

The meeting was held on Friday, 1 May 2026 at Te Whare Apārangi, and via videocall.

Present: Geoff Chase (Chair, Academy Executive Committee), Neil Gemmell (Domain Convenor – Biological and Environmental Sciences), Jane Harding (President, Royal Society Te Apārangi), Lynda Johnston (Domain Convenor – Social and Behavioural Sciences), Stephen May (Deputy Chair, Academy Executive Committee), Nancy November (Domain Convenor – Humanities), Rohan Ameratunga, Tim Anderson, Skelte Anema, Rod Badcock, Mike Baker, Peter Barrett, Neil Boister, John Caradus, Natalia Chaban, Andrew Cleland, Brent Clothier, Tony Conner, Averil Coxhead, John Crump, Fred Davey, Cecile de Klein, Peter Dearden, Nicola Gaston, John Haines, Aiguo Hu, Sue Huang, Udaya Madawala, Snejina Michailova, Paul Millar, James Murphy, Wendy Nelson, Andy Nicol, Nigel Perry, Kim Pickering, Katie Pickles, Steven Ratuva, David Schiel, David Skegg, Yvonne Underhill-Sem, Bruce Weir, Bing Xue, Mengjie Zhang.

Apologies: Cliff Abraham, Philip Barnes, Barbara Brookes, Brendon Bradley, Virginia Braun, Deirdre Brown, Ian Brown, Rowland Burdon, John Butcher, Owen Catchpole, Charles Clifton, Stephane Coen, Marston Conder, Leo Condron, Kevin Davies, Catherine Day, Renwick Dobson, Ken Dodds, Roberta Farrell, John Harper, Charles Higham, Andrew Hill, Justin Hodgkiss, Anthony Hōete, Simon Holdaway, Philippa Howden-Chapman, Geoff Jameson, John Kennedy, Robyn Longhurst, Ken Markham, Tim Naish, Charmian O'Connor, Stephen Robertson, Brett Robinson, Cornel de Ronde, Nic Smith, Hamish Spencer, Jeff Tallon, John Troughton, Moana Waitoki, Qiao Wang, Graham Weir, David Whitehead, Kjesten Wiig, David V Williams, David Williams, Paul Young

Discussion speakers: Yun Sing Koh, Sir Ashley Bloomfield KNZM CRSNZ

In attendance: Justine Daw, James Henry, Kahu Hotere, Marc Rands.

1. Welcome

Geoff Chase welcomed Fellows to the Forum, and Kahu Hotere gave a karakia.

2. Valedictories

Geoff Chase announced the deaths since the last Annual Forum of the following Fellows and a minute's silence was observed:

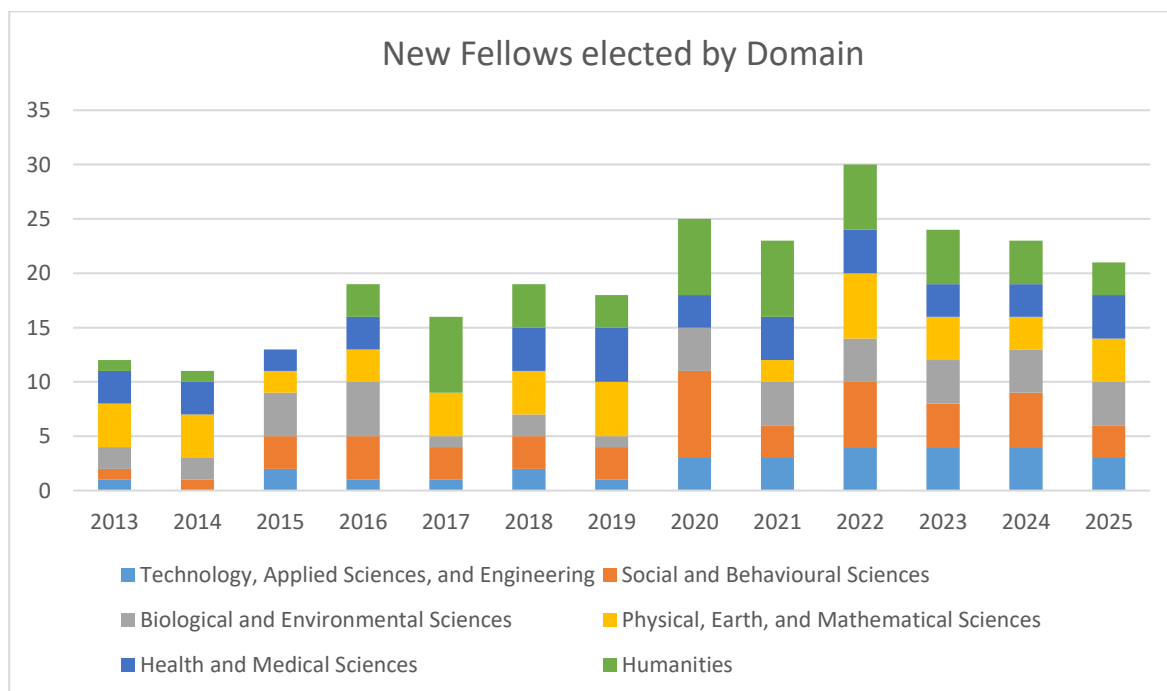
- **Professor John Bradshaw FRSNZ** (University of Canterbury) 1939–2025. John Bradshaw was a distinguished geologist and a leading authority on tectonics in the South Pacific region. Mount Bradshaw in Antarctica is named to commemorate his role in New Zealand's Antarctic geological expeditions in the 1970s and 1980s.
- **Dr Janet Grieve ONZM FRSNZ** (National Institute for Water and Atmospheric Research) 1940–2025. Janet Grieve was a specialist in the taxonomy and phylogeny of planktonic copepod crustaceans and the interaction of physical and biological processes in marine environments.
- **Professor Helen Leach ONZM FRSNZ** (University of Otago) 1945–2026. Helen Leach achieved world-class status for her scholarly contributions in the fields of Polynesian stone technology; the social history and anthropology of horticulture; culinary practice and plant foods; and the documentation and critical assessment of the history of archaeology and anthropology in Oceania.

- **Professor Stuart Letham Hon FRSNZ** (Australian National University) 1926–2025. Stuart Letham was a chemist and biochemist whose pioneering work on plant cell-division factors led to the identification of zeatin, the first naturally occurring cytokinin to be identified.
- **Professor Digby Macdonald HonFRSNZ** (University of California, Berkeley) 1943–2025. Digby Macdonald was a pioneering scientist in corrosion and electrochemistry who developed the concept of redox control (oxidation–reduction potential control) to adjust water chemistry in the primary coolant systems of various water-cooled nuclear reactors.
- **Dr Alex McNabb FRSNZ** (University of Auckland) 1930–2025. Alex McNabb was one of New Zealand’s leading applied mathematicians, providing a framework for the theory of existence and uniqueness of solutions to differential equations.
- **Professor Alan Musgrave FRSNZ** (University of Otago) 1940–2026. Alan Musgrave was one of New Zealand's most distinguished philosophers, establishing a strong international reputation in the philosophy of science, writing on the philosophy of economics, the philosophy of mathematics, and the history and philosophy of biology.
- **Dr Graeme Stevens QSO FRSNZ** (GNS Science) 1932–2026. Graeme Stevens was an expert in the systematics, biostratigraphy, and palaeobiogeography of Jurassic and Cretaceous Belemnoida and Jurassic Ammonoidea, and one of the first professional geoscientists to devote time to teaching geoscience to a non-scientific audience.

Obituaries have been or will be lodged on the Society’s website as they are provided.

3. Report of the Academy and Remarks from Chair of the Academy, Distinguished Professor Geoff Chase FRSNZ

Tēnā koutou katoa, welcome back. Particular thanks again to all the new Fellows that are here today, and congratulations to all of you.



In numbers, there are 21 new Fellows inducted. We gave out 19 medals and awards. Of those 21 Fellows, and we're sometimes asked this: How has that looked by domain over the past, in this case, about 12 or 13 years? You can see that the number we admit every year is quite variable. This is because it's about excellence. We receive a number of excellent nominations every year, a number are passed on, several are admitted. Every year we're asked, or perhaps assume, there's maybe some bias by domain or by other thing, and I think you can see by the panoply of colours and heights that that is at least not planned.

We gave out 19 medals and awards at the Research Honours Aotearoa events in Christchurch, Auckland, and Wellington. The Rutherford Medal, our top honour, went to Distinguished Professor Wickliffe Abraham. We have nine new Companions elected, and we're still looking for more excellent Companions. Five Fellows were in the 2026 New Year's Honours List — Professors Danesh–Meyer, Le Gros, Hayward, Martin, and Moughan. I think, if we want to look through this by the numbers, one part of our job as a peak body of science and an academy is recognising and promoting excellence, and I think that that's shown up in all those areas.

From the leadership standpoint, this is my last forum as Chair of the AEC. The election is ongoing, and my best wishes and small amounts of condolences to whoever wins that election.

Internationally, we are highly engaged. There was a Taikura Tri-Academy Summit that was held in Auckland, with 150 participants. Māori led and concluded with a communiqué on Indigenous Partnership and Global Research. CAETS, the Council of Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences — an academy of academies, I think, if I have the right hierarchy there (because if you are in STEM at all, you know that it's all about the acronyms). That [conference] was in Brisbane, and Dame Jane Harding and Professor Anthony Hōete represented us there.

Probably the biggest thing and the biggest news was the initiative we've had about addressing threats to research, in particular in the face of various cuts that have come through and have been in the news for the past year or almost a year. It's been led by a number of people, particularly our Domain Conveners Nancy November, Neil Boister, and several others who were too long to list here. Looking at the scope of this report, it is to remind government of the value of science — its scope, its impact, and in particular the value delivered — and creating, hopefully, a sense of the opportunity, so, even as change occurs, that opportunities can be created moving forward for New Zealand through science funding.

Some of the things that we'll be asking you for later on, and our part of this report already, is thinking about impact stories. Everything from start-ups created, jobs created — the mundane, if you will, but necessary — through to capacity created, the prestige gained, the lives changed. There's a wide range of research represented in all of you out there. There was a wide range in our valedictories, and there's a wide range of the ways in which we all touch on regular society. I think if there's been an issue for us, we sometimes forget to mention that to people, at least in ways that they understand.

The straight facts on the funding landscape: in July last year, the New Zealand Institute for Advanced Technology was announced. It's funded partly by cuts to Marsden, the Health Research Council, and the Endeavour Funds in part, and other areas. The funding system, in short, is changing almost in its entirety — one could say the cards are pretty much all in the air.

There's a new board taking over Marsden. So for those who don't know, I'm also on the Marsden Fund Council. While this year we are still running the Marsden Fund out of the Royal Society, Research Funding New Zealand will be providing any final approval, as it were, over those decisions that come out of Round 2. Next year, it will be all new, and the last that I've heard, for those that might wish to ask, is that nobody here, and I myself in particular, know what that will look like. It could be all new, it could be the same thing in a different building. It will likely be something in between those two is my very safe bet.

So that actually brings to an end, as it stands, the 30-year stewardship of the Marsden Fund at the Society. I think the Royal Society Te Apārangi has a lot to be proud of in that delivery, across a huge range of impact stories.

For you, particularly the new Fellows, we have three asks. Every year, we'd like to see more Fellow nominations – more high-quality Fellow nominations – in particular, not only Māori nominations, but Pasifika nominations. We cannot elect people that are not nominated, so get out and nominate those people you think are of the quality, of the standard, and deserve the recognition. The same stands, actually, for Companions.

Send your impact stories to myself and to the Academy (Marc Rands). Particularly anything short, concrete, and evidence-based. Government, particularly at the moment, is responding to these. They want to see positive impact. They want to be able to go to people and say, "When I want more money for this, it's because this." That simple, concrete outcome is sometimes something that we're all well-trained not to talk about. I think we need to probably learn to talk about that a little bit more here and there.

I think, as I said, it's been a hard year. I think we've done a good job. If you have opinions to the contrary, I have heard from some of you, and I may hear from others, but there's always more work and more to do.

And with that, I'd like to hand over to President Jane Harding to talk about the Society as a whole.

4. Report by the President of the Society, Distinguished Professor Dame Jane Harding DNZM FRSNZ

Tēnā koutou katoa,

I am going to speak briefly about the Society broadly: our governance, our leadership, and our ongoing work that has quietly continued through a fairly noisy year.

Governance

In April last year, after extensive consultation, Council agreed to a significant refresh of our internal governance structure. The aim was twofold: better, more focused governance, and closer engagement with all of the membership.

In terms of the governing Council, we reduced its size from twelve to eight, retaining the two seats elected by the Māori Electoral College, and adopted a skills matrix to guide appointments.

In September we welcomed the first new Council members elected using this revised process: Professor Stephen May, Deputy Chair of the Academy Executive, and Dr William Rolleston, elected by the general membership. I would like to pay warm tribute to the Councillors whose terms ended last year; Cate Macinnis-Ng, Susy Frankel, Marie Bradley, Steve Ratuva, and Jens Mueller. We very much appreciate the time and effort they contributed to further the work of the Society.

In terms of the second objective of the governance reforms – enhancing engagement with the membership – we have instituted the first of planned biannual meetings with each of the membership groups. These are attended by the Chief Executive, the President, and other Council members, and minutes are reported back to the Council. So far attendance has been high and there has been fantastic engagement with the work of the Society and our shared objectives. I look forward to more of these wonderful events in the future.

Finally on the topic of governance, I have been particularly pleased to welcome Hadee Thompson-Morrison as our inaugural Early-Career Researcher Observer on Council. This provides the opportunity for the important ECR voice at the Council table, while also offering governance training for the career development of one observer each year. We are delighted with this new initiative which is already enriching our deliberations.

Leadership

Turning, then, to the leadership of the Society, last year we said goodbye to Paul Atkins, who as Chief Executive led the Society with care and clarity for 4 years. His legacy lives on in our 20-year Strategic Plan.

James Henry then steered us beautifully through a somewhat turbulent interregnum as Acting Chief Executive - thank you, James.

And in January we welcomed Justine Daw as our new Tumu Whakarae Chief Executive. Her focus on the risks but also new opportunities for the Society, and her energy and networks are a real asset. I am sure you will all take the opportunity to meet her and make her welcome at this event.

Finally on the topic of leadership, I would remind Fellows that later this year we will be starting the process of electing the next President of the Society. Please start thinking about who you would like to lead the Society from 2027. I'd be happy to discuss what is involved with anyone who may be interested.

Speaking up

But while getting our own house in order is critical, our major role is to be outward facing. When the Prime Minister announced the New Zealand Institute for Advanced Technology in July, funded partly by further cuts to the Marsden, Health Research, and Endeavour Funds, I wrote formally to the Prime Minister expressing the Society's concern, and we then met more than once with Minister Reti. Those conversations with relevant government Ministers are ongoing and important.

We have been working hard to clarify a distinction that matters: between applied "basic" research directed at a specific problem, and blue-skies "discovery" research, without an immediate application, but which provides the pipeline of ideas that feed future innovation. Both are essential, as also are research in the Humanities and Social Sciences; points we are making to decision-makers at every opportunity.

We are currently working with MBIE to scope an independent evaluation of the Marsden Fund over its 30 years. This work will sit alongside the Academy Advisory Group's report on threats to research, to help make the case for sustained Crown investment in discovery research across all disciplines.

Finally, we have developed a set of consistent messages to decision-makers, to be shared with our membership and also with other players in the science and innovation system. We hope that this will help us all "sing from the same song-sheet" to clarify what will work for the system, and for all of us. Please help us amplify these voices by sharing these messages in your own networks and opportunities. The future of New Zealand needs all of us to contribute.

In closing, it has been a year of turbulence but also of quiet achievement. Thank you, each of you, for the work you do that makes that achievement possible. I look forward to continuing to work with you in the year ahead as we focus on our key purpose:

Growing pathways of knowledge to enable science and research to be shared for the benefit of all.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

5. Report by the Chief Executive of the Society, Justine Daw

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e rau rangatira mā, tēnā koutou katoa.

It is a great honour to host today's Annual Fellows Forum, my first at the helm of this august and distinguished organisation.

Our work matters

Yesterday was a celebration – and rightly so. Today is a call to action, an invitation to work together to ensure that the voice of New Zealand's leading experts is heard, influential, and informs the choices facing this country. I feel some urgency about this. The work of the Society, its membership of 1,500 individuals and 60-odd organisations – your work – has never been more important.

This year's World Economic Forum Global Risks Report identified mis- and dis-information as the second highest risk to global wealth and wellbeing in the short term. As one of the world's most digitally connected nations, New Zealand is not immune. But we have an important window of opportunity. In the latest comprehensive global survey, New Zealand ranked ninth in the world for highest trust in science. But here, as globally, levels of trust are dropping.

Strategic focus

It is clear that the Society's operating environment is undergoing major transformation. This requires us to be agile and future-facing: as Mark Carney so aptly put it, nostalgia is not a strategy, and we cannot expect to return to the world we once had.

As the new Tumu Whakarae Chief Executive, I am focused on delivering the Society's **Pathways of Knowledge** strategy, to grow the relevance and impact of the organisation and ensure we can navigate successfully the challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

My immediate priorities are:

1. **To lift the voice and visibility of research** – we have successfully engaged decision-makers in an election year, and developed common messages to amplify system perspectives. We are also starting work to strategically position the Science Media Centre ahead of its rebid proposal early next year.
2. **To better articulate the value proposition** – from a strategic standpoint, there is some urgency to better articulate the value of research and grow the constituency for continued support and investment. Our work engaging with communities is key to this. Among other initiatives, this year we will be working to reinstate a National Science Fair, and we will continue to support science teachers and primary and secondary school children to engage with STEM.
3. **To partner more systematically** – I am seeking to build more effective two-way engagement with the Society's membership and system partners and facilitate meaningful collaborations to support our vision of "an Aotearoa New Zealand guided and inspired by science and research". While resources are in short supply, we can still achieve real impact by working together.
4. **To support the next generation** – an estimated 30% of our national research workforce is expected to retire within the next 5 years. Capability development is therefore a growing focus for our work. Each year, we support Fellowships for early- and mid-career researchers, and we are also now looking to expand our National Early Career Forum and its associated mentoring programme.
5. **To reinvigorate our work to support te ao Māori** – We are refreshing our te ao Māori work programme, including by partnering with Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga to develop mātauranga Māori case studies. We are also already planning for the third Indigenous Research Summit later this year, working closely with the Australian and Canadian Academies.

In closing, I'm looking forward to working with you all. My congratulations, once again, to our new Fellows.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

6. Presentation on 'What is truth in the age of AI?' (Professor Yun Sing Koh, Faculty of Computer Science, University of Auckland, and Professor Sir Ashley Bloomfield KNZM CRSNZ Chief Executive, New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science)

Professor Yun Sing Koh and Professor Sir Ashley Bloomfield gave presentations on how artificial intelligence distinguishes truth from data, and how this tool is now being used and mis-used.

Key points from the subsequent discussion included:

- The risks of AI models to exploit vulnerabilities in our online public systems, and the role of Government in its protection.
- Bad actors are using these tools to undermine trust in research. How can we use these same tools to improve trust.
- Public Civil institutions provide an ethical safeguard, but they are being undermined.
- Should researchers make their data available to AI models so they become more accurate and provide the public with better results?
- We are being held to the pace of change of the AI companies, irrespective of the benefits or risks. We need a public discourse on what we want to do with AI, as a country.
- There is a growing religious community providing people with advice, particularly in the Pacific.
- Advertising uses 'sciencyness' to sell products – this could undermine trust in scientists. Need to deal with the mis-representation of science to sell products.
- How the Society can act in these times of change, to build trust in its people and members, and use AI to our best advantage.

Geoff Chase thanked the speakers for their presentations and the great discussion they prompted.

Anthony Hōete gave a closing karakia to end the meeting.