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The New Zealand Association of Scientists
contact@scientists.org.nz



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Attn: Mr T Somerville

Communications

University of Auckland

t.somerville@auckland.ac.nz

Tēnā koe

I am writing on behalf of the Council of the New Zealand Association of Scientists to express serious concern about the University of Auckland's draft Media, Public Communication and Statements policy. The proposed policy aims to prevent academics from communicating publicly outside their area of **'research and expertise.'** Such wording may at first appear logical and innocuous, but creates significant difficulties that undermine the function of universities in society and silence academics when their voice is most needed.

We encourage the University of Auckland to:

- Review the reasons for the removal of similar wording from the draft version of what is now The Royal Society of New Zealand's Code of Conduct, after considerable controversy.
- Understand that such wording can be weaponised by complaints and investigations, potentially behind closed doors, to criticise and silence the limited pool of researchers in our small nation who are knowledgeable and/or without conflicts of interest on a topic.
- Consider the lived experience and potential scenarios in which policies worded in this way can also frustrate the efforts of scientists working across disciplines, reaching into frontiers of research, or describing the application of their research in policy or business.

- Implement the recommendations on this topic of University of Auckland Prof Shaun Hendy in his book, *Silencing Science*.
- Ensure fuller recognition of the Education Act of 1989 by adding the concepts of “critic and conscience of society” and elevating “academic freedom” so that both these principles are paramount over pragmatic and questionably defined terms such as ‘expertise’ if the latter term is used at all.

To reinforce these recommendations, I will simply note that prominent academics have commented on social media that the outreach and positive impacts on society they’ve been proud of would appear to be a violation of the draft policy.

Thank you for your consideration of this and other submissions on this proposed policy.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Troy Baisden'.

Prof Troy Baisden (President NZAS)

president@scientists.org.nz