



PAPUA NEW GUINEA
AUSTRALIA ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

CONCEPT NOTE

Papua New Guinea-Australia Alumni Biennial conference - 2021

Conference theme:

Leadership and innovation in

Papua New Guinea's new normal

1. Proposed date and venue

Date: Tuesday 28 September 2021

Time: 8:30am – 4:30pm

Venue: Hilton Hotel and virtual (face-to-face according to COVID-19 protocols and guidelines).

2. Background

The Papua New Guinea Australia Alumni Association (PNGAAA) has a mission to contribute to the growth and development of Papua New Guinea (PNG) whilst fostering productive relationship with Australia.

In working towards achieving this mission the PNGAAA hosts a biennial conference to provide a platform whereby alumni showcase the impact of their efforts in contributing to the growth and development of PNG in their various sectors whilst maintaining the people to people links with Australia. The first conference was held in July 2019.

In 2020, the world was largely impacted by the novel corona virus, with the spread of its highly infectious COVID-19 strain being declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020. Due to early assessments of the highly infectious rate of the virus from close contact with an infected person or from touching surfaces before transferring to eyes or the mouth which enters and affects the respiratory system, strict measures of mandatory social isolation and cleaning regimes were enforced to contain the spread. People could not leave their homes, go to workplaces, travel and physically access services outside of their homes. Business which thrived from social interaction including shops and restaurants, had to be closed to observe Government restrictions. The restriction for business to operate and for people to work meant businesses lost income and had to downsize or shut down completely. Travel bans were put in place domestically and internationally which crippled the travel and tourism industry. This resulted in the plummet of the global stock market as economies of the world were affected, particularly China and the United States of America as the two leading global economies with the world's highest COVID-19 infection rates. In countries like PNG, COVID-19 further constrained its already depleted economy whilst increasing its national debt.

The WHO reported that COVID-19 presents an extraordinary challenge to the global economy, public health, food and job security. The economic and social disruption caused by COVID-19 is devastating for millions of people and pushing them into extreme poverty. According to the WHO, nearly half the world's 3.3 billion global workforce are at risk of losing their livelihoods.

Whilst the world's health experts have progressed in the production of vaccines to counter the initial strain of the COVID-19 virus as we began 2021, the world is now experiencing a second wave of a new strain of the deadly virus. The WHO has reported that this new strain is of greater severity and will continue to impact the globe with greater intensity as it continues to spread across Europe and other countries around the world.

The Government of PNG (GoPNG) took early action to contain the initial spread of COVID-19, implementing a mandatory lock down, imposing travel restrictions and limiting social

interaction. However, like other countries in the Indo-Pacific region, PNG also experienced a drop in its economy as business, travel, hospitality and tourism sectors were impacted. Like many other countries faced with the pandemic, the GoPNG enacted a regulation to help the country address global pandemics of such nature through the National Pandemic Act of 2020. This outlined what is now termed the “new normal” guide for prevention and containment of the virus in the country.

The 2021 PNGAAA alumni conference will be of paramount importance as our country continues to face an uncertain future during this global pandemic. Members of the PNGAAA are elite Papua New Guineans and the conference will provide a platform for individuals, partners and teams to share their strategic views on how best PNG can rebuild, strengthen and persevere as a country in the new normal. The conference will provide an opportunity for alumni to address the challenges which COVID-19 has brought to the country under various important sectors and will introduce important domestic solutions to our economy and livelihoods during these uncertain times. In line with the new normal protocols, this alumni conference will be held face-to-face and virtually using online platforms of engagement.

The conference theme is “Leadership and innovation in Papua New Guinea’s new normal”. Session tracks of the conference will cover five strategic sectorial approaches including:

- I. Public health in the new normal
- II. Education and training in the new normal
- III. Business, industry and enterprise in the new normal
- IV. Agriculture and food security in the new normal
- V. Tourism and hospitality in the new normal

3. Conference session themes

I. Public health in the new normal

This session is important as health is the primary sector being affected during a pandemic. Given the existing health burden, and very limited health resources we have in country, what can be done to address the existing health needs of our country and how can it be done with the additional burden of COVID-19?

Through the conference alumni can contribute to the question of how and where our limited resources - and those donated by other countries - should be invested for maximum health benefits for our people under the pandemic situation. Alumni can also propose strategies to improve the health sectorial responses to maintain prevention in the new normal in PNG and provide some innovative health service solutions in the new normal.

Presentations under this theme must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be from an alumni within the health sector contributing to frontline health sector response to COVID-19 in the country.
2. Share firsthand experiences of alumni in the frontline health sector response to COVID-19 in the country.
3. Share adaptative and innovative strategies taken to ensure health care service delivery continued in the new normal.
4. Highlight how technology was utilised for health care services in the new normal.

5. Propose specific domestic innovative health service solutions in the new normal based on global evidence and local experiences of alumni in addressing COVID-19 that would be effective in the country.

II. Education and training in the new normal

The education sector was largely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as schools were asked to close and forced into online learning for where possible. In PNG online learning in virtual spaces is quite new and likened to a novel concept just like the COVID-19, especially in public schools which have very limited resources to provide all students with tools required for online learning. Given these challenges that exist in the education sector, how can we continue to maintain education services and provide learning opportunities under the new normal?

Through the conference alumni can propose strategic contributions: to what it would it take to transition modes of learning into non-contact learning; what an ideal hybrid model of learning would be in PNG for public and private sector schools, and what innovative solutions can be provided to some of the anticipated online learning challenges. Alumni can also provide some innovative education service solutions in the new normal at the various levels of education.

Presentations under this theme must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be from alumni within the education sector actively contributing to primary, secondary, Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET), higher education or Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) spaces.
2. Share firsthand experiences of alumni adjusting to the new normal within the education sector at primary, secondary, TVET, higher education or STEM spaces.
3. Share adaptative and innovative strategies taken to ensure learning continued in the new normal at primary, secondary, TVET or the higher education levels including STEM.
4. Highlight how technology was utilised for learning in the new normal.
5. Propose specific domestic innovative education service solutions in the new normal based on global evidence and local experiences of alumni that would be effective in the country.

III. Business, industry and enterprise in the new normal

The resilience of businesses was tested during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who could find innovative ways to operate or diversify streams of business and had the resources to do so were able to maintain operating in the new environment. Many small businesses, local businesses targeting international markets and large-scale businesses meeting the regional and global market chains at higher levels were hit hard and largely affected. For PNG 80% of the population participate in the informal sector of business within local markets and those in main trading centres such as Port Moresby, were affected as the government shut down local markets and movement of goods across various routes of transportation. GoPNG announced business stimulus packages managed through the National Development Bank (NDB) to assist small businesses to remain operational during these economically challenging and uncertain times.

Through the conference alumni can provide strategic commentary and analysis to business stimulus packages that may effectively work for PNG in the new normal. Alumni can share local business models that are forecasted to work in the new economic climate created by COVID-19 and innovative strategies or solutions to keep business operational in PNG under the new normal.

Presentations under this theme must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be from alumni within business, public, or private sector actively contributing to the business development or SME enterprises in the country.
2. Share firsthand experiences of alumni adjusting to the new normal within the business sector particularly as entrepreneurs or in specialist key positions within the private or public sector driving business and economic advancement in the new normal.
3. Share adaptative and innovative strategies taken to ensure business continued in the new normal.
4. Highlight how technology was utilised for business in the new normal.
5. Propose specific domestic business stimulus package solutions in the new normal based on global evidence, domestic economic climate and experiences of alumni that would be effective in the country.

IV. Agriculture and food security in the new normal

Agriculture and fisheries together contribute to over 50% of the country's revenue. In PNG 80% of the population engaged in the informal sector are farmers or fisherman coming to the markets to sell fresh produce and catch. The produce is transported to main towns and cities like Port Moresby with greater population participating in the formal economy who can afford to buy food. While there was a shortage in supply due to transportation and market restrictions in a country like PNG, with large land masses and oceans, the potential for agriculture to maintain food security within PNG can be maintained.

Through the conference alumni can strategically contribute to how PNG can maintain the potential of the agriculture sector and maintain food security locally in the new normal. Alumni can contribute to areas that can be invested in to improve the potential of food storage and supply in PNG under the new normal engaging innovative solutions.

Presentations under this theme must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be from alumni within the agriculture or fisheries sector actively contributing or engaged in the sector as a local farmer or technical expert within the sector.
2. Share firsthand experiences of alumni adjusting to the new normal within the agriculture sector particularly as farmers or in specialist key positions within the agriculture sector driving agribusiness advancement in the new normal.
3. Share adaptative and innovative strategies taken to ensure agribusiness continued in the new normal.
4. Highlight how technology was utilised for agriculture in the new normal.
5. Propose specific food security solutions in the new normal based on global evidence, domestic agriculture capacity and experiences of alumni that would be effective in the country.

V. Tourism and hospitality in the new normal

Like many other Pacific Island nations, PNG also benefits from the tourism and hospitality industry. Due to the travel restrictions imposed on international travel between countries, PNG has not seen many tourists in 2020. Many hotels and hospitality industries either downsized, making staff redundant or shut down.

Through the conference alumni can strategically contribute to local travel bubble concepts or local eco-tourism options utilising innovative solutions that can maintain the industry in PNG under the new normal.

Presentations under this theme must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be from alumni actively contributing to the tourism and hospitality sector.
2. Share firsthand experiences of alumni adjusting to the new normal within the tourism and hospitality sector.
3. Share adaptive and innovative strategies taken to ensure tourism continued in the new normal.
4. Highlight how technology was utilised for tourism in the new normal.
5. Propose specific domestic innovative service solutions in the new normal based on global evidence and local experiences of alumni that would be effective in the country.

4. Abstracts

Abstracts submitted should have a maximum of 350 words. Presentations need to cover research papers, shared ideas and experiences that may contribute to a dialogue on the theme. Presentations will be limited to either 15 or 5 minutes (based on presentation type) and five PowerPoint slides respectively. All presenters must produce a pre-recorded session as a back-up should there be an interruption in live streaming the presentations.

A rigorous selection of participants will be made by the conference panel according to the proposed presentation's contribution to the highlighted sectors. Selected presentations will be made available on all social media platforms of PNGAAA.

5. Submission dates

The timeline for submission includes:

Number	Activity	Date
1	Call for papers opens	Monday 10 May 2021
2	Close of submission	Friday 13 August 2021
3	Assessment of submissions	Wednesday 25 August 2021
4	Acceptance correspondence to alumni	Monday 30 August 2021
5	Alumni presenters confirm participation	Wednesday 01 September 2021
6	Development of program	Tuesday 07 September 2021

7	Circulation of conference program	Friday 10 September 2021
8	Admin and logistics for conference	Friday 17 September 2021
9	Alumni Conference	Tuesday 28 September 2021

6. Conference presentation and program

Participants will register through an online platform. The conference sessions will be run concurrently through facilitated breakout sessions using the *Zoom* platform. Participants can decide to attend only specific sessions and will be given access only to those selected sessions.

Thematic presentations may be delivered in the following ways:

1. Live and/or prerecorded paper presentations (full paper - 15 minutes)
2. Lightning paper presentations (5-minute talk)
3. Posters presentations (digital poster sessions)
4. Digital video presentations
5. Display presentations

The online conference program will include:

1. Presentations (key address and break out session presentations)
2. Interactive displays (digital posters with electronic tags, videos and displays) that can be accessed through all media platforms of the PNGAAA.

Participants will be able to e-vote the best presentations and provide feedback on selections.