



Briefing Note: Background and speech notes for the Inaugural University of Otago Pacific Leaders' Summit

To:	Hon Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
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Purpose of Report

This briefing provides you with background information and speech notes to support your attendance at the Inaugural University of Otago Pacific Leaders' Summit on 4 August.

Summary

1. You, and your wife, have been invited to attend the Inaugural University of Otago Pacific Leaders' Summit on 4 August 2021. You have been invited to provide the Keynote Address from 6:45pm to 7:00pm. The Summit will be at the Fale Samoa, Mangere, Auckland, from 5:30pm to 8:00pm, including dinner.
2. The Summit is a high-level, future-focused event which aims to increase the profile of Pacific engagement, while strategically positioning the University of Otago within the Auckland Pacific community. The Summit also seeks to explore issues currently faced by Pacific Peoples in tertiary education and find Pacific 'champions' in Auckland with whom the University can partner to improve Pacific learner engagement and success.
3. Speech notes and a programme for the Summit are attached, to support you in your attendance (**annexes 1-2**). We have also included background information on topics which may be of interest to your audience, including your work with Komiti Pasifika, work on supporting secondary-tertiary transitions, allocation of funding from Budget 2020 for Pacific Funds (which includes allocation of funding to University of Otago specifically), and recent changes to the way research and researchers (including Pacific research and Pacific researchers) are weighted and funded by Government.

Proactive Release

- a. **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you and following your attendance at the Summit.

Agree / Disagree



Kieran Forde
Acting Manager
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22/07/2021



Hon Au Pito William Sio
Associate Minister of Education

11/8/21

Background

About the Summit

1. The Inaugural University of Otago Pacific Leaders' Summit (the Summit) on 4 August 2021 aims to increase the profile of Pacific engagement, while strategically positioning the University of Otago (the University) within the Auckland Pacific community. The Summit is a high-level, future-focused event themed, 'The Future is Now.' It aims to explore the issues currently faced by Pacific Peoples in tertiary education and find Pacific 'champions' in the Auckland corporate world with whom the University can partner with to improve Pacific learner engagement and success.
2. The audience is expected to include approximately 250 attendees from the University and wider Pacific community, including the Chancellor, Dr Royden Somerville (QC), senior management and leadership of the University, Pacific Members of Parliament, and Pacific and mainstream media.
3. You have been invited to provide the keynote address from 6:45pm to 7:00pm. This will be preceded by a formal mihi whakatau, ava ceremony, and the official welcome from Professor Tony Ballantyne, Deputy Vice Chancellor (External Engagement).
4. Your wife has also been invited to attend the Summit. To assist your attendance, we have attached a full programme for the Summit in **annex two**.
5. We propose your keynote address focus on the:
 - a. Tertiary Education Strategy and Action Plan for Pacific Education, including the objectives outlined by the Government for Pacific learners and communities; and
 - b. current work the Ministry and partner education agencies are undertaking for Pacific tertiary learners and their communities, of interest to the university sector.

The University of Otago and Pacific communities

6. Most of the learners enrolled at the University study at its Dunedin campus, but the University is trying to grow its reach to learners based in Auckland. Its Auckland campus is of strategic value in reaching Pacific learners, given that approximately two thirds of New Zealand's Pacific population reside in the Auckland region (at the time of the 2018 census).¹
7. About 5% of the University's approximately 21,000 learners are Pacific, with the number of Pacific learners enrolled at the University steadily increasing since 2015.²
8. The University has seen significant growth in Pacific enrolment in the last year, with an increase of 21.3% in commencing Pacific enrolment, and an increase of 13.0% in overall Pacific enrolment between 2020 and 2021.³ This is comparatively better than the total enrolment of Pacific learners across all eight universities, which increased by less than 2% in the last year (from 13,010 learners in 2019 to 13,255 learners in 2020).⁴
9. Last year the University appointed Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai to the new role of Manager, Pacific Community Engagement. Her Auckland-based role involves building the

¹ [2018 Census ethnic group summaries | Stats NZ](#)

² [Quick statistics, About Otago, University of Otago, New Zealand](#)

³ [9 March 2021, Strong upswing in domestic enrolments at Otago University, News, University of Otago, New Zealand](#)

⁴ [Tertiary Participation | Education Counts](#)

University's relationships and engagement with Pacific communities in Auckland. She is one of the organisers of the Summit, and the person who invited you to attend the Summit and provide the keynote address.

10. Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai's role sits within the University of Otago External Engagement Division, which is led by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement) Professor Tony Ballantyne. The Division is responsible for raising the profile of the University and attracting high quality domestic and international students to study at Otago. The Division embraces a global outlook, leads and promotes activities to increase engagement (both nationally and internationally), and seeks to build lasting relationships with key stakeholders. The Division includes Development and Alumni Relations, the Centre for Asia-Pacific Excellence, Communications, International, Marketing, Schools Liaison, Undergraduate Entrance Scholarships, and the Auckland Centre.

The Tertiary Education Strategy

11. The Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) was published alongside the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) in November 2020. It builds on issues identified by learners, families, communities, and educational staff. The TES details the Government's long-term strategic direction for tertiary education, including economic, social, and environmental goals, and the development aspirations of Māori and other population groups, including Pacific.
12. The five broad objectives of the TES are:
 - a. *Learners at the centre*: learners with their whānau are at the centre of education
 - b. *Barrier-free access*: great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach for every learner
 - c. *Quality teaching and leadership*: quality teaching and leadership make the difference for learners and their whānau
 - d. *Future of learning and work*: learning that is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives
 - e. *World-class inclusive public education*: New Zealand education is trusted and sustainable.
13. Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) are required to describe how they will give effect to the Government's priorities described in the TES, including in their policies, practices, and plans.

The Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020 – 2030

14. The Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030 (the Action Plan) is a blueprint for Pacific education that responds to diverse voices and outlines how Government wants to keep working together with Pacific communities and the education sector. The Action Plan maps the Government's actions to support Pacific Education and signals how TEOs, as well as schools and early learning services, can achieve change in collaboration with Pacific learners and their families.

15. This 10-year strategic plan was developed through conversations with Pacific learners and communities during the Kōrero Mātauranga | Education Conversation in 2018, and Pacific fono series in 2018 and 2019.
16. The TES and the Action Plan are aligned through shared overarching objectives for the education system. As TEOs respond to the priorities of the TES through their policies, practices, and plans, they will also contribute towards achieving the key shifts outlined in the Action Plan.
17. The key shifts outlined in the Action Plan are as follows:
 - a. *Key shift 1:* work reciprocally with diverse Pacific communities to respond to unmet needs, with an initial focus on needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic
 - b. *Key shift 2:* confront systemic racism and discrimination in education
 - c. *Key shift 3:* enable every teacher, leader, and education professional to take coordinated action to become culturally competent with diverse Pacific learners
 - d. *Key shift 4:* partner with families to design education opportunities together with teachers, leaders, and education professionals so that aspirations for learning and employment can be met
 - e. *Key shift 5:* grow, retain and value highly competent teachers, leaders, and educational professionals of diverse Pacific heritages.
18. Your priorities for Pacific Education align with the objectives and key shifts outlined in the TES and the Action Plan [METIS 1251718 refers]. They also overlap with the values and aspirations for Pacific learners identified in the University of Otago's Pacific Strategic Framework (which outlines the University's commitment to ensuring equity in learner achievement).⁵

Government's actions to support the objectives for Pacific Learners outlined in the TES and the Action Plan

19. Government is undertaking a range of activities and work-programmes to realise the objectives for Pacific learners detailed in the TES and the Action Plan. The first phase of the Action Plan will involve building on the \$80.2 million investment secured in Budget 2020 to meet the education-related needs of Pacific learners and families, particularly those impacted most by COVID-19.
20. We have provided more detail on current actions being undertaken by Government for Pacific learners and communities in the sections below, with particular emphasis on the university sector.
21. Significant detail is not needed for your speech, but your audience will likely be interested in the allocation of funding from Budget 2020 for Pacific Funds (including funding to University of Otago specifically); work on supporting secondary-tertiary transitions; and recent changes to the way research and researchers (including Pacific research and Pacific researchers) are weighted and funded by Government.

⁵ [Plans and Strategies, University of Otago, New Zealand](#)

Investment in Pacific Education

22. Budget 2020 established two new funds to support Pacific learners' wellbeing and educational success post COVID-19. Both are part of the \$80.2 million investment in Pacific Education through the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund announced in the Action Plan for Pacific Education. This includes \$39.7 million over four years for the Pacific Education Support Fund, and \$28.5 million over four years for the Pacific Education Innovation Fund.
23. **The Pacific Education Support Fund** was established to fund community providers, groups and organisations that help Pacific learners and their families to meet education and wellbeing needs arising from, and/or exacerbated by, COVID-19. Tertiary providers (as well as schools and early learning services) are not eligible for this fund.
24. **The Pacific Innovation Fund** is targeted at supporting innovative practices that support Pacific learners' wellbeing and curriculum needs post COVID-19. Pacific bilingual and immersion education are key foci of the fund. The Innovation fund is open to educators, places of learning, community groups, providers, researchers, and academics.
25. Applications for the second round of both Funds closed on 26 April 2021. The University of Otago's Division of Sciences (Dunedin-based) has been awarded funding under the Pacific Innovation Fund to support their initiative, 'Pacific Voices in STEM.' The project aims to enable Pacific communities to engage with, and celebrate, STEM subjects (that is, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). The funding received will support Pacific learners to have a positive experience within STEM subjects and instil a sense of belonging – one of the critical conditions for Pacific learners to achieve educational success.

Working with Komiti Pasifika

26. In 2018, Universities New Zealand established Komiti Pasifika to advance and promote the collective national interests of New Zealand universities for any matters relating to the advancement of Pacific learners and communities.⁶
27. The Komiti consists of eight members of Pacific descent who are in the highest Pacific leadership roles within their respective universities. This includes Dr Tasileta Teevale, the Director of Pacific Development at the University of Otago, who was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit this year for services to Pacific education and public health research.⁷
28. You have twice met with Komiti Pasifika, in March and May this year, and have also been invited by the Komiti to attend its regular quarterly meetings [METIS 1251718 and 1258331 refer]. In meetings with the Komiti, you have outlined your priorities for Pacific education and the government's activities to support the success and aspirations of Pacific learners and communities.
29. Komiti Pasifika has outlined its objectives, which include improving Pacific learner success outcomes; fostering Pacific development and research excellence; and enhancing Pacific leadership and education policy. The Komiti has iterated the need to support Pacific learners in secondary-tertiary transitions and expressed concern

⁶ [Komiti Pasifika | Universities New Zealand - Te Pōkai Tara \(universitiesnz.ac.nz\)](https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/komiti-pasifika)

⁷ [Exceptional service recognised in New Year Honours, Uni News, Otago Bulletin Board, University of Otago, New Zealand](#)

with inequities in Pacific learner access, engagement, participation, and completion rates for higher education.

30. You have invited the Komiti to provide you with advice on improving:
- Pacific learner success outcomes by preparing Pacific students to transition and succeed in degree study; and
 - development and research excellence for academic staff, for example, through the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF).

Supporting secondary-tertiary transitions and learner success

31. One of your key priority areas shared with Komiti Pasifika is supporting Pacific learners to transition effectively from secondary to tertiary education. In 2019, retention and completion rates for Pacific learners at university were persistently lower than for other groups. Pacific learner completion rates at graduate degree level were 19% lower than Pākehā learner completion rates at the same level, based on a five-year qualification.⁸
32. Better preparation and support during this transition phase is important to lift success outcomes for Pacific learners. An important step in this work is establishing and expanding partnerships with key tertiary providers and schools with high numbers of Pacific learners. Over 50% of all Pacific secondary students in New Zealand are enrolled at just 28 secondary schools.⁹
33. Earlier this year, you commissioned the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to undertake the following work to support the secondary to tertiary transitions work:
- complete a stocktake of secondary to tertiary initiatives that work for Pacific learners and their communities;
 - develop an initiative to roll out these approaches in secondary schools with the highest Pacific student population, and in communities where they are most needed; and
 - embed the design elements of the secondary to tertiary initiatives that make them successful into policy, monitoring and funding tools.
34. The stocktake remains ongoing, and TEC will provide you with monthly updates on how this work is progressing.
35. The TEC is also working collaboratively with Universities New Zealand (UNZ) to develop a cross-university approach to learner success. The TEC has established a steering group with two representatives from each of the eight universities, and a representative from each of Komiti Pasifika and Te Kāhui Amokura (a UNZ sub-committee of eight Māori leaders in the highest Māori leadership roles of their respective universities).¹⁰
36. Key aims of the steering group are to:
- identify key factors for each university that contribute to low learner success;

⁸ [Tertiary Participation | Education Counts](#)

⁹ [Statistics | Education Counts](#)

¹⁰ [Te Kāhui Amokura | Universities New Zealand - Te Pōkai Tara \(universitiesnz.ac.nz\)](#)

- b. provide recommendations for improvements and capability-building; and
- c. provide advice on any areas that Government processes and policies can contribute to learner participation and progression, and ways to address these within current funding streams or mechanisms.

Review of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF)

- 37. The PBRF is the main mechanism of Government funding for tertiary education research capability, with allocated capped funding of \$315 million per year. The universities are awarded nearly 97% of the total fund; as such, recent changes are likely to be of interest to your University of Otago audience.
- 38. Komiti Pasifika previously raised concerns that the PBRF does not adequately recognise or reward Pacific research, or Pacific researchers. Government commissioned an independent review of the PBRF fund settings and presented Cabinet with a package of proposed changes to the PBRF on 24 May.
- 39. Following Cabinet decisions, the Ministry publically announced a suite of changes to the PBRF on 1 July 2021, to promote a stronger, fairer, and more diverse education system. Key changes for Pacific learners and researchers include:
 - a. changing the funding weighting for Pacific researchers and research; and
 - b. broadening the definition of research used by the PBRF to better recognise and reward a diversity of research types, including Pacific research.
- 40. The TEC has also established a PBRF Sector Reference Group, which will be responsible for providing continued advice and recommendations on implementation of the PBRF for the 2025 Quality Evaluation. TEC is currently seeking nominations of sector professionals into the Reference Group.

Annexes

Annex 1: Speech notes for keynote address

Annex 2: Programme for the Inaugural University of Otago Pacific Leaders' Summit

Annex 1: Speech Notes for keynote address

Introduction

- E ngā mana, e ngā iwi, e ngā reo, e ngā hau e whā, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.
- Talofa lava, Kia orana, Mālō e lelei, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Taloha ni, Ni sa bula vinaka, Kia orāna, Gud de tru olgeta and warm Pacific greetings to you all.
- *[Samoan fa'aaloalo from Minister Sio]*
- Fa'afetai lava Tofilau [Nina Kirifi-Alai] for inviting me here this evening to participate in your inaugural University of Otago Pacific Leaders' Summit. I wish also to acknowledge Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Tony Ballantyne and the External Engagement Division for organising this Summit and hosting us here today.
- It is a great privilege to speak to you today and be surrounded by so many excellent Pacific leaders. I greatly appreciate the work you all are doing to help our Pacific communities succeed, across New Zealand and here in Auckland especially. As you'll know, Māngere is my electorate and home base, and South Auckland is, and has long been, close to my heart.
- I know we all share similar aspirations for the success and wellbeing of our Pacific learners, their families, and communities.
- As the Minister of Pacific Peoples and the Associate Minister of Education, I believe that education is the key to unlocking success, opportunity, and fulfilment for our Pacific communities.
- I am a believer in the power of education to transform people's lives. Education underpins all the goals we have for New Zealand's future, and the vision we have for all people in New Zealand.
- Education is and will remain a priority for this Government. This Government is committed to a long-term, positive transformation in the education system to improve the outcomes and experience of Pacific learners and their 'āiga. This is about ensuring learners can thrive and experience the world, knowing and understanding who they are, where they come from and how being grounded in their Pacific culture and identity can support their success in all that they strive to achieve.

Supporting secondary-tertiary transitions

- One of my key priority areas this year, which I have shared with the UNZ Komiti Pasifika, is supporting Pacific learners to transition effectively from secondary to tertiary education. The Ministry of Education's data tell us that retention and completion rates for Pacific learners at university are persistently lower than other groups. We need better preparation and support during this transition phase to lift success outcomes for Pacific learners.

- An important step in this work is establishing and expanding partnerships with key tertiary providers and schools with high numbers of Pacific learners. Over 50% of all Pacific secondary students in New Zealand are enrolled at just 28 secondary schools.
- Earlier this year I commissioned the Tertiary Education Commission to undertake some work to support the secondary to tertiary transition of Pacific learners. This work is currently underway with a complete stocktake of secondary to tertiary initiatives that work for Pacific learners and their communities.
- The Tertiary Education Commission will be looking for a clear alignment of any new secondary-tertiary transition initiative with its learner success approach. This to ensure any initiative is fully embedded within participating tertiary education organisations and that these can be delivered at scale across multiple sites and provides.
- This work will ultimately embed the design elements of the secondary to tertiary initiatives that make them successful into policy, monitoring, and funding tools. It's important that we understand, but also continue to build upon, what works for our Pacific learners and their communities so that we don't become stagnant.

The Tertiary Education Strategy and Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030

- The Tertiary Education Strategy sets out key long-term objectives for the success of all learners, including ensuring that learners and their families are at the centre and that great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach for every learner.
- The Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030 further maps the Government's commitment to transforming outcomes for Pacific learners and families. It builds on nationwide fono with Pacific learners and communities in the last couple of years, where we heard the importance of working to address racism and discrimination, and ensuring equity, excellence, and success for all learners in our education system.
- Our government has worked hard over the last three years to lay the platform for a renewed education system that is fit-for-purpose in the 21st century. We have launched our Action Plan for Pacific Education to provide clear guidance about our expectations as learners progress through early learning, compulsory schooling, tertiary education, and on into employment.

Investment in Pacific Education

- We have increased our investment in Pacific education in the last two Budgets to support the key themes in the Action Plan for Pacific Education. This includes building on the investment of \$27.4 million in Budget 2019 and the investment of \$80.2 million in Budget 2020 to support Pacific learners and families to access and participate in education, particularly those impacted by COVID-19.
- I am pleased to report that, as at the end of June, almost \$11 million dollars of this investment has been paid to Pacific providers across Aotearoa through the Pacific Education Support Fund and the Pacific Innovation Fund.

- This includes, of course, money awarded to the University of Otago's Division of Sciences for your project relating to Pacific Voices in STEM. Congratulations to you for being a very worthy recipient. I am excited to see how this project progresses, as Pacific learners should be able to succeed as Pacific learners and feel like they belong in the educational pathways they choose, including STEM.

Stronger support for Pacific researchers and research

- One of the ways we'll know the Action Plan for Pacific Education is successful is when Pacific learners and communities feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in their learning environment, and they can engage, participate, and succeed at university, home, and work.
- To ensure the same is achieved for Pacific researchers, Government has recently reviewed the way we consider and fund Pacific researchers, and Pacific research projects. We have made changes to the Performance-Based Research Fund to promote a stronger, fairer, and more inclusive tertiary education system. The changes mean Pacific researchers and research will be more strongly weighted, and a broader and more diverse range of research will be recognised and rewarded.

Conclusion

- We all know that our Pacific learners and families have experienced hardships due to COVID-19 and we are responding to these challenges. We are leading the way in transforming education to meet the needs of our Pasifika community, and to achieve change for our learners and their families.
- Our shared commitment is to ensure that all learners have access to quality education services that are responsive to their needs and those of their families and communities.
- Quality education provides strong foundations for life-long learning and enables our young people to contribute strongly to the knowledge society. To be curious, to ask questions, to explore and to be kind.
- I commend the work being done by the University of Otago to make learning accessible and engaging for Pacific learners, shaping university spaces that Pacific learners feel comfortable in, and fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging.
- Let's continue to work collectively to make positive changes and continue to place Pacific voices at the heart of educational focus.
- The future is our Pacific learners, and the future is now.
- Thank you again for inviting me to speak. Soifua ma ia manuia.