



**International  
Science Council**

Regional Focal Point for  
Asia and the Pacific

HOSTED BY



**Australian  
Academy of  
Science**

# ISC MEETING OF PACIFIC SCHOLARS

It's time to raise the voice of science

24-25 October 2023 • Apia, Samoa



THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF  
**SAMOA**  
*Le Iunivesite Aoao o Samoa*



DOI: 10.24948/2023.15

December 2023

Writing and design: Global Access Partners (GAP)

Photography: FOS Media

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### **About the International Science Council (ISC)**

The International Science Council (ISC) is a non-governmental organization that convenes the scientific expertise and resources needed to lead on catalyzing, incubating and coordinating impactful international action. It is the largest organization of its kind to bring together natural and social sciences for the global public good, bringing together over 220 international scientific unions and associations as well as national and regional scientific organizations including academies and research councils.

Learn more: [council.science](https://council.science)

### **About the ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific**

Based at the Australian Academy of Science, the regional focal point convenes the scientific community in Asia and the Pacific and acts as a hub for ISC Members and activities in the region. It is working to ensure that regional needs and priorities are adequately represented in the ISC's global agenda, that regional voices are actively engaged in the governance and management of the ISC's work, and that the region benefits from the results of that work.

Learn more: [council.science/Asia-Pacific](https://council.science/Asia-Pacific)

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## FOREWORD



**Honourable Afioga Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa**  
Prime Minister of Samoa

*"One of the key strengths of academies is their ability to bring together experts from various disciplines. By fostering interdisciplinary approaches to synthesising evidence, academies can provide comprehensive insights into complex problems. This holistic perspective is crucial in addressing regional challenges in the Pacific effectively. Therefore, a Pacific Academy offers exciting possibilities to connect scholars from across the globe who share a common goal, that is: addressing global challenges through science and actionable knowledge.*

*The establishment of a Pacific Academy of Sciences and Humanities will be a global testament and a commitment by the Pacific region to promote sustainable developments through scholarly activities, providing interdisciplinary approaches to complex problems, offering scientific advice to governments as well as informing public policy for the benefit of communities, and fostering international collaboration among academies, so that we can create a better future for generations to come."*



**Sir Peter Gluckman**  
President, ISC  
ISC Fellow  
Head of Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures,  
University of Auckland

*"The International Science Council (ISC) is delighted and honoured to participate in the landmark decision and journey to establish the Pacific's very own science academy. This ambitious endeavour will bring together the states and territories of the region, researchers from diverse backgrounds and career stages, and a broad spectrum of disciplines, ranging from natural and social sciences to humanities and various other forms of knowledge.*

*In its mission to act as the global voice for science, the ISC is committed to supporting currently underrepresented and underserved regions, including the Pacific Island States. A Pacific academy of sciences is a long overdue endeavour - the region, its rich knowledge and outstanding talent must be visible and heard on the global stage. A regional Academy, transcending institutional and local affiliations, will be well placed to champion the collective wisdom of the Pacific scholarly community."*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 60 scholars from across the Pacific gathered in Apia, Samoa, on 24-25 October 2023, under the auspices of the International Science Council (ISC), to discuss the merits of creating a new regional Academy for the natural and social sciences, and the humanities. Participants included senior academics, distinguished scientists, industry consultants, university students and early and mid-career researchers from more than ten countries.

After two days of discussions and sharing of experiences from within and outside of the region, the Pacific scholars overwhelmingly supported a landmark decision to join forces to ‘raise a voice of science’ in the Pacific by setting up such an Academy, and mandated the ISC to continue facilitating efforts towards its establishment.

The creation of the Pacific Academy responds to the pressing need to empower Pacific scholars to be part of solutions in their region. The challenges facing Pacific Island nations – from the increasing impacts of climate change, resource extraction and environmental and marine degradation to social instability and geopolitical tensions – demand local research, co-creation of knowledge and advocacy that the Academy could facilitate.

“There is a time and a place for everything, and I think the time for an Academy in the region is now.” – Sir Collin Tukuitonga, Associate Dean, University of Auckland

The new institution would support local scientific practice, increase the international visibility of Pacific science and amplify the Pacific’s voice on the global stage.

Academies play a critical role in being the voice of scientists as a collective independent of the institutions that employ them and thus creating a clearer voice for science and scholarship.

Examples of the African Academy of Sciences and the Caribbean Academy of Sciences prove the value of multinational bodies that represent science across a region, encourage early and mid-career practitioners to aspire to leadership roles, appoint Fellows to raise their international profile, and support female advancement. The Pacific Academy could encourage collaboration between practitioners, institutions and nations in a similar way. It could promote the development and retention of regional talent, contribute to rebalancing the dominance of the Global North in science discourse and help build public trust in the scientific method.

Participants urged the future Academy to represent the Pacific’s cultural diversity as well as its broad range of natural and social disciplines, and encourage science education in every form. The new body should complement the work of existing scientific, academic and diplomatic bodies and be ethical, transparent and inclusive, embracing the ‘Pacific Way’ of open dialogue, mutual respect and close cooperation.

Participants endorsed the creation of an Establishment Committee to proceed with necessary practical arrangements. The Co-Chairs of the Committee, Sir Collin Tukuitonga and Prof Teatulohi (Lohi) Matainaho, were tasked to recommend a balanced membership, in consultation with the ISC, striving for geographic, disciplinary, gender and age diversity.

“A Pacific Academy would be game changing for the region and for our young people.” – Teatulohi (Lohi) Matainaho, Vice-Chancellor, Pacific Adventist University Papua New Guinea

The news about the Pacific Academy was picked up enthusiastically on social platforms and by traditional media all across the region, including RNZ, Cosmos Magazine, Samoa Observer, Island Business, SCOOP, The Australian Academy of Science, Live News NZ, 531 Live radio, Pacific Media Network, Open Forum, The National Tribune, and Mirage News, among others.

The meeting was facilitated by the ISC and its Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific, in partnership with the National University of Samoa and with financial support from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and Richard Lounsbery Foundation.



## MODERATORS

**Sir Collin Tukuitonga**

Associate Dean, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences  
University of Auckland

**Teatulohi (Lohi) Matainaho**

Vice-Chancellor  
Pacific Adventist University Papua New Guinea

**Peseta Su'a Desmond Mene Lee Hang**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
National University of Samoa

## PRESENTERS AND PANELLISTS

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Chief Executive Officer  
Ministry of Education and Culture,  
Samoa

**Anna-Maria Arabia**

Chief Executive  
Australian Academy of Science

**Apisalome Movono**

Senior Lecturer, Development  
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Senior Researcher  
Ministry of Natural Resources  
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Head of the School of Information  
Technology, Engineering,  
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Acting Dean and Professor of  
Environmental Science,  
Head of Environmental Sciences  
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Senior Research Fellow  
Te Puna Vai Mārama,  
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**Ourania (Rania) Kosti**

Executive Director, InterAcademy Partnership, Director, Board on International Scientific Organizations, US National Academies

**Pal Ahluwalia**

Vice-Chancellor and President  
USP

**Patila Malua Aмосa**

Vice-Chancellor and President  
National University of Samoa

**Petra Lundgren**

Director, ISC Regional Focal Point  
for Asia and the Pacific

**Roger Ridley**

Director of Expert Advice and  
Practice, Royal Society  
Te Apārangi New Zealand

**Sir Peter Gluckman**

President, ISC, ISC Fellow,  
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**Sam Manuela**

Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology,  
University of Auckland

**Steven Ratuva**

Pacific Pro-Vice Chancellor,  
Director of Macmillan Brown Centre for  
Pacific Studies; Distinguished Professor,  
University of Canterbury

**Sushil Kumar**

Professor of Physics,  
Director of Research, USP

**Luamanuvao Dame Winnie**

Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Pasifika)  
Victoria University of Wellington

**Teorae Kabure**

Director, Maritime Academy,  
Solomon Islands National University

**Lau Dr Viliamu Iese**

Associate Director, Victoria Drought  
Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub;  
Senior Research Fellow, Climate and  
Drought Studies, School of Agriculture,  
Food and Ecosystem Sciences,  
University of Melbourne

**Vomaranda Joy Botleng**

Consultant, Janessa's Research  
and Consultancy Services

The full participant list and programme are available at  
[council.science/events/isc-meeting-of-pacific-scholars/](https://council.science/events/isc-meeting-of-pacific-scholars/)



# BACKGROUND

## **The role of academies**

Scholarly academies play a critical role in supporting scholarly activity, national development, and curating knowledge. As the world faces multiple challenges reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals and the SAMOA Pathway,<sup>1</sup> the importance of science and actionable knowledge in addressing these challenges is increasingly recognized.

The scholarly ecosystem is complex, involving knowledge generators (primarily universities and research institutes), knowledge synthesizers (primarily universities and academies) and knowledge brokers (academies and advisory mechanisms). In many countries, academies offer a vital interdisciplinary mechanism to provide evidence-based advice to publics and the policy community.

## **A Pacific Academy**

Pacific Island states and territories and other Small Island Development States (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable to climate-related hazards, but their involvement in scientific research remains limited due to various historical and structural factors. The region lacks a scholarly academy of its own to support science and science practitioners and promote an evidence-based Pacific voice in international fora.

The inclusion of scholars from the Global South into knowledge production not only promotes diversity and justice but generates significant pragmatic benefits. Local scientists and indigenous communities have unique insights and experiences that can complement Western epistemologies to offer a holistic view of current challenges and generate actionable, appropriate solutions. Increased recognition will also help retain local scholars within the Pacific region and potentially attracting diaspora researchers to return.

The proposed Pacific Academy will unite Pacific scholars, foster collaboration within the community and outside, and promote research on and from the region to feature underrepresented but needed voices from the region. It will increase the visibility of science in the Pacific and ensure greater indigenous natural and social scientific input into regional issues. It will facilitate cooperation among islands and globally, enabling direct expert-to-expert engagement, and help agencies and scientists elsewhere identify key stakeholders in the Pacific. The independent nature of the Academy will reduce the risk of science being manipulated for political or geostrategic purposes in the region.

The establishment of the Academy will be a major step forward in the development of the autonomy of the Pacific, demonstrating it is building human capacity to evaluate and resolve the issues it sees as most urgent and relevant. The formation of an affiliated Young Pacific Academy was seen as being particularly important, as it would offer younger scholars the opportunity to have globally relevant careers at home in the Pacific.

Target audience comprises Pacific scholars from all Pacific countries and territories (including the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, the French Territories of New Caledonia and Tahiti, the American Territories Guam and American Samoa), as well as those scholars who reside abroad.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/sites/www.un.org.ohrlls/files/samoa-pathway-overview.pdf>

## MEETING INTENT

The meeting in Apia was facilitated by the ISC, under the guidance of Pacific scholars, to solicit response and input to the Pacific Academy among a larger group of regional scholars. The participants were asked to share their expectations, reservations, vision and hopes for a future Academy and to collaborate to co-design its scope, remit and activities.

Academies give science a louder and more authoritative voice than individuals or universities can raise alone, as they stand independent from government, academic and commercial interests.



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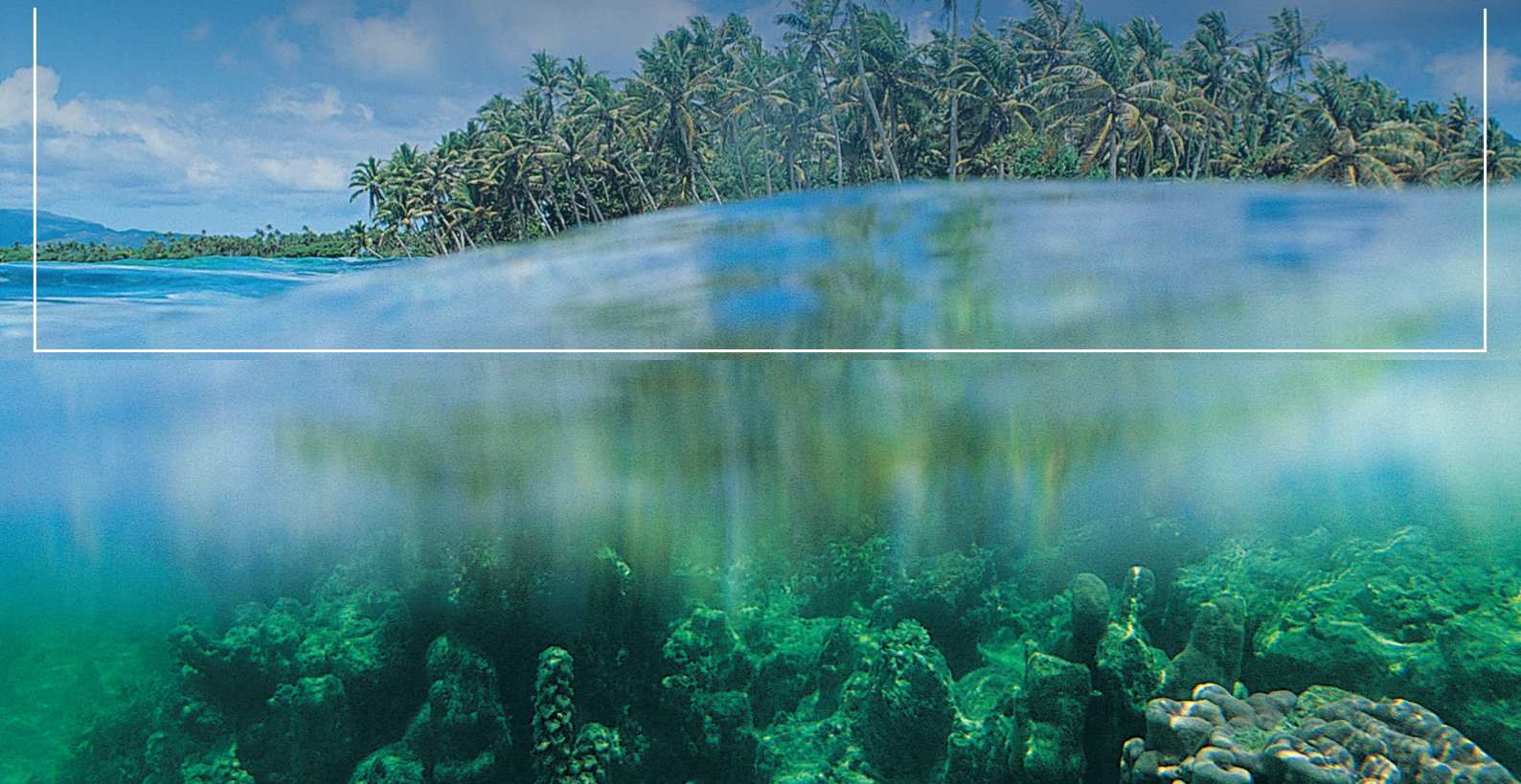
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**Australian  
Academy of  
Science**

# IT'S TIME TO RAISE THE VOICE OF SCIENCE



# PROCEEDINGS

## Session One – The role of science academies

### Chair:

- *Sir Peter Gluckman, President, ISC*

### Speakers:

- *Felix Dapare Dakora, Immediate Past President, African Academy of Sciences (virtual address)*
- *Anna-Maria Arabia, Chief Executive, Australian Academy of Science*
- *Ourania (Rania) Kostis, Director, Board on International Scientific Organizations, US National Academies*
- *Karoline Afamasaga-Fuata'i, Professor of Mathematics and Mathematics Education, National University of Samoa*

The opening session highlighted the significant role played by national and regional science academies around the world. The Pacific is the only global region to lack this type of institution, although the region's far-flung geography, small-scale economies and cultural diversity leave it particularly vulnerable to a range of challenges, which science can help address. Science academies advise policy on climate change, environmental degradation, food insecurity, economic vulnerability and geostrategic competition elsewhere in the world. A permanent Pacific Academy will offer an invaluable platform for the international collaboration and knowledge sharing required to deliver sustainable collective solutions.

Academies unite scholars from diverse disciplines, and interdisciplinary approaches can generate fresh insights to address overwhelming challenges more effectively. Science academies can also build human capacity, offering aspiring young scientists the mentorship, career development, research funding and networking opportunities they need to pursue their studies in their home nations.

Academies give science a louder and more authoritative voice than individuals or universities can raise alone, as they stand independent from government, academic and commercial interests. The links and commonalities between academies allow them to empower collaboration on a global scale.

The African Academy of Sciences, for example, is an Africa-led, Africa-centred and Africa-specific Pan-African organization that invests in scientific excellence, leadership and innovation across that continent, and could serve as a model for the Pacific Academy. Australia's Academy has been convening scholars to deliver an independent, authoritative voice for science for 70 years, and is also striving to increase the representation of women and Indigenous Australians. The US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine also honour the expertise and experience of its members and uses their collective knowledge to advise government in credible ways.

The ISC represents over 220 natural, social and medical science academies, unions and organizations. It convenes and catalyses scientific expertise generated by its member organizations and has established itself as an effective voice for science in the realms of policy-making, international relations, public trust and interdisciplinary collaboration. It also stimulates and supports international scientific research and scholarship and defends its free and responsible practice.

## Session Two – Challenges of undertaking science in the Pacific and SIDS at large

### Chair:

- *Muagututia Ioana Chan Mow, Professor of Computing and Computing Education, National University of Samoa*

### Speakers:

- *Chalapan Kaluwin, Acting Dean and Professor of Environmental Science, Head of Environmental Sciences and Geography Discipline, University of Papua New Guinea*
- *Pal Ahluwalia, Vice-Chancellor and President, USP*
- *Teorae Kabure, Director, Maritime Academy, Solomon Islands National University*

Session two explored the common challenges to practising science in the Pacific Islands. The region's relatively small population is culturally diverse and geographically scattered, and its tertiary institutions have fewer resources than their international peers. Internal promotion is limited by several factors, increasing the reliance on overseas teaching expertise. The Pacific also lacks female PhD students compared to other regions, with many scholarship opportunities remaining unfulfilled. The Pacific Academy could encourage a wider range of criteria for academic merit, as well as promoting regional research to international journals.

A lack of public investment and student income also hinders progress, and Pacific universities either focus on teaching or remain dependent on Australian, New Zealand and American funding for research. Promising domestic candidates often leave the Pacific for Australia or other nations, but building research partnerships with foreign institutions could reduce this 'brain drain.'



An analysis of political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors facing the new body should be considered. The Academy will also need to overcome the limited role ascribed to the university sector by national governments, which see them as factories for work-ready graduates, rather than research and advisory organizations that should ‘inquire, inform and influence’. More respect, as well as more funding, is required to ensure the academic sector can balance the commercial ambitions and lobbying power of foreign companies and governments with environmental data, community testimony and legal expertise.

While universities value research for its own sake, others may question its practical purpose. The Pacific Academy should harness indigenous expertise and experience and use workplace attachments and mentoring to share that knowledge outside the academic realm. Scientists have sometimes viewed local people and resources as mere sources of data, so the Academy could embrace a more participatory approach to secure community support for local research projects. The Academy could also encourage more school students to study science through media campaigns, positive role models and educational proposals.

## The Pacific Academy should harness indigenous expertise and experience and use workplace attachments and mentoring to share that knowledge outside the academic realm.

While the internal academic issues of research infrastructure, human resources, gender equality, academic appointments and research funding hamper Pacific science, these challenges increase the importance of a regional representative body. The new Academy could integrate local communities’ knowledge into research and promote the importance of science to government as well as the public.

### Scientific Presentations

#### *Speakers:*

- *Salote Nasalo, Research Student, Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development, USP*
- *Dr Sam Manuela, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, University of Auckland*
- *Bernadette Amosa, Senior Researcher, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Samoa*

After lunch, participants welcomed several scientific presentations by early and mid-career researchers. Salote Nasalo spoke about her findings on the survival of saplings in mangrove rehabilitation schemes in Fiji. Dr Sam Manuela reported on his comprehensive survey of mental health and wellbeing in the Cook Islands and his mission to reconceptualise them in Pacific cultural terms. Bernadette Amosa discussed the impact of climate change on soil health in Samoa, based on samples from ridge to reef along the Vaisigano River.

## Session Three – ISC and Asia-Pacific

### Speakers:

- *Petra Lundgren, Director, ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific*
- *Anna-Maria Arabia, Chief Executive, Australian Academy of Science*
- *Salote Austin, Oceania Programme Manager, ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific, Royal Society Te Apārangi New Zealand*

This session outlined the work of the ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific to strengthen the voice of regional scientists in global scientific discourse. The Regional Focal Point seeks to address regional needs and priorities by championing regional knowledge generation, human capacity building and science communication and translation.

The ISC has another Regional Focal Point for Latin America and the Caribbean, and an agreement with Future Africa to co-design the ISC's presence on the continent.

Many scientists are experts in their field of research but are not necessarily best placed on how to communicate science to a general audience. However, presenting evidence-based knowledge in accessible ways is a vital weapon in the war against misinformation and should be elevated as an area of expertise in its own right. The ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific works to emphasize the importance of communication as well as knowledge generation. Science must deliver public benefits to maintain popular support and official funding, and inspire the next generation of researchers to enter the field.

## Session Four – Co-designing a Pacific Academy

### Chair:

- *Tuifuisa'a Patila Malua Amosa, Vice-Chancellor and President, National University of Samoa*

### Speakers:

- *Jemaima Tiatia-Siau, Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific, University of Auckland*
- *Roger Ridley, Director, Expert Advice and Practice, Royal Society Te Apārangi New Zealand*
- *Sir Peter Gluckman, President, ISC*

Opening the second day of the meeting, Session Four explored the practical aspects of setting up a science Academy, including its name, scope, membership, financing and operations. Participants acknowledged that co-designing the Academy will be a complex, collaborative and iterative task, beginning with a clear mission statement. A thorough needs assessment should analyze the region's science requirements, strengths, cultures and existing infrastructure, and map its commonalities and diversities to inform the Academy's planning, structure and operations to ensure it has maximum impact.

An Establishment Committee should forge links with local communicators and influencers, education providers, early and mid-career researchers, post-doctoral fellows, PhD candidates, government officials and potential students to harness their input and views, which could take the form of a series of collaborative workshops.

Regional issues, such as data sovereignty and commercial rights, as well as ethical goals, such as diversity and inclusion, should shape a guiding set of design principles. The Pacific Academy should represent the region's rich cultural and linguistic heritage as well as a broad range of disciplines, and leverage digital connectivity to empower virtual participation. The Academy should protect its physical and digital infrastructure from risk and incursion and define the proper role of artificial intelligence in research, data analysis and content creation to ensure it protects local knowledge systems.

A stable and sustainable financial model will ensure a pipeline of students, researchers, administrators and project managers can serve the Pacific Academy into the future, reducing rather than exacerbating, the shortage of science skills in the region. The Academy can raise the profile of science in the Global South by encouraging the publication and dissemination of papers by local researchers, as well as promoting science at a local scale. A robust evaluation system to gauge the Pacific Academy's effectiveness and guide improvement should hold it to account.

The multidisciplinary Royal Society of New Zealand Te Apārangi offers a point of comparison to the proposed Academy, not least in having a range of membership classes. It also offers advice to government and information to the public through workshops about science issues, develops detailed submissions to public inquiries, promotes innovations and ideas on social media, and works with its peers in Australia and other nations.

The Pacific Academy's co-design process will acknowledge that scientific organizations around the world have common features but also embed the history and culture of the Pacific into a unique offering.

The Academy can raise the profile of science in the Global South by encouraging the publication and dissemination of papers by local researchers, as well as promoting science at a local scale.

## Session Five – Risk and mitigation strategies

### Chair:

- *Lau Dr Viliamu Iese, Associate Director, Victoria Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub; Senior Research Fellow, Climate and Drought Studies, School of Agriculture, Food and Ecosystem Sciences, University of Melbourne*

### Speakers:

- *Vomaranda Joy Botleng, Consultant, Janessa's Research and Consultancy Services*
- *Apisalome Movono, Senior Lecturer in Development Studies, Massey University*
- *Eric Katovai, Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic and Dean/Associate Professor, Solomon Islands National University*
- *Steven Ratuva, Pacific Pro-Vice Chancellor, Director of the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, Distinguished Professor, University of Canterbury*

This session discussed potential risks and mitigation strategies for the proposed Academy. The new institution faces more complexities and uncertainties than the academies in single nations, as the Pacific is a geographically vast and culturally diverse region. The Academy must therefore be multidisciplinary, as many of these issues require experts in natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities to understand. The Pacific's disparities in economic development, employment opportunities and income distribution may increase the Academy's workload, while limiting its funds to undertake its chosen tasks.

The Academy will need to manage its inevitably limited financial resources to fulfil its mission and educational objectives over the long term. It should aim to secure reliable funding from the start, but a dependence on external funding is risky, as these may diminish over time or demand undue influence. Economic downturns, for example, could reduce the willingness and ability of donors to contribute, while inflation could increase the Academy's running costs and diminish its purchasing power. While the ISC has pledged initial support, a permanent future for the Pacific Academy will depend on developing a robust and independent range of revenue and funding sources.

Natural disasters could impact the Academy, and it must also protect itself in the digital realm, but keeping up with fast-developing technology might also strain the Academy's budget. In addition to grants, donations and subsidies, the Academy should develop mutually beneficial partnerships with businesses and organizations. Fostering an alumni network will secure contacts and donations, while building an endowment fund would offer a stable, independent source of long-term revenue to insulate it from sudden economic downturns and unforeseen expenses.

The danger of replicating the current work and past mistakes of similar bodies must be acknowledged, as several attempts to collaborate across national boundaries in the Pacific have failed in the past. The creation of a pan-Pacific body might also reduce the voice of Pacific researchers and scientists as representatives of their respective institutions and countries. This has proved a problem in the Pacific Islands Forum itself, with several Micronesian countries leaving the table when they felt their views were sidelined or ignored.



The Pacific Academy should therefore ensure every country is an equal partner, with broad criteria for membership guaranteeing that scholars of all types can join in several ways. It needs to also bridge and connect modern science with traditional frames of understanding to become an empowering indigenous platform that gives voice and power to Pacific people, rather than appear as another colonial construct.

## The Pacific Academy should ensure every country is an equal partner, with broad criteria for membership guaranteeing that scholars of all types can join in several ways.

As part of its drive to amalgamate ethnosciences with Western approaches, the Academy should not lionize ‘helicopter scientists’ who venture into the field for short periods. Instead, it should encourage the active participation of local researchers in the community, and respect and protect the value of indigenous knowledge and practices. Clear guidelines for intellectual property rights and benefit-sharing agreements will ensure original knowledge holders receive due recognition and reward.

The Academy’s governing body needs to enforce the ethical guidelines they draft to ensure all research meets internationally recognized standards. It could also train researchers to reinforce their appreciation of ethical conduct and cultural sensitivity. The Academy should justify its creation by offering value to existing stakeholders as well as creating new opportunities. It should engage, but not become dominated by, the diaspora, as the circulation of ideas and cultural connections generated in this way should enrich, rather than fragment, science in the region.

### Session Six – Group discussion and feedback

*Chair:*

- *Bibhya Sharma, Head of the School of Information Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Physics, USP*

*Speakers:*

- *Rapporteurs from each group*

In breakout sessions, participant groups considered the risks and challenges the new body might face and the guiding principles it should embody to sustain it. They supported **the concept of the Pacific Academy** to promote Pacific research, indigenous knowledge and scientific excellence for the public good. It should become a trusted, independent and authoritative scientific advisor to the Pacific Islands Forum, national governments, regional universities and other institutions and decision-making bodies.

The Academy should facilitate research work in the Pacific, increase the visibility of Pacific scientists in the international scientific community and recognize the value of practitioners by their contribution to the community, as well as publications and citations. It should advance and promote excellence in Pacific research, but its charter should also acknowledge that traditional Pacific knowledge, languages, cultures and values can complement and enrich Western approaches. It should promote excellence and innovation in science of all kinds and therefore potentially include non-university practitioners.

Participants **expected** the Academy to maintain its independence, relevance, convening power and representation of the Pacific’s cultural diversity. The new body should inform policy and best practice in government, undertake science communication and engagement with communities, and build capacity in the local scientific community to facilitate career and leadership succession planning.

The Academy’s **guiding principles** should emphasise collaboration, diversity and inclusion to empower all concerned. The new body should be transparent in its processes and embrace the respectful, cooperative ‘Pacific Way’ in terms of governance. It should always advocate for science, while respecting traditional and intergenerational knowledge, and its consideration of the role of the transnationals should recognize that Pacific people ‘always come back.’

The Academy can offer a new platform for unity and cohesion in a vast and culturally diverse region and help its members look for common ground. It could become a think tank for the Pacific and ensure the international community hears its evidence and heeds innovative ideas.

Participants agreed that the Academy’s governing body must maintain financial stability to ensure the Academy can prosper and serve future generations. While seeking the attention of international organizations, the Academy should also build science awareness in local communities. It should collaborate with its peers around the world and ensure its sustainability through high-quality research, inclusivity, transparency and strong governance.

The Academy could publish its own scientific journal to overcome the difficulty of publishing Pacific science in international journals dominated by a handful of large corporations. It should promote indigenous voices in regional institutions, as well as Pacific voices on the world stage, and offer a pipeline to build human skills and capacity.



The Academy should encourage the application of scientific and academic knowledge for practical gains for the community and recognize the value of science practised outside the universities by non-professionals. It should fight institutional racism and ageism by offering a more inclusive alternative and, by acknowledging traditional knowledge, protect Pacific intellectual capital. It should steadfastly resist political interference to maintain its independence and ensure it complements, rather than competes, with existing institutions in its work.

There will be many **challenges** to overcome, from pooling together enough committed people and sufficient funding to launch it, through building regional awareness and credibility, to gaining international recognition and respect. The Academy's challenges include securing adequate and sustainable funding and managing potential shortages of technical and human capacity. Pursuing multiple avenues of communication could be an issue, and it will need strong strategies for conflict resolution. Gaining political support and achieving financial equilibrium while building consensus and maintaining independence will require patient communication and strong and ethical leadership.

The Academy should value the work of different fields, as all of them will play a key role in shaping the region's future and offer pathways for young practitioners. Internal transparency and independence from non-Pacific institutions and national governments are important, as the Academy should be able to lobby on behalf of the wider community as well as academic interests.

## The Academy can offer a new platform for unity and cohesion in a vast and culturally diverse region and help its members look for common ground.

An **Establishment Committee** should clarify the Academy's leadership structure and legal responsibilities to ensure its leaders manage diverse stakeholder expectations and relationships with national governments. It should embrace a governance system that guarantees proper representation for the whole Pacific. It should enrich research in the region and raise the Pacific voice on the international stage to inspire young researchers for the future.

The Academy needs to be transparent and accountable in its activities, ethical in the research it undertakes or underwrites, and thoughtful in the partnerships it seeks with others. Its designers should consider what academic 'merit' and 'impact' mean in the modern Pacific context, and have structured mentorship programmes to help young people achieve their potential before their careers take flight. The Academy should support its staff's wellbeing in their workplace as well as advocating on behalf of others. However modest its beginnings, the Academy can create an indispensable role for itself by convening Pacific scholars and collating, synthesizing and communicating their research to maximize its impact on decision-makers at every level. It must then evolve to sustain its relevance and ensure its membership reflects the fast-changing Pacific region.

## Session Seven – Next steps

### Chair:

- *Peseta Su'a Dr Desmond Mene Lee Hang, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, National University of Samoa*

### Speakers:

- *Merita Tuari'i, Senior Research Fellow, Te Puna Vai Mārama*
- *Teatulohi Matainaho, Vice-Chancellor, Pacific Adventist University Papua New Guinea*
- *Sushil Kumar, Professor of Physics, Director of Research, USP*
- *Luamanuvao Dame Winnie, Former member of the New Zealand parliament, Assistant VC (Pasifika) at Victoria University of Wellington*

The final session summarized and synthesized the discussions over the two days and charted a way forward through concrete next steps and actions.

Led by Sir Collin Tukuitonga, Prof Teatulohi Matainaho, the Establishment Committee will discuss the Academy's location, registration, structure, ethical framework and proposed activities. The Committee will include representatives from Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia, including young scholars, and bring in legal and other advice as required. It will draft the Academy's terms of reference, agree and propose a constitution to put forward, and reach out to other regional and international bodies. It will report on its initial progress to meeting participants via email before the end of 2023.

Academies in the United States, New Zealand, and Australia have already offered mentorship and partnerships to help the new Academy.

The ISC will seek funds and other support for the work of the Establishment Committee and the future Academy.



# SUMMARY OF BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

The creation of a multidisciplinary Pacific Science Academy would allow the knowledge of Pacific scholars to be gathered and used to inform decision-making across the region and the world. In the words of Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa, *“The establishment of a Pacific Academy of Sciences and Humanities will be a global testament and a commitment by the Pacific region to promote sustainable development through scholarly activities providing interdisciplinary approaches to complex problems, offering scientific advice to governments as well as informing public policy for the benefit of our communities.”*

Science is the key to improving the livelihoods of Pacific communities and realizing the potential of the Pacific islands, as well as being valuable for its own sake. The Pacific Academy could retain talent, inform regional policy and decolonize research in the Pacific's 'large ocean states' by advancing the practice and visibility of science and traditional knowledge across the region. It could improve international networking, align science with the needs and aspirations of Pacific communities and advise national governments to improve policy. It could then advance the Blue Pacific agenda, and with the help of the ISC and other stakeholders, collaborate towards Blue Pacific goals with a coalition of other groups and universities.

A Pacific Academy of Sciences will encourage the cooperation and innovation required to secure a sustainable and inclusive future for all the region's residents. Pacific Island states are strong when united, and the Academy will offer another avenue for the 'Pacific Way'. In partnership with existing institutions in the region, the Academy can offer opportunities for collaboration, research and peer support which will boost science in the region. It must emphasize the importance of hospitality, respect, unity and inclusivity, and it will be the role of the Establishment Committee to create a strong framework to put these principles into operation.

## OUTCOME

After two days of discussions, the Pacific scholars overwhelmingly agreed to develop a voice for science in the Pacific by establishing a multidisciplinary Pacific Academy encompassing the humanities as well as natural and social sciences. This independent body will give scientists, researchers and academics in the Pacific a respected collective forum to discuss and develop ideas and offer solutions to the pressing challenges facing the region, including the existential threats from the climate crisis.

Shaped by its Establishment Committee and ongoing stakeholder consultations, the Pacific Academy will endeavour to become a trusted and authoritative source of impartial advice to national governments, regional organizations and international bodies. It will empower cooperation to build academic and scientific capacity, conduct Pacific-led research and protect local communities and traditional knowledge from external exploitation.

Although based on similar institutions elsewhere, the Pacific Academy will pursue its own 'Pacific Way' and integrate indigenous knowledge to tackle regional priorities and benefit the region's diverse cultures and communities.



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