



# The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Converge Research Symposium 2025

*Celebrating Diverse Perspectives*

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18 July 2025



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# Workshop Summaries

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**Converge Research Symposium**  
**18 July 2025**



## LARA NETTLE

### CULTIVATING CONNECTION: CO-CREATING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

#### Summary

This interactive workshop aims to equip participants with practical strategies for identifying opportunities to build psychologically safe environments – particularly beneficial for neurodivergent individuals – in both educational and workplace settings. The session begins by revisiting foundational definitions of psychological safety and engagement, drawing upon established frameworks like the Gamechangers League Expectations Document (introduced within the research).

Participants will explore how to envision an ideal shared culture of safety within their contexts, and implement these expectations across diverse spaces, considering universal accommodations and flexibility as key components. A significant portion is dedicated to discussing practical actions – such as clear communication, accessibility initiatives, and prioritising individual voice and agency – mirroring strategies observed in the Gamechangers model. The workshop also encourages reflection on perceptions of others' needs and a shift towards a more inclusive culture built on curiosity and understanding, moving beyond judgment. Participants will receive feedback opportunities to refine their approach and contribute to ongoing improvement.

#### This workshop is designed for:

- Leaders and emerging leaders
- Team members seeking to enhance team safety
- Educators and teaching assistants
- Parents
- Individuals who are neurodivergent or curious about the topic

#### Participants will gain:

A Deeper Understanding of Psychological Safety  
Practical Tools for Immediate Impact  
The Ability to Recognise and Address Barriers  
The Power of Small Acts of Solidarity  
A Shift in Perspective: Neurodiversity as Strength

#### About the author

Lara Nettle is a deeply invested researcher bringing a unique, insider perspective to the critical issue of psychological safety within education. Driven by personal experience as an undiagnosed autistic individual and now a parent of a neurodivergent teen, Lara's research stems from a long-standing commitment to addressing systemic barriers faced by neurodivergent youth. This dedication led to the creation of Gamechangers League (GCL), a supportive environment fostering play, learning, and growth. Recent graduation as a Master of Change & Organisational Resilience has equipped Lara with expertise in establishing psychological safety preconditions – informed by seven years' immersion in neurodiversity, activism, and liberation. Her research investigates how this concept impacts group participation and engagement in formal and informal education settings. Co-design was central to Lara's approach, putting the participants at the core, ensuring their voices and lived experiences are authentically reflected in the outcomes. By examining psychological safety through a neurodivergent lens, this work illuminates specific challenges and frames universal culture change as a pathway towards more inclusive, autonomy-respectful practices in work and education.

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## MARCELO ABREU

### VISUALIZING RESEARCH: AI-DRIVEN IMAGE GENERATION FOR EFFECTIVE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION

#### Summary

In an era where research impact depends on clear and compelling communication, the ability to translate complex ideas into visual narratives is no longer optional, it's essential. Visualizing Research is a groundbreaking workshop that equips researchers with cutting-edge AI tools to revolutionize how they communicate their work.

This hands-on session addresses a critical gap in academic and scientific practice: the struggle to create precise, engaging visuals for papers, presentations, grants, and public outreach. Whether you're illustrating a concept, envisioning a speculative future, or visually supporting qualitative data, AI-generated imagery allows researchers to create custom visuals that enhance clarity, engagement, and impact. Participants will learn how to craft high-quality prompts, reverse-engineer effective examples, and use prompt templates to generate consistent and meaningful visuals tailored to their research context.

The workshop will also introduce practical techniques for visual refinement, including logo creation, background removal, resolution enhancement, and image manipulation, all without needing advanced design skills. These methods are especially useful when resources are limited, deadlines are tight, or traditional visual production methods are not accessible. Participants are encouraged to bring a Gmail account for seamless access to free, browser-based tools that support Google sign-in.

#### This workshop is designed for:

- Graduate, Postgraduate students and academic researchers from all disciplines
- Educators and science communicators looking to enhance research dissemination
- Anyone interested in using AI tools to visualise abstract or complex ideas

By the end of the session, each participant will have generated visuals directly related to their own research, gaining not just technical knowledge, but a broader understanding of how visuals can play a critical role in knowledge translation and engagement.

#### About the author

Marcelo Abreu is a seasoned graphic designer and creative professional with over 30 years of experience. His journey began in his late teens when he co-founded MCI Serviços Gráficos, which honed his skills in printed materials. Marcelo later transitioned from self-teaching to formal education, studying Graphic Arts at Maui Community College in Hawaii, and later pursuing a degree in Social Communication with a focus on Marketing in Brazil. With a deep passion for design and marketing, Marcelo worked as an Art Director and Urban Marketing Consultant at Urbe Planejamento Urbano, contributing to significant projects like Master Plans, public tenders for metro and monorail systems, and the São Francisco River Transposition Monitoring Platform. He further expanded his expertise with a Bachelor's in Graphic Design from Australia and a specialization in Audiovisual Production from Spain. Currently pursuing a Master's degree, Marcelo is committed to leveraging innovation in design and marketing. Outside of work, he channels his creativity into sustainable woodworking, crafting surfboards and taking on diverse carpentry and CNC projects. Marcelo's lifelong learning and passion for excellence empower him to provide cutting-edge solutions that stand out in today's market.

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## HUW JONES

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### WAYFINDING FUTURES - LIVING WELL IN 2050: CO-CREATING A MULTI-SENSORY EXPERIENCE OF SPECULATIVE FUTURES

#### Summary

What might 'living well' in 2050 be like? Embark on a self-directed wayfinding experience of speculative futures interacting with 'sensory islands' to co-create a series of artefacts relating to healthy homes, families and communities 25 years into the future.

The purpose of this workshop is to introduce participants to the Wayfinding Futures Framework (Jones, 2025) through an immersive, interactive and experiential practice inspired by indigenous innovation, polynesian voyaging, the Pūrakau of Tāwhirimātea (Keane, 2006), and the facilitation skills of various futurists (Clarke & Cooper, 2025), educators and mindfulness practitioners (Farrow, & Hoffman, 2025).

The workshop will begin with a mihi and karakia, welcoming attendees into the space and acknowledging the mana that each person carries with them. This is followed by an introduction to 'The Islands' - an overview of the four sensory stations that attendees will interact with. Encouraged to navigate in silence, participants will have approx. 25 mins to explore, experience and engage with a variety of scents, sounds, vibrations and visuals - representing possibilities and provocations for 'living well' in the future. Throughout this process attendees will make a contribution at each sensory island, culminating in a collective effort to speculate on what 'living well' might be like in 2050.

During the final phase of the workshop, attendees will be invited to participate in a guided mindfulness practice providing a 'mindful moment' of clarity, contentment and a conscious commitment to embodying the speculative futures they've contributed to.

#### **This workshop is designed for:**

This workshop is appropriate for a diverse audience of students, staff, and researchers interested in indigenous innovation, speculative futures, flow states, and mindfulness.

Attendees will gain an insight into the Wayfinding Futures Framework, as well as a range of practical exploration techniques that can be adapted into their mahi, progressing skills in the art of facilitation, foresight practice and futures work.

#### **About the author**

Huw Jones (Te Arawa, Waikato-Tainui, Ngapuhi, Ngāti Hamoa, Ngāti Tonga, Ngāti Kereti) is a proud husband, twin dad, entrepreneur, educator and flow state nerd passionate about indigenous innovation, intergenerational futures and holistic health and wellness.

As Kaitohu Moana Māori, Director for Indigenous Innovation, Equity and Engagement at AcademyEX, Huw works across the organisation and externally to support lifelong learners to disrupt education, lead change for good, and harness technology for impact.

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## SHOURJO DASGUPTA

### BRIDGING CULTURES, BUILDING BRANDS: ACCELERATING NEW ZEALAND CONSUMER EXPORTS TO INDIA

#### Summary

This presentation-focused workshop reveals the significant untapped potential for New Zealand consumer brands in India's rapidly evolving marketplace. With India projected to become the world's third-largest economy by 2030 and premium consumer spending accelerating rapidly, the timing is ideal for strategic market entry. Participants will discover which New Zealand brands are already succeeding in India, understand key consumer insights driving purchasing decisions, and learn how to navigate common barriers that have limited success to date.

Through real case studies and market data, attendees will gain practical knowledge about India's \$450 billion consumer market and how the Kiwiyana platform is designed to accelerate market entry for premium New Zealand brands. The session includes dedicated time for addressing specific concerns and perceived barriers, making this an ideal introduction for brands considering their India strategy.

#### This workshop is designed for:

New Zealand consumer brand owners, export managers, and business leaders exploring India market opportunities, particularly in beauty, personal care, food and beverage sectors.

#### Attendees will learn:

Current market landscape and consumer trends driving India's premium brand adoption

Success stories: Which NZ brands are winning in India and why

Key consumer insights and purchasing behaviors in target demographics

Common barriers and practical solutions for market entry

How technology platforms can reduce traditional entry costs and complexity

#### About the author

As founder of Kiwiyana, I bring deep connections to both New Zealand and India, with expertise at the intersection of technology and international business. My experience spans digital platform development, cross-cultural commerce, and AI implementation for business optimization. Selected for the Microsoft Founders Program and Composabl Champions Program 2025, I've developed specialized knowledge in deploying autonomous AI agents to solve complex international trade challenges. My current research focuses on how technology-enabled market entry acceleration platforms can address systemic barriers to New Zealand exports in emerging markets, with particular emphasis on cultural translation methodologies and distribution innovation. Through Kiwiyana, I'm committed to addressing New Zealand's substantial trade deficit while creating new opportunities for premium brands to reach India's rapidly growing consumer class. My approach combines data-driven market insights with deep respect for both countries' cultural contexts, creating authentic pathways for meaningful trade relationships.

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## RACHEL MONKS

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### FROM TASKS TO TRANSFORMATION: UNLEASHING AI IN YOUR DAILY WORK

#### Summary

This interactive 1-hour workshop will help attendees understand the transformative power of AI in their daily roles and lives. The session begins by demystifying AI, with real-world examples from a variety of industries showing how AI is being used to boost productivity and effectiveness.

Participants will be guided to map out their job tasks, identifying where AI can assist in automating them. This exercise will provide clarity on how AI can seamlessly integrate into their daily routines.

The second part of the session focuses on a group sprint. Attendees will collaborate to identify repetitive tasks and design AI-powered workflows, uncovering how AI can enhance productivity and which tools they will need to support their automations. They will be encouraged to think about their own real-world challenges and explore ways to implement solutions immediately.

The final segment will cover how to successfully pitch AI solutions to organisations that may be reluctant to adopt AI. Attendees will leave with actionable steps, tools, and ideas to implement AI in their own workflows, as well as insights into how AI can be used elsewhere in their businesses. By the end, participants will understand how AI can automate daily tasks, freeing them to focus on higher-value activities, and will have practical tools to begin or advance their automation journey.

#### **This workshop is designed for:**

Anyone wanting to implement AI into their individual roles or organisations to improve productivity, but doesn't necessarily know or wants ideas where the best place to start is. Where is the low-hanging fruit?

#### **Attendees will:**

Ideate themselves and gain ideas from the group of easy/good AI use cases which they can implement in their own roles or organisations to increase their productivity

Understand the use of AI to complete commonly identified tasks and what the new workflow could look like

Learn how to use AI to transform a current mapped workflow into an AI automated workflow in a minute, complete with tools and estimated time savings/ROI

#### **About the author**

Rachel Monks is a Masters of Technological Futures alumna and founder of AI for X, an AI-first marketing and sales agency that helps organizations scale smarter and faster. She combines strategy, creativity, data, and technology to drive revenue through intelligent business growth systems. With twenty years of marketing and sales experience, Rachel has worked on brand strategy for global companies including Disney and Campbell's, and helped scale startups to the Deloitte Fast 50. She holds multiple AI certifications, including Section School's AI Mini MBA. Rachel specializes in rebuilding marketing and sales systems using AI, intelligent agents, and automated workflows. Her approach leverages decades of hands-on experience to identify potential pitfalls and transform traditional bottlenecks into growth accelerators. She focuses on creating smart systems and data-driven processes that deliver measurable results without requiring enterprise-level software investments.

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## MILLA INKILA

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### **MOVING FROM SAFE SPACES TO BRAVER ONES: EXPLORING GENDER INCLUSION IN LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP**

#### **Summary**

This interactive workshop invites educators, researchers, and anyone interested in social change to reflect on how gender is understood and expressed, and made visible in their learning and leadership environments. Together, we will explore what it takes to move beyond comfort-focused "safe spaces" and cultivate braver spaces (Arao & Clemens, 2023), where inclusion is actively practised, and discomfort can lead to deeper learning.

Grounded in a Master of Change and Organisational Resilience research project, the session shares findings from survey and co-designed podcast episodes. Participants will engage in creative reflection activities, and examine how our mental models (Kania et al., 2018) around gender evolve through relational and reflective practices.

Informed by Kumashiro's (2000) framing of unlearning, this session invites participants to surface subconscious biases, question outdated norms, and reimagine belonging. We will also explore the concept of cis-paralysis, the hesitation to act due to fear of getting it wrong, and how cisnormative assumptions shape our systems, language, and leadership. This is a space for unlearning, reflection, and reimagining inclusion through critical and creative means.

#### **This workshop is designed for:**

Educators and education professionals  
Researchers and postgraduate students  
Anyone interested in gender inclusion and social change

Attendees will gain insights into shifting gender-related mental models, reflect on personal and systemic biases, and explore practical strategies for creating safer and braver spaces, whether in classrooms, workplaces, or communities.

#### **About the author**

Milla Inkila (she/her) is an educator, researcher, and digital learning specialist at academyEX, working on the Master of Contemporary Education team. With a background in teaching, information technology, and educational leadership, Milla is passionate about creating contemporary and inclusive environments where learners of all ages feel seen, valued, and safe. Milla has just completed her second master's degree, this time in Change and Organisational Resilience. Her latest Design and practice-based research explored how educators can shift their mental models around gender, move beyond cisnormative assumptions, and foster more inclusive and braver spaces in education. This workshop is grounded in co-design approaches and draws on systems thinking, and design-based research. This workshop is part of an ongoing research project that builds on that work and extends it further, exploring how creative, reflective, and participatory methods, such as visual expression and collaborative dialogue, can shift thinking around gender in diverse professional contexts. Alongside her research, Milla facilitates postgraduate learning, leads innovation workshops, and hosts UNLEARN, a professional learning podcast that supports gender inclusion through storytelling and expert insights.

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# Presentation Summaries

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**Converge Research Symposium**  
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## CARREN RICHARDSON

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### REDEFINING BUSINESS SUCCESS: A FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURABLE PURPOSE

#### Research Summary

Embedding organisational purpose is increasingly recognised as a catalyst for long-term resilience, stakeholder trust, and sustainable performance. However, despite widespread support for purpose as a business strategy, barriers such as short-termism, leadership misalignment, and lack of credible measurement tools hinder authentic integration of organisational purpose. This study addresses the measurement gap by developing and testing a Purpose Measurement Framework tailored to the New Zealand context.

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining literature review, framework construction, and empirical testing. Testing involved a self-assessment survey, a company participant case study, and external data analysis across a final sample of sixteen companies across diverse sectors and business types. The framework synthesises drivers and outcomes of purpose, applying a weighted scoring system to generate purpose implementation scores.

Results demonstrate that while purpose articulation and leadership embodiment are relatively strong across the sample, weaknesses exist in areas such as measurable social and environmental impact, stakeholder co-creation, and external validation. The findings highlight short-termism as a fundamental barrier to embedding purpose, while Indigenous timeframes and digital technologies offer alternative pathways for systemic change.

This study concludes that purpose can be credibly and practically measured, and that structured frameworks can facilitate more strategic purpose integration across business operations.

The Purpose Measurement Framework contributes a pragmatic tool for advancing organisational authenticity, resilience, and stakeholder value creation. Recommendations for future research include deeper engagement with Māori worldviews, long-term cultural change strategies, and the ethical integration of technology to further purpose-driven systems change.

#### About the author

Carren Richardson has been studying with AcademyEX for the past 2 and a half years, gaining her Post-Grad Diploma in Leading Change for Good and following with the Masters in Change and Organisational Resilience.

Carren is an experienced marketer and strategist, with a long background in advertising. She is now building a consultancy in the purpose-space, based on her belief that business can be a force for good.

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## ANUPAMA WIJESUNDARA

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### EMPOWERING KAIMAHI AND ENHANCING WHĀNAU ENGAGEMENT THROUGH DATA AND TECHNOLOGY

#### Research Summary

This research project addresses the significant gap in data and technology utilization at organisationX, a not-for-profit NGO located in New Zealand's North Island. The study explores how data, analytics, and disruptive technologies can enhance the effectiveness of kaimahi (staff) and management in delivering social and health services. Its primary aim is to improve decision-making, communication, and access to information. Grounded in Kaupapa Māori values, the research underscores the importance of safeguarding whānau data and embracing diverse perspectives.

The study's main research question and accompanying sub-questions are shaped by the specific needs of both kaimahi and management, aiming to generate operational insights. Employing a multi-method qualitative approach, the research utilizes in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method, supplemented by literature reviews, document analysis, and desktop research for secondary insights. The report recognizes limitations and ethical considerations, ensuring the importance of stakeholder engagement throughout the process. Spanning from January to June 2024, this project aims to provide actionable insights that will inform best practices, policies, and strategies within organisationX, ultimately enhancing the services offered to whānau in the community.

#### Who Should attend

This presentation is intended for a broad audience those involved in frontline social and health service delivery, data handling, or client engagement, are strongly encouraged to attend. Policy and systems analysts working on organisational development, data strategies, or technology integration will find the insights particularly relevant. IT and data specialists exploring or implementing analytics and disruptive technologies within the NGO sector will also benefit. Finally, community stakeholders and whānau representatives whose lived experiences are central to improving service delivery are invited to engage and contribute to the kōrero.

#### About the author

Anupama is an accomplished Analytics Manager with over a decade of experience at the intersection of data analytics, social work, and consultancy. With a proven track record of leading teams and developing effective, data-driven strategies, Anupama has consistently provided impactful analytical insights that contribute to both operational success and business growth. Skilled in leveraging data for enhanced decision-making and optimizing processes, Anupama has supported risk management and crisis intervention initiatives in various organizational settings, including Kaupapa Māori organizations. Possessing a strong background in strategic planning, critical thinking, and problem-solving, Anupama is dedicated to mentoring teams and fostering a culture of performance excellence. Anupama holds a Master's in Applied Management and a Master's in Technological Futures. With a history of delivering actionable insights that improve operational efficiency and support successful audits, Anupama is passionate about using the power of data to address complex challenges and achieve measurable outcomes. This dedication to harnessing analytical techniques drives Anupama to continue making significant contributions to the field of analytics and beyond.

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## LISA EVERETT

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### TRANSFORMING HOMEWORK: USING GAMIFICATION TO FOSTER ENGAGEMENT IN YEAR 11-12 STUDENTS

#### Research Summary

This research explores the design and implementation of a gamified spreadsheet to improve homework completion rates and engagement in year 11-12 students. The project used Action Research as its methodology, and integrated gamification elements such as experience points (XP), progress bars, and real-time feedback

Quantitative data from 32 students revealed mixed results in homework grade changes, with 22% increasing, 34% decreasing, and 31% showing no change, suggesting gamification alone wasn't effective for completion rates. However, qualitative thematic analysis highlighted two main themes: 'homework engagement' and 'teacher benefits'. While students appreciated the visibility of their scores and progress, teachers observed a perceived increase in student engagement.

An unexpected but significant outcome was the project's role in reducing teacher workload and enhancing the accuracy of homework reporting. Despite a low student survey response rate, the project's overall benefits led the school to request its continued implementation, demonstrating its value beyond initial expectations. The study also suggests the need for varied gamification elements and long-term research.

#### About the author

Lisa Everett is a teacher at Nukumea Primary School in Auckland and brings over a decade of teaching experience spanning Years 1-6. She has a passion for integrating digital technology into all areas of the curriculum. An avid gamer and puzzle enthusiast, Lisa's research interests encompass coding, game-based learning and gamification. Holding a Bachelor of Commerce in Commercial Law and Marketing, a Graduate Diploma in Primary Teaching, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Digital and Collaborative Learning, she is also recognised as an Advanced Classroom Expertise Teacher.

Lisa aims to ignite inspiration in both current and future students through the realm of gaming. Guided by the philosophy of equipping students for the future, she concentrates on fostering problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and curiosity.

Lisa delights in developing students to achieve their fullest potential and has coached Kapa Haka groups and Jump Jam teams. Beyond her dedication to research and teaching, she proudly represented New Zealand in both Pool and Karate, showcasing her competitive spirit. Additionally, Lisa engages in archery competitions, demonstrating her diverse skills and passion for sports.

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## LIZ AUINA-JONES

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### IMPROVING RHEUMATIC FEVER HEALTH LITERACY THROUGH GAMIFIED INTERVENTIONS

#### Research Summary

Rheumatic fever is a preventable disease triggered by untreated Group A Streptococcus (GAS) infections, yet it remains a persistent and inequitable health issue in Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite national prevention efforts, Māori and Pacific children, particularly those aged 4 to 19 in West and South Auckland, continue to bear a disproportionate burden. With rates showing little improvement over the past decade, there is a clear need to rethink our approach to health literacy and disease prevention.

This research investigated whether game-based health interventions (gamification) can be an effective tool for improving rheumatic fever health literacy and promoting proactive health behaviours among Māori and Pacific youth.

Grounded in Kaupapa Māori and Pacific research methodologies, this mixed-methods study highlighted systemic failures in current health education and service delivery. Health literacy is not only low, but the normalisation of poor health within deprived communities acts as a barrier to engagement. Gamified health interventions emerged as a promising and culturally resonant strategy, with the potential to reframe how health knowledge is shared and acted upon. They were seen as a way to empower students, support intergenerational learning, and ultimately drive long-term behavioural change.

#### About the author

As a Samoan woman born in Tāmaki Makaurau to migrant parents, Elizabeth brings a rich blend of personal, cultural, and professional experience to this research on rheumatic fever prevention. Her lived experience, where she was diagnosed with rheumatic fever at 13 and on penicillin treatment for a decade, provides her with empathy and deep insight into the realities faced by aiga and whānau navigating the health system.

With over ten years of experience in health policy, programme development, and commissioning, she now leads as the Principal Service Development Manager for Rheumatic Fever in the Northern Region. Elizabeth's research is guided by a Kaupapa Moana approach, which recognises the whakapapa and interconnectedness of Māori and Pacific peoples, and is grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems. This lens enables her to critically challenge systemic inequities and design culturally responsive, equity-driven strategies to improve health outcomes for Māori and Pacific communities.

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## ALICE WATSON-HARDING

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### THE OCR ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ECOSYSTEM, THE INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDERS AND THE ASSOCIATED FUTURE ROLE OF AI TECHNOLOGIES.

#### Research Summary

With 1.17 million (or 66%) of households in New Zealand owning a home or holding property in a family trust, the Official Cash Rate (OCR) has a direct impact. Clear and informative commentary on the OCR is essential to help people make informed mortgage decisions — yet the OCR commentary ecosystem is noisy and cluttered.

The ecosystem also shaped by a wide range of stakeholders - including the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, economists, the media, and the public. Each group has distinct motivations, needs, and influences. As commentary travels through this network, it can be filtered or reframed before it is interpreted.

The complexity of the OCR commentary ecosystem is further amplified with the challenges, uncertainties and magic of economic forecasting – part art, part science, qualitative and quantitative, influenced by the data available at the time and the layers or biases of human interpretation.

This completed Masters project provided deeper insights into the intricacies and influences in the OCR commentary ecosystem alongside an AI blueprint with the potential to supercharge mortgage rate decision making. It addressed the question “How do we evaluate and enhance transparency in RBNZ OCR economic forecasts, the influence of stakeholders on the forecasting ecosystem and the associated future role of AI technologies?”

Primary research was conducted with the key participants of the OCR commentary ecosystem, including experts at the RBNZ and members of the team responsible for Monetary Policy Committee data, Chief Economists and senior economists from major banks and independents, New Zealand media. Public surveys were used to gauge perceptions on OCR economic forecasting and attitudes towards an AI tool which amalgamates OCR commentary.

Secondary research provided insights into how AI is transforming economic forecasting, by enhancing the breadth, speed and depth of predictions.

The research outcomes suggested that AI tools can serve as a framework to amalgamate OCR economic commentary for stakeholders through nowcasting, large language models, natural language processing, machine learning and fine tuning.

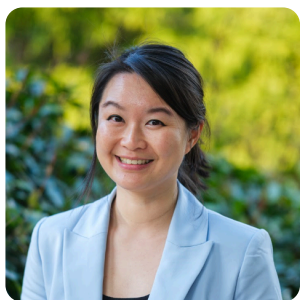
#### About the author

Alice Watson-Harding is a graduate of the Gen22 cohort of the Master of Technological Futures, completing her degree in March. She is the Group Chief Marketing Officer for two innovative and leading fintech firms, Tax Traders and Taxi. Alice brings extensive experience from senior roles at Jarden, National Australia Bank, and Reuters, and has a longstanding passion for financial markets and economics. Alice has commenced the Doctor of Business Administration programme at the University of Otago.

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**AMY CHAN**

## **USING DIGITAL SENSOR TECHNOLOGIES TO PREDICT ASTHMA ATTACKS**

### Research Summary

Asthma attacks are a leading cause of morbidity and mortality but are preventable in most if detected and treated promptly. However, the changes that occur physiologically and behaviourally in the days and weeks preceding an attack are not always recognised.

There is an opportunity for everyday sensor technologies to fill this gap by identifying biophysical changes in the body before an attack happens. The aim of our study 'DIGIPREDICT' was to identify early digital markers of asthma attacks using sensors embedded in smart devices including watches and inhalers, and leverage health and environmental datasets, to develop a risk prediction model to provide an early, personalised warning of asthma attacks. We have recruited over 130 people to date, with a target sample of 200 people, 10 years or older, with a history of a moderate or severe asthma attack in the last 12 months.

Each participant is given a smart watch (to assess physiological measures such as heart and respiratory rate), peak flow meter, smart inhaler or spacer (to assess adherence and inhalation) and a cough monitor mobile app to use over 6 months. Other data collected include: fortnightly questionnaires on asthma control and well-being, sociodemographic data; lung function; dietary intake; medical history and technology acceptance assessed at baseline and at 6 months.

The collected data, along with environmental data on weather and air quality, will be analysed using traditional regression and machine learning approaches to identify early digital markers of attacks and develop a risk prediction model for asthma attacks.

### About the author

Dr Amy Chan is Associate Professor and co-lead of the Medicines Intelligence big data group at the School of Pharmacy, University of Auckland. She is a clinical pharmacist by training with over 15 years' experience working in hospital, where she led one of the clinical pharmacy teams. Amy holds an honorary post with the Centre of Behavioural Medicine, University College London, UK, where she completed her postdoctoral fellowship training. She now leads a research group that explores the intersection between digital technology, big data and health behaviours, with a focus on risk factors, adherence and outcomes.

She is currently leading the implementation working group for the European Respiratory Society Clinical Research Collaboration CONNECT which focuses on digital respiratory healthcare. She is also the senior behavioural scientist for a UCL-spin out company which designs adherence programmes, and provides consultancy to charities, medical research organisations, and non-government organisations. She has supervised over 70 projects and is the global lead for workforce transformation with the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP). Amy is also a Minister-appointed councillor for the Pharmacy Council New Zealand, and member of the Respiratory Effectiveness Group, Open Digital Health, PSA Respiratory Taskforce and clinical director of Asthma NZ.

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