A catalyst for critical conversations about our future

Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures is a young but increasingly impactful, independent and non-partisan think tank and research centre based at the University of Auckland, with associate members across New Zealand and internationally.

We undertake transdisciplinary research and analysis and generate knowledge, commentary and tools to address critical long-term national and global challenges arising from rapid and far-reaching social, economic, technological and environmental change. These transformations are happening at a scale and speed which is unique in human history.

Ensuring our resilience and sustainability in this challenging context requires analysis, interpretation and partnerships. We provide robust evidence synthesis, analysis and brokerage on these issues through engagement with a broad range of stakeholders across government, academia, industry and civil society.

Koi Tū can assist New Zealand’s influence and profile as a future-looking society in exploring and tackling emergent issues. As a small advanced country, New Zealand can be both the ‘canary in the mine’ to identify issues that emerge and be ‘the headlights to identify the road ahead’.
WHY CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS ARE NEEDED

For democracy to thrive and for societies to progress, dialogue and decision-making on complex issues need to take place in an informed, inclusive and constructive manner. Yet we live in a world where the contest of ideas is taking place in an unhealthy environment of misinformation and declining public trust in our democratic, scientific and societal institutions. Misinformation compromises how we make choices about the future. In addition, short-term thinking dominates our policy processes at the very time that we most need policy responses that go beyond election cycles and span longer periods.

Koi Tū provides innovative methods that can engage policy makers, academia, the business sector and society in conversations on contentious, complex and dynamic public policy issues. We address long-term issues typically left in the too-hard basket of policy-making. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance and relevance of the work we undertake. The socio-economic consequences are driving increasing discussion for a longer-term vision of how New Zealand should evolve. This environment provides an opportunity to consider our place in the world, and how we operate as a country and cooperate as society.

WHAT WE DO

Koi Tū has a strong record of internationally recognised research, extensive domestic and international networks, and experience in brokering science knowledge to governments and society. Koi Tū is administered as a University of Auckland research centre, and the team includes academics from the University of Auckland, across New Zealand and around the world. We work with leading and emerging scholars and students with experience spanning natural, data and social sciences and humanities, as well as practitioners from the society and policy interfaces. We also have partnerships with broader institutions of New Zealand society including Māori and Pasifika communities. Koi Tū hosts the secretariat for the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA).

Our collaborators include:

National
- The University of Auckland – academic staff from faculties of Arts, Science, Medical and Health Sciences, Engineering, Business, Education and Social Work, and Liggins Institute

International
- University of Sheffield, UK – Research on Research Institute
- University College London, UK – Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy
- Oxford University, UK – Centre for Social Cohesion
- University of West Indies – Centre for Solutions for Developing Countries
- Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences and National University of Singapore School of Medicine
- University of Bergen, Norway – Centre for the Study of Sciences and Humanities
- University of Ottawa, Canada – Institute for Science, Society and Policy
- Joint Research Centre of the European Commission
- Lisbon Council – a Brussels think tank
- International and Policy Office, National Academy of Sciences, USA

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OUR TEAM

Governance
The advisory board comprises Bridget Coates (Chair), John Allen, Andrew Grant, Rangimarie Hunia, Sir Christopher Mace and Evan Williams.

Leadership
Director Distinguished Professor Sir Peter Gluckman is one of the foremost thinkers on the practices and principles of science advice, transdisciplinary analysis and science communication. He was the first Chief Science Advisor to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, and founding chair of INGSA. Sir Peter is the incoming President of the International Science Council (ISC).

Deputy Director Dr Anne Bardsley has extensive experience in evidence synthesis for policy and knowledge brokerage. Her work focuses on using evidence in policymaking, the changing nature of interactions between science and societal decision-making, and concepts of risk and precaution in the context of rapid technological change.

Core Staff
Dr Tatjana Buklijas (philosophy and ethics of science, deliberative democracy)
Dr Felicia Low (human development)
Kristiann Allen (deliberative and participatory democracy, social sciences, impact of technology on society, evidence to policy)
Dr Andrew Chen* (digital technology)
Rochelle Menzies (mental health, Māori engagement)
Dr Ryan Greenaway-McGrevy* (economics)
Dr Jennifer Lees-Marshment* (political science)
Grant Mills (science diplomacy)
Naomi Simon-Kumar (INGSA)

*part time

HOW WE WORK

Operating at the nexus of academia, civil society and public policy, both nationally and internationally, Koi Tū is uniquely placed to integrate multiple forms of transdisciplinary knowledge and support New Zealand to be a global leader in exploring and tackling emerging issues.

We connect knowledge produced in academia with civil society, integrating both perspectives and assisting the policy and broader community in a timely and relevant way.

Tapping into our extensive domestic and international partnerships with both science and policy communities, we act in a ‘brokerage’ role, providing thought leaders and researchers a way to engage with the community and inform the policy discussion.

We take an integrative systems-based approach that brings together expertise from a range of specialties including the physical, social and health sciences, as well as the humanities, law, engineering, computer science, economics, policy and Mātauranga Māori.

A core part of our work is attracting some of the world’s best visionaries to engage with thought leaders within the University and across civil society.

We produce and synthesise evidence from multiple disciplines and we seek new ways to use robust knowledge and deliberation to counter the impacts of misinformation and declining trust.

We teach into courses in the Faculties of Arts, Science, and Medical and Health Sciences and take a particular interest in developing graduate students’ capacities to turn knowledge to impact.

While philanthropy is the mainstay of our funding, we accept third party contracts from government, industry or trusts provided these do not compromise our intellectual independence and trusted position as non-partisan interlocutors.
HELP US CREATE AN INFORMED FUTURE

Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures relies on philanthropy and on grants from government, public interest organisations and trusts. To discuss how you can support the Centre, please contact:

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