



Australia Awards

Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility

Australia Awards
Pacific Scholarships
Alumni Survey 2021

November 2021



The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the Australian Government, its agencies or representatives.

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms and where otherwise noted, all material presented is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia license.

Acknowledgement:

The authors would like to thank DFAT's Australia Awards Section and Posts across the Pacific for supporting this case study. In particular, thanks to Lorissa Hazelman and colleagues in Suva for their support and guidance in helping to coordinate the study.

Most importantly, we thank the 388 alumni who took their time to complete their survey and share their outcomes and post-award reflections with us.

Recommended citation

Edwards, D. & Radloff, A. (2021). *Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships: Alumni Survey 2021*, Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra. Retrieved from: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/australia-awards/australia-awards-global-tracer-facility-year-6-results>

Contents

Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction	5
1.1 Objectives	5
1.2 Scope	6
2. Alumni survey participants	8
2.1 Characteristics of alumni respondents	9
3. Impact of scholarship on career development	12
3.1 Introduction	12
3.2 Post-award employment	12
3.3 Impact of award on career	14
3.4 Further study	15
3.5 Professional development needs	16
4. Australia Awards long-term outcomes	17
4.1 Introduction	17
4.2 Contributions to development	17
4.3 Public diplomacy and networks	26
5. Conditions for success of AAPS	28
5.1 Enabling factors	28
5.2 Barriers to contributions	29
5.3 Suggestions and request from alumni	30
5.4 Successful program features	30
6. Conclusion	32
7. Acronyms and Abbreviations	33
Annex 1: Approach and survey instrument	34
Case study approach	34
Survey instrument	34

Executive Summary

This study explores the outcomes of alumni who received an Australia Awards Pacific Scholarship (AAPS) or an award from its predecessor scholarship program, the Australian Regional Development Scholarships (ARDS). The outcomes of the study are based on the first large-scale survey of the outcomes of alumni of these scholarships. The study was conducted by the Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility, which has a mission to generate high-quality information on Australia's investment in international scholarships, with a focus on the outcomes of less recent alumni.

The survey conducted in this study collected insight from 388 alumni, representing a diverse group of people across the Pacific. The survey achieved a 50 per cent response rate from alumni contacted. Alumni respondents are from 11 Pacific Island countries, and had studied across a diverse range of fields of education and qualifications within the Pacific. About two thirds of alumni respondents were part of the AAPS and a third were from the ARDS. Study years of this cohort ranged from commencing in 1994, to completing in 2021.

The skills and knowledge AAPS and ARDS alumni developed while on award positively impacted their careers. In total, 84 per cent of these alumni now hold a leadership position at work or in their community. The vast majority agreed that their work and career opportunities had improved after completing their award. Furthermore, almost all alumni surveyed felt there was a strong link between their current work and the skills and knowledge they had gained while on award.

Alumni of the AAPS and ARDS are making notable contributions in the years following their study. Alumni are sharing their new knowledge and skills widely, and are improving their communities, their organisations, their nations and the region through their work. These alumni are contributing to all 17 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, these alumni continue to engage with one another, and many are working and interacting with Australians and Australian organisations in their work – and have plans to continue this engagement in the future.

Alumni identified a range of factors linked to their award that have helped them in the years following graduation. These 'conditions for success' include selection of fields of study that align with job markets and development priorities, opportunities for internships while on award, and support from (and for) employers to use new knowledge and skills on return from award. Alumni also identified a number of areas where they would like to engage in professional development. For future policy, planning and implementation of the AAPS, these conditions and ideas could offer a useful reference point to further enhance the successful outcomes of the scholarships.

1. Introduction

The Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships are development scholarships offered to people from the Pacific to study at selected education institutions in the Pacific region. This Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships Case Study is the first large-scale survey to examine the long-term career outcomes and contributions of this group of alumni. An online survey of this group of alumni was conducted in August 2021 and its findings are detailed in this report.

The research was conducted by the Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (GTF). This research facility commenced in 2016 and is funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Research by the GTF helps DFAT to assess the development contributions and public and economic diplomacy outcomes of Australia's investment in the Australia Awards. This case study forms one of the key research outputs of the sixth year of the GTF.

1.1 Objectives

The purpose of the Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships (AAPS) is to offer people from the region an opportunity to build their skills and knowledge and drive positive change by undertaking undergraduate or postgraduate study at participating regional universities and Vocational and Education Training (VET) institutions located within the Pacific. This case study is designed to explore the outcomes of alumni who received an AAPS or an award from its predecessor scholarship program, the Australian Regional Development Scholarships (ARDS). This fits with the overall mission of the GTF, which is to generate high-quality information on Australia's investment in international scholarships, with a focus on the outcomes of less recent alumni. Information and reporting generated by the GTF provides a strong evidence base for country programs and the Australia Awards Section (AAS) of DFAT to evaluate the impact of Australia Awards on alumni, as well as on their home institutions and countries.

For this case study, two specific aims for exploring alumni of the AAPS and ARDS were developed. The purpose of these two aims is to assist Posts and managing contractors of Australia Awards in the Pacific to fill gaps in knowledge and better support alumni engagement. The aims of this case study are:

- to better understand the link between study and career outcomes; and
- to better understand alumni's career and professional development plans.

In addition to the aims specific to this case study, all research conducted by GTF is framed within the overall objective of the Australia Awards: to help 'partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests'. Four long-term outcomes to achieve this overall aim are outlined in the *Australia Awards Global Strategy*¹ and *Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*.² Briefly, these outcomes are:

- **Outcome 1:** Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development.
- **Outcome 2:** Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries.
- **Outcome 3:** Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and businesses in Australia and partner countries.
- **Outcome 4:** Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively.

In this case study, Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 are the focus of this research. Outcome 4 is not applicable to this case study as alumni have studied in the Pacific region rather than in Australia.

An online survey instrument was developed to capture the outcomes of alumni of the AAPS and ARDS. Further detail relating to the survey instrument and approach can be found in Appendix 1.

1.2 Scope

The focus of the GTF in this case study is alumni of DFAT's AAPS and ARDS scholarship programs. The alumni of focus in this case study come from 12 different Pacific Island countries:

- Fiji
- Tuvalu
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Nauru
- Tonga
- Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)
- Marshall Islands
- Palau
- Vanuatu
- Kiribati

This report is centred on the findings of the survey developed specifically for this case study. The overall purpose of the survey is to capture high-level data from alumni of Pacific-based scholarships in relation to their contributions to development and links with Australia gained from their award experience, as well as the link between their study and career outcomes. The data resulting from the survey offers a regional perspective of the Australia Awards.

¹ For further information: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-awards-global-strategy.pdf>

² For further information: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-awards-global-monitoring-evaluation-framework.pdf>



A group of AAPS Fiji alumni. Source: Australia Awards Pacific Scholarship Fiji Information Brochure

This report begins by providing an insight into the characteristics of the alumni who participated in the survey. It then explores the relationship between the AAPS and ARDS scholarships and the career development of alumni. The final analysis section of the report is structured around addressing three of the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards: contributions to development, cooperation with Australians, and partnerships with Australian organisations. The report concludes with a brief summary of findings and recommendations for Posts and Australia Awards managing contractors. It is intended that the insights generated can inform Posts in the Pacific, DFAT Canberra and Australia Awards country programs about the outcomes, networks and career plans of Pacific alumni and how best to support them.

2. Alumni survey participants

As discussed in the introduction, this survey focussed on alumni of two scholarship programs run in the Pacific over the past few decades. The Australian Regional Development Scholarships (ARDS) were funded by DFAT from the early 1990s. These scholarships were renamed the Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships (AAPS) in 2014. All alumni of these two programs were encouraged to participate in the survey.

To identify and contact alumni, the GTF used three avenues, these were:

- the records held by the GTF based on data extracted from the now defunct Global Alumni database;
- records provided by Australian High Commissions in the Pacific and managing contractors of the Australia Awards in the Pacific;
- an online contact form that alumni of AAPS or ARDS were encouraged to complete where they could update their details and register for participation in the survey. Posts and managing contractors distributed communications materials developed by the GTF, this included using social media platforms, emails, distribution to alumni groups and radio advertisements.

Based on available data, it was established that there were approximately 1,747 alumni who fit in the target population for this survey. Of this group, an up-to-date email address³ was available for 781 alumni. Each of these alumni were invited to participate in the survey. A total of 388 alumni responded to the survey, representing a 49.7 per cent response rate. This is a very high response rate for this type of survey, a testament to the engagement of Posts and managing contractors during fieldwork.

³ i.e. this is the number of alumni for whom the GTF had an email address that did not 'bounce-back' when the invitation email for the survey was sent. It is possible that alumni counted in this group no longer monitor the email address sent to. As such the true 'contactable' population may be lower than this estimate.

2.1 Characteristics of alumni respondents

The 388 alumni who responded to the survey represent a diverse group of people across the Pacific. The graphics on the following pages provide a summary of the broad characteristics of this group. These alumni were aged between 25 and 70 years at the time of the survey and had studied across a mixed range of fields of education and qualifications. About two thirds of alumni respondents were part of the Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships (AAPS) and another third had received the predecessor scholarship, the ARDS. Study years of this cohort ranged from commencing in 1994, to completing in 2021.

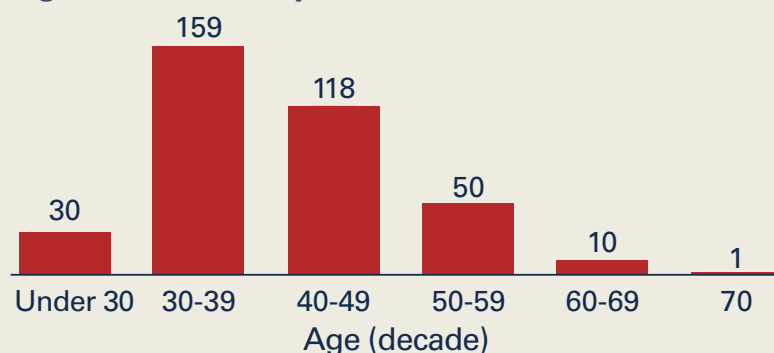
Alumni respondent characteristics

Total alumni respondents **388**



Survey response rate **49.7%**

Age of alumni respondents



Alumni from **11** Pacific Island countries

Gender

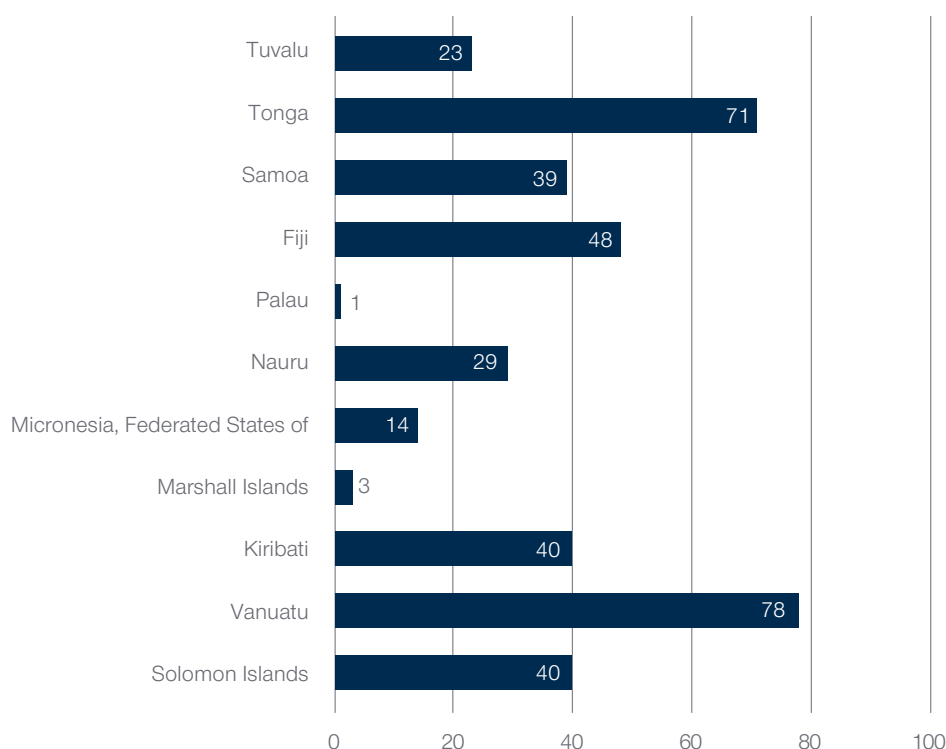
41.4%
Male

58.6%
Female

Identify as having disability **1%**



Figure 1: Alumni respondents to the AAPS/ARDS survey, by country of citizenship



Overall, the group of alumni who were part of this survey come from 11 different Pacific Island countries, with Vanuatu and Tonga each making up about 20 per cent of the respondent population, and Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Kiribati each representing about 10 per cent. The numbers of alumni by country can be seen in Figure 1.

These alumni studied at various institutions across the Pacific under an Australian scholarship. The majority, nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) had studied at one of the campuses of the University of the South Pacific (USP). More than a quarter (29 per cent) of this group undertook their scholarship with Fiji National University, while the remainder had studied at institutions in PNG (University of PNG, Unitech, and Pacific Adventist University), or other smaller institutions. Overall, across this whole cohort, half of the respondents had completed their scholarship with USP at the Laucala Campus in Fiji.

For the majority of these alumni, the Australian scholarship enabled the completion of a Bachelor degree (72 per cent) with a further 17 per cent either undertaking a graduate diploma, certificate or Masters qualification. The remaining 11 per cent of alumni in this survey completed a diploma, short course or other type of qualification. The disciplines in which these alumni studied ranges greatly. The largest group (24 per cent) among these survey respondents studied in the field of management and commerce, which covers areas such as accounting, business management and administration in public health care. Health was the second-most prominent field studied by this group, with about one in five alumni completing their scholarship in this area, which mainly encompasses nursing and general medicine qualifications, but also includes other areas such as dentistry, public health and radiography. The other large group by field of study were those in 'society and culture' (17 per cent of alumni surveyed). This area of study is mainly made up of alumni studying law or economics courses, but also included qualifications in human geography, politics and sociology, among a range of other similar disciplines.

Scholarship details of alumni respondents n=388

Scholarship

Australia Awards
Pacific Scholarships

64%

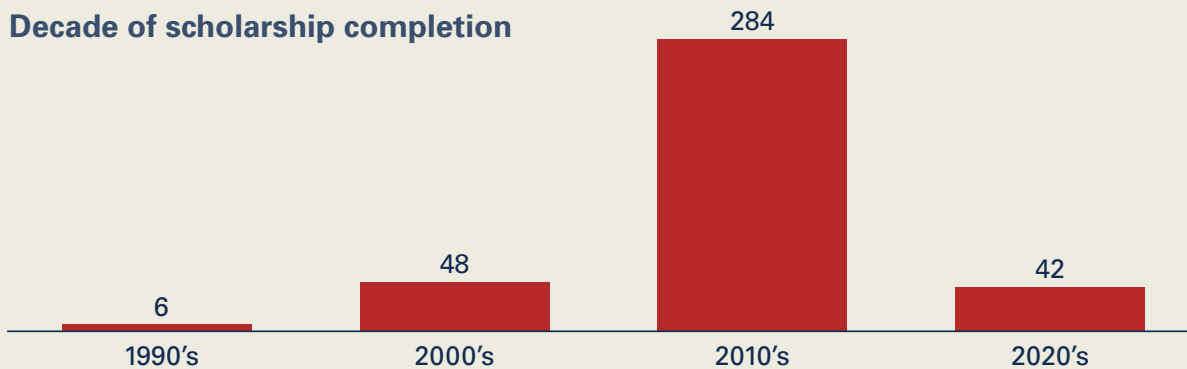


Australian Regional
Development
Scholarships

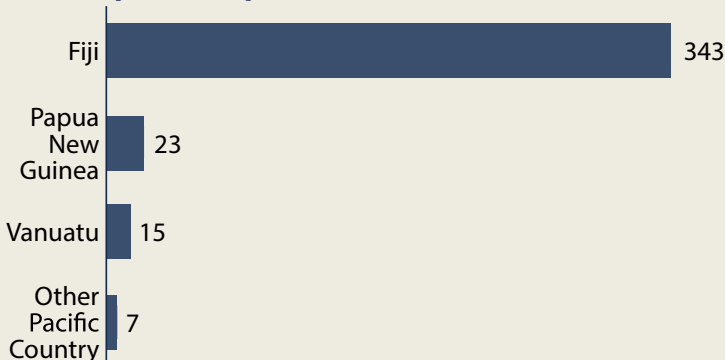
36%



Decade of scholarship completion



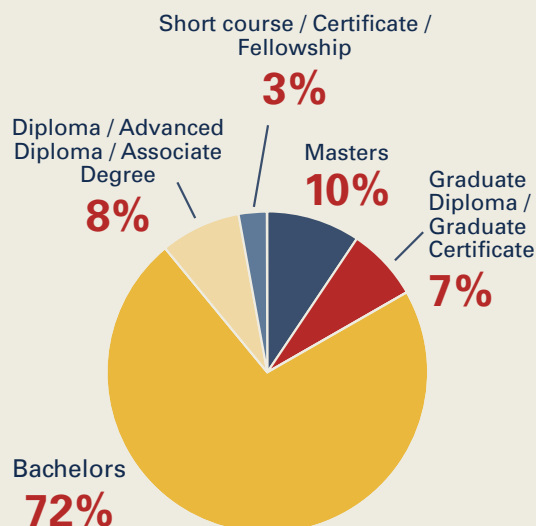
Country of study



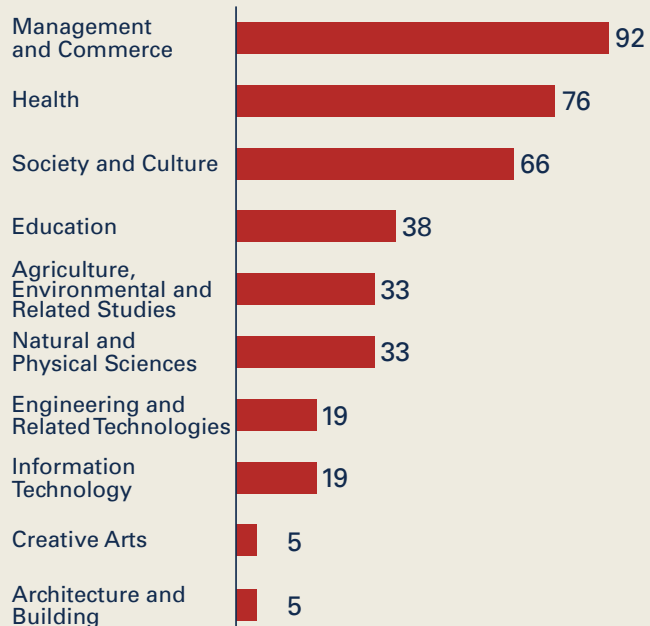
University of study

The University of the South Pacific	247
Fiji National University	112
Other institutions	29

Level of qualification



Field of Study



3. Impact of scholarship on career development

The skills and knowledge AAPS and ARDS alumni developed while on award positively impact the careers of alumni and also have flow-on effects on their colleagues, networks and wider communities. Nine-in-ten alumni were employed and 84 per cent held a leadership position at work or in their community. The vast majority agreed that their work and career opportunities had improved after completing their award. Furthermore, the vast majority of alumni felt there was a strong link between their work and the skills and knowledge they had gained while on award.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the immediate outcomes of study for alumni and the impact of their course on their workplace and career opportunities. It also takes a holistic look at the professional development aspirations of alumni to better understand the next steps for alumni after study. These findings address the first two aims of the case study; to better understand the link between study and career outcomes of AAPS and ARDS alumni; and to better understand alumni's career and professional development plans.

3.2 Post-award employment

When asked about their current employment status, 90 per cent of alumni reported that they were currently working. Almost all alumni who were working (97%) were working full-time. Three per cent of employed alumni indicated that they were working part-time and one per cent were self-employed. A small proportion of alumni were undertaking further study or reported that they were not employed or had retired. Rates of employment were very high for both male (92%) and female (88%) alumni. Female alumni were more likely than male alumni to report that they were not currently employed, with six per cent of female alumni indicating that they were not currently employed.

Rates of employment for alumni were also consistently high across different fields and levels of study. Employment rates ranged from 82 per cent in the field of agriculture, environmental and related studies to over 90 per cent in the fields of information technology, society and culture, and management and commerce. Alumni who had completed a Bachelor Degree reported the highest level of employment (91%), while those who completed a Diploma, Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree reported a slightly lower rate of employment (84%).

Overall, most alumni were working in the public sector. The public sector was the biggest employer for alumni in all fields of study. Alumni who had completed an award in the fields of agriculture, environmental and related studies or management and commerce were more likely to be working in sectors other than the public sector. Seventeen per cent of alumni who had studied in management and commerce were working in the private sector, and 19 per cent of alumni who had studied agriculture, environmental and related studies were working for a multilateral organisation.

Employment details of alumni respondents (n=386)

Current activity

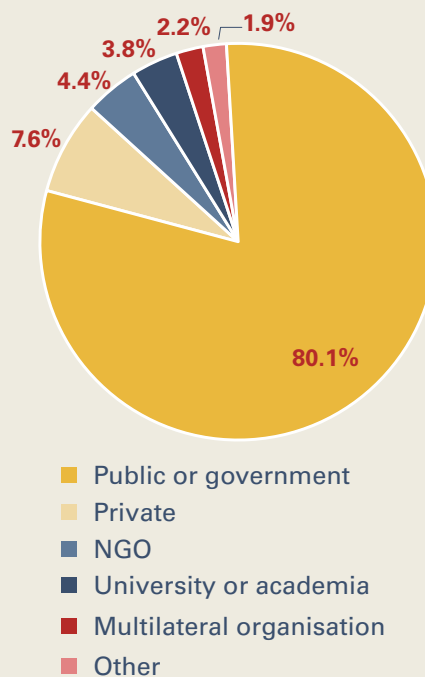
Employed **90%**



Studying **9%**



Sector of employment



Relevance of qualification to alumni

100%
Alumni consider what they learned as valuable for their future

98%
Alumni use skills gained from qualification in job

98%
Qualification prepared alumni adequately for job

88%
Qualification is a formal requirement for job of alumni

Impact of qualification on alumni



96%
Improved work or career opportunities



80%
Improved salary or remuneration package

3.3 Impact of award on career

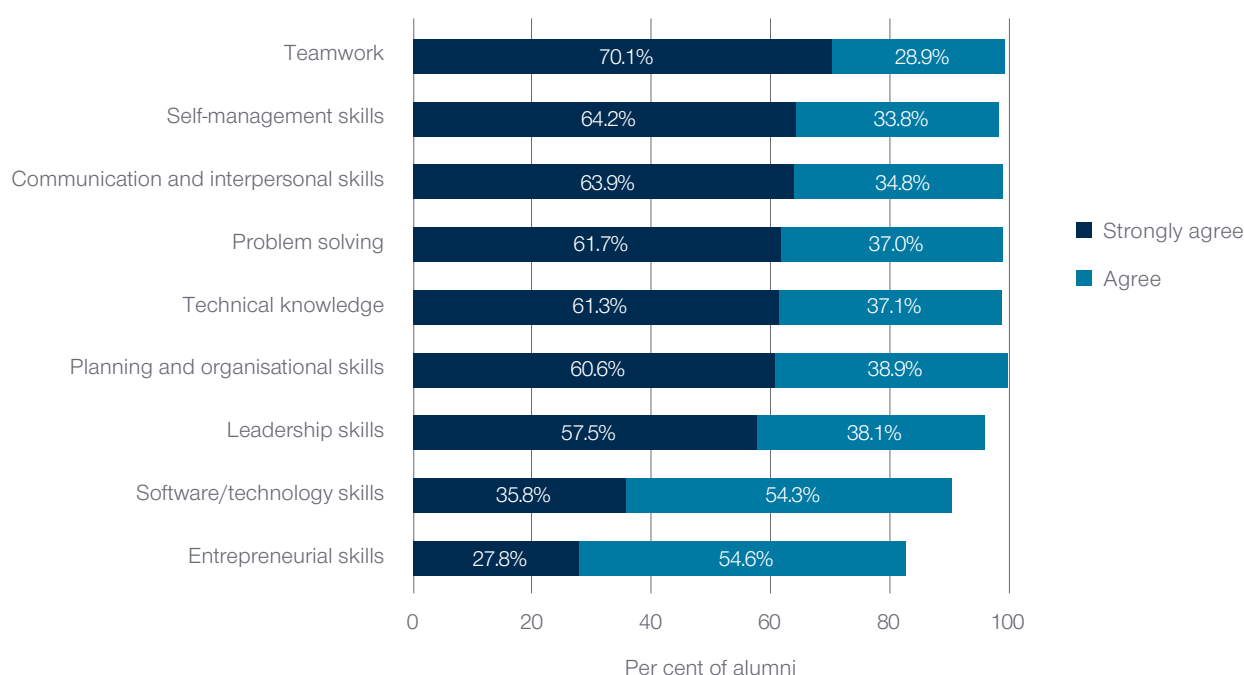
Alumni were asked to reflect on the qualification that they undertook as part of their award and the impact it has had on their own career. Alumni were overwhelmingly positive about their qualification. Virtually all alumni surveyed (99%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of their qualification.

When reflecting on the relevance of their qualification to their job, their career, and their future, alumni were very positive, as highlighted. There were strong links between alumni qualifications and current job, with 88 per cent of alumni indicating that the qualification they received while on award was a formal requirement for them to do their current job. In addition, all alumni agreed or strongly agreed that what they had learned in their qualification was valuable for their future. There was also a strong link between the qualifications studied while on award and their work. Ninety-eight per cent of alumni reported that they use the skills gained during their qualification in their current job, and 98 per cent felt that their qualification had adequately prepared them for their current job.

When asked more specifically about the individual skills that they had developed during their award, alumni were also very positive. As shown in Figure 2, at least 95 per cent of alumni agreed or strongly agreed that they had developed skills relating to teamwork, self-management, communication and interpersonal relationships, problem solving, technical knowledge, planning and organising, and leadership during their qualification. Alumni were less likely to report that they had developed skills relating to software and technology or entrepreneurship, but most were still positive about their skill development in these areas.

The qualifications alumni had studied on award also clearly had a positive impact on their career. Almost all alumni (96%) agreed that following their qualification they had seen improvements in their work and career opportunities. Alumni were less positive about the impact their qualification had on their salary, although 80 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that their salary or remuneration package had improved since completing their qualification.

Figure 2: AAPS/ARDS qualification helped develop the following skills (n=388)



3.4 Further study

Over one third of alumni were undertaking or had completed further study since their AAPS/ARDS, with nine per cent of alumni currently undertaking studies, and 28 per cent having completed a subsequent qualification since their award. Nearly three quarters of those currently studying and 91 per cent of those who had completed additional study had received a subsequent scholarship.

Around a quarter of the relatively small group of alumni who indicated that they had received a scholarship for further study had been awarded an Australia Awards Scholarship or Fellowship (26%) and a small number had been awarded a further AAPS (7%). Other types of scholarships that alumni had been awarded included government scholarships from their home country (16%) and government scholarships from other countries (28%).

Applying for subsequent scholarships

All alumni surveyed were asked about whether they had applied for or received a scholarship after completing their AAPS/ARDS regardless of whether they were undertaking or had completed further study. Almost half of all surveyed alumni had applied for a subsequent scholarship. Around half of those alumni – representing 24 per cent of all surveyed alumni – had been awarded a scholarship.

The most common scholarship that alumni had applied for was an Australia Award Scholarship or Fellowship - 48 per cent of alumni who had applied for a scholarship had applied for one of these scholarships. The next most common scholarship applied by alumni was a government scholarship from a country other than Australia or the alumni's home country (21%). Around a quarter of alumni who had been awarded a scholarship had received an Australia Award Scholarship or Fellowship, and 30 per cent had received a scholarship from a country other than Australia or their home country.

In addition, 81 per cent of alumni said that it was likely or very likely that they would apply for an Australia Awards Scholarship in the next five years to undertake further study.

3.5 Professional development needs

Alumni were also asked about their future plans as they relate to work, study and networking. There were many different skills that alumni indicated they would like to develop further. As shown in Figure 3, at least half of alumni would like to further develop their networking skills, technical knowledge, leadership skills and technology skills.

These areas are of direct relevance to High Commissions, alumni associations and other key stakeholders in the engagement of these alumni into the future. The role of Australian High Commission in helping with networking in particular is a clear and tangible activity that is seen as beneficial to the majority of this cohort of alumni.

Figure 3: Skills alumni would like to develop further (n=388)



4. Australia Awards long-term outcomes

Alumni of the AAPS and ARDS are making notable contributions in the years following their study. Alumni are sharing their new knowledge and skills widely, and are improving their communities, their organisations, their nations and the region through their work. These alumni are contributing to all 17 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, these alumni continue to engage with one another and many are working and interacting with Australians and Australian organisations in their work – and have plans to continue this engagement in the future.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the development and public diplomacy outcomes of AAPS and ARDS alumni as a result of their award studying in the Pacific region. As discussed earlier, the overarching aim of the Australia Awards is to help 'partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests'.

The findings and discussion in the section below are based on the responses of alumni to the survey and framed around two key concepts from the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards:

- Contributions to development made by alumni (Long-Term Outcome 1); and
- Connections, networks and partnerships resulting from the scholarship (Long-Term Outcomes 2 & 3).

The insights from this group of alumni assist in providing understanding and filling a gap in knowledge about this particular cohort. It is intended that the results here help in better aligning the outcomes of AAPS and ARDS alumni with the 'big picture' outcomes of the Australia Awards as a whole.

This chapter explores the way in which alumni of the AAPS and ARDS have used and shared their knowledge and skills in the time since they completed their award. It then briefly explores the ongoing networks and partnerships that have developed as a result of the scholarships – including contact among alumni themselves and links to Australia. Given that these scholarships are different to the other Australia Awards offerings in that they do not bring recipients to Australia for study, the explicit exploration of links to and with Australia are not as heavily focussed on in this work as has been in previous studies of the GTF.

4.2 Contributions to development

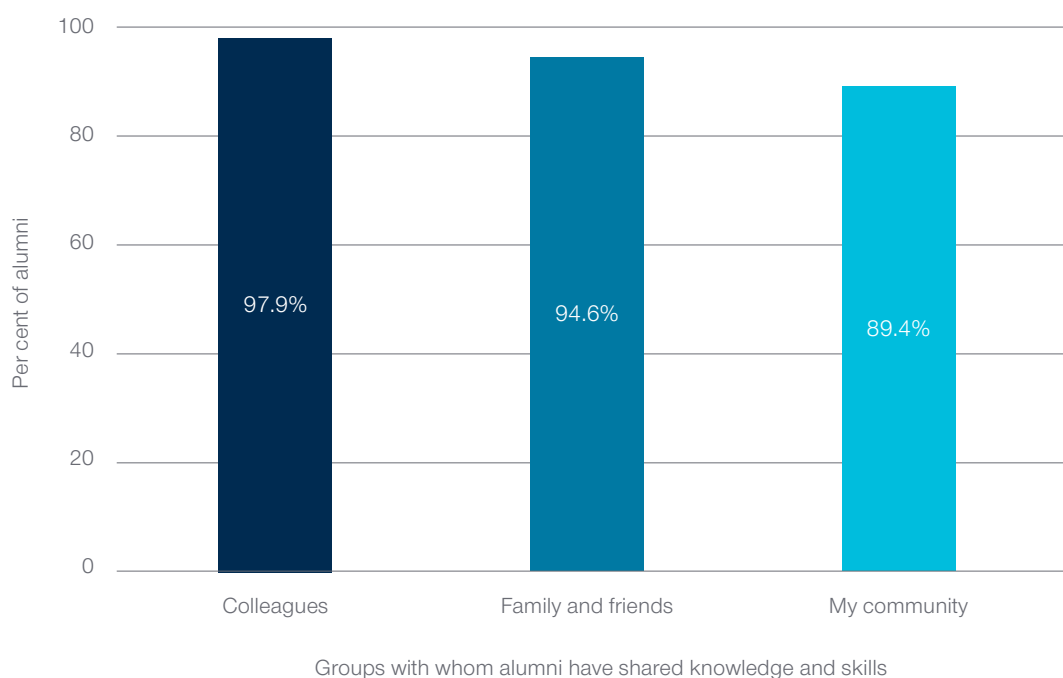
Alumni contributions and outcomes in relation to their ongoing work were measured in the survey in a number of ways. There were questions based on gathering 'big picture' quantitative information about the knowledge and skills developed during the scholarship, and how these have been used and shared. There were specific questions relating to contribution towards the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to gain an overall understanding of the areas of contribution by alumni. And there was an open-ended question, designed to elicit specific details about alumni contributions. The contributions of AAPS and ARDS alumni are summarised here using each of these data collection approaches.

4.2.1 Sharing new skills and knowledge

An important intention of the Australia Awards is that the content, methodologies, tools and approaches that are developed in the qualifications that are part of the scholarship are shared by alumni when they return to their work following completion of their award. It is hoped that through this, the impact of the Australia Awards provides ongoing benefit not only for the alumni themselves, but for their colleagues, family and communities.

The survey asked alumni about the extent to which they have shared their new knowledge and skills with others in the time since completing their award. Figure 4 shows that overwhelmingly, this transfer of knowledge is happening. Almost every alumni indicated sharing skills and knowledge from their scholarship with their colleagues (98 per cent), family and friends (95 per cent), and almost nine in every ten have also shared aspects from their award within their community.

Figure 4: Alumni sharing new knowledge and skills, by groups shared with (n=367)



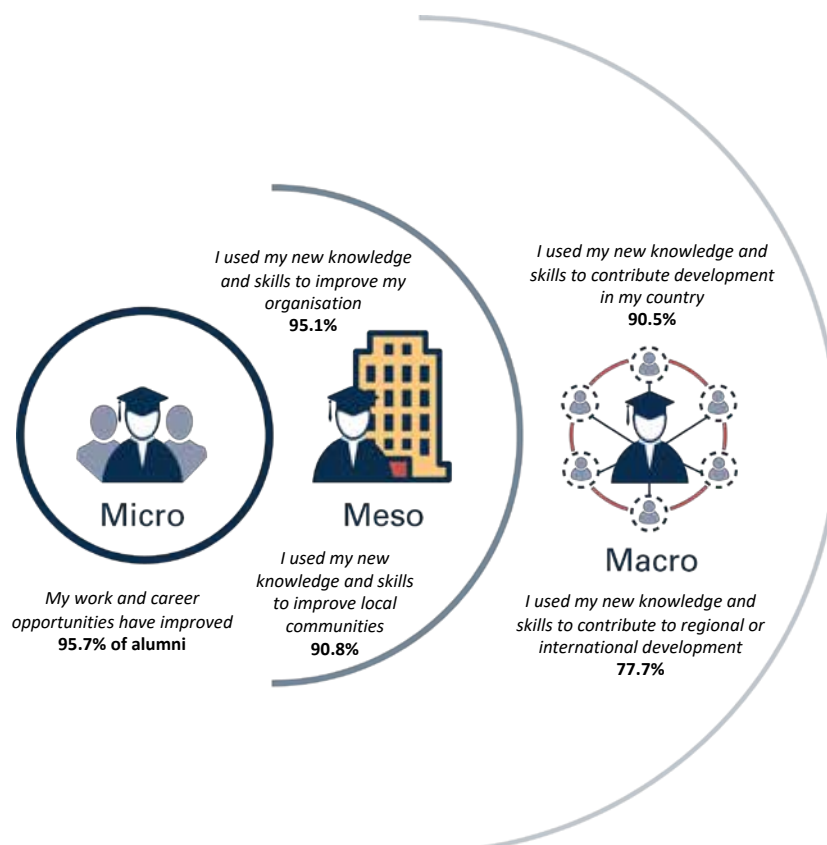
4.2.2 Impact of contributions

Alumni have made contributions through their work and community involvement, and the survey explored the impact of these contributions. Alumni responses to the survey were analysed for their 'magnitude of impact' at the micro, meso and macro level. This approach has been discussed in more detail in other GTF reports (Edwards et al., 2020), but the levels are summarised below:

- Micro-level impacts are those that benefit the alumni themselves and their family;
- Meso-level impacts are contributions that help improve workplaces, organisations and communities of the alumni;
- Macro-level impacts are contributions that are improving and influencing aspects of national, regional and/or international policies, projects and development outcomes.

The findings of this survey show that alumni are making an impact across all these levels in their contributions following their scholarship. As shown in Figure 5, almost every alumni has experienced improvements personally to their careers as a result of the scholarship (micro-level impact), and almost all alumni indicate having made positive improvement through their new skills to the organisations they work with (meso-level impact). About nine out of ten alumni respondents also indicated they have helped improve local communities (meso-level impact) and contributed to development of their country (macro-level impact). In addition, more than three quarters of alumni indicate using their new knowledge and skills to help in regional or international development (macro-level impact).

Figure 5: Alumni contributions – percent of alumni from the AAPS/ARDS Survey making contribution by magnitude of impact



These findings also highlight the strong leadership alumni play in their work and communities and show that those in leadership roles are even more prominent in making contributions. Almost half of alumni hold a formal leadership role in their current job (48%) and many others hold an informal leadership role at work (31%) and so are involved in mentoring and leading others while not being in a role as a manager, supervisor or member of the executive. A third of alumni hold a leadership role in their community, with many working in formal leadership roles in youth, community and religious organisations. Overall, 84 per cent of alumni hold either a formal or informal leadership role in their work or community.

Alumni who hold a leadership role were more likely than others to report that they had made an impact on their communities. Ninety-one per cent of alumni who are leaders at work or in their community indicate that they had shared their knowledge and skills with others in their community compared with 84 per cent of those who are not in leadership roles. Leaders were also more likely to report that they had improved their organisations (98%) and local communities (94%) than alumni who were not in a leadership position.

4.2.3 Areas of contributions

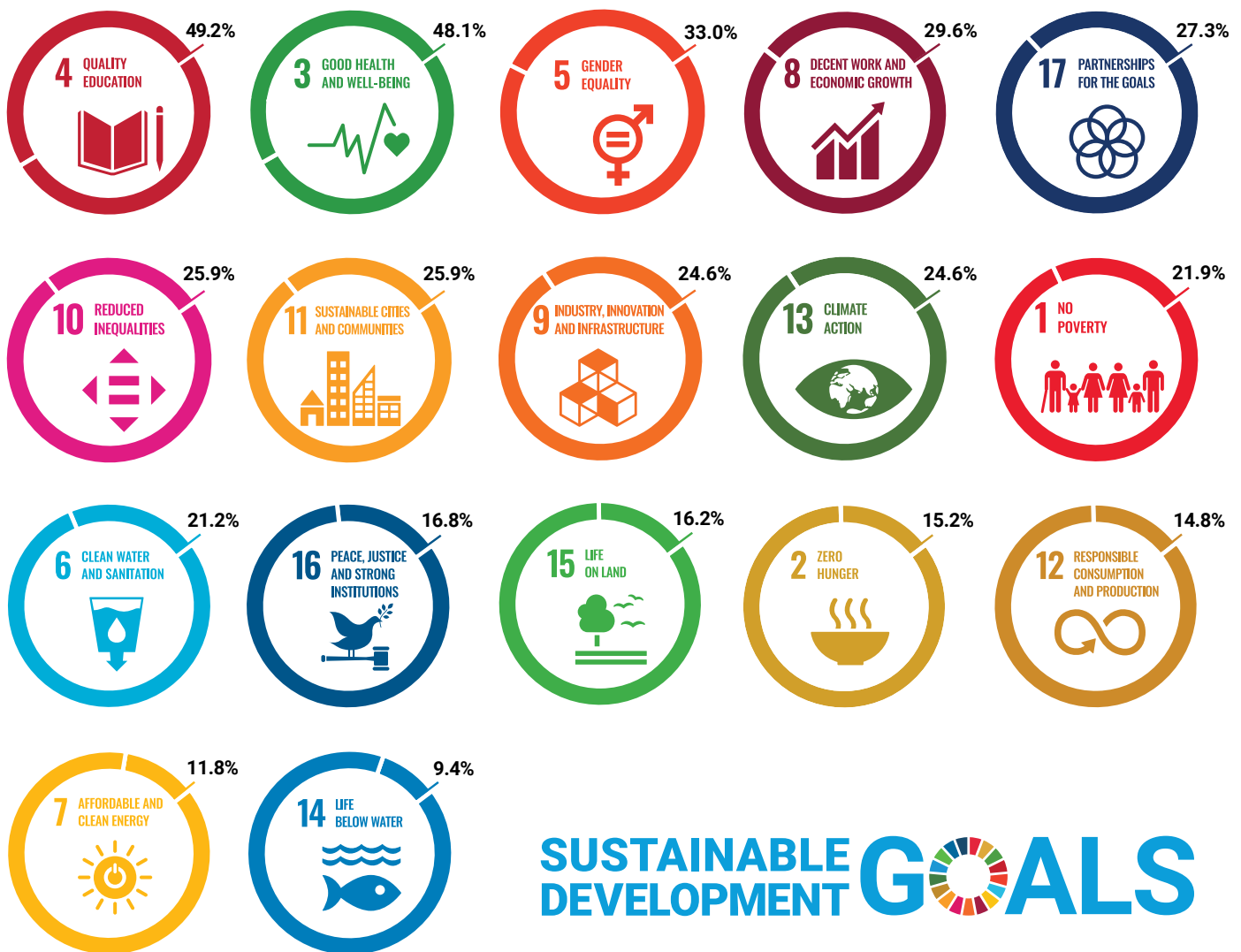
One of the most effective ways to explore the contributions of alumni is through the lens of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). The 17 UN SDGs span a wide range of areas with the intention on improving development outcomes across the world. AAPS and ARDS alumni were asked to reflect on the things that they have done since their award and identify which SDGs they felt they had contributed to.

As shown in Figure 6, across the whole AAPS and ARDS cohort of alumni, contributions are being made to each of the 17 SDGs. The two SDGs where contributions are the most concentrated among this group are in *Quality Education* and *Good Health and Well-being*. For each of these SDGs, almost half of the surveyed cohort indicate they are making contributions. One third of all alumni indicate that they are contributing to *Gender Equality* (SGD 5), and a range of other goals have at least one quarter of alumni indicating that their work and contributions are making a difference to achieving these goals. Overall, the graphic highlights the breadth of contributions being made by alumni of the AAPS and ARDS.

Figure 6: Contributing to the SDGs – per cent of AAPS/ARDS alumni respondents contributing to each of the UN SDGs

Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships alumni contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals

Percent of all AAPS and ARDS alumni who are contributing to each SDG



Source: Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility, Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships Alumni Survey, 2021

4.2.4 Examples of contributions – areas and levels of impact

In order to provide some further nuance to the overall outcomes described above, a range of quotes from the survey are shared below, giving insight into the types of contribution and the levels of impact that alumni are making. The focus on the examples below is to demonstrate contributions of alumni at the meso (organisation/community) and macro (national/regional) levels, with a focus on the three SDGs where the largest volume of contributions from these alumni are found.



Quality Education

As shown in Figure 6, almost half of the alumni involved in the survey have made contributions to improving the quality of education (for AAPS alumni the figure was 48 per cent, for ARDS it was 52 per cent). The quotes below provide some illustrative examples of these contributions, beginning by looking at how alumni have improved education at the local/organisational level (meso-level impacts), and then contributions that could be described as influencing national and regional-level outcomes (macro-level impacts).

Improving education locally (meso-level impacts)

As a Senior Education Officer, my roles and responsibilities are planning adequate and equitable resources, providing timely and relevant information and motivated professional development within my school region. I have been involved in writing of School Annual Improvement Plans, as well as administration and management of schools. This has involved carrying out consultations regarding policy/school curriculum, professional developments etc. I studied all these roles and responsibilities as part of my AAPS. Alumna, Tuvalu

As an educator in a community level, I have passed on the knowledge gained to many students I taught in different high schools. Alumna, Vanuatu

I have been able to teach students from outer islands from my Post of Teaching here in Tongatapu, through online classes. There was no History teacher in this remote school and I cannot be posted there since there is the same pressing needs for more teachers here in Tongatapu. The solution then is to teach these students History through Video Calls etc. Alumna, Tonga

Improving education nationally (macro-level impacts)

The skills and knowledge gained from my study [ARDS] really helped me with my roles, especially in organizing and conducting in-service training and professional development to Early Childhood Education teachers across Tonga in all sectors to ensure they are offering quality ECE services to our young children. Alumna, Tonga

After my graduation, I was promoted from being a classroom teacher to work as a school project coordinator at the Ministry of Education. From there I have worked with many development partners including the Australian Government to coordinate and support the Cyclone Pam (2015) recovery project for the schools ("build back better" initiative). Alumnus, Vanuatu

I set and mark national high school exams where I am really able to apply the knowledge and skills learnt in my [AAPS] degree not only to run workshops for other national exam markers but also to create resources for high school English that is shared in all high schools both government and non-government sectors. Alumna, Tonga



Good health and well-being

Nearly half of all alumni surveyed have made some contribution towards SDG 3, *Good Health and Well-Being* (for AAPS alumni this figure was 51 per cent, for ARDS it was 43 per cent). The quotes below highlight exemplars in this area of contribution, again presented in relation to meso and macro-level impacts.

Improving health and well-being locally (meso-level impacts)

I work as a health promotion officer and we offer health promotion talks in schools, work places and within communities. Alumna, Nauru

Upon return from award, I took up a leadership role as I was appointed as the Team Leader for our hospital. Being young and having to lead the hospital nurses was very challenging especially when some of these nurses are older than me. But with the qualities learned from my scholarship, I am able to overcome these challenges and lead these nurses by example. Alumna, Fiji

I have helped with the extension and empowerment of the Malimali Program in the remote Islands of Ha'apai. This is an existing dental preventive program where we perform demonstration of tooth brushing in Primary Schools. The fourteen remote Islands have no oral health care worker so we have developed a partnership program with the Ministry of Education to equip teachers with the skills to do this. Alumnus, Tonga

I am currently involved in creating and developing procedures and systems for our Environmental Health Laboratory using the skills and knowledge that I have obtained from the course that I have undertaken (which was funded by AAPS). Alumna, Tonga

Improving health and well-being nationally and regionally (macro-level impacts)

As a pharmacist, I am responsible for coordinating the compilation and submission of our country's required controlled substances reports and estimates of need to the International Narcotics Control Board. Alumna, Federated States of Micronesia

The skills and knowledge gained from my scholarship course have contributed to me being involved in the development of the first ever Vanuatu national oral health survey and Vanuatu national oral health policy. Alumna, Vanuatu

I work at the Essential Medicines Authority under the Ministry of Health as the focal point for Antimicrobial Resistance for Fiji. This allows me to work with national and international partners to improve systems. I have recently joined a group of Australian Pharmacist Mentors who are looking to make a difference in improving Clinical Pharmacy Practices in Pacific Island countries. This is an exciting opportunity to further my knowledge as well as be able to support fellow pharmacists in neighbouring island countries. Alumna, Fiji



Gender equality

One third of the alumni who participated in the survey indicated that they have in some way been able to work towards the SDG of Gender Equality (for AAPS this figure was 32 per cent, for ARDS it was 35 per cent). Below are some examples of how the alumni of the AAPS and ARDS are contributing to this particular SDG.

Building gender equality locally (meso-level impacts)

I have had an opportunity to utilise the knowledge and skills gained from ARDS at the local community level, especially working with women. Specifically, I have lead a small group of women in our local urban community last year 2020, to help raised funds for our community activities. This women's group is at its very early stage and has very young women who are members. It is my desire to lead this womens' group and its members to improve their financial management/literacy skills, at the same time to learn other life skills (e.g. sewing, cooking, floral arts etc.) that can help us generate additional source of income. Alumna, Solomon Islands

I am a woman living with physical disability and am able to empower other women and girls in my work place and country. Alumna, Vanuatu

I am co-leading a women's empowerment campaign of our Women Village community to fight against all forms of violence against women and girls. It is an initiative that has created participation with our own community especially with mothers/women doing domestic work. I was able to utilise my planning and organising skills, communication and networking, as well as leadership skills [from my AAPS]. Alumna, Samoa

Building gender equality nationally and regionally (macro-level impacts)

I am contributing to ending domestic violence against women, girls and children. My knowledge from Law School [AAPS] helped me to build awareness about laws/legislation (Family Protection Act, Sexual Amendment Act (2016 etc.) in communities, to conduct training on Gender Law (equality) and representing victims of domestic violence in court. My knowledge has helped me to influence my work colleagues and participants. Alumna, Solomon Islands

Currently I am working as an Associate Lecturer for Inclusive Education. Among my responsibilities, I participated in developing and delivering two Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs for all In-Service and Pre-service teachers in Kiribati. The focuses of these 2 CPDs are to provide a deep understanding of how to mainstream Gender in teaching practices as well as to train teachers from primary to secondary schools on how to support people with and without disabilities. Alumna, Kiribati

I had to opportunity to work on a communications project for Pacific Women in promoting the work of Girls Rise Up project implemented by the Young Women Christian Association. This happened because of my qualifications in Gender Studies [from my AAPS], alongside my media career. I was also contracted to deliver training and mentoring of 20 Pacific journalists to be able to cover the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and the 7th Meeting of the Pacific Ministers for Women hosted by the Pacific Community in April 2021. Alumnus, Solomon Islands

4.2.5 Alumni and their country's COVID-19 response

This survey was undertaken in mid-2021, a time when the COVID-19 pandemic had swept across the world, and when some parts of the Pacific were under considerable strain. Within the survey was a short section designed to increase an understanding of the way in which alumni of the AAPS and ARDS have been involved in the COVID-19 responses in their country. The findings show that just over one third of the AAPS/ARDS alumni surveyed have contributed to the COVID-19 response.

Of these alumni, about one quarter were 'frontline responders', including nurses, doctors, pathology specialists. A further 10 per cent were involved in the development of government policy and processes to tackle COVID-19. And about one third are 'secondary responders', that is, people making substantial adaptations to the way they work or service others due to the pandemic, and include alumni involved in advocacy, education and communications about the pandemic.

The variety of ways in which alumni are providing assistance and support within their countries during the pandemic are exemplified in the voices and stories of alumni themselves which are detailed below, ordered based on the three types of response discussed in the paragraph above.

Frontline responders

As an emergency nurse shift lead at a divisional hospital we are managing COVID-19 positive and non-COVID-19 clients. We are also involved in pre-hospital COVID-19 response teams and in the Infection Prevention and Control Training and monitoring. Alumna from Fiji

My place of work is one of the quarantine stations for the government, mainly for accommodation. We have worked with the Ministry of Health and National Disaster Council to set up procedures at work which can help stop spread of COVID-19 if there was a case in our premises. Alumna from Solomon Islands

I'm involved in Laboratory testing of COVID-19 swabs and blood tests. Alumna from Samoa

I am working as a Midwife in a COVID-19 maternity isolation facility. We are performing child births to COVID-19 positive mothers. We're also providing antenatal care and postpartum cares to pregnant women. Alumna from Fiji

I am a Doctor working in the front line treating patients who present with COVID-19 and Non-COVID-19 like symptoms. I have had patients whom I came in contact with directly test positive for COVID-19. I have also worked with the vaccination teams going into communities and encouraging the public to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Alumnus from Fiji

Secondary responders

As a teacher I have to teach the safe measures to avoid COVID-19. I am also preparing home school package for students to work on while away. Alumna from Vanuatu.

I am translating children's COVID-19 instructional books and creating home school activities for parents to use during lockdown that teach hygiene activities. Alumna from Tonga

My job involves providing assistance to the eligible stranded nationals through their repatriation and through processing warrants to concerned Ministries to support their services financially. Alumna from Kiribati

My team was responsible for verifying information and application submitted by business for the COVID-19 stimulus package. Alumna from Tonga

In my traditional ethnic community, I've been involved in mobilising our association's funds to help our members who have struggled to stay afloat in employment in order to provide for their families. Alumnus from Fiji

Policy responders

I work on DFAT'S Health development program which provides funding and technical support to the Governments COVID-19 response. Alumna from Vanuatu

I am involved in the planning for implementation of a new Vaccination System. I also have heavy involvement with development of National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. Alumnus from Tonga

I was involved in the development of the 'Guidelines for Safe Business Operations in Vanuatu in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic'. Alumna from Vanuatu

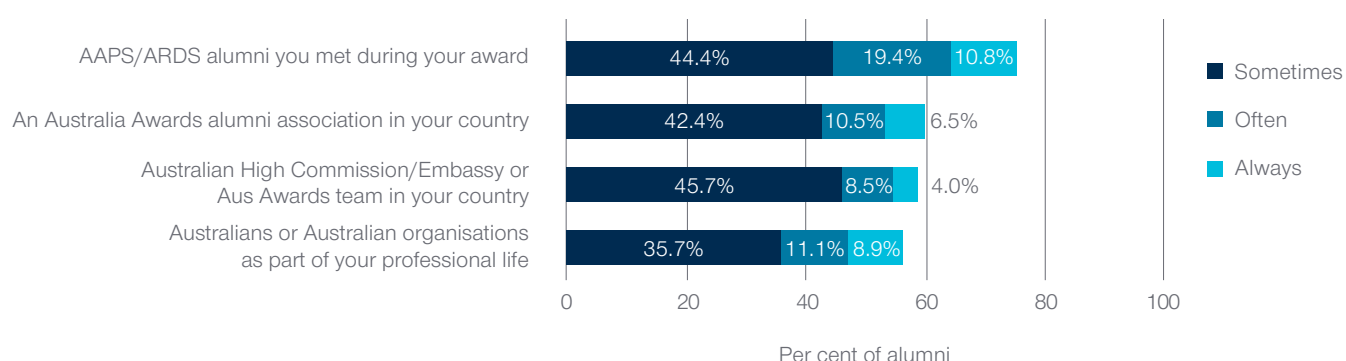
I helped in the development of the Public Health Emergency Bill and training of frontliners on the relevant laws in response to COVID-19. Alumna from Solomon Islands

4.3 Public diplomacy and networks

Two of the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards relate to the extent to which alumni are able to develop ongoing connections and networks as a result of their scholarship (Outcome 2), and bilateral relationships with Australians and Australian organisations (Outcome 3). Given the fact that the AAPS and ARDS alumni did not study in Australia as part of their scholarship, some of these aspects of the long-term outcomes of the broader Australia Awards are not necessarily relevant, or to some extent achievable for this cohort. However, in the survey the GTF was still interested in understanding the extent to which alumni have been able to maintain networks with one another, and whether they have made connections with Australians and Australia Award-related organisations following their award. The survey also asked alumni about their plans for the next five years in order to explore the extent to which these alumni are considering future opportunities to maintain or establish networks. The findings in relation to these broad outcomes are discussed in the section below.

Figure 7 shows that nearly three quarters of all alumni surveyed have remained in contact with other AAPS or ARDS alumni they met during their award. In particular, 30 per cent are 'often' or 'always' in contact with fellow alumni in the time since their scholarship ended, suggesting that these scholarships have the ability to forge strong and ongoing relationships among Pacific alumni. The results also show that more than half all alumni are maintaining contact with an alumni association and the Australian High Commission. It is interesting to highlight that the majority of alumni (56 per cent) have interactions with Australians or Australian organisations as part of their professional life, and that one in five are 'often' or 'always' working with Australians. Overall, these findings show there is continued engagement of alumni with people or organisations that have some relevance to their award, or to Australia more specifically.

Figure 7: Alumni who remain in frequent contact with selected groups/organisations (percentage often or always in contact) (n=350)

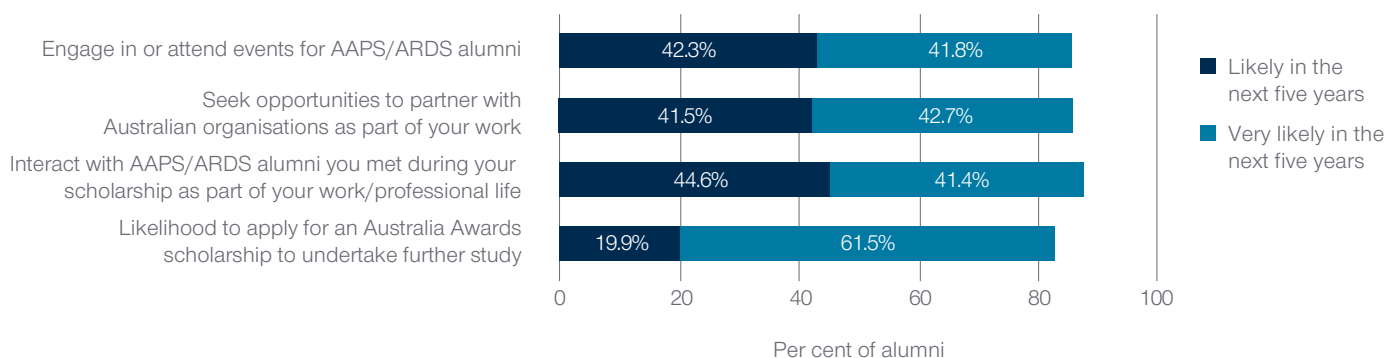


The intentions of these alumni for the future are also important to understand so as to be able to develop opportunities for support and for engagement in the future. Survey participants were asked about their plans for the next five years in relation to engaging with other alumni and with Australia. Overall, their answers show that there is a strong interest in continuing engagement (Figure 8).

The vast majority of alumni have intentions to continue links with fellow alumni through alumni events (84 per cent), suggesting that the continuation of engagement activities for this cohort through alumni associations and High Commission activities would be worthwhile. There is also strong interest among alumni to build professional partnerships with Australian organisations (84 per cent of alumni), again suggesting that ideas or activities that promote opportunities for Australian organisations to interact with alumni could be beneficial.

Also of important note is the interest among alumni in further study opportunities through the Australia Awards. More than 60 per cent of alumni indicated they are 'very likely' to apply for an Australia Awards scholarship in the next five years (a further 20% indicated this was 'likely'). Further exploring this data, the survey results show that alumni who completed their award within the past five years were the most likely to indicate interest in applying for the Australia Awards. Of those who completed their AAPS in the past five years, nearly 90 per cent indicated an intention to apply for an Australia Awards scholarship.

Figure 8: Alumni intentions for engagement with selected groups in next five years (n=350)



5. Conditions for success of AAPS

Alumni identified a range of factors linked to their award that have helped them in the years following graduation. These ‘conditions for success’ include selection of fields of study that align with job markets and development priorities, opportunities for internships while on award, and support from employers to use new knowledge and skills on return from award. For future policy, planning and implementation of the AAPS, these conditions could offer a useful reference point to further enhance the successful outcomes of the scholarships.

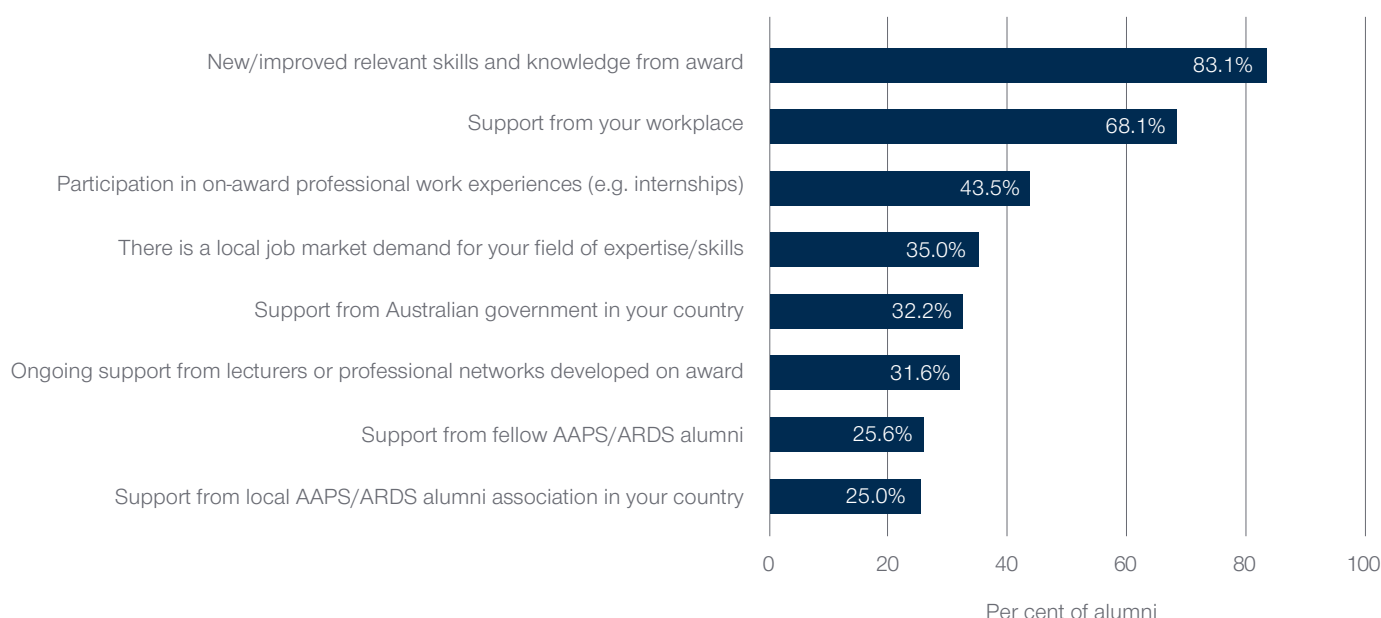
The survey of AAPS and ARDS alumni not only collected the information about achievements and outcomes discussed in earlier chapters, it also provided insight from alumni about the factors that have enabled or challenged them in the time since their scholarship. In this section of the report, these aspects are discussed, and then summarised in a table that highlights what the survey data suggest are the ‘conditions’ that are consistently identified by alumni as being important for success.

5.1 Enabling factors

Two aspects were identified by the majority of alumni as being important in helping them make a contribution to development following the completion of their scholarship. Figure 9 shows that more than four out of five alumni believe that the new or improved skills and knowledge they gained as part of their qualification were important in this regard. Nearly 70 per cent of alumni also mentioned that support from their workplace on return was important in helping them to contribute.

In addition to those stand-out responses, there are a range of other factors that were highlighted by many alumni as being important to their success. Factors that can be influenced while on award, such as work experience or internships were really useful for many (43.5 per cent), as were relationships with lecturers formed on award (31.6 per cent). Other areas where a number of alumni were positive, and could possibly be built on were support from the Australian government overall, support from fellow alumni and support from an alumni association.

Figure 9: Enabling contributions: per cent of alumni indicating selected factors as important (n=360)

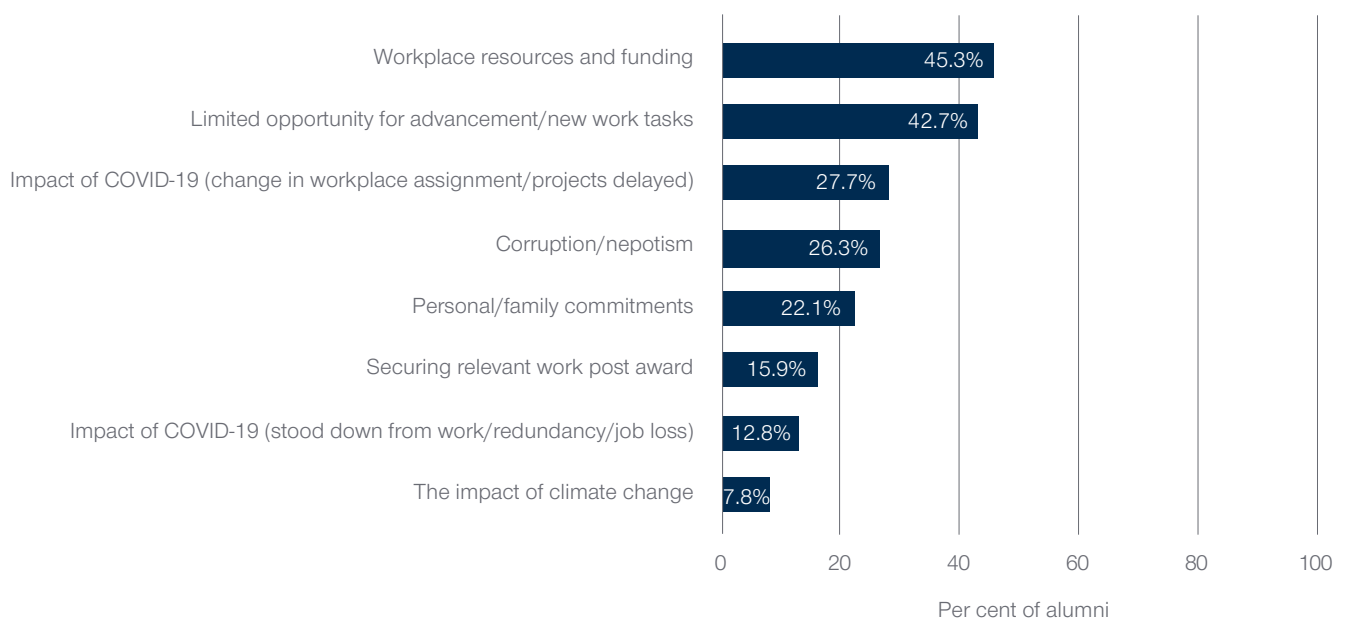


5.2 Barriers to contributions

The barriers and hurdles faced by alumni are also important to explore in order to understand what alumni are faced with on return from award, and which aspects can be helped through change. Overall, alumni were less likely to be indicating there were factors that are inhibiting their contributions, but as shown in Figure 10, there are a couple of issues which almost half of respondents indicated had been problematic.

The key area in which there were difficulties faced related to alumni return to the workplace. More than 40 per cent of alumni noted that a lack of workplace resources or funding (5.3 per cent) or limited opportunities for advancement to build on the new skills and knowledge (42.7 per cent) had made it difficult to contribute to the development and improvement on their return home. COVID-19 issues were also mentioned by a small by notable proportion of alumni as slowing progress, with nearly 30 per cent finding frustrations in changing work and project delays, while 12.8 per cent had been stood down or lost their job as a result of the pandemic.

Figure 10: Barriers to contributions: per cent of alumni indicating selected factors as making contributions difficult (n=358)



5.3 Suggestions and request from alumni

Respondents to the survey had an opportunity at the end to add anything extra they would like to offer in relation to their scholarship and/or their outcomes post award. Overwhelmingly, the response provided were filled with thanks and gratitude to the Australian Government for funding the scholarships and providing this opportunity that for many, would not be possible to self-fund. In addition to this thanks, there were some suggestions and requests among the answers from alumni that are summarised briefly here.

A key issue raised by alumni in their final comments involved finding opportunities for further study. As noted earlier (Figure 8), more than 80 per cent of alumni suggested they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to apply for an Australia Awards scholarship in the next five years. Comments from alumni supported the view that there is a keen ambition to continue to develop skills and knowledge. Alumni had general suggestions like, 'It would be great if you can follow up with students who might want to further studies' (alumna from Vanuatu) as well as more specific suggestions such as this alum from the Solomon Islands:

These scholarships [AAPS/ARDS] have produced a good number of elite professionals over the years that are currently contributing towards our country's development. It would be very good if a similar support is offered for short term leadership development opportunities for young professionals like myself to further enhance our leadership skills in order to drive our country towards sustainable development and improved economic growth.

Other alumni have suggestions for targeting future scholarships, suggesting 'reprioritisation of the priority fields of study chosen each year' (alumna from Tonga), and 'providing new fields relevant to current issues affecting climate change, development and the economy' (alum from Vanuatu), and 'programs to encourage and advance leadership skills and knowledge for the benefit of our Development Goals' (alumna from Tonga).

Furthermore, alumni mentioned a willingness to connect and re-connect with each other and their Australian High Commission/Embassy in the future. For example, an alumna from Kiribati noted, 'It would be good if there is a chance for us to meet somewhere and share and exchange our new skills and knowledge to others as a time to reunite the Alumnus network'.

5.4 Successful program features

The table below summarises the findings from the survey and other observations by the GTF in relation to the delivery of the Australia Awards and support for alumni more broadly. The intention of this table is to articulate some of the conditions that need to be in place in order for alumni of the AAPS to be able to contribute as best they can to the development of their country and region, and to forge connections with other alumni and Australia. It is important to note that the data collected for this research suggests that many, if not all of these conditions are in place across the AAPS currently, the intention here is to highlight their particular importance to the program.

Table 1: To be as successful as possible, AAPS needs to support the following conditions

Award Stage	Condition for success	Delivery partner/s that can influence this
Planning and selection	Local job market demand identified/projected and selection decisions incorporate likelihood of relevant post-award employment	Partner countries, Posts and managing contractors (MCs)
	Alignment with country development plans is taken into account in selection – with particular focus on the needs of the country in the 3 to 5 year horizon.	Partner countries, Posts and MCs
	Selected applicants for the awards are motivated to support sustainable development.	Posts and MCs
On-award	Professional work experiences/internships are offered on award	Host institutions
	Both technical and soft skills are developed/enhanced as part of award.	Host institutions
	Strong connections are developed with lecturers and professional networks.	Host institutions
Post-award	Workplaces are supportive and enable alumni to apply new skills and knowledge.	Employers of alumni, Posts
	Workplaces have the resources/funding to enable alumni to use skills and foster networks/partnerships.	Employers of alumni, Posts
	There is demand in the local job market for the skills and knowledge acquired on award.	Partner countries, employers
	There is an active alumni association with relevant activities to enhance the development of alumni and their networks.	Posts, MCs and alumni
	Opportunities for further professional development are offered.	Posts, MCs and employers

6. Conclusion

This report offers a ‘big picture’ insight into the sentiments and outcomes of alumni of the AAPS and ARDS. It is the first large-scale collection of outcomes information from this group of scholarship recipients and presents a range of positive insights into the progress of alumni and their contributions to their country and region. The survey collected data from 388 alumni, who had studied across the Pacific as part of the ARDS or AAPS. Nearly 50 per cent of alumni contacted participated, which is a substantial outcome for this kind of survey.

Overwhelmingly, the regard of alumni for the quality of the course they studied on award was positive, and their qualifications have helped alumni secure relevant work, and in some cases pursue further studies. Furthermore, the skills and knowledge gained by alumni are being used to contribute to development.

Alumni of the AAPS and ARDS are contributing to each of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting the breadth of the skills and expertise of alumni. In addition, the survey was able to identify that the scholarships and alumni are making an impact at the micro (individual), meso (organisational/ community) and meso (national and regional) levels.

The networks developed by alumni as a result of their award are also strong and ongoing. These networks include collaboration with host institutions, with fellow alumni and with Australians and Australian organisations. Importantly, these alumni indicate an ongoing interest in developing networks with Australia in the future.

The survey also explored alumni needs and interests over the coming years, and identified a range of particular areas in which they seek further professional development. These responses are an opportunity for Posts and Australia Awards managing contractors to provide tailored alumni engagement through professional development in the future.

These results, coupled with previous research by the GTF suggest that ongoing engagement that is meaningful to alumni can further increase the impact of alumni on development outcomes and can foster strong, long-term networks with alumni across the Pacific and with Australia.

7. Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAPS	Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships
AAS	Australia Awards Section (of DFAT)
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
COVID-19	2019 novel coronavirus disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
ECE	Early Childhood Education
FNU	Fiji National University
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GTF	Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility
MC	Managing contractor (of an Australia Awards program)
PNG	Papua New Guinea
Unitech	University of Technology, Papua New Guinea
UN SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
USP	University of the South Pacific
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Annex 1: Approach and survey instrument

Case study approach

This case study by the GTF was conducted online between the 29 July and 20 August, 2021. Each alumni was emailed a unique link to the survey and responses were monitored in real-time, with reminder emails sent at appropriate intervals during fieldwork. Following the survey period, data was coded, cleaned and prepared for analysis and reporting.

Survey instrument

Questions in the Australia Awards Pacific Alumni Survey were structured around three of the four long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards (list above in the Objectives section above). Questions relating to the immediate impact of study on work and career development, and future professional development plans were also developed in collaboration with participating Posts and Australia Awards managing contractors.

The survey was conducted online and comprised of a range of closed (Likert scale) response questions and some open-ended questions. The questions asked alumni about their work and career experiences in the time since they completed their scholarship, and also captured information of relevance to current priorities and global contexts. The survey instrument was structured as follows:

- **Alumni contributions to development (Outcome 1)**
 - Use of new knowledge and skills
 - Sharing of new knowledge and skills
 - Magnitude of impact of contributions (individual, community/workplace, country/region)
 - Examples of contributions (including specifics relating to COVID-19 responses and UN SDGs)
 - Factors enabling and challenging ability to contribute
- **Alumni contributions to public diplomacy (Outcomes 2 and 3)**
 - Frequency of contact post award
- **Impact of study on career development**
 - Link between award and work
 - Satisfaction with study experience
 - Further professional development needs and plans
- **Demographics and characteristics of alumni and their award.**

The full survey instrument can be viewed here:
<https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=0&article=1029&context=tracer&type=additional>