedin College of Education in 1975 and went on to gain a Diploma in Māori and a Diploma in Social and Community Work in 1998, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Welfare in 2004.

Throughout her career, she has made significant contributions to social work as a profession in New Zealand and internationally through voluntary governance roles.

"Such an honour cannot be achieved by one person working alone, and I very much pay tribute to the many inspiring and supportive colleagues who it has been my privilege to work with over the years,

both within the profession and across the multidisciplinary teams that I have been a part of. I hope they see a part of themselves reflected in this."

Henderson says her Social Work study through the University of Otago laid the foundation for her career, and she was particularly appreciative of the distance learning opportunities provided at the time, as she was raising a young family in Southland.

Associate Professor Anson was also awarded an ONZM, in recognition of his life-long contribution to exercise sciences and the field of human movement neuroscience, both in New Zealand and internationally.

He completed his DipPhEd at Otago in 1973, an MSc in Motor Control at the University of Wyoming in 1976 and his PhD at Penn State in 1980. Returning to Otago, he worked at the University from 1985 to 2009 and was an Associate Professor and Director of the Applied Sciences Programme before moving to Auckland.

At the University of Auckland, Anson was Head of Department of Exercise Sciences from 2010 to 2020, and Head of the Tāmaki Campus for seven years. He served as Deputy Chair and Chair of the New Zealand Tertiary Council for Physical Activity, Sports and Exercise, was a board member of the International Society of Motor Control and is an International Fellow of the American National Academy of Kinesiology.

Anson says he had the chance to work with some amazing colleagues and students at Otago and says he is "indebted to the rich collegial environment and mentoring at Otago".

Otago alumni and academics to receive New Year Honours in 2024:

Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM):

Professor Brian Joseph Anderson, of Auckland (MB ChB 1980). For services to paediatrics and anaesthesia.

Professor Graeme Mervyn Bydder, of Altrincham, United Kingdom (MB ChB 1969).

For services to medical imaging.

Mr James Ross Wilson, of Wellington (LLB 1969; BA 1971). For services to the trade union movement and workplace safety.

Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM):

Associate Professor James Gregory Anson, of Auckland (DipPhEd 1974). For services to exercise sciences and neuroscience.

Mr Richard Waldron Bunton, of Dunedin (MB ChB 1976). For services as a cardiac surgeon.

Ms Rosemary Alice Henderson, of Christchurch (Dunedin College of Education 1975; DipMaor 1998; DipSCWk 1998; PGDipSW 2004). For services to social work and health.

Associate Professor Tristram Richard Ingham, of Wellington (MB ChB 1997). For services to the disability community (see page 30 to 31 for a full profile).

Mrs Norah Elizabeth Matthews, of Auckland (DipPhEd 1969). For services to curling.

Dr Hana Merenea O'Regan, of Christchurch (DipArts 1996; MA 1998). For services to education.

Emeritus Professor Peter Donald Wilson, of Motueka. For services to obstetrics and gynaecology.

Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM):

Mr Tevita Filisonu'u Funaki, of Auckland (BCom 2000). For services to Pacific health.

Mr Richard Geoffrey Keddell, of Tauranga (MB ChB 1982). For services to orthopaedics.

Ms Philippa Agnes Laufiso, of Dunedin (DipTchg (Primary) 1987. Former College of Education staff member; BA 2019). For services to arts and the community.

Lemalu Silao Vaisola Sefo, of Auckland (BCom 2004). For services to Pacific health.

Queen's Service Medal (QSM):

Mr Allan John Kerr, of Fairlie (Dunedin College of Education 1962). For services to music.

Dr Michael John Hugh Miller, of Whangamatā (PGDipHeallnf 2000; PGDipMSM 2004; PGCertCPU 2011). For services to rural health.



Photo: Dave Bull

Some of the 75 donor-funded scholarship recipients for 2024.

Alumni Entrance Scholarships “make everything possible”

Having travelled from around Aotearoa New Zealand to study at Otago, the 2024 class of Alumni scholarship recipients was warmly welcomed at a gathering at Allen Hall Theatre at the start of the year.

IN 2024, 75 DONOR-FUNDED ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIPS have been awarded to first-year students. These include those funded through the Alumni Entrance Scholarships Appeal; Alumni in America; Elman Poole; Graeme and Mary Fogelberg; John F. Ward Southland Scholarship; R & E Seelye; Ralph Moir Surveying; Commerce and Pacific Scholarships (from an anonymous donor); Yarrow South and 71-73 Alumni Frank Leong Entrance Scholarship; Freely Received, Freely Give (Matt 10:8).

At the welcome, Otago’s Development and Alumni Relations Office Director, Shelagh Murray, spoke about how many of the donors had received scholarships themselves and wanted today’s students to experience the same benefits they had received.

“As these donors generously give back to the University, their financial support helps a new generation of students on the pathway

to success, by easing financial stress and enabling you to immerse yourselves in your studies and life at the University.”

A common theme among the students was how pivotal the scholarships were in enabling them to come to Otago to study. Alumni Appeal Entrance Scholarship recipient Olivia Railton, who is studying Health Sciences First Year (HSFY), says the scholarship has been “life-changing”.

“It makes everything possible, it’s completely changed the course of my life,” says Olivia, who is from Waikanae.

These sentiments are echoed by fellow Alumni Appeal scholarship recipient, HSFY student Lily Greenwood, from Christchurch. “It takes a lot of pressure off, not having to work. It feels much more sustainable, and makes coming down here easier to fund and makes it more possible.”

Phoenix Whalley, also from Christchurch, says the course she wanted to do in Health and Physical Education, was only offered at Otago, but without the Alumni Appeal scholarship she wouldn’t have been able to afford to go to university. “When I received it [the scholarship] it was crazy, my mum was crying.”

Two donors who wish to remain anonymous have provided generous scholarships for Commerce and Pacific students. HSFY student Riki Sagato says the Pacific scholarship “helps me and my family

financially, mentally and physically, and I don’t need to work because of it. Thank you!”

71-73 Alumni Frank Leong scholarship recipient Jodi Jefferson has come from Tākaka, near Nelson. She attended Golden Bay High School and plans to study Law and History. “The scholarship is very good as it helps ease some of the stress, letting me focus on my studies.”

Oceania-Blue Joblin-Ross, who has also received an Alumni Appeal scholarship, says they’d have been “pretty much homeless” if they hadn’t received the scholarship, as they had been living in a caravan with their sister and four-year-old nephew, in Ōpōtiki in the Bay of Plenty.

Oceania-Blue, who is doing a double major in Computer Science and English, says they came to Otago mostly for the Exchange Programme offered by the University, and wants to take the opportunity to study in California. They wouldn’t have been able to afford to come to the University without the scholarship, as it has helped pay for accommodation in a residential college, which they wouldn’t have been able to afford otherwise.

“I will definitely be able to work less. I imagined when coming down here I’d have to get a job immediately, now I have time while settling in, a buffer to figure out where I am in the city.”

Alumni events around New Zealand and the world

It has been our pleasure and privilege to host our alumni at events and reunions around New Zealand and the world, and to hear about their lives and journeys since graduation. Here are just a few of the highlights.



Physical Education Class of '68 reunion

February 2024
Wanaka



New Plymouth event

5 March 2024
Devon Hotel, New Plymouth
Photo: Emma Crofskey, Eloise Pollard and Kendall North



Napier event

7 March 2024
Crown Hotel, Napier
Photo: Linda Mackay, Lucy Blakeney-Cabot, Honey Lee Blakeney-Cabot and Marnie Mannering



Auckland Young Alumni event

15 March 2024
St Alice, Auckland
Photo: Ben Marshall-Lee, Sarah Findlay and Anna Riddle



Home Science Class of '66 reunion

April 2024
Auckland

Yes, I would like to support the University of Otago and its ongoing programmes. Your gift can be directed to any one of the following areas:

- Scholarships
- Research
- Pūtea Tautoko Student Hardship Fund
- Where the need is greatest
- Other

Amount of gift

- \$50
- \$100
- \$250
- \$500
- \$1000

or my choice is

Payment options

1. Make a one-off donation or set up a monthly donation using our secure giving page at otago.ac.nz/alumni/donate

2. Charge my credit card: Visa Mastercard

Card number:

Expiry date:

Cardholder's name:

Signature:

3. Direct deposit:

Bank Name: ANZ Bank New Zealand Limited

Account Name: University of Otago Foundation Trust

Account Number: 01-1839-0944132-00

Swift (if required): ANZBNZ22

Particulars: eg: Smith JA

Reference/code: e.g. Greatest Need or Scholarship

Leaving a bequest

I would like information about including a gift to the University of Otago in my will.

I have already included a gift to the University of Otago in my will and would like to notify the Bequest Manager.

For residents in the UK:

please visit peoplesfundraising.com/donation/otagouniversitytrust-UK or email Chapel & York at otago@chapel-york.com

For residents in the USA who wish to make a tax deductible donation: please visit otagoalumni.us/donate-to-auoa or email treasurer@otagoalumni.us

For residents in New Zealand and rest of the world, please send this form and your donation to:

Development and Alumni Relations Office
University of Otago
PO Box 56
Dunedin 9054
New Zealand

Name:

Address:

Email:

Thank you for your support

Lessons on life and death



Medical students are learning about life from those who are dying and exploring their creative sides at the same time, part of an innovative palliative care programme at the University of Otago's Wellington campus.

THE PROGRAMME, RUN IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MARY POTTER HOSPICE, gives medical students the opportunity to meet and talk to patients in palliative care and create artworks based on their experiences.

The convenor of the programme, palliative care specialist and Professor of Medicine Sinéad Donnelly, says fourth-year medical students are introduced to the services provided by inpatient and community palliative care services and then connected in pairs with patients who they can arrange to visit at home or in the hospice.

For many of the young students, it is the first time they have met someone who is facing imminent death.

“Even though the students are training to

be doctors, meeting a person who is under palliative care is a daunting experience for a young person,” she says.

After their visit, each student writes a reflection on their experience and is given the opportunity to create an artwork which expresses the impact of the encounter on them both personally and as a future doctor. They can choose to compose a piece of music, paint or sketch, create a sculpture or write poems.

Donnelly says meeting people at the ends of their lives helps the students gain an insight into their common humanity.

“They are often in awe of the positive attitude that patients have about the life that remains to them.”

In their written reflections, students mention the importance of whanau and community to the patients, and reflect on their own families and friends, identifying the things they most value in their own lives.

“They also gain an insight into the value that palliative care adds to the quality of a patient's life,” she says.

The artworks display themes of family, connections and gratitude, as well as fear and anxiety.

Student Abdullah Mirza chose to create a watercolour painting of a robin to symbolise ‘a good death’.

In his reflection, he writes: “The robin is the harbinger of spring, the prelude to a season of new beginnings, signalling the belief of continuity of existence and death as

a transformative experience, rather than an end, whatever that may mean to someone.”

Emily Davey created a painting about her poignant experience with a patient who was diagnosed with breast cancer on the same day her granddaughter was born.

Her painting shows the granddaughter running through a doorway into the family home, while the grandmother has a glimpse beyond into wairua.

“[Her experience] resonated with me and reminded me that we all share two experiences: coming into being and coming out of it.

“This programme is like a seed planted in the students' experience to which they may turn for nourishment in the future.”

“Underlying all of this is their human connection through whakapapa,” she explains in her reflection.

Sophia Parbhu, who visited a young man who was dying, was struck by his positive mindset despite the difficulties he had experienced through his life.

Her work, ‘The Light in Times of Darkness’, shows the man's mind shining with yellow light, while he is surrounded by a world of darkness, expressing the suffering he had experienced through his life.

“Through everything, from living on the streets, to his pain of not being taken seriously due to an assumption he was seeking drugs, to the diagnosis of his tumour, to the loss of mobility, he has remained positive.”

Ross McLeod, the Director of Funding, Marketing and Communications at Mary Potter Hospice, says patients value the opportunity to talk to students in the final seasons of their lives.

“They enjoy being able to talk about their life story and share their insights into what it's like to live with a life-limiting illness. This is not always easy to do, and it isn't something all patients want to participate in, but those who do find it therapeutic and draw comfort from helping to train a new generation of medical students.

“For many of our patients, being able to play a part in preparing for the future is a meaningful experience, which offers comfort during their end-of-life journey.”

The palliative care teaching programme

was set up in 2002 by Professor Rod McLeod and Emeritus Professor Sue Pullon from the Department of Primary Health Care and General Practice as a joint initiative between the hospice and the medical school.

Art became part of the assignment in 2012, when Donnelly, along with Associate Professor Eileen McKinlay and Professor Lynn McBain from the Department of Primary Health Care and General Practice, and former palliative care educator Clare O'Leary from Mary Potter Hospice, took over the running of the programme.

Donnelly says creating artworks helps students get in touch with their innermost selves.

“Creativity can help us gently reach the deepest places. Meeting death up close challenges our sense of self, opening up the door to an existential mystery and to the depths of our inner worlds.”

Putting students in touch with their creative sides also gives them a gift they

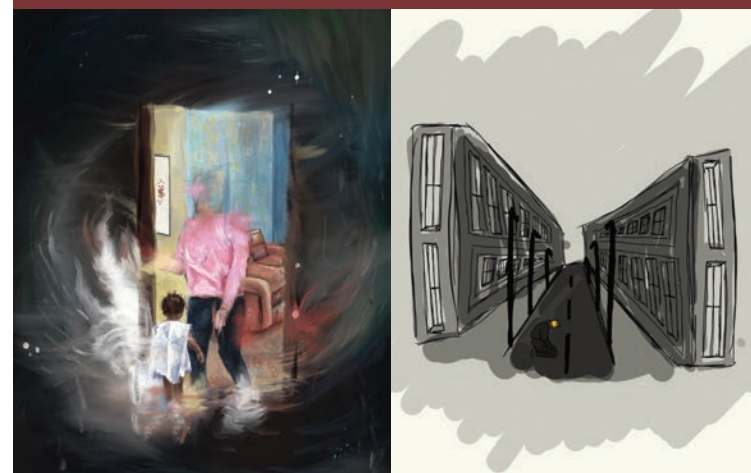
can return to in their future careers as professionals caring for the sick, the wounded, the vulnerable and the dying, she says.

“The work of a doctor in service to humanity is not a light load, so we must learn ways of restoring ourselves throughout the journey. This programme is like a seed planted in the students' experience to which they may turn for nourishment in the future.”

Students' work from 2022 and 2023 was celebrated with an exhibition, *Te Toi Porehu – The Art of Palliative Medicine*, on the Wellington campus at the end of February.

CHERYL NORRIE

Watch this video for more:



EMILY DAVEY (Artist - Above, left): “[Her experience] resonated with me and reminded me that we all share two experiences: coming into being and coming out of it.”

SOPHIA PARBHU (Artist - Above, right): “Through everything, from living on the streets ... to the diagnosis of his tumour, to the loss of mobility, he has remained positive.”

ABDULLAH MIRZA (Artist - Previous page, top right): “The robin is the harbinger of spring ... signalling the belief of continuity of existence and death as a transformative experience, rather than an end, whatever that may mean to someone.”



PROFESSOR SINÉAD DONNELLY: “Creativity can help us gently reach the deepest places. Meeting death up close challenges our sense of self, opening up the door to an existential mystery and to the depths of our inner worlds.”

Photos: Luke Pilkinton - Ching

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