

ANU-UPNG partnership 2021-2023 report

June 2023

“This database is only one example of the value of working with our international friends. I have been a strong supporter of the many elements of the partnership between UPNG and the ANU. I am very pleased that this partnership will continue through the very welcome extension of the UPNG-ANU partnership into a second-phase. Good, long-lasting partnerships are critical for building our nation’s capacity. I hope I will be here in another five years, still as PNG Treasurer, to announce the third phase of the UPNG-ANU partnership, as durable change requires long-term investments.”

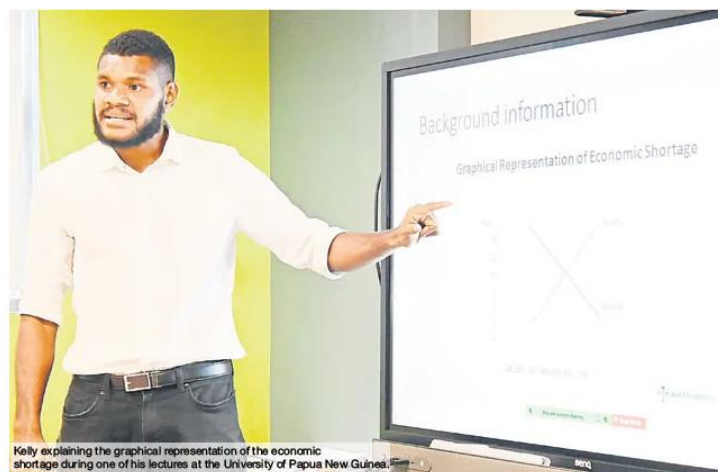
The Hon Mr Ian Ling-Stuckey, PNG Treasurer, speaking at the launch of the PNG Economic Database, 30 September 2021

“[This book] should be required reading for aid donors, development studies, and Pacific Islands studies, and indeed for anyone engaging with PNG in any capacity who wants a solid briefing on its situation.”

Penelope Schoeffel, National University of Samoa, Apia, published book review of the ANU-UPNG book, [*Papua New Guinea: government, economy and society*](#)



UPNG students sitting an economics exam in a course lectured by one of our ANU staff.



PNG seen as import-dependent, export-reliant country

April 6, 2023 The National Business

This report attempts to provide a basic understanding on how FX operates, what is its purpose, who regulates it, and how it contributes or influences the country's economy. Reporter NATHAN WOTI had a business media brief with University of Papua New Guinea economics lecturer KELLY SAMOF and this was his commentary

One of the UPNG economics lecturers featured in the PNG media

This report is written by Professor Stephen Howes, Director, Development Policy Centre with the assistance of various colleagues. The author would like to thank all the many ANU and UPNG colleagues who have not only provided input to the report, but have also contributed over the years in so many ways to the success of the ANU-UPNG partnership.

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Executive Summary

Background

Decades of experience have shown that reform to boost development and reduce poverty only succeeds when it is home-grown, not externally imposed. For this reform to occur, a country needs a cadre of good economists and public policy experts, both to work in government and to promote public discussion of key policy issues.

While the University of Papua New Guinea economics department has a proud history, by 2010 it had become run down, with senior staff leaving for jobs elsewhere resulting in a shortage of lecturers. A partnership between the Development Policy Centre at ANU and UPNG's School of Business Administration (now called the School of Business and Public Policy, or SBPP) began in 2013, with expanded arrangements in place from 2015 with the signing of an MOU between the ANU and UPNG vice chancellors (refreshed in 2018) and support of the Australian Government. The first phase of this project, known as the ANU-UPNG Partnership, ran till the end of 2020. The Australian and PNG governments agreed to fund a second phase from 2021 to 2025. However, the decision on funding for 2024 and 2025 was retained as an option for DFAT to exercise. This report provides an overview of partnership activities from 2021 to 2023.

Independent evaluation (2020)

Both phase 1 and 2 of the project have been extensively documented, with annual plans and reports, and end-of-phase-I-project report and a phase 1 independent evaluation all available on the [Devpol website](#).

A [publicly-available independent evaluation](#) of the project was undertaken by a former senior Australian Treasury official, John Evers, and a former World Bank Vice President, Jim Adams. It was finalised less than three years ago in September 2020, and much that it says remains relevant today. The evaluation was very positive about the project, finding that “[a]t the five-year mark, the Project has come along well in respect of all its objectives – in our view, at least as much as could realistically have been expected.” The independent evaluation concluded that the project “could not be more relevant”, was “fully effective”, “highly efficient”, and that sustainability depended on future funding and commitment. It recommended funding for the partnership be continued, which it was, albeit at a much lower level.

Objective, components and costs

The **objective** of the project remained unchanged between phase 1 and 2, namely to:

address critical weaknesses within SBPP and help realise a stronger SBPP, as well as a deeper and lasting relationship with the ANU

The **four project components** were also unchanged:

1. Strengthening SBPP teaching and the student experience
2. Collaborative research and outreach
3. Staff and student exchanges
4. Project management

Reduced costs. Although the objectives and components were unchanged, the project has been downsized from an annual average cost of \$2.0 million in phase 1 to \$1.5 million in phase 2. Inflation of about 20% between the two phases has further reduced the real funds available. Therefore,

instead of five ANU staff being based at UPNG, there are now only three. Program management support has also been reduced. Indirect costs for deployed staff (accommodation, cars, security) are covered by Abt. The sustained and in some cases higher level of results achieved despite significant budget costs indicates increased value-for-money.

Partnership results

Key Phase 2 partnership results are summarised below.

- Mainstreaming.** As the project matures, more emphasis is given to mainstreaming. The **ANU-UPNG MOU** had been between the two partner schools, SBPP and Crawford. It is now being replaced by a university-wide MOU, due for signing in August this year at the PNG Update which the ANU Vice Chancellor is expected to attend. We also sponsored new **prizes** for the top graduating student in economics. That has now been broadened into prizes for top graduating students in all eight SBPP divisions, including for the top male and top female graduating students. The tutor workshops we ran for several years have now been replaced by UPNG-organised, university-wide tutor training. As other parts of Crawford and ANU get to know SPBB and UPNG new opportunities open up: for example, facilitation of membership of international associations.
- Support for critical government reforms.** The ANU-UPNG partnership has played a critical role in relation to the Marape Government's signature economic reform, the reform of the Central Banking Academic. Devpol Director Professor Stephen Howes has served on the three-person [Independent Advisory Group](#) reporting to the Treasurer since mid-2021. The IAG's first phase report has been concluded and the Central Banking Act amended. The second-phase report is now being drafted. In addition, various UPNG academics and project staff have participated in the Secretariat for the IAG, making vital and timely contributions.
- GoPNG funding.** Very few aid interventions receive GOPNG funding, particularly in the area of technical assistance and training. However, in the 2020 budget, GOPNG committed K5 million to the ANU-UPNG partnership (see Volume 3 of the 2021 budget, p. 34). This money was delivered to UPNG in 2021. Since by then, Australian government funding for the second phase had materialised, this money was saved for future use (see below).
- Complementarity to other Australian investments.** The UPNG funding is now being used to finance the maintenance of the Australian government financed buildings. These buildings are in many ways unsuitable to the PNG environment, for example, there are no fans and windows cannot be opened. Air conditioning is heavily relied on, and expensive, with the back-up generator frequently breaking down due to overuse. An electronic locking system is particularly vulnerable. While the Australian government has financed the maintenance since 2018, it is now the responsibility of UPNG, which has decided to put the money provided by GoPNG (the K5 million above) to this end. Without this funding raised as a result of the partnership, the cash-strapped UPNG would find it extremely difficult to fund the expensive maintenance funding requirements. In addition, and on a smaller, scale, in both Phase I and 2 the partnership has funded the cost of a librarian to staff the Australian government financed SBPP library.
- Bringing through the next generation.** Staff trained by the partnership are becoming increasingly active as researchers and commentators. Most notably, ANU-trained Maholopa

Laveil was selected by the Lowy Institute as their first Pacific Fellow in 2022, taking leave from UPNG for the year, and moving to Sydney. Other lecturers, such as Kelly Samof, are increasingly in the media and offering commentary. Project Coordinator, Andy Mako, delivered the 14th Henry Kila Memorial Address to the Australia-PNG Business Council in May 2023. The project is also bringing through the next generation of international experts dedicated to PNG. Former staff have gone on to work as consultants to the PNG Treasury (Dek Sum, Luke McKenzie), PNG economist for ADB (Marcel Schroder), DFAT Lead Economist for the Pacific (Jonathan Pryke), and as ANU's first female PNG lecturer (Nahayamui Rooney).

- **Teaching.** In its first phase, the project taught on average 19 courses a year. In the last three, that average has increased to 25. The increased scale is due to the successful strategy of training up junior lecturers. Four top UPNG economics students have now completed their training at ANU in the Masters of International Development Economics at Crawford School, and three have commenced their studies, with one more to start next year (5 male, 3 female). The partnership is also sponsoring two public policy and one economics tutors to undertake the MEPP in PNG.
- **Access to Australian expertise.** Lectures are now delivered by a mix of online and in-person lectures. This has not only resulted in significant savings, but also enables us to access top Australian expertise, with our stable of lecturers expanded beyond our own ANU lecturers to include M&E expert, Dr Peter Graves, and climate change expert, Dr Melanie Pill.
- **Masters of Economic and Public Policy (MEPP).** Phase 1 of the partnership established a new two-year postgraduate program in economics and public policy at UPNG, with world-class teaching. Annual enrolments have continued to grow in Phase 2, from less than 10 initially to more than 40 now, mostly mid-level public servants.
- **The PNG Update.** The PNG Update, hosted at UPNG since 2014, has become PNG's premier public policy forum, growing in the number of attendees and presenters each year. After two years of disruption due to COVID, the Update was held once again in 2023. The increase in the number of PNG, PNG female, and UPNG presenters over the years has been remarkable, and in 2023 80% of presenters were Papua New Guinean.
- **Book.** A highlight was the publication in 2022 of the book *Papua New Guinea: government, economy and society*, a joint project of the Devpol and SBPP teams.
- **Blog.** Representation of PNG and UPNG authors on the Devpolicy Blog has grown rapidly. The Devpolicy Blog has published on average 74 blogs a year on PNG between 2015 and 2020. In 2015, only 9% had a PNG national as author; by 2020, that had grown to 70%.
- **Databases.** Since 2021, the project has added another two to its family of research databases of use to the broader PNG research community: economics and MP databases, in addition to the phase-1 budget and elections databases.

- **Seminar series.** After several years of trying, a regular monthly seminar series was successfully introduced in mid-2021, since when 20 seminars have been held, at ANU, at UPNG, and online.
- **Summer School.** The ANU-UPNG Summer School, which started in 2018, but which was suspended due to COVID in 2021 and 2022, resumed in 2023. The summer school provides the opportunity for the top five final-year undergraduate students from both economics and public policy to travel to Australia to complete a customised program of coursework at the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy, and to participate in extracurricular activities such as meetings with DFAT.
- **Value for money.** Costs in the second phase are 25% less than in the first phase, and that is before inflation. But results are in many areas higher (more courses taught, for example) indicating greatly increased value for money.

Conclusion

Despite an almost 40% budget cut (adjusting for inflation), in its second phase, the ANU-UPNG Partnership is delivering more than ever. This indicates a high level of efficiency and effectiveness, and a high value for money. It also augurs well for sustainability. If the 2024-2025 option is agreed to, funding will be further cut, with one fewer staff member allowed in POM, and no allowance for inflation. This is unfortunate, but it would be self-defeating not to provide a further two years of funding. Indeed, beyond that, on the basis of performance to date, funding should be provided for a third phase.

1. Introduction

This section provides a brief background and context. Section 2 sets out the partnership's philosophy. Section 3 deals with objectives, components and costs, and Section 4 results. Section 5 outlines the partnership's M&E system. Section 6 considers challenges, and the final section concludes with lessons learnt.

Decades of experience have shown that reform to boost development and reduce poverty only succeeds when it is home-grown, not externally imposed. And for reform to be home grown, a country needs a cadre of good economists and public policy experts, both to work in government and to promote public discussion of key policy issues. The University of Papua New Guinea is the only university in PNG where economics is taught, and one of only two where public policy is taught.

While the University of Papua New Guinea economics department has a proud history, by 2010 it had become run down, with senior staff leaving for jobs elsewhere resulting in a shortage of lecturers. A partnership between the Development Policy Centre at ANU and UPNG's School of Business Administration (now called the School of Business and Public Policy, or SBPP) began in 2013, with expanded arrangements in place from 2015 with the signing of an MOU between the ANU and UPNG vice chancellors (refreshed in 2018) and support of the Australian Government. The first phase of this project, known as the ANU-UPNG Partnership, ran till the end of 2020. The Australian and PNG governments agreed to fund a second phase from 2021 to 2025. However, the decision on funding for 2024 and 2025 was retained as an option. This report provides an overview of project activities from 2021 to 2023.

2. Partnership philosophy

The partnership has always been explicit about its philosophy, sometimes called the project narrative. It has been reproduced with minimal variation in every project plan and report. The emphasis is on: a long-term approach and continuity; partnership and having skin in the game; producing both tangible and intangible benefits; requiring high-level support; and being adaptive and realistic. The box below contains the version of the project's philosophy from the first progress report (for the first half of 2016).

This project philosophy has served the project well. High level support has been sustained, even with the departure of Foreign Minister Bishop. In particular, successive UPNG VCs have continued to support the project. And The PNG Treasurer Ian Ling-Stuckey has emerged as a strong supporter.

ANU-UPNG partnership philosophy

The project takes a long-term approach. Aid funding for this partnership may wax and wane (and we hope it waxes) but the project has been set up to be here for the long term, at least a decade. Of course, there is no guarantee it will last for a decade, but that is the intent: there is little point to setting up a shorter-term project. Focusing on longer-term outcomes enables us to adapt to the many surprises and unanticipated twists and turns along the way, including, most recently, the pandemic.

The concept of partnership is critical. Both parties have skin in the game. Both have made a long-term commitment to the partnership. Both are prepared to discuss and resolve issues in a transparent manner.

The benefits of the project are both direct and indirect. Perhaps the most important, certainly the most tangible, benefits of the project are for the students who otherwise might receive no teaching, and certainly a lower quality of teaching. These are the future leaders of PNG

after all. But there are also important indirect benefits – the systemic changes, the research and outreach. This dual approach serves as both a risk mitigation approach and as a way to maximize project value.

The project has and requires strong support from the highest levels. Australia's former Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop MP initiated the expansion of the project during a meeting in mid-2014 with the then ANU Vice Chancellor. The high-level champion of the project is currently the PNG Treasurer. Given the difficulty of the project, high-level support is critical for success.

The project has strong UPNG ownership. The project is as much a UPNG initiative as an ANU one. It was the former UPNG VC's initiative to seek a new MOU with ANU, and it was his drive that brought that into fruition. The SBPP Dean plays a critical role in providing day-to-day support to the partnership and its various initiatives. Without this, the project would undoubtedly falter.

The project takes an adaptive, learning-by-doing, and adjusting-as-we-go approach. This is the only approach that makes sense. We learn as we go, documenting what we learn along the way. The latest shift to virtual teaching is a good example of the project's flexibility and evolution.

The project values continuity. To develop good relationships, and to learn to be effective, staff need to be in place for as long as possible. Long-standing relationships between ANU and UPNG faculty are key to the success of the partnership. If project staff do well, we want them to stay for as long as possible.

The project is based on realistic expectations and seeks incremental gains. It would be foolhardy to wish away the systemic challenges that UPNG faces in a range of areas. No external intervention can turn UPNG around, or even a part of the university. However, an external intervention can make a difference, and be judged a success, provided realistic expectations are maintained.

Extracted from the 2021 plan; reproduced in all plans with minimal variation

3. Partnership objective, components and costs

The official partnership **objective** (for Phase 1 and 2; only slight wording changes) is to

address critical weaknesses within the School of Business and Public Policy and help realise a stronger SBPP, as well as a deeper and lasting relationship with the ANU

To achieve this objective, the partnership includes four **components** (unchanged between phase 1 and 2 except for slight language changes):

1. Strengthening SBPP teaching and the student experience
2. Collaborative research and outreach
3. Staff and student exchanges
4. Project management

Reduced costs. Although the objectives and components were unchanged, the project has been downsized from an annual average cost of \$2.0 million in phase 1 to \$1.5 million in phase 2. Inflation of about 20% between the two phases has further reduced the real funds available. Therefore, instead of five ANU staff being based at UPNG, there are now only three. Program management support has also been reduced. Indirect costs for deployed staff (accommodation, cars, security) are

covered by Abt. The sustained and in some cases higher level of results achieved despite the very significant budget costs indicates increased value-for-money.

4. Partnership results

This section covers the results of the project in relation to the four components set out in the previous section.

4.1 Strengthening SBPP teaching and the student experience

This was the largest component of the project, and delivered results, from excellent teaching to course development, and from staff mentoring and student engagement.

Teaching. In its first six years, the project taught 3,651 students in 100 courses. In just the last three, it has taught the same number of students in 76 courses (see summary table below). The increased scale is due to the successful strategy of training up junior lecturers. Four top UPNG economics students have now completed their training at ANU in the Masters of International Development Economics at Crawford School, and three have commenced their studies, with one more to start next year (5 male, 3 female). The partnership has also now started sponsored tutors in the Public Policy and Strategic Management Divisions to take the MEPP to improve their knowledge and promotion prospects, and thus strengthen these divisions as well. One economics tutor has also been sponsored for the MEPP. Two tutors have completed the MEPP, and another three are currently taking it.

ANU lecturers are increasingly teaching at the postgraduate level, and increasingly involved in the mentoring at junior lecturing. However, where critical gaps exist, ANU staff are still involved in undergraduate teaching, for example of a 300-student first-year economics course.

All classes were asked to evaluate their lecturers and courses, with almost universally excellent results. Average scores have reduced over time. However, this is to be expected with first a greater mix of lecturers, and then more lecturing by young lecturers who are still learning. However, scores seem to have stabilised at around 4.1. At ANU, anything above 4 is considered very good. We have also noted a tendency for the evaluation scores of UPNG lecturers to improve over time. There was a definite male bias in the classes, something returned to later, under challenges. As well as the full-time, regular ANU lecturers, the project has also involved a number of lecturers from the PNG think tank, NRI, and from overseas from time to time. Note that the UPNG lecturers trained at ANU are also required to submit to student evaluations (not a standard UPNG requirement).

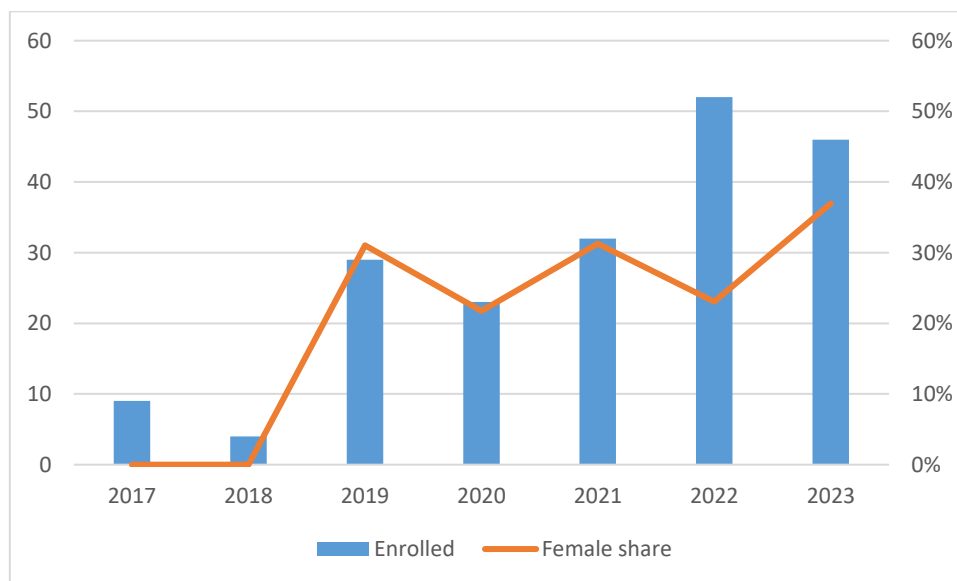
Summary of project teaching

	Courses			Students			Ave. evaluation score (out of 5)
	Total	Undergrad	Postgrad	Total	Female	Male	
2015	5	5	0	127	42	85	4.9
2016	11	11	0	554	207	347	4.7
2017	18	12	6	638	176	462	4.5
2018	23	12	11	604	183	421	4.5
2019	20	10	10	719	172	547	4.5
2020	23	14	9	1009	246	763	4.5
2021	25	16	9	1177	365	812	4.3
2022	26	17	9	1297	412	885	4.1
2023 Year to date	9	7	2	763	282	481	4.1
Projected	25	15	10	1247			
Total/average	176	112	64	7372	2085	4803	4.5

Informal monthly mentoring/information sharing meetings are held with recent ANU economics and UPNG MEPP graduates to discuss issues around teaching and research.

Masters of Economic and Public Policy (MEPP). Phase 1 of the partnership established a new two-year postgraduate program in economics and public policy at UPNG, with world-class teaching. Annual enrolments have continued to grow in Phase 2, from less than 10 initially to more than 40 now, mostly mid-level public servants. Most students are mid-level public servants. The share of female students has also increased greatly from zero in the first two years to 20-30% from 2019 to 2022 to almost 40% now.

MEPP enrolment, and female share



Most of the MEPP courses in which have been taught by ANU faculty, and some by faculty supported and financed by the ANU. An initial problem with the MEPP was the requirement that graduation required the completion of a research project. This proved to be beyond the reach of most students, and a coursework-only variant version of this course has now been developed, as well as a one-year only. Students who take the research project continue to struggle. Another lesson is that a pro-active approach is needed to student completion. With these problems now being addressed, completion rates are improving.

Ten MEPP scholarships for public servants are provided by Australian Awards. This is a good example of cross-program collaboration. DFAT (through Abt), at a cost of \$14,000 per student. This was a great benefit of being part of the Precinct.

On average, it costs the Australian government about \$150,000 to send a Masters student to Australia for two years. To send 40 students each year would therefore cost about \$12 million each year.¹ The MEPP delivers a world-class education at a tiny fraction of this price.

With the budget cuts, increased use is being made of online teaching. While this has its challenges, it does mean that we are able to go beyond our own stable of excellent ANU lecturers to include such Australian thought-leaders as M&E expert, Dr Peter Graves, and climate change expert, Dr Melanie Pill.

¹ After the first year, there would be two cohorts of 40 each in Australia in any one year.

Curriculum development. ANU staff prepare and store course materials for the courses they have taught, and these are already available for use by others in the future.

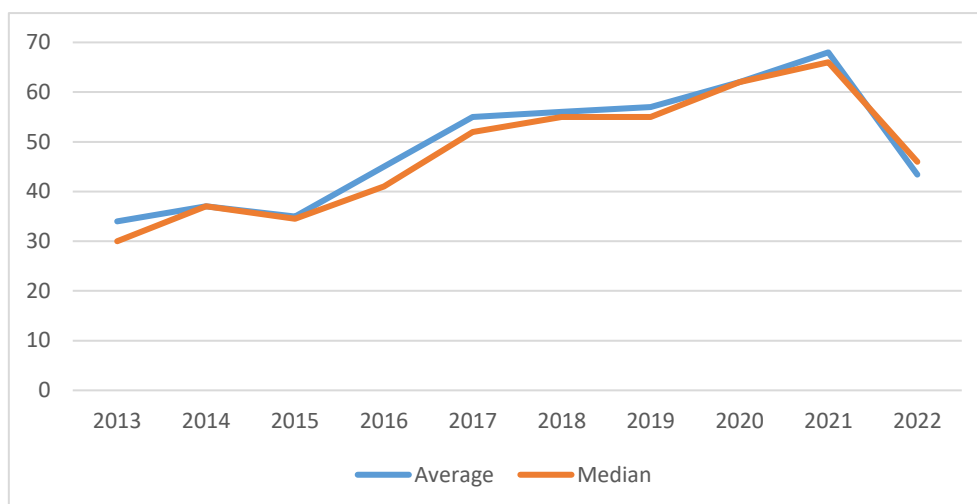
SBPP library. The partnership has continued to fund the costs of a librarian for three years to run the new SBPP library, and make it available to students.

Support for student societies. ANU staff at UPNG have supported the Economics Student Society (ESS) since 2015 and the Public Policy and Management Student Association (PPMSA) since 2019. Previously, these societies were only partly or not at all functional due to lack of institutional support and financial problems. Support is provided for student-led activities such as the school debate, essay competitions, guest speaker/motivational events, promotional materials, coffee chats, barbeques, study outings, orientation nights, and end-of-year events. Support is provided to final-year students with job application preparations and organising written references for employment on request. ANU staff also provide advice and encouragement to students regarding university study including on research and contribution to public policy (e.g., through blog writings), student life, and career pathways, when requested by individual students. These activities are important in enhancing learning and university life experience of students.

Film nights “UPNG Inspired” is the name given to the fortnightly Thursday night film screenings ANU staff have organised at UPNG since 2015. The program is now facilitated by UPNG, led by one of the recent ANU-sponsored economics graduates, which attests to the capacity the Partnership has built for UPNG. After a pause during the COVID-19 pandemic period, UPNG Inspired resumed in semester 2 of 2022.

Reading group. Reading groups are a recent innovation, with three in semester 1 of 2023. The reading groups are attended by students from all schools of UPNG. It is organized and facilitated by ANU and UPNG staff (including recent ANU-sponsored economics graduates who are now staff at UPNG’s SBPP). These interdisciplinary reading workshops introduce students to a selection of published research that examines some of the underlying issues in PNG. The aim of these workshops is to provide an opportunity for students to develop their skills to critically read and analyze academic papers, which is important for their learning at UPNG.

Economics exam. Since 2013, ANU staff have conducted an economics exam for third and fourth year students. The standard of the exam has been kept constant over time. In 2013, the typical student failed – badly. From 2017, the average student has passed, and the average continued to rise until 2021. In 2022, the average grade fell sharply as shown in the graph below. Various reasons for this have been discussed, including a big fall off in numbers and, related, an assessment clash. This decline is a serious indicator, and the results in 2023 will be important. We are not aware of any other effort to measure improvements in learning outcomes from an aid-funded training or education program in PNG.

4th year student average and median grade out of 100, 2013–2022

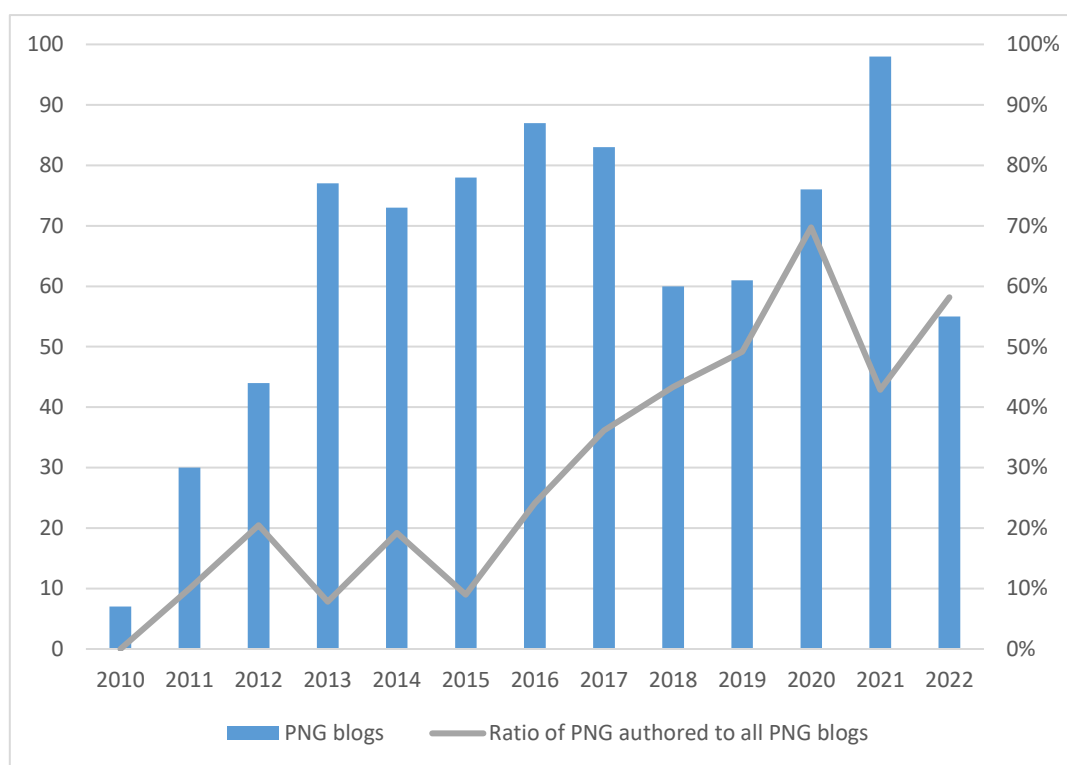
4.2 Collaborative research and outreach

The PNG Update, now revived, and the Devpolicy Blog provide growing spaces for PNG public policy discussions. The two new research databases and the new ANU-UPNG book are significant contributions to UPNG research capacity. Involvement in the Government's signature reform process provided an unexpected opportunity.

Support for critical government reforms. The ANU-UPNG partnership has played a critical role in relation to the Marape Government's signature economic reform, the reform of the Central Banking Academic. Devpol Director Professor Stephen Howes has served on the three-person [Independent Advisory Group](#) reporting to the Treasurer since mid-2021. In addition, various UPNG academics and project staff have participated in the Secretariat for the IAG, making vital and timely contributions. The IAG's first phase report has been concluded and the Central Banking Act amended. The second-phase report is now being drafted. The process has involved high-level interactions with senior Treasury, BPNG, international and private sector staff and leadership.

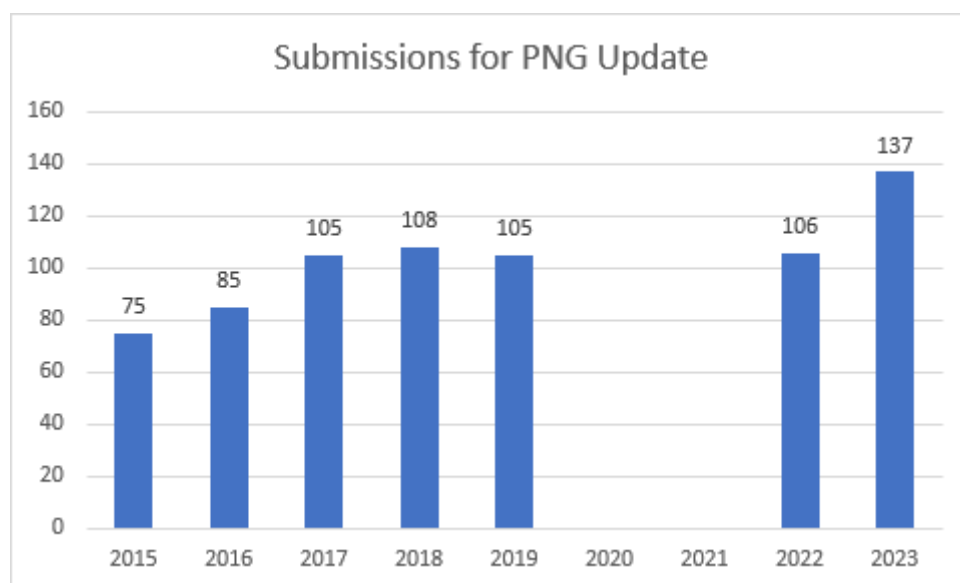
The Devpolicy Blog: fostering a PNG policy discussion. Over the last few years, the Devpolicy Blog has emerged as the main forum for policy discussions about PNG. Port Moresby is the blog's biggest city for readership and Lae the fifth biggest. Every year (since 2013) Devpolicy.org publishes an average of 75 blogs on PNG. The number of blogs with PNG authors has gone up from none in 2010 to just 7 in 2015 to 30 or above from 2019 onwards. The share of PNG blogs by PNG authors was only 8% in 2013. It reached 39% on average for the first phase, and 56% on average so far for the second phase (data to mid-June 2023). Definitely this would not have happened without the partnership. From 2020 onwards, most of the PNG blogs, especially those with PNG authors, have been republished in one of PNG's national dailies.

PNG blogs and PNG-authored blogs



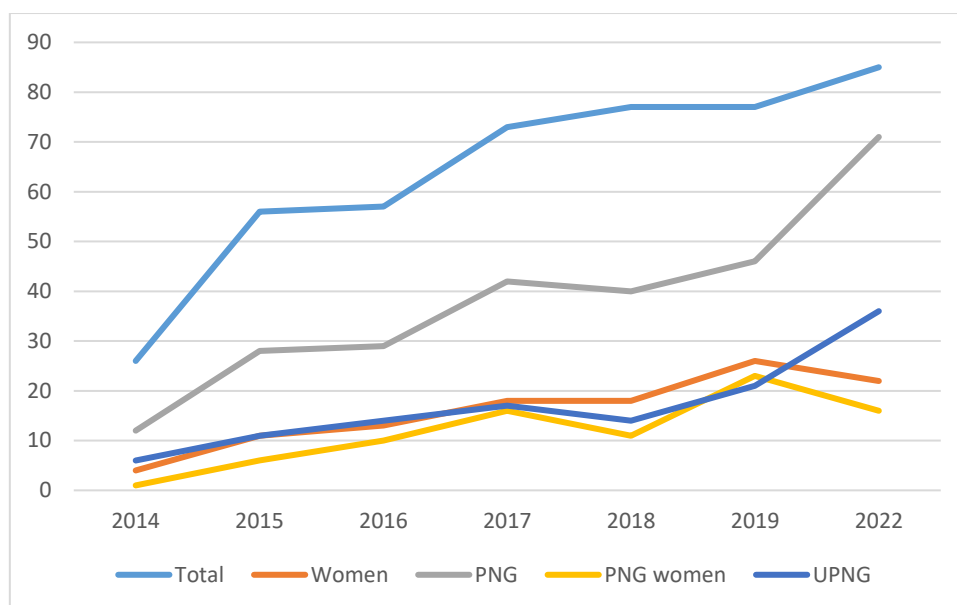
Notes: PNG-authored means at least one of the authors is from PNG, and is by nationality.

The PNG Update: PNG's premier public policy forum. Although it was not held in 2020 and 2021 on account of the pandemic, the PNG Update returned in 2022 as PNG's premier public policy forum. In 2019 and then in 2022, when it re-started, it was opened by the Prime Minister. Evaluations of participants are overwhelmingly positive. Some 400-500 participants attend each of the two days of the Update. **The Update has grown over time in importance and popularity: one indication of this is the upward trend in submissions to the call for papers, which has almost doubled between 2013 and 2023.** (The 2023 Update will be in August.)



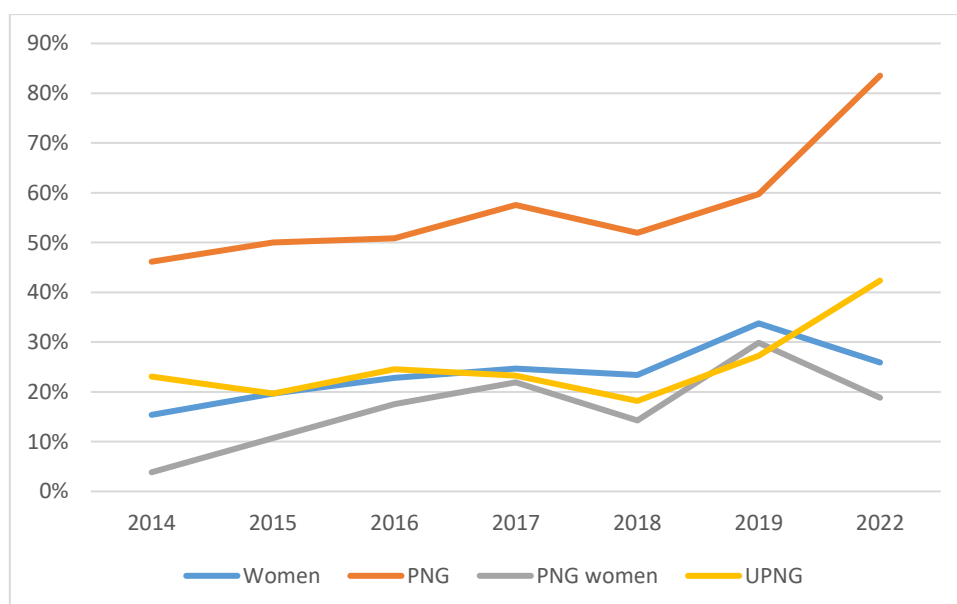
The increase in the number of PNG, PNG women, and UPNG presenters over the years is particularly noteworthy (see figure below). Since we started in 2014, the number of total speakers has grown by 227%, women speakers have grown by 450%, PNG speakers has grown by 492%, UPNG speakers by 500%, and female PNG speakers by 1500%.

PNG, UPNG, PNG female, and UPNG female speakers at the PNG Update: numbers



In terms of shares, the number of PNG speakers over this same period (2014 to 2022) has risen from 46% to 84%, UPNG speakers from 23% to 42% and female PNG speakers from 4% to 19%.

PNG, UPNG, PNG female, and UPNG female speakers at the PNG Update: shares



With 80%+ PNG speakers, the PNG Update has become a truly Papua New Guinean forum for discussing PNG issues.

A new book The ANU and UPNG teams combined to produce a new, free-to-download volume of contemporary issues [Papua New Guinea: government, economy and society](#). Altogether some 22 authors are involved, 12 from ANU/Australia and 10 from UPNG/PNG. The table of contents is provided below. The book was launched by the PNG PM in October 2022. The second joint project (post-independence economic history) is at revised draft stage.

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(L to R) Professor Helen Sullivan, Dean of the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific; Robert Igara, Chancellor of UPNG; Hon. James Marape, Prime Minister of PNG; Professor Frank K. Griffin, Vice-Chancellor of UPNG; Jon Philp, Australian High Commissioner to PNG

Two new databases. In its first phase, the partnership produced two research databases, in addition to the [PNG Pacific Research Portal](#). One is the [PNG Election Database](#), which contains detailed election results from all national general elections in PNG between independence, and is the result of an exhaustive and extensive data gathering exercise, and is only place these data are held. It is made publicly available through an interactive, dedicated website, that has already been extensively

used. Unfortunately, it has not yet been updated to include 2022 election results, but we will continue to try to get the most recent data. The other phase-1 database is the [PNG Budget Database](#), a Excel spreadsheet that now compiles information from PNG national government budgets from 1989 to 2023. The database is updated twice yearly, after the annual budget and when the FBO (Final Budget Outcome) is released. The budget is used by PNG commentators, the private sector and multilaterals.

In its second phase, the partnership produced two new databases

- The [PNG Economic Database](#) is a database of key PNG economic variables since independence, not otherwise available. It was launched by the PNG Treasurer in September 2021.
- The [PNG MP Database](#) is a database of PNG MPs from this parliament and the last, tracking their party membership and support for or opposition to the government, again making data accessible that is not otherwise publicly available.

Also in the second phase, the partnership supported the finalisation and publication of two additional data sets: [the PNG District Development Dataset](#); and [the PNG Minister Dataset](#).

Seminar series. After several years of trying, a [regular monthly seminar series](#) was successfully introduced in mid-2021, since when 20 seminars have been held, at ANU, at UPNG, and online.

Commentary Local economics division staff are now asked for their opinion for local and international news articles and on radio. This did not happen prior to the partnership.

The PNG Project. The PNG Project encompasses the various research outputs undertaken in relation to PNG through the partnership. A sample of research includes:

- Nemat Bizhan (ed). 2022. *State fragility: case studies and comparisons*, Routledge [with case studies on PNG and other countries]
- Andy Anton Mako “[Reversing rural decline](#)”, The 11th Henry Kila Memorial Lecture, Australia PNG Business Council, May 2023
- Terence Wood, Michael Kabuni and Maholopa Laveil “Troubles and Puzzles: the 2022 general elections in Papua New Guinea” submitted to *The Journal of Pacific History*
- Nayahamui Rooney, Miranda Forsyth, Joshua Goa, Dunstan Lawihin, and Dora Kuir-Ayius, “Thinking Incrementally about Policy Interventions on Intimate Partner Violence in Papua New Guinea: Understanding ‘Popcorn’ and ‘Blanket,’” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* (2022)
- Martin Davies 2021 *Study of the Foreign Exchange Market in Papua New Guinea: the path to Kina convertibility*, reported commissioned by the PNG Treasury.

4.3 Staff and student exchange

This component of the partnership promotes sustainability by delivering new lecturers to UPNG. The summer school is one of the most innovative features of the partnership.

A pipeline of new lecturers. Four top UPNG economics students have now completed their training at ANU in the Masters of International Development Economics at Crawford School, and three have commenced their studies, with one more to start next year (5 male, 3 female). The partnership is also sponsoring two public policy and one economics tutors to undertake the MEPP in PNG to strengthen the Public Policy and Strategic Management Divisions at UPNG.

Summer schools. The ANU-UPNG Summer School program takes the top 5 economics and top 5 public policy students to Australia to complete 6 weeks of academic coursework at the Crawford school and many extracurricular activities. The Summer School ran in 2018, 2019 and 2020, had to be abandoned in 2021 and 2022 and then resumed in 2023. The summer school gives students the chance to undertake customised student learning programs and to engage in extensive networking. Student evaluations are extremely positive.

International linkages. The partnership has been successful in building international linkages. For example, Assoc. Prof. Martin Davies from Washington and Lee University has been teaching MEPP Macro for seven years as part of the partnership, and visiting the country every year (except during the pandemic), most recently spending the full 2022-23 academic year in country. Dr Davies is an expert on the PNG economy and one of the most active researchers worldwide on PNG issues. He is a frequent speaker at academic and business conferences, has arranged sessions on PNG at American economics conferences, is widely and well networked within PNG, and has facilitated the involvement of several of his collaborators in PNG research. Dr Davies' involvement is huge asset to the partnership, to the students he teaches and to the cause of better economic management in PNG.

4.4 Relationships and management

This is a complex project, but one that has been well managed throughout.

ANU-SBPP relationship. The relationship remained strong throughout, supported by regular meetings and visits. The visit by CAP Dean to UPNG for the 2017 and 2022 PNG Updates have been strong statements of support. We also look forward to the visit of the ANU VC to the 2023 PNG Update in August.

Project management. Project management responsibilities are shared on the ANU side between the Project Manager (Arichika Okazaki - Canberra), Project Coordinator (Andy Anton Mako – POM), Team Leader (Nemat Bizhan – Canberra/POM), and Project Director (Stephen Howes – Canberra). All plans and reports have been delivered on time, and the various activities delivered successfully, and risks managed prudently.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

M&E tools. From the start, the partnership had built into it a number of M&E tools. Staff and student surveys were conducted in 2017. Evaluations of all courses and major events are undertaken every semester or year. We also undertake the annual economics exam (discussed earlier). And six-monthly performance reports analyse our progress. Reports continue to be sent to DFAT every six months and published on the web: see <https://devpolicy.crawford.anu.edu.au/png-project/anu-upng-partnership>. Progress reports use a traffic light system to indicate progress against annual targets.

Independent evaluation. An independent evaluation of the project was undertaken by a former senior Australian Treasury official, John Evers, and a former World Bank Vice President, Jim Adams. It was finalised in September 2020, and [published](#) on the web. The evaluation is very positive about the project, finding that “[a]t the five-year mark, the Project has come along well in respect of all its objectives – in our view, at least as much as could realistically have been expected.”

The evaluators were asked to assess the Project against the standard evaluative criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability:

- **Relevance:** “In short, since this Project provides support of a kind which is vital for PNG’s future, it could not be more relevant.”
- **Effectiveness:** “Our assessment, as explained in the sections evaluating each of the Project’s components, is that it has been fully effective in improving teaching of economics and public policy in SBPP, in building a program of research on PNG-related subjects, and in developing SBPP’s own capability for that teaching and research, within the bounds of the available funding and SBPP’s situation within UPNG.”
- **Efficiency:** “Our assessment, as explained in the section evaluating the Project’s management, is that it has been highly efficient in three senses: while keeping resources focused on the main means of attaining the Project’s objectives, its managers have adapted to set-backs and opportunities rapidly and constructively; economies have been made in the resources devoted to management as the Project developed; and value for money in the Project, so far as we can assess it, is very good.”
- **Sustainability:** “Our assessment, as explained in the sections on Project management and considerations for future investment, is that sustainability of the Project’s outcomes mainly depends on: continuation of the exemplary commitment and leadership shown by the heads of SBPP and the ANU’s Development Policy Centre; the obvious issue of future funding; the prospects of a tapering of ANU support directly linked to increases in the number and capability of PNG staff of SBPP in economics and public policy; and the extent of constraints, or opportunities for greater benefits, represented by SBPP’s place within UPNG.”

Other findings and recommendations included the following

- “We believe, based on experience in our own careers in economic development, that by providing high-quality training in economics and public policy this Project provides support of a kind which is vital for PNG’s future.”
- “The Project has delivered effective teaching capacity, both in the near term and for the long term, an extensive and productive research program, and an impressive outreach program informing public debate in PNG.”
- “Its cost of about \$2 million a year is very modest in relation to its benefits, and savings can probably be secured over time if the present use of remote learning proves successful.”
- “[C]ontinuation of funding for the Project should be agreed as soon as possible so that its component activities can continue with a minimum of disruption.”

The full evaluation [is available on the Devpolicy website](#).

6. Project risks and challenges

Certainly, the project has faced various risks and challenges over the years.

Lack of university reform. Many of the constraints to SBPP performance are beyond the control of the School to address, and need university-wide change. [Hopes were high in 2013](#) that the university would undertake far-reaching reform, but, while some progress has been made in a few areas, overall it has been disappointing. UPNG is the only university in PNG to teach economics (and only one of two to teach public policy). It is too important to abandon, but it is also important to be

realistic. The project was designed to and did make gains despite a lack of university reform, but there is no doubt much more could be achieved with broader reform.

High level of risk. The high level of risk implicit in a project like this became explicit with the university shutdown and protests of 2016, the staff strike of 2019, and the pandemic of 2020-22. The adaptive, flexible approach taken from the start was the best way to respond.

Gender imbalance. Despite considerable effort, recruiting females to work in Port Moresby has not been easy. However, we do see significant gender initiatives and progress, including: more female MEPP students; more female PNG speakers at the PNG Update; gender quotas for the summer school and MEPP scholarships; encouraging female students to [speak out](#)); making gender a research and PNG Update focus; and (v) mainstreaming gender issues into lectures and research. Good progress has been made, but more needs to be done.

Staff continuity. A number of long-term Devpol staff are still active today, including Stephen Howes, Terence Wood, Grant Walton, Nemet Bizhan and Arichika Okazaki (project manager). They have provided a frame around which other, newer staff have been able to join. At the leadership level, continuity was ensured by the partnership directors, Professors Howes and Pillai, being in position throughout.

Sustainability. Sustainability was an objective of the partnership from the start, and the strategy is now showing results with four new economics lecturers in place at UPNG. That said, the project was always designed and presented as a multi-decadal one and there is no doubt that, if the partnership funding were withdrawn, sustainability would be at risk. While the partnership itself would continue, termination of funding would mean the Masters of Economic and Public Policy would collapse, there would be no more summer schools or scholarships, and that the future of the PNG Update would be in doubt. It would also be premature to hand over to a very young and inexperienced economics faculty at this stage. All are highly employable elsewhere, and, as earlier experience shows, would easily find jobs elsewhere. Without the support of ANU staff for a few more years, they might well leave for less stressful and better paid jobs.

7. Conclusion

The decision of the Australian government to invest in a second phase of the ANU-UPNG partnership was undoubtedly the correct one, and is illustrative of the need to make long-term investments in Australia's aid to PNG. Apart from the various achievements summarised above, three more general ones have emerged from the second phase:

Mainstreaming. As the project matures, more emphasis is given to mainstreaming. The **ANU-UPNG MOU** had been between the two partner schools, SBPP and Crawford. It is now being replaced by a university-wide MOU, due for signing in August this year at the PNG Update which the ANU Vice Chancellor is expected to attend. We also sponsored new **prizes** for the top graduating student in economics. That has now been broadened into prizes for top graduating students in all eight SBPP divisions, including for the top male and top female graduating students. The tutor workshops we ran for several years have now been replaced by UPNG-organised, university-wide tutor training.

Bringing through the next generation of PNG experts. Staff trained by the partnership are becoming increasingly active as researchers and commentators. Most notably, ANU-trained Maholopa Laveil was selected by the Lowy Institute as their first Pacific Fellow in 2022, taking leave from UPNG for the year, and moving to Sydney. Other lecturers, such as Kelly Samof, are increasingly in the media and offering commentary. Project Coordinator, Andy Mako, delivered the 14th Henry Kila Memorial Address to the Australia-PNG Business Council in May 2023. The project is also bringing through the

next generation of international experts dedicated to PNG. Former staff have gone on to work as consultants to the PNG Treasury (Dek Sum, Luke McKenzie), PNG economist for ADB (Marcel Schroder), DFAT Lead Economist for the Pacific (Jonathan Pryke), and as ANU's first female PNG lecturer (Nahayamui Rooney).

GoPNG funding. Very few aid interventions receive GOPNG funding, particularly in the area of technical assistance and training. However, in the 2020 budget, GOPNG committed K5 million to the ANU-UPNG partnership (see Volume 3 of the 2021 budget, p. 34). This money was delivered to UPNG in 2021. Since by then, Australian government funding for the second phase had materialised, this money was saved for future use (see below).

Complementarity to other Australian investments. The UPNG funding is now being used to finance the maintenance of the Australian government financed buildings. These buildings are in many ways unsuitable to the PNG environment, for example, there are no fans and windows cannot be opened. Air conditioning is heavily relied on, and expensive, with the back-up generator frequently breaking down due to overuse. An electronic locking system is particularly vulnerable. While the Australian government has financed the maintenance since 2018, it is now the responsibility of UPNG, which has decided to put the money provided by GoPNG (the K5 million above) to this end. Without this funding raised as a result of the partnership, the cash-strapped UPNG would find it extremely difficult to fund the expensive maintenance funding requirements. In addition, and on a smaller, scale, in both Phase I and 2 the partnership has funded the cost of a librarian to staff the Australian government financed SBPP library.



2023 ANU-UPNG summer school social dinner



MEPP class of 2022