

The Pacific Health Realities: The Way Forward Noumea, New Caledonia

Building Our Capacities Panel



Keynote Speaker

Hon. Dr Saia Maú Piukala, Minister for Health, Tonga

Hon Dr. Piukala became a Member of Parliament at the November 2014 elections and subsequently became Minister for Health in early 2015. He has also been leading Tonga's delegation and work related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

He is also the former chair of the Parliament Standing Committee on Population and Development. Prior to becoming a politician, he was a surgeon and medical superintendent with the Ministry of Health and continues to practice Surgery at the main referral hospital in Tonga.

Hon Dr. Piukala has a particular interest in Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), the leading cause of death in Tonga. In addition, he has a strong interest in population and development matters particularly those related to health and youth. His other interests include Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and emerging infectious diseases.

Hon Dr Piukala did his medical training at the Fiji School of Medicine where he graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery – MBBS and subsequently with a Master of Medicine in Surgery – MMed(Surg)



Dr Siu Sikivou

Dr Siu Sikivou trained at Fiji school of Medicine and Masters in Ophthalmology, Melbourne. Worked at Fiji MOHMS, private practice and now with an NGO. Lead diabetic retinopathy programme at PEI.

She is currently the Director for the Pacific Eye Institute.



Faumuina Dr Fa'afetai Sopoaga

Faumuina Associate Professor Fa'afetai Sopoaga is the Associate Dean (Pacific) in the Division of Health Sciences, University of Otago, New Zealand.

Head of the Va'a o Tautai, Pacific Health, Faumuina leads the Divisional Pacific Office, is the Director of the Pacific Islands Research and Student Support Unit (PIRSSU), and co-Director of the Centre for Pacific Health. The University celebrated the success of proportional representation of Pacific entries into Medicine for the first time in 2016, and increased Pacific entries into its health professional and biomedical programmes in recent years. Her research interests include Pacific workforce capacity building, Pacific students' mental health and well-being, and Pacific health curriculum.



Dr Allister Bush

Dr Allister Bush is a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist working for Health Pasifika Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health Service, based in Porirua, New Zealand.

He has been a facilitator for the Pasifika Study Group since 2013.

Academic interests include addressing Maori and Pacific Culture in Mental Health Care, Fostering Mental Health collaboration with indigenous healers, and implementing evidence based trauma treatments in Child and Adolescent Mental Health.



Mrs. Debbie Sorensen D.C.C.T, CMInstD, NZRPN

Debbie is a New Zealand-born Tongan, a health strategist and management expert specialising in projects that address the health challenges that face Pacific communities in New Zealand and in the Pacific region. She played a leading role in the establishment of the Pacific health sector in New Zealand and continues to be active in the Pacific region in delivering specialist health services and building workforce capacity and capability in partnership with Ministries of Health.

Debbie has received a number of awards. In 2011 Debbie was awarded a prestigious ANIVA Fellowship which enabled her to travel to Harvard University to undertake additional executive development study. In 2015 Debbie was invested with the Royal Order Crown of Tonga, Dame Commander by His Majesty King Tupou VI in recognition of her services to the people of Tonga. She was recognised with a Life Service award from the Pasifika Medical Association in 2016. Most recently Debbie was awarded the Pacific Business Executive Award at the 2016 National Pacific Business Trust Awards.

Debbie is currently Chief Executive of Pasifika Futures, the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency for Pacific families in New Zealand, Chief Executive of the Pasifika Medical Association, Director of international consultancy firm Health Specialists Ltd, Chair of “Make a Wish” Pacific and a Trustee of the Fred Hollows Foundation.