

# PACIFIC STATEMENT



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE  
AUSTRALIA

OUR COMMITMENT  
TO PACIFIC  
COMMUNITIES

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# SHOWCASING PACIFIC STUDENTS



*Traditional dancers at Wantok Pasifika*



*The Hon. Pat Conroy, Minister for International Development and the Pacific takes part in a lei ceremony.*

In 2023 the University of Newcastle hosted Wantok Pasifika, an annual event that encourages connection and cultural exchange. The work of the University's Pacific students was showcased at the event.

Carrol Chan a PhD candidate from Fiji who works under the umbrella of the University of Newcastle Pacific Node (pictured below) is one of three students researching how to tackle invasive species in the Pacific. Hoping to make a difference back home in Fiji once she graduates, Carrol is using a remote sensing monitoring tool to detect and map species that are threatening native biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, human livelihoods and food security across the Pacific.



*Carrol Chan a PhD candidate*

The Hon. Pat Conroy, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, joined University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor Professor Alex Zelinsky, University staff, students, and members of the Pacific community at the event to celebrate the continued friendship and collaboration between the University of Newcastle and communities in the Pacific Islands region.

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Nursing students  
visiting Sangam  
College of Nursing  
and the hospital in  
Labasa, Fiji.



The University of Newcastle's Pacific Islands region commitment sits as a major pillar of the University's Looking Ahead Strategic Plan 2020-2025. The University has prepared this Pacific Statement, as a formal acknowledgement 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

- Uphold Pacific Peoples' custodianship of land, sea, and sky.
- Include Pacific Peoples' histories, perspectives, and priorities.
- Inform and engage Pacific Peoples in planning processes and outcomes.
- Integrate Pacific Peoples' knowledge into practices.
- Develop mutually beneficial relationships of value.

## OUR VISION

As a global impact leader, deliver research and education excellence with Pacific partners that drive sustainable solutions and enhance capacity across the Pacific Islands region. Our activities will be considered an exemplar for training and mentoring future Pacific Islands leaders and will expand career pathways for Pacific and Australian students.

## OUR VALUES

### EXCELLENCE

As a University of choice for prospective staff and students, we will focus on research and education excellence to fill knowledge gaps that are aligned to regional and national priorities, codesigned to incorporate Indigenous knowledges and deliver sustainable and innovative solutions.

### EQUITY

For Pacific Peoples living in Australia, we will seek to increase the proportion studying and/or working at the University proportionate to the overall population.

### ENGAGEMENT

We will build strong partnerships with stakeholders in the Pacific Islands region, including governments, industry and communities, through collaborative research, education, training, student mobility, and knowledge exchange focused on addressing regional challenges.

### SUSTAINABILITY

We are committed to aligning our strategic priorities in the region to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

University students participated in a two-week microplastics study in Samoa, working alongside Samoa's top scientists and students.



## 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 vital 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 Pacific region's crucial development objectives. 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 making a positive impact.

We value our role to provide research support, education, resources and expertise to build capability 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 to develop capacity within disability inclusive education in Vanuatu and cyber security operations in Samoa and sending our students on valuable study tours in the Pacific. We are also partnering with national Universities throughout the Pacific to provide study opportunities for Pacific Island students. 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 the challenges of the region.



*Professor Alex Zelinsky AO  
Vice-Chancellor and President*



# A MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR, GLOBAL AND DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

It is a privilege to partner with Pacific Island countries and territories as we continue to tackle the significant impacts of climate change, plastic pollution, and biodiversity loss and to strengthen and support Indigenous communities to achieve better health and well-being outcomes.

We value our partner role in providing access to inclusive and quality education, resources and cutting-edge research that empowers Indigenous-led solutions to critical issues.

Building on our strengths, our collaborative initiatives will focus on creating multidisciplinary networks for research, teaching and innovation, and improving pathways for Pacific students to access international education and resources.

We look forward to paving the way for impactful change in the region.



*Professor Kent Anderson,  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global*



*Professor Zee Upton,  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,  
Research and Innovation*

Our strategic engagement with Pacific Island nations and territories, not only strengthens Australia's higher education sector, but is also focused on building capacity within Pacific national Universities, providing access to higher education opportunities and the latest knowledge for Indigenous communities. We will promote Indigenous-led research and teaching to deliver a common path forward in line with international conventions and frameworks.

## OUR PURPOSE

- To serve the Pacific Islands region by enhancing capacity and global expertise.
- To support our staff to deliver research for meaningful impact in the Pacific Islands region.
- To deliver an outstanding student experience that prepares students to be life-ready, career-ready, culturally capable, and civic-minded global citizens.

## OUR COMMITMENT

- We will be a leading advocate and driving force for research excellence and equity in higher education in the Pacific Islands region to enhance the capacity of the region.
- We will deliver an outstanding and inspiring student experience. We will ensure students develop relationships of value, as well as life and career skills that will support their professional development, make them competitive in the workforce and support their overall wellbeing.
- We will bring the rest of the world to the Pacific Islands region and take the Pacific Islands region to the rest of the world through relevant research solutions to local, national and global problems.
- Through this commitment, we are also signalling our intent to become the tertiary leader in the Pacific Islands region - to serve the region and provide students with an outstanding experience through real world learning opportunities with impact.

# OUR CORE PILLARS

The University's Pacific commitment is guided by Pacific Peoples' culture and upheld by 6 core pillars:



**PACIFIC-LED  
PARTNERSHIPS**



**LIFE-READY  
GRADUATES**



**ENGAGEMENT  
PRIORITIES**



**INSPIRING  
PEOPLE**



**INDIGENOUS  
COMMITMENT**



**IMPLEMENTATION  
AND IMPACT**

# PACIFIC-LED PARTNERSHIPS



We will continue to forge mutually beneficial partnerships in the Pacific Islands region through research collaboration, capacity development training, international student recruitment, transnational education programs, staff and student exchange, and outbound and inbound student mobility. These partnerships leverage the University's research strengths, expand access to international funding schemes, increase impact and entrepreneurship opportunities, and build reputation.

Our partnership activities will focus on addressing complex global issues with multiple strategic partners (government, industry, academia, and civil society) to deliver an innovation agenda, shared learning opportunities and drive impact.

We will increase co-authored publications, increase the translation of knowledge (including traditional knowledge) in accessible forms, and co-design capacity building initiatives to meet community needs.



*Trainers and mentors of Frontline One Health Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) of Papua New Guinea (L-R) Richard Bulo, Miriel Boas and Elaine Kagena.*

# PARTNERSHIPS FOR A HEALTHY REGION

With a focus in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu, the University of Newcastle and Hunter New England Local Health have been working for the past ten years to strengthen field epidemiology capacity, disease surveillance and outbreak responses to major health challenges.

The project, 'Field Epidemiology in Action' involves a multidisciplinary team that includes epidemiologists, physicians and researchers

who use evidence-based decision making, tailor made for the Pacific context, with the objective of training and supporting public health professionals, including field epidemiologists, to anticipate, prevent, detect, and control public health threats. This is part of a \$620m Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative to boost Australia's support for partner countries in the Pacific and Southeast Asia to build resilient and equitable health systems.



*A Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) team travels to a remote health centre on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, during COVID-19 to follow-up on reports of a cluster of cases and deaths.*



# ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES



The University's Pacific Commitment is relational rather than transactional. By leveraging our unique partnerships, we will guide our activities in priority areas that our partners are committed to, such as tackling climate change, plastic pollution, biodiversity loss, strengthening medicine, health and well-being outcomes in the Pacific Islands region, and building stronger and more inclusive communities.



*Toiata Apelu-Uili and Faafetai 'Tai' Kolose with Pacific PhD candidates, NIER and Wollotuka Institute staff and academics at their arrival morning tea.*

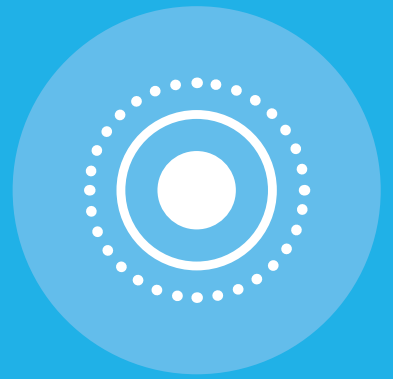
# CAPACITY BUILDING IN ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY RESEARCH

The University of Newcastle recently welcomed our partners from Samoa to explore further opportunities to collaborate on environmental and energy research. The visit forms part of our continued commitment to support the advancement of a vibrant and resilient Pacific Islands region by harnessing the collective capacity of the University and our Pacific partners through our Pacific Node initiative. Toiata Apelu-Uili, Assistant Chief Executive Officer for the Renewable Energy Division of the Ministry for Natural Resources and Environment, and Faafetai 'Tai' Kolose, Principal Research Scientist in

Renewable Energy under the Environment and Renewable Energy Division of the Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa, met with University executives, world-leading researchers, PhD candidates and our partners in the regions. The delegation experienced the breadth of our regions, touring CSIRO's Newcastle Energy Centre, meeting Lake Macquarie City Council's sustainability team, and joining the University's Doctoral Training Centre students for a tour of AGL's Baywater Power Station and the Ethtec Pilot Biorefinery in the Upper Hunter.



# INDIGENOUS COMMITMENT



The University is recognised as a leader in research and training to improve equity in education. Equally, we are committed to promoting indigenous knowledges and cultures across our campuses and in the coursework of diverse disciplines.

The following principles guide all University of Newcastle engagement in the Pacific Islands region:

- Uphold Pacific Peoples' custodianship of land, sea, and sky.
- Include Pacific Peoples' histories, perspectives, and priorities.
- Inform and engage Pacific Peoples in processes and outcomes.
- Co-weave Pacific Peoples' knowledges into practices.
- Develop relationships of value.
- Develop and implement new models of interactive governance.



*Our students experienced the best of Samoan culture while undertaking their fieldwork.*

# A PERSONAL PLIGHT TO END PLASTIC POLLUTION

Fimareti Tupu Selu (pictured below) was part of a team of Samoan scientists who worked with University of Newcastle scientists and students to collect and identify microplastic samples in and around the island of Upolu during a two-week study.

When Fimareti Tupu Selu was a child her Dad would take her snorkelling to explore the beautiful, colourful coral reefs surrounding their village in Samoa. Today, Fimareti is one of Samoa's top marine scientists in the Division of Environment and Conservation at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. According to Fimareti, the same coral reefs she once snorkelled with her Dad now have plastic everywhere - plastic bottles stuck in coral and wrappers floating next to fish.

The plastic pollution problem is an unfair burden Pacific Island nations face, particularly as the region contributes as little as 1.3% of the world's plastic pollution and yet has the highest recorded quantity of floating plastics in the world.

Microplastics result from the breakdown of macroplastics – bottles, wrappers etc – and are less than five millimetres in size – smaller than a grain of rice. It's their insignificant size which makes them particularly dangerous to marine life and human health as Plankton and other small creatures unknowingly consume these tiny plastics. This can trigger an immune response which affects the health, growth and reproduction of these creatures. Another danger is that microplastics concentrate in the digestive tracts of small fish and bivalves like oysters, which has flow-on effects to predators up the food chain, including the fish humans eat. Due to their small size, changed surface chemistry and large surface area, microplastics can attract and carry other toxic pollutants such as heavy metal and PFAS.

Quantifying microplastics is a crucial step to better understand and manage microplastic pollution. Fimareti says the project has been good capacity building to bring Samoa one step closer to better plastic management.



# LIFE-READY GRADUATES



Recognising the rapidly changing environment that students will be entering when they graduate, our education experiences will prioritise access to the latest science, technology, knowledge and leading practices in activities that are focused on collaboration to solve real-world problems and help develop life-ready graduates who are culturally capable, community-minded, resilient, and ready for work.

Work ready students need a range of flexible and transferable skills that will enable them to work collaboratively across professions and transition between careers. Students will graduate with a clear understanding of their value and skills, knowledge and capabilities to prepare them for life.

Opportunities for inbound and outbound exchange programs help build a deep cultural awareness, a commitment to social, ethical and sustainable practices, and an eagerness to contribute to Pacific Island communities in ways set by Pacific Island communities. Academic teams working in the Pacific Islands region can deliver a rich learning environment whilst delivering education and research activities.

Students and academics will be advocates for our University and the Pacific Islands region.



*New Colombo Plan trip - 9 nursing students, 2 weeks in Fiji visiting Sangam College of Nursing and the hospital in Labasa, Fiji and memories to last a lifetime.*

# A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

Thanks to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade-funded New Colombo Plan program, eight University of Newcastle students participated in a two-week microplastics study in Samoa. They worked alongside Samoa's top scientists and students from National University of Samoa.

University of Newcastle student Campbell Martin says the experience was one he will never forget. "One of the reasons I chose to study at the University was because of their values for sustainability and it's great to see the relationship that the University has with the Pacific Islands and how they genuinely care," Campbell says.

During the study tour, the team of University of Newcastle researchers and students visited the Australian High Commission in Samoa. For Campbell, who is a Development Studies student, it opened his eyes to a world of career possibilities.

"We met with the Acting High Commissioner of Australia to Samoa and learnt about the programs in place to support the partnership between Australia and Samoa. I never imagined I would get to be part of something like this at University. It was an incredible experience."



Campbell Martin (pictured right) with Maurice Reynaud Cabezas, two of the eight University of Newcastle students who participated in the plastic pollution study in Samoa.



# INSPIRING PEOPLE



The University will work with our Pacific partners to leverage tertiary education through select coursework Masters and Higher Degree by Research scholarships. We will create opportunities for career-ready placements in the Pacific Islands region for Australian undergraduate students to deliver the best possible student experience.

We will foster people-to-people linkages and a passion for lifelong learning.

We will promote Pacific Island countries and territories as key destinations for New Colombo Plan study tours and internships, and other global experience pathways to lift student knowledge of the region.

We will strengthen connections with Pacific alumni, recognising the significance of their lifelong relationship with the University. We will explore opportunities to further network and engage to build strategic partnerships. We will share University alumni experiences to assist the next generation of Pacific students.



*From L-R: Pierre Gouhier, Faafetai 'Tai' Kolose, Toiata Apelu-Uili, Profesor Zee Upton, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation.*

## WILLIAM'S STORY

William Young, a student within the University of Newcastle's Pacific Node initiative, is playing a key role in supporting Apolima Island in Samoa become the model for rat eradication efforts across the Pacific Islands region.

The Pacific Node initiative is a University of Newcastle partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), to provide a flexible research framework for collaborative engagement between academia, industry, government and communities to deliver impact in national priority areas.

William had the opportunity to work with staff at SPREP and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to lead a three-day survey as part of his PhD project. The survey seeks to gauge the engagement, awareness and support the Apolima

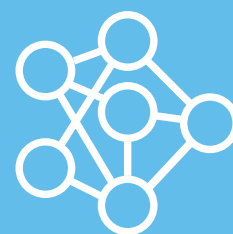
community shows for the rat eradication project. The results will help to inform the feasibility of managing invasive species on the island and help understand how invasive species management can be strengthened through local community involvement and considerations of diversity and social inclusivity.

If successful, the project could result in a reduction of damage to food supplies and buildings, as well as an increase in the abundance of native bird life. So far, the plan to conduct the project in Apolima Islands has been welcomed, with village representative and Mayor Mr Leala Solo saying, "Rats have been a problem in this island for so many years now, and we thank the government for considering our small, isolated island to be part of this project."



William Young (middle) conducting the survey with community participants. Credit: MRNE

# IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT



As a public institution entrusted with stewardship of public and stakeholder funds, we are monitoring our performance against several measures of success to ensure that we are delivering on both the 'what' and 'how' of our Pacific Commitment.

In doing so, we hold ourselves accountable to students, staff and partners in the Pacific Islands region. Celebrating our achievements and milestones along the way is an important part of this.



*New Colombo Plan 2-week Fiji trip for 9 nursing students.*

## DIPTI ADVANCES HEALTHCARE IN FIJI

Despite holding a Bachelor of Nursing and a Graduate Diploma of Midwifery, Dipti Darshika Lata (pictured below) felt compelled to complete a Master of Midwifery at the University of Newcastle.

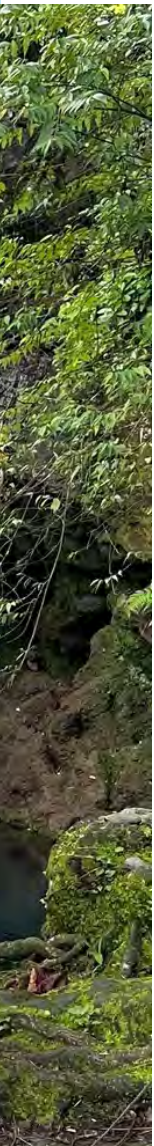
Dipti is passionate about providing the highest standard of care to expectant mothers and their newborns and advancing midwifery care and education in her homeland of Fiji. Having the opportunity to study at an institution with a strong track record for producing successful healthcare professionals instilled confidence in Dipti and living in Newcastle while studying allowed Dipti to enjoy a vibrant coastal city, and engage in campus life.

“From the moment I stepped onto campus, I felt supported by the friendly staff and students and having access to modern libraries, research

centres, and technology-enabled classrooms contributed to a dynamic and enriching academic environment,” she said.

Dipti was awarded an AusAID scholarship which helped to alleviate financial pressures and allowed Dipti to focus on her studies without the burden of having to worry about tuition costs or daily living expenses.

Throughout her studies, Dipti engaged with industry professionals through various events and initiatives, which helped her build valuable contacts and foster a sense of community within the midwifery sector. Upon completing her master’s degree in 2023, Dipti returned to Fiji, ready to serve the people of her country in a new role as Team Leader at Rakiraki District Hospital.



# UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS - ALIGNMENT WITH GLOBAL OBJECTIVES

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



		1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
<b>INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION, INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT</b>		●	○	●	●	○	○
<b>ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES</b>	Better, Healthier Living		●	●			●
	Next Generation Resources		○	○			○
	Connected Communities	●		○	●	●	
	Growing Industries		○	○			
<b>LIFE-READY GRADUATES</b>		○		●	●	○	
<b>ASIA PACIFIC FOCUS</b>				○	●		○
<b>REIMAGINING OUR CAMPUSES</b>				●	●	○	○
<b>INSPIRING PEOPLE</b>		●		●	●	●	
<b>OUR VALUES</b>	Excellence				●	●	
	Equity	○			○	●	
	Engagement	○				○	
	Sustainability		○				●

● Strongly Aligned   ○ Aligned

## 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.

	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
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