

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO | NOVEMBER 2021

# MAGAZINE

ISSUE

53

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## Professor Keith Gordon wins Distinguished Research Medal

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Professor Michael Baker: Behind NZ's COVID response  
Hollywood to Queenstown: young composer is opening doors  
Innovative measures to achieve smokefree vision



UNIVERSITY  
of  
OTAGO

Te Whare Wānanga o Ōtāgo  
NEW ZEALAND

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Otago researchers are leading the world's most ambitious public housing research project, aiming to map the effectiveness of different types of housing in achieving key wellbeing and health goals.



## Behind NZ's COVID response

Professor Michael Baker's calm, considered, research-backed opinions have helped to guide Aotearoa's response to the global pandemic. As the strategic choices become increasingly complex and contested he shares his insights.



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Since taking on  
the role of Acting Vice-  
Chancellor at the end  
of March I have become  
even more aware of the  
wisdom of the words of  
the Māori proverb:

“He aha te mea  
nui o te ao?  
He tāngata,  
he tāngata,  
he tāngata.

What is the most  
important thing  
in the world?  
It is the people,  
it is the people,  
it is the people.”



**AS WE HAVE NAVIGATED** the changes that 2021 has brought, I have been privileged to witness, and be supported by, the amazing expertise, innovation and kindness of our people, whether they be staff, students or alumni.

For the University, one of the biggest changes was saying farewell to Professor Harlene Hayne, who was our Vice-Chancellor for nearly 10 years. We wish Harlene well in her new position at Curtin University. We are now looking forward to the arrival of our new Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Murdoch, early next year.

to the Government. Some of our people feature regularly in the media and have become household names, while many other colleagues have been working hard behind the scenes undertaking important research. As a University community we are proud to be able to help the Government and the team of five million New Zealanders in this way.

The appearance of COVID-19 has meant returning to online learning for many of our students. This brings challenges for the students and also the teaching and professional staff as they

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“With Professor Murdoch and the University Council, we are developing the University’s future strategic direction document Vision 2040. This considers our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the University’s position in the Pacific.”

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With Professor Murdoch and the University Council, we are developing the University’s future strategic direction document Vision 2040. This considers our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the University’s position in the Pacific.

New Zealand has been fortunate to have escaped many of the ravages of COVID-19 over the past 18 months. We recognise that this has not been the case for those of you who live in other parts of the world and have lost loved ones and livelihoods as a result of the pandemic. Our thoughts are with you. However, after several months of relative freedom, the delta variant of COVID-19 has entered our New Zealand community and we are back coping with restrictions of our day-to-day activities. Our people have continued to provide assistance and advice

endeavour to support learning and stay connected. It has also brought financial hardship to students and I would like to thank all of you who have donated to Pūtea Tautoko, the student hardship fund. Your gifts have made a real difference to our students.

Speaking of our teachers, this year all four of our nominees were awarded National Tertiary Teaching Awards by Ako Aotearoa, including one in the Kaupapa Māori category and another endorsed in supporting Pacific learners. Furthermore, Dr Latika Samalia, from the Department of Anatomy, was awarded the Prime Minister’s Supreme Teaching Award. This means we have won this top award seven times in the past 10 years, showing that we have excellent teachers as well as world-class researchers!



I would like to end by thanking another special person, Karen Hogg, as this is the last *Otago Magazine* that she will be involved in editing. After 18 years producing this and the University’s other high profile publications, Karen is retiring. Karen has an amazing knowledge of the University and particularly its people and has used this to produce award-winning publications. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Karen for her dedication and expertise and wish her a long and happy retirement.

Kia kaha

**Vice-Chancellor (Acting)**  
Professor Helen Nicholson

# Building for the people

As New Zealand embarks on its largest public housing building programme since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, an ambitious research project is underway at the University of Otago to map the effectiveness of different types of housing in achieving key wellbeing and health goals.

## THE RESEARCH PROJECT,

“Public housing and urban regeneration: maximising wellbeing”, is being led by Sesquicentennial Distinguished Chair, Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman, Director of the Department of Public Health’s He Kāinga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme at the University of Otago in Wellington, and also a Director of Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities.

The research is supported by a \$12.4 million Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Endeavour Fund grant and will enable researchers to track the results of different housing models in achieving wellbeing and health goals.

Howden-Chapman says the massive public housing building programme will shape the futures of hundreds of thousands of people over coming decades.

“There are about a quarter of a million people currently living in Kāinga Ora public housing and if you think about the fact that these buildings are built to last 50 to 80 years, there are a lot of people who are going to live in these buildings over the years. You want to do it well the first time.”

The research project brings together 24 researchers from Otago and 12 from other institutions. Among them are economists, architects, social scientists, physicists, engineers, lawyers and Māori and Pasifika researchers. They include Professor Jacinta Ruru from the University of Otago’s Faculty of Law, whose expertise includes indigenous peoples’ legal rights to own, manage and govern land, and who will explore the legal complications of Māori urban authorities building papakāinga housing on marae reserve land.

“We’ve brought together a range of

different professionals with expertise in the indoor environment, in urban design and in funding and governance, to ask how we can produce the best-quality housing, which is innovative and increases the wellbeing of the tenants and the communities where these houses are,” Howden-Chapman says.

The researchers will examine the approach taken by different public housing organisations: state housing provider Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities, which is partnering with Tāmaki Regeneration and Ngāti Toa Rangatira; Wellington City Council; the Wellington-based social housing provider Dwell; the Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust; the Salvation Army; and the Wainuiōmata Marae Trust.

Working in collaboration with each housing provider, the University of Otago-led research group will be measuring performance on a number of agreed key outcome indicators: governance; financial arrangements and strategies; housing quality and scale; energy efficiency; transport and carbon emissions; community development; and understanding and implementation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations.

Howden-Chapman says all the projects are experimenting in different ways with innovative approaches.

At one end of the scale, the Wainuiōmata Marae Trust in Wellington has formed a unique partnership with Kāinga Ora to build up to 30 homes on marae land. The papakāinga, which will be supported by a solar-powered microgrid,

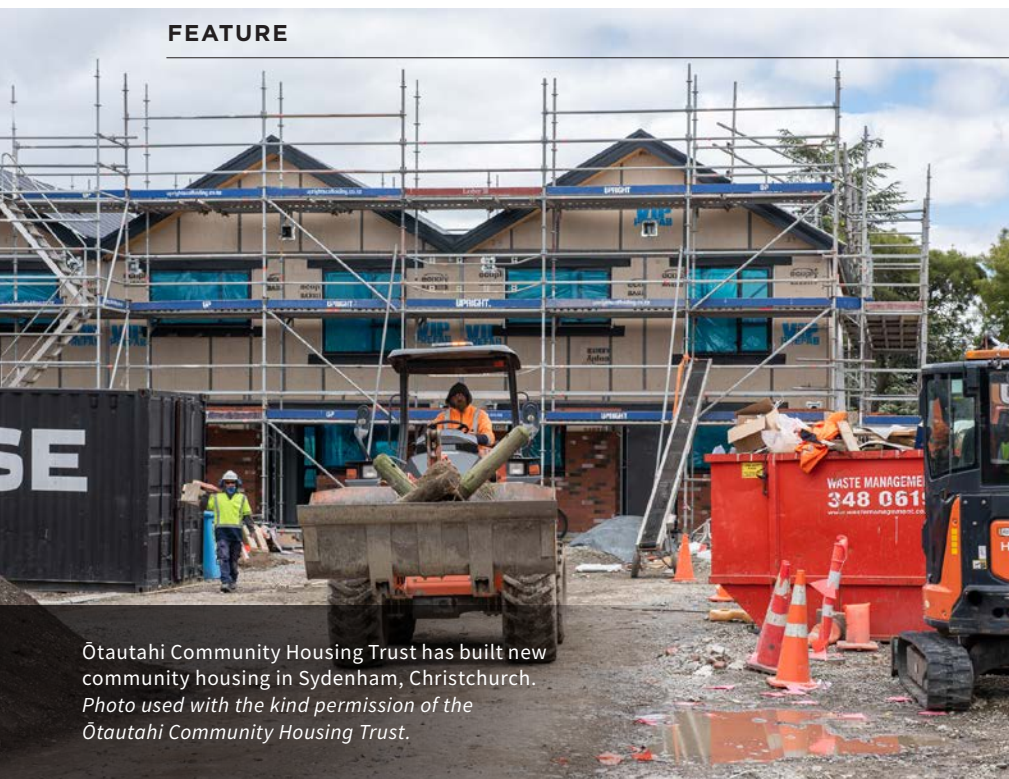


“We’ll also be able to tell how warm this housing is, we’ll know how much energy people use in the houses, how comfortable and safe they feel in the areas they live in, and how accepted they are into the community.”

**PROJECT LEADER OTAGO’S PROFESSOR PHILIPPA HOWDEN-CHAPMAN:**

“Whether you’re earning a big salary, or are on a welfare benefit, you should be able to live in affordable, safe, warm, dry housing and live a life that you value.”





Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust has built new community housing in Sydenham, Christchurch. Photo used with the kind permission of the Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust.

is providing a way for the Wainuiōmata community to deal with its own housing crisis and could become a pilot project for others around the country.

Trust Board Secretary and University of Otago, Wellington, researcher Cheryl Davies has worked with Howden-Chapman for 10 years to bring the project to life. Her motivation throughout has been to provide high-quality affordable housing for the people of Wainuiōmata.

She explains that the microgrid is designed to reduce household energy costs for the marae and their new residents, as well as to foster community independence and reduce their carbon footprint.

“A lot of what we want to do is around supporting sustainability for the families. Providing a nice, healthy home is not the only answer to addressing some of the needs of our families. Fuel poverty is a huge issue,” Davies says.

At the other end of the scale, state-funded housing provider Kāinga Ora, a Crown entity, has embarked on a new funding model, with the Government allowing it to raise \$8 billion on the international bond market to fund medium- and long-term developments through the issuing of Wellbeing Bonds.

Howden-Chapman says researchers and providers will be able to assess the innovations and progress being made in the different research strands.

“This will encourage adaptive management and allow us to find out what is working well and what is not, so that the providers can adjust their plans accordingly.”

Researchers will be able to look at where providers are succeeding, and which lessons can be shared with others.

“We have a key partner in each of the different housing providers and we will pass information back and forth to them, and those key people will also get together and share information.”

Associate Professor Nevil Pierse, who is Deputy Director of the He Kāinga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme, leads the focus on housing quality. As part of the research, air quality sensors will be fitted in public housing to collect real-time information on indoor temperatures.

Researchers were able to place sensors in Wellington City Council’s Arlington Street apartments to measure indoor temperatures before the buildings were demolished. Sensors have also been placed in the Te Māra apartments which replace them, monitoring indoor temperatures

both before the tenants moved in and after occupancy. The readings will enable researchers to compare the temperature inside older housing units with those in the new apartments, now leased to Kāinga Ora.

Pierse says the sensors will allow researchers to analyse the extent to which high-quality housing improves indoor temperatures, as well as how important other factors might be, such as the use of solar panels to reduce the cost of electricity.

The warmth of the homes will be a key test for all the houses in the research programme, he says.

“We know the actual temperature of children’s bedrooms makes a big difference to their health and that’s why we’re building quality houses, but can we deliver it just with well-built houses, or do we need solar panels? Does changing the cost of electricity result in a big difference in temperature? I suspect it will.”

As well as collecting real-time data on indoor temperatures, researchers will be making use of anonymised data on residents’ health and wellbeing from Stats NZ’s Integrated Data Infrastructure, and will conduct interviews with directors and managers of housing programmes, public housing tenants and their community neighbours.

Howden-Chapman says the research will provide insights into how satisfied residents feel with their housing.

“We’ll also be able to tell how warm this housing is, we’ll know how much energy people use in the houses, how comfortable and safe they feel in the areas they live in, and how accepted they are into the community.”

A key focus will be on transport links and carbon emissions, she says.

“We’ll be looking at how close the houses are to public transport and to cycling and walking routes, so that it is easier for residents to make active journeys, rather than driving their cars. One of the



## BBC to spotlight housing research

outcomes we are very interested in is carbon emissions, including the level of embodied carbon in the buildings.”

The research project is drawing on expertise from a top level advisory group which includes: Professors Richard Edwards and Michael Baker from the Department of Public Health at the University of Otago, Wellington; Dr Kay Saville-Smith, Research Director at CRESA and Chief Science Advisor to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development; Rosemary Goodyear, a Senior Analyst at Stats NZ, who has particular expertise in housing; Len Cook, the former Government Statistician of New Zealand; Anaru Marshall, Lead Negotiator and Transition Manager for Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Maru and former Chief Executive of WISE Better Homes in Taranaki; Dr Manfred Plagmann, Principal Scientist at building research organisation BRANZ; Professor Simon Kingham, from the University of Canterbury and Chief Science Advisor to the Ministry of Transport; Dr Biddy Livesey, a Principal Advisor at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development; Dr Dave Jacobs, an international expert in housing and health; and Professor Harrison Fraker, a former Dean of the University of California Berkeley College of Environmental Design.

The He Kāinga Oranga/Housing and Health Research programme at the University’s Department of Public Health in Wellington is to be featured in an upcoming mini-documentary, produced as part of a collaboration between the International Science Council and BBC Global News.

The research programme was selected after an international search for ideas for the series, which will showcase evidence-based actions being taken to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The documentary will focus on the real-world impact the group’s research has had in providing the evidence base for New Zealand’s Healthy Homes Standards and its leading role in developing World Health Organization (WHO) International Guidelines on Housing and Health.

Filming has been supported by the University of Otago and the Hutt Mana Charitable Trust.

The documentary will be hosted on the BBC website.

Howden-Chapman say the research is the most ambitious public housing research project she knows of anywhere in the world.

“I would hope that by the end of the five years, not only will we be able to see with pride what Aotearoa is doing in this flourish of new homes linked to supportive

tenancies, we will also be able to provide lasting evidence on the benefits of building houses which perform better than the current building code.”

The research will be able to demonstrate the benefits of making houses easier to heat, of using solar energy, and of having houses located near public transport and with access to cycling and walking tracks and amenities, including parks and other green spaces.

“It would give us huge satisfaction to know we’ve helped provide evidence to make sure that never again can we turn our backs on the critical benefits of public housing. Whether you’re earning a big salary, or are on a welfare benefit, you should be able to live in affordable, safe, warm, dry housing and live a life that you value.”

“I would hope that by the end of the five years, not only will we be able to see with pride what Aotearoa is doing in this flourish of new homes linked to supportive tenancies; we will also be able to provide lasting evidence on the benefits of building houses which perform better than the current building code.”

**CHERYL NORRIE**

# Behind NZ's COVID response

Few academics become familiar household names in New Zealand. Fewer still achieve the widespread international exposure that Professor Michael Baker has experienced since the global pandemic began. As he continues to support this country's COVID-19 response he shares his insights.

**NOTE:**

*This story was written in September and reflects the COVID-19 landscape at that time.*

## THE APPARENTLY UNFLAPPABLE

Baker's considered answers to even the hardest questions have generally been a calming influence within New Zealand, and are seen as wise counsel around the world.

His research-backed opinions and advice are still appearing on television, radio and in print, and his words are carefully weighed by health officials, politicians, business leaders and the general public.

So what prepared the University of Otago's Baker (Public Health, Wellington campus), for being thrust so spectacularly into the spotlight? How did he and several of his research colleagues become unexpected stars of the pandemic publicity phenomenon?

"Quite simply, we were researching and thinking about something like COVID-19 long before it happened," says Baker. "For us, it wasn't a case of if but when we were going to be hit by an event like this."

Epidemiologists didn't know exactly what they would be facing, but they'd researched and drawn lessons from past events, including the 'flu pandemics of 1918 and 2009 and the outbreak of SARS in 2003. When COVID-19 appeared they had a head start on what might be done.

Baker and colleagues had long been pushing governments to invest more in prevention and preparedness for pandemics but it wasn't until the virus arrived that health officials started to act on their advice. Baker was the first to call for an elimination strategy and rapid lockdown to fight COVID-19. He led the writing of the world's first published elimination strategy, which appeared in the *NZ Medical Journal* on 3 April 2020.

He had a record of giving good advice in response to threats. His first major public health role was helping to establish the world's first national needle exchange programme in New Zealand, resulting in substantially reduced HIV/AIDS infections among injecting drug users. More recently he had advocated for improving the food safety of fresh chicken, which contributed to a huge decline in campylobacter rates.

As Professor of Public Health at the University of Otago he is also director of

the Health Environment Infection Research Unit. Previous roles include working as a medical adviser to a Minister of Health, for the Wellington Regional Public Health service, for the Environmental Science and Research (ESR) Crown Research Institute and for the World Health Organization (WHO).

Baker's recommendations to go into lockdown hard and early followed a WHO report on how China had largely contained the virus in Wuhan. He says the way the government responded has shown how proactive measures can protect the public from avoidable hazards.

In January 2020 he was asked to join the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group (TAG), where he is still a member.

During a crisis, communicating science can be messy, says Baker. With fast-moving events, routine advisory processes start to break down. The communication systems that keep functioning are direct contact with key officials, political leaders and the media.

So at the peak of the 2020 crisis, Baker and a small group of Wellington colleagues disseminated their evidence-based ideas as blogs, and then talked about them via the media in what he calls the most intense period of his working life.

Science communication can be terrifying, says Baker. "You often must speak out before having the same level of certainty you might have when publishing research. There is also the problem of having your carefully planned messages sliced up into sound bites that convey a different meaning from what you intended."

Consequently, Baker prefers live radio and television interviews and blogs such as *The Conversation*, which provide maximum opportunity for communicating what is intended.

Baker's effective science-based advocacy has helped earn him a growing list of accolades including becoming a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit, the Prime Minister's Science Communication Prize, and Wellingtonian of the Year.

## PROFESSOR MICHAEL BAKER:

"Now we're in year two, the strategic choices have become more complex and more contested."



“... we were researching and thinking about something like COVID-19 long before it happened. For us, it wasn’t a case of if but when we were going to be hit by an event like this.”



**ON CAMERA:** A crew films Michael Baker for an HBO documentary, in the living room of his Wellington home, in June 2021.



**MASKED UP:** Michael Baker with Director General of Health, Dr Ashley Bloomfield, at Wellington Airport in February 2021.

Photos: Katie Chalmers

He is a member of the Science Media Centre Board and has received philanthropic support to establish a Public Health Communications Centre, which should start full operation early in 2022, supporting science communication in Aotearoa New Zealand.

After more than 2,000 interviews Baker is still one of the most called upon commentators on COVID-19 in New Zealand and internationally. Time zones are no barrier to calls from media across the world, if a little disruptive to family life with his wife Katie and four children in Wellington and elsewhere.

“Rapid, science-based risk assessment linked with early, decisive government action is critical to successful outcomes,” says Baker.

“In New Zealand’s case we had a courageous government that was prepared to act proactively to protect public health. We also had an effective public service and health sector that could implement the elimination strategy, and trusted communicators in the Ministry of Health, like fellow public health medicine specialist Dr Ashley Bloomfield, who fronted the response day after day.

“Finally, the media in New Zealand performed well in communicating the science. The collective work of all these people has built a high level of public support and social licence for the COVID-19 response.

“New Zealand’s decisive response has shown that good science and good political leadership are a powerful





**A PROUD MOMENT:** Professor Michael Baker, his wife Katie (right) and three of their four children (from left) Augusta, George and Euphemia with Research, Science and Innovation Minister Hon Dr Megan Woods and Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern when Baker received the Prime Minister's Science Communication Prize in April. *Absent: The Bakers' eldest son Alexander, who is living in Canada.*

Photo: Royal Society Te Apārangi

combination that can protect both public health and the economy.

"The evidence suggests that countries that pursued elimination of COVID-19 performed much better than those that only suppressed the virus. Elimination has produced the lowest death rates, least time under lockdowns, and best economic performance compared with countries that have been trying to 'live with the virus'."

New Zealand's situation compares favourably with some parts of the world where many individuals and even some leaders are taking life-threatening risks: ignoring safety advice, not following lockdowns, refusing vaccinations, promoting dis-information and even indulging in riotous, disease-spreading gatherings.

Baker says the first year of the pandemic was simpler in that the goal was

to stamp it out and keep it out, and the elimination strategy was undoubtedly the optimal response.

"It saved an estimated 10,000 lives compared with the deaths we would have seen if we had a similar mortality rate to the UK. It also gave New Zealanders very high levels of freedom and supported a much better economic recovery than most OECD countries.

"Now we're in year two, the strategic choices have become more complex and more contested. We have safe and highly effective vaccines that are being rolled out, but we also have far more infectious virus variants. There are many unknowns, including viral evolution and the potentially severe chronic effects of COVID-19 infection."

After months of bubbles, borders and bureaucracy, what now for New Zealand?

"People say, 'I can't wait to get back to business as usual', but there are a whole lot of things that we must do better," says Baker. "I hope that is one of the lessons we learn from this terrible disaster."

The recent endeavours of New Zealand's team of five million have led Baker to hope that they will inspire more ambitious action on other global threats like climate change, loss of biodiversity and high social inequities.

"I think one of the benefits of our successful response to COVID-19 is that the public has gained a greater appreciation of science and how evidence can be used in constructive ways. The public's understanding of the reasons for acting gives governments a social licence to take quite extreme measures to protect public health.

"The trajectory of COVID-19 has taught us that it is the behaviour of governments,



**RELAXED AT HOME:** Michael Baker in his kitchen.

Photos: Luke Pilkinton-Ching

more than the behaviour of the virus or individuals, that shapes countries' experience of the crisis.

"I do have a sense of idealism that we can actually do much better in New Zealand and globally at combatting the huge threats and challenges that we face. And I love the idea that good science, government leadership and collective action can make a positive difference in people's lives.

"My greatest hope as we emerge from the current pandemic is that we can use this newfound sense of agency to tackle the many other environmental, social and health challenges we face. Hopefully there is the will and confidence to build a more equitable and sustainable society."

We need to create stronger public health agencies to assess and manage potential future threats better as well as increase support for international health organisations such as the WHO, says Baker.

His consistent science-based advocacy has won him the Gama Foundation's Critic and Conscience of Society Award for

providing independent, expert commentary on New Zealand public health issues from 2016 to 2020 and notably during the COVID-19 crisis. The Public Health Association also made him their public health champion for 2020.

He has continued his research, publishing more than 25 peer-reviewed papers on COVID-19, several in leading journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Lancet* and *BMJ*, and working on scores of blogs and features with close Wellington-based Otago colleagues including Professor Nick Wilson and Dr Amanda Kvalsvig.

Otago Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) Professor Richard Blaikie says Baker's great skill is his ability to translate his expertise into practical and accessible information. "His efforts, and those of colleagues supporting him, have undoubtedly helped to save lives and reduce the wider impact of the pandemic."

The COVID-19 response has demonstrated one of the benefits of research-

intensive universities like Otago says Baker.

"This University has provided a large pool of expert scientists who have stepped up to fill many gaps in New Zealand's public health and science infrastructure. They have provided expertise in a range of areas, including epidemiology, microbiology, immunology, genomics, modelling and public policy that has been critical to New Zealand's successful response. Much of this input has been voluntary."

The pandemic has given Baker an unexpected public profile. He receives so many emails that it is hard to reply to them all, and he is recognised in public and gets people wanting selfies with him.

He also gets eye-wateringly vitriolic hate-emails and abuse on social media from people who seem to hold him personally responsible for all of the unintended consequences of the pandemic response.

There have been surreal moments too. On *Good Morning Britain*, interviewer Piers Morgan was comparing countries' responses to the pandemic. Baker found



“My greatest hope as we emerge from the current pandemic is that we can use this newfound sense of agency to tackle the many other environmental, social and health challenges we face. Hopefully there is the will and confidence to build a more equitable and sustainable society.”



**OUT AND ABOUT:** Michael Baker enjoys a walk in Central Park, Brooklyn, near his Wellington home.

himself arguing against the diametrically differing views of Sweden’s former state epidemiologist. Bizarrely, he was an old friend who had formerly hosted Baker on sabbatical in Sweden.

The *New York Times* telephoned Baker for his views on the prospects of then-President Donald Trump when he was diagnosed with COVID-19. Baker admits that many thoughts went through his mind before he finally pointed out Trump’s likely good prognosis despite some risk factors, and that was what was published.

Perhaps Baker’s most surreal moment was attending the opening night of the play *Transmission* at BATS theatre and watching actor Tim Spite impersonating him for the 90-minute show about the critical period in March 2020 when New Zealand pivoted from COVID-19 mitigation to elimination. Also enjoying the performance were Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Hon Grant Robertson and journalist Mei Heron who were the other characters portrayed.

Despite the time demands of the

COVID-19 response, Baker continues to lead a very active programme of research focused on infectious diseases and environmental health.

The Health Research Council has just funded him to lead a five-year programme on the connections between infectious diseases and long-term conditions. “The research application was submitted before COVID-19 but now takes on greater importance as we learn about the tail of chronic disease this pandemic may be leaving in its wake.”

The programme, Syndemic Management of the Biology and Treatment of Infections and Chronic conditions (SYMBIOTIC), will explore relationships between infectious diseases such as influenza and long-term conditions such as chronic lung disease and diabetes, which often occur together, making them both worse.

“The risks of infection and poor outcomes are strongly influenced by the presence of chronic conditions and poverty,” says Baker. “We want to better understand

the two-way relationship between acute infections and long-term conditions to improve health and equity in New Zealand.”

One key area is rheumatic fever where he and colleagues have identified some very promising interventions they hope to trial soon, subject to funding applications now under review.

Another is the need for a collaborative research effort across the country to learn lessons from the COVID-19 response and apply them to the prevention and management of other public health threats, including future pandemics.

Baker would like to see the 2020s become a decade of elimination for other harmful infections. “The successful elimination of COVID-19 transmission in Aotearoa New Zealand for a sustained period has shown us the value of aiming high. With good science and good leadership, tough challenges that previously were thought to be impossible are now within our reach.”

**NIGEL ZEGA**

# High energy

Professor Keith Gordon's youthful interest in solar energy has helped power a prolific and influential research career. And the winner of the University of Otago's Distinguished Research Medal for 2021 has no plans to slow down.



"... chemistry  
 seems like an  
 old traditional  
 subject, but  
 actually our  
 opportunity  
 to make a  
 difference and  
 to help society  
 is actually  
 pretty damn  
 good."

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**CHEMISTRY PROFESSOR** Keith Gordon describes his students as his colleagues – “they’re just at a different stage of their career” – and is continually discovering new branches of investigation and opportunities to collaborate. It seems fitting that a scientist brimming with such enthusiasm specialises in what are known as “excited states”.

But while “excited states” of matter occur at barely comprehensible speed and scale, Gordon’s research output is less complicated to calculate.

In a career over three decades, during which he has adapted techniques to measure excited states to examine conventional materials more easily, Gordon has published more than 350 papers in scientific journals which have accrued more than 11,000 citations. In recognition of his outstanding work spanning both fundamental and applied research, he has been awarded the University of Otago’s prestigious Distinguished Research Medal.

Working extensively with researchers in both New Zealand and overseas, his research lies across a range of areas that broadly span photonics as well as new materials for energy use (either as energy generators, photocatalysts and solar cells, or as efficient energy systems such as organic light emitting diodes).

“He has made a huge contribution, based on his unique understanding of the relevant science, to the development of solar cells and enabling compounds for the human harnessing of light energy,” says physicist Garth Carnaby, a former Royal Society Te Apārangi President.

University of Otago Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Helen Nicholson says Gordon’s publications record speaks for itself, placing him in the top tier of New Zealand researchers. “His work is also distinctive in the direct benefits that his techniques and discoveries have had on end users in New Zealand and elsewhere, across diverse industries involved with food, pharmaceuticals, energy and agriculture. He is endlessly curious and

open to collaboration, exhibiting creativity and resourcefulness.”

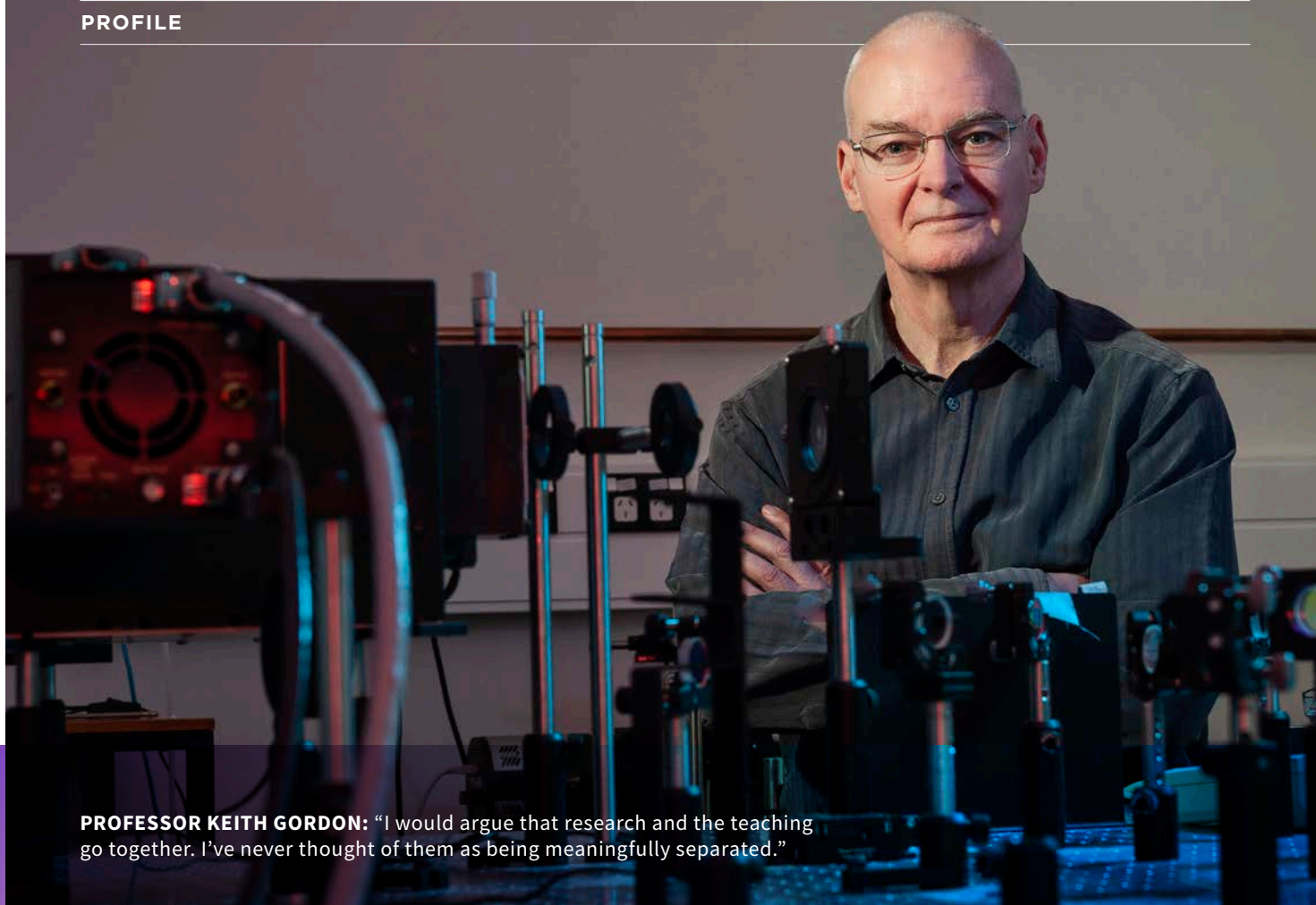
Gordon’s other accolades include Fellowships of the Royal Society Te Apārangi, the New Zealand Institute of Chemistry and the Royal Society of Chemistry; the New Zealand Institute of Chemistry Maurice Wilkens Prize; and the Royal Society Te Apārangi MacDiarmid Medal. He is also a founding member of two photon and materials-related Centres of Research Excellence (the Dodd-Walls Centre and the MacDiarmid Institute).

Keith Gordon grew up in Belfast during the oil shocks of the 1970s and says there was a dawning realisation that fossil fuels were not a sustainable energy source. During his undergraduate degree and PhD at the University of Belfast, he became interested in solar panels, specifically using spectroscopy to measure and improve the minute chemical reactions at the heart of the technology.

“Chemistry basically breaks down into two types of people: the people who like to make new things, and the people who like to measure things and model them. Making things is really cool and I love working with the people who do that. But my strength is how to develop experiments to measure stuff.”

During his PhD he worked to develop new techniques using time-resolved Raman spectroscopy – “we weren’t the only people to do it, but we got it to work and that was great” – and was later awarded a Director’s Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Los Alamos National Laboratory before applying for a job at the University of Otago after meeting then Head of the Department of Chemistry Brian Robinson. He moved to Otago in 1993 and, in the decades since, has found fulfilment in both the laboratory and the classroom.

“I would argue that research and teaching go together. I’ve never thought of them as being meaningfully separated. Part of what you teach is because of what you research. We’ve developed new techniques and some aspects, because they’re used so widely, you introduce into your teaching.



**PROFESSOR KEITH GORDON:** “I would argue that research and the teaching go together. I’ve never thought of them as being meaningfully separated.”

“I think what makes a university a university is research, so it’s critically important, but teaching is equally critical to me. If you imagine a rope bound with the twines of research and teaching, that’s how I think of it.

He is driven both by a powerful curiosity and a desire to help his students and the wider community: “You really need to publish the work so other people can see it and see what was done. Not to make yourself more important, but to give people an advantage so they can build on your work.”

A recent focus has been using analytical spectroscopy to look under the surface of pills and meat using methods developed to probe solar cells.

“We started worrying about solar cells – that’s why we started the experiment. And we ended up using those experiments on pharmaceuticals and now we’re going over to

doing it with various agricultural products.”

Since his undergraduate days, great strides have been made in the solar power field, largely driven by China which has “fantastic materials scientists” and the development of new techniques such as making solar cells based on plastic which can be printed in the same way as banknotes.

Gordon is pleased to have played a part in the advancements of solar technology and is a strong supporter of its use.

“I’ve advocated for solar cell use in New Zealand for some time and you get the same tropes every single time: ‘It’s not sunny enough, it’s not sunny in the right places,’ and so forth. So, let’s take an example of a country that’s less sunny than ours – Germany. The deployment of solar cells in Germany is sufficient to completely replace our current energy needs fulfilled by oil. You can make dramatic changes in how you use energy.

There’s no magic required; you just have to deploy the solar cells.”

He stresses to his students that chemistry is all around them, from the “indestructible” blue dye in their pens to the workings of their smartphones.

“Human society is extremely complex and the chemistry that we’ve done to facilitate the complex society we live in is not done in isolation – and it’s not good and it’s not bad. It can create bad outcomes, or better outcomes.

“We take an awful lot of materials totally for granted and don’t really appreciate that they are only here because of chemistry. Which is kind of cool because chemistry seems like an old traditional subject, but actually our opportunity to make a difference and to help society is actually pretty damn good.”

**SEAN FLAHERTY**

# At the cornerstone of crisis

Working across 38 countries in the Asia Pacific for the International Federation of Red Cross, Otago law alumna Gabrielle Emery understands the importance of legal frameworks to help in times of natural and humanitarian disasters, climate change and, now, global pandemics.

**WHEN WE THINK OF** disaster relief, we don't usually think of the law. We see medical supplies, food parcels and temporary shelter. But at the eye of every storm, invisible but just as crucial in helping communities out of turmoil, is a functioning, responsive legal system.

Key to developing those systems across the Asia Pacific region, and ensuring they meet the needs of communities in times of emergency, is Otago law alumna Gabrielle Emery. For the past seven years, Emery has been the disaster law manager for the Asia Pacific regional office of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), based in Kuala Lumpur.

In June, as the COVID-19 situation worsened in Malaysia, Emery, her husband Ricard and their three children came back to Auckland, where she continues to work remotely.

Having spent the past 15 months home-schooling in Kuala Lumpur, Emery says it was a "huge relief" to get back to New Zealand and start the two oldest children in school again. "They're very happy. You can see them buzzing and learning again which is wonderful."

Emery first became interested in human rights and humanitarian issues while studying law at the University of Otago in the late 1990s.

"My first passion before law was actually languages. I was doing Japanese and Asian studies papers, and also Russian, and at school I'd done Spanish and German, so I was very in the language mode.

"I did law as well because it was something a little more solid and thoughtful around the languages, but the more I studied law and got into looking at the human rights dimensions and governance as a whole, that was what really interested me so that was the path I followed."

After Otago, Emery headed to Ireland where she completed her Master of Laws in International Human Rights Law at the National University of Ireland in Galway. She then took up an internship with a



**GABRIELLE EMERY** (centre) sits with non-governmental and academic stakeholders at a workshop to discuss and develop strengthened legal preparedness for international disaster assistance in Nepal, following the magnitude 7.8 earthquake in April 2015.



human rights law network in Chennai in southern India.

In London, she managed an international development programme for the Royal College of General Practitioners and, in 2008, landed a job in New York as a humanitarian and development adviser for the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

“That was a super-interesting, amazing job: all-up close to three years, following all the different multilateral negotiations on humanitarian issues and resolutions that were coming up through the different committees, preparing New Zealand’s positioning statements, feeding back information and intelligence to Wellington.”

After having their first child, she and Ricard decided it was time to come back to New Zealand. “I kind of had tunnel vision at that time that I must come home.”

From Wellington, she worked as a policy and advocacy manager for New Zealand Red Cross, focusing on international humanitarian law – the laws of war, and developing training programmes for schools and universities. She was also involved with integrating New Zealand’s refugee programme into the operations of New Zealand Red Cross.

In 2014, she took up her current position with IFRC. Her initial task was to establish the strategic and operational base for the IFRC Asia Pacific Disaster Law programme.

Today, her team of four works across 38 countries, supporting national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in their work with authorities on legal frameworks and policy reform, focusing on disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. Since the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, their work has broadened to include public health emergencies.

As well as legal advice and policy drafting, the team conducts research, and delivers training and advocacy plans to policymakers, parliamentarians and the humanitarian community. They also help create strategies to ensure the practical, on-the-ground application of legislative and

“There’s no one size fits all and there’s not one perfect way of doing something. I think you have to find something realistic for the country you’re working with.”

policy reform for communities.

Since 2015, they’ve been involved with establishing disaster response frameworks, protection and management laws for Mongolia, Nepal, Myanmar, Nauru, Indonesia and Laos.

Unlike humanitarian law applicable in times of conflict, Emery says there is no body of international law that exists in times of natural disaster.

“Back in 2004, after the big Indian Ocean tsunami, there was a lot of confusion about what are the rules, how can people work together, particularly in the international community and how that relates to national systems.

“Red Cross really spearheaded that. It started doing research and developed a set of non-binding principles around this area. The [IFRC disaster law] programme grew out of that work.”

Their work varies according to need. In some countries, they are working on awareness levels and running training programmes, in others providing expert advice on legislation and drafting bills.

Sometimes, a community or local authority might not understand what their rights are and what their responsibilities are under law, so they work locally to “break down what the law is in layman’s terms and get people really understanding and familiarising themselves with key concepts and key duties”.

A main focus is ensuring the needs and rights of the communities are incorporated and prioritised into the legal frameworks. “It needs to be very people-centred. People need to know what they have to do. We focus on having a very transparent, participatory way of developing those laws.”

Emery says the programme has become well known by decision-makers in the Asia Pacific region, and she finds they often reach out to ask for advice, with a high demand now coming from Pacific countries.

Another key area is providing legal, policy and advocacy support as part of a humanitarian disaster response. After the Nepal earthquake in 2015, Emery was deployed to support the Nepal government and humanitarian community to develop some policies on how the international assistance should be regulated and co-ordinated.

“Law really is the cornerstone. You need to have very effective and clear laws for everyone who is involved. They need to know what they’re meant to be doing and when, who they’re meant to be working with, how budgets can be allocated, how those different co-ordinating mechanisms work.

“We’ve seen in COVID how the small liberties of people in a time of emergency might be impinged and the importance of the safeguards of law around that. So it’s very very important that governments are thinking about their legal frameworks and how they work before a disaster hits them. It’s too late during a disaster because you get lots of ad hoc decision-making.”

Globally, Emery says there have never been so many laws issued for one event in such a short time.

“What we’re seeing from COVID is that it’s not just a public health emergency. It affects every sector, every area in a society, and there need to be better ways of working with normal systems in the country and normal emergency response mechanisms.”

She says countries need to think globally in terms of how they support each other during this time, be it with PPE supply or access to vaccines.





**GABRIELLE EMERY** (second from right) stands with representatives from Pacific governments, Red Cross societies and regional representatives together with the AHA Centre, the ASEAN Co-ordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management, to conduct peer learning on regional governance for disaster risk management and climate change adaptation.

One positive response has been the establishment in April 2020 of the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19. This aims to ensure regional co-ordination in response to the pandemic and to facilitate the provision of medical and humanitarian assistance. IFRC is working with Pacific Pathway governments to “try to make sure that it is not just a political statement, but gets fully embedded into their frameworks”.

With climate change, their focus is also on ensuring that whatever policies and laws are developed, particularly how we adapt to climate change, that they work together

not normally think of as disaster management law, but they’re the laws that people really need to focus on for reducing risk.”

Unfazed by the range of tasks faced by the team and the enormous geographical area it covers, Emery says the diversity of her work is what she loves most about her job. “I love trying to find a solution for every country that’s going to work for that country. There’s no one size fits all and there’s not one perfect way of doing something. I think you have to find something realistic for the country you’re working with.”

“We’ve seen in COVID how the small liberties of people in a time of emergency might be impinged... So it’s very very important that governments are thinking about their legal frameworks and how they work before a disaster hits them.”

with existing disaster risk reduction initiatives. “We’re making sure that those systems talk to each other. That they don’t duplicate efforts or cause confusion, particularly at the community level.”

She says all laws have their part to play in reducing disaster risk, be they housing laws, planning laws or the curriculum. “It’s probably some of those laws that people might

Sometimes, however, she must accept that you can’t make things progress at the pace you might like them to.

“You could invest your heart and soul into a process and do everything you possibly can, but so much of that is out of your hands at the end. I find that can be frustrating, but you also need to be able to step back and think ‘well if that’s going to

happen, it will happen in the way it needs to for this country’.”

With the amount of travel involved, it’s also a challenging role to fit around a family. Pre-pandemic, Emery would be away from home for about two weeks every month, and she is appreciating having more time with her family. “I’d spend a lot of time sitting in dingy airports. It’s definitely not glamorous.”

While Zoom has had its challenges, she thinks people have adapted well and COVID-19 may have shown that jumping on planes isn’t always necessary. “And I think this pandemic has got the international system also trusting and investing a lot more in all the national and local actors in those countries. By and large, they’ve done a remarkable job.”

The programme is already starting to see quite a lot of demand being generated out of COVID-19, as governments and practitioners start to think about what they need to be doing in the recovery, both in terms of the resilience and better legal preparedness.

“I think this will be a key focus for the next couple of years, along with the high focus which is needed on the climate emergency and the governance that’s needed. There’s been lots of great work done around the international frameworks and agreements, but really now, when rubber hits the road, how do you implement these commitments at the national level and local level? And that needs to start with your legal framework.”

**MARGIE CLARK**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Web: [disasterlaw.ifrc.org](http://disasterlaw.ifrc.org)

Twitter: @Disaster\_Law

# Hollywood to Queenstown: young composer is opening doors



Photo: supplied

**JOSH ROMERO:**  
“I still get emotional reactions listening to great composers’ popular works.”

## Music graduate Josh Romero is forging a successful career in the competitive Hollywood film industry – and pays tribute to the influence of his University of Otago teachers.

### “I’M TRYING TO GIVE THEM HOPE.”

This was Otago music graduate Joshua Ryan Romero’s mission when recently speaking to performing arts students at the University of Otago’s Dunedin campus and at local schools.

And Romero is well qualified to be imparting that message. The young composer and producer has broken into the vast Hollywood film industry, forging a successful career composing music for film trailers in Los Angeles (LA). Romero studied composition and piano performance at Otago, graduating with a MusB (Hons) in 2014.

“I wanted them to know that the music industry is gasping for new talent,” says Romero, who arrived back in New Zealand last year two hours before the borders closed. He has now returned to LA, after spending over a year creating music and discovering new opportunities for his work in New Zealand.

“If you want to do it badly enough, and you just keep pushing through... then it’s an open door.”

There is one caveat, however. “It has to be for the right reasons. If you go in to this industry just to be rich and famous, you’ll hit dead ends very quickly. If you do it for the

love of it, which I think is the reason most people study music, then the sky is the limit.”

Romero was born in Italy, to Spanish and American parents, and his childhood included growing up in Italy, the US, UK and ultimately New Zealand, initially in Auckland, but the family moved to Queenstown when Romero came to Otago.

He credits the influence of his Otago teachers for his success and development as a musician, highly praising Professor Terence Dennis who instructed him through his piano performance major, Associate Professor Peter Adams and Professor Anthony Ritchie in composition, Tessa Petersen and Heleen du Plessis in instrumentation, Dr Ian Chapman in song writing, and Dr John Egenes in music technology.

“It was a very eclectic environment; you learned about musicians from all over the world and different cultures. Not one teacher ever told me I should do something else or go into a certain field of music: it was a very cultivating atmosphere.”

After finishing his degree, Romero spent a year working in hospitality and teaching in Queenstown. Then, through some contacts from Dunedin, he took up an internship in LA with a post-production music house, producing music for high-end advertising and commercial

campaigns, writing for big brands such as BMW, Universal Studios and Macys. “The only thing I had was my passport. I didn’t know anyone on the West Coast.”

He then spent the following three years writing and producing in his bedroom after working odd jobs day and night, sitting in on friends’ writing sessions and networking as much as he could, before finally getting a breakthrough.

Through friends he met two musicians who had recently created a start-up, making trailers for studio movies – huge orchestral ensembles combined with electronic/hip-hop, R&B etc. – and was taken on as an assistant composer and intern.

“I was trained every day by mentors who had the time and patience to instruct and critique me. I still owe a huge chunk of my industry knowledge and musicality to them. They gave me the tools I needed to work high up in the industry – mainly consisting of production skills and mixing techniques, the ‘how to’ on making your music sound professional.”

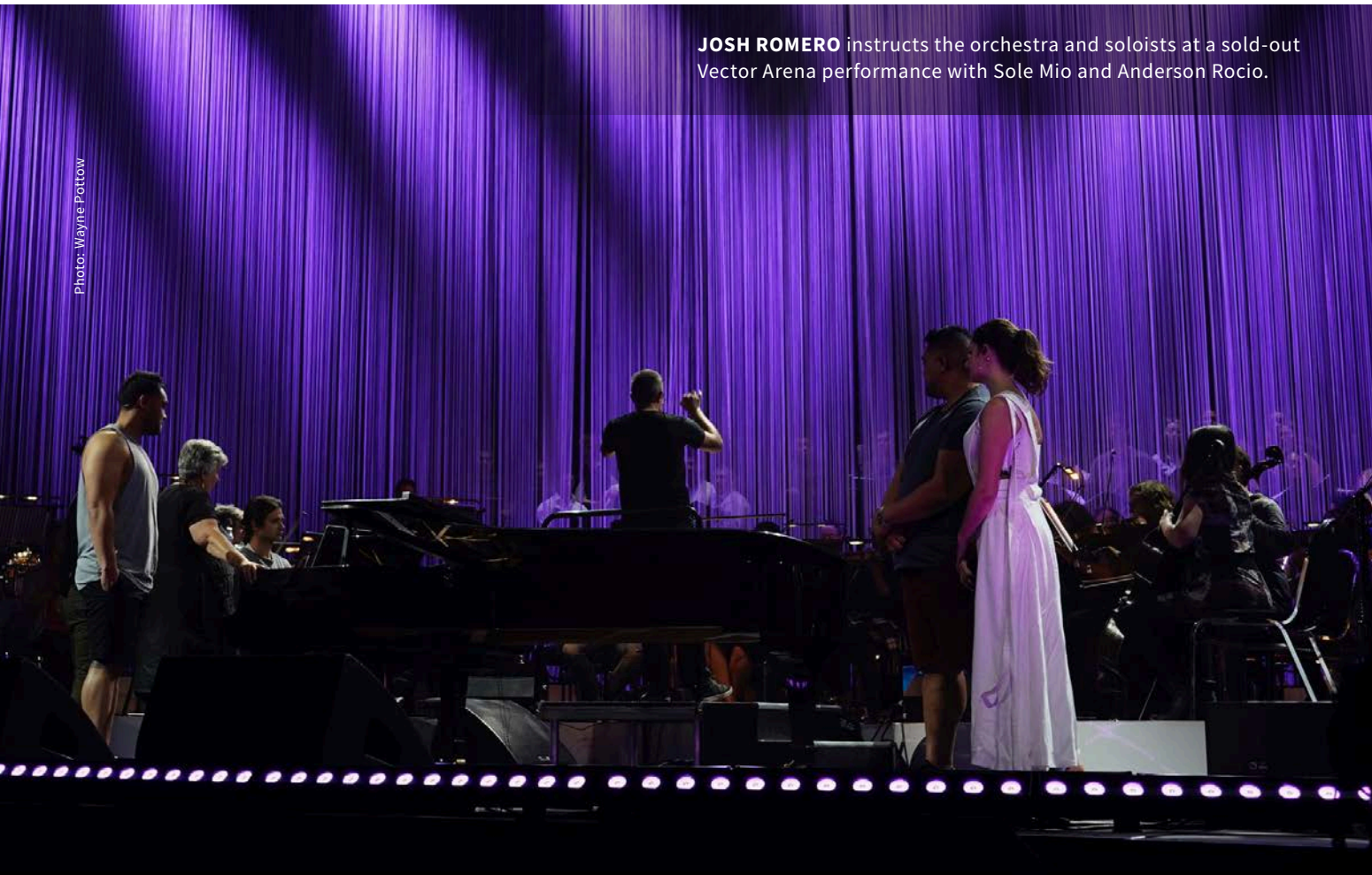
After another year, Romero went out on his own and kept on networking. “Most of my friends were industry professional composers, so they could give me feedback that was ‘real-world’ relevant.”

In his fourth year in LA he and one of his closest friends and colleagues, an



**JOSH ROMERO** instructs the orchestra and soloists at a sold-out Vector Arena performance with Sole Mio and Anderson Rocio.

Photo: Wayne Pottow



accomplished film composer in his own right, established an artist duo known as SAYSH, and began creating trailer music, combining their talents in film composition and production.

Long story short, a mutual friend put them in contact with a music licensing company who listened to their music and believed they had the potential to have their music in mainstream shows and movies.

“They had something like 70 artists on their roster and I think we were the only two that were classically-trained composers yet could also produce, so we had a bit of an edge. We have been placed in sessions with quite a few of their artists and we stand out because we

can make them sound just as good in a sweeping orchestral section as well as epic electronic productions. This was the break that I needed.”


The company started using their pieces of music, tracks two- to three-minutes long, and licensed them to Netflix, MTV, HBO, amongst other streaming platforms. From there, things start to gain momentum, as listeners would use the Shazam app to identify the songs from a particular scene, which would take them to Spotify or Apple Music or YouTube.

“And after a while the listens add up, so you earn money from each of the streaming platforms... and you can generate a pretty legitimate income.”

In the film and television industry, SAYSH’s work has featured in the Netflix Anime series *Dragon’s Dogma*, CW’s *Nancy Drew* series, *Batwoman*, *Selling Sunset* and more to come.

When the pandemic hit, Romero’s work was going well and he was “very apathetic” about returning home to Queenstown. But, again through networking, he has met a range of musicians and created a host of opportunities in the past year, to the point where he confesses to feeling conflicted at returning to the US.

“I’ll miss my new friends and the artistic environments I have discovered whilst being home, however, I am excited to return to my life in LA.



“If you go in to this industry just to be rich and famous, you’ll hit dead ends very quickly. If you do it for the love of it, which I think is the reason most people study music, then the sky is the limit.”

“I have been pleasantly surprised at the talent and unique innovation of composers and musicians all around New Zealand. I felt relieved and excited at the concept of working from New Zealand as a more permanent option in the future.”

At a concert in Arrowtown featuring opera singer Simon O’Neill, he caught up with his former teacher Professor Terence Dennis, and was introduced to jeweller and entrepreneur Michael Hill. One thing led to another. “I got to be part of the musical environment in Queenstown, which is quite big actually, you just have to know where to look.”

He kept busy over the past year with projects involving the New Zealand

Symphony Orchestra (NZSO), composing and arranging orchestra and choir for a sold-out performance in Auckland for Sole Mio, and arranging music for the Wakatipu Music Festival put together by the Michael Hill Foundation.

“One of their directors wanted me to arrange the *Ode to Joy* for a younger choir ensemble, so I had to write it out phonetically and try to make the music simpler to read. I had to write it out by hand, note by note, using my ear as much as my theory knowledge. I still get emotional reactions listening to great composers’ popular works.”

During his time back home in New Zealand Romero also worked with travel

photographer blogger Trey Ratcliff, who happened to live behind him in Queenstown. Romero is composing music to accompany Ratcliff’s *Machine Elf* projects, incorporating 16- to 20-minute videos of computer-generated images – “like looking through a kaleidoscope” – backed by meditative music.

He has also been very impressed with the new Performing Arts facilities at the University of Otago and hopes to be able to use them in his work in the future, including in collaborations with the Dunedin Symphony Orchestra. He believes New Zealand has some of the best musicians in the world and was excited to discover that the technology the composers use in Europe and the US – which allows you to watch in real time your orchestra performing your work on the other side of the world – was available at the new Otago studio.

“The facility here is arguably one of the best I’ve seen, on par with many top studios in LA.

“I was invited to have a little tour of the new studio just before they opened it, all I could think was ‘I can’t wait to record here’.”

Romero also spent some time instructing piano in Queenstown and participated in the Vocational Pathways Seminar at the Dunedin Town Hall for several local high schools about career pathways in music and the arts, as well as speaking at the University.

“I meant to ask how many of the students study music or an art form as their major. A common reality is students study a minor in business, marketing, law or the sciences. I acknowledge that this is done largely for financial security reasons. These are noble career paths, but I think the humanities, the arts, music are kind of what makes life worth living. Pursuing this with the mind-set of ‘I will succeed because I need to’ and, in doing so reminding yourself not to fear failure. With a little patience, you’re guaranteed to achieve success.”

**MARGIE CLARK**

# Innovative measures to achieve smokefree vision

New Zealand led the world with its Smokefree 2025 goal, but bold and fundamental changes are needed, now. The co-directors of Otago's ASPIRE 2025 research centre outline the measures they believe are crucial to make this goal a reality.

**NEW ZEALAND'S 2020** response to the COVID-19 pandemic showed we could lead the world with bold, innovative and evidence-based measures. While the delta variant has brought new challenges, our initial decisive measures to protect population health meant we enjoyed freedoms seen in few other countries.

Yet, despite this evidence of our ability to act quickly when faced with a serious infectious disease, we have been much slower to respond to other sustained threats to health, such as the smoking pandemic, which still kills nearly 5,000 New Zealanders every year.

New Zealand led the world in announcing a Smokefree 2025 goal, which Māori leaders proposed, to reduce the unacceptably large disparities in smoking prevalence between Māori and Pacific peoples and non-Māori/non-Pacific. Sadly, successive governments have failed to develop a bold strategy and action plan to achieve the goal: our largely business-as-usual approach has seen smoking prevalence decline slowly while disparities remain unaddressed.

However, change looks likely. Associate

Minister of Health Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall's recent Smokefree 2025 Action Plan discussion document sets out bold measures that could see New Zealand providing global leadership in dealing with an insidious non-communicable disease. So, what are the key measures that will help us achieve this transformational goal and bring smoking prevalence in *every* population group down below five per cent (and as close to zero per cent as possible)?

We believe the solution lies in changing our approach to focus on supply-side measures that will reduce tobacco's availability and addictiveness. Hon Dr Verrall's discussion document proposes ideas that could bring about fundamental changes needed to achieve the Smokefree 2025 goal. What do we see as crucial?

Tobacco products are highly addictive and widely available through comprehensive distribution networks. We need to restructure the market place by changing the composition of tobacco products and making them much less available.

Because the design of smoked tobacco products is largely unregulated, tobacco

companies have created extremely addictive products and added ingredients to reduce the harsh sensations of smoking. Cigarettes and rolling tobacco are engineered to make it very difficult for people who smoke to quit and stay quit. This same design means young people who experiment with smoking quickly become dependent on nicotine.

If tobacco products were no longer addictive, the incentive to keep using them would disappear. Studies conducted in Aotearoa and internationally report that people using very low nicotine cigarettes (VLNCs), which have had nearly all nicotine removed from them, often reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke, make more quit attempts and are more likely to successfully quit.

A large New Zealand trial that investigated adding VLNCs to Quitline cessation support found no difference in quitting between Māori and non-Māori participants. A Health Research Council-funded study led by the University of Otago (the Te Ara Auahi Kore project) surveyed Māori who smoke and found over half said they would quit smoking or switch to e-cigarettes, if VLNCs were the only smoked tobacco product available. Introducing VLNCs could help reduce sustained disparities in smoking prevalence and the health inequities that follow.

Although it may seem intuitive that reducing the nicotine in cigarettes would lead people to smoke more, research has found compensatory smoking is not sustained, probably because there is not enough nicotine in VLNCs to make even greatly increased smoking worthwhile. Several studies found





**PROFESSOR JANET HOEK, PROFESSOR RICHARD EDWARDS AND ANDREW WAA:**

“We believe the solution lies in changing our approach to focus on supply-side measures that will reduce tobacco’s availability and addictiveness.”

participants provided with VLNCs who continued smoking realised they could not access the same dose, quickly lost interest in smoking and consumed fewer cigarettes.

Surveys and in-depth interviews conducted by ASPIRE 2025 have found the VLNC policy has strong support from people who smoke, most of whom have tried many times to quit and greatly regret ever having started to smoke. Removing nicotine, which is the major barrier to quitting, will help people achieve their goal of becoming smokefree.

As well as changing the addictiveness of smoked tobacco, we also need to reduce the availability of these products, which anyone aged 18 years or over may buy from virtually every dairy, convenience store, petrol station and supermarket in the country. For decades, we have allowed tobacco to be sold at any store, just like milk and bread. Yet, smoked tobacco products are inherently unsafe and would never meet product safety standards if they were introduced today.

Restricting tobacco sales to a limited

number of specific outlets, such as specialist R18 (“adult only”) stores or pharmacies, would signal tobacco is not a normal product and could bring considerable health benefits. If young people had less exposure to outlets selling tobacco, smoking uptake would decrease. In addition, removing tobacco products from many retail outlets could help people making a quit attempt to avoid cues that trigger impulse purchases and relapse.

Changing our perspective also means recognising Māori were originally a tupeka kore (tobacco free) society, and viewing smoking as one of many harms caused by colonisation. Because Māori led the Smokefree 2025 goal proposal to eliminate smoking disparities and return to the hauora they enjoyed before tobacco was introduced, supporting Māori governance to develop, implement and oversee new measures is essential.

Other measures could support supply-side initiatives. Developing more social marketing campaigns, explaining the goal and measures being introduced, creating

a smokefree generation, removing filters (a consumer fraud that does not reduce the risk of smoking), and developing more targeted support for people quitting, could underpin more fundamental changes.

Predictably, tobacco companies and the groups they fund oppose supply-side measures, just as they have fought against every proportionate and evidence-based policy that would reduce their profits. Claims that illicit trade would increase gain traction only from reports tobacco companies have commissioned and spokespeople they fund. New Zealand’s strong border controls and surveillance, and relative geographical isolation, make it unlikely that smuggled tobacco will be a major problem. Nor do arguments that small retailers would go out of business withstand close scrutiny. Robust studies undertaken by ASPIRE members show tobacco is a low profit product that tends to be a single-item purchase.

Reducing the nicotine in cigarettes to non-addictive levels and greatly reducing the outlets selling tobacco would change the design, appeal and availability of this toxic product. National and international evidence shows these measures could accelerate progress towards the 2025 goal. Drawing on the same courage shown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, could see New Zealand lead the world in eliminating smoking and the terrible health disparities it causes.

**PROFESSOR JANET HOEK,  
PROFESSOR RICHARD EDWARDS,  
ANDREW WAA**

Co-directors, ASPIRE 2025 research centre

“For decades, we have allowed tobacco to be sold at any store, just like milk and bread. Yet, smoked tobacco products are inherently unsafe and would never meet product safety standards if they were introduced today.”

## Geography celebrates 75 years

When Geography joined a growing list of University of Otago teaching subjects in 1946, New Zealand was grappling with the practical aspects of a post-WWII rebuild, such as surveying and mapping. Today it has expanded and matured into a School of Geography, grappling with a range of issues shaping the future of the planet and humanity, investigating – amongst others – dynamic physical processes, climate change, food security and planning and development challenges.

It would be hard to describe Geography's beginnings as anything other than modest, with a single staff member, lecturer-in-charge Ben Garnier, and 75 to 80 students. Seventy-five years on, it is a modern, outward-focused department, offering research-based teaching. The School, which includes the Centre for Sustainability, has nearly 30 staff – with 117 postgraduate students and 260 undergraduate EFTS.

The School's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee has been planning celebrations for the milestone, including producing special publications and holding an event to mark the occasion.

Geography's development as a subject at Otago owes a lot to the charismatic leadership of key individuals such as Ben Garnier and Ron Lister – the first Professor. Others, such as Blair Fitzharris and Peter Holland, subsequently played key roles in nurturing Geography at Otago.

Research and publishing have gradually evolved to reflect broader changes in society, academia and new understandings of environmental processes. At the same time, staff composition has changed to better reflect both cultural and gender diversity.

Current Head of School, Professor Etienne Nel, says a feature of today's School of Geography is the degree to which staff are teaching and researching on key cutting-edge global issues.

"These reflect both staff interests and the changing needs of society, focusing on key issues such as climate change, development and planning, indigenous knowledge, resource management and dynamic earth processes."

**RECENT TIMES:** Students surveying a glacial moraine near Mt Cook, as part of the 'GEOG 290 – Field Research Methods' field course.

Photo: Chris Garden

# Milestone anniversaries celebrated

2021 is a milestone year for several Otago subjects. The Archaeology and Social Anthropology programmes are celebrating 100 years at the University, while Geography is celebrating 75 years. The Otago Magazine looks at their histories.





**LOOKING BACK:** A third-year geography fieldtrip to Kaitangata, 1954.

Its affiliated Centre for Sustainability's strengths lie in the areas of sustainability research, environmental issues and indigenous knowledge around environmental management.

Current holder of the Ron Lister Chair of Geography, Professor Tony Binns says a significant step came just three years ago when the department became the School of Geography.

"We're the only stand-alone geography unit in a New Zealand university. Elsewhere they are all parts of other schools. We're quite proud of that."

Rankings improved in the latest PBRF review, while, in international terms, the subject scores well, with Development Studies – which involves geographers as part of an interdisciplinary group of researchers from across the University – ranked number one in New Zealand and 44<sup>th</sup> in the world.

The School enjoys strong links with multiple departments and research clusters across campus, including the Otago Global Health Institute and the Otago Energy Research Cluster.

This is also reflected in the wide range of research areas postgraduate students are pursuing, such as climate change, adaptation, migration, development issues, community development, planning, and themes in physical geography, ranging from glacier melting and biogeography to lake-bed sediments and riverine processes to coastal issues.

"One of the highlights of the last 15 years has undoubtedly been the setting up of the UniVol programme with Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA), which has given

over 100 Otago Geography students the opportunity to work for a year in a range of community-based development projects in Pacific Island countries," says Binns.

Looking ahead, the School of Geography is embracing new and emerging research directions, including a stronger focus on the understanding of, and shifts in, our relationship with the environment, and the associated power relations embedded in global and local environmental change.

Of key significance is the need to draw on *mātauranga Māori* and *te ao Māori* to engage in decolonising. Engagement with issues that are relevant to the contemporary climate- and pandemic-changed world, hearing and valuing the voices of the marginalised, and promoting an ethical, just and resilient world are also seen as key imperatives.

**MARK WRIGHT**

## A founding father – Professor Ron Lister

**Many Departments can point to an influential early figure who helped them get established. For Geography that figure was Professor Ron Lister.**

"Lister was a legend – a founding father – and very well known in the Dunedin community," says Professor Tony Binns, who now holds the Ron Lister Chair of Geography, established under the Leading Thinkers programme.

"He fought like hell to get Geography recognised as a department and was a great teacher and a very charismatic figure."

Lister retired in 1981 and sadly died just a few years later. Binns says that aside from the Chair he holds, there's a lot of evidence of Lister still in the School, including travel grants and an annual memorial lecture.

There were many other influential staff over the years, for example Professor Blair Fitzharris, known for his work on climate change, and Professor Peter Holland, recognised for his work on environmental histories of New Zealand.

## Anniversary publications

**Two publications have been produced to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.**

A book of alumni reflections provides cameos of each decade, from amusing anecdotes to memories of staff and some legendary field trips, including going right down to the Kaitangata mine coalface.

Meanwhile, a 200-page paper collection covering key Otago Geography research since 1946 is being included in *The New Zealand Geographer*, the flagship journal of the New Zealand Geographical Society.

The 11-paper collection is designed to provide a small, but representative, selection of the many significant contributions Otago geographers have made over the decades.



# A century of Archaeology and Social Anthropology at Otago

They have changed names several times, had an amicable separation and, if human, would have recently received telegrams from the Queen – the dynamic entities that are Archaeology and Social Anthropology at Otago have many reasons to celebrate their joint centenary this year.

The two programmes' history goes back to 1918 when Otago became the first Australasian university to employ an anthropology lecturer, Henry Devenish Skinner CBE DCM.

Anthropology was offered from 1921, with Skinner's physical and cultural anthropology lectures augmented by classes from professors from other disciplines.

Otago 150<sup>th</sup> historian Dr Ali Clarke suggested Skinner's high workload – he was also assistant curator at the University-run Otago Museum and ran the Hocken Library – may have prolonged Anthropology's nascent stage; the subject remained a "Stage I" course for four decades.

After Skinner's retirement in 1952, the course was offered intermittently by visiting lecturers until Peter Gathercole's appointment in 1958. Gathercole revived the Stage I course and by the early 1960s, staff numbers had increased, a stand-alone department emerged, and students could major in the subject for the first time.

By 1970 the department had one of the largest first-year courses in the Faculty of Arts, with over 200 students, 12 MA students and five PhD candidates. This trajectory continued, and there have been more than 2,000 Otago Anthropology graduates since the major was first offered.

In 1968 a Chair in Anthropology was announced and there was surprise when Gathercole, who had worked hard to consolidate the department's position, announced he wouldn't apply for the position.

In gaining the position, Charles Higham ONZM became the first professor of prehistoric archaeology in Australasia, but this wasn't a universally popular appointment:



**CURRENT HEAD OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAMME**  
**DR TIM THOMAS** collaborates with local people on Simbo, Solomon Islands, to identify sacred sites on the island.

after it was announced he'd got the job someone gained access to his office overnight and reduced his chair to kindling.

Although some had reservations about the impact of an archaeologist holding the position, Higham supported social anthropology throughout his tenure.

At the time of his retirement in 2018, Higham was an internationally-recognised archaeologist whose corpus on the prehistory of mainland Southeast Asia included several documentaries about the Angkor civilisation in Cambodia and Northeast Thailand. When awarding him the Mason Durie medal in 2014, the Royal Society Te Apārangi called him "New Zealand's premier social scientist".

Another long-serving faculty member, Helen Leach ONZM, started her Otago career as an undergraduate in 1963, completed the department's first master's in 1968 and in 1976 became the first woman to gain an archaeology PhD in New Zealand.

Leach, who had also become the first woman to be appointed to an archaeology lecturing position in New Zealand in the early 1970s, was Head of Department from 1983 to 1987 (and an acting Head of Department in 2003). She retired in 2008 an authority on the anthropology of food in New Zealand but continues involvement with the programme as an Emeritus Professor.

Dr Ian Frazer, a long-serving staff member and now Honorary Social Anthropology programme member, says a host of academics helped Otago's reputation grow exponentially.

Archaeologist Associate Professor Donn Bayard came to Otago in 1970 and taught until 2002, during which time his

focus switched from Southeast Asian archaeology to sociolinguists.

Anthropologist Erich Kolig was at Otago from 1974 until 2006, and published widely on a range of topics, including Aboriginal religion and Muslims in Aotearoa. Through his work recording sacred sites and native title issues in Australia he was involved in the pivotal Noonkanbah and Rubibi land rights cases.

Frazer says the contribution of Charles Higham's early hire Peter Wilson has often "been underplayed".

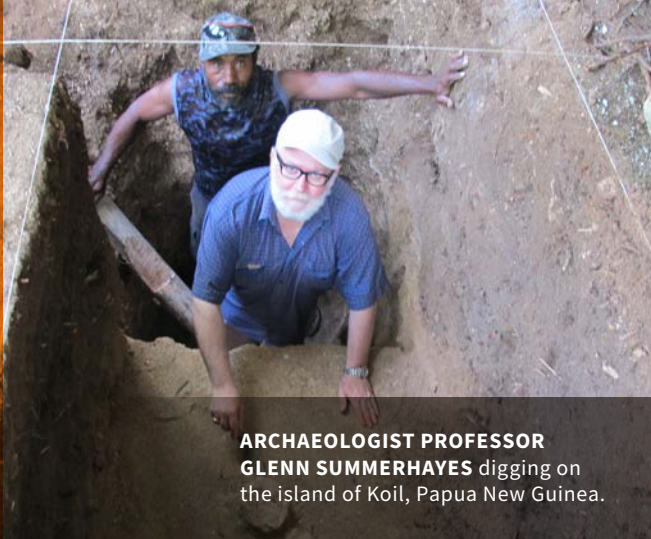
Wilson came to Otago in 1970 and wrote up findings from ethnographic research in the Caribbean, Madagascar and Malaysia. He later concentrated on questions around human evolution. Frazer says his publications, such as *Man, the Promising Primate*, still attract interest.

Frazer, also an Otago undergraduate in the 1960s, returned in 1977 and went on to study the Pacific and Melanesian cultures.

He says economic imperatives during his time as Head of Department (between 1996 and 2004) led the integration of other social science disciplines into the newly formed Department of Anthropology, Gender and Sociology, and created challenges. These disciplines were disaggregated in 2011, and the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology emerged.

Professor Glenn Summerhayes arrived at Otago in 2005 to take up the Chair vacated by Higham, becoming Head of Department for seven years.

Summerhayes initiated a new phase of



**ARCHAEOLOGIST PROFESSOR GLENN SUMMERHAYES** digging on the island of Koil, Papua New Guinea.



FEATURE

**SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGIST DR SUSAN WARDELL** conducts fieldwork in Christchurch on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the second Canterbury earthquake for a project on collective memory after trauma.

“Management of our heritage and archaeological legacy is a growing sustainability issue ... helping protect and manage archaeological sites from risks associated with climate change and development is now a priority.”

research into Papua New Guinea (PNG) and headed a Marsden Grant-funded project on Austronesian migrations that began 3,300 years ago and led to the colonisation of Remote Oceania.

Published in the journal *Science*, the research brought staff and students into the field, pushed understandings of humanity’s story in this part of the world back to 50,000 years, and led to relationships with the National Museum and Art Gallery of PNG and the University of PNG.

For his contribution to PNG archaeology, Summerhayes was made an Officer of the Order of Logohu of PNG in the 2014 New Year’s Honours listing.

Summerhayes believes his work complemented that of Higham working in Southeast Asia, Richard Walter in the Solomons, and Ian Barber in New Zealand.

“With other staff, I’ve enjoyed nurturing research students, and I’m pleased to be one of many people from Otago that have

improved our understanding of how humans came to this enormous area of the globe, and how they not only survived but established so many fascinating and vibrant cultures.”

Associate Professor Jacqueline Leckie, who taught at Otago for 27 years from 1989, was Head of Department until 2015, when Richard Walter took that role.

The Department also experienced loss in 2015, when respected anthropologist Dr Cyril Schäfer – a researcher and teacher specialising in studies of ritual, the anthropology of religion, and death and dying – passed away suddenly.

In 2019, Archaeology and Social Anthropology became two independent programmes within the newly established School of Social Sciences in the Division of Humanities (they continue to share a single Anthropology major).

Current Archaeology Head of Programme Tim Thomas says the programme’s long tradition of research excellence has kept it in the top 50 of the QS global ranking system for years, appearing as high as 28<sup>th</sup> in the world in 2018.

While ‘archaeology’ evokes images of excavation pits beneath pyramids or leafy jungle canopies, the discipline is far more dynamic.

“Increasingly, research draws on disciplines such as genetics, geology, environmental science and indigenous knowledge systems, and collaborations with Māori, Pasifika and other descendant communities,” Thomas says.

“Management of our heritage and archaeological legacy is a growing sustainability issue and while these have always been key, they are taking on an added dimension – helping protect and manage archaeological sites from risks associated with climate change and development is now a priority.”

An emphasis on strong, vocationally focused teaching – and qualifications like the advanced degree in professional heritage management (the MArchP) – has seen graduate students increasingly find work as professional archaeological consultants or in a range of emerging jobs.

Social Anthropology Head of Programme Dr Greg Rawlings says since emerging as a distinct entity in the School of Social Sciences in 2019, a “relatively small number” of programme staff have offered a full suite of papers contributing to the Anthropology major and have successfully recruited a steady number of students year-on-year.

Rawlings says this, combined with its international reputation for research on citizenship, development, ethnohistory, globalisation, social media, medical anthropology and moral reasoning, saw the programme ranked in the top 51 to 100 global QS band this year.

“Our graduates find work in museums, as central or local government policy advisors, in community development, the police, or for non-governmental organisations such as Volunteer Service Abroad. The programme prides itself on fostering critically engaged, cutting-edge, cross-culturally informed research.”

**SAM STEVENS**



## Domesticated animals map social change

**Biomolecular techniques are being used to study the bones of domesticated animals from across the Western Pacific to show how social networks have changed over time.**

Co-director of Southern Pacific Archaeological Research Dr Karen Greig explains that domesticated animals, particularly pigs, have been important to communities across the Western Pacific since their introduction around 4,000 years ago.

“Their use as a food item was often secondary to their role in social interactions, where status and wealth could be obtained through the exchange of valuables. But our understanding of the role of animals in the development of these networks has been limited,” Greig says.

Archaeological research has typically focused on tracing objects such as stone tools, pottery and shell valuables. “What is missing is consideration of the role of pigs, dogs and chickens in these networks. This is critical – without it, we lack a complete picture of how the networks functioned and changed.”

Studying animal bones is challenging: they are fragile and often highly fragmented and difficult to identify.

Now, with the support of a Marsden Fast Start Grant and new biomolecular techniques, Greig and her team can determine the species and age bones. Further, the chemical signatures in animals’ tooth enamel shows if they were moved between regions during their lifetime.

This will help researchers trace the patterns of trade and husbandry of domestic animals, mirroring the interactions and movements of people throughout the Western Pacific, and contributing to the wider story of human-animal relationships and their place in human societies from the past to the present.



**DR KAREN GREIG:** “Our understanding of the role of animals in the development of these networks has been limited.”

## Heart health

**Pasifika peoples stand to benefit from research on the measurement of a blood marker of heart health.**

Dr Allamanda Faatoese, from the University of Otago’s Christchurch Heart Institute, has been awarded a Pacific Project Grant from the Health Research Council to lead the research, after she and her colleagues identified a potential anomaly for Pasifika in the measurement of the marker, called NT-proBNP.

Faatoese explains that, when they studied 300 people with healthy hearts, the levels of the blood marker in Pasifika were only half those observed in European New Zealanders.

In a research project entitled “Are all tests created equal?”, the researchers will use the \$1.1 million grant to investigate whether similar observations occur in patients with heart failure, and whether any disparities result from differences in detection or whether it is an ethnic difference.

Faatoese notes that this blood marker has been proposed as part of cardiovascular screening tests in the community to detect those at risk of heart failure.

She says that, if levels of NT-proBNP are inherently low in Pasifika, the reference ranges might need to be adjusted to be relevant for Pasifika in New Zealand and in the Pacific region.

Faatoese, who specialises in cardiovascular risk among Māori and

Pasifika communities, is joined in the three-year research project by Andree Person, Dr Lynley Lewis, Professor Vicky Cameron, Professor Mark Richards, Dr Anna Pilbrow, Professor Chris Pemberton, Jaye Moors, Zoe Ward, Professor Richard Troughton and Professor Robert Doughty.



**DR ALLAMANDA FAATOESE:** she has been awarded an HRC Pacific Project grant for a research study titled “Are all tests created equal?”



## COVID fatigue

**Ground-breaking research on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome could be the key to understanding the causes of long-term fatigue in some people affected by COVID-19.**

Last year, a team led by Emeritus Professor Warren Tate (Biochemistry) proved once and for all that Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is not all inside people's heads, but has a real biological basis in molecular changes in the immune cells of patients.

Tate and colleagues are now turning their attention to so-called "long hauler" COVID-19 patients, who show prolonged debilitating symptoms long after the expected recovery time to normal health.

Tate says that many of the symptoms reported by these COVID-19 patients, particularly the persistent fatigue and "brain fog", are characteristic of ME/CFS that often arise after infectious disease outbreaks such as glandular fever.

The researchers are comparing the molecular profiles of long-hauler COVID-19 patients with those of ME/CFS patients and a control group, to see whether they are one and the same disease or, at least, closely related.

Tate says the immediate aim is to suggest potential therapeutic interventions that might mitigate the severity of both conditions, but the ultimate goal is to find strategies to reverse what are lifelong global illnesses affecting millions of people.

The COVID-19 research team comprises Tate, senior technician Tina Edgar (Biochemistry), Dr Torsten Kleffmann (Centre for Protein Research), Associate Professor Aniruddha Chatterjee (Pathology), postgraduate student Anna Blair (Biochemistry) and immunologist Dr Anna Brooks from the University of Auckland.



**SENIOR TECHNICIAN TINA EDGAR, PROFESSOR WARREN TATE AND DR ANNA BROOKS:** They are comparing the molecular profiles of long-hauler COVID-19 patients with those of ME/CFS patients and a control group.

## New frontier of justice

**The COVID-19 pandemic has advanced the introduction of online court programmes around the world. They help protect public health – and offer a more modern, cost-effective, efficient and accessible court system, reducing the barriers to justice for many.**

However, co-director of the Otago Centre for Law and Society Dr Bridgette Toy-Cronin says it is essential that care is taken with the design of online filing systems if online courts are to be accessible without a lawyer.

"Without well-designed forms the public will not be able to effectively engage or coherently tell their story to the court, and the promises of online courts will be lost."

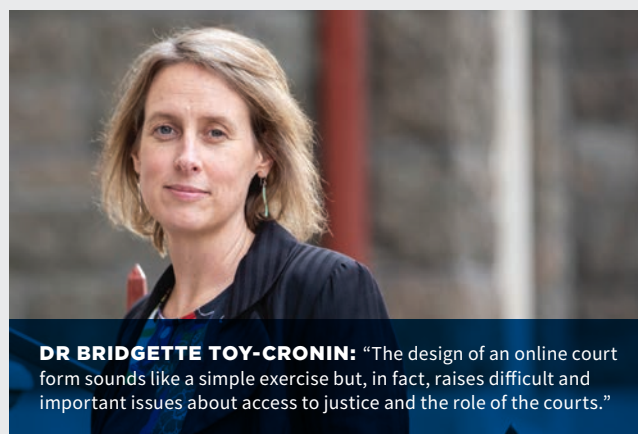
She says that while online filing offers significant benefits to all stakeholders, the systems need to be designed with a deep understanding of the users.

A report co-funded by Otago and the New Zealand Law Foundation, and co-written with academics from the University of Waikato cautions against making all forms "digital by default", arguing for off-line alternatives for those who are digitally excluded. It also raises the issue of "nudging" that alters user behaviour, and the need to prompt users to provide the detail a legal narrative requires.

"The design of an online court form sounds like a simple exercise but, in fact, raises difficult and important issues about access to

justice and the role of the courts," Toy-Cronin says.

"With the safeguards of a strong user-focus and judicial engagement, online court forms could provide greater access for many disputants, and better data about our justice system to support ongoing design improvements and cost savings for government."



**DR BRIDGETTE TOY-CRONIN:** "The design of an online court form sounds like a simple exercise but, in fact, raises difficult and important issues about access to justice and the role of the courts."

## When cancer and diabetes coincide

**When Dr Jason Gurney (Ngāpuhi) began his career as a researcher, it was to investigate diabetes-related foot problems for Māori.**

The research brought him face-to-face with the appalling toll diabetes was having on tangata whenua and it was then that he decided to dedicate his career to Māori health.

Now the epidemiologist and director of the Cancer and Chronic Conditions (C3) research group at the University of Otago, Wellington is turning his attention to the co-occurrence of diabetes and cancer in Māori with the aid of a two-year \$800,000 Health Research Council (HRC) project grant.

The latest statistics show diabetes cases are increasing by seven per cent a year and are three times higher among Māori and Pacific people. At the same time, there is a rise in potential cancer cases, with recent projections indicating a doubling of cancer patients over the age of 65 by 2035.

Gurney says the research will help identify parts of the cancer pathway where Māori and Pacific patients with diabetes may not be accessing best-practice care.

“We will examine what the impact of diabetes is on access to early diagnosis, cancer care and health outcomes among patients who have diabetes and cancer.”

The research will be conducted by the C3 research group in

association with researchers at the University of Waikato led by Professor of Population Health Ross Lawrenson.

The research funding was announced by the Minister of Health Hon. Andrew Little and HRC Chief Executive and former UOW Dean Professor Sunny Collings in July.



**DR JASON GURNEY** with HRC Chief Executive Professor Sunny Collings and the Minister of Health Hon Andrew Little.

## Depression faces sniff test

**An Otago study has identified a link between olfactory function and postpartum depression.**

Lead author Dr Mei Peng (Food Science) says the world-first study helps show the sensory symptoms related to postpartum depression are very different from those of major depression.

“Specifically, patients with postpartum depression show normal olfactory sensitivity whereas patients with major depression show substantially declined olfactory sensitivity.”

The findings add evidence to the growing argument postpartum depression is different to major depression, and requires separate research and medical attention.

“Postpartum depression has been long regarded as a sub-category of major depressive disorder, but with a poor diagnostic rate. Recently, the scientific community has been questioning whether postpartum depression should be studied and treated separately from major depression following insights into the different effect each disorder has on neurobiology.”

Pregnancy-related depression is common, with six to 12 per cent of women affected during pregnancy, and more than 20 per cent affected after having a baby. Resolving the status of postpartum depression may have important implications for diagnosis, treatment, policy and research of the disorder.

The multidisciplinary study assessed the olfactory abilities of 39 depressed mothers who were pregnant and up to one-year post pregnancy, comparing them against a healthy cohort.

The researchers found no difference between the two groups in terms of their ability to detect smells, but postpartum depressed women experienced different intensity and hedonic perception of some smells.

“These findings imply that postpartum depression is associated with alterations in higher-order olfactory perception, but not early-processing of odours,” Peng says.



**DR MEI PENG:** “Patients with postpartum depression show normal olfactory sensitivity whereas patients with major depression show substantially declined olfactory sensitivity.”

## Education pathways for refugees

**College of Education staff are leading a research project with former refugees from Dunedin and Invercargill secondary schools to explore tertiary education pathways in Aotearoa New Zealand.**

Project leader Associate Professor Vivienne Anderson says 37 students have joined the Secondary to Transitions Project since it began in April 2020.

The Invercargill-based students are Colombian, speaking Spanish as their first language; the Dunedin students are Syrian, Palestinian and Afghani, speaking Arabic or Dari/Farsi as their first language.

They participate in four workshops each year, held during school holidays, with content planned in collaboration with the students.

Anderson says the project offers students a space to reflect on their education aspirations, learn about education pathways in New Zealand, ask questions and access information, and become familiar with tertiary education environments.

In addition, the students are collaborating with the research team to create student-centred resources to inform schools and tertiary education providers' work with refugee-background students.

Research findings have highlighted the importance of schools taking the students' educational aspirations seriously. Some students have expressed frustration at being seen only as English-language learners, or as incapable of academic study. Others have described the pressure of managing schoolwork and language learning alongside

caregiving responsibilities and the ongoing effects of trauma.

"While refugee-background students are, like all students, diverse, our research is highlighting the intense emotional and academic labour involved in navigating New Zealand education as a recently-arrived former refugee," Anderson says. "We hope our project can inform policies and practices that make educational navigation a bit easier for them."



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR VIVIENNE ANDERSON:**

"While refugee-background students are diverse, our research is highlighting the intense emotional and academic labour involved in navigating New Zealand education..."

## Financial literacy for retirement

**Māori, Pacific Islanders and women have lower levels of financial literacy, resulting in them being financially underprepared for their senior years, according to new research.**

The study, "Financial Literacy, Debt, Risk Tolerance and Retirement Preparedness: Evidence from New Zealand", showed people with better education were more financially literate, and more likely to have less debt anxiety and higher risk tolerance.

It supported previous research that found financial literacy is high in New Zealand, with 57 per cent of older people scoring well in testing. However, females aged 55–59 and people of Māori or Pacific Island ethnicity with lower educational attainment, lower incomes and high family responsibility had significantly lower levels of financial literacy and were more vulnerable to financial struggles in their senior years.

"Lack of financial literacy sees many people missing out on the ability to make positive financial decisions in their working years, resulting in tougher living conditions in their senior years," says Associate Professor Helen Roberts who co-authored the study with Associate Professor Ros Whiting and Dr Jelita Noviarini (all Accountancy and Finance) and Dr Andrew Coleman (formerly Economics).

The researchers concluded that, contrary to findings in a previous New Zealand study suggesting heavy reliance on the

universal superannuation, financial literacy is important for retirement preparedness and those who suffer most financially in their retirement generally have lower income and more anxiety about their debt levels.

"Provision for better financial literacy can help improve financial health and overall wellbeing through positive decision-making towards retirement planning, savings plans and investments."



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HELEN ROBERTS:** "Lack of financial literacy sees many people missing out on the ability to make positive financial decisions..."



## HOCKEN LEGACY



**FROM LEFT:** Hocken Head Curator, Pictorial Collections, Robyn Notman with *Rangui*. Lithograph by A. Maurin, printed by Lemercier (1<sup>st</sup> edition) (Atlas plate 71) [Ellis & Ellis 101] Given by E.A.G and R.D.J Collins, Christchurch in 2020, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, Collins 65a;

*Kowhai*. Coloured engraving. Published in J.C.Mordant de Launay & J.L.A. Loiseleur-Deslongchamps, *Herbier général de L'amateur*, Paris: Audot, volume 3, 1819. Given by E.A.G and R.D.J Collins, Christchurch in 2020, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, Collins 197;

*Terres Australes, Pirogue de guerre de la N<sup>lle</sup> Zélande*. Coloured engraving. Given by E.A.G and R.D.J Collins, Christchurch in 2020, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, Collins 15.

# The French Connection

The University of Otago's Hocken Collections has further benefitted from the generosity of a self-described "enthusiastic Francophile".

## DR ROGER COLLINS CREDITS

a high school French teacher in Timaru with igniting his passion for France and things French, and his abiding interest in Franco-New Zealand contacts.

Collins went on to study French at universities in New Zealand and France, and taught French and Art History at Otago for many years.

A prolific author of books and articles in French as well as English, his published works include a book, in French, on Louis Le Breton, who visited New Zealand with the French explorer Dumont d'Urville in 1840 and painted a famous scene of Otago Harbour, which the Hocken later acquired.

While teaching at Otago, Collins also edited a bilingual journal, *Antipodes*, devoted to the documentation and study of contacts between New Zealand and the French-speaking world.

“It is a fascinating collection and offers some very interesting opportunities for interpretation and further research, whether that is from an artistic or historical point of view, or from the cultural perspective of the people, activities and subjects depicted in the prints.”

The meticulous collector has donated much material to the Hocken over several decades. His most recent gift is an extensive collection of more than 1,000 prints, some previously on indefinite loan, related to the French exploration of New Zealand and the Pacific, dating from the 1770s to the 1880s.

“When I went to France for the first time in the early 1960s, I was soon captivated by early French publications with illustrations of New Zealand,” Collins explains. “Some of these were in published accounts of the voyages of exploration, some were in illustrated newspapers or magazines, and I just started accumulating this stuff from print dealers in Paris.”

Collins says that the much-expanded collection comprises printed pictures of New Zealand subjects made in France and copied from any source, whether French or foreign; and pictures printed in other countries by printmakers who adapted French images to their own local markets.

The diverse subjects embrace landscapes, plants and animals, portraits, voyages and encounters, customs and practices, costume and dress, and tools.

Collins says that most of the prints are founded on the collections of the natural historians and the portfolios of draftsmen and artists who visited New Zealand from the 1760s, notably those taking part in French naval expeditions to the Pacific.

He says that drawings either made on the spot, or later from specimens and artefacts taken back to France, were copied by lithographers and engravers, whose work most often appeared as book illustrations, but also as anything from pictorial wallpaper to children’s board games.

Some of the items in the collection are single-sheet prints but most are leaves from books that had been taken apart.

Some of the prints have already been displayed at the Hocken, most recently as part of an exhibition earlier this year titled “Drift”, featuring recent Hocken art acquisitions and selected collection items.

Hocken Head Curator, Pictorial Collections, Robyn Notman, hopes that academics, students and other interested parties such as artists and curators, will make good use of the prints.

“It is a fascinating collection and offers some very interesting opportunities for interpretation and further research, whether that is from an artistic or historical point of view, or from the cultural perspective of the people, activities and subjects depicted in the prints.”

She adds that the big job of helping to identify and catalogue the most recent prints could be a great task for Humanities interns, especially senior Māori or Pasifika students.

Collins has been very generous to the Hocken over the years. The retired academic previously donated collections of books he amassed relating to the French and New Zealand, including histories and biographies of French people in New Zealand, French literature set in New Zealand, New Zealand literature set in France, and New Zealand novels translated into French.

He has additionally donated his collection of text books used for teaching French in New Zealand.



Photo: Nick Austin

**DONOR DR ROGER COLLINS:**

“When I went to France for the first time in the early 1960s, I was soon captivated by early French publications with illustrations of New Zealand.”

While French is the obvious common connection between these donations, one eclectic Hocken donation has nothing to do with France or the French.

It comprises a collection of books that UK publishers opted to have printed in New Zealand during the Second World War, rather than printed in the United Kingdom and shipped to New Zealand, because of the wartime threat to shipping.

The Collins Collection, as it’s named, ranges from a book of children’s verses, *Now we are Six*, by A. A. Milne; to a detective novel, *Towards Zero*, by Agatha Christie.

Collins’ work has been acknowledged by the Fédération des Alliances Françaises de Nouvelle-Zélande, which awarded him the John Dunmore Medal in 1987. The medal recognises outstanding contributions to knowledge and understanding of the part played by the French people or French language in the development of world culture, particularly in the Pacific region.

Appropriately, Collins – who was a founding committee member of the Friends of the Hocken in 1991 – was made an Honorary Hocken Fellow in 2007.

**IAN DOUGHERTY**

## University appoints new Vice-Chancellor

Professor David Murdoch has been appointed as the University of Otago's next Vice-Chancellor, commencing in early 2022.

Professor Murdoch, a distinguished academic and recognised world-leader in the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, particularly pneumonia and other respiratory infections, is currently Dean and Head of Campus at the University of Otago, Christchurch (UOC).

He was awarded the University's Distinguished Research medal in 2020, was the Head of Pathology (UOC) during the Canterbury earthquakes, and has been involved in the planning of Te Papa Hauora, the Christchurch Health Precinct, including a new building for the University's campus.

Among Murdoch's other notable achievements are a leading role in a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded global study of childhood pneumonia that changed the way the disease is diagnosed, treated and prevented in developing countries; and years of research that has re-written the world view on Legionnaires' disease. He is also the co-director of the One Health Aotearoa research alliance, a diverse network of infectious disease experts working to address health hazards at the human, animal and environmental interface.

He has advised the New Zealand government during the COVID-19 pandemic and has been a member of the Strategic COVID-19 Public Health Advisory Group. He was also one of three international experts invited to advise the Oxford University team developing a vaccine for COVID-19.

Murdoch says he is honoured to take on the role of Vice-Chancellor. "I care deeply about the University. I am very much looking forward to beginning in



Photo: Neil Macbeth

### OTAGO'S NEXT VICE-CHANCELLOR PROFESSOR DAVID MURDOCH:

"I am very much looking forward to beginning in the role next year and working with staff, students and the many groups of people who are important to me and the University's future."

the role next year and working with staff, students and the many groups of people who are important to me and the University's future."

Murdoch graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of Otago in 1985, and later a Doctor of Medicine in 2003. He also has a Master of Science degree in Epidemiology from the University of London.

As a young doctor he worked in a very remote Nepalese hospital, which greatly influenced his future career as an infectious disease specialist and researcher.

Otago Chancellor Dr Royden Somerville says Murdoch is a values-driven and empathetic academic leader who has a demonstrated record in developing positive organisational structures that encourage diversity and inclusiveness.

"He is also a strong advocate for equity, global citizenship and Te Tiriti-led partnership. He will be an outstanding leader who will ensure that we are well positioned to face the future, and confront challenges and embrace opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

"I know that he is committed to building the University's future as a leading public university with a rich heritage, not only here in Aotearoa, but also internationally."

An extended profile of Professor Murdoch was featured in the *Otago Magazine* issue 51:

[otago.ac.nz/otagomagazine/issue51](https://otago.ac.nz/otagomagazine/issue51)





## Otago wins prestigious national teaching award

For the seventh time in 10 years, the University of Otago has won Aotearoa's top tertiary teaching award, with Dr Latika Samalia, of the Department of Anatomy, being named the Ako Aotearoa Prime Minister's Supreme Award winner for 2021.

This top award follows her Sustained Excellence Award and the Supporting Pacific Learners endorsement announced in August.

Otago made up four of the nine Excellence in Teaching awardees – Samalia was joined by Tourism's Professor Hazel Tucker, Theology's Professor Tim Cooper and the Department of Management's Associate Professor Diane Ruwhiu (Kaupapa Māori category).

Originally from Fiji, Samalia trained as a doctor and worked as an obstetrician and gynaecologist before making the switch to teaching.

She now teaches up to 750 students in some weeks in five papers across a number of undergraduate and postgraduate clinical

courses, passing on her knowledge of anatomical structures and clinical skills to future health professionals.

Samalia has a strong focus on Pacific students and was instrumental in developing orientation sessions for Pacific and Māori students.

She says receiving the supreme award came as a "huge shock" and the announcement left her shaking.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Pat Cragg says these awards are an important illustration of the value of teaching at the University.

"We are immensely proud of all our teachers and, in particular, of the four award winners this year who deliver outstanding experiences for our students."

## Aspirational vision for Dunedin health precinct

The University of Otago has revealed a more than \$1 billion vision for a health precinct stretching from the new Dunedin Hospital to the School of Dentistry which could offer a "once-in-a-generation chance" to reshape Dunedin's city centre.

The 20- to 30-year aspirational plan includes: a purpose-built medical research facility co-located on the new Dunedin hospital site; several new ultra-modern health sciences buildings; and upgrades to the University's historic medical buildings.

Chief Operating Officer Mr Stephen Willis says the vision relied on key partners, including Ngāi Tahu, the Ministry of Health, the Southern District Health Board and the Dunedin City Council.

"This is an opportunity for growth, innovation and industry partnership," he says. "We want to future-proof the University's world-class health sciences education and research while strengthening our relationship with our partners and the city."

Feasibility work has started on a \$240

million education-focused health sciences building on the corner of Frederick and Malcolm Streets.

## Christchurch project proceeds

The University Council has approved final and full funding for a planned \$178 million (total project) building on the University of Otago, Christchurch, campus at 24 Oxford Terrace in the heart of Te Papa Hauora – the Christchurch health precinct.

Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Helen Nicholson says this will be the biggest construction project the University has undertaken to date, and will enable the growth of the world-class health science research and education programmes happening on the Christchurch campus.

The six-level, 5-Star Green Star development is expected to be completed in 2025.

## Otago tops performance indicators

The University of Otago has again topped the key indicators that measure the educational performance of students at New Zealand's universities. In the Tertiary Education Commission's annual Educational Performance Indicators, Otago ranked first for overall student qualification completion, first-year retention, and progression to higher levels of study; and ranked third for course completion.

Otago also ranked well in measures for Māori and Pacific, topping three categories for Māori students and one for Pacific.

## International rankings

In the latest QS subject rankings 13 Otago subjects were placed in the top 100 globally, including five subjects in the top 50 (up from four last year). The University's top-50 subjects are: sports-related subjects (14<sup>th</sup>); anatomy and physiology (49<sup>th</sup>); dentistry (43<sup>rd</sup>); theology and religious studies (47<sup>th</sup>); and archaeology (48<sup>th</sup>). Those in the 51-100 band are: anthropology; development studies; earth and marine science; education; nursing; performing arts; philosophy and psychology.

QS has also ranked Otago's online MBA 13<sup>th</sup> internationally. It ranked number one in the world for class experience, 24<sup>th</sup> for class profile and employability, and 18<sup>th</sup> for faculty and teaching.

The Department of Tourism was ranked first in New Zealand and 24<sup>th</sup> in the world by the Shanghai Ranking Consultancy in its latest global university subject rankings.

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## Funding successes

University of Otago scientific research projects have received more than \$16 million from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Endeavour Fund. Associate Professor **Christopher Moy** (Geology) secured Otago's sole research programme grant,



in partnership with Otago Honorary Professor **Gary Wilson** (now GNS Science). Their five-year, \$8.6 million project is looking to find a pathway towards carbon neutrality by analysing the future of Fiordland, one of New Zealand's largest natural carbon sinks.

A further eight Otago researchers were also successful in securing Endeavour Fund Smart Ideas grants, which are each valued at \$1 million over three years.

Otago researchers received around \$13 million in the Health Research Council's (HRC) July funding round to support 13 significant projects. These include investigations into the impact of diabetes on access to cancer services, the potential benefits of lung cancer screening around Māori, the immunity to measles in young adults, improving the health of Māori affected by psychosis, and a new stomach cancer drug delivery system. **Dr Allamanda Faatoese** (UOC) also received a \$1.1 million Pacific project grant to investigate heart peptides in Pasifika and Pākehā New Zealanders.

Better outcomes for women suffering from New Zealand's most common gynaecological cancer and a bioactive toothpaste that will mean fewer visits to the dentist were among University of Otago projects funded in the HRC's Emerging Researcher and Explorer funding rounds. In total, nine Otago researchers received almost \$1.65 million.

Seven Otago researchers were awarded funding in the HRC's Feasibility Studies grants with a total of \$1.74 million for projects ranging from anti-inflammatories and physiotherapy for people with knee osteoarthritis, preventing subsequent injuries and community-based intensive activation therapy for major depression.

The University of Otago, Waitematā DHB, and Auckland DHB also received a \$1.96 million grant from the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases, via the HRC. This will fund the first trial of lung cancer

screening in New Zealand, focusing on Māori, whose mortality rates from the disease are up to four times higher than other ethnic groups.

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## First for Otago Business School

The Otago Business School is the first in New Zealand to be invited to join the Global Business School Network (GBSN). Founded in 2003 by the World Bank, the GBSN is an independent non-profit organisation based in Washington, comprising more than 100 business schools. Its purpose is to help grow management and entrepreneurial talent in the developing world to help generate prosperity.

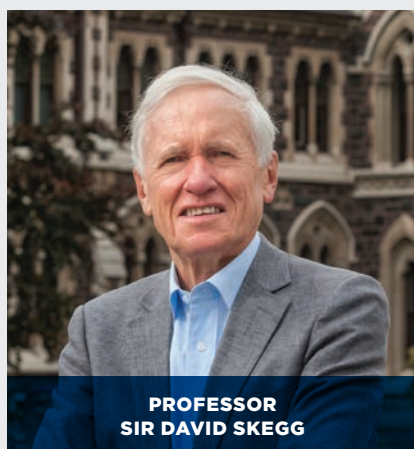
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## 2022 Arts Fellows named

The University of Otago's 2022 Arts Fellows have been named.

The 2022 Robert Burns Fellow is **Albert Belz**; **Sean Donnelly** is the Mozart Fellow; **Michael Parmenter** is the Caroline Plummer Fellow in Community Dance; **Swapna Haddow** is the University of Otago College of Education Creative New Zealand Children's Writer in Residence Fellow, and **Sorawit Songsataya** has received the Frances Hodgkins Fellowship.

Their projects will explore a wide range of topics with a common thread; understanding and embracing diversity.



**PROFESSOR  
SIR DAVID SKEGG**



**FAUMUINA PROFESSOR  
FA'AFETAI SOPOAGA**



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
ZACH WEBER**

## Appointments

Former Vice-Chancellor, Emeritus Professor Sir **David Skegg** is one of two New Zealanders appointed to the International Science Council Covid-19 Scenarios Project.

Ms **Michelle Taiaroa-McDonald** and Mr **Tagiilima Feleti** have been appointed as the managers of Te Huka Mātauraka – Māori Centre and the Pacific Islands Centre respectively.

Dr **Craig Bunt** has been appointed as the inaugural Professor of Otago's Agricultural Innovation Programme.

The Very Rev. Dr **Graham Redding** has been appointed as Otago's first lecturer in chaplaincy. Otago offers New Zealand's only specific university qualifications in chaplaincy.

Professor **Neil Gemmell** (Anatomy) has been appointed as the new Dean of the School of Biomedical Sciences.

Professor **Paul Cooper** has been appointed as the new Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry. He will take over the role in July next year.

**Hone Paul** (Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Awa, Te Arawa) has been appointed as the University's new Director of Marketing. He comes to Otago from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

Faumuina Professor **Fa'afetai Sopoaga** has been appointed to the role of New Zealand Health Adviser, Samoa with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

Professor **Craig Rodger** (Physics) has been elected as vice chair of the "Waves in Plasma" commission of the International Union of Radio Science (URSI) Scientific Union, one of the 10 sections in URSI's structure. URSI was one of the founding scientific unions which now make up the International Council for Science.

## Achievements

Chemistry Professor **Keith Gordon** is the 2021 recipient of the University's highest honour, the Distinguished Research Medal (see story pages 16 – 18).

Two Otago academics have been made fellows of the Royal Society Te Apārangi: Distinguished Professor **Neil Gemmell** (Anatomy) for his research in genomics and biology; and Professor **Michelle Thompson-Fawcett** (Geography) for her work in advancing contemporary mātauranga Māori and fostering indigenous approaches to culturally-sustainable environmental futures.

Associate Professor **Zach Weber** (Philosophy) won the Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Award presented by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to "internationally renowned academics in recognition of their outstanding accomplishments in research".

Dr **Robert Odolinski** (Surveying) received the Per Enge Early Achievement Award from the international Institute of Navigation for his outstanding achievements in the field of positioning and navigation.

Professor **Michael Baker** (Public Health, Wellington) received the 2020 Prime Minister's Science Communication Prize in recognition of his outstanding ability to translate his expert knowledge into practical and accessible information to inform the government and people of New Zealand. Professor Baker was also named Wellingtonian of the Year for 2020 at *The Dominion Post's* annual "Welly Awards" (see story pages 10 – 15).

Professor of Buddhism and Asian Religions **Ben Schonthal** and Religion Head of Programme Associate Professor **John Shaver** are joint 2021 recipients of the University's annual Rowheath Trust Award and Carl Smith Medal, awarded to early career research staff who demonstrate outstanding



scholarly achievement that enhances the understanding, development and well-being of individuals and society.

Dr **Meredith Peddie** (Human Nutrition), Dr **Michael Garratt** (Anatomy), Dr **Sarah Diermeier** (Biochemistry), Dr **Charlotte King** (Anatomy), Dr **Christina Ergler** (Geography) and Dr **Anna High** (Law) have received University of Otago Early Career Awards for Distinction in Research.

Media, Film and Communication Associate Professor **Hugh Slotten** has been awarded the Charles A. Lindbergh Chair in Aerospace History at the Smithsonian Institution Air and Space Museum in Washington DC for the second time.

**Leanne Te Karu** (Pharmacy) received a gold medal from the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand for her dedication to improving health outcomes for all, and particularly Māori.

Dr **Dianne Sika-Paotonu** (Pathology and Molecular Medicine, Wellington)



received the New Zealand Association of Scientists' Cranwell Medal for science communication for 2020.

Chief Financial Officer **Sharon van Turnhout** received a Chartered

Accountants Australia and New Zealand Fellowship in recognition of her outstanding achievement and contribution to the accounting profession.

Emeritus Professor **Richard Morgan** (Geography) received a lifetime achievement award from the International Association for Impact Assessment.

Otago graduate and Fulbright scholar **Tom Devine** has been awarded the William Georgetti Scholarship to support his studies for a Master in Public Health in Sociomedical Sciences, and History, Ethics and Law at Columbia University, New York City.

Retired Foundation Director of Otago's National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies Professor **Kevin Clements**



has been awarded the prestigious International Studies Association's 2022 Distinguished Scholar Award in its Peace Studies Section.

Dr **Phil Wilcox** (Ngāti Rakaipaaka, Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu ki te Wairoa) has been awarded the Genetics Society of Australasia Award for Excellence in Education.

Management senior lecturer Dr **Maja Graso** has been awarded the best *Academy of Management Perspectives* article for 2021.

## Queen's Birthday Honours

A number of alumni and former staff received Queen's Birthday Honours.

**DNZM:** Professor **Carolyn Waugh Burns**, CBE, for services to ecological research.

**KNZM:** Mr **Grahame Charles Sydney**, ONZM, for services to art.

**CNZM:** Mr **David Charles Cull**, for services to local government; Emeritus Professor **David Eric Richmond**, for services to health and education; Dr **Robert Simon Hearn Rowley**, for services to paediatric and neonatal care; Dr **Maxwell Gilbert Shepherd**, JP, for services to biotechnology and business.

**ONZM:** Mr **David Ross Black**, for services to health; Mrs **Margaret Agnes Chapman**, for services to rural women and rural communities; Dr **Anne Denise Guy**, for services to infant mental health; Mrs **Mary Joan McFarlane**, for services to swimming.

**MNZM:** Dr **Graeme Alexander Downes**, for services to music and music education; Mrs **Lala Athene Frazer**, QSM, for services to conservation; Mrs **Sally Anne Jackson**, JP, for services to special education; Mr **Hoani Sydney Langsbury**, for services to conservation; Ms **Caron Orelowitz**, for services to podiatry; Mrs **Samantha Anne Powell (Murton)**, for services to medical education, particularly general practice.

**QSM:** Dr **Alastair Hartley Blackie**, JP, for services to dentistry and local government; Dr **Derek Clifton Gibbons**, for services to health; Mrs **Benita Jane Robinson**, for services to the community; Mr **Paul Eric Tyson**, for services to sport and the community.

In the Australian Queens Birthday Honours, Professor **Glenn Summerhayes** received the Order of Australia for his contribution to tertiary education and history.

## Emeritus Professors

The University Council has awarded Emeritus Professor status to:

Professor **Robert Aldred** (Mathematics and Statistics); Professor **Tony Binns** (Geography); Professor **Phil Bishop** (Zoology); Professor **Timothy Crack** (Accountancy and Finance); Professor **Alison Cree** (Zoology); Professor **Steve Dawson** (Marine Science); Professor **John Horwood** (Psychological Medicine, UOC); Professor **Raechel Laing** (Division of Sciences); Professor **Janice Murray** (Clothing and Textile Programme); Professor **Inguruwatt Premachandra** (Accountancy and Finance); Professor **Poia Rewi** (Te Tumu School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies); Professor **Edward Shipton** (Surgery and Anaesthesia); Professor **Liz Slooten** (Zoology); Professor **Jean-Claude Theis** (Surgical Sciences); Professor **Murray Tilyard** (General Practice and Rural Health); Professor **Ian Tucker** (Pharmacy); Professor **Graham Wallis** (Zoology).

## Obituaries

Sir **Eion Edgar**, KNZM, aged 76. A visionary businessman and philanthropist, Sir Eion had a long association with the University of Otago. As a student he was a member of the OUSA executive and graduated with a BCom in 1967. A proud and active alumnus, he served on the University Council for 23 years from 1981, including seven years as Pro-Chancellor, and four as Chancellor from 1999 to 2003. In 2003 he was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws for outstanding service. Sir Eion was also instrumental in developing the University's Leading Thinkers fundraising initiative, including helping to establish the Edgar Diabetes and Obesity Research Centre in 2003 with a generous foundation donation made by the Edgar family. He

chaired the centre's advisory board and was also patron of Diabetes New Zealand.

A respected member of the New Zealand haematology community, Associate Professor **John Carter**, MNZM, was a staff member at the University of Otago, Wellington from 1985, continuing in a casual capacity after his retirement. He was also Clinical Lead for Haematology at the Wellington Hospital until 2018.

Emeritus Professor **George Petersen**, ONZM FRSNZ, aged 87. An Otago alumnus, George Peterson was appointed to a Chair in Biochemistry in 1968 and remained head of the department until 1991, continuing as an active researcher until his retirement in 1999. His many accolades included a Doctor of Science from Oxford University in 1993 for his outstanding contributions to DNA research; the Marsden Medal in 1995 for outstanding national scientific leadership; an Honorary Doctor of Science from the University of Otago in 2000, and the Rutherford Medal from the Royal Society of NZ in 2003.

A stalwart of Pharmacology at Otago, Emeritus Professor **Fred Fastier** recently died at the age of 101. An Otago alumnus, he studied and worked overseas before returning to the University in 1952 as a senior lecturer in Pharmacology. In 1969 he was appointed to the Foundation Chair of newly-formed Department of Pharmacology and Pharmacy. He played a pivotal role in the development of the first pharmacy curriculum at the University and was a founding member of the Otago Pharmacological Association. Professor Fastier retained strong connections to the University after his retirement and supported several initiatives for students (see page 47).

Emeritus Professor **David Russell** was the first Dean of the School of Physical Education (1981-91). He was also co-director of the Lifestyles in New Zealand (LINZ) research group and was the first

New Zealand academic to be inducted as an International Fellow to the National Academy of Kinesiology (USA).

**Yvonne Brouwer** joined the College of Education in 1991 as a teacher educator, with a particular focus on Māori education within mainstream primary education.

Following a successful career as a researcher in her own right, **Judith Candy** joined the staff of the University of Otago, Christchurch in 2013 in the role of a CDHB research advisor.

The University also acknowledges the sad loss of two members of the residential colleges' catering teams: **Nigel Donehue** and **Michael Caldwell**.

# Magazine Editor retires

Karen Hogg has been the editor of this publication, the *University of Otago Magazine*, for nearly two decades, bringing the stories of others into the spotlight. As she prepared to retire she shared her own story.

**WITH HER PASSION FOR** telling the University's stories, eye for detail and cutting-edge creativity, Karen Hogg has ensured Otago's publications are something to be proud of.

Hogg retired at the end of September after 18 years leading the University's publications, first as Editorial Manager and more recently, as Publications Editor.

She has edited 43 (and-a-half) issues of this magazine; 18 issues of the University's annual research highlights book, *He Kitenga*; 18 University of Otago Annual Reports; plus countless promotional books, brochures and posters.

When she took over as editor of the magazine it comprised 44 pages and was published three times a year; now it is 56

pages and published twice a year.

"It is a magazine for alumni, but I have tried to keep its focus broad, so that anyone who picks up an issue might find something of interest," says Hogg.

"Otago's researchers do amazing things and it has been a real privilege to be able to highlight their work. The University of Otago is strategically committed to research that enhances health and wellbeing and to addressing the major challenges of our world – and it does. The work done in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, was – and continues to be – exceptional and has been the basis of many wonderful stories.

"There has never been a shortage of stories; the biggest challenge is often what to leave out."

She says the wider University community has been very generous to the magazine. Almost without exception, every staff member approached to be featured has said yes, and she has been particularly impressed by alumni from all walks of life who have been happy to share their stories.

"Many of these people live really busy lives and do extraordinary things, and yet their connection with the University has been such that they have given their precious time to be interviewed and photographed for our magazine.

"They have all been amazing, but particular stand-outs include former Cook Islands Prime Minister Sir Thomas Davis; renowned philosopher Annette Baier; New Zealand cooking legend Dame Alison Holst; Professor Robert Webster who is a world authority on avian 'flu; 2011 Rugby World Cup CEO Martin Snedden; and Dr Carole McArthur who has dedicated her career to the fight against AIDs in Africa. And there have been dozens and dozens more."

Over the years there has been much to be proud of, particularly winning two gold awards for *He Kitenga* (2006 and 2016) in the CASE (Council for the Advancement and Support of Education) international Circle of Excellence awards programme.

"But I am most proud of the special issue of the *Otago Magazine* to celebrate the University's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary," says Hogg. "I wanted to explore the concept that the true essence of a university can be found in the achievements of its alumni. So I set out to highlight 150 alumni for 150 years, across all decades and all fields of endeavour. It seemed a good idea when I started, but proved a mammoth task. So very many alumni heroes and – again – who to leave out?"

Director of Communications Megan McPherson wishes Hogg well in her retirement, adding that she has made an extraordinary contribution to helping tell the University's stories.

"Not just through the *Otago Magazine*, but also through other publications, including *He Kitenga*, the Maori Strategic Framework and the Annual Report,



**RETIRING PUBLICATIONS  
EDITOR KAREN HOGG:**

“There has never been a shortage of stories; the biggest challenge is often what to leave out.”

“I like to think that our magazine is a tangible connection with Otago when it arrives in the letterboxes of our alumni around the world; something they can pick and put down at leisure, and perhaps share with others as well.”

for example. *He Kitenga* is an annual publication highlighting our premier researchers and their work, and Karen has made this her own. She has always been ahead of the pack in her innovative approach to beautiful publications featuring well-told stories from Otago. It is not surprising that she has twice won international CASE awards for her work.”

In an increasingly digital world Hogg is a passionate supporter of print.

Around the world publications are being cut back, and at Otago it is no different. In 2015 the University reduced the magazine to two issues a year, but continually rising postage costs are a significant problem.

“For this issue – and for the first time ever – the magazine distribution list has been cut. We do have a website that offers an online version, but I am a staunch believer in the power of print. I like to think that our magazine is a tangible connection with Otago when it arrives in the letterboxes of our alumni around the world; something they can pick and put down at leisure, and perhaps share with others as well. If anyone is still reading this, perhaps they will agree with me!”

**LISA DICK**

Photo: Alan Dove

# Books by Otago alumni

**Thomas Potts of Canterbury:  
Colonist and Conservationist,**  
by Paul Star, Otago University Press,  
September 2020.

**From Southland to Surgery:  
A Journey around Values,**  
by John Bower Morton,  
The Cotter Medical History Trust, 2020.

**First Expressions: Innovation and  
the Mission of God,**  
by Rev. Dr Steve Taylor, SCM Press:  
London, 2020.

**Reforming Public Management and  
Governance: Impact and Lessons  
from Anglophone Countries,**  
by John Halligan, Edward Elgar  
(Cheltenham), 2020.

**Policy Advice and the Westminster  
Tradition: Policy Advisory Systems  
in Australia, Britain, Canada and  
New Zealand,** by Jonathan Craft and  
John Halligan, Cambridge University  
Press, 2020.

**Slips: Cricket Poems,**  
by Mark Pirie, HeadworX Publishers,  
June 2021.

**Finding Love: An Appreciative  
Inquiry into Christian talk about  
Sin and Salvation,** Andrew Leslie  
Callender and Murray Rae, published  
by Wipf & Stock, Eugene Oregon, 2021.

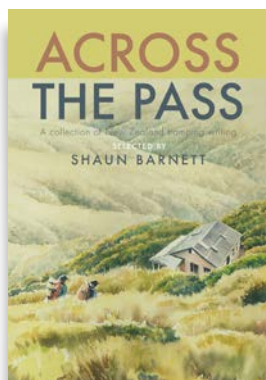
**Alert Level Four,**  
by Athol Parks, City Walks,  
April 2021

**Bono Mato Poeia: Rock Poems  
and Drawings,**  
by Mark Pirie, Earl of Seacliff Art  
Workshop, 2021.

**Audible Bleeding: The Origin and  
Development of the VGH Vascular  
Surgery Division,**  
by York N. Hsiang, FriesenPress  
Editions, 2021.

**Alumni:** if you have recently  
published a book please email  
[mag.editor@otago.ac.nz](mailto:mag.editor@otago.ac.nz)

## BOOKS



### **Across the Pass:**

A collection of tramping writing

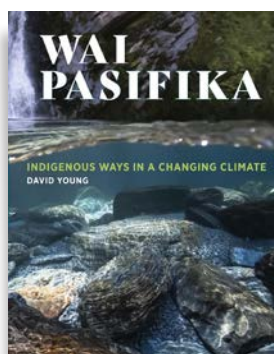
*Selected by Shaun Barnett*  
*Otago University Press, October 2021*

New Zealanders have produced a rich body of literature about tramping, with writing spanning nearly two centuries and ranging from poetry and songs, journals and newspaper pieces to magazine articles and books.

The pieces in *Across the Pass*, as selected by Shaun Barnett, range from epic tales to stories of strolls. Some writers celebrate the intricacies of nature and the strong bond forged when

facing challenges together, while others talk of treading the trails first pioneered by their ancestors. All say something about the many textures and colours of the experience we call tramping.

*Across the Pass* includes writing from New Zealanders such as writer John Mulgan, mountaineers Sir Edmund Hillary and Lydia Bradey, adventurer Graeme Dingle, public servant Bill Sutch, MP Eugenie Sage and photographer Craig Potton.



### **Wai Pasifika:**

Indigenous ways in a  
changing climate

*By David Young*  
*Otago University Press, October 2021*

In this beautifully written and illustrated book, David Young focuses on the increasingly endangered resource of freshwater and what so-called developed societies can learn from the indigenous voices of the Pacific.

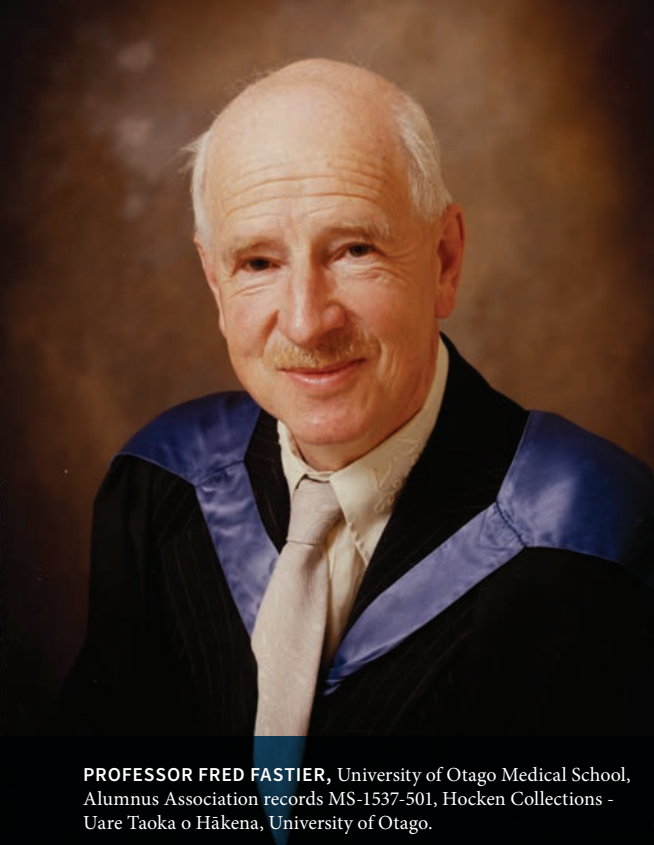
Combining 19<sup>th</sup> century and indigenous sources with a selection of modern studies and his own personal encounters, Young keeps a human face on the key issue of water. He confirms that the gift of indigenous people to their colonisers is that they offer systematic and different concepts of being in, and experiencing, nature.

There is still potential for change, Young argues in this inspiring and moving study. But it is time people woke up to the dangers and began to embrace possible solutions. The future rests on developing the discipline of deep respect for place, for planet and for life in its myriad forms.

For further information:

Otago University Press  
[otago.ac.nz/press](http://otago.ac.nz/press) | [university.press@otago.ac.nz](mailto:university.press@otago.ac.nz)





# Emeritus professor gifts estate to University

**PROFESSOR FRED FASTIER**, University of Otago Medical School, Alumnus Association records MS-1537-501, Hocken Collections - Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago.

## THE LEGACY OF EMERITUS PROFESSOR FREDERICK NOEL FASTIER

**FASTIER** (1920 – 2021) will live on in many ways thanks to his incredible generosity to the University of Otago and the lives he touched throughout his 84-year association with the University.

Professor Fastier, who taught pharmacology at Otago between 1949 and 1980 and was the University's inaugural professor of Pharmacology, passed away in July aged 101, leaving his entire estate to the University.

This final gift follows decades of giving to Otago and will be added onto, to support into perpetuity, the areas he had already established. Since the mid-1990s Professor Fastier has supported the Fastier Prestigious Summer Studentships, which fund BSc, BSc (Hons) and MSc Pharmacology and Toxicology students over a 10-week summer research project. In 2010 he donated his 1,200-strong collection of Science Fiction titles to the University's Special Collections, and between 1966 and 2005 he gave 122 works of art to the Hocken Collections.

In 2018 he said in an interview that it was important to him to give back to the

University, having himself been the recipient of others' benevolence during his studies.

"I owed them money and now I feel glad I've been able to return it," he said.

Fastier entered the University of Otago as a student in 1937 and graduated from the Science Department with a BSc. He then worked as the Chemist for the Department of Medicine, and obtained an MSc. His work at the Medical School was at first mainly in the chemical field but he became increasingly involved in pharmacological research. That led to him gaining a Beit Memorial Fellowship to study at Oxford. After obtaining a doctorate he worked in Edinburgh and New York before returning to teach back at Otago in 1949.

Following his retirement in 1980, he was made an Emeritus Professor, and never really left the University, becoming a student once again and gaining an MA in Philosophy. In recent years he often attended lectures on campus.

The University organised a morning tea to celebrate his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2020.

Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Helen Nicholson describes Professor Fastier as "one of our treasures".

"His long-standing relationship with the University has been invaluable."

She says he will be remembered for his inquiring mind, his dedication and commitment to Pharmacology and Pharmacy, and his wonderful generosity.



Photo: Sharron Bennett

**PROFESSOR FRED FASTIER** at his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday morning tea held at the University in 2020.



# Six60 supports Otago

## ASPIRING PERFORMING ARTISTS

have a new opportunity to follow their dreams thanks to an initiative from the biggest band to have got its break at the University of Otago.

Iconic music group Six60 have bought their old flat in Castle Street and partnered with the University, signing an agreement at the end of July at Te Korokoro o te Tūi, Otago's new Performing Arts centre, under which both Six60 and the University will provide two \$10,000-a-year scholarships each, for a total of four aspiring Performing Arts students to live at the flat.

The successful applicants will get to live at the iconic Castle Street house where the band got their big break, plus the opportunity to receive some mentoring from the band.

Lead singer Matiu Walters says the band is ecstatic to be giving back to a place that gave them their big break.

"Our roots have always been in Dunedin and at 660 Castle Street," he says. "Owning the house and being able to preserve its mana is something we have always dreamed of, but being able to realise it now is incredible.

"The University has always been as important a part of the Six60 story as the house, so to be able to partner with Otago, give back and create an opportunity for the next generation to start their journey is something we are really excited about."

Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Helen Nicholson says the University is delighted to be working alongside the band on this initiative.

"We know that Dunedin and the University of Otago is a key part of the Six60 story and we are very pleased to be able to work with the band to create new opportunities for students," she says.

"Their iconic Castle Street flat has

become a North Dunedin landmark and this collaboration both recognises the flat's significance and repurposes it to support the aspirations of our current students.

"The four scholarships and the possibilities of some mentoring from the band are exciting developments that will support some current Otago students to pursue their dreams in the music world.

"Alongside the recent construction of our state-of-the-art recording studio, this is a real boost for performing arts at Otago and underlines the very particular opportunities that we have for students here in Dunedin. We sincerely thank the band for giving back to the student community that they once called home."

The four scholarship recipients who will live in the house in 2022 were, at the time of going to print, being selected by a panel that included a representative from Six60.



**THE BAND SIX60 AND ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR PROFESSOR HELEN NICHOLSON (CENTRE):**  
“Our roots have always been in Dunedin and at 660 Castle Street. Owning the house and being able to preserve its mana is something we have always dreamed of ...”



**(FROM LEFT):** Ahmed Abusaleeq, Professor Rob Walker, Huda Abdulridha, Katie Attwell, Mr Mike Hunter and Michael Livingstone.

# Class of '79

## supports next generation of doctors

**A RISE IN DONATIONS** has led to an increase in scholarships from a group of generous Otago Medical School graduates.

The Otago Medical School Class of 1979 Undergraduate Medical Scholarship provides support for second- and third-year undergraduate medical students suffering financial hardship.

In previous years, two \$3,000 awards have been made, but a growth in the trust funds has allowed four scholarships to be awarded for 2021.

Professor Rob Walker and surgeon Mr Mike Hunter, who studied together in the MB ChB class of 1979, were on hand

in July to present the scholarships to this year's recipients Huda Abdulridha, Ahmed Abusaleeq, Katie Attwell and Michael Livingstone.

The scholarship fund was started after the medical class's 20-year reunion and had grown through a combination of lump sums and regular contributions. The fund is administered by the Otago Foundation Trust.

The class initially held reunions every 10 years, but have been held five-yearly since 2004 with a presentation about recent scholarship recipients shown at every reunion.

Hunter said monthly donations to the fund had been rising and he hoped four annual scholarships would become the norm.

"We'd like to give 10 scholarships. There are so many deserving stories and a hell of a lot of hardship."

Candidates for the scholarships must be New Zealand citizens or residents enrolled in the second- or third-year of the MB ChB course. Financial hardship which may limit the student's ability to otherwise complete the course is the main criterion for the scholarship, in conjunction with academic ability and personality.



Walker said the decision to increase the number of scholarships was easy, but deciding on the recipients was more difficult.

"There were so many worthy candidates."

One of the four successful recipients, Ahmed Abusaleeq, says receiving the scholarship was unexpected and he was "surprised and so grateful".

The scholarship has helped him buy medical equipment and books, and also pay for some dental care which was previously out of his budget.

"I have paid off some of my debt and saved some money to help me get through the semester without struggling. I have also given back some of this money to our community as I believe that no matter how much I spend for good, I will always get something in return."

He says the fact that the scholarship is awarded mid-year rather than at the beginning of the year is especially helpful, as this can be when students are struggling most.

"It delights me knowing that some of the past medical students are willing to support the current students," he says. "We have shared similar journeys and the same goal somehow. The idea of giving back to our community is great. It makes me think of the future students and how we can support them in the near future!"

Otago's Director of Development and Alumni Relations, Shelagh Murray, says the scholarships are a wonderfully generous initiative and provide meaningful support to the next generation of doctors.

"We're very grateful to the class of '79 alumni for giving back to the University and the Medical School in this way," says Murray. "The scholarships provide much-appreciated financial support, and they also create a valuable connection between our alumni and the students following in their footsteps."

Walker and Hunter hope other graduating Medical School classes will be inspired to set up their own scholarships.

"We were saying a couple of weeks ago that some of the other classes that are coming through should join us. We're not going to be here forever!" Walker said.

The next Otago Medical School Class of '79 reunion is planned for Wellington in 2024.

**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](https://otago.ac.nz/alumni/donate)
2. Charge my credit card: ☐ Visa    ☐ Mastercard

Card number:

Expiry date: .....

Cardholder's name: .....

Signature: .....

#### 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 [goldengiving.com/wall/otagouniversitytrust](https://goldengiving.com/wall/otagouniversitytrust) or email Chapel & York at [otago@chapel-york.com](mailto:otago@chapel-york.com)

**For residents in the USA** who wish to make a tax deductible donation: please visit [otagoalumni.us/donate-to-auoa](https://otagoalumni.us/donate-to-auoa) or email Mr John Crowe, [treasurer@otagoalumni.us](mailto: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**

# Partnership addresses global health problems

**A NEW INITIATIVE** to establish a Communicable Diseases Research Centre (CDRC) at Fiji National University builds on a longstanding philanthropic relationship between the University of Otago and Dunedin's Mercy Hospital.

In August it was announced that Otago's Global Health Institute (OGHI) and Mercy Hospital are together supporting the establishment of the new centre at Fiji National University (FNU).

As part of this initiative, Professor Philip Hill, McAuley Professor of International Health and co-director of OGHI, has been appointed as Adjunct Professor with the new research centre and is committing 20 per cent of his time to the endeavour.

Mercy Hospital, which endowed the McAuley Chair of International Health, has committed \$97,500 over three years towards the employment of a co-ordinator for the new centre.

"It is a great privilege to be part of this new initiative from its inception. We are looking forward to a long and fruitful partnership with our friends at FNU," Hill says.

Mercy Hospital mission co-ordinator Rev. Alofa Lale says the hospital is excited to support the initiative.

"We welcome the opportunity to support this new initiative in Fiji. The widespread potential for considerable positive influence in the whole Pacific around communicable diseases does not go unnoticed.

"The establishment of this research centre creates a platform for proactive engagement which will hopefully strengthen collaboration capabilities around the Pacific region," she says.

The McAuley Chair was established in 2007 and is named after Catherine McAuley (1778–1841), the founder of the Sisters of Mercy. The endowment is part of Otago's Leading Thinkers Initiative and is administered by the Otago Foundation Trust.

The Chair is funded by Mercy Hospital, Dunedin and represents a significant contribution to Mercy's commitment to address poverty worldwide and support the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. These include the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

The CDRC is the brainchild of Dr Donald Wilson, Associate Dean of Research at FNU's College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS).

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical need to build capacity in infectious/communicable disease research, and for that we are extremely grateful to Otago and Mercy Hospital, for Professor Hill's time, and the funding commitment to staffing of the CDRC," says Wilson.

Otago is already active in building human capacity for the initiative, providing strategic Otago PhD and master's scholarships to two staff of the CMNHS, both enrolled in microbiology and immunology. It is anticipated that several more FNU staff and students will be supported with PhD scholarships in the years ahead.

A major fundraising drive is anticipated in the next two years, to build world-class laboratory facilities to support the research of the CDRC.

For further information, please contact Professor Philip Hill: [philip.hill@otago.ac.nz](mailto:philip.hill@otago.ac.nz)



**REV. ALOFA LALE:** "We welcome the opportunity to support this new initiative in Fiji."



**DR DONALD WILSON:** "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical need to build capacity in infectious/communicable disease research."



**PROFESSOR PHILIP HILL:** "We are looking forward to a long and fruitful partnership with our friends at FNU."

# Events & reunions



**CHRISTCHURCH ALUMNI EVENT** at the University of Otago, Christchurch, 28 July.



**WELLINGTON ALUMNI EVENT** at the Grand Hall in Parliament, 14 July.



**RETURN TO THE GARDIES EVENT** prior to the Highlanders playing the Hurricanes on 26 March.

We have been fortunate to be able to meet with our alumni at various events across Aotearoa, New Zealand during the first half of the year. Events in 2021 have included the opportunity to meet with the management and coaching teams of the Highlanders, enjoy musical performances from world-renowned staff, hear from an award-winning author, learn about the COVID-19 vaccine development, and reminisce and reconnect in a variety of spaces including the beautiful Hākitekura, Woolshed Bay and in the grandeur of the Grand Hall at Parliament.

Unfortunately, planned events in Nelson, Blenheim, Tauranga, Napier and Gisborne were postponed until 2022.

We look forward to meeting with alumni in-person in 2022 and hope you continue to stay connected via our e-communications. Please also keep an eye out for your invitation to join and participate in our online book club in 2022.

## UPCOMING REUNIONS

Home Science First Year Class of 1970	5–6 November, Christchurch
Dentistry Class of 2011	19–20 November, Dunedin
MB ChB Class of 1968	24–25 November, Wellington
Pharmacy Class of 1983	3–6 March 2022, Dunedin
MB ChB Class of 1964	10–13 March 2022, Picton
MB ChB Class of 1963	22–25 March 2022, New Plymouth
MB ChB Class of 1966	22–25 March 2022, Havelock North
MB ChB Class of 1972	TBC March 2022, Dunedin
MB ChB Class of 1969	10–13 April 2022, Waitangi
Phys Ed First Year Class of 1972	Easter 2022, (14–17 April), Dunedin

*If you would like to organise a reunion please contact us for more information: [reunions.alumni@otago.ac.nz](mailto:reunions.alumni@otago.ac.nz)*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Tauranga Alumni event	15 February 2022
Napier Alumni event	16 February 2022
Gisborne Alumni event	17 February 2022
Blenheim Alumni event	15 March 2022
Nelson Alumni event	16 March 2022

*Final dates are subject to change. Please contact us for confirmation.*

[otago.ac.nz/alumni/news/events](https://otago.ac.nz/alumni/news/events)





# By women, for women

Graduate Women Otago, the organisation that has been dressing Otago graduands since the 1930s, is celebrating 100 years of empowering female graduates.

Photo: Guy Frederick

**IT'S A REMARKABLE** achievement, says Sue Cathro, Graduate Women Otago's former president and longstanding committee member, to be celebrating the centenary of an organisation committed to supporting the endeavours of graduate women, when you consider the historical environment for women at the time.

While at home at Otago – women had been awarded degrees since Caroline Freeman received her BA in 1885 – female university students were still in the minority, and in the UK Oxford University only began granting degrees to women in 1920.

"Our founders were pioneers," says Cathro, who was inspired to join the organisation in 1969 due to the "wonderful

women" and an interest in the hiring of academic dress: she held the position of academic dress convenor for 30 years.

"Establishing an organisation dedicated to female university graduates to use their education to reach out worldwide to build relationships and understanding, take part in local, national and international affairs and work towards creating a peaceful world, was really remarkable."

Originally formed as the first branch of the New Zealand Federation of University Women, an offshoot of the International Federation of University Women, Graduate Women Otago's foundations lie half a world away. In the aftermath of World War I, a desire from university women

to promote peace and international understanding led to the establishment of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), with the first conference held in London in 1920.

A year earlier, Helen Rawson, the woman who would later found the New Zealand branch of the federation and become New Zealand's first president, met with IFUW founders Winifred Cullis and Virginia Gildersleeve. The Cambridge University BSc graduate, who received her degree in retrospect due to Cambridge not awarding degrees to women at the time, returned to Dunedin in 1920 with an enthusiasm for the new organisation, recruiting other like-minded women.

A letter, dated June 1920, was sent by the temporary committee to university colleges in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, encouraging their groups to join the proposed new organisation. At the first New Zealand conference in 1921, Helen Rawson, by then the Dean of Home Science at Otago, was elected president, the Otago branch became the first Dominion Executive and undertook to draw up a constitution for New Zealand.

At the second IFUW conference in Paris in 1922, Kate Hogg, an Otago graduate studying at the Sorbonne, presented the constitution and NZFUW became affiliated.

“These women were well travelled, well educated, amazing women of their time,” says Cathro. “There are many links between the original founders and the group I later joined in the 1960s – including a personal link with Kate Hogg who was my French teacher at secondary school.

“In those early days, there was already an Otago University Women’s Association and, for several years, the two organisations ran side-by-side, sharing committee members until 1924 when they amalgamated.”

From the beginning, the organisation has raised money for fellowships to support graduate women – initially to come to New Zealand to study. Fundraising also enabled the purchase of Crosby Hall, a 16<sup>th</sup> century house in London used as headquarters for the British federation, which became a place to stay and study for graduates from all over the world.

In 1928, New Zealand established its own fellowship, supporting New Zealand graduates to further their studies overseas. This required additional funds and, in 1933, the Otago branch identified a gap in the market and a new opportunity that would lead to the organisation’s major fundraising activity from then until present day – academic regalia hire.

Cathro says up until then academic regalia was borrowed from staff of schools and the University but, as the numbers of students increased, more gowns and hoods were needed.

Home Science’s Avice Bowbyes and her helpers made the first six hoods. Gowns and trenchers were gradually acquired and, in the 1950s, the University’s stock was bought and the branch has organised all the hiring ever since.

“Over the years I’ve been involved a huge amount has changed. Now we have several graduation ceremonies every year, there are a prolific number of different degrees on offer, including postgraduate, and we also hire out regalia for special events, such as Otago Girls’ High School 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations, school prizegivings and to Otago Polytechnic staff for their two graduations each year.”

It’s a big job and is run by a team of convenors, with the help of member volunteers and student helpers. Cathro retired as convenor at the end of 2019, so the team has had to cope with the problems of the pandemic, lockdowns and cancellation of graduations without her.

“Nowadays, our members don’t make all the hoods: the work is farmed out to seamstresses around the city, but I have made the odd hood in the past – probably

several hundred!” says Cathro.

“COVID-19 has definitely thrown a spanner in the works – with last-minute cancellations of graduation ceremonies – but the regalia hire has seen us through many years of sustainable fundraising. Identifying such a consistent source of funding has enabled us to make a significant contribution through our scholarships on offer.”

These include community awards of up to \$1,500 for community-based organisations, travel awards (established as a 1990 project) to allow members to present original work at national and international conferences, and scholarships named after past members – the Daphne Purves Award (maximum of \$4,000 to help women graduates obtain specialist training and to carry out independent research in any country) and the Helen Benson Awards (up to \$1,500) for non-graduates to pursue a course of study.

“We’ve supported so many different women over the years across a range of disciplines and study areas and enabled them to travel all around the world.

“Through our community grants, we’ve also helped a number of local organisations and helped women take up additional training to help communities. One year, we had a woman who needed to get her heavy-driver’s licence so that she could drive the local fire engine which was a fantastic goal. Further afield, we’ve given money to other projects such as the establishment of a kindergarten in Sierra Leone.

“Our branch has also produced national federation presidents and National Council of Women members, including Helen Benson [Rawson] who became president of the National Council of Women in 1939, one of the few women to be the national president of both organisations, while today seven of the current national council Dunedin members, have been presidents of one – or both – local branches.

“We’re extremely proud of our contribution over the years.”

**AMIE RICHARDSON**



Helen Rawson, who founded the New Zealand Federation of University Women.  
*G. Helen Rawson, n.d. J. Webster photograph, from file copy print, 693.00368,  
Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago.*

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