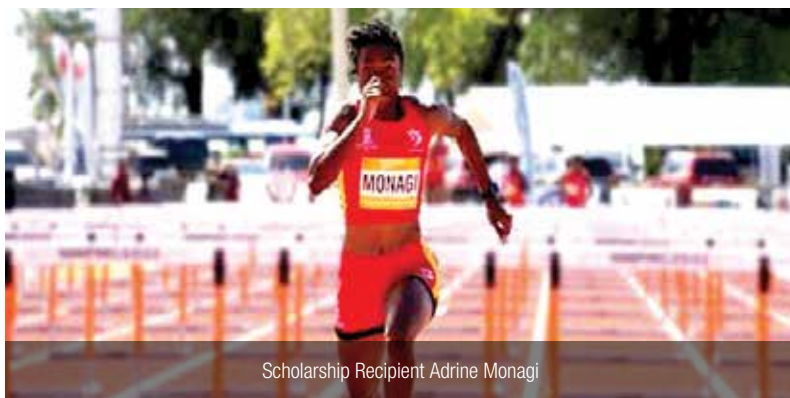




Oceania Australia Foundation (OAF)



2023 was another big year for the Foundation. New athletes commenced their scholarships, existing recipients excelled in their studies and sporting endeavours, and we continued to see the long-lasting positive outcomes of the program through the ongoing successes of our Alumni. It is once again our pleasure to share with you our annual report for the Oceania Australia Foundation.

The US Scholarship program saw five athletes graduate in May this year:

Abraham Mallam (Fiji) graduated from Neosho College and has moved from Kansas to California where he has family and is planning to study nursing.

Troy Maivusaroko (Fiji) graduated from Iowa Lakes and transferred to Ave Maria College in Florida, where Giordan Harris (2013 Alumnus) is now Head Coach, to complete his next two years of study and gain a degree.

After returning home to Fiji in January this year, Rhys Cheer was able to complete his subjects online and graduate. He is studying at Western Sydney University in Australia and competed in the Triathlon at the Pacific Games in Honiara.

Moana Wind returned to Fiji with some classes to complete. She intends to do further study at a university in the US, but has deferred this plan for now.

Philip Kinono (Marshall Islands) was planning to undertake further study, but we have not received any updates from him on his current position.

Our 2023 US Scholarships were awarded to Waisele Inoke and Vilorina Tuilawaki – both from Fiji. Kaiava Francis, our 2022 recipient who had to defer due to delays with the issuing of his study visa also commenced his studies this year. The three of them have begun their first year at Neosho College in Kansas joining Joana Vakasoboduru who returned for her second year.

All four are doing well on campus and the Coach advises that their athletic skills are also improving. Of note, Vilorina was a member of the cross-country team that made it to the top 25 at the end of the last season and competed at the National Championships in Alabama. Joana achieved a personal best in Pentathlon at a recent meet and will hopefully compete at the National Championships in Florida in early March.

Both Kaiava and Waisele have had some minor injuries but both are now recovered and training hard to qualify for Nationals competition. Coach Giordan Harris moved to a new position this year at Ave Maria University, a four-year college in Florida. As a new Coach was not appointed in sufficient time to allow for issuance of study visas and enrolment requirements, we did not award swimming scholarships at Iowa Lakes this year. The university is keen to continue the program and discussions are in progress with the new Coach and campus officials, so we hope to continue working with them in 2024.

As advised in our report last year, expressions of interest were circulated for the Athletics / Business scholarship at Griffith University and twelve applications were received. Of those three were interviewed, with Adrine Monagi from Papua New Guinea selected as the successful candidate. Adrine was thrilled to accept this offer and commence studying a Business Degree majoring in Government and International Relations. Shortly after commencing her scholarship Adrine was invited to address the OSFO AGM as part of the ONOC AGA in Brisbane where she spoke about her journey so far and her ambition to ensure athletes receive appropriate support to enable them to have long careers in their sport. Despite many setbacks along the way she believes receiving this scholarship will enable her to achieve her goals and with her determination and achievements both on the track and on campus this year, there is no doubt she will succeed.

Adrine competed at the Oceania Athletics Cup in Melanesia in June, winning gold in the 100m hurdles and at the Pacific Games in Honiara won three medals – silver in the 100m hurdles and gold in the 4 x 100m and 4 x 400m. She has also been selected to represent PNG at the World Indoor Championships in Glasgow in March and is delighted to be representing her country at another international event. She has completed her first year of scholarship with excellent academic results and continues to make the most of the opportunities that this scholarship provides.

The Foundation is continuing to investigate possible opportunities for a swimming scholarship in Australia, similar to the athletic scholarship offered at Griffith, and you will be kept informed on this.

We have noted that most of the scholarship applicants in recent years have been from Fiji or Papua New Guinea so we are currently



OAF Scholarship Athletes at Neosho College: Waisele, Vilorina, Joana, Kaiava.

working with ONOC to strengthen the application / selection process in order to achieve a wider reach in the region.

The Foundation once again provided financial support to Deaf Sports Australia to enable deaf athletes from Oceania to attend the bi-annual Deaf Games in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie in January 2024. Athletes from Fiji and Solomon Islands are anticipated to participate and a representative from Kiribati, Samoa and PNG have been invited to attend the event to encourage their attendance at the 2026 edition of these Games.

In line with our commitment to provide more opportunities for our athletes in the lead up to the Brisbane 2032 Games, the Board received a presentation from Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise (TSBE) on a potential targeted talent identification program across the Oceania region with an initial focus on individual sports – athletics, swimming and gymnastics. This proposal also included inviting accompanying family members to provide a much-needed work force in this region. Whilst local schools, businesses and sporting groups were supportive of this initiative, an ongoing funding stream was still to be identified and sponsorship from corporates and governments was hoped for. After careful consideration the Board agreed that although there was no doubt this initiative would serve the community of Toowoomba, it was not a good fit for the Foundation because it involved a considerable budget yet to be put in place, focussed on secondary school student



Abraham Mallam during his Graduation Ceremony.

athletes and had the added complication due to the accompaniment of family who would require not only accommodation but work placement and other support networks. Additionally, the level and regularity of competition alongside the proposed academic studies was still to be put in place.

It is a proud moment to look back on the achievements of our participants this year, and the opportunities that these athletes have been given through the scholarship program. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this, including ONOC President Dr Robin Mitchell and Secretary General Rick Blas. We also wish to acknowledge the ongoing support

we receive from ONOC staff in Suva and Guam, we couldn't do this without them.

We look forward to continuing to support our participants in the new year, and welcome new athletes into the program. We will continue to build upon the positive outcomes of this year to promote the Foundation and hope to be reporting on further successes at the end of 2024.

R Kevan Gosper AO OLY
Honorary Chairman

Helen McMurray
Executive Director