



**Australian  
Association  
for Pacific  
Studies**



## AAPS Newsletter, August 2021

Dear Members,

Welcome to the second newsletter of 2021. Following on from our April Symposium, this newsletter brings you a report from our President, Mandy Treagus, one of our conference conveners, Kim Kruger and Alice Te Punga Somerville, and our incoming PG Representative, Lorayma So'otuli Taula.

This edition also includes details about research happening within our AAPS community: announcements, PhD submissions, opportunities, new projects and recent member publications. Thanks to everyone who sent in a submission. It's been so wonderful to hear about all the amazing things happening in the AAPS community.

Best wishes to all,

Emma and Dominic

### **President's Report**

We find ourselves undertaking our lives and our research in an extremely difficult world. The restrictions created by COVID-19 are preventing travel, which has implications for both fieldwork and archival research. Given the situation right now, with many states in lockdown, we are so lucky to have been able to have held our postgraduate and early career symposium in person (and online) in April. What a fantastic job the convenors Kalissa Alexeyeff, Victoria Stead and Kimberley Kruger did, in adapting their planned 2020 extravaganza conference into what we did have: an incredibly meaningful and important sharing of Pacific research amongst new and established scholars. It was so great to have the hub at the University of Waikato – thanks Alice Te Punga Somerville – and to have people zooming in from cross the country and the region to both present and participate in sessions. For those of us who could

catch up in person, it was a sweet spot in an otherwise rather lonely time in research. One thing that the conference confirmed is that Pacific Studies is thriving, with a new crop of outstanding young researchers making their mark in the field in an increasingly diverse range of areas.

Our lives take place against the backdrop of COVID-19, which is devastating in some areas of the Pacific such as Fiji and PNG, and isolating others. This is having an immediate impact on our lives, and we mourn with those who have lost loved ones to this virus. We also face the even more threatening spectre of climate catastrophe, a fact underlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report released this month. While it is not too late to hold back some of the worst impacts of this, we must act right now to reduce emissions. We also acknowledge that we are already living with its immediate effects: rising sea levels, more frequent and devastating cyclones, and extreme bushfires. In light of this, the Pacific Islands Forum made a bold declaration about national maritime boundaries. The declaration aims to maintain current maritime boundaries despite sea level rise. This acknowledges not only the importance of these zones to the economies of Forum members, but also the role of the ocean in cultures and identities throughout the region.

I hope that the coming year brings more possibilities for both research and interpersonal connection. Stay well!

Mandy Treagus

President, AAPS



Footscray hub



Waikato hub and keynote

### **Conference Convenors' Report**

The biennial AAPS conference was held 8-9 April, 2021 at the Footscray Community Arts Centre after being delayed from 2020. The conference was themed on the work of the late Tracey Banivanua Mar and titled “*Decolonisation and the Trans-Pacific*”. We were inspired by Tracey’s insights into decolonisation and trans-Indigenous connections—especially connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, South Sea Islanders, Māori and Pacific people – both past and present, and included the participation of Pacific scholars from across the globe.

Eighteen months work on the program was dramatically narrowed down due to COVID restrictions and uncertainty. Nevertheless, other opportunities presented themselves. The conference was refocused to an HDR student and early career researcher symposium, recognising the need to encourage connections for this vital group during the pandemic. Thanks to the input of Alice Te Punga Somerville and the team at Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao, Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies, Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato, University of Waikato, we organised two main conference hubs, one in Melbourne and the other in Hamilton, Aotearoa. The result was a lively and stimulating exchange between groups of scholars, artists and activists that captured some of the unpredictable but significant currents of connection outlined in Tracey’s work. We believe some of the ties forged during this conference forged new alliances and knowledge-making possibilities between Indigenous, Māori, Pacific scholars and AAPs members more broadly.

The conference opened with a keynote panel 'Decolonisation and the Trans-Pacific Academy – Indigenous Perspectives' which included compelling interventions by Dr Melinda Mann, Lefaoali'i Dion Enari, Associate Professor Alice Te Punga Somerville and Kim Kruger. Subsequent panels covered topics such as the Anti-Nuclear Pacific, Movements for Decolonisation, Archiving and Education.

Highlights of the conference included:

At Waikato University, the time zone difference provided a bonus two hours each day before connecting with Melbourne: Thursday we had time for a whakatau (welcome) and a student-led tour of Pacific art around campus; Friday morning we had a workshop on Tracey Banivanua Mar's scholarship. On the Thursday evening, we kept connecting and thinking together with kava and/ or kai at a relaxed 'Fono at the Fale' session at the campus chapel which was our AAPS hub for the two days.

In Melbourne, we kicked off with acknowledgment of country by Taungurong Elder in residence Larry Walsh who created a culturally grounded space for participants, alongside Boonwurrung artist Mitch Mahoney and Yorta Yorta artist Donna Blackall's large reed canoes being constructed in their research residency for *Weaving Sustainable Culture*. AAPS had a mixer with representatives of the Pacific Climate Warriors, a group of young people who were convening for the 350 Pacific's Island Time virtual event for the Global #JustRecovery Gathering. We had a delicious group dinner with kai from the Hangi Brothers and music from Obert Tuisuga and friend. Lisa Hilli's testing of new art works drawing on colonial postcards of Papua New Guinea rounded out our much scaled down arts programming.

The symposium benefitted from the efforts of Indigenous scholars over many years to increase numbers of Indigenous and Pacific scholars globally, with large attendance of emerging scholars who shared their exciting and significant scholarship.

Finally we thank Deakin University, University of Melbourne, Moondani Balluk at Victoria University (Australia) and University of Waikato for their financial and in-kind support.

From the conference convenors, Victoria Stead, Kalissa Alexeyeff, Kim Kruger and Alice Te Punga Somerville



Waikato (Wellington) hub participants

### **Postgraduate Report**

What was originally intended to be the highly anticipated AAPS Conference, Epeli Hau'ofa Memorial Lecture and Masterclass, took on another form due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. Amidst 'the rona', the brilliant team of organisers Victoria Stead, Kalissa Alexyeff and Kimberly Kruger moved forward with the 2021 Decolonisation and the Trans-Pacific Symposium held on the 8-9 April. The Symposium was shared across numerous geographical hubs at the Footscray Community Arts Centre in Naarm, the University of Waikato in Hamilton, Aotearoa and virtually online via Zoom. This blended delivery was multipurpose -- first, the Aussie and Kiwi hubs battled against each other in a scream-off and second, everyone was present in the space between online, in-person and both at the same time. Emerging Postgraduates and Early Career Researchers presented in concurrent panels spanning across multiple disciplines and Oceanic lenses, centred on the Pacific.

Over these two exciting days, scholars shared innovative, critical and creative works, collaborations and discussions taking place in the AAPS community. In particular, the keynote panel in honour of Tracey Banivanua Mar: "Decolonisation and the Trans-Pacific Academy - Indigenous Perspectives" featured Melinda Mann and Lefaoali'i Dion Enari in conversation with Associate

Professor Alice Te Punga Somerville. As Indigenous and Pasifika scholars, both shared poignant reflections from their PhD journeys forged in “grappling with placedness” in terms of their purpose, research, communities, identity and relationships. Dion highlighted the importance and responsibility of actioning the theory and knowledge, a call to action -- in pursuit of sovereignty and meaningful trans-indigenous relations in Australia. Melinda recounted her graduation ceremony as the culmination of her family’s story in honour of her genealogy and community. These valuable moments and conversations also resonated with many of the postgraduates and ECR’s own experiences. Special thanks and acknowledgement to the amazing organisers and everyone involved in the 2021 AAPS Symposium.

Finally, a huge thank you to Tait Brimacombe and Emma Kluge for their incredible contributions as the AAPS Postgraduate Representatives. We sincerely appreciate all your encouragement and support for the postgrad community over the past years. Thank you so much Tait and Emma!

Ia manuia,  
Lorayma Taula, AAPS Postgraduate Representative

## Announcements

### PhD and Masters Submissions

We congratulate the following AAPS members on completing their dissertations!



**Dr. Jesi Lujan Bennett (PhD)**

**Institution:** University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (May 2021)

**Dissertation Chair:** Dr. Brandy Nālani McDougall

**Title:** Migrating Beyond the Mattingan: Chamoru Diasporic Routes, Indigenous Identities, and Public Exhibitions

For abstract and full access click [here](#).

**Angela Matthews (Masters)**

**Institution:** Victoria University of Wellington

**Supervisor:** Dr April Henderson

**Title:** A digital visual tok stori: Reimagining Papua New Guinean identity through Instagram

**Dr. Charles J.T. Radclyffe (PhD)**

**Institution:** University of Otago

**Supervisors:** Richard Walter and Glenn Summerhayes

**Title:** Prehistoric Settlement and Networks of Interaction in the Western Solomon Islands: A Survey of Manning Strait

For abstract and full access click [here](#).

**Tracey Banivanua Mar Prize Winners**



Named after the late Tracey Banivanua Mar, a Pacific historian, colleague, and friend to many within the AAPS community, the prize recognises the most outstanding PhD thesis by an AAPS student member working in the field of Pacific Studies.

This year, the judges awarded the prize to Pakeha scholar from Aotearoa/New Zealand Dr Bonnie Etherington, and her thesis “One Salt Water: Writing the Pacific Ocean in Indigenous Protest Literatures Post-1990”.

The AAPS PhD Prize judging committee believe that this comprehensive literary methodology and original research is emblematic of Tracey Banivanua Mar’s scholarship and enthusiasm for threading links between colonial struggles across Oceania.

The Tracey Banivanua Mar PhD Prize comes with an award of \$1000 and the opportunity to be considered for publication in the AAPS Book Series with ANU Press. We’re excited to work with Dr Etherington to develop her thesis for publication. Congratulations Dr Etherington!

#### HIGHLY COMMENDED AWARDEE

In reflection of the exceptional quality of nominations for the 2020 PhD Prize, the judges also awarded one highly commended award to Dr David Lakisa, and his thesis “Managing Pasifika Diaspora in Australian Rugby League”.



Our Highly Commended awardee will also work towards developing his thesis for publication in the AAPS Book Series. Dr Lakisa been awarded a cash prize of \$250. Congratulations Dr Lakisa!

Read more about their projects and the judges comments on our [website here](#).

### **The Australian Museum appointed Laura McBride, the first Indigenous Curator-Director.**

In March this year the First Nations, Laura McBride was appointed Director of the Aboriginal and Pacific Collections, at the Australian Museum. Laura McBride is a Wailwan and Kooma woman who has grown up in culture under the guidance of Elders in north western NSW and Sydney. Laura's vision is amplifying the First Nations voices so that Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and Pacific communities represent themselves and their cultures within the Museum.

During her employment at the Australian Museum, Laura advocated a strong perspective of the First Nations communities at the Museum, moving towards Indigenous self-determination to be present in the care for cultural objects, exhibitions, and education. She promoted Museum to move beyond its colonial past towards connecting more with First Nations People and knowledge-holders in Australia and the Pacific.

Previously Laura was the First Nations Curator in the Exhibitions, and also Creative Producer and Aboriginal Educator at the Australian Museum. She developed the [Garriqarrang: Sea Country exhibition](#), the award-winning [GADIExhibition](#), and conducted ground-breaking First Nations community consultation through [The 2020 Project](#) which has informed the First Nations-led exhibition *Unsettled*, currently opened at the Museum.

We congratulate Laura and wish her best of luck in this significant role! Check out her [profile here](#) and listen to an ABC interview with [Laura here](#).

## **Opportunities**

### **Hank Nelson Memorial Award Prize for PNG History**

Every two years, the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific may offer an award known as the Hank Nelson Memorial Award. The objective/s of the Award are

to honour the memory of Hank Nelson and his commitment to Papua New Guinea, and to acknowledge the best Doctor of Philosophy thesis submitted by any student, internationally, on any aspect of Papua New Guinea's history or society. Funding for the Award has been provided by the Hank Nelson Memorial Endowment. The value of the prize awarded is \$1,000 AUD.

For more information [click here](#).

## Pasifika Young Peoples' Wellbeing Network (PYPWN)



Pasifika Young Peoples Wellbeing Network (PYPWN) is a research and community-focused network based at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Brisbane. Its mission is to invest in the wellbeing of Pasifika Communities by using evidence-based research to identify expressed and unexpressed needs of young Pasifika people through meaningful research projects.

The network held its first Meet & Greet on 28th July 2021 and one of its members, Dr Charles J. T. Radclyffe, shared a personal reflection of his journey undertaking a PhD in archaeology which involved over five months of fieldwork his home country, Solomon Islands.

PYPWN will host open meetings at QUT Kelvin Grove on the last Wednesday of each month to provide further opportunities to network and to hear from

members making waves in our community. We hope to see you at the next one!

You can email PYPWN at: [info@pypwn.com.au](mailto:info@pypwn.com.au) or follow them on Facebook or Twitter on @PYPWN.

### **CFP: Pacific Arts**

Pacific Arts, the journal of the Pacific Arts Association, has an ONGOING OPEN CALL for submissions on the arts of Oceania and its diasporas focusing on visual arts, material cultures, and heritage arts. The scope is temporally broad, highlighting both historical and current topics while engaging with a wide range of creative mediums, forms, and subject matter. Pacific Arts encourages interdisciplinary approaches to examining the political, social, economic, cultural, aesthetic, and environmental stakes in the production and study of Indigenous visual and material cultures in Oceania, past and present.

The journal welcomes contributions from a variety of disciplines focusing on historical and present-day visual and material cultures of Oceania. Submissions can take the form of articles, discussion forums, research notes, creative work, and reviews (of books, media, or exhibitions). Authors, artists, museums, and publishers interested in having their work reviewed and anyone interested in writing a review should contact the book reviews editor Emily Cornish at [emilycor@umich.edu](mailto:emilycor@umich.edu). Please send full-length submissions and an abstract to [pacificarts@ucsc.edu](mailto:pacificarts@ucsc.edu). Submissions should follow the Pacific Arts style guide. You can access the most recent issue [here](#).

### **Conference Call: European Society for Oceanists (ESfO), Corsica, 2-5 June 2022**

Conference theme: Material and Immaterial in Motion: Oceania's vast geography, seascape, and history are full of movement

The circulation of people and things in extended networks has long captured attention. From the distant past to our shared future, the Pacific was, is, and will be shaped by movements: movements of people and of things, of ideas and images, of power and ideology, of capital, of shifting geopolitical and

scientific interests, and of circulating discourses about change, development, and degradation. In the Pacific we know the material and the immaterial, as well as their relationship, through their motion.

The conference opens a forum for the discussion of Pacific dynamics, and for thinking about the relationships between material and immaterial, about how each appear and disappear, how they are invoked, created, mobilized, stabilized, and how their distinction even dissolves. Movements, both material and immaterial, and between these states, are central to the manifestation of spirituality, to politics, to the practices of science and the abstraction of data, to health and wellbeing, and in the construction of objects. They are there in the flows of migration, the engagement of Pacific men and women in arts, performances, and ritual. The specific articulations of their features, and thus their relation, are key to understanding social processes and forms. Taking material and immaterial, and motion, as key terms, one might also interrogate the philosophical, cultural, and conceptual distinctions between them in different places and times. Does it make sense, for example, to talk of material or immaterial as if they were separate aspects of a process, if so to whom, and in what context? What specific transformations of material and immaterial should we focus on, and why? These are questions that, in dialogue with Pacific peoples and realities, past and present, we can learn much from attending to. The conference seeks to advance the agenda of understanding the dynamic motion of Oceania.

Call for Panels:

We would like to invite scholars to submit panel proposals for this conference to the ESfO Board. The Board will consider these proposals during its October 2021 meeting. **The deadline for panel submissions is 30 September 2021.** For more information [click here](#).

## Researchers and New Projects

### Dr Heena Akbar

Dr Heena Akbar was born in Fiji and is a co-founder and current Executive Board member of Pasifika Women's Alliance (PWA). Dr Akbar is a research fellow with the Woolworths Centre for Childhood Nutrition Research (WCCNR), where she is leading the Feeding Our Mana- Food Security Project and the Pasifika Diabetes Wellness Program in partnership with Maori and Pasifika

communities in Queensland. Dr Akbar's research is shaping how indigenous knowledge is used in addressing the health and well-being of Maori & Pasifika families, particularly women with type 2 diabetes. Her research seeks to understand the social behavioural change and empowerment of Maori and Pasifika peoples living with chronic conditions, co-designing and co-developing solutions with the communities to reduce the impact of chronic disease burden. Heena's work integrates participatory strength-based approaches to address health inequalities and advocates for Pacific health research informing policy development that translates to better health outcomes for Maori and Pasifika communities in Australia and internationally.

### **Nabressa Murphy: call for interest and assistance**

Nabressa Murphy a PhD student at the University of Melbourne and my PhD is exploring youth (15-24 years) sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the context of climate-related disasters in the Pacific. The focus is on tropical cyclones (particularly through understanding the effects of, and response to, TC Harold) in Fiji, Vanuatu and Tonga. The qualitative research aims to explore current challenges to youth SRHR following disasters, and identify opportunities for meaningful engagement with youth to address or transform existing challenges. Murphy would like one of the components of the PhD to be participatory research with youth in one of the focus countries, to understand intersectional youth SRHR experiences following the 2020 tropical cyclones, and brainstorm potential opportunities to strengthen a focus on youth SRHR in future disasters. Murphy has been reaching out to organisations within the region, and am hoping to partner with an in-country organisation for the participatory research component.

While Nabressa is originally from the Maldives and have an understanding and experience of growing up in a small island country and community, COVID-19 has prevented me from going into the Pacific and building relationships with youth and community members in the region. Nabressa would love for this research to be useful and practical for Pacific stakeholders, and is looking to see if any members of the AAPS community would be interested in being part of an informal advisory group for the PhD, or might know people within their communities who would be interested. Nabressa would love to be able to discuss some of the practical and contextual details with people who have the knowledge, experiences and expertise within the Pacific, and can guide me to make sure the PhD project is acceptable, appropriate and useful to the

countries or the region. If you're interested you can email Nabreesa on:  
[nabreesa@student.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:nabreesa@student.unimelb.edu.au)

### **Fellowship success for Jaap Timmer**

Associate Professor Jaap Timmer from the Discipline of Anthropology, School of Social Sciences, Macquarie University will take up a prestigious 18-month fellowship at the Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) in October this year. Curiosity-driven and independent research for excellent scholars from all disciplines is the hallmark of AIAS.

During this fellowship, Jaap will study how new understandings of history emerge as people's futures change, with a special focus on societies in Solomon Islands and West Papua. The fellowship will result in a book and a number of articles on anthropology and historicity. Jaap will also organise a conference on perceptions of time and foster future collaborations between Aarhus and Macquarie Universities.

### **Member Publications**

Sophie Chao, 'Elon Musk's SpaceX project could put Papuan lands and futures at risk,' *TRT World*, 14 May 2021, <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/elon-musk-s-spacex-project-could-put-papuan-lands-and-futures-at-risk-46702/amp>.

Aidan Craney, 'Fault lines for unrest in the Pacific: Youth, livelihoods and land rights in driving and mitigating conflict', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 2021.

Roman Kingi, Wani Erick, Vili Nosa, Janine Paynter, Debra De Silva, 'Pasifika preferences for mental health support in Australia: focus group study', *The Journal of Pacific Research*, 21:7, June 2021, 373-379.

Victoria Stead, '[Precarity's reach: intersections of history, life, and labour in the Australian horticultural industry](#)', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 27(2), 2021 (open access).

Victoria Stead and Lucy Davies, '[Unfree Labour and Australia's Obscured Pacific Histories: Towards a New Genealogy of Modern Slavery](#)', *Journal of Australian Studies* (open access).

Thanks for much for reading this edition of the AAPS newsletter. You can find out more information about AAPS on our [website](#). If you're not yet a member you can sign up there too!

*AAPS is a non-profit, academic association dedicated to strengthening and advocating for Pacific Studies, and for Pacific community and culture in Australia.*

*We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owners of the lands where our members work and live, and pay our respects to elders past and present. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.*

*Visit our website at [pacificstudies.org.au](http://pacificstudies.org.au)*