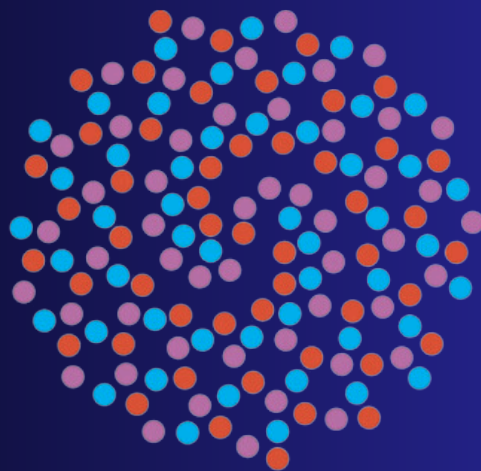


Maurice Wilkins Centre for Molecular Biodiscovery

Pacific Strategy

2026-2028

Tautai fa'atonutonu folau
Take the lead, set the course



MAURICE WILKINS CENTRE
FOR MOLECULAR BIODISCOVERY

01 FOREWORD

Malo lava le soifua manuia, Kia orāna, Ata wai wolo, Mālō e lelei, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Mālo ni, Tālofa nī, Fakatalofa atu, Ni sa bula vinaka, Noa'ia e mauri, Kam na bane ni mauri, Ia orana, Aloha, Halo olgeta, Halo oloketa, Tēnā koutou katoa and warm Pacific greetings.

I am pleased to introduce the Maurice Wilkins Centre inaugural Pacific Strategy: *Tautai fa'atonutonu folau* (meaning – Take the lead, set the course). This is an important step for the MWC, recognizing our commitment to building Pacific capability in biomedical research and to fostering our relationships with Pacific communities both here and in the islands. This strategy sits alongside and complements our Māori engagement strategy, contributing to our long-term objective to use our expertise in chemistry and biomedical research to reduce health inequity in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The strategy represents the hard work of our Pacific Researchers, who put a lot of effort into crafting a strategy that reflected their aspirations. I'd particularly like to acknowledge the leadership of Dr Ofa Dewes, who championed the strategy within the MWC, and managed much of the consultation process. But it is also important to recognize all of those researchers, from senior academics through to postgraduate students, who ensured that their voices were heard. I am looking forward to joining these researchers in accepting the challenge inherent in the strategy: *Tautai fa'atonutonu folau*.

Prof Dave Grattan FRSNZ

Director, Maurice Wilkins Centre



Tautai fa'atonutonu folau is an emboldening statement for more Pacific trailblazers to rise to this space within a national Centre of Research Excellence. This space has been co-created in recognition of the importance of bringing the best research talent together and providing enabling environments for Pacific leaders to prepare well for the journey ahead, stay the course, inspire action, and build credibility for impact.

Moreover, the Pacific Strategy signals a commitment to excellence in everything we do. This includes Pacific perspectives that value people and the role of communities and families, Pacific-focused research and innovation, and partnerships. We must build from these perspectives which means, we must work to understand and incorporate Pacific leadership, knowledges, and values of respect and reciprocity across the key themes of the Maurice Wilkins Centre for Molecular Biodiscovery.

Thank you to those who have set the foundation for our work now, those currently building on this foundation, and those who will lead the work into the future.

Mālō 'aupito.

Dr Ofa Dewes MNZM

Member, MWC Research Leadership Forum

02 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With excitement we present the inaugural Pacific Strategy for the Maurice Wilkins Centre.

- The **purpose** of this Maurice Wilkins Centre Pacific Strategy (Pacific Strategy) is to provide and support a clear pathway for the Centre to achieve its outcomes for Pacific researchers and elevate the outcomes of health research for Pacific communities. The Pacific Strategy also aims to create and sustain processes for engaging with Pacific stakeholders which will enable us to listen and take into account the unique opportunities facing Pacific researchers and their respective communities.
- The **vision** of the Pacific Strategy is: *Equipping Pacific leadership, embracing inclusivity, and expanding participation to advance Pacific Peoples representation and excellence in biomedical sciences and STEM innovation.*

This Pacific Strategy aligns with and complements the Maurice Wilkins Centre Māori Engagement Strategy and affirms the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi: tino rangatiratanga, equity, active protection, options, and partnership. It also operates under the overarching framework of the Maurice Wilkins Centre Plan and Impact Statement (1 January 2025 to 31 December 2028).

Pacific peoples are Tauīwi in Aotearoa with an innately unique relationship with Māori rooted in the tuakana (elder sibling) and teina (younger sibling) bond within shared Polynesian ancestry. The moana-nui-a-kiwa (Pacific Ocean) represents the connection among Pacific nations which, despite their distinct cultural customs, share a collective Polynesian identity extending to Aotearoa.

The Pacific Strategy centres around three interconnected pou (pillars):

- Tagata o le Moana (Pacific Peoples)
- Fakatotolo (Research)
- Kainga (Partnerships, Place and Relationality).

These pillars are supported by cyclical drivers that enable their active integration. When all three pou and their drivers work in harmony - the convergence point - the Maurice Wilkins Centre Pacific Strategy is optimised to empower Pacific Peoples and advance biomedical research for the public good. Furthermore, this Pacific Strategy identifies the key stakeholders and audiences essential to activating these cyclical drivers and implementing 3-year workplans that outline causal activities aimed at achieving the purpose and bringing the vision to life.

03 OVERVIEW

The Maurice Wilkins Centre (MWC) is a vibrant organisation that brings together scientists from a range of disciplines and research institutions to target serious human diseases. The centre's core activities include:

- Leading research into major human diseases
- Building collaborative Scientific Networks
- Educating the next generation of scientists.

As a Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE), the MWC has grown into a dynamic, highly productive, large-scale collaborative network of researchers across New Zealand since its establishment in 2002.

A major achievement of the MWC is that it has broken down traditional barriers between scientific research institutions and disciplines and developed high-functioning, collaborative teams across different institutions.*

Aligned with its commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its Māori Engagement Strategy, the MWC Pacific Strategy aims to empower Pacific researchers, promote culturally grounded research projects, and support partnerships that will help scientific research to address health equity/priorities.

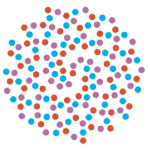
The Pacific Strategy is informed by robust stakeholder engagement and survey data within the MWC network and affiliated organisations. It also involved virtual talanoa with Pacific researchers, members of the Directorate, Research Leadership Forum, and Senior Māori Researchers (Te Amorangi) to ensure that the voices and aspirations of Pacific researchers and communities are reflected throughout.

Key insights from extensive talanoa and the survey data highlight mentorship, collaboration, cultural integration, and community-centred approaches as central to strengthening Pacific research participation and excellence.

Overwhelmingly, 96% of survey respondents emphasised the importance of Pacific-led research roles at MWC, with mentorship programmes, internship placements, and scholarships identified as vital actions for developing aspiring Pacific researchers and those already in established careers.

As highlighted throughout talanoa and survey insights, the importance of relationships and partnerships with Pacific communities and health organisations is seen as a critical opportunity to expand and empower Pacific research both in Aotearoa and more widely throughout the Pacific region.

04 STRATEGIC PLAN



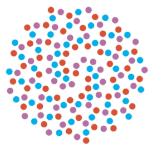
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4.1 Vision Statement Pacific Peoples Strategy

**EQUIPPING PACIFIC LEADERSHIP,
EMBRACING INCLUSIVITY
& EXPANDING PARTICIPATION
TO ADVANCE PACIFIC PEOPLES REPRESENTATION &
EXCELLENCE IN BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES & STEM
INNOVATION.**



4.2 STRATEGY OUTLINE

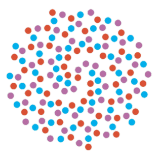


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The Maurice Wilkins Centre embarks on a journey to empower Pacific Peoples and research in biomedical sciences. The following illustration is an action orientated visual that demonstrates the strategy and convergence point. Three main pou are connected to each other which are linked through circular drivers in each area. When all three 'pou' are actively working, supported by the three cyclical drivers, the Pacific strategy is operationalised with the convergence zone being the point of optimisation.



4.3 POU



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The Pacific Strategy Pou are strategic pillars forming the core areas of focus or high-level themes that structure and support the execution of the MWC's Pacific strategy. These Pou focus on what the key focus areas are to achieve the strategic vision.



Pou 1. Tagata o le Moana ***Pacific Research*** ***Workforce/Pipeline/People***

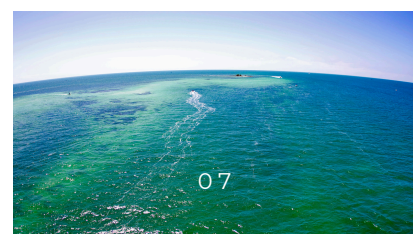
FIG 2. TAGATA O LE MOANA POU

Pou Definition:

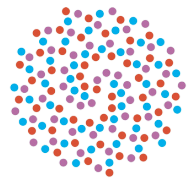
Pacific researchers and students are engaged in research-informed education within an inclusive, lifelong learning culture that respects and integrates their unique cultural identities and evolving life needs.

Priority outcomes:

- Development of emerging scientists who have skills in a broader range of experience and mentorship than would traditionally have been available
- A growing generation of Pacific leaders in biomedical sciences to collaborate with Mana Whenua and Taiwi researchers.
- Promotion of a greater importance and understanding of biomedical sciences in New Zealand, particularly in schools and Pacific communities.



4.3 POU



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Pou 2. Fakatotolo *Pacific Focused Research and Innovation*

Pacific
Strategy

FIG 3. FAKATOTOLO POU

Pou Definition:

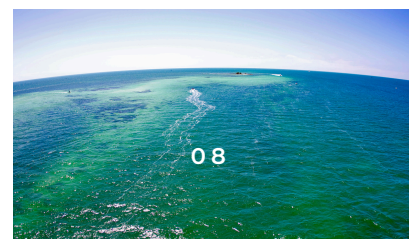
Pacific-focused Research and Innovative Projects centre on interdisciplinary collaborations aimed at improving health outcomes through biomedical and translational research that specifically benefits Pacific communities.

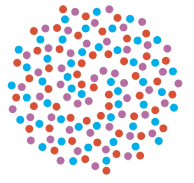
These research projects advance fundamental knowledge for precision medicine, ensuring that Pacific peoples are not excluded from future medical breakthroughs.

A key focus is supporting the growing generation of Pacific researchers, and equipping them with diverse skills and mentorship, to lead and be led in culturally responsive research.

Priority outcomes:

- Development of methods to improve health outcomes by using inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional collaborations, biomedical and translational research, and facilitating clinical trials.
- Ensure that Pacific Peoples are included in the benefits of future medical breakthroughs e.g. precision medicine innovation.
- Development of emerging Pacific scientists who step forward as mentors and have skills in a broader range of experience and mentorship.
- Innovative initiatives validating new drug targets, developing diagnostics, vaccines, and conducting clinical trials to test the effectiveness of medical strategies relevant to Pacific populations





4.3 POU



Pou 3. Kainga Pacific Collaboration & Engagement

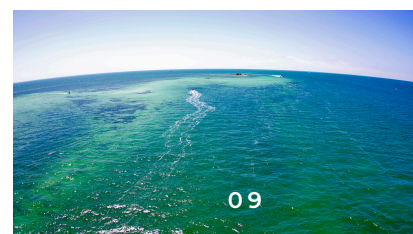
FIG 4. KAINGA POU

Pou Definition:

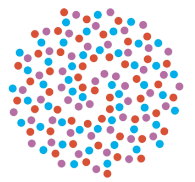
Authentic partnerships with Pacific communities cultivate meaningful engagement and collaboration creating globally connected networks of researchers and participants by valuing indigenous knowledge including Mana Māori. These partnerships are recognised for driving impactful research and innovations that support a sustainable future for Pacific communities.

Priority outcomes:

- A growing generation of Pacific researchers in biomedical sciences to lead activities with these communities.
- Resources and outreach extended to the Pacific region to build Pacific research capacity and capability.
- Strong relationships with tangata whenua in recognition of our unique status of tauwiwi, tuakana and teina relationships.
- A globally connected network of researchers and participants that prioritise Indigenous knowledges.



4.4 DRIVERS



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The following strategic drivers are the key factors and priorities that influence and shape the Maurice Wilkins Centre's direction, decisions, and long-term goals for the Pacific Strategy. They are critical components focusing efforts on areas that deliver the most value, ensuring alignment between MWC's actions and its vision. They will ensure that time, talent, and financial investments are directed toward initiatives with the highest strategic value for the three Pacific Pou.



FIG 5. DRIVERS



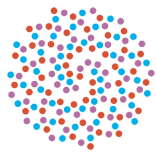
Building a dynamic pathway to attract and engage more Pacific peoples in biomedical sciences, (STEM) ensuring diversity and representation.



Cultivating a culturally inclusive environment that values and integrates Pacific perspectives in biomedical research and innovation.



Providing the tools, resources, and sponsorship opportunities for Pacific peoples to lead and excel in biomedical research.



05 PRIORITY AUDIENCES

Pacific Researchers



All Pacific researchers engaged in biomedical sciences, both within New Zealand and internationally.

Pacific Affiliates and Organisations



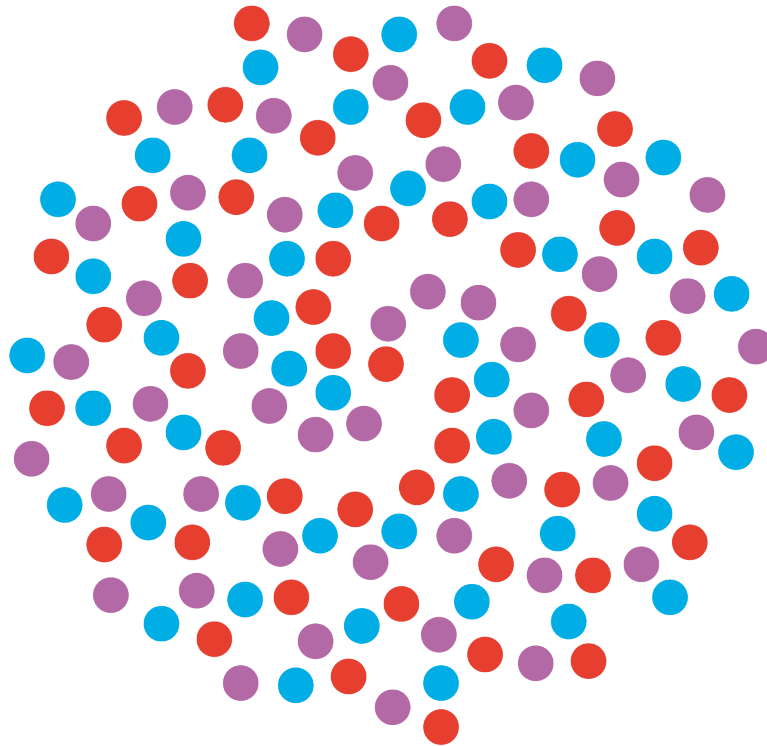
Community-based and institutional organisations, NGOs, and agencies that represent Pacific perspectives and advance Pacific health priorities.

Partners & Enablers



Tagata whenua and Tauwi within the Maurice Wilkins Centre, supporting Pacific researchers and advancing Pacific-focused research. These individuals contribute through mentorship, sponsorship, collaboration, and resource-sharing to enhance Pacific engagement and capacity-building.

By engaging with these groups, the Maurice Wilkins Centre ensures the integration of diverse perspectives, creating a Pacific Strategy that is culturally responsive, inclusive, and impactful.



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A New Zealand Centre of Research Excellence
targeting serious human disease

www.mauricewilkinscentre.org