**The Talanoa Project: Re-imagining Consultation**

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| Type your abstract here. 300 words max.  An important element of community consultation is being able to reach diverse representative parts of the community, and especially those who are directly affected. Traditional methods, even when they are duplicated nline, are not easily reaching minority ethnic groups. In 2019 Callaghan Innovation funded research on whether the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and in particular real-time translation between English and Samoan would improve the levels of engagement and feedback from the Samoan Community in Auckland.  The research hypothesis was that the community prefers to converse, receive and give information in their mother tongue, Samoan, and that the use of AI to provide real-time translations could provide a cost-effective and sustainable way of allowing this customised engagement to work for both the recipient and the requester.  We developed a method for an AI system to use real-time translation to and from Samoan. People could communicate with the agent, named Tala, via a web-browser (http://talanoa.beca.ai).  We worked with members of the Samoan community to use Tala to get views on the local community facilities including walking and public transport. We interviewed them afterwards to get feedback on the effectiveness and potential of the tool.  Many in the community had not used AI technologies before but most were confident in the potential for the use of the technology. There were complexities in the use of formal and informal Samoan language, but the research proved that the technology is able to overcome longstanding barriers for members of the Samoan community to take part in community consultation programmes.  The Talanoa Project is a world-leading example of research into the feasibility of developing conversational agents in languages other than English. |