

Issue 7

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# Te Aka Taurira

## Inside:

Addressing the digital divide  
The Pacific voice in healthcare  
Six60 scholarship recipients announced

# “It’s honestly like a dream come true.”

**The Otago Chronicles** > Max Balloch

A new podcast series hosted by University of Otago Marine Science and Science Communication student Max Balloch promises to provide a “glimpse into a world of wonder, excitement and knowledge”.

Each episode of The Otago Chronicles is themed around a different area of scientific study – from volcanoes to fungi – and contains deep dive interviews with academic staff members who take the listener with them on a journey through our complex world.

“To me, this podcast is the epitome of that love of learning. I think people of all different walks of life will be interested in The Otago Chronicles,” says Max. “On one episode we explore the world of volcanoes. Another, the world of whales.”

While the podcast is focussed at first on academics in the Division of Sciences, the team plan on expanding into other areas within the University.

After the success of his podcast Dear Nature which launched earlier this year, Max was approached and asked if he would join with the Communications team for this project.

Now as the podcast launches, Max is excited for the University community to discover some of the topics he has been learning about on this journey.

For the Science Communication student, the project fits into his ultimate career-goals.

“This is honestly like a dream come true. I get to work with really awesome people and hear their stories and see that passion in them when they explain their work. It is a passion I hope I can transfer to the listener.”

Episode two is [now streaming](#).



## September News

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*Cover image: Peace and Conflict studies student Jess Clarke in Chicago the Musical*

### In other news:



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# Out of winter and onto the beach

Stepping out of winter and onto Brazilian sands will be a stark contrast to what one Otago volleyball duo has been used to in training

Master of Sport Science graduate Will White and Law and Commerce student Eric Stratton are packing their bags and heading to South America after training in Dunedin for a major international tournament.

The pair will represent New Zealand at the FISU World University Beach Volleyball Championship in September this year.

Will, who since completing his studies works as a research assistant at the University, says the event is an “exciting opportunity”.

“We head to Los Angeles first and play a few events on the California Beach Tour and get some training in with the top teams there.”

The main event following is the Brazil champs which will take place in Maceio and features teams from around the world. Will and Eric were selected for the championship after a busy New Zealand tour over the summer months. The two joined forces after meeting at University but also both happen to hail from Tauranga, Eric says.

“We both played indoor volleyball in Tauranga before moving to Dunedin. We kind of knew of each other from home but Will ended up being my RA in first year. He asked then if I wanted to join the indoor club at Uni.”

The boys are now a solid team, stepping out onto international soil together.

While it's mostly an exciting adventure ahead, the duo is being cautious to stay well on their travels. Unlike many team sports, Volleyball doesn't have subs waiting on stand-by – making a need to avoid COVID-19 or injury paramount in order to compete.



“Most of the teams at that event are already playing professionally. It will be exciting to see how we match up with those teams.”

## “I never thought I'd be published before I even have my degree.”



The study was the first of its kind in terms of evaluating approach distances of drones to lizards.

“This now gives us a potential method for studying lizards that cannot be accessed by humans on foot. The goal is for it to help in future conservation efforts for taonga species that would otherwise be difficult to monitor for conservation purposes.

“What's also very cool is that the work has just been published in a journal called Drones as part of the Special Issue on Drones for Biodiversity Conservation.”

For Harriet Wills the outcome of her summer studentship is a dream come true.

The Bachelor of Science (Ecology) student spent last summer investigating the use of drones in alpine lizard fieldwork alongside Dr Jo Monks and Carey Knox. Harriet's involvement in the project was thanks to the support of the Te Ngaru Paewhenua (Landward Wave) Scholarship.

Her work has since been published in *Drones* as part of the Special Issue Drones for Biodiversity Conservation.

As part of the project she learned to fly a drone, was helicoptered to remote areas of Fiordland and spent her time working with endemic lizards around Central Otago and Fiordland. This experience “increased my love for Aotearoa's biodiversity and the world of ecology and conservation,” she says.

# PICS OF THE MONTH



Only good vibes at the August graduation ceremonies



The graduation procession was full of excited graduands, their friends and whānau



The magnolia tree back in bloom - the first signs of spring



Mullets for Mental Health recently held at Locals

**Have an image to show off?**

Send it to:  
[communications@otago.ac.nz](mailto:communications@otago.ac.nz)



## Addressing the digital divide

Second year Bachelor of Applied Science student Owyn Aitken (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Tainui, Ngāti Māhanga) is perhaps one of Otago's most involved contributors within the technology space right now.

The 19-year-old student is majoring in Data Science, minoring in Public Health and Finance. All this and co-founding Remojo Technologies, a social enterprise which refurbishes second-hand laptops for those in need.

Owyn attended Aotea College in Porirua where he first began "messing around with computers" with his best friend and would be co-founder of Remojo Tech, Hadi Daoud. The venture began under the Young Enterprise scheme established in secondary schools and providing mentorships, access to networks and funding.

"Remojo Tech was established as part of the scheme and a love for technology. We witnessed the need for devices among our peers, before realizing the potential scale of the issue."

Cost effectively addressing the issue meant turning to broken computers and laptops, pulling them apart and troubleshooting the problems. It wasn't long before the deemed broken devices were given second lives.

"After messing around with the devices, we began facilitating workshops around the country. Getting groups such as schools to pull computers apart, teaching them how to fix computers and get them up and running again.

"Our aim is to put devices in the hands of students while also addressing the digital divide. There is huge inaccessibility to devices in Māori and Pacifica communities. There's also a stigma around digital literacy and digital skills – people coming in thinking it's more difficult than it is. Some kids have never used a laptop before in their life but we notice they excel in our workshops."

Through the establishment and success of Remojo Tech, Owyn and Remojo Tech partnered with Recycle a Device (RAD), an Aotearoa initiative which matches those who need a laptop with one that is

donated and refurbished.

RAD was established in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown where Owyn and Hadi saw the digital inequity within their school. The need for a device has always been there, computers are becoming a necessity and make a huge difference in people's lives.

"During COVID, students were expected to have access to the internet to continue their learning, and many kids could not do that. When lockdown hit there were some students who did not have access to a device for months which led them to fall behind, hence the idea came about to refurbish laptops and give them out to students in need.

"There are many good quality devices that are no longer needed in our communities. Spark New Zealand have been a major contributor of laptops, donating them after around three years of use. The Ministry of Education are also coming onboard.

"The kaupapa is very rewarding. From resourcing a single mother with a device allowing her to apply for jobs to getting students to attend school because technology is a passion of theirs.

"Working with kura kaupapa like Te Wharekura O Mauao, Pacifica community groups and churches has been special especially when you see the outcomes."

The ongoing demand for workshops and devices around the country continues to be the biggest challenge faced by Owyn and RAD.

"We are doing our best to train up rangatahi across the country to be able to deliver the workshops and help with repairs to meet demand. Other challenges include sourcing funding and resources to sustain this kaupapa, we are always grateful for support," he said.

"We are also working toward being able to deliver the kaupapa in full Te Reo Māori across the country, which is really exciting."

# STUDY TIPS FOR NEWBIES

September exam tip

Holistic planning

Exams can be stressful, but it's completely possible to manage the stress brought on by exams if you use different strategies.

**Manage your stress** - Break your study down into manageable chunks and start working through it at the rate you planned.

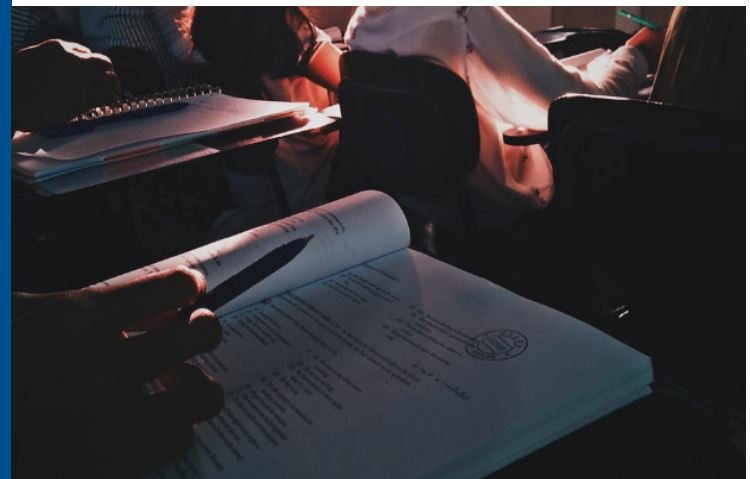
**Take the pressure off** - Deal with pressure and expectations by realistically assessing how you think you'll go and working to do the best you can.

**Do it together** - There are other people studying for the same exam, and they probably don't like having to lock themselves away to study any more than you do.

**Go easy on the substances** - Any substance you think will help you study is actually a short-term fix that'll probably make you feel much worse and cause you to underperform later.

**Get enough sleep, eat good food and keep moving** - Make sure you're stopping to eat regular meals and try to set aside 30 minutes a day to do some exercise, even if it's just going for a walk.

Check out more tips from student health on looking after yourself in the lead up to exams.



## Need Support?

Studying, especially in the lead-up to exams, can be challenging and it is important to look after yourself. The University offers a range of student support services which can help you.



## Rowing with a side of Italian gelato

Otago University Rowing Club members Kobe Miller and Sally Wylaars were two of a handful of students who travelled to Italy represent Aotearoa New Zealand at the Under23s World Championships.

Spending five weeks in Italy training with their respective teams and waiting for other Kiwi rowers to join them from the United States was quite the experience after two years of cancelled international competitions, says Sally.

"Having a longer campaign helped us to climatise," she laughs. "The temperature was in the thirties each day. It was a bit of a struggle to adapt to the heat, we were drinking about three litres of water per training session."

While competing overseas, both students were also completing their exams and making a start on semester 2 studies.

Otago University Rowing Club Manager Glen Sinclair says while the workload for young athletes is impressive, there is no shortage of quality training and support.

"We are the only winter high performance squad outside of Rowing New Zealand, which is a joint venture between them and the University. It gives us access to the high-performance gym used by the Highlanders and we work with human nutrition, the physio and PE schools."

It's a year-round training for many who go from Kiwi summer to European summer. For Kobe and Sally, this is part of the plan towards achieving their goal of returning to the World Championships in 2023.



**“I don’t think I’ve processed it yet. It’s an amazing opportunity for me to go all out with my music.”**

Four musically talented University of Otago students have been selected as the recipients of the Six60 Scholarships for 2023.

Hamish Waddell, Tomuri Spicer, Gabrielle (Gabi) Summerfield and Samuel Meikle will live together and get the chance to work with one of New Zealand’s most successful bands.

The scholarship was launched last year after Six60 purchased their iconic Castle Street property in 2021.

The scholarships include a \$10,000 rent rebate, as well as mentoring from the band and access to the University’s recording studios.

Tomuri says he is looking forward to getting to know his new flatmates and “learning their stories” too.

Samuel describes it as “kind of the dream”.

“I have been so busy with my studies that I haven’t had time to let my music flourish. This is an incredible opportunity to do that. I’m grateful to the band, they didn’t need to do this, but this is how they give back to the community and it’s amazing.”

Six60 band member Marlon Gerbes says this year’s applicants had no shortage of talent.

“It was awesome to see and hear the new scholarship students for next year. A lot of talent and passion in all the students. It was tough to pick the final four but we got there and can’t wait for the next evolution of the scholarship.”

## Pacific voice in healthcare

Tamapuretu Po Mitaera (Tama), who is studying the respiratory effects of COVID-19, has had his most recent research feature in *PubMed*, an honour he understands is not usually bestowed on a 23-year-old.

He hopes his research will result in him better understanding the mechanisms involved in the pathogenesis of the disease and that knowledge can be used in the development of novel therapies.

Originally from Rarotonga, Tama and his mum relocated to Wellington when he was an infant. He is the second in his family to take up studies at university.

The head of Social Work for over ten years at a tertiary institute, his mum has a master’s degree and is a well-educated woman. She was also often sick when he was young, which was where he first saw inequities in health care.

He recalls the time a paramedic arrived at the home and asked his mum if she spoke English and has witnessed medical professionals, including doctors, assume because of the colour of her skin that his mum could not make decisions for herself, he says.

“This is why I want to go into medicine and be the brown face that brown people can see - because they know they’ll be looked after. That’s what stops a lot of people from getting help, being turned down by professionals who don’t understand them or their culture.”

He took up a Bachelor of Science where he could focus on the subjects he enjoyed most while settling into his new life in Dunedin.

The hard work is paying off, with him now completing his Diploma for Graduates and contributing to life-changing research. Next year, Tama plans to continue onto his Master’s degree and would like to continue similar research in the use of nicotine and vaping. His goal is to benefit others in the Pacific community.

“I’ve witnessed first-hand, the systemic racism engrained in the health care system towards Pacific. Only by including more Pacific voices in the conversation of health, can we begin to make the necessary changes for the betterment of our Pacific people and their future.”



# KEY DATES & EVENTS

## September | Mahuru

05	Semester 2 resumes
16	Last day to withdraw from semester 2 and full-year papers
18	Marine encounters
19	Suffrage Lecture presented by Melissa Lama
28	Blues and Golds Awards

## October | Whiringa-ā-nuku

14	Lectures end before semester 2 examinations
19	Semester 2 examinations begin
24	Labour Day

## Recurring Events

	Diversion Day
	Lunchtime Theatre
	Lunchtime Concerts