

## News release

**Wednesday 4 March 2020**

### **Sir Peter Gluckman leads think tank focused on critical global issues**

Countering the global rise of misinformation and declining public trust with robust research and evidence-based advice is a fundamental goal of a new think tank at the University of Auckland.

Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures is an independent and apolitical think tank and research centre founded by Distinguished Professor Sir Peter Gluckman – the first Chief Science Advisor to the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Sir Peter is renowned globally as one of the foremost experts on the practices and principles of science advice to policy makers and on the interactions between science and society.

Being launched by the Governor General, the Rt. Hon Dame Patsy Reddy, at Government House today, the centre is focused on addressing global and national issues arising from rapid and far-reaching social, economic, technological and environmental change.

Sir Peter says the centre was born out of a realisation that it has never been more important for community and local, national and global policy decisions to be informed by evidence, and that society is searching for information it can trust.

“Unfortunately, we live in a world where the contest of ideas is increasingly taking place in an unhealthy environment of misinformation and, in many places, declining public trust in democratic, scientific and societal institutions,” he says.

“Social, economic, technological and environmental transformations are happening around us at a scale and speed which is unique in human history. As scientists, we have a crucial role to play in ensuring our rangatahi’s future is in the hands of decision makers armed with robust evidence.”

The centre’s research themes include societal and individual resilience in the face of rapid change; factors affecting social cohesion, choices and decisions about the impacts of rapidly emerging technologies; and understanding the trade-offs embedded within the sustainability agenda.

Sir Peter says as a small advanced country, New Zealand can be both the “canary in the mine” to identify issues that are emerging and “the headlights to identify the road ahead.”

Centre Deputy Director Dr Anne Bardsley says the centre will focus on how to help communities and governments better understand complex issues and acknowledge inevitable trade-offs and values, in ways that lead to robust, societally-accepted decisions.

She says it will offer thought leaders and researchers a way to engage with the community and inform the policy discussion, while also offering a pathway to policymakers to find the right advice.

It is also developing “complex conversations” tools to assist traditionally disempowered groups, as well as other stakeholders including the business community, to better participate in policy development. Through these processes the centre aims to become a recognised neutral space to initiate conversations that catalyse broader processes and decision making.

“We combine the scientific disciplines, both natural and social, to provide collaborative advice that can help policy makers and civil society better understand the issues,” she says.

“We want to better connect knowledge produced in academia with true engagement with society, integrate their perspectives and assist societal decisions and the policy community in a relevant way.

“Operating at the nexus of academia, civil society and public policy, and between national and international discourses, we are uniquely placed to explore these issues.”

Staff in the centre include those with expertise in the physical sciences, humanities, law, engineering, computer science, social science, economics, health sciences, policy and Mātauranga Māori.

Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures has extensive domestic and international partnerships with both science and policy communities and is home to the secretariat of the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA) – a growing global network with more than 5000 members in 100 countries.

## **ENDS**

### **Editor’s notes**

#### **About Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures**

Director **Professor Sir Peter Gluckman** is regarded globally as one of the foremost thinkers on the practices and principles of science advice. As the first Chief Science Advisor to the Prime Minister of New Zealand (PMSCA), and the founding chair of the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA), Sir Peter is the incoming president of the International Science Council (ISC), which unites scientific bodies across the social and natural sciences as the ‘global voice of science’. He continues to engage with global and multi-lateral institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and various United Nations agencies.

Centre Deputy Director **Dr Anne Bardsley** has extensive experience in evidence synthesis for policy and knowledge brokerage. Her current research focuses on the use of 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.

They head up a uniquely skilled team which includes not only members of the University of Auckland but academics and policy practitioners from around New Zealand and the world. It brings together leading and emerging scholars and students across a broad range of natural and social sciences, knowledge brokers and practitioners at the society and policy interfaces, and broader institutions of New Zealand society including Māori, Pasifika and other communities.

### **Our Māori name**

Koi Tū describes the intent of the centre.

Koi is to be bright; to be clever; it is the sharp point of the arrow. The centre is *koi* by integrating the various knowledge disciplines and to inform people through true engagement and a holistic approach. The centre places itself at the sharp end of long-term issues of complexity such as societal resilience and social cohesion, sustainability, human capital development and societal decision-making regarding emergent technologies.

Tū means to stand, to set in place and infers resilience. The centre is future focused, addressing areas of concern to Aotearoa New Zealand, small advanced countries and globally. It is committed to making a stand; to inform societal and policy decisions over the mid to long-term.

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