

## INTEREST IN NATIONAL ALUMNI NETWORK OF AWARD RECIPIENTS

**The VTAS PEN asked the past recipients of AAUTY if there was interest in connecting and sharing with other national award recipients across Australia. The responses were as follows:**

### INTEREST IN BEING LINKED TO AN ON-GOING NETWORK OF AWARD RECIPIENTS

YES	17/22	77%
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Provided there is a clear focus and time to engage.

### INTEREST IN SHARING EXPERTISE

YES	16/22	72%
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Interest in sharing expertise, provided network is easy to access.

### INTEREST IN SHARING EXAMPLES/RESOURCES

YES	15/22	68%
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Interested and willing to share examples/resources on a website for the benefit of others.

Overall, the majority of award winning teachers were in favour of being linked to a network if there is a clear focus and if time permitted. Those not interested in being involved in a national network expressed the view that that this was due to either being retired or having a different career focus. One retired member, however, expressed a desire to provide mentoring and advice to new members. The majority were prepared to share research papers, lead an advocacy group, run forums to communicate pressing issues or that promote and support further development of higher education teaching and learning policy and practice.

## IDENTIFIED BENEFITS OF A NETWORK FROM AUTY AWARD RECIPIENTS

### Identified benefits for the individual:

#### CAREER DEVELOPMENT

At the time of the Award, new awardees, particularly early career academics, need advice on how to manage their career and be strategic. To know where to direct their energies, as one recipient said; "...to network and think about what next – valuable within 6 months of winning the award". The elevated status the Award provided within the first six months can be daunting for some. Many felt that having access to a network of colleagues who had previously won this award would have been helpful for them to discuss how to best navigate the new challenges and opportunities, particularly within their own institution. As one recipient put it, they need to have a "place for seeking advice to maximize the benefits of the Awards in terms of what to avoid, how to survive, and how to avoid being pigeonholed". They had a new legitimacy and a "voice" at the highest level within their institution but at the same time, advice from other award recipients on how to maximize the benefits of their new status was lacking. After the initial period of attention, many felt an ongoing supportive network would have been beneficial to assist them to navigate the next steps. Award winners need "encouragement and support for putting in for a promotion at time of the award". Nevertheless, at least seven of the award recipients moved into senior and more strategic positions.

#### WELL BEING

Many felt that having access to a mentor at the time of the Award, would have been helpful for them to better navigate the challenges and opportunities, particularly within their own institution. For some, having advice on how to make the most of their status would have been very welcome. The benefits of having a community of people with a similar experience was a welcome idea. Many awardees would have liked such a national network at the time, to share personal experiences, to connect with colleagues in a similar situation, gain encouragement and confidential support. Many felt they needed advice on how to be more strategic for maximum impact.

## Identified benefits of a network for the institutions:

### **BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY**

AAUTY recipients expressed a desire to enhance their capacity to direct their own activities as suggested by the comment that it was “important to know how to use the status the Award has within the organization.” This implies that the network might offer possibilities for individuals to connect with mentors as ‘critical friends’ in order to develop their strategic leadership capabilities “particularly helpful for emerging academics”. Developing leadership capacity through a network provides members with models of ways of introducing and sustaining systemic institutional change.

### **SHARING RESOURCES AND PRACTICES**

Learning and teaching is a challenge and teachers need to keep pace as the teaching context evolves. As one participant remarked: “there are complex issues in the wider world – technology etc. and we need a way to liaise with other leaders – for the benefit of all”. Participants agreed that a network would allow its members to share resources, provide inspiration and an opportunity to continue the conversation beyond the hype and celebration of the award night. The benefits of a national network would be to bring together national leaders to liaise, collaborate, and share good practice, test ideas and innovations that would benefit the higher education sector, institutions and individuals. As one recipient put it, “Tertiary educators need to see specific applications of best practice teaching in their discipline, with a contact person as a role model. Sharing experiences over a network provides real examples and real faces.”

### **FOSTERING CROSS-FACULTY / INSTITUTIONAL SCHOLARLY COLLABORATIONS**

There was strong support to bring together a geographically diverse group of learning and teaching leaders from a range of disciplines. One recipient suggested that a “network is likely to create increased awareness...facilitate sharing of good practice...open up new opportunities (e.g. collaborations) and may lead to new initiatives for the benefit of individual academics as well as HE sector in general.” This recipient even suggested that a community of practice could “act as a think tank for contemporary learning and teaching issues and contribute to discussions on national HE issues.” There was a desire by many recipients to have “opportunities and exposure to new ideas and collaboration.”

## IDENTIFIED BENEFITS OF A NETWORK FROM AUTY AWARD RECIPIENTS

### Identified benefits at the national level:

#### CREATION OF A COLLECTIVE VOICE

This Award is about championing learning and teaching and it is “more than just a shiny thing” – according to Mark Israel (in conversation). For some recipients, there is an opportunity for a collective group of national award recipients to provide advice at the national level. As one recipient put it, the “Government might be interested in such a network – to provide high level advice on policies and strategies at a national level.” However, as another recipient suggested, it would “probably not be a body to develop policy as there would be too many different perspectives”. It was suggested that “such a group might need to link in with Universities Australia – as there are a number of interest groups represented by them, and Award Winners might be a group within the organization. Universities Australia might have more clout with the Government, whereas a small lobby group may not have much of a voice”. A credible expert group of higher educators has much to contribute to learning and teaching at the national level.

#### FACILITATE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LINKS

Another identified benefit of such a network by award recipients is the opportunity to create stronger links across the country and internationally. It was felt that such a national network might provide a “ way to bring awardees together ...collection of ideas, make stronger links, bring them in earlier prior to award ceremony to engage, workshop etc. to get more benefit than just a ceremony”. At the international level, there would be benefits to “link to multi-national awardees and fellows” around common themes, for example student engagement or internationalization. One award recipient suggested, “Science education has changed (changed vocations) and there was a need for greater networking to share problems, find solutions, general problem solving”. Award recipients were interested in a network that might provide them with national and international scholarly collaborative opportunities, and innovative ideas and trends.