

## 1968 Singapore Colombo Plan Students Scholarship

In 1968 nine teenagers, almost complete strangers met to board a plane for the first time in their lives and left the safety and security of home. They were leaving Singapore to study at the University of Newcastle under a Colombo Plan Scholarship Program funded by the Australian government.\*

Forty years later in 2008 the same nine people came together at a dinner to commemorate that event and to reflect on its significance for their lives. They decided they wanted to demonstrate their gratitude not only to Australia but also the University of Newcastle. The scholarship program had nurtured them through those years of university life and which had provided them with a rare opportunity to study overseas. By the end of the dinner they had devised the idea of the 1968 Singapore Colombo Plan Students Scholarship.

They collectively raised the funds to support a scholarship in perpetuity which would assist an Australian student enrolled in the second year in Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment. Together they raised \$80,000 and the scholarship award was established at \$3,000.

The principal coordinator of this group is Mr Peter Tay who played a very constructive leadership role in bringing together all the ideas of his colleagues and representing their interests in planning the scholarship. These graduates are:

- CHIA, Whye Liang Anthony (Bachelor of Engineering (Industrial) Hons - 1972 and Bachelor of Arts (Economics) - 1973
- FOO, Say Wei (Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) Hons - 1972
- HO, Gien Tou (Bachelor of Engineering (Industrial) Hons - 1972
- HO, Jin Yong (Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) Hons - 1972
- LIM, Chong Hin (Bachelor of Engineering (Industrial) Hons - 1972
- Dharma Rajan MANI (Bachelor of Engineering (Industrial) Hons - 1972
- POON, Boon Ping Bernard (Bachelor of Engineering (Industrial) Hons - 1972
- NG, Chong Thong (Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical) Hons - 1972
- TAY, Buan Huat Peter (Bachelor of Engineering (Industrial) Hons - 1972 and Bachelor of Arts (Economics) - 1973

Mark Cowan was the inaugural scholarship winner in 2009. Mark was excited and relieved to be awarded the scholarship.

"Because of my current financial situation this scholarship will provide a significant benefit to me. I have a very small youth allowance and my parents live on a single income. So this scholarship will remove a lot of the pressure and stress caused by this and hence will provide a major benefit for my studies."

While the 1968 group are determined to maintain the integrity of their scholarship plan, they also hope that other Colombo Plan scholars will follow their example and establish their own scholarship program.

*\*The Colombo Plan Scholarship was set up in 1951 to fund promising students in the former British colonies to study in universities in British Commonwealth countries. The donor countries were Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The recipients were the developing Commonwealth nations in Asia, Africa and Oceania.*



*Singapore Colombo Plan Student Scholar Mark Cowan (left) and Heath Robertson (right) with Mr Peter Tay.*



*Mark Cowan was awarded the Singapore Colombo Plan Student Scholarship by Pro Vice Chancellor, Engineering and Built Environment, Professor John Carter.*