Ma'alona Mafaufau

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CURRENT RESEARCH	**Founder**	**Approxiom Research**

CURRENT RESEARCH

Founder — **Approxiom Research**
April 2025 - Present — Auckland, New Zealand

Independent AI Safety researcher specialising in systematic vulnerability discovery in frontier AI systems.

- **2nd place winner** of the Palisade Research AI Misalignment Bounty ($500 USD) demonstrating distinct misalignment patterns in o3 and GPT-5 models. Work published in peer-reviewed research paper (arXiv:2510.19738) and released publicly on Hugging Face as part of coordinated disclosure process.
- Currently developing a comprehensive safety evaluation platform testing 50+ frontier models (OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, Meta) across systematic behavioral scenarios. Framework supports containerised, reproducible experiments with focus on reasoning-dependent safety patterns and behavioral risk profiling.

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Cybersecurity Engineer — **Workday**
January 2023 - December 2024 — Auckland, New Zealand

Promoted to engineer with a focus on threat hunting and incident response in collaboration with our teams in Ireland and the U.S.A. Ideated and completed a project to analyse SIEM detection efficacy, improving alert accuracy and reducing noise, written in Python. The software from that project was then used across our global team for guiding monthly detection tuning.

Cybersecurity Operations Analyst — **Workday**
January 2022 - December 2022 — Auckland, New Zealand

Worked as part of a global follow-the-sun security team, ensuring 24/7 coverage with detailed handover documentation in XSOAR for investigation resolution.

Cybersecurity Analyst — **Datacom**
August 2021 - January 2022 — Auckland, New Zealand

Monitored customer environments acting as the initial triage analyst for SIEM detections. Escalated tuning suggestions to the engineering team.

Cybersecurity Intern — **Datacom**
April 2021 - July 2021 — Auckland, New Zealand

Shadowed the engineers and analysts of the Datacom Cyber Defence Operations Centre.

Data Analyst — **Halter Limited**
September 2019 - February 2021 — Auckland, New Zealand

Support existing customers and identify and build new machine-learning based products that meet their business needs or that drive Customer Support team performance.

Actuarial Analyst — **Ministry of Social Development**
April 2018 - August 2019 — Wellington, New Zealand

Developed forecasting models and analytical tools for estimating and monitoring the performance of the ministry, as well as providing support and advice to MSD staff.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Pasifika Tech Tutor/Speaker — **Pasifika Tech Education Charity**
September 2022 - Current — Auckland, New Zealand

Helped orgainise workplace visits for Pacific high school students to give opportunities to see what it is like to work for big tech companies.

An example of one such visit at my previous workplace (Workday) is outlined in this

LinkedIn post:

`https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7105701512667922432/`

EDUCATION

University of Auckland, Auckland, NZ
Bachelor of Science (Honours), Statistics, May 2016
Bachelor of Science, Double Major Mathematics and Statistics, May 2015

AWARDS, CTFs & CERTIFICA-TIONS

Full Stack Developer — Mission Ready HQ
Mission Ready HQ Full Stack Developer Accelerator, August 2025
Certificate: `https://www.credential.net/6f647d31-cbd0-4b57-ac98-9a658d993c31#acc.k27D3BG6`

Palo Alto Networks Cybersecurity Professional Certificate
Coursera Specialisation, February 2025
Certificate: `https://coursera.org/share/a2f350d91f2567156406af86e1076ba1`

- ***Palo Alto Networks Cybersecurity Foundation***
- ***Palo Alto Networks Network Security Fundamentals***
- ***Palo Alto Networks Cloud Security Fundamentals***
- ***Palo Alto Networks Security Operations Fundamentals***

Blue Team Level 1 (BTL1)
Security Blue Team, September 2022
Badge: `https://credly.com/badges/74f5a12a-e8e4-4ae8-8823-f7bc0f81b78a`

Blue Team Labs Online (BTLO)
Rank: Junior Defender, 2022 - 2023
BTLO Profile: `https://blueteamlabs.online/public/user/c96d4b8bca70facd0ccaa6`

AWS Cloud Quest: Cloud Practitioner
Amazon Web Services Training and Certification, August 2023
Badge: `https://www.credly.com/badges/673233f8-3b1e-4c96-846b-ed15de3867b1/public_url`

Introduction to AWS Threat Detection
LinkedIn Learning, August 2023
Badge: Certification link

Splunk Fundamentals 1
Splunk, September 2021

Unitec CTF 2021
Unitec Institute of Technology, July 2021
One of the winners of all paid flights and accommodation to Kawaiicon 2021 in Wellington for November event. The event consisted of Boot2Root computer hacking challenges.

References available on request.