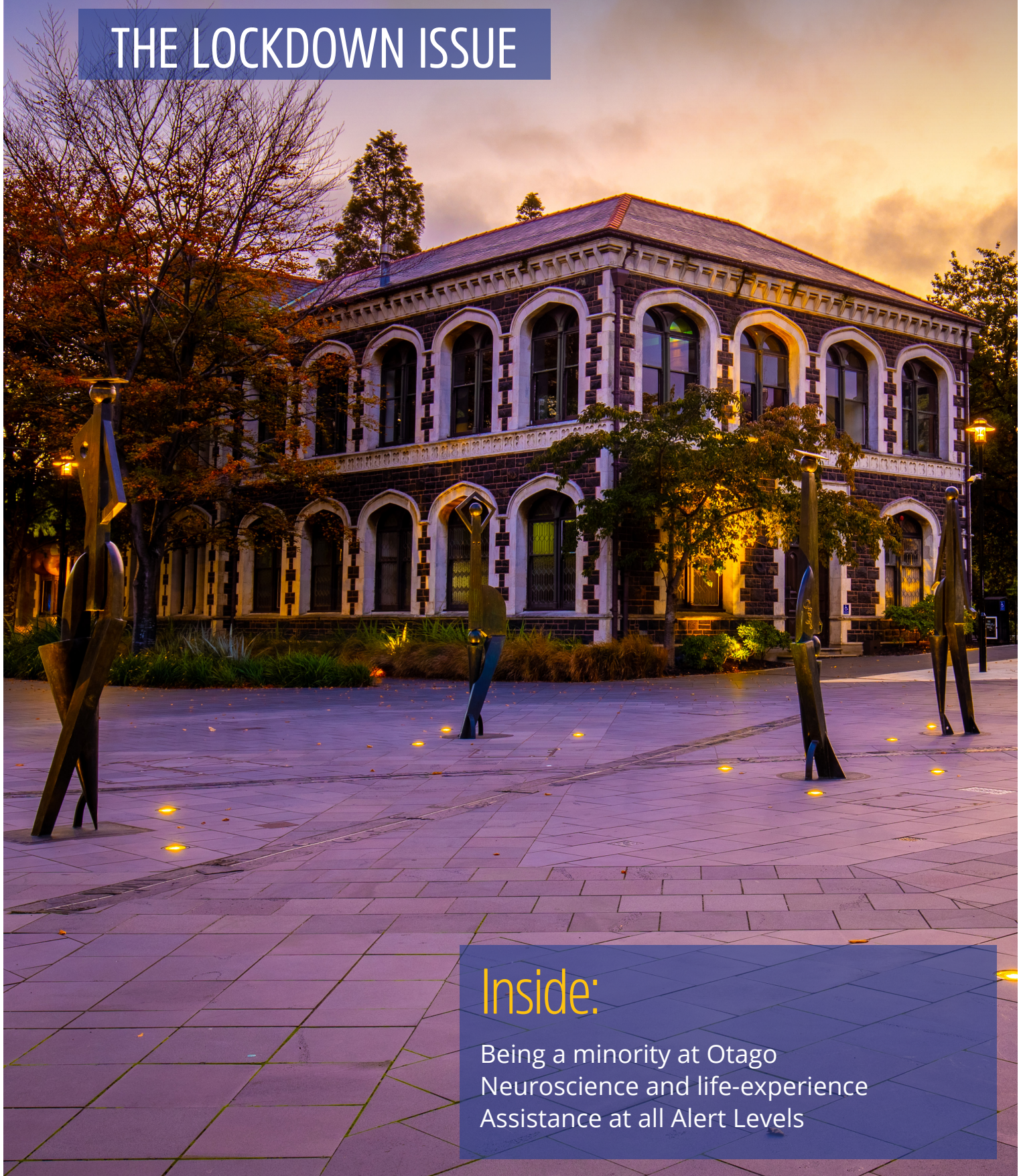


Issue 6



Te Aka Taurira

THE LOCKDOWN ISSUE



Inside:

Being a minority at Otago
Neuroscience and life-experience
Assistance at all Alert Levels

COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

September vaccine rollout > Student Health



The vaccine keeps us together

[Covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz)

New Zealand Government

Unite
against
COVID-19

The COVID-19 vaccination will be available for everyone over the age of 12 in New Zealand from tomorrow (Wednesday, 1 September). Getting the vaccine is the best way to keep you, your whanau, and all of New Zealand safe.

You can book your vaccine now using the Ministry of Health's website or use the freephone number 0800 28 29 26.

You can also find out useful information about the vaccine, how it works, and any potential side effects on the Government's COVID-19 website.

Students based in Dunedin can book now to get the vaccine on the Dunedin campus. Just use Ministry of Health website and the booking code P4X99QE367.

August News

This issue:

- » Being a minority at Otago
- » Pics of the month
- » The new OUSA HUB
- » A fundraiser with purpose
- » The importance of a scholarship
- » Neuroscience meets real-life experience
- » Finding support during Alert Level 4
- » Humanities event to nationwide lockdown

Cover image: Dunedin Campus in lockdown

In other news:



- » SIX60 return to their roots
- » Māori is in all things genetics
- » Stepping in during a natural disaster
- » International students return
- » Football team makes history

From presentation to lockdown

Bachelor of Arts and Science (Anthropology and Neuroscience) student Olivia Karavias was at the Humanities Careers Presentation Evening as Alert Level 4 was announced this month.

“My friend and I were at the event together and talking about how great the turnout was. We were aware there was going to be an announcement at 6pm and preparing ourselves for news of some kind, unsure what it may be.

“One of the presenters was mid-talk as our phones lit up with the announcement. It felt rude to look at our phones but he made it clear he understood what was going on and that unless someone came into the room panicking we could just continue on as normal.”

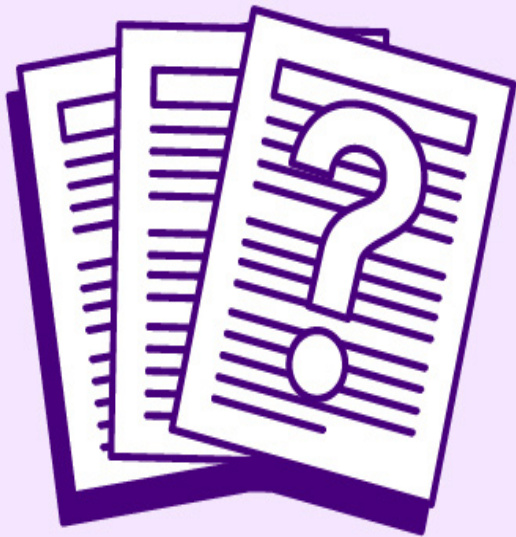
It was a somewhat poignant reminder to Olivia who, like many others in the same boat, knows to plan for a future which can be adapted to ever-changing scenarios.

“Throughout the previous years of my study I never had enough courage to go to one of those networking and presenting events but I’m glad I did as it provided a lot of insight.

“I would encourage other students to go along to these. It didn’t answer all of my questions but it made me feel reassured to not have all of the answers. I think a lot of students get stuck on that.”



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OUSA Student Support HUB

“The OUSA Student Support HUB is a dedicated team of people from a range of professional backgrounds who are here to support students at Otago. No matter what it is or what happens we will always be here for our students. The HUB will help us to reach all students no matter their location. It’s a way for us to provide helpful resources and information to students in one place and for students to get in touch with us. The tips, tricks and life hacks featured on the HUB come from both our staff team and from actual students via the student blog. Its updated regularly so stay tuned.” – Sage Burke, Student Support Manager

The new OUSA Student Support HUB is now up online and available for all students. You can contact the professional, friendly Student Support team

- » Hardship Fund
- » Flating help
- » Academic assistance
- » Health and Wellbeing
- » Staying healthy during Alert Level 4
- » Queer Support
- » Advocacy
- » General life queries

Visit the the HUB [online](#) for more.

ousa *student support* | **HUB**

PICS OF THE MONTH



Otago Science Expo in full swing earlier this month



Otago Disabled Students' Association recently held their official launch event at the Dunedin campus



Students find ways to celebrate as COVID-19 Alert Level 4 restrictions cancel graduation ceremonies



Chemistry students on stage at the NZ International Science Festival

Have an image to show off?

Send it to:
communications@otago.ac.nz



Indira Fernando knew at age eight she wanted to be a doctor.

"I grew up being told whatever you do – make it a service. My family has wanted me to go into journalism, but I think they're okay with my choice," Indira laughs.

"My mum is a dentist so it makes sense I would follow this path. She studied at Otago and I grew up with pictures of her outside of the Clocktower and Carrington, so now I get to take pictures outside the Clocktower, and I also lived at Carrington in my first year."

The Sri-Lankan born, 22-year-old found herself in a tough place during the first year of her degree back in 2017 when a mysterious illness changed her plans.

"I got really sick and was no longer able to walk. My mum flew to New Zealand as she was still living in Australia at the time. She would sleep on the floor of my dorm and take me to my appointments. She advocated on my behalf to get answers and finally I received a diagnosis of Atypical Reactive Arthritis. I had to return to Australia for treatment and I remember sitting in the Rheumatologists office wondering – "is this it? Is life as I know it over?"

It was not the end of the road for the student who was determined to achieve her lifelong goal.

"I returned the following year. I was privileged - my mum has a medical background and could help me navigate the system to get answers and the right treatment. She returned to New Zealand with me and took up a job here at the School of Dentistry."

Since returning Indira has not only thrown her entire heart and soul into her studies, but also has become an advocate for others in minority groups.

"I do advocacy work for the rainbow community in the medical space. I'm one of the founding members and the Secretary for Rainbow Otago Medical Students Association (ROMSA) and then I sit on the executive team for Otago University Medical Students Association

(OUMSA) and on the Officer Team for the New Zealand Medical Students Association (NZMSA) as well."

For Indira acknowledging privilege and being aware of other people's backgrounds is hugely important in the medical field, this is something she plans to bring to the table.

"There were so many things going against me, but I am lucky in so many ways. I have an invisible illness, people can't tell by looking at me that I am queer, I speak English yet I'm an immigrant. I say all of this from an immense place of privilege. Just by being here as a sick, queer, woman of colour I make it easier for other people. This is what I would say to other students from minority backgrounds who want to pursue studies here."

"When I arrived at Otago I discovered I could do a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery as well as study History. I'm actually the only person currently to be doing both which has been exciting too."

Recently, Indira has been researching historical media coverage of medical submissions and says discrimination looks different but is very much the same even today.

"I've been doing this research for the Kōhatu Centre for Haurua Māori supervised by Professor Peter Crampton as a result of my double degree in History and Medicine. My research is looking at the historical institutional barriers Māori and Pasifika students have faced when getting into Medicine. It's similar to modern struggles but it can look different – the racism, the transphobia, the ableism they are all present issues which keep people down.

"There are a lot of people who are trying to move the dial forward but what I've found from personal experience as a patient but also from my learning at Medical School is that as a medical professional you have to know the people. You can know the biology but if you don't know the people then how far is your medical knowledge going to get you? It's so much more than cells and it's on those medical professionals to educate themselves.

"Having experienced being sick, I've seen and been seen by some amazing doctors and some not so amazing doctors. I want to be the doctor who listens to what people have to say and takes them seriously when others' may not have. I want to be the doctor I wish I had when I was in the hospital myself."

“Just by being here as a sick, queer, woman of colour I make it easier for others.”

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Life at Otago

Alert Level 4

Right now it can be hard to know where to get help whether it assistance with your studies, finances or health and wellbeing. There are plenty of services here to help students in their time of need.

The OUSA Student Support and the Hardship Fund is available for all students during all Alert Levels. Students can make contact over email, phone or Zoom regarding academic issues, flatting concerns, financial hardship, health and wellbeing. To get in touch with OUSA Student Support or to find out more about the hardship fund visit www.ousasupporthub.org.nz

Te Whare Tāwharau Sexual Violence Support and Prevention Centre are still available to support students during Alert Level 4. Students can get in touch by emailing tewharetawharau@otago.ac.nz or text/call 021 278 3795. Zoom appointments are also available.

Other services operating during Alert Level 4:

- » Student Health
- » Library services
- » 1737: Free call or text 1737 to talk with a trained counsellor, anytime
- » PUAWAITANGA: free online, empathetic, culturally sensitive and authentic counselling
- » YOUTHLINE: free call 0800376 633 or text 234
- » RAINBOW YOUTH: call 09 376 4155
- » DEPRESSION HELPLINE: call 0800 111 757 or free text 4202
- » SAFE TO TALK: Call or text 4334 for free, confidential, non-judgemental support for sexual harm



“We are extremely proud to be part of a positive impact.”

A group of law students raising money for the Dunedin Women's Refuge says it was overwhelmed with the level of student support it received as it aimed to secure a record amount last month.

Te Whare Pounamu Women's Refuge Appeals Week Committee has been running its appeal for the last seven years, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for the charity in the process.

The Appeals Week Committee is made up of University of Otago students who run a number of events in the course of a month to raise the money.

Committee co-coordinator Carrie Wooller says by early August it had already raised more than \$28,000 from their charity gig, bake sale, quiz night and charity auction fundraisers.

While she says the students have been an integral part of attending the events, they have also played significant roles behind the scenes.

“We have around 80 student volunteers who participated in our various events. They were fantastic in organising donations from local and national businesses, and used amazing professionalism and care.”

“The fact that many survivors are silently living through this reality places extreme importance on our campaign. Every little bit helps, and we are extremely proud to be able to be part of a positive impact.”





A scholarship with purpose

Connecting with her heritage has been an important part of one student's journey here at Otago.

Amelia Kirisome is about to complete her Bachelor of Science (Surveying) and is a recent recipient of the Toloa Tertiary Scholarship. The scholarship, which is supported by the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, recognises students in the Pacific community who demonstrate leadership skills, participate in their community and excel in their studies.

"This has meant a lot to me and my family, who are very proud."

The 27-year-old says she is amazed at the chance to get to know more about what makes up part of who she is.

"During my time in Dunedin, I have been part of the Pacific Island Centre who have supported me throughout my studies."

"The Ministry for Pacific Peoples hosted an awards ceremony and I was flown to Christchurch, along with my mum. I was grateful for this opportunity. I felt inspired by a speech given by Aupito William Sio the Minister for Pacific Peoples, encouraging the recipients to continue to contribute to the Pasifika STEM community."

Amelia, who grew up in Wainuiomata, is excited for her career in Surveying and feels prepared by her time at Otago.

"I hadn't heard of Surveying as a career option until I did a quiz online to see what my future job should be. Surveying came up because it combines so many areas I'm interested in such as law, design and computing. I thought I'd take a chance and I love it.

"I want to be a Hydrographic or Cadastral Surveyor. Recruitment will commence soon and I will be finishing my studies at the end of the year. I can't wait to begin my career in the industry. It's a great career path if you like math and being outdoors."

Brionne Fleming graduated this month with a Bachelor of Science (Neuroscience) after suffering several traumatic brain injuries, an ovarian cyst and appendicitis during her degree.

"The extension of my University degree as a result of my head injuries was difficult. Having to watch friends my age and even younger all graduating and moving on with their lives before me was difficult and still can be at times."

Growing up Brionne already had two concussions through sport. During First Year Health Sciences she was tripped by a friend, resulting in a significant concussion which prevented her from completing her second semester exams.

In the weeks before she was to sit her special examinations she was in a car accident which resulted in another significant brain injury. While in hospital the doctors discovered an 8cm ovarian cyst and once Brionne had recovered from her brain injury it was surgically removed and she returned to University for semester two. Then a week before her exams her appendix needed to be urgently removed, so she underwent another surgery and a week later completed my exams.

"Dealing with the stigmatisation around concussion in New Zealand was also a challenge in itself. The thought amongst the general public is "you'll be right" and "it's only a bang on the head" so I came across this attitude from many people, even some close to me.

"I would love to incorporate traumatic brain injury into my research - I believe my first-hand experience gives me a level of empathy for this research."

Brionne is now working as a Research Assistant at the University of Auckland's Neuroscience Research Centre studying Parkinson's disease for the continuation of the year.



"To say it was a difficult journey would be an understatement."