



Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take ā-Iwi o te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa

Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel

End of Term Report 2022-2025.

11 September, 2025



'E Lē Tū Fa'amauga Se Tagata'

'No one succeeds alone, and no one suffers alone'

Fa'anānā Efeso Collins, Maiden Speech, New Zealand House of Representatives, 15 February 2024

This term 2022-2025, we lost one of our very best in Pacific leadership; Member of Parliament, Fa'anānā Efeso Collins. A former Councillor & Local Board Chair of the Auckland Council whānau. He was a close brother, mentor and inspiration to our panel and we dedicate this report to his memory and continued legacy.

E moni upu a le atunu'u, e pei ona saunoa le Afioga iā Fa'anānā; 'E Lē Tū Fa'amauga Se Tagata'. O le tagata ma lona aiga, o le tagata fo'i ma lona fa'asinomaga. E mo'omia le tatou galulue fa'atasi auā se manuia po'o se taeao mo le tatou atunu'u. Auā o le finagalo fo'i lea o Iesu, ina ia tatou maua le fealofani, aemaise le ola femulumulua'i. O le agaga lava lea a lenei komiti, o le tatou tutū fa'atasi e fa'aleo manaoga ma vaega e fa'alelei atili mo a tatou tagata Pasefika. Ia manuia tele le pulega a le tatou aai o Aukilani. Soifua ona o Iesu.

Key messages

Over this term, the Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel (PPAP) provided culturally grounded, community-informed advice across a wide range of Auckland Council policy, strategy, plans and initiatives.

Our work focused on key priorities for Pacific communities including climate resilience, civic engagement including local body elections, emergency response, economic participation, cultural identity and equity.

The panel strengthened Pacific engagement and helped ensure our peoples' lived realities were reflected in Council decision-making.

We championed Pacific-led and talanoa-informed approaches hoping to shift how Council listens, engages, and responds to Pacific voices.

Through cross-panel collaboration and participatory forums, we helped amplify Pacific perspectives across the wider Council ecosystem.



Purpose

This report outlines the work and impact of the Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel during the 2022–2025 term, including priorities, engagement, insights, and recommendations for future advisory practice.

Panel Overview

The PPAP is one of Auckland Council’s demographic advisory panels. The panel comprises members from diverse Pacific backgrounds, supported by council staff and liaised with by an elected councillor. Its purpose is to advise the council on issues affecting Pacific communities and to strengthen the responsiveness of policies and services delivered by Council.

Members of the panel

Panel Leadership

Co-Chairs: Litiana Karika and Seumanu Seuoti Simon Matāfai (elected August 2023).

Litiana Karika

Litiana, of Fijian, Samoan and Pākehā descent, was born and raised in Māngere currently residing in Takaanini. With a Master of Public Policy (First Class Honours) from the University of Auckland, she works as a policy professional at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, focusing on Pacific economic development. Her work is driven by a deep love for people and commitment to better outcomes for Pacific communities.

Seumanu Seuoti Simon Matāfai JP

One of Aotearoa’s youngest Justices of the Peace, Seumanu is a Kiwi-born Samoan with an orator chief title. After global youth advocacy roles with the UN and NGOs, he became the first Samoan elected to the Whau Local Board at age 24. He holds an MBA, a Postgrad in Law, and a BA in History and Music. A choir master and piano teacher, Seumanu also serves on the governance of Pasifika Festival and Whau Pasifika and produces the *K.o.k.o Samoa Youth Show* on Radio Samoa.

Panel Members

Arizona Haddon (resigned May 2025)

Of Samoan and Māori descent (Lu'ua, Musumusu, Waikato Tainui), Arizona is completing a Master's in Urban Planning and has a BA in Sociology. Her advocacy began at Massey University through the Pasifika Students' Association. She works in housing equity, mentors' Pacific students at the University of Auckland, and is a Research Assistant at Massey.

Evo Leota-Tupou

Founder of *Pacific Kids' Learning*, Evo is a proud Samoan mum of five from Ōtara. With a degree in Computer Graphics and Design, she is active in the EdTech and AI policy space. She serves on EdTechNZ, Tech Women NZ, and contributes to Te Whatu Ora's AI advisory group, advocating for children with disabilities.

Hainoame Fulivai

A New Zealand-born Tongan rooted in Mt Wellington, Hainoame is a mum of two and an alum of AGGS and the University of Auckland. With a recent Master's in Technology Futures, she brings 20+ years' experience in community development and social innovation. She co-chaired the 2020–2022 Panel, is Chair of the Pasifika Funders Network, and leads initiatives supporting Tongan women in digital innovation.

Hassana Kirkwood

Of Niuean, Māori, Fijian Indian, and Irish descent, Hassana is passionate about getting her people into education and employment. With over 7 years in recruitment, she also advocates for Pacific leadership in tech through FLINT. Based in Māngere, she is motivated by her young son to push for diverse representation in all sectors.

Mary Brown

Mary is of Fijian and Samoan heritage and was raised in Māngere. A seasoned educator with over 20 years of experience, she holds a Master's in Educational Leadership and is currently a principal in a Central Auckland faith-based school. Mary is committed to equity in education and has served on the Panel for two terms.

Mavae Ahio

First-generation NZ-born Tongan, Mavae is from Fua'amotu and Feletoa. Raised in South Auckland, he holds a BA in Anthropology and Geography, a Postgrad in Health Science, and a Master in Māori and Pacific Development (Hons). A former teacher and advisor in education and mental health, he now works as a Principal

Advisor at the Ministry of Education and serves as Youth Leader for the United Church of Tonga in NZ.

Penina Tu'unai (Saoatulagi-ole-Tagaloa Penina Ifopo)

A proud Samoan raised in Musumusu Fagaloa, Penina transitioned from 15 years in the public service to founding a social enterprise in 2020. With a Master's in Educational Leadership, she's held roles in union advocacy and school governance. A strong advocate for social justice, she is also a weaver, businesswoman, and community connector guided by faith, family, and alofa.

Seimoana Naisali

Seimoana, a mum of two, was raised on Auckland's North Shore with Tokelauan and Tuvaluan heritage. With a Master's in International Development, she has worked in NZ Police and now co-leads *Jobs For Mums*, promoting flexible work for caregivers. She recently represented NZ, Tokelau and Tuvalu at the U.S. Young Pacific Leaders conference.

Taitu'uga Aiolutepa Mirofora Mataafa-Komiti

From Lufilufi, Salesatele and Falelima, Taitu'uga is a mum of four and a Project Manager at Le Va. With BA (Hons) and MA (First Class Honours) in Pacific Studies, she previously lectured in Samoan Language and Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland. Her service is guided by values of love, family, and fa'aaloalo.

Vaifale Natano Melvin Le'avasā

A proud New Zealand Samoan from Solosolo, Vaiala, Moata'a and Vaimoso, Vaifale is deeply involved in community sport and research. He is a Quantity Surveyor and Research Assistant with a Bachelor in Construction Economics, a Master in Technological Futures, and is pursuing a Doctorate in Indigenous Development.

- Note: one panel member resigned during the term; Arizona Haddon in May 2025.

Supported by Council Staff and Elected Members

We have been supported by a number of Council staff in different capacities throughout our term, but we wanted to name and honour some specific staff members for their incredible contributions to helping our panel do the best work we can. You have been unwavering in your service and support of this kaupapa and we are so grateful for all your time, energy, support and care over the past three years.

Supporting Staff:

Our deepest gratitude to:

- Co-Lead Officers – Italia Toeileiu and Paul Pua
- Governance Advisor - Mike Giddey
- Principal Advisor Panels – Victoria Wicks-Brown

Elected Members:

We also want to offer our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the amazing, elected members who have been incredibly supportive and engaged throughout our term:

- Liaison Councillor – Councillor Lotu Fuli
- Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey



Experiences of Our Members — Reflections from the Panel

Our time on the PPAP has been marked by deep purpose, unity, and service. Serving on this panel was more than an advisory role, it was a sacred responsibility to uplift our Pacific communities and ensure their voices were embedded meaningfully in Auckland Council decision-making. Through our shared experiences, we have grown as leaders, advocates, and navigators of change.

Serving with Purpose and Courage

We came to this work with open hearts and a shared conviction that our voices, rooted in community, matter. Many of us viewed this role as a calling, an opportunity to advocate, influence, and reflect the values, needs, and realities of our people across Tāmaki Makaurau. It was empowering to be part of a space where our perspectives were taken seriously and where we could act as a bridge between our communities and Council.

We also gained a deeper understanding of how Auckland Council operates, and the immense effort involved in managing a city as diverse and complex as ours. Through this panel, governance and decision-making became more accessible. What once felt distant or closed off began to feel like a space where we could contribute meaningfully.

“Far too often, decision-making spaces—even the Pacific ones—can be dominated by competing interests... It’s crucial that advisory panels like PPAP remain safe and inclusive spaces for open dialogue, even when it’s uncomfortable.”

— *Hainoame Fulivai*

Being part of PPAP reminded us that Pacific voices can influence real change. We were heard, and that mattered. And, in the spirit of Pacific warmth, we’ll admit, we also loved sharing kai during our long meetings.

“Don’t be afraid to speak up—you are there for a reason. Work together as a team, and stay grounded in who we are as tagata ole moana.”

— *Penina Ifopo*

Working in Pacific-Led and Culturally Grounded Ways

A defining feature of our experience has been the way we worked together as Pacific peoples. We honoured the vā, our relationships, with each other, our communities, and with Council. From the outset, we intentionally created spaces where talanoa could happen in ways that felt safe, purposeful, and distinctly Pacific. These relational ways of working helped build trust, warmth, and collective strength.

We moved together as a collective, guided by shared values and a commitment to serve. Our process was as important as the outcomes. We believe this is what true Pacific leadership looks like: values-led, people-first, and grounded in service.

We also championed the importance of culturally aligned engagement, encouraging Auckland Council and stakeholders to work in ways that reflect Indigenous protocols and practices. Supporting others to better understand where their approaches could improve was a core part of our work.

“PPAP provides a safe and supportive environment to express both the challenges and celebrations of our community.”

— *Melvin Leavasa*



Diverse Voices, Shared Vision

We brought together a wide range of perspectives from across Auckland, South, West, Central, and from different walks of life: youth leaders, educators, public servants, creatives, health professionals, and grassroots community advocates. This diversity gave our advice nuance and depth and reflected the many lived realities of our Pacific families.

We intentionally connected with communities, not just through consultation, but through genuine relationship-building. We hope our fono and talanoa spaces were marked by our people feeling seen and heard. That trust is something we held with deep care. We also did our best to recognise and honour the work of panels before us, continuing their legacy while building new layers of vision and advocacy. This intergenerational continuity is something we are especially proud of.

Even when our views differed, we listened with empathy and upheld one another with respect. That spirit of unity anchored everything we did.

Making an Impact Together

We are proud of what we achieved together. Our highlights include:

Hosting community events like the Emergency Management Fono in Ōtara and our online Civics talanoa that created culturally safe and accessible spaces for engagement. Even those who couldn't attend in person felt the impact, our families shared how informative and empowering the emergency management event was, and how it made our work visible. We also heard that people felt inspired and uplifted by our civics engagement talanoa.

Supporting the development of Auckland Council's emergency response plans post-flooding, ensuring that Pacific needs and realities shaped this critical work.

Providing culturally grounded, evidence-informed advice on key policy areas, amplifying Pacific voices in places where they've long been underrepresented.

“Representation matters. Our advisory panel often gives grassroots realities that are true reflections of our communities.”

— Mary Brown

Encouraging more meaningful and respectful engagement between Council and Pacific communities by demonstrating how to connect in ways that resonate with

our cultural values. A couple of example of this has been through the local body elections working group and through the Pacific Policy Toolkit Working Group.

Our strongest achievements weren't just in the policies influenced, but in the trust, we built, the leadership we modelled, and the relationships we strengthened.

Navigating Challenges

We also acknowledge the challenges we faced. The limited timeframes and the wide scope of issues meant we had to be strategic and focused. We came in with aspirational goals, quickly being reminded that progress in government is slow and constrained by competing timelines, priorities and resourcing.

Yet even in that space, we saw movement, small, vital shifts that signal change. We also recognised the need for better cross-panel alignment and earlier engagement from Council so that our voices could shape the direction of decisions, not just respond to them.

We embraced the challenge of working in these spaces while staying grounded in who we are, knowing that our communities were with us every step of the way.



Advice for Incoming Panel Members

Be curious and ask questions, especially the “basic” ones. They open the door for deeper understanding for all around the table.

Stay grounded in your community. You’re not there to speak for yourself, but for the many who raised, taught, and walk beside you.

Take time to build strong relationships with one another. Our impact is greatest when we move as a collective.

Be brave. Your presence is powerful. Don’t hold back.

Be pragmatic, realistic and driven about what you can achieve. Keep it simple and stick to your priorities.

“Come in with an open mind, and don’t be afraid to ask questions or speak up—that’s exactly why you’re here.”

— *Hassana Kirkwood*

“This role should be treated as a sacred calling for your full heart and unwavering commitment to our Pacific people.”

— *Mavae Ahio*



Strategic Direction

A Strategic Work Programme was developed through a series of workshops (July–October 2023), and endorsed by the Planning, Environment and Parks Committee. This framework guided the panels focus areas, aligning with Auckland Council’s strategic priorities.

Work programme priorities and achievements

General commentary

The Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel has played a key role in advising Auckland Council on issues impacting Pacific communities, with significant contributions across climate justice, civic participation, cultural competency, equity, and economic inclusion. Key achievements include influencing emergency management readiness, enhancing Pacific-focused climate research, supporting democratic engagement through local body election forums, and advising on culturally responsive policy tools.

“We showed that Pacific participation is not just about being present—it’s about being effective, relational, and transformative.”

— *Taitu’uga Mirofora Mata’afa-Komiti*

The panel also engaged in diverse policy areas such as transport, public health, AI, and local planning. While we believe our talanoa-informed approach has enriched Auckland Council decision-making, there remain opportunities to improve timing, communication, and the integration of their advice into final outcomes.

Our Engagement Approach

Throughout the term, the Panel applied a talanoa-informed model of engagement, placing Pacific cultural values, lived experience, and relational leadership at the heart of our work. This approach enriched council decision-making across health, planning, and climate spaces.

“We didn’t just consult—we connected. That level of face-to-face, relationship-based engagement built trust and allowed people to feel heard in a system that can often feel distant.”

— *Seimoana Naisali*

“We created a space where talanoa could happen in a way that felt safe, purposeful, and Pacific.”

— *Taitu’uga Mirofora Mata’afa-Komiti*

Collaborative Leadership

We participated actively in Co-Chairs Forums, aligning our efforts with other advisory panels and supporting a collective voice on shared priorities.

The following is a list of activities that we undertook throughout our term in the various areas signalled above:

Climate Justice and Resilience

- Input into Auckland Emergency Management’s readiness programme.
- Partnered on research regarding Pacific Aucklanders and climate change, including adaptation and community engagement.
- Cross-panel feedback post-storm recovery shared with the Governing Body (Sept 2023).
- Successfully hosted a community engagement on emergency management event (July 2024), followed by a debrief and learnings session.

Civic Engagement, Participation and democracy

- Ongoing involvement in the cross-panel Elections Working Group, providing input on civic campaigns and community outreach initiatives.
- Supported participatory LTP forums and submitted feedback to the Mayor and Governing Body.
- Contributed to the Representation Review and participated in Local Board forums.
- Hosted a successful community engagement on local body elections.

Transport

- Auckland Transport Regional Public Transport Plan
- Regional Land Transport Plan
- City Centre Overnight Parking Changes
- Northwest Rapid Transit

Core Council Business

- Long Term Plan
- Annual Budget

Cultural Competence

- Advised on Pacific cultural competency training and assisted in the development of Pacific Policy Toolkit for council staff.
- Participated in engagements with Pacific communities on annual budget and local body elections.
- Advised on culturally appropriate and inclusive engagement for the Regional Pest Management Plan and tā tatau bylaw.

Economic Participation and Employment

- Reviewed and advised on the Good Employer Matrix to strengthen Pacific employment outcomes.

Equity and Inclusion

- Engagement with council's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion workstreams.

- Advocated for inclusive approaches across planning documents like the Waste Management Plan, Long-Term Plan, and Annual Plan.
- Provided feedback on Ara Moana Pasifika Strategy updates.

Bespoke and responsive engagement

- We also provided advice and insights across a wide range of council areas including:
 - NZ Royal Commission COVID-19
 - Play Advocacy
 - Open Space, Sport and Rec Policy Framework
 - Regional Pest Management Plan
 - Dog walking
 - Cemetery by law
 - Welcoming Communities Programme
 - Food and climate projects
 - Artificial intelligence.



Recommendations for Auckland Council

We encourage Auckland Council to strengthen its partnership with advisory panels by embedding more inclusive and culturally grounded approaches throughout its work. In particular, we recommend:

Involve us early: Our advice is most valuable and impactful when considered from the outset. Early engagement enables meaningful influence, not just retrospective feedback.

Close the loop: Clearly communicate how our input has shaped decisions. This builds trust, accountability, and demonstrates that our voices matter.

Invest in capability: Continue to support staff who understand the cultural, strategic, and relational dimensions of working with diverse communities. This expertise is essential to effective engagement.

Recognise lived experience as expertise: Our advice is rooted in the day-to-day realities of Pacific peoples across Tāmaki Makaurau. This on-the-ground insight is a vital source of knowledge.

Embed talanoa: Make talanoa-informed approaches standard practice across consultation and engagement. This reflects how our communities share, learn, and make decisions together.

Strengthen integration: Ensure there are robust mechanisms for our feedback to be carried through into final decisions—not lost in process.

Support Pacific-led research: Expand initiatives led by Pacific researchers, especially in areas like climate, health, and employment where community-driven insights are urgently needed.

Build local relationships: Establish enduring relationships between advisory panels and Local Boards. These links are key to aligning grassroots knowledge with local decision-making.

Keep participatory planning alive: Maintain community forums and participatory approaches in planning processes beyond election cycles. These spaces help keep the work grounded and inclusive.

Closing Remarks

As our term on the Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel comes to an end, we look back with full hearts. This wasn't just a role or a meeting to attend, it was a calling. A space where we brought our whole selves, our communities, and our cultures into rooms where decisions are made.

We came with purpose, guided by our values and our love for our people. Every piece of advice, every talanoa, every forum or submission we contributed to came from a deep desire to uplift Pacific voices across Tāmaki Makaurau. We spoke not for ourselves, but for the villages, families, and generations we carry with us.

We're proud of what we've been able to achieve together, from building stronger relationships between Council and Pacific communities, to influencing key policies in ways that honour our ways of knowing and being. We made space for our youth, our elders, our aiga and kāinga. And in doing so, we hope we helped shape a more inclusive and responsive Auckland.

It wasn't always easy. We navigated time pressures, complex systems, and moments of uncertainty. But we stayed grounded. We stayed together. And we never lost sight of why we were here.

To those who come after us, be bold. Lead with heart. Trust in the strength of your culture and your community. And remember that your voice matters.

To Auckland Council, we thank you for the opportunity to serve. We ask that you continue to honour Pacific perspectives not just by inviting us in, but by truly partnering with us. Make space for talanoa, value lived experience as expertise and walk alongside us as we build a better future together.

To our communities, you were at the centre of it all. This work was always for you.

Fakafetai, vinaka vakalevu, malo 'aupito, fa'afetai tele lava, kia ora.

