



## A tribute to colleagues Warren Parker and Kristene Gedye

Warren Parker, Genomics Aotearoa board member 2017-2023



Genomics Aotearoa mourns the recent loss of our board member Dr Warren Parker CNZM, who died suddenly on December 29, 2023.

Warren had served on the Genomics Aotearoa board since its inception. William Rolleston, chair of Genomics Aotearoa, has paid tribute to his service, saying Warren used his vast experience across agriculture, forestry and conservation to provide views which were balanced and forward thinking. "His questions were well researched, probing and thoughtful."

"Warren was a man of conviction and action who, through logic, respect for others and a constantly positive attitude, sought to make Aotearoa New Zealand a better place. His good humour, company and talents have been lost to us all well before time."

Warren's significant contribution to New Zealand has been evidenced by the numerous tributes published across the country's media that noted how well respected he was in the many organisations he headed and was involved in.

We have passed on our heartfelt condolences to his family at this sad time.

#### **Kristene Gedye, Genomics Aotearoa Principal Investigator**



Genomics Aotearoa pays tribute to Kristene Gedye, who passed away in Palmerston North on February 16, 2024. Kristene was a Senior Research Officer in Molecular Biology in the Massey University School of Veterinary Science, and the Massey University Principal Investigator for the Genomics Aotearoa Distributed Sequencing project.

Kristene was working closely with postdoc Andrea Grana on the GA project, which was investigating "point-of-need genomics" which means the ability to sequence DNA out of the labs and closer to where it is needed – Massey's role was to look at its potential for identification of sheep gastrointestinal parasites.

Kristene's studies across molecular genetics, gene expression and transcriptomics covered a very wide range of pathogen topics including viruses, microbiomes, bacteria and ticks. She co-supervised many postgraduate students and was well respected for her technical ability in the lab - her depth of knowledge, her troubleshooting and willingness to help, including to the postgraduate students, was renowned.

Massey University colleague Patrick Biggs said Kristine exemplified the hashtag #kindnessinscience, and was passionate about keeping everyone in the lab safe whilst they were doing their research. Her role on the Vet School Health and Safety Committee also demonstrated this deepfelt caring for others.

The Genomics Aotearoa team pass on our condolences to Kristene's family and colleagues.

### In the news

- Amanda Black and Peter Dearden's research grant considering the science and ethics of genetically modifying wasps as a form of pest control for the ever-increasing wasp problem in New Zealand has been highlighted in the media, including on [Radio New Zealand](#) and in [Stuff](#).
- Media coverage of David Chagné's work showing that mānuka plant species is distinct to Aotearoa NZ, has included [Newshub](#), [Radio NZ](#), and [Waatea](#).

- Joseph Guhlin (University of Otago) and his Genomics Aotearoa research into kākāpō recently featured in the [Smithsonian magazine](#).

Let us know if you have a research story you'd like to share in the media.

### Coming up: Genomics Aotearoa Early Career Researcher meeting

Genomics Aotearoa is again holding its annual meeting of postdocs and early career researchers, organised by Training Coordinator Tyler McInnes. This year's meeting in Wellington on May1-2 spans two days and includes a diverse spread of workshops and networking events.

## Genomics Aotearoa research

### Acknowledgement reminder

Please acknowledge Genomics Aotearoa in all media promotions, papers, posters, at talks and presentations, and in any handout information pertaining to Genomics Aotearoa-funded work. Please liaise with the Communications team to use the Genomics Aotearoa logo in acknowledgements, and for any further advice.

### Publications

#### Acknowledging Genomics Aotearoa funding:

- [A validated restriction enzyme ddPCR cg05575921 \(AHRR\) assay to accurately assess smoking exposure](#) by Sandra Fitzgerald, Basharat Bhat, Cristin Print, Gregory Jones, published in Research Square, Research Square Platform LLC (September 2023).

- [Gaps in current methods to detect polymorphic CpGs from Illumina Infinium human methylation microarrays and exploring their potential impact in multi-EWAS analyses](#) by Basharat Bhat and Gregory Jones, published in NHI National Library of Medicine Epub (November 2023).
- [A framework for identifying fertility gene targets for mammalian pest control](#) by Anna C Clark, Alana Alexander, Rey Edison, Kevin Esvelt, Sebastian Kamau, Ludovic Dutoit, Jackson Champer, Samuel E Champer, Philipp W Messer, Neil J Gemmell. BioRxiv 2023 June 2023.

#### **Acknowledging use of data:**

- [Insights into the evolution of the eucalypt CER1 and CER3 genes involved in the synthesis of alkane waxes](#) by Mariano A. Hernández, René E. Vaillancourt, Brad M. Potts & Jakob B. Butler, published in Tree Genetics & Genomes (January 2024).
- [Non-invasive real-time genomic monitoring of the critically endangered kākāpō](#) by Lara Urban, Allison K Miller, Daryl Eason, Deidre Vercoe, Megan Shaffer, Shaun P Wilkinson, Gert-Jan Jeunen, Neil J Gemmell, Andrew Digby, 'Elife 2023 Dec 28:12:RP84553.

#### **Referencing the Genomics Aotearoa, Variome project:**

- [Inclusion of Under-Represented Populations in Cardiovascular Genetics and Epidemiology](#) by Elias Chappell, Laura Arbour and Zachary Laksman, published in the Journal of Cardiovascular Development and Disease (February 2024).

## **Genomics Aotearoa Seminar Series**

Genomics Aotearoa is pleased to announce its Friday seminar series starts with Andelka Philips and Jan Charbonneau (University of Tasmania) on **Friday, March 8 at 3pm**, talking on "Privacy and the World of DTC - Data Breaches are already happening." This is a follow-on from the very successful update Andelka gave our Genomics Aotearoa community last year on their genetics privacy survey.

On **Friday March 22 at 10 am** we present another international speaker - Ronald Jenner, Principal Researcher at the Natural History Museum in London. Ronald researches the evolution of animal venoms and the conceptual history of phylogenetics, and is the author of *Venom: The secrets of nature's deadliest weapon* (with Eivind Undheim) and *Ancestors in evolutionary biology. Linear thinking about branching trees.*"

Ronald will be speaking to us live on "Seeing evolution through a cladistic blindfold; the challenges of thinking about evolving lineages in a world of taxa." Please let colleagues know, and note the **10am** start time.

## eResearch NZ 2024



The year might have only just kicked off, but we have already chalked up a highlight - the [eResearch NZ 2024](#) | eRangahau Aotearoa conference, in Wellington from February 7-9 .

eResearch NZ, a collaborative initiative organised by REANNZ, NeSI and Genomics Aotearoa, is the leading conference for the New Zealand eResearch community. It was REANNZ's turn to host the event, which this year had the

strategic theme of He Moana Pukepuke e Ekengia e te Waka | Navigating an evolving eResearch landscape.

Together over 150 delegates learned about the latest innovations, shared information and challenges, and celebrated achievements. Feedback from those who attended confirms the conference is the best opportunity our researchers and bioinformatics experts have to network and learn, something that is strengthening the ever-growing eResearch New Zealand community.

## Upcoming bioinformatics training

### **RNA-seq Data Analysis - March 20**

This online workshop is delivered by Genomics Aotearoa and NeSI, and is for New Zealand researchers interested in RNA-seq data analysis. The focus of this workshop is to analyse RNA-seq data with the aim to identify differentially expressed genes. [Register for this workshop at Eventbrite.](#)

### **Introduction to Bash Scripting and HPC Job Scheduler - March 27**

This online workshop is delivered by Genomics Aotearoa and NeSI, and is for New Zealand researchers interested in learning to write scripts and submit jobs to an HPC using a scheduler. [Register for this workshop at Eventbrite.](#)

### **Intermediate R for Bioinformatics - April 10**

This online workshop is delivered by Genomics Aotearoa and NeSI, and is for New Zealand researchers interested in advancing their skills with R. [Register for this workshop at Eventbrite.](#)

If you would like some exposure to teaching and training through volunteering,

or if you have ideas for future workshops, please get in contact with **Tyler McInnes** ([tyler.mcinnnes@otago.ac.nz](mailto:tyler.mcinnnes@otago.ac.nz)).

## Media training

The Science Media Centre offers several **Science Media SAVVY** courses each year for currently active researchers in any field, employed in New Zealand, who have a research project or area of expertise of potential interest to media or is likely to encounter media interest in future. The next course is in Christchurch on April 18-19, 2024 - see [here](#) for details.

Media SAVVY for Māori researchers is a fees-free workshop aimed at increasing the visibility of Māori researchers and the impact of their work in both mainstream and Māori media outlets. The next available workshop will be in Auckland on July 4-5, 2024 - link [here](#).

Otago's Media Engagement team also run regular workshops and information sessions to help University of Otago researchers work with the media. Enquiries to [Liane Topham-Kindley](#).

## Introducing Tanis Godwin



Tanis Godwin is working within Genomics Aotearoa's Bioinformatics Capability project, joining a combined NeSI and GA team to assist with the operation of the Aotearoa Genomic Data Repository (AGDR) and increase AGDR linkages with Indigenous Genomics Platform (IGP) projects. She is working alongside Vision Mātauranga Manager Tracey Godfery and Co-Director Mik Black.

Tanis has worked in Parry Guilford's lab at the University of Otago for 14 years, undertaking research into hereditary gastric cancer. She has worked on a variety of projects, including the chemoprevention of gastric cancer and on the development of a device to be used for the detection of circulating tumour DNA (ctDNA) in the blood stream. Working together with iwi introduced her to Te Ao Māori, so when the opportunity arose to work part-time with Mik Black assisting in the management of the AGDR and the IGP alongside her existing role, she knew it was something she wanted to be involved in.

## New to our website

### Introducing a new Genomics Aotearoa Indigenous Genomics Platform project:

#### **Kauri dieback detection - developing real time, point-of-need surveillance.**

Monitoring for the organism causing kauri dieback in Aotearoa New Zealand is critical, but also difficult; it is slow and expensive and involves removing soils from ngahere [forests], which presents sample repatriation issues.

Developing a point-of-need test for *Phytophthora agathidicida*, the pathogen responsible for kauri dieback, would be ground-breaking. Placing much-needed technology in the hands of communities, point-of-need surveillance will allow faster and better decision-making, reduce costs, provide more effective monitoring, and avoid removing soils from their respective ngahere.

Read more about the Genomics Aotearoa project [here](#)

## Genomics Aotearoa YouTube Channel

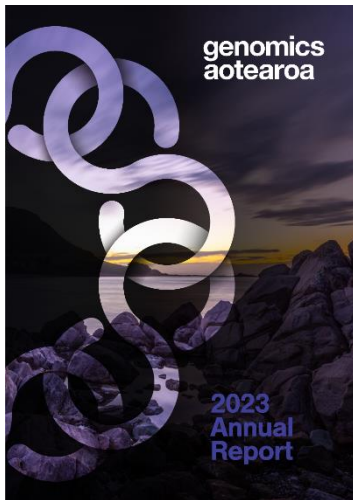


[Genomics Aotearoa YouTube Channel](#)

We have recently added some of our Friday seminars onto the Genomics Aotearoa YouTube channel:

- [Richard Newcomb](#)
- [Patrick Sullivan](#)
- [Karen Miga](#)
- [Thomas Buckley](#)
- [Laura Duntsch](#)
- [Zhongchi Lui](#)

We welcome suggestions for hosting content that our community would find useful - please email [Jess McLean](#).



## Genomics Aotearoa Annual Report 2023

If you haven't already, take a look at the Genomics Aotearoa 2023 Annual Report [here](#). And please pass on the link or let us know if you have collaborators who would appreciate a hard copy.

## Genomics events

- **March 27, 2024, 4pm (NZDT):** Asia-Pacific Genetics Seminar Series - Dr Zhengli Shi, Professor Director of the Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases, Wuhan Institute of Virology, talking on "Surveillance and countermeasures against coronaviruses with potential spillover from wildlife."
- **Aug 19-21, 2024:** GeneMappers 2024 conference, Christchurch

Let us know if you would like to add an event.

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## **Contact Genomics Aotearoa**

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