

Australian Volunteers Alumni 2023 Survey Report

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Background

The Australian Volunteers Program Alumni (Alumni) connects past volunteers with each other and helps volunteers maintain a connection with the Australian Volunteers Program.

The network currently consists of over 7,000 Australians who have volunteered overseas or remotely, under Australian Government-funded overseas volunteering programs, across more than eighty countries over more than 65 years.

In August 2022 a new name, strategy and branding for the Australian Volunteers Program Alumni was introduced. These changes were in response to the introduction of remote volunteering and a need for the previous network name 'Returned Australian Volunteer Network' (RAVN) to be updated to ensure inclusion of all volunteer experiences.

Between May and June 2023, the first Alumni survey was conducted to gain insights about alumni experiences and to gather insights on the new Alumni objectives.

641 past volunteers (66% female and 33% male) responded to the survey in 2023, this was consistent with the response rate for the previous 2021 RAVN survey.

538 (92.4%) respondents completed an in-country assignment, 111 (19.1%) respondents completed a remote assignment, 10 (1.7%) respondents completed a hybrid assignment. 7%, or 38 people, identified as someone with a disability and 2 people identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Alumni Objectives

In 2021 the RAVN survey gathered recommendations for new network objectives, these recommendations helped to inform the Alumni Strategy (2022-2027) objectives:

- Support past volunteers to advocate for the program and increase awareness and appreciation of the **value of volunteering**.
- Provide past volunteers opportunities to increase **cultural awareness** and maintain **connections across countries**.
- Provide **professional and personal development opportunities** to Alumni members

Survey Objectives

The objectives of the 2023 Alumni Survey were to:

- Capture Alumni objectives data
- Capture Alumni engagement data
- Gather suggestions on how the network can add value to the program and key stakeholders

Value Volunteering

Survey responses

- **63%** of respondents were involved in volunteering activities outside of the Alumni in the previous 12 months
- **45%** of respondents had promoted the program and/or program assignments with their networks
- **14%** of respondents identified an increased awareness of local volunteering opportunities in Australia via the Alumni
- **3** of respondents identified that the Alumni supported them to become involved in local volunteering activities in Australia

Suggestions

- Promote local volunteer opportunities in Australia via Alumni communications
- Facilitate ways for members of the Alumni to help recruit new volunteers
- Encourage sharing of volunteer experiences with personal and professional networks
- Connect the Alumni with peak volunteer bodies in Australia to collaborate, promote volunteering and share resources

Alumni response

Past volunteers are recognised to be the best advocates for the program and most effective at recruiting new volunteers.

The Alumni will aim to increase the number of respondents **45%** who identify having promoted the program by continuing to provide opportunities for past volunteers to promote the program.

Although only **3%** of respondents identified that the Alumni supported them to become involved in local volunteering activities in Australia, **62%** of respondents identified involvement in volunteering activities. This demonstrates a strong motivation among past volunteers to continue engaging in volunteering activities.

The Alumni will continue to offer opportunities for past volunteers to volunteer with the program and promote local volunteering activities.

Cultural Awareness and Connections across Countries

Survey responses

- **66.6%** of respondents have maintained connections with local citizens in partner countries
- **44%** of respondents have continued to provide support to their previous partner organisation following their assignment
- **21%** of respondents reported that their connection to another country has increased through participation in Alumni activities
- **25%** of respondents identified an increased cultural awareness via involvement in Alumni activities
- **6%** of respondents described their ongoing connection with their previous partner organisation as extremely connected, **16%** as very connected, **26%** moderately connected, **29%** slightly connected, **22%** not connected
- **4%** of respondent's relationships with their previous partner organisation was supported by Alumni activities

Suggestions

- Deliver culturally specific Alumni events
- Collaborate with Australian Award scholars
- Promote cultural festivals and events with alumni
- Deliver cultural workshops (information sessions, webinars delivered by in-country teams)
- Provide opportunities to learn more about First Nations cultures
- Engage partner organisation staff in Alumni activities
- Support ongoing volunteering with country of assignment (mentoring, financial support, grants, projects with Australian organisations)
- Promote the different ways alum have continued to support their partner organisation following their assignment

Alumni response

This objective elicited the most survey suggestions which reflects a strong motivation among members the Alumni continue to support cultural awareness and connections to other countries.

All suggestions for how the Alumni can support cultural awareness and connections to other countries will be explored. Some suggested activities are currently available through the Alumni including:

- support ongoing volunteering with country of assignment (Impact Fund Grants)
- collaborations with Australian Award scholars (Alumni & Australian Awards Networking events)
- promote ways alum have continued to support their partner organisation (Alumni speaking engagements, Post Assignment Workshops, program stories)

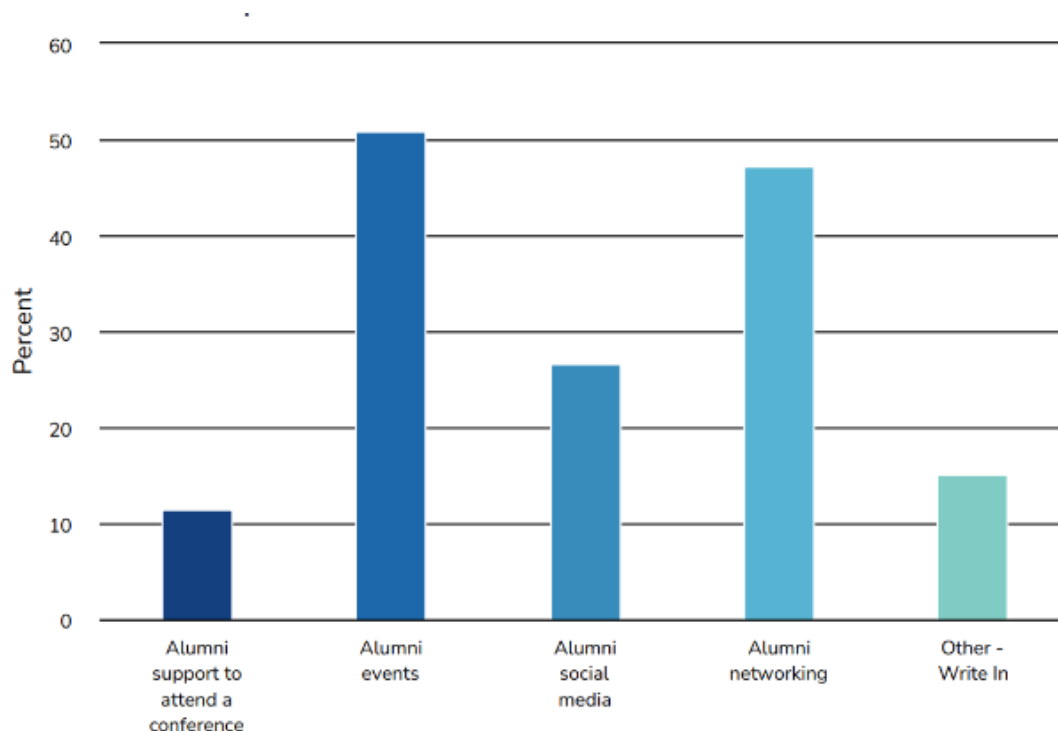
These opportunities will continue to be promoted across Alumni communications.

Professional and Personal Development

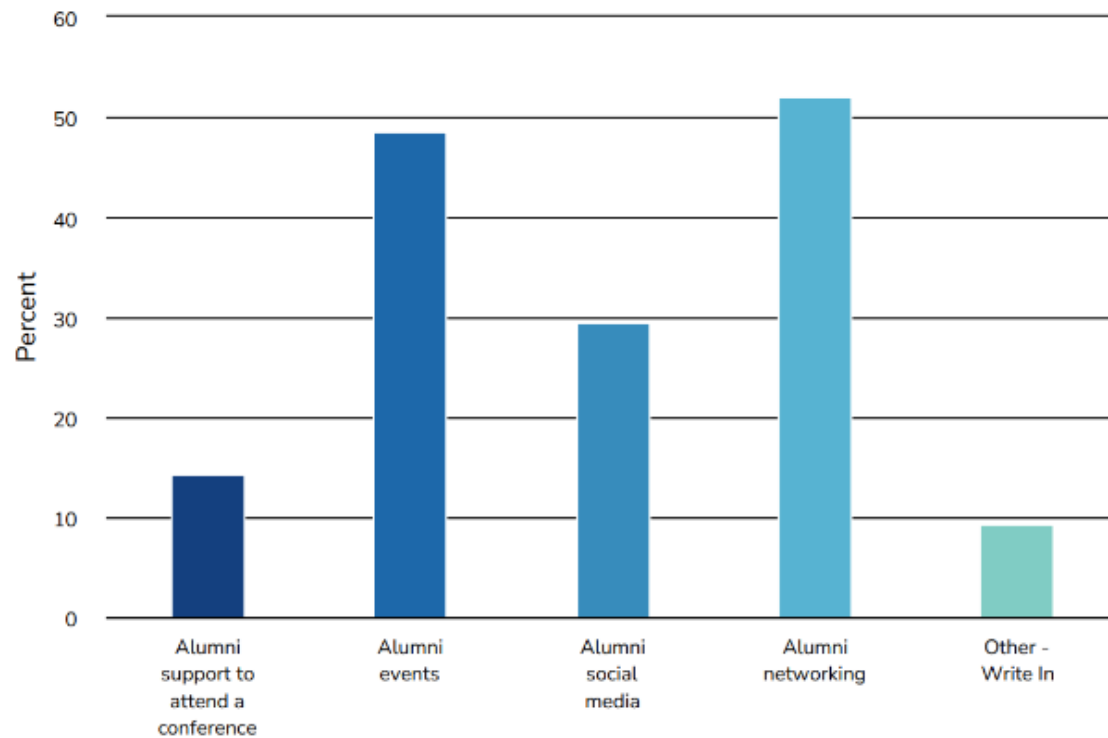
Survey responses

- **25%** of respondents felt their professional development has been supported a lot or slightly by the Alumni
- **30%** of respondents felt their personal development has been supported a lot or slightly by the Alumni
- Professional development benefits gained via the Alumni include increased cultural awareness, opportunities to mentor new volunteers, skills gained through the Alumni representative role
- Personal development benefits gained via the Alumni include friendships with fellow alum, feeling connected to the Alumni community through reading volunteer stories and newsletters and by sharing personal volunteer stories at events

The below graph shows activities that have supported alumni's professional development



The below graph shows activities that have supported alumni's personal development



Suggestions

- Share country specific information and updates
- Provide opportunities for members of the Alumni to present about volunteering experience
- Develop country specific networking opportunities (events, webinars, online platforms)
- Facilitate career advice following assignments
- Provide sector-based Communities of Practice

Alumni response

Many professional and personal benefits derived from the Alumni were identified by survey respondents. Some of the suggestions provided are currently on offer to members of the Alumni including sector-based Communities of Practice and opportunities for Alumni to present about volunteering experience (Global Webinar Series, Program Information Sessions and Alumni Representative and Program Events). Other suggestions will be explored for the Alumni.

Alumni engagement in previous 12 months

Some of the ways members of the Alumni continue to engage with the program and the network following their assignments:

- Supporting previous partner organisation with an Impact fund application/project
- Developing media stories relating to volunteer experience
- Attending an Alumni event
- Reading an Alumni newsletter
- Engaging with the Alumni Facebook group or LinkedIn group

Survey respondents were asked for the reasons they had not engaged in an Alumni activity in the previous 12 months. The reasons provided included:

- Distance required to attend events due to living regionally or overseas (18)
- Time constraints (9)
- Lack of local events (4)
- Lack of communication about Alumni activities (3)
- Cost of attending events (3)

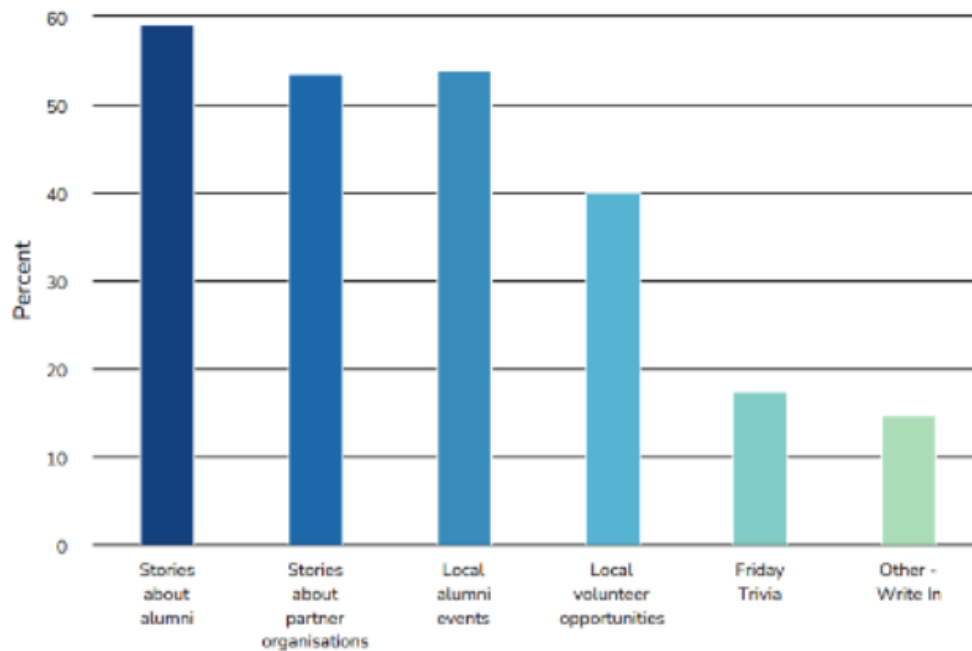
Alumni response

It is helpful to understand activities with high engagement as well as the reasons people have not engaged in activities. It will never be possible to achieve 100% engagement for all activities. It is beneficial to consider methods to increase access to network activities and remove any barriers.

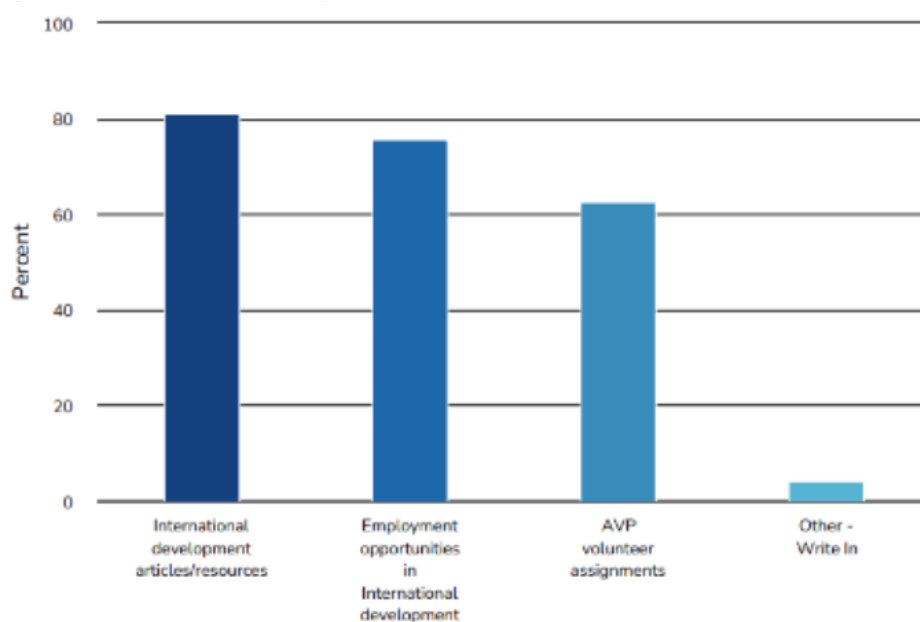
Alumni Facebook and LinkedIn Groups

- **54%** of respondents have joined the Alumni Facebook group.
- **16%** of respondents have joined the Alumni LinkedIn group.
- Reasons for not joining Alumni social media groups include people not using social media, ethical objections to social media and not knowing the groups exist

The below graph shows the type of content people would like to see on the Alumni Facebook group



The below graph shows the type of content people would like to see on the Alumni LinkedIn group



Next steps

Thank you to everyone who contributed their ideas and shared their experiences with the Alumni. Your contributions are highly valued and appreciated.

These survey results will help to inform the ongoing work of the Alumni network. The survey results will be shared with the Alumni Representative team, program staff and the wider Alumni network.

Members of the Alumni will continue to have opportunities to contribute to the development of the network and program.

Appendix 1: 2021 RAVN survey and 2023 Alumni survey results

2021 RAVN Survey	2023 Alumni Survey
<p>642 volunteers responded to the survey</p> <p>60% females and 36% males</p> <p>8 preferred not to respond</p> <p>3 were non-binary/gender non-confirming</p>	<p>641 volunteers responded to the survey</p> <p>66% females and 33% males</p> <p>1% prefer to self-describe</p>
<p>Top 5 countries respondents volunteered in</p> <p>Indonesia; Cambodia; PNG; Vietnam; Fiji</p>	<p>Top 5 countries respondents volunteered in</p> <p>Indonesia; Vietnam; Papua New Guinea; Timor Leste; Solomon Islands</p>
<p>63% of respondents didn't attend RAVN activities in the last 12 months.</p>	<p>74.8% of respondents didn't engage in an Alumni activity in the past 12 months</p>