



Australia Awards



Scholar reflections: Hawwa Yumna at the inaugural Australia Awards Scholars Forum for South and West Asia

Australia Awards scholar Hawwa Yumna from the Maldives reflects on the inaugural Australia Awards Scholars Forum for South and West Asia.

Selected Australia Awards scholars from South and West Asia came together recently in Canberra for a two-day Scholars Forum to support institutional and people-to-people links between Australia and the region – a first for Australia Awards. **The inaugural Australia Awards Scholars Forum for South and West Asia attracted over 100 participants** including 58 Australia Awards scholars from South and West Asia, alumni, senior diplomats from the region, representatives from Australia’s education institutions, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The theme for the Forum was LEARN | LINK | LEAD to reflect on the Australia Awards experience.

Among scholars from South and West Asia at the Scholars Forum was Hawwa Yumna from the Maldives. These are some of her reflections of the Scholars Forum and little about her Australia Awards experience to date.



Above: Hawwa Yumna, speaking about her Australia Awards experience at the Scholars Forum.

Yumna’s reflections of the Scholars Forum

‘The Scholars Forum created opportunities for me to network with fellow scholars, diplomats and industry leaders. I must also highlight that H.E. Somasundaram Skandakumar, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, stated in his speech that *‘every life born has so much potential, but it is the opportunities that we are given that differentiates us’*. This comment touched me because I believe that I have been very blessed with the opportunities I have received. I want to make the most of the opportunities I receive here in Australia and use what I learn and discover here to improve the lives of others. I want to be a leader who creates opportunities for others, and helps others see their potential.’

Making connections

‘I made a presentation at the Scholar’s Forum covering how I have made links in Australia through engaging in class, participating in the conversations happening, joining clubs, programs and events as well as travelling as much as possible. Those links have helped me connect with lecturers who are conducting research that is applicable to the Maldives, and I wish to explore means to make the Maldives a focus of such research in the future. Additionally, through my toddler, I discovered the library programs and educational television content that could be recreated back home. I want to find and create further links here that would support it. I concluded with urging fellow scholars to do the same: to seek, and make links wherever possible.’

'I will continue to use the linkages I make in Australia to discover progressive development opportunities in the Maldives.'

– Hawwa Yumna



Picture top right: Yumna, (left), with a fellow scholar from the Maldives, Usha Moosa, at the Scholar's Forum.

Above: Yumna experiencing a quiet moment at the Scholars Forum.

The Australia Awards experience

'As I come to the end of my first year in Australia, I want to highlight just how amazing it has been. It has exceeded all my expectations. The people are kind and friendly, the places to see and visit are endless and breathtaking, the education system and style are exceptional, and I am fortunate to experience all of it thanks to Australia Awards.'

About Yumna

Australia Awards Scholar Hawwa Yumna is undertaking a Masters in Tourism, Hotel and Event Management at the University of Queensland. Before commencing studies in Australia, she was a Marketing and Events Manager in the Maldives. When she returns home, she aims to promote tourism with a special focus on the development of events identifying the Maldives as a destination beyond the 'Sun, Sea, and Sand' concept. She believes that the linkages she is establishing through Australia Awards will help enable her to conduct future studies based in the Maldives and discover progressive developmental opportunities. She considers the Scholars Forum to be a platform for further networking, for the exchange of ideas, and for the building of links.

Australia Awards are prestigious international Scholarships, Fellowships and Short Courses funded by the Australian Government. Australia Awards Scholarships aim to contribute to the long-term development needs of Australia's partner countries in line with bilateral and regional agreements.

For further information:

Australia Awards: www.australiaawards.gov.au

Australia Awards in South and West Asia: www.australiaawardssouthwestasia.org

Australia Awards – Maldives: www.australiaawardsmaldives.org