
Pacific
Statement
UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA
Our Commitment to
Pacific Communities
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A Message From The Vice-Chancellor

We acknowledge Pacific Island nations as Australia's significant partners in trade, investment, security, environment, tourism and education, and our University has a proud history of collaboration with this valued region. By embedding our commitment to the Pacific Islands region in our University's strategic framework, we are ensuring our research, education and engagement priorities align closely with the priorities the Pacific region has identified for itself. From environmental governance, climate change and disaster risk reduction, to economic growth, biodiversity protection, waste management, pollution control and health systems, our strategic engagement with the Pacific Islands region in research and education is focused on working alongside our partners on these shared priorities. We value our role in providing research support, education, resources and expertise that strengthen capability already held by our partners in the Pacific Islands region. As successful recipients of various Government support programs including Australia Awards and New Colombo Plan, we are currently hosting researchers working in partnership on disability inclusive education in Vanuatu and cyber security operations in Samoa, and sending our students on valuable study tours across the Pacific. We are also partnering with Pacific Region Universities to provide study opportunities for Pacific Island students and academics. We provide a high level of academic, career and social support for international students and are sector leaders in evaluating and improving the student experience. It is a privilege to support our Pacific Island researchers and students to obtain the skills they need to support and implement innovative solutions in their communities to address the challenges of the region.



Professor Alex Zelinsky AO
Vice-Chancellor and President
University of Newcastle

Strengthening Connections



Papua New Guinea Graduate Certificate in Nutrition students are welcomed to the University of Newcastle by the Newcastle Lord Mayor, university executives and Wollotuka Institute First Nations staff in February 2025.



Pacific students attending an event at the University of Newcastle's City campus.



A member of the Fijian National Rugby Union Team signs a Fijian flag for members of the University's Pasifika Island Students Association in June 2025.



The Honourable Hamoa Holona, Minister of Education and Human Resources Development of Tuvalu, was welcomed to the University by the Pasifika Island Students Association.



The University of Newcastle working with Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the National University of Samoa, and the Moata'a Village Council to restore vital mangrove ecosystems on Upolu.



A Newcastle Nursing student working in Tapua Tamasese Meaole National Hospital in Apia, Samoa.

Guiding Principles

The University of Newcastle's commitment to the Pacific Islands region sits as a major pillar of the University's Looking Ahead Strategic Plan 2030. The University has prepared this Pacific Statement, as a formal acknowledgment of our intent to serve countries and territories of the Pacific Islands region through the delivery of research excellence, capacity development and education delivery initiatives.

This Statement outlines our guiding principles of engagement, priorities and purpose.

Guiding Principles

Honour Pacific Peoples' custodianship of land, sea and sky

Orient activities to Pacific histories, perspectives and priorities

Engage Pacific Peoples meaningfully in planning and decision-making

Embed Pacific knowledge within practice

Foster reciprocal relationships that create shared value

Our Values

Excellence We aim for high quality education, research, and leadership that builds knowledge and skills across places and generations.

Equity We believe everyone deserves the chance to learn and succeed, no matter their background.

Engagement We build trusted and respectful partnerships based on reciprocity, honouring knowledge, traditions, and languages.

Sustainability We care for the environment and future generations, guided by Pacific ideas of responsibility and stewardship.

Our Vision

Our vision is to work in genuine partnership with Pacific communities to support sustainable, locally-led futures through research, education, and capacity building. This is guided by three strategic themes: environment, focusing on climate resilience, biodiversity, agriculture, and renewable energy; human and social development, strengthening health, education, inclusion, and protecting indigenous knowledge; and people-to-people linkages, building connections through sport, economic growth, and social development.

Our strategic engagement with Pacific Island nations and territories reflects a shared commitment to strengthening regional futures. This work supports capacity building through higher education partnership and connects Pacific communities with global knowledge in locally meaningful ways. Guided by the University of Newcastle's Looking Ahead Strategic Plan 2026 - 2030, our purpose and commitment are realised through education, research, and engagement, underpinned by a people-first approach and a focus on impact.

Our Purpose

- Work alongside Pacific communities to strengthen capability, opportunity, and shared futures, grounded in respect, reciprocity, and meaningful connection.
- Bring together education, research, and engagement opportunities to support Pacific-led priorities and prepare culturally capable, community-minded, globally connected graduates.
- Honour Pacific knowledge, leadership, and aspirations, and commit to learning with, not for, Pacific communities.

Our Commitment

- Build relationships that are relational, enduring, and grounded in trust, through co-designed partnerships that are mutually beneficial and shaped by Pacific priorities.
- Uphold Pacific Peoples' custodianship of land, sea, and sky, and centre Pacific voices, knowledge, and ways of knowing, being, and doing.
- Deliver education and impactful research that supports Pacific-defined outcomes, strengthening self-determination and creating opportunities led by Pacific communities, while building collective strength and long-term impact.



United Nations Sustainable Developmental Goals

Alignment with Global Objectives

The University of Newcastle is committed to aligning our strategic priorities in the Pacific Islands region to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

We are proud to be home to Australia's only United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), accredited International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL) institute and the only University in Australia to fly the United Nations flag. We will benchmark our activity in the Pacific Islands region against the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, providing a globally recognised framework to measure our impact. Our Pacific statement is also inspired by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which established a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples of the world, including the right to education.

The University's Pacific engagement focus is interconnected rather than aligned to a single SDG, reflecting a holistic, Pacific-informed approach. Education, research, and engagement work together to support capacity building, sustainability, equity, and strong partnerships, aligning with both the SDGs and Pacific regional priorities such as the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific. In the 2026 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, we placed 30th overall and top 20 globally across seven SDG categories — including 3rd for Climate Action (SDG 13), 3rd for Life Below Water (SDG 14), 8th for Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), 12th for Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), and 14th for Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3).

Science Initiatives	Engineering Initiatives	Medical & Health Initiatives	Education Initiatives	Tourism & Community Initiatives
Climate research, environmental monitoring, energy transitions, biodiversity and marine studies (e.g. plastics, mangroves)	Infrastructure development, renewable energy systems, water and sanitation solutions, disaster-resilient design, digital systems	Public health training, nutrition, health systems strengthening, disability inclusion	Teacher professional learning, inclusive education, higher education pathways, CIFAL micro-credentials, student mobility	Sustainable tourism, cultural exchange, community-led development, Pacific student and alumni engagement
Climate resilience, environmental protection, sustainable resource management	Resilient infrastructure, sustainable development, technology-enabled solutions	Improved health outcomes, workforce capability, equitable access to care	Education system strengthening, inclusion, development of life-ready graduates	Economic development, cultural sustainability, community-led growth

While key SDGs are most visible across our science, health, education and development initiatives, the University of Newcastle's Pacific engagement contributions sit across the full suite of Sustainable Development Goals.

Our work is intentionally interconnected, addressing multiple goals simultaneously through a holistic, partnership-driven approach.



Cultural 'ava ceremony at the signing of a MoU between the Samoa Tourism Authority and the University of Newcastle held in Apia, Samoa in May 2025



People First

We will continue to forge mutually beneficial partnerships in the Pacific region through research collaboration, capacity development training, international student recruitment, transnational education programs, and staff and student mobility.

Grounded in a people-first approach, these partnerships prioritise relationships, respect, and shared benefit, ensuring that engagement is shaped by and responsive to Pacific communities. Leveraging the University's research strengths, we will expand access to international funding, increase impact and entrepreneurship opportunities and build reputation.

Our partnership activities will focus on addressing complex global challenges through collaboration with government, industry, academia, and civil society, fostering shared learning and delivering meaningful impact. We will strengthen co-authored research, support the translation of traditional knowledge into accessible forms, and co-design capacity-building initiatives that respond directly to community needs.





Participants of the Field Epidemiology in Action program

Partnerships for a Healthy Region

Case Study

Across the Pacific, Field Epidemiology in Action (FEiA) demonstrates the value of locally led approaches to improving community health. Based at the University of Newcastle, the program partners with national organisations to build capability among frontline health workers, including nurses and environmental health officers. Since 2013, FEiA has trained more than 200 field epidemiologists across Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste.

Most training is now delivered by local experts, ensuring skills and leadership remain within communities. Through practical, community-based learning, participants lead initiatives such as vaccination campaigns, outbreak investigations and health promotion activities. Graduates strengthen health systems and support emergency responses, including COVID-19 and polio outbreaks. Supported by government and global partners, FEiA empowers local leaders and contributes to healthier, more resilient Pacific communities.



Research With Impact

Our work in the Pacific is guided by a strong commitment to impact that is meaningful, shared, and locally defined. We focus on delivering outcomes that respond to Pacific priorities, strengthen systems, and create lasting benefits for communities and the region. Through education, research, and engagement, we generate knowledge that is applied, accessible, and relevant, supporting sustainable solutions to complex challenges. Our approach to impact is grounded in partnership, ensuring outcomes are co-developed, culturally informed, and contribute to long-term capacity, resilience, and opportunity. In doing so, we also support the development of future-ready graduates and strengthen connections between the Pacific, our regions, and the world.

Turning Climate Science into Action for the Pacific

Philip Malsale, a Senior Climatologist with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), commenced his PhD at the University of Newcastle in May 2025 with a clear purpose: to deliver research that makes a practical difference for Pacific communities.

With over 15 years' experience in the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department, Philip has worked at the forefront of climate science, supporting national responses to climate change and extreme weather. His work has included developing early warning systems, producing climate science animations to support public understanding, and integrating traditional knowledge into scientific practice to strengthen decision-making across sectors.



Philip Malsale attending the Conference of the UN Climate Change Convention

Through his PhD, supervised by Associate Professor Anthony Kiem, Philip is developing an impact-based forecasting system that translates tropical cyclone data into meaningful insights for agriculture and infrastructure. This work moves beyond prediction alone - focusing on how climate information can be used by governments, communities, and industries to prepare for, respond to, and reduce the impacts of cyclones.

Philip's research reflects a broader commitment to bridging the gap between science and practice in the Pacific. As he explains, "In the Pacific, we don't just need climate data - we need information that is relevant to people's lives, that helps them act, and that supports better outcomes for communities."

Driven by community need, Philip's work exemplifies research with impact - advancing knowledge while directly contributing to resilience, sustainability, and informed decision-making across the South Pacific.

Research is guided by a people-first approach that places communities and their priorities at the centre of knowledge creation. In the Pacific, this means aligning research with locally identified needs in areas such as climate resilience, health, education and sustainable development. Grounded in respect, reciprocity and trust, research becomes a shared endeavour shaped by Pacific voices.

Impact is achieved through collaboration. The University works with governments, industry, academia and communities to co-design practical, culturally informed solutions. These partnerships build capability, inform policy and support innovation, ensuring knowledge is accessible and relevant. By connecting Pacific priorities with global expertise, research strengthens systems, empowers communities and supports Pacific-led futures.

Nutrition in Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, malnutrition is a complex challenge that requires locally informed, practical solutions. Through the Towards Nutrition Security program, the University of Newcastle works with national partners to strengthen health workforce capability and support responses to malnutrition and non-communicable diseases.

Delivered with the University of Goroka and the National Department of Health, and supported by the Australian Government, the program brings health professionals together through applied learning. By combining research, data collection and community-based interventions, participants translate evidence into action, strengthening health systems and improving outcomes.

This work reflects the University's commitment to research with impact. Through strong partnerships, workforce development and evidence-based nutrition initiatives, the program contributes to healthier communities and sustainable, Pacific-led futures.



Sharing knowledge with the community in PNG.



PNG health professionals attending a practical workshop on nutrition in Newcastle.

Research
With Impact

Working Together for Land and Lagoon:
Research with Impact in the Cook Islands

In the Cook Islands, research with impact is grounded in partnership, place, and shared responsibility for the environment. Through Project ENUA (Enhancing Nature's Unique Areas), University of Newcastle researchers worked with the Cook Islands National Environment Service to conduct updated catchment audits across four priority areas - Avatiu, Takuvaine, Avana, and Turangi - supporting informed decision-making for land and lagoon health.

The project builds on strong collaboration with local partners, including Muri Environment Care and Kōrero O Te 'Ōrau, amplifying existing conservation and community-led initiatives. The introduction of "tiny forests," high-density native plantings that restore biodiversity and resilience, brings together scientific expertise and local knowledge. This integrated, ridge-to-reef approach reflects the University's commitment to research with impact, strengthening capacity, supporting long-term environmental outcomes, and advancing Pacific-led stewardship for future generations.





Community engagement in the Cook Islands

Engagement That Connects

Engagement in the Pacific is built on trust, respect and reciprocity. Guided by a people-first approach, the University of Newcastle listens to, values and works alongside Pacific communities, governments, educators and regional partners to build genuine, long-term partnerships. These relationships form the foundation of our engagement and ensure our work is shaped by Pacific voices and priorities.

This approach creates meaningful impact through co-designed education, research and capacity-building initiatives that address challenges such as climate change, health, education and community wellbeing. Success is measured not only by outputs, but by outcomes that are locally relevant, culturally informed and sustainable. By aligning with Pacific priorities and global frameworks, the University supports long-term resilience across the region.

At the heart of this work is community empowerment. Through higher education pathways, research collaboration and workforce development, the University of Newcastle strengthens local capability, leadership and opportunity. By supporting Pacific universities, Indigenous-led knowledge systems, and student and professional development, we help ensure that impact is led, owned and sustained by Pacific communities.

Health professionals from Papua New Guinea work with fresh produce during a practical workshop in nutrition at the University of Newcastle



Case Study

Moata’a Village – Living Lab and School Partnership

In Samoa, the Moata’a Project demonstrates how meaningful engagement creates connection - linking communities, educators, and researchers in ways that strengthen both learning and environmental sustainability. Through the co-designed Moata’a Living Lab, the University of Newcastle works alongside the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the National University of Samoa, and the Moata’a Village Council to restore vital mangrove ecosystems on Upolu. This work connects scientific research with local knowledge, enabling community-led restoration, including the planting of over 2,500 seedlings and training.

This same approach extends into the Moata’a school project, where engagement connects teachers, students, and community priorities. Professional learning is grounded in local culture and classroom practice, with Samoan educators leading the way. Through collaborative inquiry, teachers strengthen inclusive education, student engagement, and teaching quality.

By connecting environmental action with education, and research with lived experience, the Moata’a Project builds capability, strengthens relationships, and supports locally led solutions. It reflects a shared commitment to engagement that connects - creating lasting impact for communities, systems, and the wider Pacific.



Life-Ready Graduates

Recognising the rapidly changing environment graduates will enter, our education experiences prioritise access to contemporary knowledge, technology, and leading practice. Through collaborative approaches to real world challenges, we support the development of life-ready graduates across Australia and the Pacific - who are culturally capable, resilient, community minded, and prepared for work. Graduates build flexible, transferable skills that enable them to adapt across professions and career pathways.

Inbound and outbound exchange opportunities further enrich learning, fostering cultural awareness and a strong commitment to ethical and sustainable practice. Through these experiences, students and academics build lasting relationships and shared understanding, strengthening connections across the Pacific. In this way, life-ready graduates are equipped not only for employment, but to contribute to inclusive, sustainable, and community-led futures.

Student Experience in the Pacific

New Colombo Plan Trip 2026

For University of Newcastle students, learning in the Pacific is grounded in experience, relationships, and place. In Samoa, students described their two-week immersion as transformative, shaped not by lectures but by daily life in villages, homestays, and shared cultural practices. They spoke of the warmth of being welcomed, the simplicity of connection, and the sense of belonging that emerged through genuine relationships

Through these experiences, students developed a deeper understanding of community, sustainability, and respect. Observing customary land ownership and community-led ways of living challenged their assumptions and highlighted the importance of reciprocity. Learning was not something taken, but something shared - requiring trust, time, and cultural awareness.

Students returned with a shift in perspective, expressing a stronger commitment to ethical engagement and global responsibility. As one reflected, the experience **“changed the way we see everything”.**





Esther Bently, a Solomon Islander, graduated with a Master of Education with Distinction from the University of Newcastle. She delivered the graduate address, sharing her inspiring journey with fellow graduates, faculty, family members and guests at the graduation ceremony.



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