

Academic Freedom Conference: Challenges & Opportunities

31 August – 1 September 2021, TEU Zoom One <https://zoom.us/j/8229464633>

Tuesday 31st August – Panels, papers, and plenaries

9:30 am Whakataua and whakawhanaungatanga

10:15 am **Academic freedom / critic and conscience in crisis** – Moderator: Heather Warren (TEU Organiser). Panellists: Sandra Grey and Jill Jones (TEU), Jan Thomas (Massey University), and Andrew Lessells (NZUSA)

11:00 am Paramanawa – karakia kai and morning tea

11:15 am **Māori and Indigenous knowledge, colonisation, and academic freedom** – Moderator: Sian Halcrow (University of Otago). Panellists: Mohan Dutta, Fiona Te Momo (Massey University), Sean Sturm (University of Auckland), and Nkhaya Paulsen-More (Te Mana Ākonga)

This panel will examine the ways in which colonisation, neoliberalism, and racism constrain or prohibit academic freedom from being exercised in the academy.

12:00 pm Breakout one – reviewing the morning sessions together

12:30 pm **The crisis explored** – Moderator: Julie Douglas (Auckland University of Technology). Panellists: Stephen Brown, Lyn Murphy, and Kay Hammond (Auckland University of Technology), and David Kenkel (Unitec)

This panel will look at the range of ways in which academic freedom is being challenged and/or thrown into crisis.

1:00 pm Kai o te rānui – karakia kai and lunch

1:30 pm **Activism and academic freedom** – Moderator: Garrick Cooper (University of Canterbury). Panellists: Mike Joy (Victoria University of Wellington) and Sereana Naepi (University of Auckland)

Two scholars explore tensions inside academia and how academic freedom is in crisis for those with activist and critical voices.

2:00 pm **Experiencing the crisis** – *Chair: Jane Kelsey (University of Auckland). Panellists: Tom Ryan (University of Waikato), Alona Ben-Tal and Heather Hendrickson (Massey University)*

Panellists will be asked to reflect on their experiences before Professor Kelsey poses a series of questions in order to draw out the causes of the crisis in academic freedom and initiate debate from the floor.

2:30 pm **Breakout two – reviewing the afternoon sessions**

3:00 pm **Paramanawa** – karakia kai and afternoon tea

3:15 pm **Report back and questions from the afternoon sessions**

4:00 pm **Close**

5.30 pm **Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education**

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31 August – 1 September 2021, TEU Zoom One <https://zoom.us/j/8229464633>

Wednesday 1st September

9:15 am **Reforming VET and constraining academic freedom** – Moderator: Pam Fleming (Toi Ohomai). Panellists: Sarah Hardman (Unitec), David Cooke, and Angela Beaton (Te Pūkenga DCE Delivery and Academic)

This panel will look at recent legislative and practical changes in the VET sector which cut across academic freedom. As part of the conversation, Te Pūkenga Deputy CE, Angela Beaton, will contribute their understanding of what the expectations and realities of working in the new network of provision will entail.

10:00 am **Walk like an academic? The limits of academic freedom for those who are not white cis men** – Moderator: Cat Pausé (Massey University). Panellists: Tara McAllister, Jemaima Tiatia-Seath and JJ Eldridge (University of Auckland)

Who is allowed to speak with academic authority? What does an academic look and sound like? In this panel discussion, we explore the limits of academic freedom for those of us who do not “look like an academic.”

10:45 am **Paramanawa** – karakia kai and morning tea

11:00 am **Breakout rooms**

11:30 am **Report back and questions for the morning panels**

12:00 pm **Workshops**

1. *Reimagining the university and academic freedom* (Charles Sedgwick and Sandra Grey)
2. *What is the next step for TEU?* (Megan Morris and Jared Commerer)
3. *Academic freedom and precarious employment* (Leon Salter and Sarah Proctor-Thomson)
4. *Working together – staff/student actions on academic freedom, citizenship, and democracy on campuses* (NZUSA and Jack Heinemann)
5. *What are the big uncertainties around the right to execute academic freedom that we need answers to?* (Jane Kelsey, Jill Jones, and Mike Joy)

- 1:00 pm** **Kai o te rānui** – karakia kai and lunch
- 1:30 pm** **Plenary panel** – leaders of workshops sharing:
1. issues;
 2. causes; and
 3. actions.
- 2:15 pm** **Whakawātea** – closing remarks in breakout groups
- 2:45 pm** **Whakamutunga** – close of conference

Full abstracts

Panels – Day one, Tuesday 31st August

11:15 am – Māori and Indigenous knowledge, colonisation, and academic freedom

This panel examines the ways in which colonisation, neoliberalism, and racism constrain or prohibit academic freedom from being exercised in the academy.

Moderator: Sian Halcrow (University of Otago). Panellists: Mohan Dutta and Fiona Te Momo (Massey University), Sean Sturm (University of Auckland), and Nkhaya Paulsen-More (Te Mana Ākongā)

Does Māori academic freedom exist? Is the reality tika or teka? – Fiona Te Momo

Should Māori academics speak freely in the academy? Is academic freedom tika (true) or teka (false)? Academic freedom implies academic staff and students have the power or right to act, speak, and think in universities. This Western notion of academic freedom is believed to be a right of entitlement under the Education Act 1989 to which universities comply with and the government monitors. Academics educated in Western knowledge-based systems that understand educational policies, legal terminology, and institutional structures stand on podiums with loud academic voices to preach academic freedom using the astute definitions and descriptions from a position of privilege. Sometimes, an eye is cast back from the podium to an indigenous academic to come forward and briefly provide their knowledge and point of view to the academic debate under the mantle of academic freedom. These actions knowingly, or unknowingly, reinforce a historical perception that was birthed over a hundred years ago by Western leaders like Governor Grey who uttered 'He iwi Kotahi Tatou: We are one people' colonising words that became enshrined in Aotearoa New Zealand history. It is assumed that when academics strive for academic freedom, we (Māori and non-Māori) do so starting together at the same podium. But that assumption is teka.

Ask a descendant from Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Whakatere, and Ngāti Konohi are you free to speak as an academic in the academy? I respond, who is the audience? This response causes academics to pause and think. Am I expected to stand beside non-Māori academics on the podium criticising the institutions and those in power? Or espouse the hegemony that 'we (Māori and non-Māori)' share similar perceptions of what it means to be free as an academic. My experience is academic criticism of an institution tends to elevate non-Māori academics' language and knowledge but discipline Māori academics. The University of Waikato case in 2020 highlights this elevation to be tika.

Is Māori and Indigenous knowledge valued in academia? I respond again and say, who are the audiences? Institutions value knowledge from high-ranking journals and academics who capture research funding. However, Māori academics that publish reports for Whānau, Hapū, and Iwi are likely to engage in voluntary research and capture research funding for their Māori communities. Although the work is valued by their communities the academics ranking systems devalue this type of contribution. Consequently, Māori academics can be pressured to forego this work or encounter academic ostracisation.

This position paper argues that for some Māori the academic freedom frontline is different for Māori and non-Māori. It discusses the interface between Māori academic freedom and the academy. It addresses the informal barriers that prevent an indigenous academic from exercising academic freedom. It argues that until Māori academics can be free to express themselves, academic freedom for them does not exist. It concludes by reinstating the importance of recognising that Māori women, who are academics, stand on different podiums to non-Māori and Māori academic men, and there are academic political agendas that determine who has academic freedom.

12:30 pm – The crisis explored

This panel will look at the range of ways in which academic freedom is being challenged and/or thrown into crisis.

Moderator: Julie Douglas (Auckland University of Technology). Panellists: Stephen Brown, Lyn Murphy, and Kay Hammond (Auckland University of Technology), and David Kenkel (Unitec).

A perspective on LMS adoption by academics following the lockdown of New Zealand Universities due to COVID-19 – Stephen Brown, Lyn Murphy, and Kay Hammond

An unprecedented situation arose in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic forced rapid transition to online learning at New Zealand universities. This event required an academic to reflect on their current practices, and re-focus their efforts into online teaching and the online learning management system (LMS). This reflection, and a narrative that describes the academic's adoption and acceptance of the LMS during this forced transition remains largely unexplored, however, the expectation to teach online during the lockdown provided a powerful impetus for academics to fully engage with their university's LMS. When each university made this decision to teach online courses, some quality aspects remained directly under an academic's control. For example, an academic was responsible for online course content and how it was delivered in terms of structure, rigour, staff - student interaction, and student-student interaction.

Academics have always made these decisions for on-campus education, and it has been suggested

that online education simply represents another type of classroom. We suggest that this decision-making power should remain with the academic during the transition to teaching fully online courses during the lockdown. Academics are uniquely positioned in the nexus of content expertise and the dynamic, progressive interaction between professional knowledge and digital teaching technologies. However, recent trends to standardise courses, for example, to facilitate cross-crediting of courses between institutions, can undermine the autonomy of an academic. We suggest that an academic is central to course development, and further suggest that it is the academic who should determine alternative means of instruction, and any alternative means of assessment.

Therefore, an academic's engagement with the LMS, and their willingness to be in partnership with experts in e-learning, is pivotal to their university's strategic development, and this was highlighted in the lockdown of 2020. Academics require ongoing training and support to be successful (and remain

successful) in their online teaching – this training will increase the likelihood that an academic will pursue online course delivery post-pandemic, and it may address concerns and misconceptions some academics hold about online teaching at university. It is incumbent on the university to support and empower academics in this central role to develop their online teaching skills.

In addition, the academic should demonstrate a responsible autonomy in which they acquire technical competence, remain guided by evidence-based pedagogies, and maintain awareness of the student experience. The drive to digitalise higher education seems to be a global phenomenon and the academic should be rhetorically convinced of the necessity of this digitalisation and thus implement it willingly. The 2020 lockdown presented both challenges and opportunities to academics regarding their engagement with the LMS and online teaching – we suggest that the central role of the academic is pivotal to successful implementation of the online teaching ambitions of New Zealand universities post-pandemic.

What is academic freedom in service to? – David Kenkel

As a political, cultural, and economic set of ideas neoliberalism has always exalted notions of individual freedom. After more than 30 years of neoliberalism operating as the dominant global ideology the gloss may be wearing off a little as it becomes apparent that what works for a few rich individuals decidedly does not work for the collective many. However, when considered as a regime, the grip of neoliberal ideas and approaches on our institutions and approaches has not receded at the same rate as its purported loss of popularity.

Lenin's often cited challenge that 'we should always ask whom a freedom under consideration serves' perhaps becomes ever more apropos when individual freedom of choice increasingly seems to equate to a collective tyranny for the many. The many who have no choice but to live in a New

Zealand where neoliberal economic policies mean towering student debt, homeownership as practically impossible, and the accelerating degradation of the environment.

Zizek (2001) cited by Hill (2004) puts forward a distinction between formal freedom and actual freedom. Formal freedom is the capacity to make choices within existing coordinates of power, with actual freedom the capacity to question, challenge, and undermine those existing coordinates of power. This distinction may become more important in considering the place of academic freedom in a future where the coordinating truths of neoliberalism contradict ever more sharply the collective lived experience and truths of resource depletion and environmental collapse.

This presentation / paper seeks to explore questions of what constraints are placed on academic freedom when that freedom is conducted within the existing formal coordinates of power of the academy. In addition, the presentation / paper will speculatively explore potential ruptures and cracks that may present possibilities for a critical actual academic freedom. The presentation / paper also questions whom formal academic freedom will be able to serve in a likely future of stark disparity between the neoliberal promise of freedom and a collective experience of life in a resource poor world.

Tell, D. (2004) Reviewed Work(s): On Belief by Slavoj Žižek. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 2004, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2004), pp. 96-99: Penn State University Press. USA

1:30 pm – Activism and academic freedom

Two scholars explore tensions inside academia and how academic freedom is in crisis for those with activist and critical voices.

Moderator: Garrick Cooper (University of Canterbury). Panellists: Mike Joy (Victoria University of Wellington) and Sereana Naepi (University of Auckland).

It's a hard road taking on the critic and conscience role as an academic – Mike Joy

As a scientist I am often accused of the heinous crime of being an advocate. You see scientists are supposed to be 'value-free'. We are asked to swear in court that we have no conflicts of interest. We are expected to be like automatons, to give the facts and nothing but the facts, to draw no conclusions, to admit to no preferences. Well, *mea culpa*. I am an advocate. I have values. Like a growing number of scientists, I am unashamed to announce my preference for a liveable planet. I admit to having a conflict of interest with environmental polluters: I care that our future is in extreme peril.

My vested interest in our future is of course shared by all humans, and conflicts only with the interests of those who seek to degrade the environment. (Note that the commercial advocacy of exploiters is



never questioned in court or almost anywhere else). The most important thing I can do to achieve these aims is to expose hidden environmental degradation so that people have the information to make the right democratic choices.

Advocating for a liveable planet inevitably involves calling out the harm generated by extractive business, and in my experience, this does not make for popularity at work. The two universities where I have worked have not appeared to be as keen on advocacy as I am. Taking on the critic and conscience role brings with it an endless parade of complaints to one's vice chancellor, because the vested interests have figured out that a good way to shut down a noisy critic is to get the critic's university to do it for you. Generally, the complaint contains some version of, "how dare your staff member use your privilege of public funding to put down our private business."

The critic and conscience role of academies has never been more crucial than it is now, and by no coincidence at all it has also never been so threatened. We must fight for the freedom to go on pursuing the most important task we have.

Speaking back to university: academic freedom and critical university studies – Sereana Naepi

Critiquing universities as a Pacific woman was always going to be a delicate balance. Research and lived experience showcase the many ways in which universities operate to exclude and underserve Pacific communities, and bringing this to light in the public sphere can be an uncomfortable process. Public debate has been necessary to meet both our communities and governments' stated objectives for Pacific peoples and universities. However, calling out universities in increasingly public ways means that the protection and validation of academic freedom are vital, or we face being unable to establish and maintain a thriving critical university studies space in Aotearoa New Zealand. Academic freedom is a crucial part of ensuring that our universities serve all communities and not solely themselves. This means as a scholarly commons we must acknowledge and actively dismantle escalating managerial shifts to limit academic freedom in the name of 'brand protection.' Limitations on academic freedom are being implemented through stealth policies and ethics procedures that cause critical voices to hesitate before publicly speaking out about our universities and their failures to deliver on key equity goals. This impingement on academic freedom needs to be addressed in constructive ways that enable universities to maintain their public commitment to equity and individual scholars to maintain their academic integrity.

2:00 pm – Experiencing the crisis

Panellists will be asked to reflect on their experiences before Professor Kelsey poses a series of questions in order to draw out the causes of the crisis in academic freedom and initiate debate from the floor.



Chair: Jane Kelsey (University of Auckland). Panellists: Tom Ryan (University of Waikato), Alona Ben-Tal, Heather Hendrickson, and Janine Cook (Massey University)

Autoethnographic reflections on the abuse of 'academic freedom' in two New Zealand universities – Tom Ryan

'Academic freedom' is conventionally discussed in legalistic, philosophic, educational, or historical frameworks. My approach is best described as autoethnographic, in that it is based on my own lived experience, supported by documentation, of significant incidents in two different New Zealand tertiary institutions.

The first occurred in the mid-1980s at Auckland University, where I was a half-time contract lecturer and president of its Lecturers' Association, but nevertheless found myself effectively blacklisted from further employment because of untrue accusations made against me by two tenured senior staff hiding behind the cloak of 'academic freedom.'

The second case centres on the saga at Waikato University in the year 2000 regarding a doctoral project proposed by a German Holocaust-denier and which potentially involved unknowing Jewish subjects; at that time I was the academic staff representative on the university's council, and there led the pushback – ultimately successful – against official claims that the candidate's rights to pursue that doctoral research were guaranteed by New Zealand's 'academic freedom' legislation.

Erosion of academic freedom and public good: the story of sciences at Massey – Alona Ben-Tal

The importance of the sciences for keeping the New Zealand public safe and the economy thriving has been obvious in the past year through the successful response of New Zealand to Covid-19. New Zealand was lucky to have experts in microbiology, public health, and mathematical modelling at hand, and a government that listened to their advice and acted decisively. As we prepare to tackle the challenges of climate change and other social and economic challenges, safe-guarding high-quality interdisciplinary science should not be left for luck. The story of the sciences at Massey University illustrates why protecting academic freedom is essential for protecting the public.

On 24 February 2020, the first day of semester one and mere 4 days before the first reported case of Covid-19 in New Zealand, the College of Sciences at Massey University published a discussion document suggesting that natural and mathematical sciences would be removed from the Albany campus. The restructuring process has been ongoing since then and is still threatening the employment of as many as 100 scientists, some of whom have already left the university. The process

has led to a wide media and social-media coverage, to a petition signed by over 12,000 people, and to a parliamentary inquiry. By the end of 2020, the College of Sciences started enacting a university strategy called Digital Plus that aims at blending face-to-face and digital learning. New policies on media commentary and social media have also been implemented.

This paper will describe the restructuring process of the sciences at Massey University with a particular focus on the experiences of staff on the Albany Campus. These experiences have highlighted weaknesses in the Education and Training Act 2020 and have raised questions about the ability of staff to “*question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas, and to state controversial or unpopular opinions*” and to “*teach and assess students in the manner that they consider best promotes learning*” (Education and Training Act 2020, Point 267, 4a,d). Of particular interest is the ability of academic staff to “*express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work*” ([UNESCO](#), 1997, IV.27).

What are my academic expertise? – Heather Hendrickson

What can I say? That is the question I have been asking myself as Massey University announced a new set of policies on media commentary and social media. In New Zealand, universities are defined as institutions that “accept a role as a critic and conscience of society.”¹ Does that critique stop at the gates of the University or can we criticise our own institutions as well? What follows is a dissection of the issues at stake, as I see them, and one thing you can do today to define your own academic expertise.

The new policy rightly instructs faculty to exercise their academic freedom. However, the policy also reminds us that the policy on staff conduct requires:

“...a staff member to ensure that he/she does not bring the University into disrepute, defined as either wilfully or deliberately discrediting the University publicly...”

Massey University has been criticised publicly in the past year after a discussion document suggested that the School of Natural and Computational Sciences on the Auckland campus might be closed.² The closure was suggested as a possible mechanism for reducing the breadth of our academic offer, eliminating the replication of expensive infrastructure, and “preserving precious public funds.”³ A public petition was launched requesting the withdrawal of this document.⁴ A parliamentary enquiry was launched into the process by which the discussion document came about.⁵ The media wrote articles about the consequences for science in New Zealand.^{6,7,8,9} University of Auckland Professor Shaun Hendy, author of the 2016 book *Silencing Science*, described the situation as “biggest blow to the New Zealand science community in a generation.”¹⁰

Closing our School would likely have resulted in closure of laboratories like mine at Massey University. The new policy on media commentary emerged as we were waiting for a second discussion document from the College of Science. The timing and the lack of consultation led to these new policies being referred to as a “gag order” in the press.¹¹

There are two questions that I will discuss that arise from the wording of these new policies. The first of these is a question for the individual academic who is interested in engaging with the public; “what *are* my areas of expertise”?

The second question is a more broad one that we must address as a society: Do public statements that criticise the policies, strategies, and documents produced by University leadership “bring the University into disrepute”?

I will suggest a way through that is specific to my School. This solution invites all academics to become familiar with academic freedom and to include it in their scientific expertise. Under tightening regulations, defining your expertise establishes what you are allowed to say. By accepting this abstract, the TEU is assisting me in establishing academic freedom as a part of my academic expertise.

Panels – Day two, Wednesday 1st September

9:15 am – Reforming VET and constraining academic freedom

This panel will look at recent legislative and practical changes in the VET space which across academic freedom. As part of the conversation, Te Pūkenga DCEs will contribute their understanding of what will be the expectations and realities of working in the new network of provision.

Moderator: Pam Fleming (Toi Ohomai). Panellists: Sarah Hardman (Unitec), David Cooke, and Angela Beaton (Te Pūkenga DCE Delivery and Academic)

ROVE and academic freedom: more, less, or about the same amount for staff and students in ITPs? – Sarah Hardman

According to TEC (n.d.) RoVE (the Reform of Vocational Education) is “creating a strong, unified, sustainable vocational education system that is fit for the future of work and delivers the skills that learners, employers and communities need to thrive.”

This is a statement which we tangata of the ITP sector have become more than familiar with, albeit we also have a very partial and insubstantial picture as to what the form the realities will take. In 2020, the Education Act was rewritten to include Te Pūkenga, amongst which provisions was the right to academic freedom for staff and students with an exception being given to allow the

Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) to function. This seems rather murky, to say the least. Why, you ask, does the WDC need to be excepted?

In this paper I will consider what academic freedom can mean in relation to skills-focused training at NZQA levels 3-7, which is within the scope of Te Pūkenga. I will draw on my recent experience as a New Zealand union and TEU representative on Tāmaki Makaurau interim Regional Skills Leadership Group (iRSLG). 15 iRSLGs have been set up nationally, initially as a post-COVID response, and I have found being a small cog in this particular wheel to be an enlightening experience in many ways, from which conclusions can be drawn about the relevance of the academic or, perhaps, the educator voice within RoVE.

Returning to the question of the murkiness of the WDC exception, a clue can perhaps be found in section 2c of clause 161 of the Act, which states that academic freedom within Te Pūkenga includes “the freedom of the institution and its staff to regulate the subject matter of courses taught at the institution.”

The point here is that WDCs will “regulate the subject matter” to an extent which is currently undetermined. My question, however, is whether this means more or less actual academic freedom for staff and for students. I will argue that in fact there are many elements of the currently partly-built framework which will affect this but, perhaps, most of all the question should be whether RoVE will succeed in achieving the declared goal of greater equity and success for the least successful people in Aotearoa New Zealand. What, in fact, is the correlation between academic freedom and social equity? I will look back at past experience through the lens of a few examples and discuss whether mistakes have been learned from or whether they are likely to be repeated.

Limited vision, limited agency: Why VET reforms restrict academic freedom – David Cooke

The reforms to VET have reaffirmed the entire enterprise of polytechnic education through establishing Te Pūkenga. At the same time, they have codified concepts of vocational education that distinctly limit its scope and the place of academic freedom within it.

This paper (1) recognises that the legislation undermines academic freedom at sub-degree level and could well go further into degree studies; and (2) argues that official, popular, and academic notions of vocational education create an active, intrusive context for restricting the concept of polytechnic education.

The legislation holds, "It is the intention of Parliament . . . relating to Te Pūkenga" that "academic freedom is preserved and enhanced." But the Act also sets up Workforce Development Councils

(WDCs), with a majority of industry staffing, which oversee qualifications, set standards and assessments, and develop training schemes and programmes.

Then a supplementary paper to the Act makes it plain that WDCs will have precedence in sub-degree programmes, disempowering polytechnic staff to academic freedom. This situation comes about because related official documents have sharply limited the concept of vocational education to an industry frame. "*Vocational education and training*," they say, "means education and training that leads to the achievement of industry-developed skill standards, qualifications, or other awards." Meanwhile, the popular notion of polytechnics is mostly training for the trades workforce, without taking into account the breadth of polytechnic education and the necessary knowledge that goes into it.

At the same time, conversation reveals that university academics often sharply differentiate their institutions from polytechnics. They tend to assume much less need for scholarship in polytechnics, both for staff and students; less theory and research for students; and necessarily simplified teaching. It is not hard to address these assumptions, but in the current discussion, the important point is that they help substantially to reinforce the idea that VET can be subjected to constraints that universities would not.

The cumulative effect of these different forces – official, popular, and academic – is that there is little challenge to a very limited notion of VET, little concern at the loss of academic freedom, and little appetite for inspecting the legislation. The paper proposes a much enhanced definition of vocational education, with serious revision of the legislation and practice of the reforms.

10:00 am – Walk like an academic? The limits of academic freedom for those who are not white cis men

Who is allowed to speak with academic authority? What does an academic look and sound like? In this panel discussion, we explore the limits of academic freedom for those of us who do not “look like an academic.”

Moderator: Cat Pausé (Massey University). Panellists Tara McAllister, Jemaima Tiatia-Seath, and JJ Eldridge (University of Auckland)

Tara McAllister

Tara McAllister (Te Aitanga a Māhaki, Ngāti Porou) is a Research Fellow at Te Pūnaha Matatini and the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Auckland. Tara completed her PhD in Water

Resource Management from the University of Canterbury in 2018. Tara's most recent research has focused on highlighting the inequities that Māori face in higher education. Her impactful research has provided quantitative evidence that Māori are underrepresented, underpromoted and underpaid in academia.

Dr. Jemaima Tiatia-Seath

Jemaima Tiatia-Seath is the Co-Head of School, Te Wānanga o Waipapa, School of Māori Studies and Pacific Studies, University of Auckland. She is of Samoan heritage and has a public/population health background. She was one of six panellists on the New Zealand Government's 2018 Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry and currently a Commissioner for the inaugural Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. Her expertise lies in Pacific Studies, Pacific health, mental health and wellbeing, suicide prevention and postvention, health inequities, climate change, and youth development. She has held various governance positions, including as a current member of the Health Research Council of New Zealand's Public Health Committee, and as a previous member of the Mental Health Foundation's Suicide Bereavement Service Advisory Group, the Health Promotions Agency's National Depression Initiative Advisory Group, and the Health Quality & Safety Commission's Suicide Mortality Review Committee.

Associate Professor JJ Eldridge

I obtained my MA and MSci degrees from the University of Cambridge in 2001. I stayed at the University to study for my PhD in astrophysics at the Institute of Astronomy, graduating in 2005. After this I undertook postdoctoral research at the Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris, Queen's University Belfast and the Institute of Astronomy. In 2011 I was appointed as a Lecturer of Astrophysics at The University of Auckland. My research is focussed upon the lives and deaths of stars. Most of my work involves the suite of computer codes I have created, the Binary Population and Spectral Synthesis code (BPASS, bpass.auckland.ac.nz). Using BPASS I study stars in our own Galaxy to stars in the galaxies at the edge of the observable Universe. In addition to my research activities I am also keen to participate in public understanding of science activities and have helped out at open days for previous departments. I have also given many public talks in Inverness, Chester, Antrim and Cambridge. My talks are on various subjects such as: "The Birth, Life and Death of Stars", "Stars in their death throes" and "Supernova Kicks and Runaway Stars". Recently I have given a few talks on the topic of assessing how accurate science-fiction can be with titles such as: "The Science of Sci-Fi: The Good the Bad and the Ugly" and "The Science of Sci-Fi: does every planet look just like home?"