

Interview by Jonathan Ritchie and Musawe Sinebare with Robert Plak Pawilnga, Lae, 9 September 2014

MA, Agricultural Science, University of Queensland, 2003-2004



[00:00:13]	Did a bachelor at Unitech then received an ADS scholarship to do a Master of Science, in Agricultural Studies, at the University of Queensland (UQ) in 2003. He was at the St Lucia campus for eighteen months. The master's was by coursework with twelve units of research. After finishing his bachelor he worked at the university's agriculture department as a graduate assistant for two years.	Undergraduate education; Scholarship experience; Studying in Australia
[00:02:02]	He really wanted to further his education and was interested in biotechnology and plant genetics but there were no courses about that in PNG. He had made some contacts at UQ while working at the university. The scholarship application required contact with potential supervisors. He had met the UQ people through a project about taro funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). He was successful on his first application. Previously, he had been to Brisbane for two weeks training as a graduate assistant.	Motive to study overseas; Connections with Australia; Application process; Professional network
[00:05:05]	He was excited to see new places, new people, have new experiences. The scholarship gave him the opportunity to explore studies he could not in PNG. Also, in PNG he was confined to his own culture and social milieu but in Australia it was more multicultural and he could get to know different ways and people.	Motive to study overseas
[00:07:09]	For the first five days he stayed in one of the university colleges, arranged by AusAID. The AusAID liaison officer was very welcoming, greeted him by name. They were given an advance of their stipend and guided to open bank accounts and find accommodation. Students who had been there for a while helped them too. Finding accommodation through estate agents was quite easy, he lived in a share house with another Papua New Guinean. At first he spent all his time with Papua New Guineans but soon mixed with other people as well.	Arriving in Australia; Scholarship experience; Living in Australia; PNG community in Brisbane

[00:10:46]	He has a lot of colleagues from Australia, Japan and Indonesia and is still in contact with them. He's also in regular contact with his supervisor, who also supervised many others from Unitech. Sometimes there were discriminatory remarks made about him when he was out, but he had been warned about the likelihood of that so it didn't surprise him. He played touch footy at the uni, with a range of nationalities. He went to church occasionally.	Connections with Australia; Professional networks; Supervisor-student relationship; Living in Australia; Leisure activities in Australia
[00:15:04]	Unitech had supported his overseas studies but there were a lot of changes while he was away, his former supervisor resigned, and after twelve or fourteen months Unitech terminated his employment. So when he came back in 2004 he was told there were no vacant positions and he had went to NARI. He was confident that with his Australian master's he would find work. The studies in Australia were enjoyable but challenging doing such independent study.	Returning to PNG; Post-scholarship career; Studying in Australia
[00:18:01]	He had a stipend in Australia so didn't worry too much about the situation with Unitech. He was married but the family didn't go to Australia with him. He applied for a job at NARI while still in Australia and went there as soon as he got home and has been there ever since.	Family; Living in Australia; Post-scholarship experience
[00:19:32]	Highs and lows in Australia? When he was there he was happy all the time. The only low was when Unitech terminated his attachment to them but even that was OK.	Living in Australia
[00:20:34]	What difference has doing the master's made? It made a big difference because employers expect more of people who have studied overseas. You can easily tell when someone has studied overseas, they think more broadly and have greater discernment.	Post-scholarship career
[00:23:15]	Has studying in Australia given him more leadership opportunities? He was offered a laboratory management position and it didn't take him long to perform as expected. If he hadn't performed well his qualification wouldn't have made any difference.	Leadership; Career
[00:26:49]	Advice for someone going to study overseas? He would advise them to learn as much as they can, about life as well as from their studies, and try to implement what they've learned to have an impact on people at home. He went to Suncorp Stadium several times, especially for state of origin games. It was close to where he lived.	Living in Australia
[00:29:03]	END	