

(Royal Society NZ, 2022b)

News

Published 20 May 2022

He Pānui Statement

Royal Society Te Apārangi (the Society) published a statement from the President and Chair of the Academy Executive Committee on behalf of Council on 27 July 2021 in response to a letter to the editor of *The Listener* magazine titled "In defence of science". The Society's response was one of many from individuals and organisations, expressing concern about the views in *The Listener* letter.

The Society's statement was made in response to concerns expressed by individuals and communities suggesting the Society did not support mātauranga Māori and no longer deserved their support, in particular because three of its Fellows were among the authors of *The Listener* letter. As stated at the time, the Society strongly upholds the value of mātauranga Māori as a knowledge system within its research, science and scholarly activities. The statement was not intended to signal any reduction in the Society's support for science, or to limit free and open discussion.

There has since been considerable discussion about *The Listener* letter, including both support for, and concerns about, the Society's response; concern about the Society expressing a view when it subsequently received formal complaints about the authors of *The Listener* letter who were Fellows of the Society; concern about the complaints process itself; and public commentary about the Society's support for mātauranga Māori.

P The Society regrets that a combination of multiple factors and actions led to an environment that was unhelpful to considered and respectful discussion of the views originally raised in *The Listener* letter, and the perception that the Society, in making a response, shut down debate and therefore does not support academic freedom.

The Society regrets that its response to *The Listener* letter contributed to this unhelpful environment, including by stating that the authors of *The Listener* letter suggested "that mātauranga Māori is not a valid truth", whereas *The Listener* letter included no such statement. The Society also acknowledges that its reference to an "outmoded definition of science outlined in *The Listener*" was based on the Society's own interpretation of *The Listener* letter's sentiments, and that *The Listener* letter did not outline any definition of science.

With respect to other areas of concern, the Society notes that it did not itself bring any complaints against the Fellows that authored *The Listener* letter. The Society did, however, process two complaints received from others that it managed in line with the obligations set out in the Society's published Complaints Procedures.

The Society believes everyone has the right to freedom of speech, upheld with due recognition of the rights of others as recognised in legislation.

The Society reaffirms the standing of all the Society's Fellows, Honorary Fellows and Companions, and underlines the respect in which they and their work is held.

The Society has received considerable correspondence and comments since the publishing of *The Listener* letter last July. The Society acknowledges and thanks all who have communicated with us. Tēnā kōwhiri.

5th

Dr Brent Clothier FRSNZ

President

Mā te kimi ka kite. Mā te kite ka mōhio. Mā te mōhio ka mārama.

Seek and discover. Discover and know. Know and become enlightened.

Related links:

[Complaints Process](#)

[Code of Professional Standards and Ethics](#)

[Royal Society of New Zealand Act](#)

[Q&A on *The Listener* letter complaints process](#)[PDF 248.22 kb]

Source: Royal Society Te Apārangi

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