ONE STORY – MANY LIVES
The impact of the Australia-Pacific Technical College
ALL
DS

KIRIBATI

TUVALU

FIJI

SAMOA

NIUE

TONGA

COOK
ISLANDS

CREATING SKILLS FOR LIFE
FOREWORD

Thriving communities and societies, diverse as they may be, have one thing in common – a skilled, qualified and capable workforce.

Without formal qualifications, Pacific Island workers can find themselves stalled on the career ladder. When work demands make it near impossible to study to attain qualifications – and the costs and accessibility of such opportunities are out of reach – it can become a demoralising cycle.

Recognising the high demand for technical and vocational skills in trades, hospitality, tourism, health and community sectors, the Australian Government supports the Australia-Pacific Technical College in its delivery of high quality training in targeted sectors across the Pacific region.

In a region where relationships matter, APTC has embraced a partnering approach, working with governments, educational institutions as well as private sector partners to ensure that their vocational training meets labour market demands and produces job-ready graduates.

This approach has clearly reaped benefits, as demonstrated in this collection of success stories. Thousands of men and women from 14 Pacific countries have graduated with internationally recognised, Australian-standard qualifications since 2007, and are contributing their new skills back into their workplaces and communities.

APTC graduate Cathy Rimbao of PNG has combined her study and work experiences to help domestic violence and sexual assault victims in her country through a network of counselling centres and advocacy against violence. James Matariki of Vanuatu has applied his APTC studies in plumbing towards lobbying for changes in national legislation for the plumbing and building industries. Their stories and those of others are testament to the lasting difference that learning makes – not only in the lives of graduates – but also in the lives of their families, colleagues and communities.

I extend my gratitude to the graduates who shared their stories and wish them the best in their endeavours. I also wish to thank the writers and researchers who compiled this publication. I acknowledge the various governments, employers and educational institutions that have collaborated with APTC over the years, as none of this would have been possible without their support. APTC staff also deserve my sincere thanks for their unwavering commitment to helping Pacific Islanders realise their full potential.

On behalf of the Australian Government, I join the APTC CEO in looking forward to continuing the work that lies ahead in promoting growth and prosperity for Pacific Islanders and the region.

John Davidson
Minister-Counsellor, Development
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
A MESSAGE
FROM THE CEO

At APTC, success extends beyond the number of men and women who gain internationally recognised Australian qualifications. Across the Pacific, our success is underpinned by the strong partnerships we have forged with national TVET institutions, industries, employers and governments. Success is measured by the lasting impact of the difference that learning can make in the lives of individuals, their families and communities.

Technical, vocational educational and training (TVET) skills are in high demand across the region; in the trades, hospitality, tourism, health and community industry sectors. APTC continues to respond to the demand for skills across the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) countries in which it operates.

This collection highlights the impact of learning at APTC on individual and community lives, the contribution to strengthening TVET across the Pacific and in building capacity across industries.

I acknowledge that there are many more stories of success that could have been told, that could have been highlighted in this document. The process involved in collating information that can demonstrate the most significant impact, was not an easy one. I wish to extend my gratitude to all those who so willingly shared their stories and who gave their time to allow the writers to conduct interviews and research.

I also wish to thank the Australian Government for their support. I thank too the Pacific Island Governments and people who have worked with APTC to realise the results you will read about in the following pages.

On behalf of all at APTC, I hope you enjoy reading this book. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively to enhance opportunities for the citizens of the Pacific Island Countries that we serve.

Denise O’Brien
Chief Executive Officer
Australia Pacific Technical College

About the Australia-Pacific Technical College:
APTC is a development initiative funded by the Australian Government to deliver training and to increase the supply of skilled workers in targeted sectors in the Pacific region. APTC has campuses in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.
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STRENGTHENING TVET ACROSS THE REGION

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) expands opportunities for people of all ages. In the context of Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC), student development is focused on those already working in vocational occupations across a variety of industry sectors. The qualifications that APTC graduates achieve enable them to develop productive, job-relevant and lifelong skills that support them to actively participate in the economic and social progress of their communities.

The importance of TVET to national growth and regional economic integration is recognised across the Pacific and the development of a regional response is a significant part of the APTC’s focus. The benefit of focusing on a regional delivery plan ensures access to skills development for both small island countries and larger, more economically developed countries.

As a holistic, inclusive and responsive approach, TVET can offer flexible and multiple pathways to skills development and education that recognises the different proficiencies, abilities and future needs of people in the Pacific region.

TVET is also a way to attain qualifications that meet international standards, increasing graduate employability across industries in their own countries, the region and internationally.

APTC’s achievements in strengthening and delivering TVET support the vision of the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) for TVET to provide opportunities in preparing people in the Pacific for gainful employment and sustainable livelihoods.

APTC is partnering with other TVET institutions across the Pacific region to enhance their capacity to effectively deliver recognised TVET qualifications locally and in response to labour market needs and opportunities.

APTC’s commitment to strengthening TVET across the Pacific is not only a major driver for its long-term sustainability, but also a way to improve the lives of people living in the region and develop the skills base needed to advance the economies of Pacific countries.

This commitment aligns with other TVET initiatives of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), including the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program (TVETSSP). The TVETSSP program is designed to develop an integrated, accountable and modernised TVET sector that can respond to government, employer and individual demands for quality-assured training.

The partnerships which APTC has developed with TVETSSP programs across the region, focus on the development of capacity and capability to support the delivery of quality programs, products and services and to create pathways to higher level qualifications.

The increased capability of Pacific TVET institutions ensures a greater confidence in the delivery of qualification frameworks. The development of regional TVET capability enables a shift in the training profile of APTC to deliver more pathway programs for higher level qualifications.

Providing and supporting new and improved TVET models and frameworks is important if the TVET sector is to keep up with technological change and the demand for a highly responsive, skilled and experienced workforce to contribute to Pacific economic growth.

The case studies in this section of the compendium highlight some of the successful APTC partnerships that have been developed across the Pacific.

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2 Pacific Education Development Framework was developed by Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
IMPROVING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN KIRIBATI

Since its establishment, APTC has partnered with local agencies in Kiribati to assist carpentry graduates to gain employment - a significant challenge for a nation endeavouring to reduce high youth unemployment rates.

Kiribati is a small island nation of just over 100,000 people and is regarded as one of the world’s poorest countries with few natural resources, heavy reliance on overseas assistance, climate change issues and significant urban overcrowding. The unemployment rate in Kiribati is 69.4 per cent of the labour force (total working age population 15 years and older), with young people accounting for more than half of the unemployed population.

To increase opportunities for local people to gain employment in Kiribati, APTC formed a partnership with the local TVET institution, Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT), to provide carpentry training.

“Employment in countries such as Kiribati has a direct link to reducing poverty in a community where youth unemployment is very high and growing,” says James Knyvenburg, former Director School of Trades and Technology, APTC.

The TVETSSP in Kiribati is supporting the delivery of Certificate II in Construction at KIT. Students who graduate from this course can then complete Certificate III in Carpentry at APTC in Fiji.

The partnership also focuses on strengthening the planning and coordination of TVET by the Kiribati Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development, while also supporting KIT to improve the quality and quantity of its training.

In 2011, KIT replaced its carpentry course with the certificate course to ensure a direct pathway for graduates to APTC. This also reduces the time needed for KIT graduates to complete their APTC studies.

Sixteen I-Kiribati students graduated with Certificate III in Carpentry from APTC in 2013. The majority of these graduates were under 25 years of age and all of them gained paid employment after the completion of their training.

This exceptional result is in part due to the TVETSSP, which aims to help graduates move into the workplace by connecting them with potential local employers.

The employment of just one person in Kiribati benefits many others, making this partnership invaluable to local communities and a means to help break the nation’s cycle of youth unemployment.

Within just one week of graduating from the carpentry course at APTC, Tuari Reuera began working for global engineering company McConnell Dowell Corporation - contractors for the Kiribati Road Rehabilitation Project - one of a large number of infrastructure projects in Kiribati. He is now Carpentry Foreman and is also regularly entrusted with the role of Supervisor.

Tuari now supports his family and pays school fees for his sisters, and is using his new carpentry and leadership skills to encourage other young people to consider APTC training.

Five other APTC graduates also gained employment at McConnell Dowell Corporation and have developed an excellent reputation for their work ethic, skills and teamwork.
In addition to creating role models for young people, the APTC training is also encouraging women to consider a career in carpentry. Even though there has only been one female graduate to date, this clearly demonstrates that women can also successfully complete a trade course and secure employment in this industry.

With all 2013 graduates of Certificate III in Carpentry employed, there are plans for another carpentry group as well as an automotive group to undertake Certificate III studies in 2014.

There are significant benefits for local companies and major infrastructure project contractors in hiring highly skilled local people rather than sourcing workers from overseas. It saves time and money and they are also able to work more closely with communities to ensure projects meet local needs.

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4 Encyclopaedia Britannica, www.britannica.com
4 New Zealand Aid Programme, data online, www.aid.govt.nz/where-we-work/pacific/kiribati
TRAINING PARTNERSHIP FOCUSES ON SAFETY

APTC is providing international standard training and skills development for students and trainers in the Solomon Islands.

The AUD$1.9 million partnership between APTC and Don Bosco Technical Institute aims to fund the enrolment of up to 300 students over three years, as well as upgrade facilities and safety equipment and standards at the Don Bosco campus in the nation’s capital, Honiara.

This partnership also benefits local teachers by providing vocational training at Don Bosco.

At the commencement of the program, APTC appointed two permanent trainers on campus to provide training for students in Certificate II in Construction and Certificate II in Automotive Repair. These trainers also mentor local teachers on-site and deliver Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) as part of the national tutor development program. Key benchmarks have been set as part of this program to ensure ongoing professional development.

This partnership also means that students from the Solomon Islands, who previously had to travel to campuses in countries like Fiji, can now complete Certificate II in Carpentry or Automotive and the compulsory six months’ work experience in their home country. They are then eligible to apply for Certificate III studies in another country.

APTC Chief Executive Officer, Denise O’Brien, says the partnership fits with APTC’s vision to be a preferred partner with leading Pacific TVET institutions to provide excellence and relevance in training that is responsive to industry demands.

“APTC’s purpose to work with viable national partners is to train skilled workers in targeted industry sectors so they graduate with Australian internationally recognised qualifications to improve their local, regional and international employment opportunities,” says Denise.

Supporting investments in training and skills development is a key focus of the partnership between Australia and the Solomon Islands. At the commencement of the program, Peter Baxter, former Director General of AusAID, said that this new venture will give more Solomon Islanders the chance to learn new skills and secure jobs.

“They will join more than 490 Solomon Islanders who have already graduated from APTC and now have the skills, training and confidence to take advantage of job opportunities, either in Solomon Islands or in the region,” said Mr Baxter.

Father Ambrose Pereira of the Salesians of Don Bosco, based at the campus, is also pleased with the training partnership because of employment prospects and other opportunities that it brings for Solomon Islanders.

“It has helped us deal with three important areas: qualified and motivated instructors, a curriculum that is relevant to the Pacific, and an upgrading and maintenance of the workshops,” says Father Ambrose.

He hopes that young men and women continue to have the opportunity to get a relevant qualification that will propel them into the field of work.

An important aspect of the training is ensuring that the correct safety procedures are followed. This has meant dedicating time and funds to continued education of the local Don Bosco teachers. Classroom facilities, tools and equipment have been upgraded to facilitate this move.

Much of the credit for implementing this program can go to the Don Bosco teachers and management for their willingness to meet the challenges of adapting to the new teaching approaches and demands for the benefit of their students.
Improving national standards to an international level is critical given the disproportionately high rate of workplace injuries in low and middle-income countries, such as the Solomon Islands, where people are engaged in hazardous activities such as agriculture, fishing and mining.

As well as providing training, the improvement of safety standards at the Don Bosco campus means graduates return to the workplace with greater knowledge about workplace safety. This enables them to implement and share these high standards learnt at APTC.

The partnership is the first that APTC has entered into with a non-government educational institution, with similar partnerships planned for the future across the Pacific.

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6 AusAID (the Australian Agency for International Development) was the Australian Government agency responsible for managing Australia’s overseas aid program until 31 October 2013, when it ceased to be an executive agency and was integrated into the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.


8 Hamalainen P., Leena Saarela K., Takala J., 'Global trend according to estimated number of occupational accidents and fatal work-related diseases at region and country level', March 2008 (updated September 2008), www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18433205
STRONG PARTNERSHIPS PROMOTE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

A partnership between APTC and Vanuatu Institute of Technology is effectively promoting TVET and strengthening the relationship between training institutions in the region.

It is widely recognised that TVET develops skills that improve productivity and employment opportunities. With a population of 234,023 in Vanuatu, skills development is vital for economic growth, as well as a to alleviate poverty, empower young people and enable social inclusion.

In line with its commitment to support skills development and boost vocational education in Vanuatu, APTC partnered with Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) in 2007.

The two institutions now share the VIT campus in Port Vila, which provides facilities for the delivery and development of programs.

APTC also assisted VIT to achieve registered training provider status from the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority (VQA) in 2014. As part of the registration process, APTC worked with VIT to develop a model for the implementation of a quality education and training system that maximises the use of available resources. The program included a coaching model and assistance in the development of policies.

An outcome of the coaching model being developed with VIT was the TVETSSP – an Australian Government program supporting the Vanuatu Ministry of Education in developing TVET in the region, including funding a full-time quality coach to work with training providers across Vanuatu.

According to Kathryn Gray, APTC Country Manager in Vanuatu, the relationship between APTC and VIT has had a positive impact on the VIT community, she says that while TVET is recognised as key to providing students with trade and work skills, higher-level qualifications are still considered an important objective.

To this end, APTC provides a pathway for VIT students to pursue higher-level qualifications. This increases career options for students.

“This also builds the capacity of training recipients to support development of their own communities, families and nations,” says Kathryn.

APTC also assists in building the capacity of VIT management and staff to enhance their program delivery. VIT trainers now have the opportunity to participate in Australian-standard training at APTC, including the Australian Certificate III level in a range of industry areas, as well as trainer development through Certificate IV in TAE.

Tama Olsen, Head of Department for the VIT Hospitality and Tourism School, completed both Certificate IV in TAE and a Diploma in Management with APTC. He acknowledges that the higher-level of TVET education he has received through APTC has allowed him to raise the standard of his teaching role as a trainer and move into a managerial role.

“The partnership is exactly what the country has been aiming for to address the need for human resource development, particularly as the two institutions are now putting the Vanuatu TVET system into place,” says Tama.

Tama acknowledges that Certificate IV in TAE gave him and other VIT trainers a structured skill set, including advanced training delivery and assessor skills.

A former tourism trainer at VIT, Kevin Tabi is now a qualified tourism trainer for APTC after completing training as part of APTC’s tutor development program.
Kevin completed both Certificate III in Tourism and Certificate IV in TAE. In his role he provides continuous coaching to VIT trainers as well as reviewing their delivery program. As an APTC trainer, Kevin’s training delivery is benchmarked against similar Australian institutions.

He has also supported the review of VIT’s current units of competencies to ensure that students have a clear pathway to progress to higher-level TVET education.

“It has been vital from the beginning to have APTC work alongside VIT in the development and implementation of programs,” says Kevin. According to Kathryn, the TVET sector in Vanuatu is now widely recognised as a respectable and reliable alternative to university education in providing much-needed work skills. The establishment of the VQA is also supporting TVET development in the country.

The VIT-APTC partnership ensures that graduates attain the skills that meet industry and national standards, increasing their employability across various industries and locations.

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*Recorded in the 2009 census*
A PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The partnership between APTC and Port Moresby Technical College is not just about increasing the quality of training and the capability of graduates, it is also about upgrading infrastructure, funding utility and communication costs, refurbishing trade facilities, managing assets and establishing new training facilities.

The partnership between Port Moresby Technical College (POMTECH) and APTC was established in 2008 and was extended in 2011 for another four years.

As part of the partnership, the advanced training facilities established by APTC at POMTECH are increasing the capacity of trainers and the number of graduates with internationally recognised TVET qualifications.

POMTECH is the largest and longest-operating technical institution in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The PNG government currently contributes funding towards seven technical colleges (national institutions) and 132 vocational training centres (provincial institutions) across PNG.6 However, without this partnership with APTC, POMTECH would not have been able to improve operations and resources.

Allan Tira, POMTECH Principal, is grateful for assistance from APTC to upgrade technical skills and infrastructure. Allan believes that these improvements have raised the status of the college and helped it to become a highly regarded national institution.

“Even our stakeholders from the industry - mostly in motoring, building and construction - who have employed our graduates in the past are starting to show their support by sponsoring and sending back those very graduates to undergo the APTC training, seeing it is world class,” says Allan.

APTC also assisted in the design of the new National Automotive Training Centre, which is important for raising the training status so more industry clients consider the college for their employee training.

Allan is excited that this centre is one of the best in the country, which means more people from industries across PNG can come and upgrade their skills.

With an investment of funds over a four-year period, APTC has enabled new machinery to be fitted into the fabrication and welding and the fitting and machining facilities, as well as running operation training for the computerised machines.

Some of the trainers from other TVET institutions coming to POMTECH have minimal or no knowledge of how to operate heavy machinery. With the APTC training, they can develop these skills by learning how to use the latest machinery.

APTC Country Manager, Trevor Birney, believes that the APTC trade qualifications also allow trainers from other TVET institutions to upgrade their technical skills to meet current industry standards and practices using the latest technology.

The campus is also the only college in the Pacific region where electrical trade workers can attain Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician.

When PNG and Australia signed the PNG-Australia Partnership for Development in Niue in 2008, the Australian Government made a commitment towards greater cooperation with PNG to assist with development priorities.

The support by Australia for PNG’s private sector led growth in PNG by improving the environment for business; supporting rural livelihoods and income-generating opportunities.
in the agriculture sector; strengthening technical and vocational training institutions, such as POMTECH; and supporting infrastructure that encourages economic growth.

In light of this commitment, it is important that workers in these developing industries are adequately skilled to support this growth and development.

APTC has continued to expand programs at the PNG site with a new hospitality and tourism facility being completed at the campus in July 2014. Having this facility means that PNG students can be trained in their own country, rather than having to go to the Fijian and Samoan campuses as they did previously.

The campus now also has dormitories to accommodate 80 students. The hospitality and training facility has two large training classrooms, a high-tech training kitchen, restaurant and bar training areas.

Several hotels and commercial catering agencies are sending staff for training at the new facility, which offers training in programs such as Certificate III in Hospitality and Certificate III in Commercial Cookery.

Training to APTC standards means that graduates are equipped with the latest industry knowledge and skills, which they can then pass on to their work colleagues.

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Department of Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training Division, Papua New Guinea - TVET Policy, 2005
BOOSTING TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN THE NORTH PACIFIC

Graduates of a new APTC hospitality program conducted at the Palau Community College are contributing to the growing tourism industry in the North Pacific.

The North Pacific is made up of groups of atolls and small island states spread out across a vast expanse of ocean, most of which are facing the challenges of climate change. For many of these island states, developing a tourism industry and conserving their natural environment have become important and effective ways to achieve a more sustainable economy and provide economic opportunities for their citizens.

One of these island states is Palau, which is located to the east of the Philippines and is spread across 250 islands forming the western chain of the Caroline Islands. With a population of fewer than 30,000, Palau was part of the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific for over 30 years, gaining independence in 1994.

According to the most recent Asian Development Outlook by the Asian Development Bank, new tourism facilities in Palau could increase tourist accommodation by a further 6 per cent and tourism is expected to be a major driver in GDP growth in coming years.2

It is this growth in Palau’s tourism industry that prompted APTC to deliver a hospitality pilot program at the Palau Community College (PCC).

This program was delivered by APTC trainer William Hetherington to 16 Palauan students who graduated with either a Certificate III in Hospitality or a Diploma in Hospitality.

William believes that hospitality and tourism training in the North Pacific is crucial to increase workforce capability to deliver better services in these expanding industries.

“I think the students who have graduated are taking really practical and cohesive skills into a small community, and this will have a fanning-out effect,” says William. “Palau is at a turning point with its tourism market. Some [tourism operators] want to move into higher-end markets, as opposed to budget companies, which means more pressure on local environments and resources.”

Palau Pacific Resort (PPR) is one of Palau’s premier resorts for high-end tourism. The resort offers facilities to accommodate large conferences and delegates attending events in Palau, including the 2014 Pacific Islands Forum - the 45th annual meeting of Pacific Island leaders.

This significant week-long event in the country’s calendar also provided the participants of the APTC Certificate III in Hospitality program with the opportunity to demonstrate their high standard of service. Several of these students have now moved on to training as supervisors.

PPR is the primary employer of APTC graduates in Palau. The resort’s management recognises the contribution made by APTC graduates to the standard of service that is required of a five-star resort. They also recognise the change in their employees’ outlook following training with APTC.

“At the end of the day, these employees come back with an open mind compared to what they had before the APTC training,” says Ashok Tanna, Director Food and Beverage. “They have brought with them confidence, which they apply in their supervisory skills, share with their colleagues and in the way they handle the guests and their own staff.”

This training also provides Palauan graduates with the opportunity to improve their skills so
that they have the flexibility to work elsewhere if they wish to work overseas.

Nanai Singeo, Managing Director at Palau Visitors Authority, also agrees that a competent workforce is essential for sustainable economic growth.

“Programs such as those offered by APTC ensure that this goal is met by increasing local participation in the industry, awareness in the community and further improvement to the wide range of services needed to support Palau’s fast-growing tourism industry.”

APTC Hospitality students prepare food for participants at the 45th Pacific Island Forum in Palau

www.adb.org/countries/palau/economy
DRIVING MECHANICS TO NEW STANDARDS

APTC graduate Harry Smith’s passion for improving workplace safety and productivity has taken him from shining shoes on a street corner to holding a senior position at the Fiji Ministry of Education.

For the 12 years that Harry Smith taught motor mechanics to students in Fiji, he was unaware of just how unsuitable the typical attire of shorts and thongs was for a mechanical workshop.

However, after enrolling at APTC in the Automotive Mechanical Technology course, it didn’t take Harry long to understand why safety gear was mandatory to attend classes. It also sparked an enduring interest in workplace health and safety.

Before attending APTC, Harry earned his Trade Certificate in Automotive Engineering at the Fiji Institute of Technology and worked in various jobs, including as a shoe-shiner, semi-professional rugby player, motor mechanic and a vocational teacher at Fiji’s Ministry of Education.

After completing Certificate III, Harry was promoted to Head of Department at the Ministry of Education. Soon after, he was offered an exciting opportunity to really make an impact on national occupational health and safety standards.

In a well-earned promotion, Harry was appointed TVET Senior Education Officer, one of the most senior TVET roles at the Fiji Ministry of Education.

This position provides Harry with the chance to ensure that improved standards are integrated across the entire curriculum of the Fiji Government’s TVET sector for motor mechanics.

In this role Harry also strives to improve the quality standards of vocational training, and through training, improve the occupational health and safety on worksites in the Pacific.

Research indicates a disproportionately high rate of workplace injuries in low- and middle-income countries. In Fiji, the annual workplace injury fatality rate is estimated at 19.5 per 100,000 workers, with males accounting for 95 per cent of workplace hospitalisations and deaths.12

Harry is making a contribution to Fiji’s TVET curriculum with the aim of developing more competency- and outcome-based modules, specifically in the area of occupational health and safety. This is a fundamental change reflected in the new curriculum.

According to Harry, these initiatives are a direct result of his APTC studies.

Harry is also developing the nation’s first automotive textbooks for vocational schools to replace existing Australian-based learning materials.

To support teachers in delivering the new curriculum, Harry received funding from the Ministry of Education to financially assist them in upgrading their qualifications to include the internationally recognised Certificate IV in TAE, also offered by APTC.

Harry encourages tradespeople to sign-up as new teachers and share their high level of practical skills, even though they may lack formal teaching qualifications, just as he did when he first joined the Ministry.

James Kynenburg, former Director School of Trades and Technology of APTC, believes that in his current position, Harry is able to bring about change and make a positive impact on the nation’s delivery models of training, as well as improve standards in training and trades.

“He has recommended the upgrading of TVET facilities in schools and provided the resourcing implications for this to occur,” says James. “He believes his current position will allow him to make a difference and contribute to his community and Fiji.”
Harry is thankful for his improved knowledge and subsequent job opportunities as a result of his studies at APTC.

With a salary that has increased approximately two-fold since achieving his APTC qualification, Harry is now able to pay for his two sons to get a university education.

“What my parents couldn’t do for me I can do for my kids; it gives me a sense of achievement,” Harry says.

APTC Automotive students during a program delivery

IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY LIVES

Introduction

APTC offers highly effective education and training that is targeted and relevant to expanding employment opportunities for people living in the Pacific. It prioritises the development of programs and courses that support local economies and attract women, people with disabilities and those geographically marginalised.

This commitment is aligned with DFAT’s aid program to expand opportunities for people, businesses and communities as the key to promoting economic growth and reducing poverty in the Pacific region.19

Focusing on TVET as a means of developing skills has the unique advantage of providing formal and flexible learning opportunities. Women and men, regardless of previous education levels or socioeconomic status, can gain basic to advanced knowledge and skills in both institutional and work settings.

Gaining a TVET qualification can be a pathway out of poverty for people, their families and their communities. Efforts towards poverty alleviation are strengthened by better opportunities to progress beyond existing income ceilings and where individuals are able to utilise their skills and time more productively. Access to quality, fulfilling and sustainable employment opportunities can provide hope for the future by increasing capacity to earn, self-confidence, and community engagement.

Women

The Australian Government recognises the significant benefits that flow to whole communities from women’s participation in leadership and decision-making.16 To achieve this, the government has implemented a number of initiatives, including the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (the Pacific Women initiative), which aims to improve the political, economic and social opportunities for Pacific women.

APTC understands that empowering women is one of the best ways to achieve economic growth and prosperity in the Pacific. APTC has integrated gender equity strategies into all its training programs to focus on the aims of Pacific women, specifically to expand women’s economic opportunities to earn an income and accumulate economic assets.

Sustainability

One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference was agreement to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to build upon previously established Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post-2015 development agenda.15

APTC is actively promoting the SDGs’ sustainability components, including the interconnection of social, economic and environmental issues.

APTC is also committed to educating tradespeople, suppliers and policy makers in the Pacific to use more sustainable practices, especially in the tourism and construction industries. APTC initiated the Regional Ozone2Climate Technology Symposium in 2013 - a first for the Pacific Islands - to assist the 12 Pacific countries bound by the provisions of the Montreal Protocol.16

Disaster management

Disasters caused by earthquakes, floods, droughts, hurricanes and tsunamis can have devastating impacts on people, environments and economies. Providing communities with the ability to withstand these impacts and recover quickly is essential.

The Pacific is particularly vulnerable to these natural disasters. In the decade between 2004
and 2014, 2.2 billion people were affected by natural disasters with around two-thirds located in the Asia-Pacific region. The associated global economic cost was estimated at USD $1.5 trillion, with around USD $750 billion incurred in the Asia-Pacific.  

APTC is committed to providing training to increase the capacity for Pacific countries to cope during disasters, including the skills to rebuild, village-based training for reconstruction after a disaster, disaster preparedness, risk reduction and social protection to improve the resilience of communities.

Cyclone Evan devastated parts of Samoa and Fiji, leaving more than 16,000 people displaced. The cyclone damaged or destroyed thousands of homes and decimated crops and food supplies. APTC’s support of Cyclone Evan and the 2010 tsunami reconstruction programs resulted in its recognition for the 2013 Pacific Human Rights award by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

Disability
Support by the Australian Government in the Pacific region is focused on the most disadvantaged, including people with a disability and with low literacy and numeracy, to find pathways out of poverty. Through its aid programs, the Australian Government works with local partners to improve awareness around disability, which can be one of the largest barriers to full participation in community and economic life, by promoting disability-inclusive education.  

The Australian Government provides significant support to assist disability services in the region which includes support for the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability, which was introduced at the Pacific Island Forum Disability ministers’ meeting in 2009. APTC makes a concerted effort to promote equity in all their training programs and partnerships, including ensuring a good representation of people with disabilities.

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20 The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (a protocol to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer) is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous substances that are responsible for ozone depletion; it was opened for signatures in 1989 and has been ratified by 197 parties.
SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

APTC graduate Cathy Rimbao combined her studies and role as a police officer to improve workplace safety and help victims of family and sexual violence in PNG.

Cathy Rimbao has been a police officer for over 12 years, including 10 years as the Coordinator for the Family and Sexual Violence Program in the Morobe Province of PNG for the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC).

Cathy also completed the Diploma in Community Services at APTC and is using her new skills and knowledge to develop initiatives aimed at supporting those affected by family and sexual violence.

In PNG, two out of three women have experienced domestic violence and half have experienced non-consensual intercourse, according to the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) gender development index of 136 countries. UNDP also ranks PNG in the top 10 per cent of countries most affected by gender-based sexual violence. Cathy hopes to reduce these statistics through her work.

While studying at APTC, Cathy developed the Yana Advocacy and Child Lifeline Service in Lae in the Morobe Province. Also referred to as Yana, it operates five days a week and is an essential community service providing counselling, referral and support to women, particularly those affected by domestic violence.

Cathy worked with a former classmate, Mark Gozapao, who also completed the APTC Diploma in Community Services, to establish a second centre in Goroka in the Eastern Highlands Province, and then a third service in nearby Rabaul in the East New Britain Province.

“APTC gave me all the skills I needed to kickstart the advocacy program,” says Cathy. “It also helped me a lot with understanding how to communicate better with people from different ethnic groups and tribes.”

Yana assists more than 35 people weekly, as well as helping children with a disability and others affected by domestic violence.

Cathy’s work to help the Morobe community reduce domestic violence rates is being supported by senior community officials including the Mayor of Lae City and RPNGC Metropolitan Police Commander.

Her remarkable ability to successfully work with communities and make a real difference can be attributed to the skills she gained through her APTC studies and her improved self-confidence.

Cathy admits that it can sometimes be difficult being a female working in domestic violence and policing, but she has always been able to manage difficult situations.

For Cathy, the growing community demand for the service makes the hard work worthwhile.

“There is an increase in women [coming to Yana] and they are coming from all corners of the province and even from outside of the province itself,” says Cathy.

She believes that this increase is partly due to women understanding more about their rights in relation to domestic violence.

A recent Child Fund Australia report found that many women who are victims of family and sexual violence in PNG are not comfortable reporting the crime to police. The report stated that “some women were scared of police; it seemed to be a last resort for serious attack rather than a potential source of support.”

To address these and other issues, Cathy uses the skills and knowledge she learned at APTC, particularly case management and community liaison. Often, she accompanies victims to the police station or conducts interviews in a private space supported by Yana volunteers.
Involving men in domestic violence services is also a key strategy in Yana’s mission to reduce family violence. This strategy was initiated by Cathy, based on her experience working as the coordinator for the RPNGC.

By improving her skills and taking a proactive approach to domestic violence, Cathy is now a positive role model—not only for her peers in the police force, but also for other women and men who are actively taking a stance against PNG’s alarming domestic violence statistics.

Shortly after completing her APTC studies, Cathy was promoted to the prestigious role of Police Ombudsman in the Police Ombudsman Commission.

Cathy also shared her new knowledge about occupational health and safety standards in her own workplace by developing and delivering the first training program for occupational health and safety and case management for the RPNGC.
OPENING NEW DOORS

Posenai Patu - volunteer, college graduate and international student - is proof that people with disabilities can achieve anything they set out to do.

Posenai Patu was an energetic young man who, like many in Samoa, climbed coconut trees to get a drink when he was thirsty. Unfortunately, in 2009 Posenai fell from a tree and was left paralysed from the waist down.

Posenai had previously studied at the National University of Samoa School of Maritime Training, but after the accident he let go of his dream to be a sailor or to follow another career.

Posenai later turned his life around by completing Certificate III in Disability at APTC.

Some of the inspiration for returning to study was the time he spent in a New Zealand hospital after his accident. It was here that Posenai saw how other people with spinal problems could be independent and have a job.

When Posenai returned home from hospital - just after the 2009 tsunami - he realised just how difficult it was in Samoa for people in a wheelchair. There were few footpaths and ramps and limited disability support.

“People with a disability face a lot of barriers and I experienced that,” says Posenai. “I want to stand out and fight for people with a disability.”

The Australian Government is also providing significant support to assist disability services in Samoa, including some funding for the Samoa Disability Program. This program aims to increase levels of education and understanding, as well as improve services and develop employment opportunities for people with a disability.

It also provided funding to the Samoa Inclusive Education Demonstration program in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. This program works to ensure that children with a disability in Samoa have access to a quality education.

Much of the work to improve services and perceptions for people with a disability needs to start at the local level, according to Posenai, to make sure homes and communities are more accessible.

During his study at APTC, Posenai was invited by the Samoa Spinal Network (SSN) to become a volunteer. SSN President, Asomua Epenesa, saw great potential in Posenai to encourage and inspire other people with disabilities to become more productive members of the community, and urged him to be more involved in the network.

Posenai’s APTC teacher, John Bosnich, describes Posenai as one of the most inspiring students he has seen in over 30 years of teaching.

“His accident moved him from a high academic achiever to the depths of depression and grief, from which he fought his way back to a positive outlook,” says John. “And he has proceeded to pass this ‘can do’ attitude on to other members of the disability community.”

During his studies at APTC, Posenai continued volunteering with SSN, mainly supporting and motivating other people with disabilities in the community.

It is this selfless dedication to others that contributed to him winning a scholarship to study a three-year Advanced Diploma in Orthotics and Prosthetics in Cambodia. The scholarship is co-funded by the Latter Day Saints and the Australian Government.

“Now I have graduated [from APTC] and I also got accepted to go to Cambodia to go to school,” says Posenai. “I am about to close a door and open another door.”

Upon his successful completion of the course in Cambodia, Posenai has a job lined up at the orthotic unit at the Samoa National Health Services.
SHARING TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES FOR SURVIVAL

APTC graduates are rejuvenating traditional agricultural practices in the fight against the impact of climate change in Vanuatu.

In Vanuatu, about 75 per cent of the population live in regional and remote areas, with the majority of people relying on subsistence farming to grow enough food for their family’s survival.

For many, bananas are a critical food source that is highly susceptible to damage by strong winds. The inability to replace damaged or destroyed crops can be life-threatening for some villages.

When natural disaster hits Vanuatu, food and water shortages during the aftermath can be more dangerous than the ferocious winds and floods during the peak of a cyclone.

Training to preserve and rapidly propagate bananas - the Pacific’s most important source of food energy - has been successfully trialled in Vanuatu by two APTC graduates who studied Certificate III in Community Services.

Joseph Afa from Samoa and Isso Nihmei from Vanuatu have combined their traditional knowledge with their new skills learned at APTC to train people to preserve and propagate bananas. This training will help to sustain lives post-cyclone and assist people to better adapt to climate change.

Joseph is using the Samoan Laifsasi technique with local people - a practice of rapid banana propagation that enables a single banana shoot to grow up to 15 new planting sprouts.

Isso is using the Mara technique of banana preservation. This technique involves burying unripe bananas underground for up to two years.

Both of these techniques have been passed on through generations for thousands of years, but the influence of westernised living in Vanuatu has seen the erosion of many traditional practices and knowledge.

Chief Johnson Sausiara, from Teouma Futuna or larofo Cultural Village, said people in Vanuatu rely on overseas disaster aid after a cyclone, such as rice and canned foods. As the impact of climate change worsens, future generations need to be more self-reliant, just as their ancestors were.

“I remember at the age of six I had to rely on the preserved banana and breadfruit,” says Chief Johnson Sausiara. “When you are in the middle of nowhere you have to know how to survive, and no one would make it without food preservation.”

The Laufsasi technique was taught to Joseph by his elders. As part of his APTC studies he developed a manual in the local Ni-Vanuatu Bislama language to teach the method to people in Vanuatu, such as local farmer Yoki.

“Before we plant to live and now I plant to sell. Before I didn’t have a job and now I can make the garden and also enough food to sell at the market and so now I have a job. The money helps with school fees and farmer’s needs, like tools,” says Yoki.

The Laufsasi technique is not only allowing Yoki and others to earn an income for the first time, the technique will also help people to recover quickly from cyclones that often destroy entire banana plantations.

Joseph is thankful to APTC for changing his life, and for providing him with the opportunity to help others and to set a good example for his children, who have promised that “they will never quit education”.

Chief Johnson, speaking on behalf of his community and others, explains that what APTC does is invaluable.
In addition to developing technical expertise and skills, APTC courses are an opportunity for people from Pacific Island countries to meet, learn and share their culture, experience and traditional knowledge.

The banana propagation and preservation techniques are prime examples of how APTC is facilitating cultural and traditional knowledge sharing across the Pacific.
IMPROVING REFRIGERATION PRACTICES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

APTC is training and educating people in the Pacific on how to manage harmful refrigerants to help preserve the environment and reduce energy consumption.

The world’s ozone layer is shrinking, especially in southern latitudes such as Australia and the Pacific where it has dropped 10-12 per cent each decade since 1979. In general, a drop of just 1 per cent in atmospheric ozone is equivalent to an increase of 1-2 per cent in ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Increased UV radiation may cause higher rates of skin cancer and eye damage, as well as reduce plant growth.

To help combat the effects of climate change, APTC is providing training on how to better manage refrigerants that contain ozone-depleting substances (ODS), such as hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). This training is part of Certificate III in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (RAC) being delivered at the APTC Samoa campus.

APTC is also committed to educating tradespeople, suppliers and policy makers in the Pacific to find ways to better manage or avoid refrigerants that are harmful to the environment.

As part of this commitment, APTC initiated an international symposium, conducted a series of RAC workshops for tradespeople and coordinated a refrigerant recovery project after Cyclone Evan in Samoa.

Training students in this area is also an important step in improving practices in the industry. According to Michael Moller, trainer in RAC and electrotechnology at APTC in Samoa, trainers teach students about what to do and why it is important, but when they return to work, their workplaces often lack the proper tools and support.

“The students have a great awareness of environmental issues and the consequences of their service practices, but without the right equipment it is impossible [to implement],” says Michael.

To address this issue, APTC has partnered with the United Nations Environment Programme to develop and deliver workshops for RAC tradespeople in 12 Pacific Island countries. This includes the creation of a “toolbank”, or cache of tools, which is stored by a local agency and then loaned to tradespeople throughout the Pacific.

The toolbank is especially useful for tradespeople who cannot afford the equipment from overseas that is needed to conduct environmentally friendly RAC servicing and practices.

APTC began delivering the RAC “train the trainer” workshop series and six months later nine Pacific Island countries had received the training, with each workshop attracting between 20 and 40 participants per country.

UNEP sponsors the training as part of the International Montreal Protocol Compliance Assistance Programme, with support from local agencies in each Pacific host country.

For APTC graduate and now RAC business owner, Gabi Waqavanua (known as Gabi), the training provided him with the opportunity to better understand the importance of developing good practices when working with RAC.

Gabi was taught how to assess systems, write reports and provide quotes, and it was this training that led him to consider starting his own business.

“It is training not just to become a tradesman, but also a business manager. I realised that I had the skills, the trade background and the vision to start my own business.”
Gabi’s business also develops a maintenance plan for the lifetime of each RAC unit they install. This includes professional advice about energy consumption and how different products can save electricity. This is important for preserving the environment and reducing costly energy consumption.

APTC was also involved in the Cyclone Evan clean-up and ODS Recovery Project in Samoa. The cyclone left a trail of costly destruction and unmanaged refrigerants in damaged machines. The APTC team was able to collect and recover the ODS and help owners repair their systems.

For this project, APTC partnered with the Samoa National Ozone Unit in the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, the Samoa Refrigeration Engineers Association, and the National University of Samoa.

APTC has been an important player in delivering training on the careful management of RAC services to the Pacific region, and is committed to sharing their learning and practices with other countries.

APTC Refrigeration and Air Conditioning students are committed to effectively managing refrigerants

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RISING STAR IS RAISING STANDARDS IN FIJI

After graduating from APTC, Paul Tikoicolo Vakatale is now responsible for coordinating multimillion-dollar construction projects for the Fijian Government.

Paul Tikoicolo Vakatale (known as Tiko) is from Batiki - a tiny volcanic island with a land area of 12 square kilometres and a population of approximately 300 Fijian people.

Tiko had been working as a fitter and turner for the Ministry of Works, Transport and Public Utilities for 21 years, when his career took a new direction.

Within a year of completing Certificate III in Engineering at APTC, Tiko received numerous promotions and was then appointed Acting Senior Mechanical Engineer for Water and Energy at the Ministry.

"I used to be down there on the floor with the boys and in just three years I am up here at the management level," he says. "It's a really big change."

This took Tiko from supervising basic workshop maintenance to managing national public works. In his new role, he is responsible for assisting the ministry to become a semi-commercial and income-generating entity, as well as developing and improving the quality and skills of the next generation of government employees.

These responsibilities are an important part of the Fijian Government's reforms to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

To help achieve these outcomes, Tiko is directly harnessing his engineering and time-management training from his APTC studies to supervise over 100 staff members and implement more efficient operations. His role also includes contributing to costing works commercially in other government departments.

The Fijian Government previously employed overseas experts in the water and roads sectors. Now, however, with more qualified local people, such as Tiko, it looks closer to home, helping improve the long-term capacity for local employment.

Tiko has also introduced other fundamental changes at the Ministry, including implementing international workplace safety standards and improved environmental work practices, such as proper disposal of waste (oils, chemicals and general pollutants) and improved management of Fiji's fragile coral reefs.

Tiko also supervised the construction of two hospitals in Cuvu and Keyas, two government offices in Korolevu and Nayavy-i-Ra and the Vitogo Bridge in Lautoka. He also oversaw the highly complex construction of six new lighthouses between Momi Bay and Lautoka.

Tiko was responsible for managing the initial surveying, construction practices, specification and procurement, and the schedule for the lighthouses.

The Ministry, in partnership with the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji, constructed these lighthouses as part of Fiji's Aids to Navigation development program.

The new lighthouses assist seafarers to navigate local waters and prevent damage to Fiji's pristine marine environment. They also have the potential to attract more cruise ships and super yachts into local ports, which is an effective way to inject considerable tourism revenue into local businesses.

All this new construction follows the multimillion-dollar rehabilitation of schools and government buildings after the Cyclone Evan floods, with a particular focus on coordinating mechanical logistics support.

Labasa Tourism Association President, Paul Jaduram, believes that the lighthouses, along
with other government infrastructure works in Labasa, are important and will help grow the local tourism industry.

Tiko believes that it was the competency-based training at APTC - with the emphasis on experience and international standards - that made both he and the Ministry reconsider his career prospects.

Lighthouses along Fiji’s coastal line assist seafarers to navigate local waters and prevent damage to Fiji’s pristine marine environment.

BUILDING A NEW FUTURE

APTC assisted local communities to rebuild housing after the devastation caused by the 2010 tsunami and Cyclone Evan.

Cyclone Evan's heavy rain and winds of up to 270 kilometres per hour devastated parts of Samoa and Fiji in December 2012. This left more than 16,000 people displaced by the disaster. The cyclone damaged or destroyed thousands of homes and decimated crops and food supplies.

This cyclone struck only two years after the 2009 tsunami that killed almost 150 people in Samoa - a ravaging double-hit for the region.

APTC collaborated with Samoa Adventist Disaster Relief Agency and local communities in a reconstruction program that rebuilt 200 traditional fale homes for the most severely disadvantaged families.

To achieve this, in the year following the cyclone, APTC recruited 15 local people from the remote villages of Upolu Island to complete Certificate II in Construction and to assist in building these new homes.

Sajendra Bali (known as Bali), a carpentry trainer at the APTC campus in Fiji, lead the program.

"They had lost so much ... we were very happy to be contributing to the building process and to make a difference to the lives of these people through the program and the training of these students," Bali says.

Bali was one of the first Pacific Islander tutors to become a trainer at APTC.

It is a key priority for APTC to recruit more local people as tutors and to help them progress to Australian-standard trainers so they can be the future leaders of APTC in the Pacific. This also assists with ensuring the long-term sustainability of APTC.

Prior to the reconstruction program for victims of Cyclone Evan, Bali was involved in reconstruction after the 2010 tsunami hit Samoa. He was directly involved in building 80 fales with the assistance of APTC and other agencies. For the tsunami project he trained 14 students from coastal communities who had been affected by the tsunami.

The priority for APTC is to train students so that they are job-ready when they graduate. These reconstruction programs are an invaluable contribution to this commitment as they provide students with real, practical work experience, which assists them to get jobs in related industries.

For most of the students involved in these reconstruction programs, it was the first time that they had employment prospects. In fact, all the students were employed or became self-employed following the tsunami reconstruction project.

Many of these students are the sole breadwinner in their families, so earning money provides valuable food and education.

Taseni Faamalolaga, one of the recruits for the cyclone reconstruction, described the project as "a golden opportunity" for her and the people that it has helped.

"Not only do we have hope again for a good future, but so does the community," says Taseni. "We can see the smiles on their faces and we are so proud."

The opportunity for young people in Samoa to learn through APTC provides them with immense satisfaction to be able to contribute positively to their community. Bali describes one student waking at 4am to row his boat in the dark hours of the early morning, then catch a bus, and then do the same thing again every afternoon.

The Cyclone Evan reconstruction program also included two female students, challenging the common gender-based roles for tradespeople in Samoa.

For Bali, his hard work has rewarded him with not only job satisfaction and the employment of many local youths, but also with a promotion from tutor to trainer, something he is very proud of.
“I also want to see all the local and national tutors come to this level - we are from the Pacific and the program is delivered to the Pacific and in that context we have the advantage.”

Bali strongly believes that these reconstruction programs and APTC training were a “win-win situation” for everyone - for him, his students and the community - because they are about people working in their own villages with their own communities, improving everyone’s lives.
BUILDING CAPACITY ACROSS INDUSTRIES

APTC delivers training to increase the number of skilled workers in targeted industry sectors in the Pacific region. Developing the capability of people in this region is an effective way to build the capacity of local businesses to achieve success, both locally and internationally.

Increasing the number of skilled workers also contributes to the growth of local economies and provides opportunities for people to build livelihoods and increase incomes.

The quality-assured and internationally recognised TVET qualifications offered by APTC provide an opportunity for businesses to invest in their employees to develop their skills and enable them to perform at a higher level. This has direct financial benefits by increasing productivity, raising safety and quality standards, enabling knowledge transfer and promoting entrepreneurial and innovative activity.

More than 90 per cent of industry employers of APTC graduates have acknowledged the significant contribution these graduates have made to improved productivity in the workplace. 24

The Australian Government supports APTC as a way of building the capacity of the Pacific region to participate in the global trading system. This helps these countries make the most of their natural advantages, become more competitive and increase their export income, which in turn stimulates economic growth, creates jobs and lifts people out of poverty. 25

More locally-run businesses increase local employment opportunities, helping build local economies. More robust local businesses then have the opportunity to invest in the community by funding and establishing local services, such as schools and refuges. People can find long-term, productive and satisfying work close to their homes, encouraging them to connect with their community and culture and nurture a sense of civic pride.

With programs such as the recent AUD$20 million, eight-year economic infrastructure program for Samoa 26, the Australian Government aims to improve local infrastructure, drive economic growth and create jobs. An increased demand for skilled people who can work to international standards and expectations is a way for local businesses to become more globally competitive.

Developing relationships and partnerships with key industry bodies, such as the construction, tourism and fashion and textile industries, allows APTC to deliver flexible and contextualised training that directly addresses industry needs and develops highly specialised skills.

TOURISM STIMULATES THE PNG ECONOMY

An APTC graduate is working with the government to help PNG realise its potential as a tourist destination.

James Aruru Wakapu is determined to help the billion-dollar tourism industry in PNG reach its full potential and stimulate the economies of local communities.

James, who is from the remote village of Gia in PNG, worked at PNG’s leading inbound tourism company Trans Niugini Tours for 7 years. As part of his long-term plan to improve tourism in PNG, he attended APTC to gain the qualifications necessary to improve his opportunities to gain better work in the tourism industry.

Since completing Certificate III in Tourism at APTC in Samoa, James has progressed from working at a local tour company to now being Director of Tourism at PNG’s peak tourism body, the Office of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

James also has an Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management from Box Hill Institute in Australia, made possible as a result of his APTC studies and subsequent Australian Government scholarship. It was upon his return from Australia that he was appointed Director of Tourism.

The increase in tourists visiting PNG is growing every year – a pattern that James is hoping to continue to support in his new position with his newly acquired training.

James is also using his new skills and knowledge to drive a legislative review of the tourism industry in PNG and encourage improvements in areas such as customer service, management and accounting. It is hoped that the review will result in structural changes that will assist in the development of the tourism industry in PNG.

James believes in the potential for tourism to help sustain PNG’s economy if it is properly cultivated by all the relevant sectors. He is working to link tourism with other government sectors such as employment, transport, food, culture and arts, health, education and finance.

“Tourism is not a standalone industry, but a consideration across all government sectors so it has to link up with other national goals, and then the entire tourism industry can change and develop,” James says.

“My plan to develop tourism in PNG is to establish the foundation with capacity building nationwide,” explains James. “To carry out tourism educational awareness and advocacy starting in communities where the bulk of the population lives and a high number of attractions are available.”

It was through his own training and capacity building at APTC and Box Hill Institute that he too learned about the critical need for cross-sectoral and advocacy support for the tourism industry.

James believes capacity building should be an ongoing process that the government should continuously support to develop tourism. He also believes that residents have a responsibility to be tourism advocates, promoting PNG to tourists, business associates, family and friends.

To target communities, James is focusing on educational awareness activities at the grassroots level, such as at schools and churches, so “all levels of people can take ownership and responsibility” for local tourism.

For James, encouraging local people to promote PNG as a tourist destination is the first step to strengthening the growth of the sector to benefit both the local and national economy. According to James, the improved communication and better understanding of customer expectations that students learn at APTC are making a difference to the tourism industry in PNG.

James is committed to educating people about the potential of tourism in PNG to have a greater impact on the country, perhaps even more than the mining sector, upon which PNG’s economy is currently largely reliant.
PNG’s diverse cultural landscape provides a unique experience for tourists
BUILDING LOCAL CAPABILITY
AND CAPACITY

A family-owned and operated construction company in Tonga is now competing with international companies for large projects as a result of vocational training for its employees.

Construction is a key industry in Tonga, but with many local businesses unable to comply with international safety and quality standards, most of the major projects in the region are awarded to overseas companies.

However, this situation is set to change with three employees of Oregon Pacific International, a Tongan construction company, completing training at APTC.

Kapiolani Kaufusi, Taufa Kaufusi and Samiu Vaipulu - all from Tonga - graduated with Certificate III in Carpentry after studying at the APTC campus in Fiji.

Although the company has been operating in the local residential and commercial construction markets for over 25 years with clients that include the Tongan Government and other foreign aid-funded projects, it has had limited success with larger tenders, which are typically won by large international construction franchises and companies.

Now with the employees’ APTC qualifications, Oregon can comply with international standards of workplace safety and provide site supervision. This places the company in a more competitive position to tender for major local infrastructure projects.

Hehea Tukuafu, Managing Director of Oregon, is encouraging other employees to attend APTC training. Two more employees completed APTC courses recently and the company now plans to send two employees every year.

After Kapiolani, Taufa and Samiu graduated from APTC, Oregon secured its largest ever contract worth TOP$6.5 million (Tonga Pa’anga), which is TOP$2 million more than the company’s previous largest contract.

“These employees have been a great asset to our company,” says Hehea. “I believe clients are now more confident in our company ... and a major factor in this is the fact that these employees have upgraded their skills and knowledge at a recognised international school.”

It is also anticipated that there will be other tender opportunities with construction in Tonga growing an average 4 per cent per annum. This growth can be attributed to a number of projects, including the recently completed Vuna Wharf and the final stages of the business district reconstruction in Tonga’s capital Nuku’alofa.

Oregon began in 1988 with fewer than 10 employees and now has more than 100. Hehea, Managing Director, developed and implemented the company’s vision, objectives and marketing strategy, which lead to the completion of four successful projects valued at TOP$5 million. Now with more qualified employees it is hoped that this expansion will continue.

Hehea believes that APTC training has taken the company to a higher level by building “enthusiasm, confidence, leadership, skills and knowledge, and most importantly, has empowered our business by adding value to our tenders”. With this increased capacity, Hehea also hopes that Oregon can expand and bid for projects beyond Tonga.

Upon completion of their studies at APTC, all three graduates moved into approved site supervisor roles, with one of the graduates, Kapiolani Kaufusi (known as Lani), overseeing larger projects. They also mentor and train other employees to implement international standards of safety and quality on worksites. This benefits both the company and Tonga’s future workforce.
Lani believes that APTC training is a great way to improve job skills, compliance with international standards of occupational health and safety, and on-time delivery of quality construction projects.

It is also expected that extending the knowledge and skills of the Tongan people will improve their employment prospects. This is critical in a country that is largely dependent on funds from overseas sources and where unemployment is at 13 per cent and a quarter of the population live below the poverty line\textsuperscript{22}.

Hehea is committed to upgrading the knowledge and skills of the company’s employees to be more competitive in the growing construction industry in Tonga and pave the way for expansion. The company is also using this improved expertise to help other Tongan businesses.

\textbf{Kapiolani has now become a supervisor for Oregon Pacific’s major projects}

\textsuperscript{21} Tonga’s economic growth is expected to improve, recording real growth above 2 per cent in the 2014 financial year. The expected improvement is driven by an anticipated turnaround in the construction and finance industries, and ongoing growth in the agriculture and distribution industries. National Reserve Bank of Tonga (NRBT) Monetary Policy Statement, September 2013

\textsuperscript{22} Approximately AUD$3.8 million

\textsuperscript{23} National Reserve Bank of Tonga (NRBT) Monetary Policy Statement, September 2013

\textsuperscript{24} HM King Tupou VI opened the new Vuna Wharf, reconstructed with a TOP$32 million loan from China, in time to welcome its first cruise ship, the Ocean Princess on 11 December 2012.

\textsuperscript{25} Approximately AUD$2.8 million

\textsuperscript{26} Tonga Economy Profile 2013, CIA ‘World Factbook’, www.indexmundi.com/tonga/economy_profile.html
PLUMBER LEADS NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE IN VANUATU

An APTC graduate has successfully helped to raise workplace safety standards to an international level in his home country of Vanuatu.

You rarely see the words plumber and politician together in the same sentence, but James Matariki has used his skill as both to drive legislative change for improving building standards in Vanuatu.

As the owner of a plumbing business in Vanuatu, James enrolled in Certificate III in Plumbing at APTC in Samoa to improve his professional skills and to assist him with training his apprentices.

However, these goals changed midway through his studies when he learned more about international building standards. As well as implementing these standards in his own business, James saw an opportunity to improve building quality and occupational health and safety standards for the entire industry.

In a campaign led by James, the Vanuatu Building Act and Code of Practice (referred to as the Building Act or the Building Code) was passed by Parliament in 2013, exactly 30 years after it was first drafted.

“If we want the industry to grow and follow the standards I learned at APTC, then legislation needs to be put in place to enforce the standards,” James says. “What is the point of using the Australian-standard training when there is no law in place to safeguard me or my customers?”

James believes a national building code with international standards will increase developers’ trust in Ni-Vanuatu tradespeople and bolster the ability of local companies to compete for international tenders, especially for larger contracts.

Construction is a major driver of Vanuatu’s gross domestic product earnings, so if local Vanuatu companies can be more competitive then they have the chance to make significant financial gains.

In terms of competing for international tenders, James is leading by example and winning tenders that previously may have been awarded to larger, locally based contracting firms or international contractors.

James is also a council member of the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He represented the Chamber on the National Training Council’s new Advisory Board in February 2014 and is a member of the Curriculum Advisory Committee for the TVET Program.

According to his APTC teacher, Bruce Weatherill, James was a high-achieving student and someone who was always looking for new challenges.

“I’m not sure if it is his gentle nature, his integrity, his commitment to his studies or if it is simply that he is a great person to be around. Whatever it is, he deserves all the accolades,” says Bruce.

In his role as Chair of the Port Vila Vanuatu Alumni Chapter, James was the driving force behind an initiative that encouraged the members to take advantage of and promote the network of the highly skilled APTC graduates to generate more local business.

James also hopes to see more APTC graduates establishing their own businesses and will continue to encourage them to do this.

“Being confident to run your own business is a big thing,” explains James. “And often in the Pacific we feel reluctant to take on that responsibility when we actually have the skills.”

He says APTC can play a further role in assisting its graduates, especially those keen to open their own business, to develop their management skills.

“If we can help them to manage their own business in the future then that is what I see as being the real long-term benefit, beyond
having trade skills and moving toward more local employment and locally run companies,” says James.

James believes that this is all possible as the network already exists.

“We just need to make sure the network is functioning and people start to benefit financially by using each other’s work skills.”
TRAINING FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS

Investment in employee training and development is paying off for Samoa's Electricity Power Corporation.

Established in 1972 as a corporation, Samoa’s Electricity Power Corporation (EPC) supplies electricity to over 96 per cent of the country’s population.

EPC employs over 450 people and the management are well aware that in order to achieve business success and preserve specialised skills and knowledge sets, the company must invest in developing the capability of its employees and have a succession planning strategy.

For this reason, EPC is investing in training and development as a key part of its business strategy to enable its employees to gain international standard qualifications and increase their skills.

To make this possible, EPC has supported its employees to participate in training at APTC, and has continued to recruit APTC graduates.

Douglas Tomane, EPC Training and Development Officer, says it is a business priority for the company to invest in consistent, high level and continual training of employees, primarily so they have the skills and capability to operate and maintain the equipment.

“Our new generation plant has up-to-date technology and we want our staff to be at that level,” says Douglas. “If we want to improve our service, we have to start adapting to new technologies and for that we need to comply with international standards.”

Investing in employees’ training has direct financial benefits for EPC by enabling local employees to perform at a higher level and reducing the reliance on overseas consultants for regular maintenance activity.

The employees themselves also see the value in improving their skills and career potential, and are keen to take advantage of the opportunity to train with APTC.

APTC provides training for EPC employees across a range of relevant industry sectors, including automotive, electrical, electronics, fitting and turning, metal fabrication and diesel engineering.

Some EPC employees have received APTC scholarships, while the company pays individual tuition fees for others. It also makes a significant investment to enable the training by resourcing staff absences from work while employees attend training.

Douglas believes that training improves the quality and performance of individuals and the company. Trained EPC employees also ensure ongoing, on-the-job training of their co-workers.

These improvements, coupled with long-term cost savings, are justification to continue investing in training as a business priority.

EPC also encourages its APTC-certified employees to seek further education and work overseas. Five APTC graduates have progressed to degree-level studies overseas via the New Zealand Aid Programme.

“These graduates are moving forward to a level where they can come back and work at EPC at a very high standard,” says Douglas.

Douglas has also noticed that employees who attend APTC improve their level of performance, responsibility and confidence at work. He also regularly receives feedback from workplace supervisors that this improved behaviour is being replicated at home.

Douglas is keen to ensure that the company continues its long-term investment in employee development.

EPC employees who lack the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills required to do further study have also been able to benefit from APTC.
To support these students, APTC has appointed a Learning Support Facilitator at each campus. These facilitators work with trainers to develop the LLN skills of students to ensure that they are supported during their studies and develop the skills required in the workplace.

Douglas not only encourages other people to train at APTC, but he also went back to the classroom himself, enrolling in Certificate IV in TAE at the APTC Centre for Professional Development.

“The training at APTC opened my eyes,” he says. “It changed my way of thinking; I learned there is no end to our learning.”
TRAINING FOR OLYMPIC SUCCESS

APTC is providing valuable assistance to sports coaches and administrators to prepare athletes for the 2016 Olympic Games.

Sporting teams in the Pacific are determined to win medals at future Olympic Games. Central to achieving this goal is ensuring that professional standards of coaching, sports management and administration are in place to support athletes competing at the highest international levels.

APTC is playing a key role in achieving this goal with a tailored course for coaches and sports administrators delivered in partnership with Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC).

The ONOC Community Educator course is delivered in Fiji and Samoa, with assessments conducted in nine other Pacific countries.

"With this training we aim to have better-managed National Olympic Committees (NOCs) who can deliver on their objectives with better-managed teams, better-run events and hopefully get better results in the long run at the highest level," says Dennis Miller, ONOC Executive Director.

"If you look at the statistics for the last four Olympics the majority of our results are in the lowest percentile and the reasons for this are poor sports management, training and structures, despite the efforts of keen volunteers."

A significant aspect of the delivery of the APTC-ONOC Community Educator course is the on-site assessment of students' training delivery. While the training program is delivered in Fiji and Samoa, the workplace assessments are carried out in the students' home countries. This has meant that APTC staff, including assessors from Australia, travel to nine different countries across the Pacific, including Kiribati, Palau and Tuvalu, to assess more students.

There are high hopes for the future success of Pacific Island athletes. PNG is currently developing champion swimmers; Samoa and Tonga are training some strong throwers; Nauru has a Commonwealth Games medallist for weightlifting; and Vanuatu is ranked in the world's top 10 for its women's beach volleyball team, as well as having unprecedented success in table tennis.

Sainimili Talatoka, who coordinates the Oceania Sport Education Program (OSEP) at ONOC, worked with APTC to develop the new course in the 15 ONOC member countries.

"In the past we relied on people external to the country, but this program is building the capacity in-country, and not just coaches, but also administrators and athletes, so there is a balance."

The course teaches important skills, including how to establish a sporting club, organise elections, chair meetings, keep records, organise competitions, seek funding, plan and review training sessions, fitness, safety, nutrition and managing athletes' injuries and wellbeing.

Bridget Gray, the Coordinator of the APTC Centre for Professional Development in Fiji, sees the course as not only a productive partnership between APTC and ONOC, but also a genuine Pacific-wide collaboration.

"Part of the reason APTC has connected well with ONOC is that the goals of both organisations are similar; both organisations seek to develop the potential of Pacific Islanders and improve workforce opportunities," says Bridget.

Sainimili hopes the new APTC-ONOC Community Educator course will help with professional development of community volunteers and sports professionals, local sports administrators and coaches, while also raising awareness of the importance of structure and management in sport to government and officials.

"Through this training we want to demonstrate to the people with the resources that there is a need to be more strategic if we want success in sport," Sainimili says.

"We need to better coordinate our national activities with in-country partners through strategic planning, investment in quality control..."
of our sport training and development initiatives, and consider employing competent people to deliver professional [sports] programs.”

In line with the work carried out by the ONOC Community Educator course, a new ONOC Master Trainer course has been introduced to ensure selected ONOC and other trainers can deliver quality training to local coaches and sports administrators across the member countries. With this capacity to “train the trainers”, ONOC will also be able to continue the program independently in the future.

OSEP is a partnership between the Australian Sport Commission (ASC), Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC) and the Organisations of Sport Federations in Oceania (OSFO). It offers sport administration and generic coaching training materials and is expected to expand to other sport education areas like sport science and medicine, community social sport coaching, team manager and sport management and governance.
DEVELOPING LOCAL INDUSTRY THROUGH WORKPLACE TRAINING

An industry-based training partnership between APTC and the local fashion industry in Fiji is developing the skills and talents of employees and helping to build a stronger and more vibrant sector both locally and internationally.

APTC established a significant relationship with the Textile Clothing and Footwear Council of Fiji (TCFC) - Fiji's key stakeholders in the local fashion and garment industries - to introduce Certificate III in Applied Fashion Design and Technology.

This certificate involves skills assessment in the workplace and aims to improve proficiency and workplace safety standards. Offering people internationally accredited training provides strong benefits to the local fashion and manufacturing industries.

APTC Trainer, Jodie Araya, says that the advantage of Certificate III in Applied Fashion Design and Technology is the inclusion of workplace-based training, providing more scope for skills development and education for students.

This training is aimed at improving and developing the skills of people working in garment manufacturing so they can increase their contribution to the growing local fashion industry in Fiji.

The first participants in the training were 25 employees from eight local garment manufacturing companies, including Mark One Apparel, United Apparel, Classic Apparel, Lyndhurst Limited, PFD Fiji Limited, Ranjit Garments, Intimate Apparel and Outfitters. These companies offered a high level of support, engagement and commitment to the program.

The training focuses on design, pattern-making, sewing and quality assessment. Concentrating on these aspects aims to help the participants to understand and familiarise themselves with the processes involved in designing and manufacturing a garment - from initial design to final product.

Mark Hallaby, Managing Director of Mark One Apparel, believes that this training is a wonderful opportunity for fashion manufacturers.

"This is the first time an internationally accredited certificate course in fashion has been offered in Fiji," says Mark. "Even though the industry has been here, it has never truly focused on fashion. The establishment of a proper fashion program is the opportunity to work towards structuring feasible fashion courses."

The fashion industry in Fiji is growing rapidly with events such as Fiji Fashion Week and increased funding from the Fijian Government. This backing, together with the support by the Australian Government for this APTC industry training, is a welcome boost for the industry.

Fiji Fashion Week is an annual fashion event that is supported by the Fiji Fashion Council, which Mark Hallaby also helped to set up.

Each year Fashion Week showcases an increasing number of regional and international designers, with local designers becoming more involved. This new APTC program has the potential to increase local and regional participation, benefitting the industry as a whole.

Mark believes that Fiji has the talent, but it is only through education that this talent can be encouraged and developed. He also believes the new fashion program at APTC provides an opportunity to broaden technical knowledge and advance fashion locally as well as internationally.

Sashi Vimlesh Singh from Mark One Apparel, who completed the APTC Certificate III, says
that the program has not only offered him and his fellow students the chance to upgrade their skills and learn new techniques, but it has also allowed for greater involvement in the fashion industry.

Mark One Apparel Fashion Production Manager, Prakash Kaur, says the program helped both her professional and personal development.

"Because I usually work more with production management, the program has allowed me to learn techniques like pattern-making, which has helped me truly understand the basics of creating a garment," says Prakash.

Prakash also benefitted from being able to share information about what she was learning with the line managers and supervisors at her work, as well as through regular contact with other colleagues who participated in the training.

"My colleagues and I have developed personally too. It has boosted our confidence levels, and we have even learnt how to make our own garments.”

This investment in education offers the potential for Fiji to achieve higher standards in fashion and presents opportunities for local designers to showcase their talents. This will allow Fiji’s garment industry to become more competitive globally.
GUIDING THE WAY TO A BETTER FUTURE

Two APTC graduates have established a tourism business that has transformed a small village in Vanuatu.

The remote Funaspef Village on Vanuatu's Espiritu Santo Island is home to 150 people as well as the magnificent Millennium Caves. Hidden in a tropical rainforest, these 4 kilometre-long caves boast 50-metre-high ceilings and are full of bats and swallows.

Although the caves have been known to locals for many years, it wasn't until a German television crew broadcast footage of the caves in 1998 that they gained global attention.

Today, tourism operators take groups to visit the caves on a daily basis. To assist these larger operators, two brothers from the Funaspef Village - Michel and Sam Andikar - established Millennium Cave Tours (MCT) in 2000.

To improve their business skills and develop a way for the village to benefit financially from the popularity of the caves, the Andikar brothers enrolled in Certificate III in Tourism at APTC.

MCT is now a successful company that employs more than 30 local people. The company has its own office, a professional website, and takes direct bookings via phone and email. The global travel website TripAdvisor lists the Millennium Caves as one of the top attractions in Vanuatu.

The brothers also received support for tour guiding, first aid and occupational safety through the Australian Government-funded TVETSSP in Vanuatu.

"After the APTC training, and with the help of TVETSSP, we were able to tighten the tour program and turn it into a real business," Michel says.

As part of the training, the pair also had the opportunity to improve their accounting skills and this has been integral to their success.

The achievements of the business have not only benefited Michel and Sam, but also the village and its people, especially through employment.

"The people, before when they do the gardening it is hard work and long hours, and sometimes they haven't got money for soap, or school fees or if the kids are sick and need to go to the hospital. But now they have money and that is a big change," says Sam.

This new work has been life changing for many of the MCT employees and has also had a flow-on effect for the children in the village, providing money to families to pay for their children's education.

"My dad carries bags for the tourists," says Bamaby, a local boy. "He now pays our school fees and buys food; we get books and clothes and a pen. I feel happy."

As well as tour guides, many women in the village are employed to serve refreshments for tour guests and to assist with the homestay dinners and cleaning.

"During the past I had no work, but when the tours began it helped," says Estella, one of the village women working with MCT. "Now the tour employs most of us here in the community and it generates income inside the community."

In addition to providing employment for local villagers, the company is now investing some of its profits to the community to build a school and kindergartens.

The Millennium Cave School Project has funded the building of three local kindergartens, the most recent being Saint Joseph Kindergarten School at Nambele Village. The School Project also helped to fund the construction of a classroom at the new Fanafo Primary School.

These new kindergartens will also feed into the newly opened local Lackruja Primary School. This school is an example of a successful local partnership between the Millennium Cave School Project and eight village chiefs.
“I am so proud just because of the school,” says Moltures Victor, Chief of Tambotal Village. “Before with the education [the children] move around and soon they can come home and join the village again. It is very good, I feel overjoyed.”

The opportunity for children to be educated in their own towns provides the chance for them to connect with their local community and culture.

The partnership between MCT and local communities to build a school and kindergartens was made possible by the strategic partnership between Australian Government-funded projects APTC and TVETSSP.

“This program is so amazing ... you can think you are doing something small, but the impact is enormous,” says Anna Gilbert, Team Leader for the TVETSSP. “Lives that are changed by relatively small inputs, but when these inputs are targeted, coordinated and strategic, the impact is significant.”

In addition to Certificate III, Sam also completed an APTC Diploma in Management. This added qualification has allowed Sam to shift his company from an informal operation to a recognised leading tour operator, a milestone for the Andikar family and the Funaspef community as a whole. The company has grown to not only offer tour guiding services, but also sells local handicrafts and has established the new Millennium Caves primary school for children from the community.
ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT AND KEY SKILLS HELP A SMALL BUSINESS EXPAND

Brothers Abhinesh and Ravinesh Kumar have successfully used the skills they learned at APTC to run a thriving tiling company that is recognised across Fiji for its high standards and quality of work.

Fiji’s consistent economic growth can be attributed to tourism - Fiji’s highest income-generating sector. With the steady increase in the number of tourists visiting Fiji, the construction industry has also expanded. The projected value of construction activities in Fiji for 2015 is FJD$140.1 million.¹⁴

This growth has led to an increased demand for construction services from both local and multinational corporations, including large global hotel chains. More construction also requires more construction workers who are able to meet the industry standards that these companies expect.

To help fill this gap for more skilled workers, Abhinesh Kumar and his brother Ravinesh Kumar, who both graduated from APTC with Certificate III in Wall and Floor Tiling, combined their skills and knowledge to expand their small tiling business into a thriving company.

Abhinesh was first to recognise that a growing construction industry would need qualified tilers. He was aware that the tilers who were working in the industry were often unskilled and unfamiliar with working to international industry standards. Abhinesh saw that there was a lot to be gained by studying at APTC and gaining a qualification.

While they were still students at APTC, Abhinesh and Ravinesh registered their tiling business, Quality Tile Setters. With the money from their first contract and their savings, they were able to buy more tools.

According to Neill Atkinson, APTC trainer in wall and floor tiling, Ravinesh excelled in the practical side of the course, while Abhinesh was the entrepreneurial one who combined practical skills with business flair.

According to Abhinesh, in addition to the technical skills he learnt at APTC, he also gained valuable time management skills and learned how to use the latest tools of his trade.

The APTC Certificate III in Wall and Floor Tiling is an Australian-accredited qualification. This is an advantage in Fiji as there is no industry body that oversees the standard of tiling services provided by individual contractors. Increased regulation and more highly skilled workers improve the safety standards, timeliness and quality of construction work.

“Employers approach us to hire our graduates or students for their jobs because they recognise the quality of training provided by APTC,” says Neill. “One of the most significant aspects of the training program that appeals to employers is the focus we have on occupational health and safety, which is now a growing area of concern in aligning local tiling standards with global standards.”

Quality Tile Setters has grown from three business partners, who also carried out all the work, to more than 20 staff, all of whom are APTC graduates.

“One of our first major projects was the Westin refurbishment,” says Abhinesh. “We finished 173 rooms on time and exceeded the expectations of the client. This led to the Starwood Hotels’ management providing us with more tiling and waterproofing contracts at both the Westin and its other resorts such as the Sheraton Fiji Resort.”

Abhinesh understands that maintaining consistency in service quality ensures that clients continue to provide his business with opportunities for larger projects.
He has confidence in his employees' ability to maintain the standard and quality of work that are significant to these large clients. He is also aware that having adequately trained workers ensures that equipment is used effectively and correctly and that safety standards are not compromised.

As well as Certificate III, Abhinesh is also a graduate of the APTC Certificate IV in TAE. Abhinesh uses these skills to mentor and teach his employees, including encouraging his casual employees to consider choosing tiling as a career and training at APTC.

Abhinesh is a strong believer in the flow-on impact that APTC can have at the community level. This belief has encouraged him to actively give back to his local community through his business. Quality Tile Setters contributes 2 per cent of its profits to community-based projects and regularly does small tiling jobs for community churches and schools free of charge.

APTC tutor, Raj Kapoor displays an example of learning outcomes of the Wall and Floor Tiling program

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14 Approximately AUD$81.8 million
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<td>DFAT</td>
<td>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</td>
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<td>EPC</td>
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