



# ASA-Pakistan

## AusAID Scholarships Alumni-Pakistan

### Alumni Launch

## WHAT'S INSIDE

ASA-Pakistan Executive  
Committee Oath Taking  
Ceremony

01

Being an International  
Student

02

Success Story

03

Things to do in  
Melbourne

04

From Abdur Rehman  
son of alumnus  
Ms. Sumaira Nasim

05

When Dreams Come True

06

My thoughts about  
Australian Society

07

Timeless Memories and  
Lifelong Friendships

08

Pre-Departure Briefing

09

AusAID Foundation  
Awards

10

Editor's Note

11



Australian High Commissioner, Mr Timothy George and Counselor AusAID, Ms Rebecca Shaw pose with the elected ASA Pakistan Executive Committee – Nov 2011

## ASA-Pakistan Executive Committee Oath Taking Ceremony

On 30 September 2011, Australian Development Awards (ADA) held an Oath Taking Ceremony to formally recognise and congratulate the newly elected ASA-Pakistan Executive Committee. The reception was attended by 56 alumni, 2 Government of Pakistan officials and 5 AusAID/Australian High Commission personnel. The Australian High Commissioner, Mr Timothy George, also attended the reception and addressed the newly elected Executive Committee members. In his address, the High Commissioner highlighted the importance of associations such as ASA-Pakistan and announced a grant of AUD \$5,000 to support commencement of the formal activities of the network. The High Commissioner added that the ASA Pakistan network in Pakistan is particularly important in establishing and maintaining contacts among scholars, upon their return to Pakistan.

The ceremony was also addressed by Ms Fatima Moin, Team Leader for administering and delivering Australian Development Awards in Pakistan, and the newly elected ASA-Pakistan President, Mr Asad Jahangir. The Executive Committee will create an annual work plan for all alumni activities across Pakistan through to November 2013.

On the same evening, a brief ceremony was held in recognition of scholars who recently graduated and returned from Australia. These scholars were presented with AusAID Scholarship Completion Certificates by the Australian High Commissioner.



# “BEING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT”

by Zahid Masood

Living in a different culture is by all means a difficult task. After going through a strict selection criteria, I was selected by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) for a 2 year scholarship. In this article, I will focus mainly on my experiences starting from leaving home, Introductory Academic Program (IAP), university experience, social life, the experiences of my family members and finally departure from Australia. I hope fellow ASA-Pakistan readers find my feelings and observations interesting and enjoy the same by relating it to their own experiences in Australia.

## Leaving Home

Leaving home and the thought of relocating to a completely unfamiliar place was quite overwhelming for me. The reception at the airport was less than desirable due to the fact that I was in a foreign country and not a soul was there to receive me. Fortunately, however, the Australian High Commission had briefed me quite well and I therefore managed to arrive at the desired destination; Flinders University of South Australia, Adelaide.

When I reached the campus of the university, I finally had some time to catch my breath. I was fortunate enough to meet a student from the university who very graciously led me to the place where I could get some temporary accommodation.

Things have come a long way since the time of my Scholarship, as now people are provided with airport reception along with guided tours of campus and temporary accommodations. Awardees can make arrangements for their permanent accommodation before departure, through the Student Contact Officers (SCO) at the University.

## Homesickness

In the initial days as I was trying to settle down, I had some time to recollect myself. I began to think about the place I had left behind and more importantly



the people who were no longer with me. At that instant a strong feeling of homesickness had engulfed me.

## Introductory Academic Program (IAP)

The introductory program arranged by the Study Skill Centre proved to be a tremendous help. The program consisted of seminars aimed at getting us better acquainted with academic English as well as ‘Australian English’. The book "Making the Grade" was recommended to us and it was exceedingly beneficial in allowing us to prepare high quality assignments and effective presentations.

## Finding a Place to Stay

Finding an apartment was difficult because each day we were pre-occupied by the rigorous schedule of the IAP program and could not get a chance to visit real estate offices or to inspect ‘For Rent’ houses at their strictly stipulated times. However, the moment I moved into my flat, most of my problems seemed to vanish. I was now ready to welcome my wife and kids for whom I was eagerly awaiting for quite some time.

## Arrival of Family

The day finally came when my family joined me in Australia. The sight of my wife and kids, for a moment,



made me forget where I was and made me realise how much I missed them.

My family had the chance to interact with many other families within Australia's multicultural society. We had the pleasure of spending a day with an Australian family, the Wisconsin's, who were kind enough to guide us through the "do's and don'ts" of Australian culture. Through our interactions with the various families that make up the social framework of Australia, we learned that communication is the biggest instrument in removing the social and cultural barriers that exist within one's psyche.

## Studies

The academic environment in Australian Universities is quite friendly and informal which came as a pleasant surprise to me. This friendly atmosphere did not imply any disrespect or laxity as strict academic environment was still maintained. The professors preferred to teach us in an informal manner, which at first seemed quite unsettling to me. The material was taught to us through a conceptual manner. We were taught to use reference material and to make use of the digital library and internet. This new style and methodology of academic learning was thankfully

explained quite adequately to us during the IAP program.

## Personal Development

During my stay in Australia, I had an opportunity to explore and observe the fabulous culture of Australia through its remarkable people and marvelous places. Apart from the time allocated to my studies, my family and I were able to enjoy sightseeing (excursions), visiting theaters, festivals and films. I utilized my time on the weekends by joining the cricket club and engaged myself in frequent club matches as an active member.

## Different Adelaide

The days leading up to my departure were emotionally tough. I was able to catch my last sunset in Adelaide. As the sun sank below the horizon it took with it a piece of my heart. On the way to airport the next morning I glanced out of the car window. The sea of faces that once seemed strange to me had become my own. As we walked towards the Departure gates, I turned back and saw a few hands waving. It truly touched my soul.

## Success Story

by Fizza Sabir

"My studies in Australia have improved my professional skills and have contributed in excelling my career in the development sector. My Master's degree in development studies enhanced my understanding about development concepts and theories and enabled me to use my knowledge for improved understanding of development scenario in Pakistan. It also helped me broaden my horizon of global development perspective and how it affects the process of development in Pakistan. Lastly it gave me an opportunity to learn from the experiences of people from different parts of the world."

**Saadia Ainuddin** has been working in the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan (Islamabad) as a Development Advisor for Human Resource Development since January 2008. Her

portfolio includes management of projects related to labour issues, and technical and vocational education. She says she is glad that she can fully apply her knowledge and learning that she gained from her academic experience in Australia in her current job.





She started working at the EU soon after completing her Masters in Development Studies from the University of Melbourne, as an AusAID scholar during 2006-07. Upon her return, it did not take her long to find this job. She says her Masters degree from Australia significantly contributed in getting this job, as well as her previous qualification and work experience.

Saadia did her first Masters in Economics from Quaid-i-Azam University. This university is an example in itself of excellence in the area of research and development. Her previous work experience includes about three years of experience as Program Officer in Cavish Development Foundation and a freelance consultant for a couple of years. When she applied for an AusAID scholarship on open merit, she was working

as Program Officer at National Commission for Human Development (NCHD).

Saadia found her stay in Australia challenging, but in a positive way because it gave her an opportunity to learn to be more independent as an individual. She also found it interesting as she got a chance to know different cultures through meeting people from various parts of the world. She found her stay joyful.

Her current job requires her to visit EU Headquarters in Brussels regularly. However, her association with Melbourne, after staying there for one and a half years, made her go back to that beautiful city last year (2010) to meet her friends and recollect her memories. Saadia plans to visit Australia again in 2012.

## Things to do in Melbourne

by Hina Tillat

Melbourne is an amazing city. When you hear that it has four seasons in a day you think it is crazy but when you experience it yourself it's unbelievable! I want others to experience the wonderful colors, beautiful birds and multicultural environment of Melbourne just as I am doing. But some information beforehand will make a lot of difference. So here we go:

### 5 things to do before coming to Melbourne.

1. Familiarise yourself with map reading (Google Aussie maps and get used to them!)
2. Try planning journey to and from your university with help of Met link journey planner (this will become very handy on your arrival. The link to get to it is <http://www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au/>)
3. Try to secure some form of accommodation as it is time consuming and expensive to find one that suits most of your requirements. It is suggested to get in touch with existing students and get recommendations/references.
4. You should familiarise yourself with your university and course: course sub-streams, subject guides, subjects and time-tables (classes & tutorials/days and timing), credit points etc. All this information is available on-line for each university/course. It is recommended to spend standard time on initial selection of subjects so that when you arrive you



have some idea of what to expect. Here is the courses main page <http://www.coursesearch.unimelb.edu.au/>

5. Study all the leaflets/information packs available and provided by ADA.

### 5 essentials you will need in Melbourne

1. Bring your own mobile phone (if you are not planning to go on a famous cap for a mega technical phone like HTC or iPhone 4 or 4S ☺)
2. Bring your own laptop if you have one.
3. Bring an adaptor for your phone/laptop charger.
4. Bring a few Pakistani dresses for formal/semi formal wear and some handicrafts too for giveaways.
5. It's better to bring your own medication (with prescriptions please) for at least initial days as only part of medication is covered by health insurance.



### 5 things to do on arrival in Melbourne.

1. Buy a prepaid mobile phone sim and activate immediately (better with the help of a shop keeper) or else you may end up in a strange city, in a strange room, with no phone and no friends! ☺
2. Get familiarised with trams/trains/buses and routes
3. Start your subject selection and find out census date and pre-requisites for subjects ASAP.
4. As soon as you can, start working on your first assignment! And DO NOT HESITATE to ask for help and clarification from your teaching staff.
5. Try to blend in with the Aussie timings and get over jet lag ASAP otherwise it may linger on.

### 10 things recommended to do while in Melbourne (Among many others)

1. Visit Melbourne Cricket Ground
2. Visit Melbourne Museums
3. Go to Great Ocean Road, Philip Island and other such places

4. Check out Victoria Market, Bridge Road, DFO, Myers for shopping-or rather window shopping. For day to day shopping Kmart, Woolworths, Big W and Coles are good options.
5. Watch a 3D movie at any of Hoyts cinemas and/or experience drive in cinema.
6. Do try to attend a musical concert, theater or opera
7. Go to Saint Kilda Beach and Williamstown Beach
8. Visit the Aquarium, Eureka towers, Botanical Gardens, Mount Buller, Ballarat Gold Mines among other places.
9. Do not miss the concession rates of the AusAID trips and events
10. Try to experience the variety of food available , to name a few; Indonesian, Malaysian, Greek and Italian.

## From Abdur Rehman son of alumni Ms. Sumaira Nasim

I am Abdur Rehman and I am 9 years old. In 2008, my mother Sumaira Nasim was awarded an AusAID scholarship for doing Masters in Public Health from Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. She went to Australia one month before my arrival. I joined her after she managed to find accommodation and secured my admission in school. After fulfilling these requirements, Australian High Commission issued me the visa. I travelled alone from Pakistan to Australia; it was a great experience as I was then only 5 years old.

After two days of my arrival, I joined my Kelvin Groove State School. Luckily my school and Mama's university were at a walking distance from our accommodation. Ms Vennesa Parker was my class teacher of Prep. Within few days I adjusted in the new environment and made a lot of friends from India, Pakistan, Korea, Sri Lanka and of course Australia. Ms Parker taught us a lot of things in a very informal way. In Year One, Ms Van West was our class teacher. She was a very enthusiastic teacher.



The Founding of Australia, Jan 26th 1788

I joined swimming and tennis classes and also visited the famous Gold Coast, Dream World and Sea World; it was a great experience for me and my mum. In July 2009 we came back with lots of sweet memories. My class teacher arranged a farewell party for me.

I miss all my class fellows, friends and teachers back in Australia.



# When Dreams Come True

by Sabeeh Shaikh

In the month of December, 2011, it would be exactly two years since my return to Pakistan, after completing a one year Master's degree in Counseling from Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Even after one year, the memories are still fresh and keep motivating me to follow my aspirations and ambitions. The year I spent in Melbourne was no doubt a unique experience for me emotionally, academically and professionally. Though times have changed but still most people in Pakistan would find it hard sending their single daughter to study abroad and stay there for a year. Not many single girls in Pakistan can dream of doing so. I was lucky enough to dream for such an adventure and see it come true. The trust and confidence of my family was reinforced the day my picture came in the newspaper as part of the group selected for the AusAID scholarships. The year that I spent in Australia as an independent young woman changed me forever. It opened up a whole new world for me and I was able to thoroughly enhance every aspect of my personality.

When I came back, I still remember that I was extremely excited to start working as a counselor here in Pakistan. Though a branch of Psychology, the concept of counseling was still unheard of in Pakistan, and I believe it still is. Only a small fraction of our people who



probably had a chance to experience it or have studied it like me, realise its importance and necessity. The last two years were therefore a period full of extreme disappointment and frustration as a professional. I approached few of the top educational institutes of Lahore, in the hope that they would utilize my services as a counselor for their students, even if it was for a few hours a week, but it was without any success. I offered flexible and cost-effective options. Sadly, not many doors opened up for me. As I had been working as an education counselor for over four years in one of the most reputable education consultancy firm, it was only this door which was still open. I kept trying, sometimes getting immensely discouraged. My path was difficult but I was determined to find work which would suit my newly acquired skills as well as my future aspirations.

In early 2011, I started applying for the position of a teacher so that I could at least interact with the youth of our nation. Soon I was given an opportunity to teach Business Communication Skills to a batch of graduate students. It was the institute from where I myself had completed a Master in Business Administration in 2007, the Imperial College of Business Studies, Lahore. It was a great learning opportunity for me and satisfied my need to play a constructive, positive and guiding role for Pakistani youth. I hope to continue my affiliation with this institute as a visiting faculty member.

Later in the year, I was offered to work as a Trainer and Counselor for a highly reputed organisation called National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK). It was no doubt a new beginning in my professional life and my two year struggle has come to a successful end. It is





certainly going to be a challenging job for me as most people are unaware and would have to be informed about the concept of counseling and how it can improve their lives. At the same time, it is also a great learning opportunity that will enable me to explore my potential as a communication skills trainer. I am excited and nervous both at the same time, but grateful to Allah for bringing such an exciting opportunity to me and in an organisation that has been brave enough to venture into such a new and unexplored avenue in Pakistan. I believe that this is a lifetime opportunity and I embrace it with open arms and I am grateful to AusAID for providing me an opportunity to make my dream come true.

In the end, my message to the readers: work hard and do not lose hope. Do not be afraid to dream. Face the disappointments, hardships and the frustrations with determination when pursuing your dreams. You never know how and when you will be rewarded and eventually when you do achieve success, the sense of satisfaction is indescribable. I have realised that we as Pakistanis need to think positively and believe in ourselves. We can definitely work towards the betterment of our country no matter how small our effort is. Our country needs us now more than ever and as late Steve Jobs (Co-founder, Chairman of Apple Inc.) once said “the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do it”.

## My thoughts about Australian Society

by Samiya Malik

The cultural diversity is nowhere as evident as it is in Australia. There is a world-wide trend of immigration to Australia these days as it was a case with Canada a few years ago. Here in Australia, you would see diversity in every form and colour. For example, there are marked variations in the way Australians speak English; the differences are in spelling, pronunciation, accent, meaning, usage and style. Particularly, Australians whose jobs involve public dealing like the bus driver or the people in the retail are not just tolerant and accepting but painstakingly patient when they have to wait for the speaker to be able to communicate no matter how much time is taken by the latter. If I use the analogy of UN assembly to describe Australian society, in a limited sense, it would not be an out of place comparison.

One thing that is greatly valued by Australians is an individual's knowledge of multiple languages – something we Pakistanis are quite good at. Neighborhoods are quite distinct from what we have in Pakistan. While Australians are exceedingly courteous in general; in their private lives they don't like any sort of undue intervention, which is understandable.

It is also a pleasant sight to see how the aged Australians are self-dependent in their day-to-day activities no matter how frail or weak they have become.



You would see elderly people, who are barely able to keep their hand stable, strolling on the roads and going to shopping malls for their own shopping. The sector of Old Age Care contains lots of jobs and therefore students with even the basic training in Old Age Care (six to eight weeks) can easily find jobs in this area.

Educational values and culture are also a world apart compared to what we have in Pakistan. To me, the most striking feature of Australian education system is its 'inclusiveness' that embraces even students with disabilities, and all are equally treated irrespective of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds. The teachers and administrative staff are adequately trained in Diversity Management procedures.

To conclude, we can say that there is a general trend of acceptability and tolerance in Australia where people don't treat a foreigner as an alien but as an equal human being. This trait of Australian society is truly commendable and it reinforces its remarkable egalitarian values.



# Timeless Memories and Lifelong Friendships

by Niaz Akbar (AusAID Scholar 2006-2007)

Australian National University (ANU) having been the first choice on my AusAID scholarship application form, I felt extremely fortunate to be accepted there. However, friends who had been to Australia soon deflated my spirits, describing Canberra as a dull bureaucratic city, especially when compared with "happening" places like Melbourne and Sydney. Luckily my personal experience was quite different. Every city has a character of its own and Canberra certainly has a distinct charm: quiet, peaceful and inviting – some would suggest these are mere synonymous for dull and boring but it is after all one's own perception that makes the difference.

Canberra tends to creep into your blood. It is when you leave the city for good that you actually realise just how much you miss it: those long lazy walks around Lake Burley Griffin; the amazingly turquoise skies and fiery sunsets; enjoyable biking and hiking trails that bring you close to nature; streets strewn with russet autumn leaves filling your heart with indescribable delight; cool summer evenings spent with friends on Mount Ainslie, watching the city light up below; countless hours spent in Canberra Center just hanging around and window shopping; the beautiful ANU campus where one is bound to come across brilliantly colorful Australian parrots, mischievous cockatoos or a possum or two; the beautiful black swans you meet on the lake and the kangaroos you catch sight of hopping along in the woods while driving up Mount Ainslie.

Of course an important part of my stay in Canberra included the wonderful and lasting friendships I formed there. Home to two world renowned universities, the city plays host to a large number of international students from all over the world so that being a student there means that one is a part of a very large and diversified student community. Befriending students from different countries exposed me to a whole spectrum of cultures and expanded my own vision, something that has stood to my advantage to this day. The friendships I developed while at ANU are with me still as are the memories – watching movies and devouring popcorn together at the ANU cinema, hanging out at the Gloria Jean's café at Borders,



The author at Uluru, Northern Territory.

swotting together for the exams, going on day trips to the wineries around Canberra, going on a month long camping trip to Central Australia organized by the University – an unforgettable experience! There were wonderful barbeque parties we had at the edge of the lake; the trips we took to the Gold Coast and Sydney; going trekking up the Snowy Mountains on a university trip and freezing with the cold; getting great bargains at the Jamison flea markets every Sunday; enjoying amateur performances at the street theatre and the coffee served at their cafe; rejoicing in the breathtaking riot of color of tulips and other flowers at the Floriade in October; staring at migrating humpback whales during whale watching trips to New South Wales organised by ANU; watching the solar eclipse together from Mount Ainslie. The memories of all the fun-filled times I had with the friends I made in Canberra still crowds my mind and takes me back in time!

As I look back now, I realise just what a wonderful time I had as a student in Australia – all the new things I learnt and the diverse people I met. The sights and sounds of Canberra continue to haunt me as I recall its serene natural beauty, the adventures I enjoyed with my friends, my extremely cooperative and inspiring professors at ANU and perhaps strangest of all, the feeling of being at home in a city that was not mine but became mine by the time I finally graduated!



## Pre-Departure Briefing (PDB)

Each Year, Australian Development Awards (ADA), Pakistan delivers pre-departure briefing for the outgoing cohort in Islamabad. This year, a two day event was arranged for all Australian Development Scholarship and Australia Pakistan Agriculture Scholarship awardees on 18-19 October 2011. All awardees and reserves in the current cohort along with their spouses were invited to attend the briefing prior to their departure to Australia. Information was provided to the awardees on the following issues:

1. Studying at an Australian University
2. On-Arrival services
3. Accommodation options
4. Orientation and enrolment events
5. Student services on campus
6. What to bring
7. Living in Australia (cost of living, food, transportation)

The PDB also provides an opportunity to awardees to meet each other to enhance their networking. ADA alumni were also invited to advise and guide the current cohort with respect to their own Australian experience.

Mr. Timothy George, Australian High Commissioner, and the AusAID Scholarships Officer were also present at the event. The Scholarships Officer delivered a one hour briefing session with current information on scholar entitlements, Australian culture, University's responsibilities, Scholar obligations. Speaking at a pre-departure briefing for the students, Mr. Timothy George, said "the ADA provided opportunities for people from less developed areas in Pakistan, mainly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Fata and Balochistan". Mr. George said that the priority fields of study under which the candidates were awarded the scholarships were Rural Development and Food Security, Maternal, Neo-natal and Child Health, Basic Education and Governance. "The qualifications attained by the students will contribute towards Pakistan achieving the Millennium Development Goals" he added.

We wish all the awardees an excellent study experience ahead.



Australian Development Awardees 2012



## AusAID FOUNDATION AWARDS

In 2010 the Australian Government awarded ten Foundation Awards to Pakistani professionals. These awards were delivered to selected candidates from the priority areas of KP, FATA and Balochistan. The Foundation Awards are provided to support priority & marginalized groups for improving their skills to enable them to be competitively selected for an Australian Development Awards (ADA), according to the same eligibility and selection criteria for all Pakistani ADA applicants.

2010 saw the first cohort of Foundation Awardees complete their in-country training which focused on increasing English language proficiency, general study and IT skills. A graduate ceremony for all the Foundation

Awardees was held in the Islamabad Serena Hotel in early 2011 in recognition of their success.

Of the ten Foundation Awardees, nine candidates were successfully selected for an Australian Development Award for the 2012 intake. These candidates have commenced their post-graduate Masters course at a relevant Australian University in January 2012.

Based on this recent success, the Australian Government has increased the number of Foundation Awards being offered in 2011 to 16 candidates. These candidates have commenced their training programs in Pakistan in September 2011.

Australia has provided scholarships to Pakistani students and professionals since 1991, and the Foundation Awards initiative will further emphasize the strong development partnership between Australia and Pakistan.



Foundation Awardees 2010 cohort with ADA Team members



## Editor's Note

by M. Tariq Jamal Khattak

It is my pleasure to present to you the third edition of the AusAID Scholarships Alumni-Pakistan Newsletter. I am sure in this edition you will find some very interesting contributions from your fellow alumni members.

It is really reassuring and pleasing to notice that the tone of the newsletter articles coming from AusAID alumni are overwhelmingly positive and nostalgic. Without fail, the writers relish their memories and experiences during their stay in Australia. As you must have noticed in the previous two editions of the newsletter, some stories of our fellow alumni have been included; telling us how the ADS experience has helped advance their careers, transformed their personalities and changed their lives. This edition is no different from the previous ones.

I would encourage all fellow alumni again to actively participate in all the activities and forums of ASA-Pakistan, particularly its interactive website and contributing to the Newsletter. The newly elected Executive Committee (EC) is already working on various initiatives relating to areas of alumni interest as per its mandate. However, the EC members are eager for more alumni feedback and suggestions on how to work for the alumni in a better manner.

In the end, I sincerely thank the Honorable Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr Timothy George, and the ADA team for their continued support to ASA-Pakistan. I would also like to thank alumni who have to this date contributed various articles/essays for the newsletter. I urge you to continue writing for your newsletter in the future as well. Your write-ups and suggestions are highly valued so whenever you think of sharing any idea or experience please jot it down and send it to [info@adspakistan.com.pk](mailto:info@adspakistan.com.pk).



Australian Government



Australia Awards

DEVELOPMENT AWARDS



Contact Us

**ASA-PAKISTAN Secretariat**

Level 4 Serena Business Complex, Khyaban-e-Suharwardy, Islamabad.

Tel: +92 (051) 260 0186 - 9, Fax: +92 (51) 260 0191

Email: [info@adspakistan.com.pk](mailto:info@adspakistan.com.pk)

DISCLAIMER:

*"The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of AusAID or the Australian Government.  
Articles and photographs may be reproduced with permission."*