



Australian
National
University



THE UNIVERSITY OF
PAPUA NEW GUINEA



CELEBRATING A DECADE OF PARTNERSHIP

ANU-UPNG 2015-2025

Photo: ANU-UPNG Summer School
Students meeting Prime Minister James
Marape at ANU in February 2024.





FOREWORD

2025 is an important milestone in the enduring relationship between Papua New Guinea and Australia, as PNG celebrates 50 years of independence.

This historic moment is not only a time to honour the achievements of past generations of nation-builders, but an opportunity to look ahead to those who will shape the future.

For the past ten years, Australia and PNG have been working together — with support from the Australian Government — to develop the skills of the next generation of leaders through the ANU-UPNG Partnership.

This initiative brings together the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) School of Business and Public Policy and the Australian National University (ANU) Crawford School of Public Policy.

Since 2015, the partnership has helped transform the UPNG School of Business and Public Policy.

Thousands of students have directly benefitted from the combined expertise of these national institutions. Our collaborative research and outreach has had a national impact.

This booklet provides an overview of some of the key achievements of the partnership over the past ten years.

As leaders of this initiative, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to see how our partnership has grown and how it has been able to deliver results far in excess of our original expectations.

The journey is not over, but it is certainly well begun!



Dr Laurence Sause
Acting Executive Dean, School of Business and Public Policy, University of Papua New Guinea



Professor Stephen Howes
Director, Development Policy Centre, Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University



Professor Lekshmi N. Pillai
Acting Pro Vice Chancellor (Planning & Development and Industrial Relations), University of Papua New Guinea

A DECADE + OF COLLABORATION

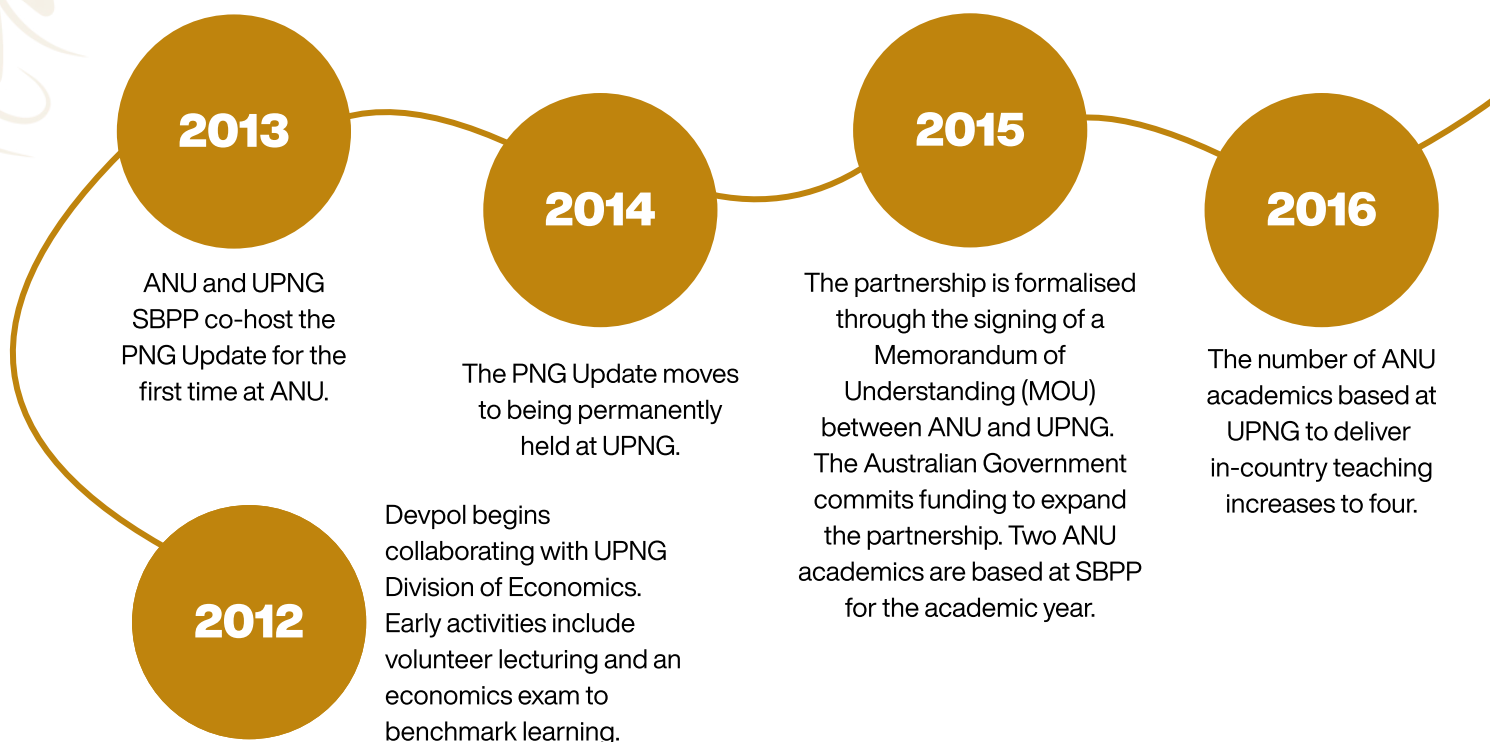
The partnership between the UPNG School of Business and Public Policy (SBPP) and ANU Crawford School of Public Policy first began in 2012, when economic researchers at Crawford School's Development Policy Centre (Devpol) became aware of the challenges being faced by the overstretched and under-resourced UPNG Economics Division.

With UPNG and ANU academics both seeing a huge unmet need for quality economics education, public policy dialogue and research to support PNG's development, they began working together to plan a stronger future through collaboration.

The partnership began informally, relying on volunteer lecturers. One of the first joint initiatives was the revival of the flagship PNG Update conferences — firstly in Canberra in 2013, and then in Port Moresby, the Update's new home, from 2014 onwards.

In 2015, the partnership was formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two universities, and an injection of Australian Government funding enabled its expansion.

Ten years on, the Economics Division has gone from having just one lecturer to a faculty of seven. More women are involved in learning, teaching and research. Students and faculty have access to international learning opportunities, exchanges and collaborations. A new postgraduate program has paved the way for public servants and professionals to develop their knowledge and skills without needing to leave the country. New publications and databases have filled fundamental knowledge gaps, while the PNG Update has become the premier forum for discussion of public policy issues in the country.



2019

SBPP commences teaching in its new building. The first recipients of the ANU MIDEDEC scholarships return and commence teaching at SBPP.

2020

The number of ANU academics based at UPNG to deliver in-country teaching peaks at seven. Teaching and program activities pivot due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2018

The first ANU-UPNG Summer School takes place. MOU between ANU and UPNG is renewed. The first graduates of the MEPP complete their studies. The new School of Business and Public Policy Building funded by the Australian Government is officially opened.

2021

A second phase of Australian Government funding begins. The partnership starts monthly hybrid public seminars on PNG research. The PNG Economic Database was launched by the Treasurer of Papua New Guinea.

2017

First cohort of the UPNG Master of Economics and Public Policy (MEPP) commences study. The first two recipients of the ANU Master of International Development Economics (MIDEDEC) scholarship commence their study at Crawford School. The Papua New Guinea Election Database and PNG Budget Database are launched.

2022

The PNG Update resumes after the COVID-19 pandemic. A book authored through the partnership — *Papua New Guinea: Government, Economy and Society* — is published. The PNG MP Database is released.

2023

The ANU-UPNG Summer School resumes after a break due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The partnership MOU is extended and expanded to cover cooperation between all schools and faculties at ANU and UPNG. The PNG Update attracts its largest audience ever.

2025

The partnership celebrates ten years, as PNG marks 50 years of independence. A second book authored through the partnership — *Struggle, reform, boom and bust: an economic history of PNG since independence* — is published.

2024

Student results in the annual Economics Exam exceed pre-pandemic levels. The PNG Budget Database is expanded to include provincial budget data.

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.

The Update, which is open to the public, supports the discussion of research and analysis relating to contemporary economic and public policy issues in PNG.

Attendance peaked in 2023, with 1,800 people registering for the event, and remained high in 2024 with 1,600 attending the conference.

Prime Minister James Marape has opened the conference in every year it has run since 2019, demonstrating the Update's influence and importance.

Other notable keynote speakers in recent years have included:

- Allan Bird, East Sepik Governor (2024)
- Kessy Sawang, Minister for Labour and Employment (2023)
- Andrew Oake, Department of Treasury Secretary (2024)
- Jeffrey Yabom, Deputy Governor, BPNG (2024)
- The Australian High Commissioner to PNG (2022-24)
- Brian Schmidt, former ANU Vice-Chancellor and Nobel Prize winner (2023)
- Dame Meg Taylor, former Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum (2018)

Attendees at the Update have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback through surveys, and many return year after year.

The increase in the number of Papua New Guinean presenters, including women, as well as UPNG presenters over the years has been particularly noteworthy. PNG nationals have gone from being a minority of presenters to the large majority. ANU has been successful in attracting external funding from the Asia Foundation to provide travel support for Papua New Guinean presenters, further supporting this shift. Presentations by women have also increased from 15% to more than 40% of the program.

NOTABLE MOMENTS

In **2024**, both Prime Minister James Marape and East Sepik Governor Allan Bird outlined their vision for PNG, their concerns, and future policy priorities.

In **2023**, then-ANU Vice Chancellor Brian Schmidt, a Nobel Prize winner, spoke on the importance of the ANU-UPNG relationship, and Professor Helen Sullivan, Dean of ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, launched her book *Collaboration and Public Policy*.

In **2022**, the conference explored recovery from COVID-19, Papua LNG and Chinese investment in PNG.

In **2019**, Prime Minister James Marape opened the conference, and returned for an open Q&A during the closing. Then-Opposition Leader Patrick Pruaitch delivered a plenary.

In **2018**, the Update focused on PNG in the year of APEC. Dame Meg Taylor, then Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, delivered a keynote.





RESTORING QUALITY ECONOMICS EDUCATION AT PNG'S NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

One of the core goals of the ANU-UPNG Partnership is to strengthen teaching at SBPP and the student experience. Quality education in economics and public policy at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels will support PNG to reach its economic and human development aspirations, as SBPP graduates move into the workforce and progress to positions of leadership.

When Devpol first began collaborating with UPNG SBPP, the Economics Division was on life support. Competition for expertise with the private sector and a lack of higher degree study opportunities had left PNG's national university with an underpowered economics faculty down to its last one or two staff, and this strain was impacting teaching quality.

When the partnership formally began in 2015, the Economics Division was down to just one tutor. Through scholarships and in-country visiting lecturers, as well as the development of a domestic postgraduate program, the partnership has successfully created a pipeline of new Papua New Guinean economics and public policy lecturers to address staff shortages at SBPP.

In 2025, the Economics Division now has a staff of seven, including five ANU-trained lecturers. Enrolment in economic courses has increased each year as students have become aware of the quality of the courses being offered.

In addition to teaching, the partnership has also invested in a range of other activities to enrich the student experience at SBPP. These have included support to student societies, film nights, guest speakers, events, workshops, debates and investments in facilities such as libraries.

MEASURING IMPACT

All classes at UPNG evaluate their lecturers and courses through an anonymous feedback survey at the end of each semester. Student satisfaction with partnership-supported courses has been universally high, with average scores for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses ranging from 4 to 4.5 out of 5.

The partnership also runs an annual economics exam. This exam has a dual purpose: to assess undergraduate learning and teaching quality and the impact on student results; and to identify top students to be offered the opportunity to undertake postgraduate study at ANU.

Average and median scores in the exam have steadily improved, with the exception of a dip in 2022 and 2023 — believed to be a product of the disruption of the pandemic. In 2024, scores exceeded their pre-pandemic levels. Since the partnership began running the exam in 2013, which is standardised at a similar level of difficulty each year, student average and median scores have more than doubled.



THE FACULTY STRENGTHENING JOURNEY

In 2015, two ANU academics were based at SBPP full time, supporting undergraduate teaching by directly delivering lectures. By 2019, this number had peaked at seven, with ANU academics teaching into both undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

As recipients of scholarships to study at ANU returned (see ANU Scholarships section on page 10), they were increasingly able to take on undergraduate teaching responsibilities, under the mentorship of the in-country ANU academics. Now, nearly all undergraduate economics subjects are taught by Papua New Guinean lecturers.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the return of many ANU academics to Australia, meant that the partnership shifted to a mix of online and in-person teaching in 2020. Since this period, only two ANU staff have been based in Port Moresby at a time, switching in and out to flexibly support teaching needs and any gaps in expertise.

While disruptive, the pandemic also proved that recent investments by the Australian Government in national internet connectivity, university technology and facilities meant that online and hybrid teaching could work at UPNG. This model continues to be used by the partnership across both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. Course evaluations have continued to show a high level of satisfaction from students, even when courses are taught fully or partly online.



Photo: Former ANU Economics Lecturer Dek Joe Sum with students on campus at UPNG.

Methuselah Wabiria
UPNG economics graduate

“In second year, that's when I noticed a change. When [the partnership] came in 2015 and they were running in full strength we noticed updated materials, we noticed that there were two other lecturers who could spend time and really talk to people, mentor them and motivate them. And it wasn't just that, I feel like it was the other skills like critical thinking, the analytical skills. It was not just the academic stuff — the quality in the materials, the teaching — there was a lot of enthusiasm brought back into the faculty. I feel like the partnership has changed the economics program at UPNG for the better.”

A HOMEGROWN, INTERNATIONAL STANDARD MASTER DEGREE

In 2016, partnership academics began developing a curriculum for a locally delivered, PNG-relevant master degree program in economics and public policy, designed to support researchers and practitioners to further their knowledge and tap into international expertise without the need to study abroad.

In 2017, the first cohort of 10 students in the UPNG Master of Economic and Public Policy (MEPP) commenced study. Now, 30-40 students commence the program annually, with strong demand from mid-level public servants looking to gain a postgraduate qualification while continuing their employment.

The MEPP provides an Australian-standard qualification to PNG nationals for a fraction of the price of attending university overseas. Students gain the benefits from international faculty at ANU thanks to the partnership and online teaching, as well as a range of other professional enrichment and learning opportunities.

The Australia Awards program provides ten MEPP scholarships for public servants annually.

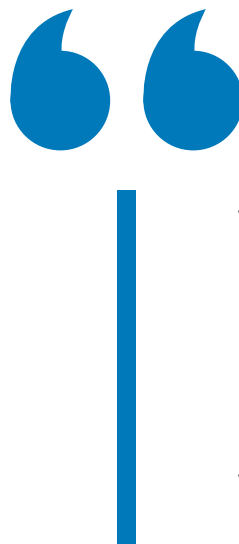
The MEPP is also contributing to UPNG's revenue generation efforts through its tuition fees, supporting the sustainability of the university and SBPP.

Graduates from MEPP will contribute to informed understanding of economic and policy issues, supporting development in PNG and across the Pacific.

The MEPP is also being used as a training pathway to strengthen the skills of UPNG public policy and strategic management lecturers and tutors. Seven scholarships have been awarded, to three women and four men. Five recipients have completed the MEPP, while two are currently studying.



Issabelle Vilau



“These students are going to go back to wherever they are from, whether in Port Moresby, their provinces, or districts, and in whatever capacity they have, they can contribute to development. If I can make even just a small change in their mindset or their perspective or just help them in whatever capacity that I can, that would be satisfying.”

Issabelle Vilau
2025 MEPP graduate and
UPNG public policy tutor



Photos (Top to bottom): 2024 MEPP graduates; MEPP students with ANU Lecturer Dr Nematullah Bizhan (middle row centre).

Academics supported by the partnership have taught **200+** courses with **8,700+** enrolments

6,897 undergraduates
1,813 postgraduates

(as of June 2025)

TEACHING FUTURE TEACHERS THROUGH ANU SCHOLARSHIPS

Since 2017, eight economics lecturers — two women and six men — have been trained at ANU in the Master of International Development Economics (MIDEC) at Crawford School. A further two (one woman and one man) are currently studying (as of August 2025).

MIDEC is a rigorous, two-year full-time applied economics program, highly regarded in Australia and internationally.

As part of their acceptance, all recipients committed to teaching for at least five years at UPNG and worked as tutors for a year prior to their departure to Australia, ensuring the scholarships were actively addressing SBPP's staffing challenges while developing the next generation of PNG economic thought-leaders.

All graduates have honoured this commitment and have been supported in their careers and professional development through the partnership on their return to UPNG. As a result of this successful strategy, undergraduate teaching in economics at UPNG is now being almost entirely led by Papua New Guinean faculty.

Tragically, one returned graduate died in 2020. One graduate left to join the Asian Development Bank at the conclusion of their five years of service; another graduate is currently on leave from UPNG to complete an economics PhD at ANU, supported by Australia Awards. The partnership MIDEC graduates' expertise has also been recognised through media appearances, secondments to think tanks like the Lowy Institute and Devpol, consultancies, research collaborations and other opportunities in addition to their core teaching responsibilities.



Photo: Anna Kapil graduating with her MIDEC from ANU in 2024. Anna is now an economics lecturer at SBPP.



Jollanda Matthew



“Growing up as a woman in PNG, I felt this course would help me better understand and unpack what is going on in my country... I didn't think of teaching as a career at first, but then I did one year of tutoring before starting my Masters and I really enjoyed it. Crawford [School] has helped me build confidence in so many ways. We had to do many presentations which helped me improve my public speaking skills. I also learnt a lot about useful software that will be a great resource for my future teaching.”

Jollanda Matthew

*MIDEC graduate and UPNG Lecturer
on her return to PNG in 2021*

PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION



Photos (Top to bottom, left to right): Summer School students in conversation with PNG Treasurer Ian Ling-Stuckey in Canberra in 2020; Dr Nayahamui Rooney teaching at UPNG in early years of the partnership; ANU Vice Chancellor Brian Schmidt and UPNG Vice Chancellor Professor Frank Griffin sign a renewed MOU for the partnership in 2023; Professor Stephen Howes presents Wilba Bossin with the prize for the top economics exam score by a 4th year economics student in 2024; a UPNG graduation; undergraduate students in Foundation Economics undertaking their final exam for Semester 1 2025.

A SUMMER OF NEW EXPERIENCES

Annual ANU-UPNG Summer Schools commenced in 2018, offering the top ten SBPP undergraduate students (five from economics and five from public policy) to spend a month of their summer break in Canberra, mixing academic coursework at ANU with the chance to learn more about Australia, while engaging with key institutions and individuals that support the Australia-PNG relationship.

Six summer schools have taken place between 2018 and 2025, with a break due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 and 2022.

Students in the Summer School are exposed to a new way of learning as well as skills that receive less attention in undergraduate courses at UPNG, such as academic writing, critical thinking and data analysis. They also have the opportunity to network with students from around the globe and build their confidence through meetings with stakeholders such as the Minister for International Development and the Pacific, the PNG High Commission, DFAT, the World Bank and Lowy Institute.

Summer school students have also been encouraged to develop Devpolicy Blog posts, giving them a taste of professional writing and commentary. 15 summer school student blogs have been posted since 2020.



“This ANU summer school program is a really terrific opportunity for students and it gives us exposure and to what is out there. So with the knowledge we’ve gathered we want to come back and contribute meaningfully towards improving our country.”

Michelle Panie
2024 summer school participant

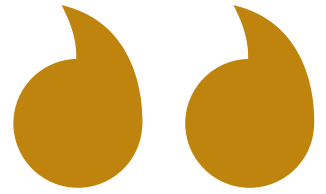




Gerhardt Siune

2023 summer school participant

“The facilities, resources, and teaching methods are world class. I was amazed at the depth of knowledge that the lecturers had and the level of engagement they had with us, their students... This experience motivated me to strive for excellence in my education and to seek out opportunities for further studies, career growth and development. My experience... has widened my horizons and made me more aware of the diversity around the globe. I also have a fresh appreciation for my home – for PNG’s beauty and potential.”



Photos (Top to bottom, left to right): 2023 Summer School students on Sydney Harbour; 2023 Summer School students with the Hon Pat Conroy MP; 2023 Summer School Students studying with Dr Nayahamui Rooney at ANU; 2024 Summer School Students with ANU Chancellor the Hon Julie Bishop; 2019 Summer School students at Parliament House; 2018 Summer School students visiting the NSW South Coast; 2025 Summer School students visit the Lowy Institute in Sydney.

DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE, STRENGTHENING TIES

Through the partnership, ANU and UPNG staff have worked collaboratively and independently on many research projects under what has come to be called the PNG Project, with topics ranging across elections, macroeconomic policy, decentralisation and gender-based violence.

The impact of this international collaborative research has been three-fold: the skills, publication and career opportunities for Papua New Guinean researchers — including UPNG lecturers — have been expanded; international and Australian academics have demonstrated a stronger interest in research on Papua New Guinea and many have developed a life-long interest in the country; and the evidence base for economic decision-making and policy has grown and strengthened.

Academic exchanges have increased over the life of the partnership. More ANU staff now visit UPNG, both for the PNG Update and to present at the ANU-UPNG seminar and teach, while more UPNG faculty now visit ANU. A regular two-week research visit has been instituted for 5-6 young SBPP lecturers to coincide with the ANU Australasian Aid Conference, as a learning and networking opportunity.

Two books on contemporary policy issues in PNG and the country's economic history have been published by the partnership.

The PNG Update has been a key fora for the dissemination of partnership research, along with presentations at other international and ANU conferences, media appearances, and posts on the Devpolicy Blog, a well-known and freely accessible online fora for PNG and Pacific analysis.

In addition, the partnership introduced a monthly ANU-UPNG seminar series in 2021. The seminar series is held in-person at UPNG and ANU, as well as online for hybrid attendees. 32 seminars have been run since 2021, on topics including decentralisation, political economy, macroeconomics and elections.

In recent years, ANU-UPNG Partnership research under the PNG Project has:

- Examined NGO Femili PNG's client data to assess trends on child abuse and gender-based violence and make policy recommendations
- Looked at PNG's long-running foreign exchange shortage issues and how the problem could be addressed
- Provided an annual assessment of emergent and future economic issues in PNG
- Undertaken a public opinion poll of UPNG students to assess their views on the nation's future
- Analysed electoral trends in PNG, including candidate numbers, the impact of limited preferential voting, and whether incumbency or ministerial status increased re-election prospects for MPs

The percentage of Devpolicy Blog posts on PNG authored or co-authored by Papua New Guinean writers increased from zero in 2010 to 70% by 2021.

Through the partnership, 41 PNG-related discussion papers and 11 reports have been published by Devpol since 2014.



Above: UPNG and ANU partnership academics with Dean of the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, Helen Sullivan, and ANU Vice Chancellor Brian Schmidt in Port Moresby in 2023.

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC REFORM

The partnership has provided research support for economic reforms in PNG, most notably through the Independent Advisory Group's review of the Central Banking Act from 2020 to 2024. ANU and UPNG researchers contributed to developing policy recommendations and adapting international best practice to the PNG context on issues ranging from monetary policy governance, foreign exchange, financial inclusion and banking competition. This work fed into two reports to the PNG Treasurer, which drove significant change in the Bank of PNG, including the formation of a specialised monetary policy committee.



DATABASES

The partnership has improved economic and political data availability in PNG by maintaining and updating the PNG Budget Database, PNG Economic Database, PNG MP Database and PNG Elections Database. These databases, a collaboration between UPNG and ANU academics, have become key repositories of information, with numerous stakeholders in PNG government departments and multilateral development banks using these statistics in their day-to-day work.

LASTING IMPACT

Two external published evaluations of the ANU-UPNG Partnership have found that the project has been highly relevant, effective and efficient.

An independent evaluation of Phase 1 was undertaken in September 2020 by Jim Adams, former World Bank Vice-President, and John Eyers, former senior Australian Treasury officer, who both have extensive experience working in PNG.

This evaluation was highly positive, finding “[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.”

An evaluation of Phase 2 of the project was conducted at the end of 2023 by the Australian-PNG Economic Partnership (APEP), of which the ANU-UPNG Partnership is a part.

This review was also extremely positive, finding “all stakeholders involved in strengthening SBPP teaching and the student experience ... are unanimous in attributing high levels of personal and professional success and achievement to the partnership.”

The review also found that partnership research products such as the PNG Budget Database and Economic Database were being used by multilateral development banks, the country’s central bank, and other PNG government departments, including to brief the Prime Minister on development matters. The review also highlighted the partnership’s strong value for money, in particular providing “an Australian-standard MEPP qualification at a fraction of the cost of sending students to Australia for postgraduate studies.”

“[The] review team, on a number of occasions, was reminded by senior bureaucrats of the importance of partnerships such as the ANU-UPNG Partnership to strengthen PNG institutions and to develop a strong and stable PNG in the region.”



“As Treasurer, I am acutely aware of the need to improve the quality of the graduates coming into the PNG Treasury, Central Bank and other key economic agencies. Since its inception... the impact of the partnership has been evident to all to see, whether in terms of teaching, or research or outreach.”

*Hon. Ian Ling-Stuckey MP
PNG Treasurer*



The Hon. Ian Ling-Stuckey MP launching the PNG Economic Database in 2022.



August 2025

Authors: Ashlee Betteridge and Stephen Howes

The ANU-UPNG Partnership is funded by the Australian Government and implemented by the ANU Development Policy Centre.

This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The views expressed in this publication are the authors' alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.

