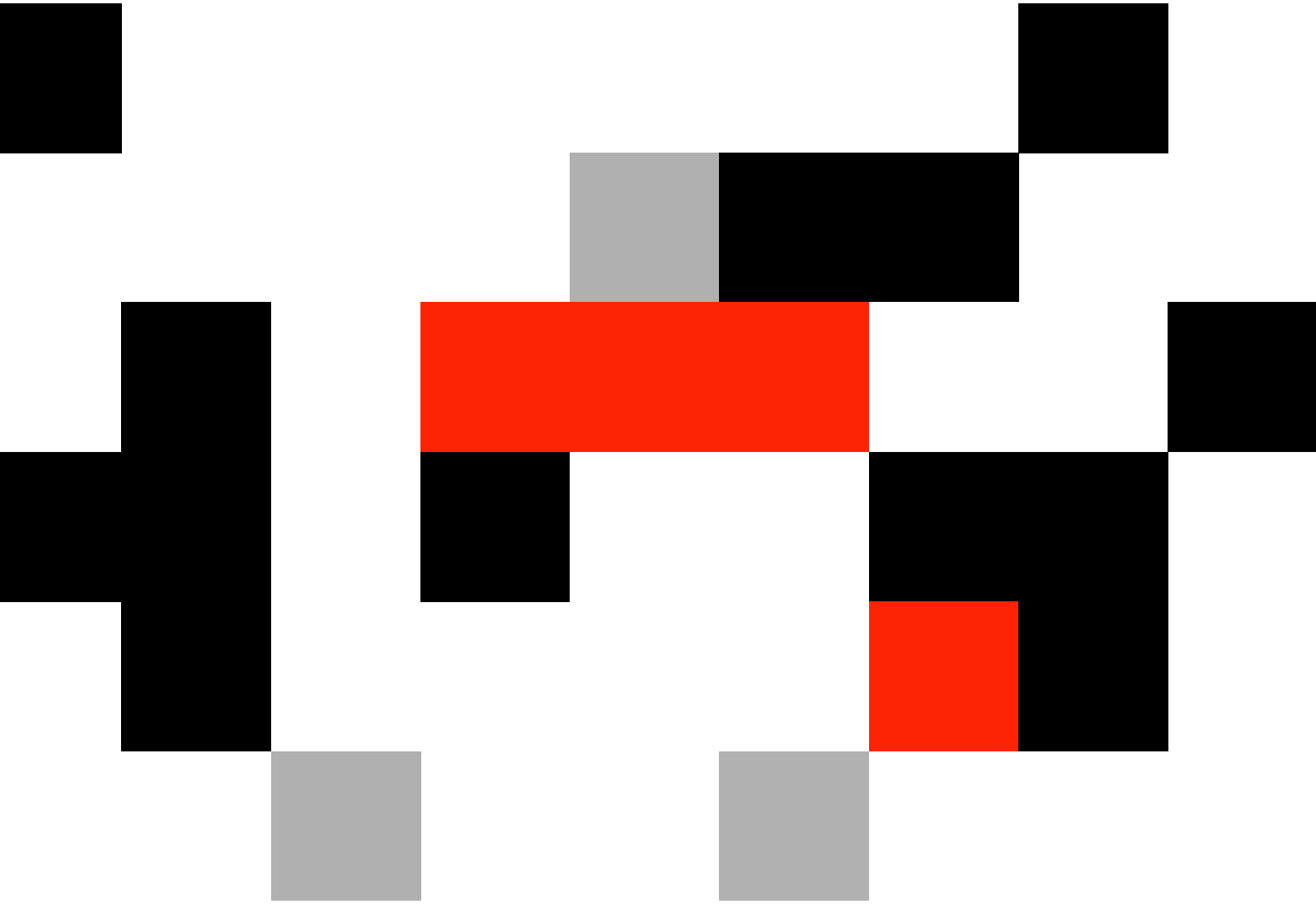
UTS Business School

Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers (2019-21)

Final Report

April 2022



Acknowledgements

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About UTS

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Citation

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Glossary

AAD	Approved accompanying dependant. A partner of a volunteer who accompanies the volunteer during their assignment and who is supported by the program (including participating in VPLJ activities) but who does not have a formal paid or unpaid position
AVI	Australian Volunteers International
AVP	Australian Volunteer Program, referred to in this document as 'the program' unless quoted by respondents
Career Breakers	One of seven categories of participants delineated in this project based on the participants' motivations for volunteering and how these intersected with their career. *Career Breakers* view a volunteer assignment as an interlude to a career that may be returned to after the volunteer assignment is completed, but which – at the time of accepting the assignment - is not fulfilling the individual's needs (taking a temporary and meaningful hiatus from an ongoing career)
BLM	Black Lives Matter social and political movement that emanated from the United States of America and that became globally prominent throughout 2019 and 2020
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
COVID	Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). "COVID" is used in this report to refer to all interruptions to the program and participants as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic
Enhancers	One of seven categories of participants delineated in this project based on the participants' motivations for volunteering and how these intersected with their career. *Enhancers* view a volunteer assignment as a means to consciously develop or enhance a career through the acquisition of skills, experiences, opportunities, and/or networks (progressing a career through a meaningful and developmental experience)
HCN	Host country national - A "local" person from the country that hosted participants' volunteer assignment
ICOP	In-country orientation program - A formal information and training program undertaken by participants after their arrival in the host country and prior to commencing their volunteer assignment
Imposed Transitioners	One of seven categories of participants delineated in this project based on the participants' motivations for volunteering and how these intersected with their career. For *Imposed Transitioners*, a volunteer assignment occurs in response to a negative career experience (e.g. labour market conditions) that leads the individual to consider a new profession or context (undertaking a meaningful alternative to domestic work with career possibilities)
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
Launchers	One of seven categories of participants delineated in this project based on the participants' motivations for volunteering and how these intersected with their career. *Launchers* view of the assignment as a stepping-stone to launch a career, most commonly in a sector or profession that allows them to express their values, such as international development or humanitarian aid (integrating values into a meaningful career)
LQI	Longitudinal qualitative interviews – An approach to longitudinal data collection that involves a series of interviews on a particular topic or experience. LQIs combine identical questions posed at different times to assess change (e.g. engagement with development issue), as well as questions that target particular experiences as indicators of causality
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
Non-working Partner	One of seven categories of participants delineated in the study based on the participants' motivations for volunteering and how these intersected with their career. The participants from this group accompanied a partner on an international volunteer assignment as an approved accompanying dependant (experiencing a vicarious assignment and adventure)
Participant	A respondent who participated in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers (2019-21)
PDB	Pre-departure briefing - A formal information and training seminar provided by the program to all participants in Australia before their deployment to the host country and prior to the commencement of their volunteer assignment
PD	Position description – a written description outlining the formal duties and responsibilities of the volunteers' role with the partner organisation
PO	Partner organisation – the organisation in the host country with which volunteers worked during their volunteer assignment
Program	Australian Volunteers Program
Referred candidate	A volunteer who was "referred" by a PO for the volunteer position, typically because they had had some prior contact with the PO before applying for the assignment.
Repatriated participant	Participants who were repatriated to Australia due to the COVID pandemic prior to completing their planned assignment
RAVN	Returned Australian Volunteer Network
Remote volunteering	An international volunteer role that involves the volunteer providing support for a PO online rather than being based in the host country
SDG	The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals
Transitioners	One of seven categories of participants delineated in this project based on the participants' motivations for volunteering and how these intersected with their career. *Transitioners* view a volunteer assignment as a pathway to enter a new sector or context, most commonly with an international - rather than domestic – focus (entering a new sector or context that provides meaning)
Veterans	One of seven categories of participants delineated in this project based on the participants' motivations for volunteering and how these intersected with their career. *Veterans* view a volunteer assignment as an opportunity to apply professional expertise accumulated through a long career in order to achieve a positive outcome (applying career expertise toward a meaningful purpose)
VPLJ	Volunteer Professional Learning Journey - A series of structured activities provided by the program that is intended to support volunteers' learning and success during the assignment. It includes pre-departure briefing (PDBs), in-country orientation programs (ICOPs), and other organised events.
LSAV	Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers (2019-21)

Executive Summary

The *Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers* (LSAV) is a research project that aims to explicate whether, why and how participating in the *Australian Volunteers Program* (the program) influences volunteers personally and professionally in relation to four outcome areas: (i) civic participation, engagement and literacy (civic), (ii) global literacy and connections (international), (iii) career progression and professional capabilities (professional), and (iv) personal circumstances and capabilities (personal).

This report outlines findings of the study's first three years (2019-21), which tracked a cohort of 54 Australian volunteers and "approved accompanying dependents" (AADs) who in 2019 commenced assignments in 16 countries. Scheduled assignment durations ranged from 2-18 months although most were curtailed prematurely by COVID. Data were collected via a series of semi-structured interviews with each participant at three waves: prior to commencing their assignment (T1), at the end of their assignment (T2), and again 12 months after completing their assignment (T3). This report complements earlier reports outlining participants' pre-assignment motives and expectations (Phase One, 2019) and in-country experiences (Phase Two, 2020).

The study reveals generally favourable personal and professional impacts for participants despite their truncated assignments and the substantial post-assignment social and economic impacts created by COVID. Most participants are more engaged with, informed about, and connected to their host countries and the international development landscape in which the program operates. Most of those who entered the program with the aim to enhance or change their professional career have been able to take steps toward achieving this. Beneficial personal changes include improved satisfaction and meaning in life, confidence, and self-awareness. While the long-term consequences of these changes may unfold more fully in coming years, participants have begun to reap benefits through applying these in tangible ways to their civic and professional activities, lifestyle, and social lives.

At the same time, positive outcomes have been unevenly dispersed. At T3, small numbers of participants were struggling with challenging repatriations, personal upheaval, and career setbacks – mostly associated with the forced repatriation. In general, the program has been least developmental for volunteers seeking to use the assignment as a pathway to transition to a new career or sector, and for developing capabilities and networks that relate specifically to participants' professional area.

Features of the program that appear to have provided a platform for many of the positive changes reported by participants include the challenge, novelty and meaning of volunteers' assignments (and living conditions), opportunities to interact and collaborate with host-country nationals and other volunteers, and certain volunteer professional learning journey (VPLJ) activities. In many ways, the most vibrant manifestation of volunteers' assignments continues through volunteers' ongoing social networks - especially with fellow volunteers, which are ballasted by shared values and experiences. These networks act as both an outcome and propellant of many of the most meaningful changes and appear to be important mechanisms that direct and sustain many of the beneficial changes that volunteers undergo.

Section 7 outlines four overarching recommendations for the program, the foundations for which are detailed in Sections 3.6 (p. 13), 4.5 (p. 26), 5.4 (p. 37) and 6.5 (p. 46). In general, the recommendations centre on four sets of activities that, in unison, are likely to help volunteers to benefit personally and professionally during and after their volunteer assignments. These include making available in ways that do not detract from the program's primary objectives:

- Opportunities for volunteers to form, sustain and contribute to social networks that offer support, friendship and information, and allow them to develop and apply newfound capabilities. These include networks comprising other volunteers, host-country nationals, others from their professional field, and various groups who are touchstones on volunteers' journey through the program.
- Volunteer assignments with "learning-intensive characteristics" in terms of the role, PO environment, placement setting and experiences. Importantly and where feasible, doing this should consider individual volunteers' objectives, needs, circumstances or past experiences that may influence their potential to gain personally or professionally during and/or after their volunteer assignments.
- Structured support and opportunities, primarily under the auspices of the VPLJ, to help volunteers understand and take advantage of the many informal and incidental learning opportunities that the assignment presents. This might include, for instance, activities designed to assist volunteers to integrate formal (via VPLJ) and informal (unstructured) learning, transfer learning to new situations (including post-assignment), and articulate their personal and professional development in meaningful ways (including to prospective employers).
- Information for program staff to assist them to support volunteers to benefit personally and professionally. This includes efforts to understand the distinctive features of different assignment modalities, the roles of social media in connecting volunteers to POs and other networks, and ways to customise support to certain types of volunteers to enhance their propensity to benefit personally and professionally from the program.

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PART I: Study Overview

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This report presents results and recommendations from the research project, *Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers* (LSAV) for the period 2019-21. The project was undertaken by a global research team led by UTS Business School, University of Technology Sydney, for the Australian Volunteers Program ('the program').

The report contains three parts:

1. Part I: Study Overview – Outline of the LSAV's background, research aims and methodology
2. Part II: Volunteers' Personal and Professional Changes - Main changes to volunteers from their participation in the program along four dimensions: civics, international, professional, and personal
3. Part III: Key Findings and Implications – Summary of the LSAV's main findings and implications for the program and for future iterations of the study

The report's contents build on four interim reports: (i) Phase One Inception Report (April 2019), (ii) Phase One Final Report (October 2019), (iii) Phase Two Progress Report (April 2020), and (iv) Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

1.2 Background and Context

The LSAV is a longitudinal research project commencing in April 2019 that aims to **explicate in a credible and persuasive way whether, why and how participating in the program influences volunteers personally and professionally in ways that are relevant to the program's objectives.** For the purposes of this research:

- *'Participating in the program'* is defined as all aspects of contact and involvement that volunteers have with the program including pre-departure (e.g. recruitment, selection and preparation), during the assignment, and post-assignment (e.g. support from the program). It includes all the volunteers' work and non-work experiences that arise from their involvement in the program.
- '*Personally and professionally'* is defined as all volunteers' work and non-work behaviours, capabilities and attitudes that lead to outcomes relevant to the program.
- '*Outcomes relevant to the program's objectives'* are those relating to or associated with one or more of the following areas of volunteers' lives as identified in the program's *MEL Framework* and objectives, and articulated in the study's operational framework[1]: (i) civic participation, engagement and literacy (civic), (ii) global literacy and connections (international), (iii) career progression and professional capabilities (professional), and (iv) personal circumstances and capabilities (personal).

In parallel, the study undertook a critical review of participants' contact with the program at each stage of their volunteer journey. This has encompassed: their initial engagement with the program and pre-departure preparation (T1), in-country contact and support with program staff (T2), and in the twelve months following the completion of their assignment (T3).

The LSAV's results are intended to contribute to the program's objectives that "Australian volunteers gain professionally and personally" and that "volunteers (current and returned) promote greater cultural awareness and build stronger connections between partner countries and Australia." Through this, the study supports the program in helping to meet the Australian Government objective that Australians be more globally literate and connected.

The findings of the LSAV address the following key evaluation questions relating to the effectiveness of the program (MEL Framework): (a) What have been the outcomes/results (intended and unintended, positive and negative) of the program for volunteers?, and (b) To what extent has the program contributed to these outcomes?

1.3 Intended Audience

The study's results will assist the Volunteer Services team, Country Management team, Public Diplomacy and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning teams to:

i. Better support volunteers to benefit from their experiences on the program;
ii. More effectively recruit and match to assignments volunteers with different backgrounds and motivations;
iii. Improve volunteers' satisfaction with the program's support before, during and after their placement;
iv. Raise the profile of the program and support its public diplomacy outcomes; and
v. Provide evidence of the program's impact on key outcome areas.

2. Research Aims and Methodology

2.1 Objectives and Research Questions

The LSAV's primary objectives are to:

1. Explicate the nature of personal and professional changes in participants across the study period that are relevant to the program (i.e. civic, international, professional and personal);
2. Offer explanations for these changes, drawing on participants' experiences with and reflections on the program before, during and after their assignments; and
3. Present a critical review of participants' contact with the program throughout their volunteer cycle (before, during and after their assignment).

From these objectives, the three research questions guiding this analysis of the period 2019-21 are:

1. How does volunteers' participation in the program influence them personally and professionally in ways that are relevant to the program objectives?
2. What features of the volunteer assignment (including work and non-work aspects) had major influences on these changes (and in what ways)?
3. Drawing on participants' experiences across the study, how can the program improve the way it interacts with and supports volunteers (and accompanying dependants) across the volunteer lifecycle to increase their personal and professional benefits?

The study's design and procedures, as well as amendments to incorporate modifications due to COVID (27 March 2020),[2] were pre-approved by *UTS Human Research Ethics Committee* (HREC-ETH 19-3663 and 19-4445). A summary of procedures used to manage the main ethical concerns is included at **Attachment 1.**

The design of the LSAV was informed by a comprehensive literature review, consultations with international researchers and program staff, as well as several of the program's policy documents, evaluations and frameworks, including the *LSAV Terms of Reference*, *Annual Reports*, *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework, Global Program Strategy,* and *Returned Australian Volunteers Network Survey 2018-19.*

2.2 Sample Recruitment and Composition

Fifty-five participants were recruited from four pre-departure briefings (PDBs) between May and July 2019 in accordance with an approved recruitment and engagement strategy.[3] The approved approach ensured participants' identities were not disclosed to the program or in any publication without their prior approval. It also specified protocols to protect the confidentiality of all data collected during the study.

Strategies to ensure retention and encourage a diversity of participants (e.g. age, family status, rurality) and assignments (e.g. host country) were generally successful. Just one participant withdrew from the study (at T3)[4], meaning the final sample comprised 54 participants - 49 volunteers and five "approved accompanying dependants" (AADs), a retention rate exceeding 98%. Participants undertook assignments ranging from 61 to 293 days in 16 countries, hosted by a variety of partner organisations (POs). A précis of these assignments and participants' demographic characteristics is presented in **Attachment 2** and detailed in the report, *Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019).* **Attachment 3**, meanwhile, lists the main characteristics of each participant. Numerous statistical comparisons show the LSAV sample to be broadly representative of recent program volunteers.[5]

2.3 Data Collection

The design of the study is primarily inductive, with qualitative data collected via a series of semi-structured interviews across a 24-month period. Interviews have so far encompassed three points in the volunteer journey: (i) pre-departure (interview T1), (ii) during – or shortly after the completion of – the volunteer assignment (interview T2), and (iii) following completion of the assignment (interview T3), approximately 12 months after interview T2.

The data collection process is summarised in **Figure 1** on the next page. It shows that T1 interviews occurred after PDBs and prior to (or soon after) participants' assignment deployment. T2 interviews were scheduled immediately prior to the assignment's intended completion. Because some assignments were truncated by COVID, some T2 interviews were conducted soon after participants' repatriation to Australia. Final interviews (T3) were conducted approximately 12 months later. T1 interviews were preceded by a brief online survey addressing basic demographic and assignment questions intended to reduce the interview length.[6] Participants also consented to their formal volunteer position description (PD) being examined (n = 49).[7]

At each wave of data collection, a series of fine-grained aims and research questions – linked to those in Section 2.1 - guided data collection and analysis. An overview of each (T1-T3) is presented in **Attachment 4.** Details of these, and the core findings emerging from each, are found in the project's Phase One and Phase Two reports.

2.3.1 Interview Topics and Procedures

Semi-structured interpretive longitudinal qualitative interviews (LQIs)[8] canvassed: (i) participants' experiences at each stage of the program, (ii) the impact of their participation and their assignment on them personally and

professionally, and (iii) features of their experiences that impacted these. Indicative interview schedules for each phase, approved by UTS's Human Research Ethics Committee, are outlined in **Attachment 4**.

Figure 1: Data collection procedures

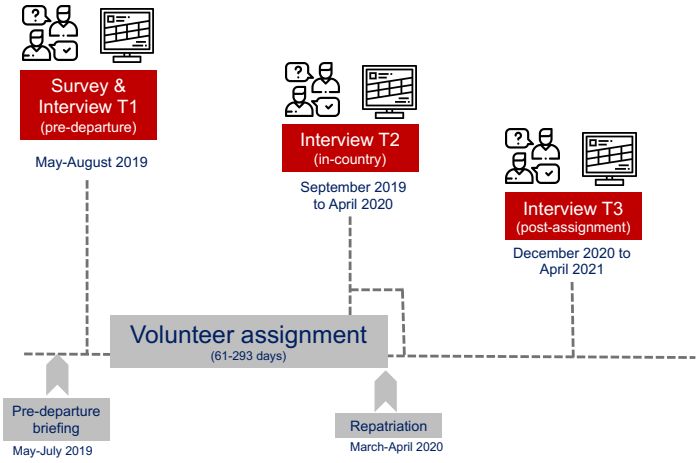


Table 1 summarises the main themes raised at each interview to date (T1-T3).[9] Interview questions are open-ended and designed to encourage participants to reflect on and make sense of their experiences.[10] Thus, participants' interpretations of events and experiences are central to the LSAV's design[11], and changes that are most meaningful to participants are interpreted as important outcomes.

Table 1: Summarised thematic interview schedules (T1-T3)

Theme	T1	T2	T3
Personal details: Demographic and background information including motivations for and expectations of the volunteer assignment	X*		
In-country experiences: Anticipated (T1), actual (T2) and reflections on these (T3)	X	X	X
Current situation, capabilities and attitudes in relation to main study outcomes: Civic, international, professional and personal	X	X	X
Future Plans: Future personal and professional plans (5 years)	X	X	X
Program contact and support: Contact with program staff and support mechanisms	X	X	X
Personal and professional changes: Perceived changes in attitudes, behaviours and capabilities, and the main reasons for these		X	X
Reflections: Reflections on changes (perceived changes from T1-T3)			X

* Online survey preceding interview T1

Some pre-COVID interviews were conducted face-to-face; most were mediated electronically (telephone, Skype, FaceTime or Zoom).[12] Effort was made to establish conditions (for interviews) and relationships (with participants) to foster openness and honesty in responses and to retain participants throughout the study. This included devoting time to building rapport and disclosing (interviewer's) personal experiences and retaining the same interviewer across the study. The strong retention rate, diversity of experiences (good and bad), richness of the detail provided, and high levels of reflexivity evident in the interview transcripts support our view that interviews were able to achieve this. An important observation is how strongly most participants reported enjoying discussing their assignment experiences and feedback on the program with "professional strangers" who had vicariously shared their journeys.

At the same time, social desirability and/or recall biases have the potential to distort how some experiences are reported. Thus, while taking participants' responses at face value, efforts were made to validate these during interviews. These included asking follow up (probe) questions ('What makes you believe that was caused by …?'), seeking tangible examples ('How has that influenced the way you go about your job now … do you approach if differently?'), inviting participants' interpretation of events ('To what extent do you think those changes stemmed from your assignment or from other things, like the COVID lockdown?'), challenging participants' interpretations, and/or seeking external validation ('Have your family or friends noticed any changes?'). Where pertinent, participants were asked directly about patterns of responses that interviewers observed across interviews (T1-T3).

Some participants proffered (without being asked) a variety of secondary data sources to support their reported experiences. These included media reports, online blogs and, most commonly, social media feeds.

The study's longitudinal design presented challenges, including threats to validity arising from attrition (intended and unintended), and complications associated with managing data to ensure confidentiality of responses. The table at **Attachment 5** summarises key characteristics of longitudinal research and the steps taken to mitigate or prevent some of the risks and capitalise on some of the opportunities during the LSAV.

2.4 The Impact of COVID

While we are not aware of any participant contracting COVID during the study, the global COVID pandemic disrupted participants' assignments and lives, and thus the way their involvement in the program shaped them personally and professionally. The impacts of this introduced threats to the reliability and validity of the study's findings that necessitated structural changes to the study's procedures and design. **Attachment 6** presents a summary of these threats and the strategies used to minimise bias due to forced repatriation of participants.[13] The three most prominent threats unable to be fully mitigated were:

- **Diminished intervention effects due to reduced assignment length:** Thirty-eight participants were repatriated prematurely from their assignment in March 2020, leading to a reduction in their planned assignment duration of 31% and so potentially limiting the extent and nature of intrapersonal change arising from their in-country volunteer experiences.[14]
- **Conflating effects on the study's main outcomes:** Dramatic extraneous events like COVID can create conditions that render attribution of changes more difficult. Some participants commented on difficulties delineating the impacts of COVID from those of their assignment. Moreover, responding to such conditions can alter social behaviours, attitudes and identities.[15] These features introduced some complexity in discerning whether changes stemmed from the assignment or other factors.
- **Extraneous influences on post-assignment opportunities:** The disruption of wider socio-economic conditions in Australia and elsewhere restricted participants' domestic and international mobility for work or personal reasons. It also distorted labour market conditions in most sectors and limited or prevented contact with friends, family and networks. These factors reduced opportunities for some forms of work, social and civic participation, and disrupted some participants' readjustment to Australia. In some cases, they caused or exacerbated mental health challenges. This applies equally to the 16 participants who had completed their assignments before the forced repatriation of all volunteers in March 2020.

Where pertinent, we address potential impacts of COVID conditions on the result in the analysis that follows. While these could be mitigated to some extent through amending interview protocols (e.g. seeking to distinguish COVID-related influences from those associated with the assignment) and the analytical schedule (e.g. comparing outcomes of repatriated and non-repatriated participants), they could not be fully negated. **For this reason, interpreting the results of the current study must take these atypical factors into account.**

At the same time, COVID provided a useful background against which to highlight patterns related to some relevant phenomena. For instance, a shared interest in COVID provided a useful comparison to ascertain the extent to which participants remained emotionally engaged with POs and host countries (Section 4.2).

2.5 Data Management Protocols and Data Analysis Procedures

The study's primary empirical materials were electronic copies of interview transcripts. The 164 transcripts making up the full dataset totalled 1.65 million words (mean lengths from 8093 words per interview at T1 to 11429 words at T3) and reported 191 interview hours (mean durations from 58 minutes at T1 to 79 minutes at T3). These were supported by a detailed participant database, individual case files for each participant, and PDs of all 49 volunteer roles.

Numeric codes or pseudonyms have been used to ensure participants' anonymity. In some parts of this report and in case studies, quotations and other identifying details are modified to ensure confidentiality. All empirical materials were managed in ways consistent with the UTS "Guidelines for the Management of Research Data" (September 2018) and the data management procedures approved by the program.[16]

The LQIs employed multiple techniques to produce data that was suited to rigorous longitudinal comparisons. For some outcomes (e.g. career status, future plans, engagement with host-country or civic issues) identical questions were replicated at each interview in ways that enabled direct comparisons at different time period. Where relevant, these patterns were discussed with participants.

In other cases, complementary data that took advantage of the timing was collected. For instance, at the end of their assignments (T2) while fresh in their minds, participants were asked to describe specific in-country learning outcomes and to link these to specific activities and the contexts in which these occurred. At T3, participants reflected on the main changes, the bases for these, and their impacts on participants current work/life. Combining these datapoints helped to create direct links between changes that provided the strongest (lasting) impacts and specific in-country causes. In all interviews, emphasis was given to seeking tangible example of changes through enacted behaviours (e.g. civic participation, career changes, enacting lifestyle changes).

Content analysis procedures were used to distil prominent themes from transcripts relating to the four main outcome areas, as well as assignment and support features associated with each area. Detailed descriptions of the procedures used at T1 and T2 are presented in earlier reports.[17] For T3, analysis was facilitated by a comprehensive electronic database that amalgamated data materials across all three waves. It combines coded quantitative data (e.g. age category, gender, PO type, assignment duration) with key qualitative themes extracted

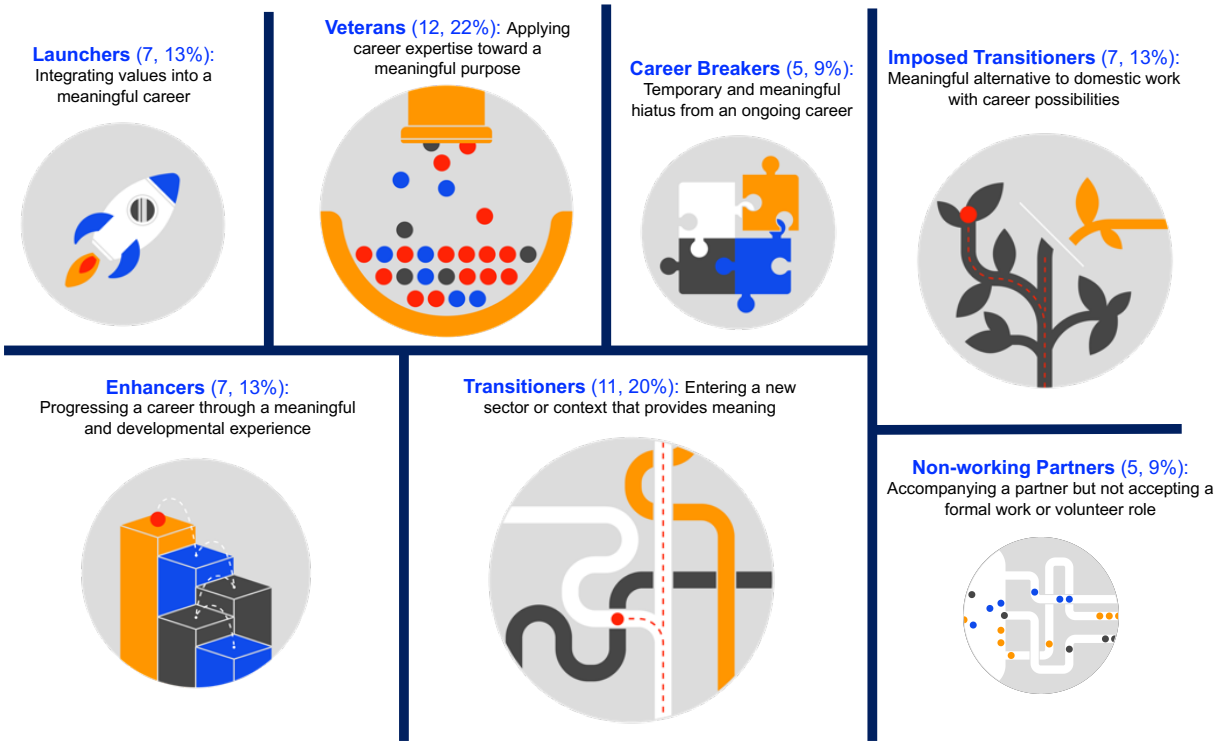
from interviews (T1-T3). A list of the main variables forming in this database can be found at **Attachment 7**. In some cases, relative weighting was attached to qualitative responses to indicate, for example, the strength of participants' engagement with their host country (see Section 4.2.1 for an example of how this was operationalised).

Qualitative thematic responses were sorted and compared to identify patterns and explore relationships (e.g. the personal characteristics most strongly associated with changes to participants' civic participation). Emerging relationships were then examined in detail through participants' case files and in some cases full transcripts. The quantification of some data enabled statistical analysis to examine the strength of some correlations and comparisons between groups of responses on some outcomes (independent t-tests, Pearson's chi square tests).

One of the main frames for analysis throughout the study was a classification of volunteer "types" based on the way that participants' motivations for volunteering intersected with their careers. This typology was developed inductively at *Phase One* and modified during *Phase Two.*[18]

Figure 2 shows each of the seven volunteer types, the number of participants represented in each category and the percentage of the study's sample this represents. Where relevant, we use these classifications when discussing the main changes among groups of participants in the analysis that follows in **Part II**.

Figure 2: Typology of volunteers based on motivations to volunteer and career stage



As with earlier reports, a modified draft version of the report, approved by program staff, was sent to participants for comment and feedback on 15 February 2021. Numerous informal acknowledgements and four formal responses were received. These were discussed with program staff at a sensemaking workshop on 01 March 2022 and can be found at **Attachment 8.**

Finally, the study's inductive design and the ongoing analysis of data, which commenced early and continued throughout the study's 36-month duration, rendered benefits. As well as providing flexibility to adapt to the circumstances created by COVID, it facilitated the identification of outcomes and impacts that were unexpected. Three examples of this are participants' emergence with greater empathy and privilege awareness (Section 4.4.2), their achievement of "prosocial career transitions" (Section 5.2.1), and the multiplying effect of volunteering and formal education on participants' professional development (Section 5.3.3). In addition to these personal and professional changes, peripheral findings relating to participants' protracted "liminality" after being repatriated (Section 6.3.2), the invisible "discretionary" contributions volunteers make (Section 3.4.2) and the amplifying effects of social movements like "#MeToo", "Black Lives Matter" (BLM) and aid decolonization (Section 6.3.1) may have otherwise been overlooked.

Part II of this report details the main personal and professional changes identified in relation to the study's four key outcome areas: their civic participation, engagement, and literacy (Section 3), their global literacy and connections (Section 4), their career progression and professional capabilities (Section 5), and their personal circumstances and capabilities (Section 6).

PART II: Volunteers' Personal and Professional Changes

3. Civic Participation, Engagement and Literacy

3.1 Overview and Background

This section links directly to the program's objective that volunteers and others better appreciate the value of volunteering and the contribution it makes to sustained development.[19] It focuses on "civic engagement"[20], which we conceptualise broadly to include the extent, nature of, and changes in participants':

i. Overall participation in structured and unstructured voluntary service, including the type and amount of civic participation (Section 3.2), discretionary support for and contact with POs (Section 3.3), and involvement in and attitudes toward remote and in-country international volunteering (Section 3.4); and

ii. "International development" literacy (Section 3.5), which incorporates participants' cognitive and emotional engagement in international development issues (e.g. monitoring media, reading or watching topical content, or informing oneself about issues relevant to international development via podcasts, online courses, perusing websites), and their knowledge of and capabilities relating to the sector.[21]

The section concludes by distilling the core findings and considering their implications for the program's volunteer support and management (Section 3.6).

Civics baseline: Summary of participants' civic participation, engagement and literacy at T1

On the whole, the study's participants were strongly engaged in civic participation and civic issues prior to accepting their assignment with the program (T1). The proportion of participants involved in community volunteering was more than double the average for some cohorts of Australians at T1. Thirty-five percent (19 participants) had completed (sometimes multiple) former assignments with the program. Nine others had undertaken other forms of skilled or semi-skilled international volunteering through myriad secular or religious and voluntourism agencies, giving an international dimension to their civic contributions.

For some, this civic contribution formed an important part of participants' identity and/or lifestyle. One participant who had performed semi-skilled volunteering in multiple countries during a global career commented: '*I think if you just keep the habit of always volunteering, then you're always volunteering, I guess. It's when you stop and you've got free time, you fill it with something else*' (#09). Seven (13%) were working in Community/Social Development, a sector with strong career links to international development volunteering, while the same number expressed an aim to enter the International Development and Humanitarian Aid sector on the back of their volunteer assignment. The latter included several *Launchers* who had completed degrees focusing on international development and some *Transitioners* and *Imposed Transitioners* who had aims, with varying levels of conviction, to apply their skills to a career in the sector.

The sample's knowledge of and engagement with international development issues varied although was generally strong at the outset, evident in them following media, advocating for certain issues, and possessing vast international experience. Some saw their international volunteer assignment as an extension of their other volunteering ('*it's just another branch of that*', #10), while others viewed it as quite distinct. By way of example, a *Veteran* who had done pro-bono work as a director of a health-related NGO observed: '*It's quite different to what I've done in the past … I'm not working anymore … I've got the time to put in some serious mileage (to) this (volunteer role) …*' (#22).

3.2 Overall Civic Participation in Australia

While most participants' interest in civic participation remained high at T3, there was a general decline in the overall intensity of voluntary service that participants performed at T3 compared to T1. For half the participants (27/54) no substantial change occurred. Eighteen participants (33%)[22] experienced a general decline in involvement while 9 (17%)[23] described activities that indicate an increase in civic participation. Unlike other studies[24], those whose civic participation increased (which included 3/5 *Career Breakers*) tended to be older, on average, than others.[25] This pattern came against a background of declining civic participation globally and in Australia stemming from COVID (see Section 3.6).

For the most part, reduced voluntary service was attributed to extraneous circumstances, notably the direct and indirect impacts of COVID and related issues such as renewed focus on family (Sections 6.3 and 6.4), time constraints due to changed commitments, living arrangements, or adjusting to new work situations ("*I don't really have time*", #27), including some who transitioned to paid work with strong prosocial components (Section 5.2.1).

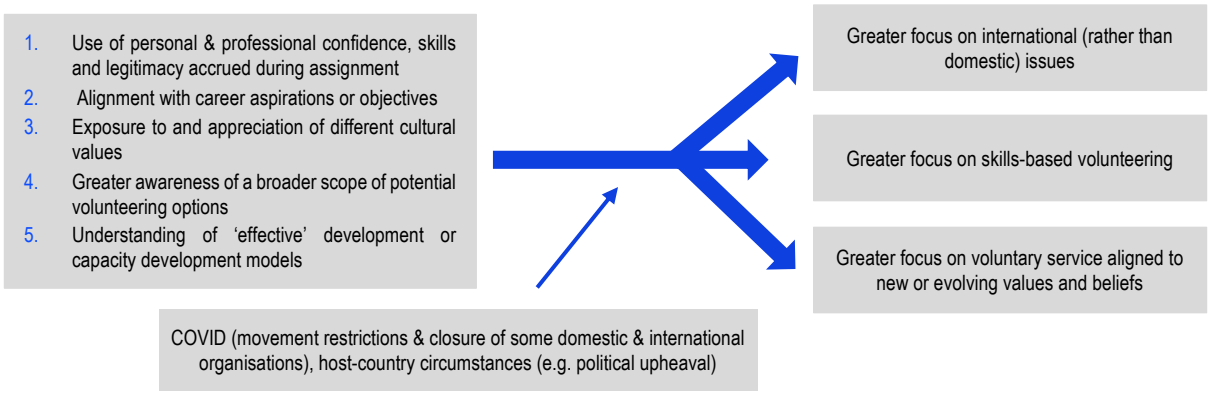
A small number did feel that their experiences on the program had diminished their appetite for further volunteering while others reported disengaging from all volunteering and civic activities due to financial pressures, seeking employment, or as a health/wellbeing measure, often associated with COVID.[26]

Change to voluntary service (T1-T3)

3.2.1 The Evolving Nature of Voluntary Service

Despite a decline in the amount of voluntary service at T3, there is evidence that the program may have triggered some changes in the nature of volunteering for more than half of the participants – volunteers and *Non-working Partners* alike.[27] The right side of **Figure 3** identifies these trends, which became evident at T3. They include participants placing a greater focus on volunteering oriented towards: (i) international rather than domestic causes, (ii) skilled rather than unskilled activities, and (iii) new or evolving values and beliefs. **Figure 3** also summarises some of the main program experiences that contributed towards these changes (left) and contextual features that also influenced the changes (bottom). These changes are expanded below.

Figure 3: The changing nature of participants' voluntary service (main changes and contributors)



» Directing voluntary service toward international causes rather than domestic ones: Fifteen participants oriented their voluntary services more strongly toward international organisations, issues or contexts at T3 than they had at T1.[28] This includes seven whose volunteering energies became focused on remote assignments with international POs (Section 3.3), as well as other participants who sought and commenced (voluntary) positions in internationally-focused professional associations (#28), intergovernmental agencies (#40), working groups (#01) and NGOs (#03) which had explicitly international concerns. Others had begun applying experiences and knowledge forged in the international context of their assignment to internationally-oriented issues in Australian contexts by, for instance, advocating for multiculturalism (#21), migrant/refugee issues (#07) or anti-racism (#04). Still others, while pivoting toward international issues, were interested in how they could support greater localisation in global development.[29] In each case, participants drew causal links between their observations and experiences as development volunteers and their interest in and willingness to act on these international issues. Conversely, five participants turned their volunteering energies away from an international context towards local community issues - a consequence of few opportunities (COVID) and evolving values (see below).[30]

No change was observable in the overall quantity or intensity of participants' involvement in advocacy on social or political justice issues (including international development) from T1 to T3. However, there is evidence of participants more strongly advocating for international causes. One asked to be a delegate on a regional dialogue on global environmental issues and to represent the '*voice*' of participants from throughout the region of her assignment (#35). A *Veteran* reported having '*put a lot of energy into Twitter and (the) political sphere'* since returning to advocate for more generous humanitarian aid (#10). Although no overall trend in patterns of charitable donations could be discerned (financial uncertainty associated with COVID was noted by some), a small number reported donating more toward international issues – typically to organisations or ventures in the host country and with which they had had direct contact during their assignment.[31]

Two major contemporary events – the global COVID pandemic, and political upheaval that unfolded in the host country of a small number of participants – contributed to elevated levels of international engagement and advocacy by some participants. Besides these, the main reason given for an "internationalisation" of civic participation was participants' desire to use the (international) knowledge and experiences that their assignment gave them.[32] One volunteer explained how the assignment "*exposed me to realise that (my contributions) can be internationally focused*" (#35); another reported '*actively (choosing) to do things more international than domestic*' (#27) since the assignment finished. Yet another reported shifting from volunteering with a homeless shelter (at T1) to '*more with refugees, tying the social side of homelessness with the international side*' (#31).

» Evolving from unskilled volunteering to more skills-based volunteering: A second change in the types of voluntary service undertaken at T3 (compared to T1), most common among young participants, was increased interest in "skilled" volunteering activities that utilised participants' professional experiences, knowledge, or skills.[33]

While some participants were vague about the reasons for this, six identified more confidence and better skills to make a different form of contribution that they directly linked to their assignments[34] ('*It made me feel like I've got something to contribute whereas before, I was probably a bit more hesitant to put my hand up'*, #47). One is '*hoping to bring some of the skills that I learnt [on the assignment]'* to a new voluntary role that supports volunteer Australian

scientists working offshore ('*I want to try and incorporate as much of that as possible')*. Three others believed that they had more credibility or legitimacy now to use their expertise productively as volunteers.[35] One of these (#04) explained:

> *Now I have had experience as a minion in the aid program I feel like I have got more legitimacy to get my voice going again. I have always had a bit of imposter syndrome … but now I feel like I actually do know a few things and I want to … talk to a few people and see if we can move this (social justice issue) along*

In other cases, volunteers - prominently *Launchers* – expressed a desire that their volunteering contributions benefit their career aspirations, and so have taken steps to seek volunteering opportunities more actively in their professional field. Like the case of Shelby in the box on the right, the impetus for their increased confidence stemmed from having accrued understanding and a body of experience.

Case study – Shelby: Building on skills & advocating the (host) region's interests

Like many participants, before her volunteer assignment Shelby had been involved in international & domestic volunteering on summer camps (North America) & with sports clubs (Australia). Her inspiration for volunteering came when she visited a '*childhood friend'* who was completing an assignment with the program '*which turned into … an opportunity for him to set up a business … it's definitely changed his life*.' Since then, it '*was kind of always in the back of my mind that I would try to find something that I could use my skill set to go & have that experience & try to … help improve a particular area … a sustainable change for that community*.'

For the volunteer role Shelby accepted, '*the skill-set … transferred really well & the timing managed to work as well'* (coinciding with the end of a work contract). She had '*an amazing experience … great personally & professionally … a really positive experience*', defined by the relationships she developed, her deep engagement with the local culture & '*achieving so many positive things*.' Her work involved '*a lot of collaborating*' & she worked hard to establish '*rapport & trust with the community … to make things happen*.' Her diverse networks ('*people working across different areas: health … hospital … private company … Olympic Committee … disabilities*') exposed her to '*inherently political parts'* of their roles & so made her '*more aware of how I act & interact with my own community & the importance of having a voice in things that affect the country*.'

Shelby became emotional explaining that the assignment '*definitely had an impact, that's for sure … I probably got more out of being there personally than I (gave back*).' At T3 she had re-focused her voluntary service to be '*through my role rather than just me as myself*' – incorporating both her desire to advocate for the interests of the region in which her assignment was located & to make use of the experiences & knowledge she gained on the assignment. To facilitate this, she '*reached out'* to '*an Australasian*' professional working group because, she says, '*I think it's an interesting space & aligns well with the (professional) stuff I'm interested in*.'

Shelby now sits on two voluntary professional associations, which allows her to promote issues of interest to her host country. She sees part of her role now to '*make sure that it's not just Australia and New Zealand … that the Pacific is considered within that*.' Pertinently, she reports now having more meaning in her work and life ('*it feels like it has a purpose now*'), believing that '*being a volunteer (on the program) gave me more of a structure to what "meaning" is, what value it is and how that can all work … it's an actual tangible thing not just the "ideal". Being in the program changed that part of it, it's a bit more structured and holistic*.'

» Volunteering that expresses changing values and beliefs: Finally, nine participants reported shifting their volunteering energies in response to evolving values or beliefs that were shaped by their experiences on the assignment.[36] One of these was greater appreciation for communitarian voluntary service (e.g. in local community gardens) and community-oriented practices (e.g. offering to help neighbours), whatever their form, as important civic contributions.[37] Participants attributed this to their extended exposure to different cultural values; all four reporting this had identified learning outcomes at T2 that stemmed from dissonance relating to cultural values and practices (also see Section 6.3, "Lifestyle and values changes").

Other participants' experiences led them to embrace (more strongly) issues such as environmental neglect, pollution, or over-consumption, to which they had been exposed in the host country (see Section 6.3). Yet others began questioning the value of certain forms of volunteering they had participated in previously, from the negative impacts of using expatriates[38] to the types of organisations (best) able to support capacity development. These findings build on large numbers of participants whose views about the efficacy of short-term, unskilled volunteering and/or voluntourism were shaped by VPLJ activities.[39] In this, participants' more "literate" understanding of effective development (Section 3.5) seems to have informed their volunteering decisions. Supporting this, two participants[40] reported being more strategic in their donation patterns to target more effective development practices, decisions that were informed by program experiences, especially advice from other volunteers.

As the interview extract on the right demonstrates, not all participants' voluntary activities were structured.[41] A variety of unstructured volunteering occurred at T3 which had not been part of participants' repertoire at T1. These include teaching friends a language that the volunteer had learned on the assignment, helping neighbours and/or friends cope during COVID, making and donating clothing items for charity sale, seeking relationships with neighbours from different backgrounds, and sharing goods.[42]

> *'A big takeaway I had from the (host-country) culture was about importance of doing what is right for the community rather than what is right for you & that sense of really looking after people. I think that really had an ongoing impact on my thinking. … living in a culture that definitely puts the collective first has really shown me how important that can be … I shop locally now, I go to a lot more small businesses now in my local area which I didn't really consider that much before. There's a lot of informal charity stuff that goes on … I give away a lot of stuff to people in the community, I noticed, which has been really interesting, I definitely wouldn't have done stuff like that before. I lend people things now … I'm just about to start a community garden project down the road from me & I'm in the process of getting involved with a couple of local community groups'* - **Beth**

3.3 Ongoing Support for and Contact with Partner Organisations

At T2, 28 volunteers were continuing to support POs (i.e. contribute to POs' capacity via voluntary assistance).[43] Of these, 12 had sustained this and were continuing to provide support at T3, of which seven[44] continued formal remote assignments facilitated by the program ("formal") and five[45] were providing informal regular support of some kind outside the parameters of the program ("informal"). An additional 10 volunteers provided support for the PO after their return (either remote assignment/s or regular informal support) but had discontinued this before T3.

It is estimated that these post-assignment support activities amounted to 174 months of voluntary contribution to POs in the period T2-T3, 73 months or 42% of which was informal.[46] The types of informal support that volunteers provided POs in this period varied. Several helped POs until they were able to finish a project or specific activity/task that they had started before being repatriated. Others provided advice or feedback

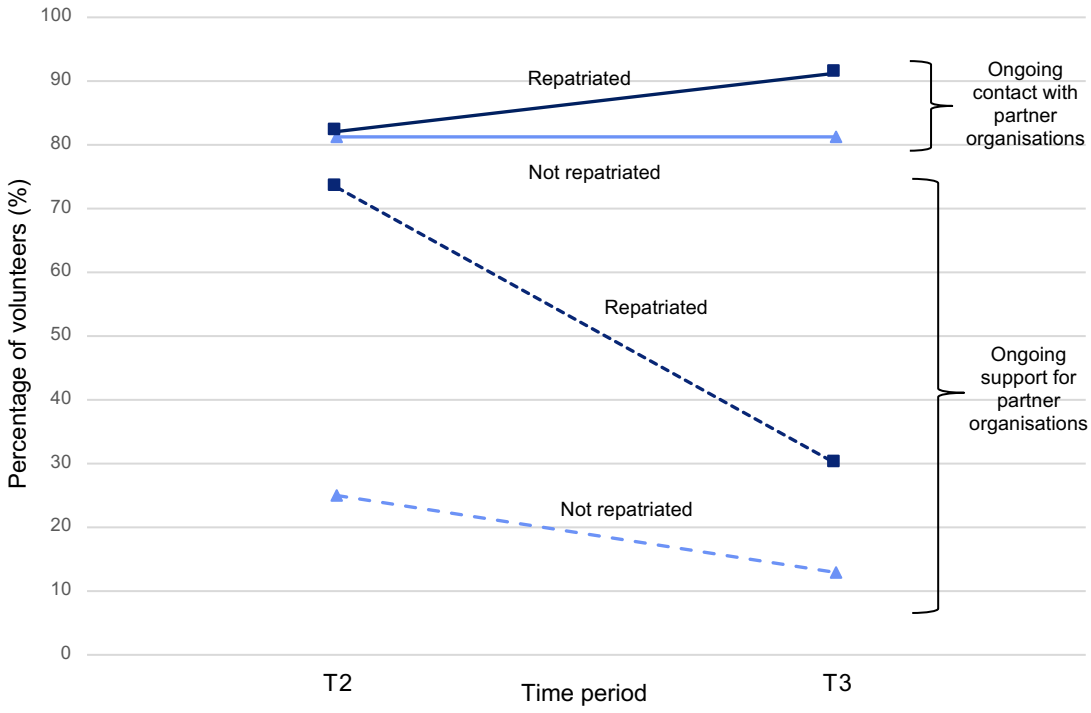
in response to ad-hoc questions, regular mentor-style discussions, or specific tasks like reviewing grant applications, preparing COVID emergency documents, helping develop relationships with Australian organisations, teaching English and writing résumés.[47] Some offered to help POs but, at the time of interviews, this had not been taken up.[48] The box "Discretionary volunteering – recognising the full volunteer contribution" at the end of Section 3.4.2 discusses the impact of this discretionary volunteering further.

Figure 4 compares the percentage of volunteers providing ongoing support for POs at T2 and T3 for two groups of volunteers:[49] those who were repatriated due to the COVID pandemic ("repatriated") and those who were not ("not repatriated"). It also compares the proportion of each group that continued to have some form of contact with POs at T2 and T3 (without necessarily providing a voluntary contribution).[50]

The lower two lines in **Figure 4** show a general decline in support from T2 to T3 for both groups, although the proportion of repatriated volunteers supporting POs was higher at both points in time. Ongoing contact with POs remained relatively stable among both groups and actually rose for repatriated volunteers from T2 to T3 (top two lines in **Figure 4**).[51] The level and regularity of this (mainly personal and informal) contact varied and did decline for most participants across the 12-month period from T2 to T3 (see Section 4.3.1).

Figure 4 shows that support for POs at T3 was higher amongst those who had been repatriated, despite a sharp decline from T2. *Veterans* and *Launchers* – especially those who were unaccompanied on their assignments - were the groups most likely to continue support for POs.[52] Unsurprisingly, ongoing contact and support appears to have been an anchor for stronger cognitive and emotional engagement with the host country (Section 4.2.1). Participants whose assignments were in rural locations and with "local" POs (domestic NGOs, government agencies) reported higher incidence of ongoing support.[53]

Figure 4: Comparisons of ongoing PO relationships (repatriated and non-repatriated volunteers)



3.4 International Volunteering

At the time of the final (T3) interview, 42 of the 49 volunteers (86%) reported being open to either a remote or an in-country international volunteer assignment at some stage in the future. Just seven reported not considering either.[54] Nineteen volunteers (49%) had acted upon or were open to **both** a remote **and** an in-country volunteer assignment.[55] A moderate correlation (r = 0.45) existed between attitudes towards remote and in-country volunteering, suggesting that the cohorts for these two forms of volunteering overlap but may have important distinctions.

3.4.1 Remote International Volunteer Assignments

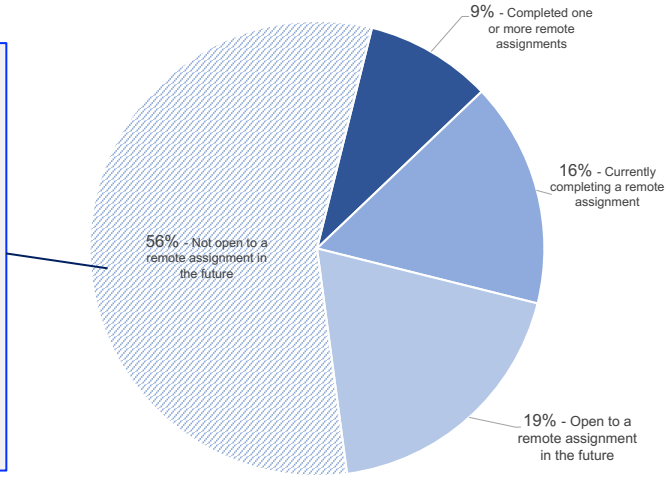
As **Figure 5** shows, 25% of participants had applied for, commenced, or completed a remote volunteer assignment; 16% of these assignments were still underway at T3.[56] An additional 19% were open to undertaking a remote assignment - this includes several who had been actively seeking one without finding a suitable option, as well as those who were open to an assignment but had not begun looking. **Thus, in total just under half the participants (44%) saw remote volunteering as a viable option for their civic engagement 12 months after their assignment was completed.** Again, *Launchers* and *Veterans* were most likely to volunteer remotely while

Transitioners and *Career Breakers* were least likely. The main reasons offered by participants for not wanting to volunteer remotely are summarised in **Figure 5**, along with example/s of each.

Figure 5: Participants' (planned) involvement in remote volunteering

Four main reasons for not wanting a remote assignment

- Insufficient benefit received in return, including the remuneration level (e.g. '*For me it would feel too much like free labour*', #14)
- Scepticism about the efficacy or impact of volunteering remotely for their area of expertise (e.g. '*You can't build connections with people online … … half these places don't even have good internet … I can't see it working in the long term*', #52; '*For me to override language, and cultural differences at a distance, and build up the level of trust, and understanding … is too hard an ask*', #15)
- Other work or personal priorities (e.g. '*I think I've just had to completely prioritise getting my own life back on track which has just taken so long, so I've had zero capacity to step back into that kind of role*', #07)
- Not enjoying online work generally ('*I hate [working] over Skype … there's a sort of immediacy that is lost*', #12)



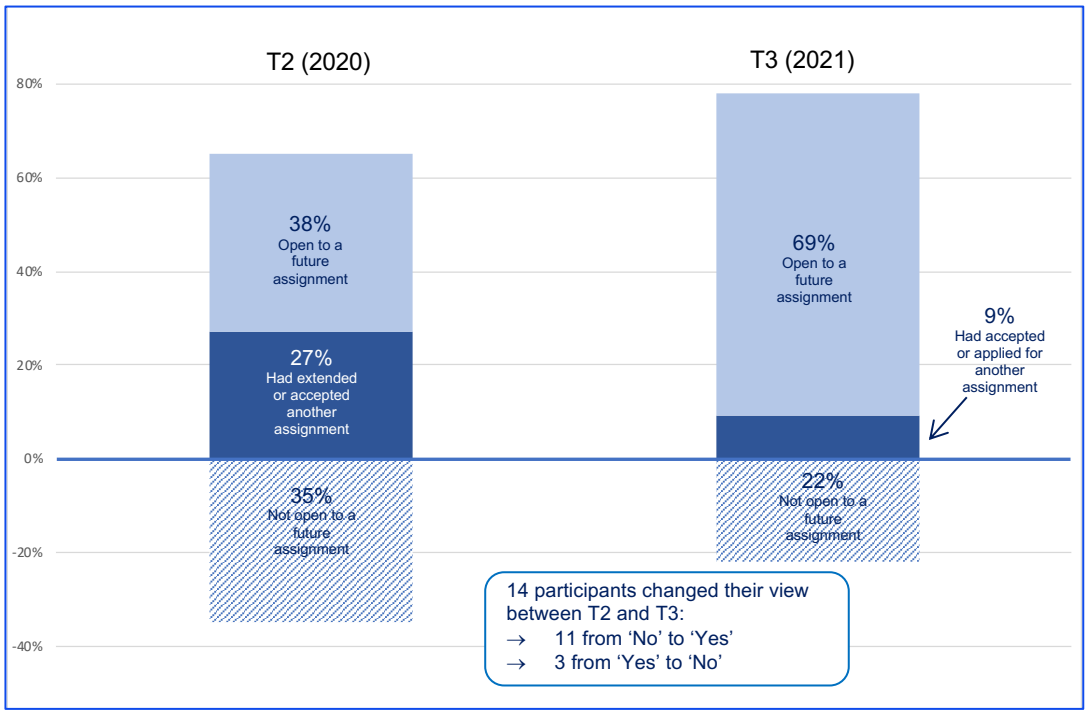
3.4.2 In-country International Volunteer Assignments

Thirty-two volunteers[57] and three of the five *Non-working Partners* (69%) expressed openness to a future in-country volunteer assignment – most prominently *Veterans*, *Enhancers* and *Launchers*. Four (9%) had already commenced or applied for an assignment at T3.[58] Just eight volunteers stated that they would not consider another in-country assignment, including three of the five *Career Breakers*.

Figure 6 compares the attitudes of participants toward future in-country volunteering at T2 and T3. Noticeable is that several changed their views on future in-country volunteering between T2 and T3; 11 participants who at T2 had not indicated a willingness to volunteer again expressed an openness to do so at T3.[59] The most common explanation for this change was volunteers' (temporary) fatigue or disappointment at T2 associated with their (at the time) recent repatriation. While these events may be atypical, this finding points to fluctuating attitudes toward civic participation about which the program should be cognisant.

Just three participants who indicated at T2 a willingness to volunteer again (including one who had extended the initial assignment) reported having a change of heart by T3. Two of these were *Career Breakers*. Changed life priorities, including personal health challenges, were the main reasons for this change of intentions.

Figure 6: Participants' (planned) involvement in in-country volunteering

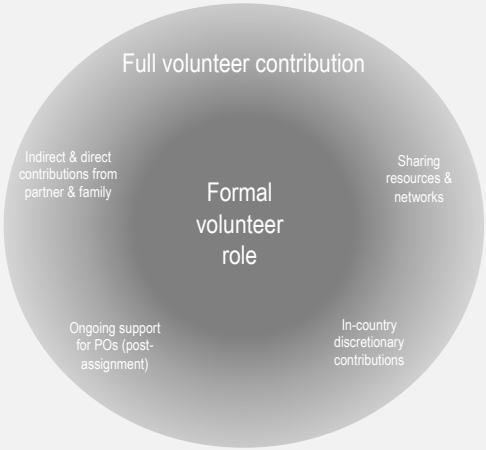


Discretionary volunteering - Recognising the full volunteer contribution

The informal support and advice that participants continue to provide POs after their assignment - and outside the formal parameters of a remote volunteer assignment (Section 3.3) - is consistent with a finding that has stretched across all three phases of this study to date.

In addition to the "formal" in-country and remote volunteering assignments that participants have undertaken (represented by the dark shading at the centre of the circle below), this longitudinal study has unveiled an ecosystem of informal contributions and support that volunteers and their partners provide POs, PO staff, and their host communities. Consequently, we posit that the full contribution of volunteers, and therefore the program, to the capacities of host communities and POs is not fully captured by the program's formal monitoring and evaluation protocols. These contributions encompass pre-departure, in-country, and post-assignment phases. Four broad types of "discretionary" contributions are apparent (clockwise from the right side at the periphery of the circle):

1. Sharing resources and networks: Making direct resource contributions to POs and colleagues through sharing or donating equipment, wifi access, texts, subscriptions and other tangible resources.
2. In-country discretionary contributions: Teaching, supporting, consulting, mentoring or providing other professional services outside their main volunteer function. Some of this was conducted 'after-hours' with the PO (e.g. evening English classes) that were not scoped in the volunteer's PD, but very often it was undertaken with other organisations with which participants became involved in host communities.
3. Ongoing support for POs (post-assignment): Providing informal ongoing advice, support and professional services to POs and PO staff after returning to Australia, sometimes leading to formal remote assignments. Very often, however, this is not formalised and instead initiated and sustained through interpersonal relationships without formal agreement and/or program support.
4. Indirect and direct contributions from partners and family: Non-working partners providing informal skilled or unskilled volunteering activities with their partner's PO or via separate initiatives (direct contributions), and/or providing support to partners that facilitated their ability to be more effective volunteers (indirect contributions). The latter include assistance with report writing, research or task planning, as well as emotional, practical or logistic support.



Although not directly relevant to LSAV's core interest in volunteers' personal and professional changes, efforts to identify the extent and nature of these discretionary contributions are likely to reveal a more accurate account of the full extent of an assignment's enduring impact on volunteers and POs/host communities alike.

3.5 International Development Literacy

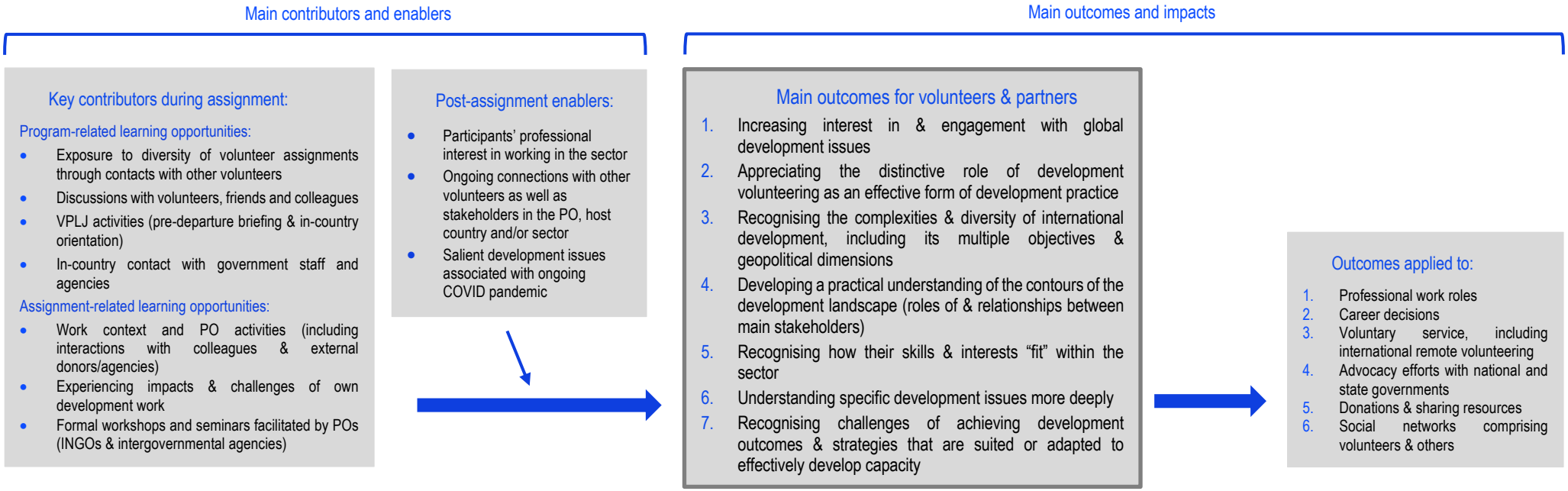
One of the clearest and most consistent changes at both T2[60] and T3 was to participants' engagement with, views on, and understanding of, the values, practices, assumptions and relationships that exist within the international aid and development sector. **On the whole, the participants' involvement in the program increased their "international development" literacy, leading most to be more engaged with, more aware of, and more informed about international development issues. There was also some evidence of the tangible application of this new understanding, despite countervailing extraneous conditions, through participants applying new interest, knowledge, and skills to professional and civic roles.**

Most participants across all seven categories were more cognitively engaged with international development issues than they had been prior to their assignments. That is, while exceptions existed, participants monitored and engaged with news, media reports, social media and/or policy announcements more acutely at T3 than they had at T1. These changes apply equally to *Non-working Partners*, who appeared to have been influenced by their participation in VPLJ activities, exposure to their partners' and other volunteers' experiences, and their social networks and activities within the host country. Thirty-one participants (57%) reported that their assignments had contributed to them holding a different view of international development than they held at T1. Those who had volunteered previously were just as likely to express different (changed) attitudes towards or understanding of international development as those with no prior volunteering experience. All but a few participants (all of whom were *Veterans* and *Non-working Partners*) were able to articulate specific ways in which their involvement with the program had led to a deeper understanding of international development.

Figure 7 on the following page summarises the main contributors, enablers, outcomes, and impacts of the program on participants' international development literacy. The main box (centre right) highlights the variety of ways that participants' understanding of the sector was shaped by their assignment. Some of these relate to participants' career aspirations in the sector – for instance, recognising how their skills and interests "fit" within the sector[61] or a practical awareness of the aid/development ecosystem that had previously been classroom-based knowledge[62] (mainly *Launchers* – also see Section 5.3.3). Others include a more nuanced understanding of specific development issues ('*you're exposed to (development inequality) in a real sense … you don't notice it too much until you get into a program like this,* #19),[63] recognising the diversity of the sector's objectives and challenges *('a much broader understanding* of *what Australia's aid program is … how soft some of this diplomacy gets … it was pretty sketchy knowledge previously', #12)*, or better awareness of (and practice deploying) mechanisms to achieve productive development outcomes.[64]

A notable shift from T2 is a greater appreciation (at T3) of the multiple objectives of development practice and funding ('*trade, regional connections, geopolitics'*, #55) and the importance of its contribution to diplomacy ('*it's not misplaced ... that's not a bad thing*', #54). Fourteen participants (predominantly *Transitioners*) reported deeper appreciation for (and interest in) the geopolitical dimensions of international development.

Figure 7: How the program contributes to participants' international development literacy



Notes:

"Key contributors during assignment" refers to features experienced by participants during their assignment that contributed most strongly to their improved international development literacy. In general, key contributors 1-4 can be described as "program-related" and so are more strongly influenced by the program and in-country program staff, whereas contributors 5-7 are "assignment-related" and more strongly influenced by the PO and the volunteers' specific role.

"Post assignment enablers" refers to conditions that participants experienced or activities that they engaged in after their assignment that have enabled or facilitated their ongoing understanding of the sector.

"Main outcomes for volunteers & partners" refers to the main changes reported by or observed in participants as a result of their involvement in the program. Examples of participants reporting each of these outcomes include:

1. Increasing interest in & engagement with global development issues: Participants: #01, #09, #17, #18, #22, #24, #26, #29, #31, #32, #40 and #51.
2. Appreciating the distinctive role of development volunteering as an effective form of development practice: Participants #01, #07, #15, #16, #24, #25, #29, #33, #36, #42, #47, #49 and #52.
3. Recognising the complexities & diversity of international development, including its multiple objectives & geopolitical dimensions: Participants #03, #04, #05, #07, #08, #12, #19, #23, #24, #26, #28, #30, #34, #42, #44, #46, #47, #48, #50, #52, #53 and #55.
4. Developing a practical understanding of the contours of the development landscape (roles of & relationships between main stakeholders): Participants #08, #10, #20, #23, #27, #37, #51 and #53.
5. Recognising how their skills & interests "fit" within the sector: Participants #07, #37 and #51.
6. Understanding specific development issues more deeply: Participants #08, #10, #11, #17, #29 and #52.
7. Recognising challenges of achieving development outcomes & strategies that are suited or adapted to capacity development: Participants #01, #02, #10, #15, #20, #29, #34, #40, #42, #43, #49, #51 and #52.

"Outcomes applied to" refers to the situations where participants reported being able to apply their new understanding or changed view of the sector since completing their assignment. Examples of participants reporting each are:

1. Professional work roles: Participants #01, #02, #03, #08, #09, #19, #21, #29, #31, #33, #35, #37, #40 and #46.
2. Career decisions: Participants #02, #03, #04, #08, #09, #19, #28, #37, #40, #51 and #54.
3. Voluntary service, including international remote volunteering: Participants #01, #03, #04, #09, #21, #26, #28, #44, #46 and #49.
4. Advocacy efforts within the community or with national and state governments: Participants #10, #12, #15, #16, #20, #21, #26, #28, #35, #46 and #54.
5. Donations & sharing resources: Participants #08, #12, #15, #22, #29 and #43.

A second change reported at T3 more commonly than T2 is greater appreciation by some of the value of local (rather than externally imposed) development. This stemmed from a confluence of experiences: a better awareness of and positive feelings towards the country and host-country nationals (HCNs), seeing or hearing about patterns of development that were ineffective, their own struggles to effectively support POs, and negative behaviours by (foreign) actors in the sector.

Overall, the outcomes are consistent with changes reported at T2, where over half of the sample (31 participants, 57%) reported improved understanding of the international development landscape. As with T2, this view now appears more accurate, nuanced and sometimes critical of the sector's values, practices, or practitioners. A *Launcher* (#14), for instance, was left '*very disillusioned by international development'*, causing a re-evaluation of whether and how she could forge a meaningful career ('*when you get to it on the ground, it's such a shemozzle'*); participant #03 criticised its '*unchecked*' nature (and has since undertaken corporate governance training and sought out a governance role with an international NGO). Participant #31 felt it '*solidified (an) interest in foreign affairs*' despite emerging more cynical about the sustainability of much of the sector's work that was encountered.

Figure 7 also identifies the features experienced by participants during their assignment that contributed most strongly to their sector understanding (left) and conditions or activities that participants undertook after their assignment that have enabled or facilitated their ongoing understanding of the sector (centre left). A notable (ongoing) contributor at both stages is the deep and strong networks that participants developed with other volunteers, seeded mainly via VPLJ activities prior to and during their assignment but sustained informally via social media. The importance of these networks is discussed elsewhere, including Sections 3.6 and 4.3.

Despite limited opportunities for involvement in international development projects since their assignment finished, 14 (26%) participants reported having begun to apply their new literacy since returning to Australia in either unpaid (i.e. voluntary)[65] or paid work.[66] Eleven also used their sector insights to inform career decisions (e.g. specialising in a particular field). These and other outlets are summarised in the right box of **Figure 7**. To illustrate this, participant #08 reported (at both T2 and T3) a better understanding of how small domestic NGOs like her PO contribute to broader (international) discourses and policies. She now supports her current employer, a small business providing health/welfare services, to do similarly. She reflected at T3:

> *My partner organisation included me in everything … I got to attend a discussion on the rollout of … a UN initiative across many countries … so I got to understand those high-level conversations and the working groups and strategies being put in place and how important it is for community groups to feed back into those programs, to be able to shape it, to be able to meet the need and respond appropriately. So now, whilst I'm not the person feeding back, I recognise the importance to support my manager to go and (to give) feedback to those groups*

Two participants' work involves them sharing this knowledge with future development workers (#35, #46). As an example, participant #35 recognised the highly political nature of development projects in terms of uneven project funding, tensions between development and diplomacy outcomes, and how geopolitics distorts good practice (T2, T3). She now shares this knowledge in her job advising young people accessing global humanitarian career opportunities ('*that really helped … it helps me get (clients) the information and the outcomes that they want … I have a much better understanding of foreign governments ... how they operate, their motives'*).

3.6 Civic Participation, Engagement and Literacy: Key Findings and Implications

3.6.1 Key Findings

- There is evidence to support the claim that involvement in the program has contributed to participants being more informed about and engaged with international development issues. This is despite generally high levels of knowledge and engagement at pre-departure. Most participants have a better appreciation – although not an uncritical view - of international development volunteering and international development generally, including its distinctive features, complexities, challenges, and impacts. It is reasonable to expect most participants to remain informed, active, and potentially impactful actors in the sector in coming years.
- Given the circumstances of their return, the sample's level of civic participation at T3 – while declining from T1 levels - is strong. Nonetheless, there is insufficient evidence to indicate a direct impact of the assignment. COVID has been a confounding factor. Prior studies of development volunteers suggest that overall levels may increase in coming months/years.[67] For this sample, an increase in participation is not yet evident.
- There is emerging evidence that patterns of civic participation have been shaped by experiences on the program, although the unusual circumstances of participants' return make it difficult to know whether their involvement and/or advocacy for civic participation reflects their assignment features or other factors; notably, the difficulty of accessing domestic civic engagement opportunities. If sustained, the features of these changes (international, skills-based, values-driven) suggest the potential for more expansive, higher value and more sustainable voluntary service.
- Large numbers of participants are maintaining contact with POs, although the intensity of contact has waned since assignments were completed for reasons related to the schedules of volunteers (e.g. work and family commitments), and/or the PO and its staff (changes circumstances due to COVID) – see Section 4.3.1. Most of this contact is informal and personal. Ongoing voluntary support for POs continues although it too has declined across the study period (T2-T3). While some of this support is formalised, some is not and forms part of a "hidden" discretionary contribution that volunteers make to POs.

- Interest in remote and in-country volunteering through the program is reasonably strong although we are unable to claim a direct impact from the program. Some evidence supports the conclusion that: (i) remote and in-country assignments may attract different cohorts, and (ii) attitudes towards these fluctuate - in the current study becoming more favourable from T2-T3.
- Later sections of the report show the value of the program as a gateway to participants transitioning to "prosocial" careers (Section 5.2.1), and networking with an informal community of volunteers and others (Section 4.3) who foster and contribute to their ongoing knowledge and engagement with international development issues. Both these can be expected to influence participants' civic engagement in coming years.

3.6.2 Considering the Results in the Context of COVID

The distinctive context of this cohort's experiences made the longitudinal analysis of their civic engagement complex. Two thirds of all Australians participating in voluntary service discontinued their voluntary work during the first wave of COVID, the time when most participants were repatriated to Australia.[68] COVID prevented several participants from (re-)engaging with civic participation activities due to restrictions on their own movements or the temporary closure of community organisations. International border closures directly affected 15 participants who had extended their current assignments or were in various stages of preparing for a follow-up international volunteer assignment with the program or other agencies.[69] The dampening effects of COVID on civic activities were exacerbated for several participants throughout 2020-21. This was most noticeable among repatriated participants, some of whom relocated to temporary housing for extended periods (e.g. leasing their permanent accommodation for the duration of their planned assignment) and/or experienced uncertainty about their futures because most participants had no structured work/income upon their repatriation. A small number also returned to changed family circumstances and/or caring responsibilities. Collectively, these features limited some participants' ability to commit energies toward civic participation, at least in the short-term, including lower rates of volunteering generally and higher levels of remote volunteering and/or support for POs than might otherwise have been the case.

3.6.3 Supporting Volunteers' Ongoing Civic Participation, Engagement and Literacy[70]

» Improving volunteers' international development literacy

The contribution of the program to volunteers' international development literacy is consistent with studies of similar cohorts in multiple contexts.[71] The evidence shows that, for the large number of volunteers wanting to enter or transition to employment in the field of international development (primarily *Launchers* and *Transitioners*), the program offers the potential of a firm grounding that can assist these volunteers to enter and to contribute productively to this professional field. At the same time, not all assignments offered the experiences, organisational settings and roles that were identified as most beneficial. Value is likely to come from continuing efforts to match and curate assignments that best allow volunteers with pre-defined aims to benefit from these opportunities. In this, the features on the left of **Figure 7** provide guidance about the "learning-intensive characteristics" of volunteers' experiences on the program that contribute to their capabilities and knowledge relating to international development. More opportunities (structured and/or unstructured) for volunteers to engage with local and international development practitioners beyond those in their POs during their assignments is also likely to be beneficial for some volunteers.

Participants' deeper appreciation for (and interest in) topics like the geopolitical dimensions of international development, or debates relating to decolonisation of aid/development (also see Sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.3) have been reported in one longitudinal study of development volunteers, although not recently.[72] Topics like these that generated interest and learning for volunteers during their assignments could be the focus of volunteer engagement and/or VPLJ activities that, if made available to volunteers, may serve as helpful connection points to post-assignment experiences that can aim to continue volunteers' development and engagement with these issues (and with the program).

» Facilitating the civic participation and engagement of returned volunteers

The atypical features of participants' return to Australia (closure of some community organisations, restrictions on movement, lockdowns, and lack of permanent accommodation or work/income) appear to have influenced some patterns of civic participation, including lower rates of volunteering generally and higher levels of remote volunteering and/or support for POs than might otherwise have been the case. Nonetheless, the findings suggest that different groups of volunteers may prefer and/or seek different benefits from different modalities of volunteering (e.g. hybrid remote/in-country assignments). For instance, *Veterans* and *Launchers* were the most active providers of ongoing support to POs and the most likely to consider future volunteer assignments; yet *Launchers* expressed a keen desire that their civic participation offer career benefits whereas *Veterans* were more attracted to shorter-duration in-country assignments.

We see benefit in the program considering ways to configure remote or hybrid assignments in ways that retain the meaning, enjoyment and learning that appear to make in-country assignments attractive and developmental to volunteers. A necessary starting point to support these volunteers' performance and development is for the program to develop a clear understanding of what motivates these volunteers, their expectations from the experience, and the features that make these emerging forms of volunteer assignments developmental.

Two emerging patterns of volunteering, if continued,[73] could reasonably be expected to reap high value, sustainable and expansive civic contributions with the potential to lead to better impacts relative to pre-assignment levels. These come from volunteers' stronger focus on skilled, values-aligned and international civic participation at T3 (Section 3.2.1), and their ongoing and self-directed support for POs and other recipients in the host country that volunteers discretionarily established during their assignments (Section 3.4). While trade-offs may exist,[74] the nature of this civic participation, and the intrinsic motivations which underpin it, have the potential to result in improved impacts for host communities, and greater engagement and development for volunteers. Benefit may come from efforts to facilitate connections between (returning) volunteers and prospective community organisations that operate in their vicinity and that can make use of volunteers' generally high levels of interest in civic participation (Sections 3.2 to 3.5).

Similarly, benefit may come from VPLJ activities for volunteers during and after their assignment which focus on helping volunteers to (prepare to) transfer new knowledge and skills (gained on assignment) to voluntary service opportunities after their assignment. These can include raising awareness of opportunities that are available to volunteers to apply many of the new experiences and capabilities that they gained during their assignments, such as facilitating locally-led change or using their enhanced international development literacy in ways that might benefit organisations in need of these capabilities.

4. Global Literacy and Connections

4.1 Overview and Background

This section deals directly with the program's objectives that "volunteers (current and returned) promote greater cultural awareness and build stronger connections between partner countries and Australia" and the Australian Government objective to foster more globally literate and connected Australians. It addresses participants':

i. Ongoing engagement with and understanding of the host country. This encompasses participants' ongoing psychological connection to the country, as evident in them monitoring media, viewing content, planning visits, or informing themselves about host-country issue via study, websites or other sources (Section 4.2.1), as well as their country- and culture-specific knowledge and capabilities (Section 4.2.2);

ii. Global connections, defined as professional or personal networks that have strong international dimensions. It includes connections with HCNs (Section 4.3.1), other groups of expatriates (Section 4.3.2), and Australian residents with global connections, such as other volunteers, groups, or individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, HCN diaspora communities, and those with global careers and interests (Section 4.3.3). A final sub-section also addresses the use of social media to facilitate these networks (4.3.4); and

iii. Global literacy and cultural awareness, including knowledge, awareness and skills that have particular application in international settings beyond the host country (Section 4.4) and to participants' view of Australia and themselves as Australians (Section 4.4.1). We also consider participants' applications of these capabilities since the completion of their assignment in work, civic participation, and other areas of their life (Section 4.4.2).

The section concludes by distilling the core findings and the implications for the program's volunteer support and management (Section 4.5).

International baseline: Summary of participants' global literacy and connections at T1

At the commencement of their assignments, the sample exhibited high levels of international work, travel and/or study experiences, although their knowledge of and experiences in their host countries were more limited.

Fifty participants (93%) had lived overseas previously. More than half (28, 52%) had completed prior international volunteer assignments, although in some cases these were relatively brief group-based (e.g. voluntourism) and/or unstructured experiences. Six (11%) spoke English as a foreign language, and 30 (56%) reported some degree of competence in a second language. Although most participants identified as 'Australian (Other)' (34/54), others reported national identities (by ancestry) as Scottish, Chinese, French, Australian Aboriginal, Irish, Malaysian, German, Italian, Welsh and English. At T1, most participants expressed confidence in their ability to cope with expected cross-cultural challenges.

Yet less than a quarter of participants had prior experience living in the host country (13/54, 24%). Eleven (20%) had competence in the host-country language and just 15 (28%) reported existing contacts within the host country. These tended to be younger participants with fewer years of professional experience than others in the study. A further 10 participants (19%) had some first-hand experience in the host country through travel or study visits. Others had friends amongst the host-country diaspora in Australia, although contact was often quite limited. Indeed, the lack of knowledge about the host country was a factor for some volunteers to choose their destination. The bulk of participants' understanding of the host country context came from secondary research after applying for (or being offered) the assignment via sources such as the Internet ('*I Googled a lot of stuff*', #32), books (#06, #25), television (#17) and social media.

4.2 Host Country Engagement and Capabilities

4.2.1 Engagement with the Host Country

Although most participants had lacked connections and interest in the host country (and in many cases the region) before the recruitment process began, twelve months after the completion of their assignment all but four reported some form of ongoing engagement with their host country. The behaviours of over one third of these[75] could be classified as highly engaged with the host country, region, and/or both. These participants' engagement was reflected by practices such as:

- Actively continuing to monitor with heightened interest events in host countries (e.g. '*I'm always getting [host-country] feed on my Facebook so you're always seeing what's happening with the local (situation) .... I've still got a good (understanding) of what's going on there'*)
- Reporting positive feelings towards, and/or a shared emotional bond with, the country or its citizens (e.g. '*I have felt really homesick ... I think about (it) all the time. It's quite a strong thing …I'm quite surprised really'*)
- Having regular ongoing contact with one or more HCNs and expressing emotional connection or closeness toward them (e.g. '*We're really close, we're friends'*); and/or
- Expressing a professional or personal identity tied to the host country ('*it's my second home'*).

Three participants reported a desire to return to the host country to work; one other had already returned, and another planned to return days after being interviewed at T3.[76]

The most common way participants keep abreast of issues in the host country is via social media (seeking and responding to updates via WhatsApp chats or Facebook feeds with friends or groups in the host country). Supplementing this, participants now regularly read online newspapers and literature, follow and comment on online blogs, subscribe to Google news alerts or newsletters, and regularly watch news bulletins in the host-country language.[77] One (#54) described his philosophy as '*keep(ing) a watching brief*' on the host country. Two[78] whose assignments were based in rural locations lamented the difficulty finding news reports from those areas.

A recurring explanation for participants' higher levels of engagement was that their time in the host country:

> *… piques your interest when you see it in the news or when you see an article about […] If it's about the COVID cases, you can understand the context a bit more about how things are going (#39)*

As this extract illustrates, COVID has proven to be a motivating bond for national- and personal-level information exchanges between participants and HCNs; it also exposed the relatively high levels of emotional engagement that many participants feel ('*It breaks your heart … we've been just devastated at the news from what's going on'*, #52). COVID (and other) updates gleaned from host countries are sometimes shared with friends in Australia, although this is not widespread.

Updates on activities of friends, former colleagues and POs from the host country were closely monitored. One reported *'getting a lot of updates ... what's happening and what issues are being talked about*' (#39). Another (#24) relied on '*networks (to) know what they're up to and what they're achieving*.'

While a large part of participants' ongoing interest stems from events surrounding COVID, several other variables are associated with high levels of engagement with the host country. These are summarised in the box below. In general, having **an outward orientation, some cross-cultural skills to support this (especially related to the host country), and an assignment that provides opportunities for work and non-work contact with HCNs seem to be most conducive to volunteers sustaining engagement with the host country beyond their assignment.**

What leads to higher sustained engagement with the host country?

Three conditions were most strongly correlated with higher levels of engagement with the host country at T3:

- Having a better understanding of the host culture before the assignment, as reflected through variables like prior experience living in the host country, speaking the host-country language, knowledge of the local culture, and having completed a previous international volunteer assignment (T1);
- Wanting a future international career (at both T1 and T2);
- Undertaking the assignment alone (i.e. not accompanied by a partner).

It is also true that volunteers who worked closely with designated HCN counterparts established stronger emotional bonds that appear to have made these relationships more sustainable (see Section 4.3.1) and, through these, involve higher levels of two-way information exchange relating to the host country.

Other variables were positively correlated with engagement, although the basis for these relationships is less clear. For instance, those whose engagement was strongest were more likely to work in the Health sector, in government agencies or international NGOs, and be on assignment in East Asia. For some, this pattern may reflect the relative availability of information (including in English language).

Four participants reported being strongly disengaged from the host country at T3. Each proffered different explanations: two had unhappy experiences in the host country *('It feels so long ago now … I so infrequently think about [it] … I can barely remember*', #14), while one has tried to disengage from all media ('*I've actually decided to not watch the news … I find that I'm constantly being bombarded by news and the negativity around that'*).

4.2.2 Culture-specific Knowledge and Capabilities

While great variation existed, all 54 respondents interviewed at T3 felt that their assignment had contributed directly to noticeably better understanding of some aspect of the host country and its culture.

The in-country experiences that contributed most strongly to this were participants' immersion in the local culture and their (work) collaborations or (unstructured) discussions with HCNs.[79] Thus, the most direct influence on participants developing host-country knowledge and capabilities was their willingness and opportunity to interact with HCNs – a feature that the design of some volunteer positions contributed to directly. Participant #05's detailed description of this was typical, albeit more elaborate, than some others' views that:

> *… living in another country, particularly in a developing country, it fundamentally changes everything, your whole value system really … you come back and you just feel differently and so you do everything differently, and I guess over time things slip back but you've still got that influence there forever … I think doing it as a volunteer rather than as a paid person is a really special thing. It was completely unique … you're not just living there like some hobo because you've opted out of real life and you're not there as a highly paid consultant or a bureaucrat, you're something else … and I think in a way it makes it easier to connect with the local community. I think [HCNs] probably think that we have greater understanding of what it's like not to be well-off … you're just like an ordinary person and they think you've got a greater chance of understanding … I think it's an extraordinary experience*

As a contrast, participant #50, a *Non-working Partner* whose movements during the assignment were heavily restricted due to security concerns and so who had mainly vicarious contact with HCNs, reported greater understanding of the local health system and donor landscape but few other changes. The role of the program's VPLJ (notably the PDB and ICOP) was also pertinent, a contribution that some participants re-evaluated (more favourably) in their final interview.[80]

Distinguishing culture-specific & culture-general capabilities

In assessing how participants' experiences on the program influenced their cross-cultural knowledge and skills, we distinguish **culture-specific knowledge & capabilities** relating to the host country or region (e.g. language proficiency, contextual knowledge, understanding features of the host culture) from **culture-general knowledge & capabilities** that improve participants' cultural awareness or enhance cross-cultural competence but which are not related to a specific culture/country (e.g. sensitivity to cultural differences generally, understanding the impacts of stereotypes or cultural biases, appreciating different ways of life, communicative flexibility).

The former, addressed in this section, strengthen participants' connections to the host country & contribute to the depth of awareness of & comfort operating in that specific context.

The latter, addressed in Section 4.4, are more readily transferable across national borders & connect participants to a broader global community.

The value of participants receiving deep context-specific information at ICOPs - as both foundational knowledge and inspiration to learn more - was again apparent in some responses.

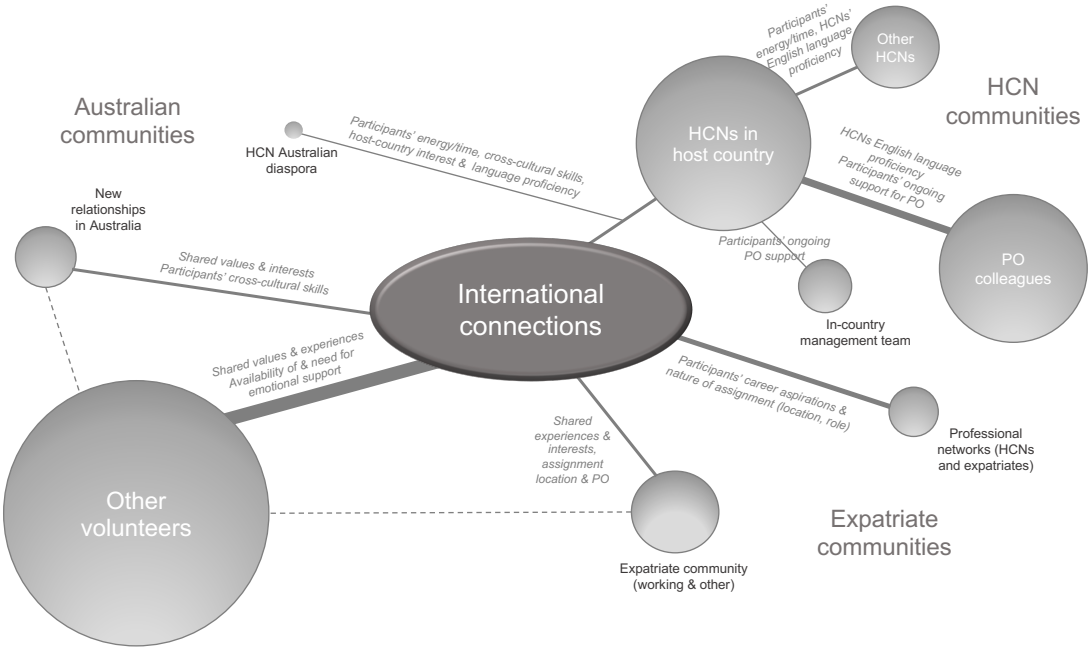
Participants' use of and interest in the host-country language fluctuated across the study. Eight participants reported some levels of fluency before their assignment. In-country language training – perceived as one of the most valuable components of the VPLJ[81] – contributed to improved language capabilities at T2, when 21 participants (38%) reported continuing to use or learn the host language in some form. This figure had declined to 27% by T3. Overwhelmingly, those continuing to use and learn the host-country language had prior experience in the host country and spoke the language at T1.[82] Few participants without a background in the language continued to develop or use these skills post-assignment.

4.3 International Networks and Connections

Most participants felt that their involvement with the program contributed to them being more globally connected and there is evidence of their international personal and professional networks being broadened, although the strength and diversity of these is somewhat limited, in part attributable to COVID.

Figure 8 visualises the main sets of connections that participants developed that have international dimensions. It shows three broad groups: (i) HCN communities (top right), (ii) other expatriate communities in the host country or region (bottom right) and (iii) Australian communities (left). The size of each circle in **Figure 8** reflects the relative number of participants reporting it.[83] The thickness of the connecting lines represents the strength of each connection (e.g. frequency of contact, emotional investment in the relationship). Labels on these connectors indicate the features contributing toward strengthening each set of networks. In general, relationships with people based overseas are presented on the right of the figure, while those with communities in Australia are on the left.

Figure 8: Type and strength of participants' international connections



The following sections (Sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.3) address the characteristics of each of these three groups of connections (HCN communities, expatriate communities, Australian communities) and their international dimensions. This is followed by a section devoted to the many uses and benefits of social media as a mechanism to manage these new relationships (Section 4.3.4). The professional and personal consequences of participants' new networks are outlined in Sections 5.2.2 and 6.3 respectively.

4.3.1 Connections with Host Country National Communities

At T3, all but five participants had continued to maintain some form of social connection with individuals or groups from the host country (49/54, 91%)[84], more than triple that at T1 (15/54, 28%). Of those with ongoing networks, 22 (41%) can be classified as having "strong" connections, involving regular conversations and intentions to maintain this, while eight (15%) are "moderate" (more than episodic) and 19 (35%) are "weak" (only at special events, like New Year or national celebrations) but ongoing.

Eighty-eight percent of volunteers (43/49) had sustained some meaningful ongoing contact with colleagues in POs. While Section 3.3 shows some formal or informal support for POs, **participants classified the bulk of these ongoing relationships with POs as social/personal rather than professional.** Eight participants (15%) also reported some ongoing connection with the program's in-country management team.

In general, the connections that were most "sticky" (i.e. more regular, deeper and sustained contact) were with former work colleagues, and in particular with designated **counterparts from the PO**.[85] That is, while the "counterpart" model was infrequent among this sample's assignments, it did seem to nurture bonds between volunteers and HCNs that were stronger and more enduring. An example of this is participant #24, who at T1 reported '*I have never met a (HCN) in my life*', and at T3 became emotional explaining: '(*My counterpart) is missing me and me missing (them) … we talk on the phone probably about once a week now … we still have connections when you write a post on Facebook or whatever … that would happen quite a bit and (their family) would post on Facebook and I normally make comments*.'

Most relationships with PO staff were sustained by personal (rather than work-related) discourse, and were relatively loose, underpinned by episodic social media exchanges to '*keep in touch*' or '*check in'*. While uneven across the sample, to some extent the strength of sustained friendships with former colleagues likely reflects the high levels of rapport, trust, and reciprocity inherent in the participants' assignments and the program's philosophy. Among the features of the relationship and context that tended to support more regular contact were competence in **a common language**, most frequently HCNs' English language capabilities[86], and **ongoing mutual interest in the impacts of COVID**, which was frequently a reason for contact being initiated.[87]

For other participants, while connections remained, the frequency and intensity of contact with HCN friends and colleagues did decline across the study period, especially in regard to POs. For many this '*naturally just dwindled' (#43)* due to absence, while for others this was due to the volunteers' schedules (e.g. work and family commitments), and/or changed circumstances in PO/HCNs (personnel changes or COVID shutdowns). One (#29) explained:

> *The last 12 months it's much more occasional, ad-hoc messaging … we're in a very different situation because Australia's stated privilege and normalcy … but then also because the border closures … it feels like there is less chance or reason to be reaching out*

A surprisingly large number – including participants who hold or held plans for international careers – had let international and host country connections dissipate across the 12 months since their return. As **Figure 8** shows, the main explanations for this were personal – e.g. a lack of energy or time due to other commitments, but also physical and mental health concerns. Having limited opportunities to contact HCNs (including limited or expensive internet coverage in some host countries) and having had a relatively unhappy assignment were also reasons.

Most of the 15 participants who had connections with the host country at T1 reported strengthening and/or expanding their in-country networks. The case study of Amelia (right), a repeat volunteer who spoke the host-country language at T1, is one example of these. According to Amelia, her assignment strengthened most existing relationships and allowed her to broaden these socially and professionally. Importantly, Amelia was one of three participants who believed being a repeat rather than novice volunteer in the country was critical to her having the cultural awareness necessary to undergird long-term relationships in a relationship-oriented culture.

Case Study: Amelia - Strengthening existing host country connections

At T3, many of Amelia's civic activities & social networks revolved around the host country, a place with which she now strongly identifies & would like to return to when circumstances allow. Amelia continues to support her PO (although this has declined over time), has considered a remote assignment & is open to another assignment. As she describes it, the assignment gave her the '*opportunity to find my tribe … be involved in the type of work that I doubt I would have been able to in Australia … & feel like I can make choices*.' Consistent with her T2 interview, at T3 she viewed two features of the assignment as prominent contributors to these changes; (i) a professional role that '*I became really passionate about … I have found myself learning so much*' & connected her with like-minded colleagues ('*we had these incredible conversations … I realised how aligned our ideas were … I have broadened my ideas about (this area)*') & (ii) being a repeat rather than first-time placement, meaning that she was no longer '*conscious of all the mistakes that I had made*' on the first assignment & instead able to focus on stronger relationships which gave her '*an awareness of difference & a passion to understand that (which) has permeated all the work I have done since*.' On this, she feels that the depth of cultural understanding she had accumulated contributed to better relationships & work outcomes, '*building my self-confidence, an awareness of difference … I didn't appreciate it (previously) for what it is*.'

Amelia now strongly identifies with the host country. She spoke of it as her '*home … I guess I spend far too much time on Facebook now to make up for (not being there)*.' She is '*absolutely, very much'* more connected with the country than previously. She has regular contact with locals including '*high up people*'. She actively contributes to social media platforms on host-country political & news issues. She has instigated regular catch-ups with diaspora in Australia. She instigated a collaboration with prominent host-country experts, with whom she created a public website to share professional knowledge relevant to the country. She also believes that her professional output & reputation have benefitted from both the technical knowledge she gained & from the '*deep*' cross-cultural awareness & appreciation for different perspectives & '*indigenous ways of knowing*.' Her acceptance of difference has resonated in other ways, including respect for different beliefs & ways of life, including '*relationships … I am starting to understand why it's so important*.' At the time of the interview (T3), Amelia was continuing to pursue a job opportunity in the host country that had arisen prior to her return to Australia.

4.3.2 Connections with Expatriate Communities

Participants' connections with other expatriates tended to be less abundant than those with HCNs or other volunteers. These centred on two overlapping groups of expatriates: those with whom participants socialised in the host country, and those from a similar professional area that offered common professional interest and potential work opportunities (see Section 5.2.2).[88] In both cases, expatriate communities offered some relief from the intensity of interactions with HCNs. One participant captured some of this sentiment at T2, explaining:

> *I feel bad saying this, but in terms of friends, the people that I chose to spend my time with, it was mainly other expatriates. Living in another country is really wonderful and culturally vibrant, but then it's also really lovely to have that familiarity to relax around people who are from similar cultures to you. I don't know if there was a subconscious element – like, this is all a lot of effort and at work you're working through different communication styles and being really sensitive to cultural differences. All that takes energy and awareness. Then to be able to get around other expats at the end of a day and to just have that safety net, it's comforting. I think that's what drew me to that group a lot. Shared interests, but also just being more comfortable*

Participants in urban areas, in certain destinations[89], and working in internationally staffed POs (INGOs, intergovernmental agencies) reported more regular contact with expatriates outside the workplace. Some

connections to expatriate communities were facilitated via other volunteers (represented by the dashed horizontal line in **Figure 8**). As with HCNs, contact with expatriates tended to decline from T2 to T3, with most being episodic. A typical example was a *Non-working Partner* (#32), who reported benefitting from the information, support, and social opportunities from a group of expatriates who '*had a WhatsApp group, there were always things on. Someone would say, I might go to this movie or we might go away this weekend, anyone want to go?*' By T3, this contact was '*less and less … I get the news and things, every now and then we do email each other. But I have a feeling over time it might get less and less, unless you're actually in the same location at some stage*.'

4.3.3 Connections with Australian Communities

On the whole, **participants were more likely to sustain (and report benefitting from) new relationships with other volunteers than they were with any other groups**. This was the case even for participants who reported being too busy or fatigued to maintain international connections (Section 4.5 presents a possible explanation). Most (although not all) connections were with volunteers assigned to the same host country and based on relationships forged in-country, through VPLJ activities[90] and during repatriations. A central feature of these connections was volunteers bonding over (perceived) shared values, worldviews, or attitudes. Section 6.4 discusses this further.

These connections were sustained through teleconferences, social media, visits, and in a few cases cohabitating. Connections with other volunteers were also more commonly associated with personal benefits than other relationships. The most prominent of these was emotional support to assist coping with repatriations and re-establishing their lives in Australia. The importance of this is discussed further in Section 4.5.[91]

In addition to other volunteers, it is also clear that the assignment has enabled volunteers to establish new networks since their return, some coalesced around common interests that were reinforced during the assignment (e.g. political action supporting issues in host countries). Others came through involvement in working groups, committees or organisations that was spurred, in part, by participants' interest in applying the country-specific, international and/or domain-specific expertise[92] (and confidence) that their assignment afforded (e.g. Section 3.2.1). Important to their acceptance in these new groups was the legitimacy and credibility bestowed by their in-country '*field work*.'[93] As **Figure 8** shows, some of these are facilitated through relationships with other volunteers.

Finally, opportunities for connections within HCN diaspora in Australia were restricted. Just a few were able to develop ongoing contacts through friends or former colleagues.[94] Others made direct approaches to community members via social media[95] or were able to catch up in Australia with HCNs visitors whom they had met on assignment.[96] The case study of Susan, in the box below, illustrates how other networks, cultural sensitivities and (host-country) language proficiency were important enablers of diaspora connections. It also points to the potential benefits arising from these connections. Like many other connections reported in this study, social media played a role in sustaining the connections that Susan drew on. The following section highlights the features of social media and its use (and power) as a vehicle for sustained global connections within the program.

Case study: Susan - Connecting and helping diaspora networks through a shared language

An extreme & potent example of the benefit of diaspora connections was shared by Susan. Prior to her assignment she had never visited the host country. Her first contact with HCNs and the host-country language occurred during the assignment recruitment & VPLJ process.

Although truncated by COVID, Susan's assignment involved deep immersion in the local culture. She was the sole foreigner in the PO & dealt daily with HCN colleagues & clients. Almost all the learning outcomes she reported at T2 related to the host culture & cross-cultural skills to build relationships & work as a cultural & linguistic minority. The role necessitated learning the host-country language, something that, at T1, she '*would like to do while I am there*' & by T2 '*I was able to pick that up relatively well … by the start of this year, I felt pretty confident I could navigate any kind of conversation that I needed to*.' These language skills - and her ability to use them to connect with the diaspora community in Australia - became important when she was contacted via social media by a former HCN colleague who had come to Australia. She explained:

> *He did seasonal work in […]. With COVID I didn't get to visit him, but he ended up needing some support for his mental health & connecting with services. His English is totally fine, but just to have some of those conversations around mental health [in his own language] … to frame that within the context of his language & asking those questions meant I got better answers & he got better support. There's just questions & ways of saying things that you can't get the same meaning out of (in) English*
>
> *His contract got extended because of COVID … he just wanted to be home & it wasn't possible. So we had to figure out how to keep him safe out in the middle of rural […] & then how to get him home in a 'hurry up' timeframe. And that was good because there was another volunteer in […] who I'd never met but worked at […] & who knew this guy. And another gentleman who came out … who I had met & who also knows the [man]. So between the three of us we all linked up & helped him out. And now he's home & happy*

Susan remains in touch with several former colleagues & friends in the host country & has tentative plans to return when travel restrictions are lifted ('*I do find myself drawn to doing more projects & programs there & if we need to locate a program within a community, I often advocate for it to go there*'). Of the language she says, '*I value that as a tool for connecting with them. It makes keeping that connection easier*.'

4.3.4 The Widespread Use of Social Media Across All Three Groups of Networks

A feature of the connections that participants developed during the program (and have sustained since) is the abundant use of social media. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram are widely used and are the primary medium through which participants remain connected with POs, friends, and fellow volunteers.

Research has looked at the effects of social media use on cultural adjustment[97]; however, no major studies have evaluated the post-assignment use of social media to sustain global networks. As a relatively low threshold technology that can connect people who share interests, social media may have particular potency to support the program's global connections and amplify participants' contributions well beyond their in-country experiences.

The main ways that participants used social media during and after their assignment, and the benefits accrued from these are summarised in **Figure 9**. As it shows, these include **informing** (accessing and sharing news), **connecting** (exchanging salutations and updates), **advocating** (promoting issues, including those relating to their

assignments), and **coordinating** (organising events and protests). The box "The tentacles of social media: Informing, connecting, advocating and coordinating networks" below outlines some of the ways participants used social media in these ways, and its role as the "glue" to adhere participants to their new international networks.

Figure 9: Patterns of social media use and benefits

The tentacles of social media: Informing, connecting, advocating and coordinating networks

While social media platforms are convenient mediums to sustain relationships, especially from a distance, the utility of such connections appears, at first glance, limited. Few participants attributed tangible benefits to their interactions on these platforms. Much was event-based & episodic; for instance, sharing photographs or exchanging pleasantries on particular occasions (e.g. birthday, new year). These frequently dissipated across the final year of the study. In some cases, language barriers limited these to quite rudimentary exchanges. In this regard, many of the international relationships that social media enabled were relatively "weak ties" (Granovetter 1973).

Notwithstanding this, a closer examination hints at more substantial personal, professional & program benefits from the widespread use of social media. For relationships that were strong (such as those with HCN counterparts), social media supplemented other richer forms of contact & enabled personal disclosures (e.g. family photographs) – important for interpersonal trust (Heizmann et al. 2018) - where this might otherwise not be possible ('*I can see their life goes on & what is happening. We share a lot, being women with children. It's interesting to see what's new for them*', #49). In doing this, social media is likely to have sustained reciprocity relationships (e.g. wantok, bubuti) that are valued in some host cultures, which are difficult to sustain from a distance, which might be activated at some stage in the future (Davison et al. 2018), and which many participants reported as important parts of their assignments.

There is some evidence that the ability to exchange images, photos or videos (not just text) via social media may have helped some HCNs overcome their concerns about language proficiency that fractured some volunteer-HCN relationships (T2 and T3). Emotionally engaging content (e.g. photographs of PO projects or HCNs' families) may be one contributor to the high levels of emotional connection reported in Section 4.2.1. This not only contributed to volunteers' knowledge of the PO's ongoing activities – and thus on-the-ground international development practices (Figure 7) - but also gave insight to the impact of their work well after their departure. As one example, a volunteer working in rural health services (#40) described her contact with PO staff through a Facebook group to which '*colleagues post things … so I see, through translation, what they're talking about'* and a Telegram group onto which:

> *they put pictures … they've got a lot of workers all through [ ] provinces … I can just look at it each day and see which little villages they've gone to and the [work] they are doing. So, I'm following that quite closely, it keeps me in the picture … I can generally follow what's going on*

Another benefit to volunteers of the use of social media came from opportunities to receive reinforcement or feedback about the impact of their volunteering, an important contributor to the "meaningfulness" of their efforts (Rosso et al 2010) which participants linked to assignment satisfaction (Section 6.2). By way of example, one *Non-working Partner* (#18) who voluntarily instigated a skill-share program with women in her host community commented: '*I got this message through Facebook saying thank you very much. I was so impressed … that kind of thing, when it happens, you feel so happy … those days, I'm really, really happy.'*

Social media was the primary source participants used to monitor political, social, weather, health & other news from the host country, most often passed on by HCNs and/or volunteers from the host country. Information about the sector, volunteering & professional issues were also shared. Through this, social media was an important support mechanism for dispersed communities of interest centred on activities in the host country. It also served as a platform for periodic information, advice & support from volunteers to POs, often on an "as needed" basis. Consequently, the loose connections that social media helps to sustain also serve as valuable portals for ongoing knowledge sharing & capacity development (see Section 3.3).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, volunteers used social media as an organising, coordinating and advocacy tool for social & political engagement on issues that were relevant to their assignments. As well as coordinating donations in response to disasters & COVID outbreaks in (former) host countries, this was most apparent when one host country experienced political turmoil soon after participants were repatriated in March 2020. In this case, a social media group was used to share updates from in-country contacts, to coordinate donations of money & resources, to organise submissions to domestic political bodies, & to plan street protests in Australian cities (& to communicate details of these). Every participant who had completed an assignment in this host country reported instigating some action of solidarity or support; social media was the platform to coordinate all of these. A *Veteran* of multiple assignments (#16) reports being made aware of events by '*contact with people that we knew in [the host country], & a woman who's now living in [Australia] that we got to know at [the PO], sending just SMS or Messenger or Facebook comments to some of the commentary which is coming from people in […]. I'm much more almost aware now*'. This led to him attending a protest march, '*the first real event I've attended like that … that was obviously driven a bit by watching the Facebook entries from friends there, meeting with [an HCN diaspora in Australia] since the coup took place, so there was a real personal sense of all of that. You know, that's fairly meaningful*'. These experiences led him to reflect that, in hindsight, the most important contribution of development volunteering came from '*helping maintain that sort of social fabric, a community and democracy and a better world, if you like, the SDG arena of what are the goals that the country and the world should be focused on. I think philosophically and practically AVP is an important part of that*'. A different volunteer described connecting with '*a lot of AVIs and former [AVIs], we've run the gamut between sharing [host-country] posts on Facebook actively … several members [of the group] have been to the visible protests. And consolidating GoFundMes & various other things like that for actual money*'. He described '*two major Facebook groups that came together & were like, okay, this is what we're doing, we're going to do this, this protest … this protest, this fundraising & this & this & this.'* Another used social media exchanges with former volunteers to gauge interest in & feedback on a proposal for an awareness raising campaign that he had devised relating to the event in question.

Sources

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4.4 Global Literacy and Competence

Of the 54 participants who reported improved *culture-specific* knowledge and capabilities (relating to their host country), just over half (28, 52%) articulated new insights, awareness, interest or capabilities that they developed, and which reflect a broader "global" perspective beyond the specific context of their assignment. All 28 attributed these changes to the current volunteer assignment despite most having plentiful prior international work or travel experiences. These generally fell in to two types which we label "behavioural flexibility" and "global mindset".

4.4.1 Behavioural Flexibility: Relationship Building, Collaborating and Communicating

"Behavioural flexibility" refers to transferable interpersonal capabilities that participants felt had arisen from their contacts with HCNs or other foreigners, which have application outside the host country and that made them better relationship builders with a range of people[98] (establishing trust, having genuine conversations, establishing rapport with different stakeholders), collaborators and/or communicators[99] (e.g. explaining things simply, needing to listen more carefully, giving and eliciting feedback). Flexibility in approaching interpersonal contact and being more thoughtful in interpersonal interactions, both reported commonly at T2, were defining features in many of the descriptions in this category. One participant (#31) described being more adept at '*switching from the "telling side" to the "listening side" when working with others*'; another (#39) at '*making things accessible in plain English*.' In both cases, the behaviours are critical to their professions (project manager and media/communications manager). Participant #19, a *Launcher* working in Community/Social Development, elaborated:

> *Sitting down and listening to what people have to say is something I've gotten from the volunteer program. I'm […] years old now and things change your life. You start to appreciate other people's stories a bit. The program was a mechanism that exposed me to these kinds of people [diversity with different life experiences] ... very different stories to mine, very different experiences to mine*

Of the many learning outcomes relating to these capabilities reported at T2, most were linked to collaborating and interacting with HCNs and to volunteers' own adjustment processes,[100] a sizable minority of which occurred in non-work settings.[101] These were also the outcomes that participants reported most frequently as beneficial in their work and life since completing their assignment (Section 4.4.4).

4.4.2 Global Mindset: Empathetic Awareness of Difference, Outsiders and Privilege

The second set of outcomes, more commonly reported, is less easy to define. Participants used a variety of terminology to describe these changes. Many struggled to articulate precisely what had changed and how these have affected their lives subsequently. Collectively, we label these "global mindset"[102] – cognitive capabilities and perspectives which encapsulate various descriptions of participants being able to view people, groups, situations, or events more holistically, empathetically and/or flexibly.[103] The following descriptors capture the range of ways that participants explained these changes, along with illustrative interview extracts:

- Having a broader perspective on events and one's own enculturation[104] ('*a much broader world view*')
- Being able to understand one's own culture as an outsider and able to see an '*outsider's perspective*'[105] ('*you see a much more concrete view of how other people see us … I think a lot of Australians don't actually have a concrete idea of what people overseas think of us*').
- Being more aware or appreciative of cultural differences[106] ('*I'm certainly more aware of the different cultural situations*')
- Being able to view situations in less polarised ways; e.g. to see similarities rather than differences[107] ('*an appreciation of other cultures ... that sense of living in another country ... that sense of perspective look(ing) for people's commonalities as opposed to differences*')
- Being more interested in or comfortable with multiculturalism or cultural differences[108] ('*just more relaxed around people of different cultures*')
- Seeing and understanding different points of view[109] ('*being able to see differences in the standpoint (of different parties) ... having an appreciation for both sides ... knowing the vast amount of miscommunication that's going on in there, the biases behind those differences*')
- Being less categorical, divisive, or judgmental[110] *('a different mindset ... not to judge someone')*

Participants from all seven categories reported these changes, *Enhancers* and *Imposed Transitioners* (both 5/7) most commonly. The assignment features most strongly associated with these changes related to the role that volunteers performed; particularly, whether their assignment had a designated "mentor" role.[111] Participants who reported "global mindset" were also slightly younger than those who did not.[112]

The data suggest that a more global mindset may also be associated with other beneficial outcomes. Participants reporting changes in global mindset were more likely to report that others (family and friends) had noticed changes in them since the completion of their assignment. They were also more likely to report applying their learnings to their work/study since their assignment,[113] to be inspired to commence a study program because of their assignment[114] (although not always relating to cultural/global issues) and to see parallels between parts of their assignment and how issues of disadvantage, inequity, capacity development or cross-cultural awareness related to (participants' understandings of) the experiences of Indigenous Australians (Section 4.2.3).[115]

Two additional outcomes, not evident in the dataset at T2, were surprisingly widespread and are closely related to the program's global literacy objectives. The first is variations of "**cognitive empathy"** – or being willing and able to understand (in a non-judgmental way) the thoughts, motives and/or feelings of the others, and the reasons behind these.[116] Seventeen participants[117] reported outcomes consistent with this. Participant #05 explained: '*Once you understand the things that we take for granted that other people can't take for granted, like the availability of water out of a tap or electricity, it does make you think really differently. It makes you a more empathetic person. You have a greater understanding of the 'other', whoever the other is.'* For two participants, including Melissa, whose case study is below, greater empathy was identified as the primary impact of their assignment. As Melissa's case illustrates, it was both the regular and close contact with HCNs and the conditions in which this contact occurred that contribute to this.

A further outcome was participants' awareness of their social privilege and systematic advantage, or "**privilege awareness"**[118], reported by 12 participants.[119] In Melissa's case in the box below, this came from the privilege of being a native English speaker. Others related this change to their (relative) financial security or access to more capacious health systems – a point exacerbated during COVID and by their repatriation. One observed '*this privileged existence (where) I get to go back my wealthy homeland whilst the people that I'm trying to help have to face this global health threat on their own*' (#52). Another described her early post-repatriate days in Australia in this way:

> *I remember walking along the footpath without paying any attention to where I am putting my feet and then realising the privilege of living in a country like that … and the more stark disparities around COVID playing out and the emotions attached to that. It's very safe here and "emotionally neutral" basically, whereas people back in […] have clearly had a much more up and down experience (#29)*

The contributions of VPLJ activities to these changes were acknowledged by some participants. Indeed, a prominent finding at T3 was participants tempering earlier criticisms and showing more appreciation for the relevance of PDB content. Whereas reports of cognitive empathy were correlated with global mindset changes, this was not the case for privilege fluency, suggesting this may have been linked to other features of the volunteer experience, such as experiencing contrasting economic conditions (amplified by forced repatriations) and/or their complex identities as "volunteers" and the insider/outsider status with which they associated this identity.[120]

Case study: Melissa - Privilege fluency & cognitive empathy in an unfamiliar and 'daunting' context

Melissa's assignment was strongly motivated by career concerns. She had quit her job & was intending to explore work opportunities in other countries before deciding that she could achieve some of the career opportunities she wanted while having '*a fun experience, but also really good for my career moving forward. It's the best of both worlds.*' She also believed that '*this region is so influential for Australia … it'd be great to have that Asian literacy too'* (T1). Melissa was excited by the prospect of living in a culture she knew little about but equally realistic that '*my own ignorance is probably holding me back from knowing a lot of the challenges*', believing that '*understanding cultural nuances & what works for the local audience'* would be important *'before digging my teeth into anything*' (T1).

Interviewed at T2, Melissa says on a personal level she '*absolutely loved'* the assignment (*'I couldn't have been happier with the entire experience'*). Nonetheless, the assignment did not provide a lot of scope for her to develop her professional skills as she had hoped. She attributed this to the unexpected (poor) technical competence & English proficiency among her colleagues, which led her to feelings of '*never knowing what was going on.*' Many of the learning outcomes she reported at T2 related strongly to this, such as accepting uncertainty, '*being flexible & agile & adaptable & resilient'*, grading language when communicating, & understanding the importance of investing in practices consistent with the values of the host cultural, such as fostering relationships. At T3, Melissa reflected on the main impact of the assignment on her as:

> *It's enabled me more to put myself in other people's shoes, like trying to think of the perspective of other people a bit more. I think it really is quite challenging cross-culturally to do that, and I think that really gave me a good understanding of that … you can't (easily) put yourself in somebody else's shoes & understand their perspective, because you've had totally different lived experiences - culture, religion – everything is so different. That understanding, that you can't understand how other people are approaching things … maybe that sounds a bit flowery but I think for me that was the key. I thought I could do that before going. I had no idea how challenging it would be*

Melissa also reflected on the assignment's impact on things she had taken for granted, like the privilege she has as a native English speaker. Although she had indicated a desire to '*do my best to understand*' the local language at T1, she reflected at T3, '*I probably didn't have an understanding that it's really bloody hard to learn another language.*' This was distilled during her T2 interview when she explained that:

> *One of the main take-aways is just the privilege that I have in speaking English, it's unbelievable … just thinking about my colleagues, for example, they wanted to learn how to use … a particular [software] program, and they purchased this program that I'd never heard of & they wanted to know how to use it. I'd never heard of it before but … my colleagues couldn't use the platform because it was all in English, let alone learn how to do it. I could just watch a You Tube clip & then teach them. It's so easy if you have the English language. I had never done things that simply before. If I didn't know how to do something before I'd talk to people or whatever, or I'd stress about it. But it really taught me that we are just so privileged to have so much information … I was really struck by how privileged we are speaking English*

Melissa also described how the support provided by the program helped her to cope & learn during her assignment. At T2 and T3 she shared multiple examples of stressful cross-cultural encounters that she felt '*were pretty intense ... in retrospect'* but which were made *'less daunting'* by '*the program being so supportive'* which helped her navigate the experience & left her more favourably disposed towards the assignment & the host country. At T3, she reflected:

> *… if anything was concerning you could turn to your in-country managers & talk it through with them … I would hate to think if you just found it really overwhelming. If you didn't have that support you might really hate the experience & then have bad feelings towards the country. I think the really good thing about the program is they offer that support to make sure you are not on your own & make sure that you are having good feelings towards the program & the country more broadly as well*

4.4.3 From Global Experiences, New Insights into Australia and Being Australian

A related outcome is the large number of participants (79%)[121] reporting that their assignment changed their view about Australia or being an Australian.[122] Most (78%) of these changes could be viewed as broadly positive: for instance, feeling greater pride in being Australian, appreciating Australia's lifestyle, environment, or acceptance of differences/minorities, and – most frequently – increased gratitude towards the country's political, educational or health structures. One example of this was a recent migrant to Australia (#44), who at T1 expressed cynicism about Australia's foreign policy and the geopolitical role of the program. At T2, her in-country contacts with embassy staff

and seeing the positive work done in the country led to a better understanding of Australia's role as a donor and development partner in the region. This culminated at T3 in her expressing greater pride and *'feel(ing) more Australian in some ways.*' Other changed views of Australia were more neutral – for instance, reporting changes in values or attitudes that now differed from '*mainstream*' Australia (most common among participants whose tenure in the host country pre-dated the study), or now seeing Australia differently '*as an outsider'* might. Others could be perceived as more negative; for instance, multiple participants reported feeling a sense of disappointment or shame in Australian government policies (e.g. better understanding host-country criticism of '*boomerang aid'*, #10).

As well different views on Australia, at least 11 participants (20%)[123] saw direct links between parts of their assignment and how issues of disadvantage, inequity, capacity development or cross-cultural awareness related to (participants' understandings of) the experiences of Indigenous Australians. For most of these participants, this connection was based on their experiences working with Indigenous colleagues, customers, or communities, either prior to the assignment[124] or since returning.[125]

Four participants[126] (in rural East Asia and Pacific) found parallels between their interactions with HCNs and Indigenous Australian clients in their current work (T3). This included techniques to establish trust and rapport ('*able to really connect on that sort of level'*, #35) or having more empathy in relation to systemic issues that these clients may confront in areas of health (#28), government services (#39), education (#10) and land ownership (#35). One explained, '*it's a very different context from working in [the host country], but it's still a cross-cultural context - that's a useful thing to be aware of*' (#39). Another felt her experiences as an outsider in the host country made her more sensitive to the discrimination that Indigenous Australians confront in their day-to-day lives, observing '*I think I'm probably more likely to voice up about things like that, having lived somewhere else*' (#26).

In addition to participants using these skills in their current work, five[127] had instigated or applied for positions that would involve directing their expertise toward services for Indigenous Australians and/or disadvantaged minorities, feeling their experiences had provided '*a lot of lessons*' that would make them more effective working with these groups. The most overt example of these may be Christine, summarised in the box below, who since returning to Australia had collaborated with friends on a domestic anti-racism and Indigenous reconciliation initiative. The idea for this was a crystallised on her assignment, which gave her the motivation, awareness and, she believes, legitimacy to make a more effective contribution.

Case study: Christine - Re-orienting toward domestic anti-racism initiatives

Christine '*took probably six months … to settle back in'* after returning to Australia, but her main focus now has shifted to be much more actively involved in funded & voluntary roles directed at her passion for anti-racism education & advocacy in Australia, which she has approached with renewed vigour since returning. Much of her focus now, she says, is on '*making a contribution'* on this. She believes that this involves '*creat(ing) the work that I find most meaningful*', a philosophy she seems to apply to both her paid employment & her very active community work.

Unlike some *Transitioners*, Christine's assignment did not set any specific new direction. Nonetheless, she believes the experiences of her assignment – in particular observing & '*re-engag(ing) with some constructive critique'* about international aid/development practice, including '*often feel(ing) embarrassed to be a white Australian*' – combined with the extended time to reflect & re-assess her priorities (both on assignment & subsequently during lockdown) were major contributors which '*made my commitment stronger … to the perils of not understanding anti-racism*.' While this has been an ongoing part of her life that pre-dates the assignment, she is categorical that her interest in, passion for & ability to contribute to this is '*100% informed*' by her assignment. Across the study, Christine moved from '*burnt out'* mid-level local manager in Australia (T1) to being inspired & motivated toward creating change on anti-racism & Indigenous reconciliation in Australia (T3). This was a vague interest expressed at T1 but which has been informed & reinvigorated by her assignment & subsequent reflection on her values. These led her to reject international work opportunities due to '*those power dynamics … I don't think I could have stomached working these sorts of jobs*.' While COVID may also have played a role, she believes that '*my concern for the [international region] is still paramount but my way of acting on it is not – the location has changed … I want a better Australia*.' Her sensitivity to this was heightened & reinforced during her assignment & has been the impetus for subsequent action.

Christine's future plans changed across all three interviews, apparently shaped by the experiences she had, by opportunities presented to her (e.g. connecting with friends) & by constraints imposed by COVID, which curtailed her assignment extension & international travel ('*to be free & wandering'*). A substantial change for Christine is the vastly expanded breadth & depth of civic engagement since returning, '*definitely*' a result of being able to '*see clearly the anti-racism work & where & how I can share & think about that … that was honed by my (assignment) … the eyes that I had in […] that I can bring to this work are really enriched*.' As well as leading a collaboration with colleagues that has won grant funding for awareness/information programs relating to this work, Christine instigated involvement with two related local community groups, one of which required re-training ('*8-week program online every fortnight*') & both of which involve sharing experiences & skills that relate to her assignment. She reports active political engagement & making efforts to influence the practices of development organisations with which she has contacts. Despite having spent much time overseas & in the host country previously, Christine believes the recent assignment improved her cross-cultural awareness & that this has helped her work ('*curiosity around listening to other voices … I'm much more switched on to that … I get it in my guts*').

Personally, Christine feels '*wiser, a much better listener*' & reported strengthened relationships with family & with overseas friends. She has instigated behavioural changes to improve her physical & mental health because '*I am really committed & passionate to this anti-racism work, I want to be the best that I can be & that means making a commitment to myself to feel strong physically & mentally*.' While Christine remains '*open to all sorts of things'*, for now she intends to remain focused on her social justice efforts at the local & national level – '*I want to feel like I have contributed some change*.'

4.4.4 Applying Cross-cultural Knowledge and Capabilities

Figure 10 shows the proportion of participants who, at T3, had had opportunities to apply cross-cultural capabilities developed on the program to different aspects of their lives. As it shows, just over half the sample (28 participants, 52%) reported applying their new cultural acumen in the 12 months since completing the assignment – most commonly in workplaces (35% of participants) or their personal lives (20%), as well as civic engagement and studies (right-side of **Figure 10**). This was despite several barriers that limited their opportunities, including not working and restrictions on their social and work interactions (indicated on the left of **Figure 10**).[128]

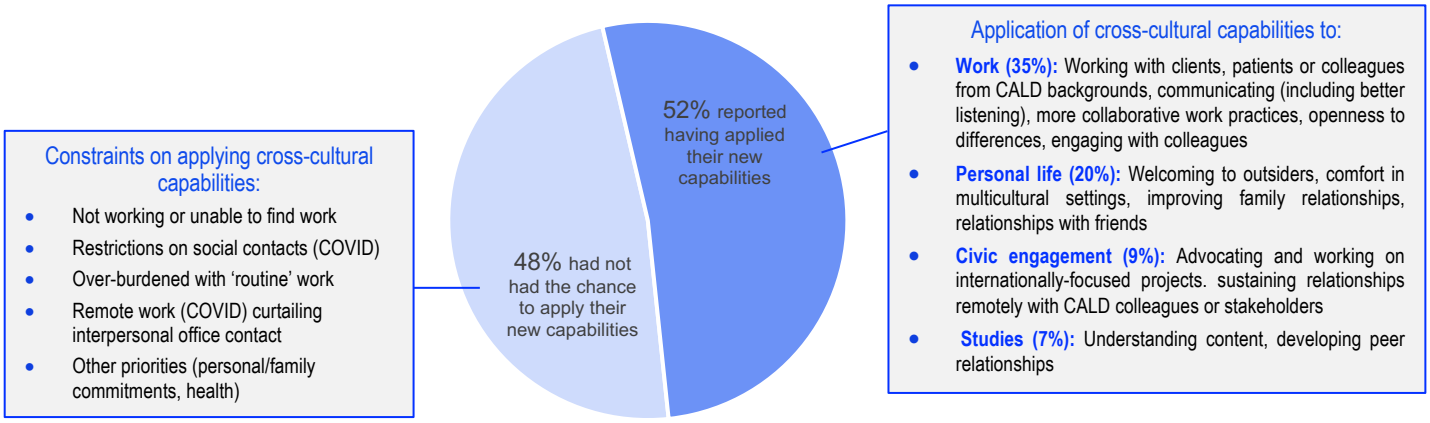
For those who reported applying these capabilities in workplaces, responses tended to highlight their use in a vast array of interpersonal contexts and with a variety of groups. Most common was fostering or managing relationships with colleagues, clients or stakeholders that were international (including HCNs) as well as Australian residents from different backgrounds ('*Having genuine conversations rather than a transactional thing. I find I can be in different parts of that system in different ways without it being uncomfortable, whereas I can now see how for some people that would be quite uncomfortable'*, #28). Activities that multiple participants reported performing more often, more effectively, or in different ways, were communicating, empathising, collaborating, welcoming outsiders, mentoring, and listening to and understanding different points of view.

Several participants specified working with minority groups (Indigenous, CALD) or in multicultural contexts as outlets for their new cultural acumen. A *Non-working Partner* now supporting CALD customers during a government COVID support program was frank: '*I understand a bit more why people [from different cultural backgrounds] are behaving a certain way'*, #21. The case study of Anna in the box on the right is one example of these.

Case study: Anna – 'Opening minds' & 'empathising'

The closure of national borders due to COVID prevented Anna – an *Imposed Transitioner* and repeat volunteer – from commencing an international position that she had accepted but was unable to begin. Confined to her home city in Australia & with additional family commitments, she found casual work with a reputable employer that was '*hugely*' a result of the professional and international experiences she gained during her assignment. The new role involves policy, education and mentoring roles ('*the guy who employed me … recognised its value')*. In this new role as an educator, she regularly shares examples from her assignment *('it pops up'*) & applies the knowledge she learned during her assignment '*to help (people) open up their minds to valuing different ways of thinking*.' She believes that the cross-cultural acumen that came from her assignment has made her *'much better equipped'* to understand her students ('*reading between the lines … why are they thinking in the way they are*') & '*engaging with people*.' She says, '*before I went volunteering this time, the students used to complain about my style, that I wasn't professional … whereas now they are much more likely to talk (positively) about my empathy*.' In this, Anna believes that her professional output & reputation have benefitted from the novel volunteer role, which she draws on in her classes, and the '*deep*' cultural awareness, which informs her relationships with students & peers, and which influence the way she teachers her classes.

Figure 10: Participants' use of cross-cultural capabilities since completing their assignment



As with other outcomes, participants' reports of using these capabilities at T3 are consistent with learning outcomes and experiences they reported at T2. Participant #31, for instance, believes that her greater empathy and openness to taking people's opinions on board - described in detail at both T2 and T3 – is now '*100% from a professional perspective … really valuable for me to be a better manager*.' Participant #02 now manages a major international project remotely and has found she uses her cross-cultural skills '*all the time ... a lot of the communication stuff ... accepting the fact that I am female and what's worth trying to push and what is just better off asking a man to say for me ... those cultural norms have been really helpful*.' Another described being conscious of *'engaging better with staff ... (being) a lot more patient, probably tolerant ... more understanding, more engaging with regards to having genuine conversations with people.*' Participants reported applying their culture-*general* knowledge and capabilities more often than culture-*specific* knowledge and capabilities,[129] six volunteers have taken host-country/region expertise into their work and career plans as a specialisation or point of differentiation, including some who had no interest or intention of this prior to volunteering.[130]

Participant #09, who now consults with small social enterprises operated by CALD owners, is more conscious of working hard to, and being better at, seeing situations from different perspectives ('*I didn't think about that much before'*). This was an outcome she reported at T2 in observing locals' attitudes toward foreign travellers in the host country ('*You're travelling and you're going to a new country and you think more about yourself, but I guess now I think more like I'm a guest there, live with the locals … you've got to be more polite and talk to people. It's rude just to hang out with foreigners. I didn't think that before, but now I think it's rude*'). She also observed this in the projects with which she was involved via her PO, a grassroots NGO staffed by HCNs ('*You can't be an outsider and just implement something because they've seen so many projects that organisations would try to implement [there] that just don't work*', T2). Notably, at T3 she reflected on a disagreement she had had early in her assignment in the PO, and that she would now - with hindsight and with different capabilities - have handled differently ('*If I went and*

did that again, I think I would have […] because I think maybe I didn't explain to them […] and that was the main issue. I would have tried a few more ways of trying to create a relationship instead of shutting it off).

4.5 Global Literacy and Connections: Key Findings and Implications

4.5.1 Key Findings

- At T3, all participants identified knowledge, capabilities or awareness which they had developed during their volunteer assignment that falls within the program's objectives to improve volunteers' global literacy, although the degree of change varied greatly. The clearest evidence exists for participants developing better understanding of, greater interest in, and stronger connections with, the host country than they possessed before their assignments. For a smaller number of participants (just over half), there is evidence of the assignment instigating more transformational changes to their culture-general capabilities and outlook. These are the participants who were most likely to have begun applying (in work and life) the new capabilities and outlook that their volunteer assignments helped to shape. On balance, although interest in host-country language declined rapidly after the assignment, **the evidence does indicate a positive contribution to "Australian volunteers gain(ing) a deep cultural understanding (of the host country) from living and working in a community overseas."**[131]
- The extent and depth of participants' engagement and connections with the host country vary across the sample and, on the whole, have declined in the year after their return (T2-T3). Nonetheless, these connections remain and are sustained through personal (rather than professional) exchanges and via social media. As the experiences of some volunteers show, these connections facilitate ongoing information exchanges that contribute to awareness and knowledge about the host country (and Australia). This has been propelled by events like COVID. These relationships, while relatively "weak ties" for most participants, provide a platform for deeper and different forms of exchange, including ongoing PO support (Section 3.3). From these, it is clear that connections and knowledge exchanges between host countries and Australia have been strengthened and have been facilitated by participants' base level of knowledge and interest in the host country, deep contact with HCNs in-country, and the utility of social media to nourish the connections. Thus, **the data also indicate that the program does assist in "promot(ing) cultural understanding through connecting people."**[132]
- There is evidence that the cross-cultural nature of the program has the potential to lead to changes that can be transformational to volunteers' cultural awareness and outlook (Section 4.3). On the other hand, some of the participants' main changes were relatively minor and host-country specific. The data indicate a combination of features - personal (e.g. past experiences), support (e.g. PDB content), contextual (e.g. access to networks), and assignment (e.g. "mentor" role) - combined to facilitate some participants' ability to convert their intercultural experiences to a more global outlook, and that these participants had begun applying this more global outlook in multiple areas of their lives.
- The program contributes directly to strong, informal, and beneficial networks of volunteers, typically coalesced around common values and interests in social justice and host country issues. For some participants these networks led to valuable outcomes such as emotional succour and practical support after their assignment, access to information about host countries and development/civic issues, and guidance and reinforcement on career or personal decisions. Through these mechanisms, these networks offer potential to be especially powerful contributors to multiple program outcomes, including volunteers' personal and professional development, and ongoing contributions to POs' capacities.
- Participants' connections with practitioners, stakeholders, and mentors from their (domain-specific) professional areas were relatively limited, especially for volunteers in remote locations and in local (host-country) dominated POs (also see Section 5.2.2).

4.5.2 Supporting Volunteers' Ongoing Global Literacy and Connections[133]

» Strengthening volunteers' host-country engagement, connections and knowledge

Increasing access to and use of social media, especially among host-country communities, has the potential to transform the global connections that program participants develop and the benefits – in both directions – that arise from this. Participants gained information, joy, professional opportunities, satisfaction and/or emotional sustenance from these exchanges. We are cautious about suggesting the program seek to manage these interactions in any way. However, in-house research to better understand how host communities and POs perceive, manage and respond to their interactions with volunteers via social media would help the program (and volunteers and POs) better understand the full impacts of these exchanges and to assist all sides to benefit.[134]

The results in this and other sections (Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 5.2.2 and 5.3.1) highlight the learning benefits of volunteers having strong prior knowledge of, interest in, or engagement with, host countries. This is true even for volunteers who, at T1, expressed most interest in the international/global elements of the assignment or their work (rather than the host country).

The relative impact of volunteers' pre-existing culture-specific knowledge may have been exacerbated for the current sample because so many assignments were truncated by COVID, reducing the time participants had to develop this foundation in country. Nonetheless, this finding suggests that the sooner volunteers develop comfort in the host country, the more personally and professionally developmental their experiences can be. For this

reason, volunteers and the program are expected to benefit from bringing this finding to the attention of prospective and current volunteers and to help them to begin developing country- and culture-specific knowledge, engagement and connections. This may include, where feasible, making optional VPLJ resources available or supporting volunteers' relationships with diaspora HCNs in Australia prior to assignments commencing. In doing this, informal social networks of former volunteers (Sections 4.3.3 and 6.4) may help prospective volunteers to connect with networks and/or information sources. A related benefit of this is the potential to seed relationships that may later strengthen volunteers' ongoing (post-assignment) networks with HCN diaspora.

» Helping volunteers broaden their global outlook

The depth and extent of contact that volunteers had with HCNs is a central feature of many of the changes reported in this section, including enhancing culture-specific and culture-general knowledge and capabilities, host country engagement, and ongoing connections with host-country communities. It is feasible to propose that the program's distinctive design and support mechanisms make a valuable contribution to these outcomes. That is, while much valuable contact with HCNs occurred outside work and outside the program's auspices, the theory of change that undergirds the program – e.g. person-to-person relationships, interpersonal capacity development, meaningful intercultural collaborations – and the VPLJ activities that support it[135] are likely important contributors to this outcome.

To further buttress these benefits, the program might consider VPLJ activities that raise volunteers' awareness of these patterns. These might include, for instance: (i) customised optional seminars or learning activities to assist volunteers to transfer/apply PDB content to their experiences in country, (ii) activities designed to assist participants to broaden volunteers' understanding and "global mindset" from their accumulated country-specific experiences throughout their assignment, (iii) opportunities to discuss topics like privilege awareness, cognitive empathy, and global mindset with peers or experts, and/or (iv) support for returned volunteers to help them transfer the culture-general and culture-specific knowledge and capabilities that they gain on the assignment to their work and lives in Australia.

» Supporting volunteers' global connections

Many of volunteers' new networks (notably those with their fellow volunteers) could be classified as "strong ties" offering "bonding capital" – that is, psychologically close relationships with people who share similar demographic characteristics.[136] These types of relationships are most valuable as sources of emotional support during difficult experiences. In some cases, volunteers' networks also provided "bridging capital" - more expansive "outward-focused" ties with those who differ in identity or profession.[137] These relationships can be important to women and minorities,[138] and for those wishing to transition to a new career or to work in a new sector.[139]

The findings indicate that the program provides opportunities for volunteers to develop important and valued networks, primarily with other volunteers. The relative lack of international networks among volunteers who have international objectives, and the strong career emphasis of many volunteers, suggest potential benefits in diversifying and strengthening access to bridging capital.

The program should continue to create an enabling environment for volunteers to develop networks with other volunteers before, during and after their assignment. This might include in-country VPLJ activities, RAVN events and other mechanisms that encourage volunteers to recognise the value of mutual support as well as shared interests and values. Important in this is the program taking steps to ensure that these are inclusive of different demographics and assignment locations (including volunteers in remote areas).

One area where participants may not have benefitted, however, relates to their "linking capital"[140] – relationships that connect participants across different power levels and which enable participants to access services, information and resources that might otherwise be unavailable. This may be especially acute in relation to professional mentors and gatekeepers due to the limited access that volunteers had to higher-status and more influential people from within their profession (see also Section 5.2.2). Volunteers' extended separation from their Australian networks makes this relevant to all volunteer assignment. While the importance of this may have been magnified for this sample due to their sudden return to Australia, the program and volunteers are likely to benefit from efforts to help volunteers to develop or retain contacts with key domain-specific professional associations and individuals during their assignments, including those in the host country, Australia and/or elsewhere.

Volunteers' investment of their energies in (emotionally supportive) volunteer networks – a point about which some participants were explicit - may, at least in part, be driven by stresses associated with COVID. These types of external stresses can drain emotional resources[141] and lead people to "reconfigure their portfolio of interpersonal connections" to give more attention to relationships that help them cope[142] and neglect networks that offer advice (such as work-related information) or which are more demanding, such as those with ethnically-or linguistically-different out-groups ('*I just didn't have the energy for it, so I let that go by the wayside*').[143]

Viewed this way, volunteers' relatively stronger bonds with their volunteer peers than with other groups may reflect the circumstances of their return and so make the patterns reported here atypical. It also highlights both the benefits and difficulties of retaining certain networks (bridging and linking capital), and the way in which the disruptions of volunteers' post-assignment experiences can influence the program's objectives.

Efforts by the program to nurture and facilitate these supportive volunteer-to-volunteer networks make sense. Equally, however, helping volunteers to balance these with valuable host-country (and other international and

professional) relationships is also warranted, especially given the many positive outcomes associated with host-country knowledge, connections and engagement that this study unearths (e.g. Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 5.2.2 and 5.3.1). In this, a balanced and complementary set of social and professional relationships is likely of most value to volunteers' personal and professional growth. For this reason, curating opportunities for volunteers to connect with a broad range of relevant international networks during and after their assignments is one way to remedy this. International Volunteer Day events were an example that volunteers reported as helpful. Networking opportunities with other international volunteer cooperation organisations and/or international development agencies and practitioners may also be beneficial.

How effectively volunteers were able to transfer their motivations and skills to domestic setting with disadvantaged or minority groups, including Indigenous Australians and Australians from CALD backgrounds, could not be assessed. Nonetheless, the responses indicate that volunteers were exposed to issues of inequity and discrimination in host countries that have (in their view) parallels in Australia (Section 4.2.2). In some cases, VPLJ activities introduced or reinforced concepts and practices that, combined with their experiences, helped volunteers to understand these issues differently (also see Section 6.3.1). The program also contributed to a more nuanced "outsider's" view of social issues in their own country, at least among some. Likewise, it seems to have been the impetus for some volunteers to return with (renewed) motivation to direct their energies (and new cross-cultural awareness) toward domestic inequality/social issues.

Building on this, support to help volunteers to recognise these parallels and to assist volunteers to develop pathways to apply their energies and skills toward these endeavours are likely to be beneficial. Part of this might include, for instance, re-framing post-assignment program support (RAVN, VLPJ activities) to focus more directly on helping volunteers' learning and their ongoing use and development of new knowledge, capabilities and networks in their work and life. In doing this, the program's formal support should seek to complement and enable volunteers to benefit from the many informal learning and development opportunities presented on their assignment.

5. Career Progression and Professional Capabilities

5.1 Overview and Background

This section reports outcomes relating to participants' career progression and professional capabilities. As well as addressing the program's objective to support volunteers to "gain professionally", the outcomes discussed in this section are central to the motivations that many LSAV participants gave for volunteering[144] (and to the motivations of many program volunteers).[145] The section addresses the impact of participation in the program on:

1. Participants' career progression and employment status (Section 5.2). Sub-sections are devoted to examining participants whose pre-assignment motivations were attached to a transition to a prosocial career (5.2.1) and to participants' career networks (5.2.2); and
2. Participants' professional knowledge and capabilities, and the ways these have been utilised after the assignment (Section 5.3). This includes a separate section (5.3.2) explaining the synergistic relationship between volunteering and formal education (before and after a volunteer assignment).

We conclude by distilling the core findings and considering the implications for volunteer support and management (Section 5.4).

Professional baseline: Summary of participants' professional status and capabilities at T1

At the commencement of their assignment, participants were highly qualified in their field & more educated than most Australians, with 95% holding either a Bachelor (45%) or Masters/Doctorate degree (49%). Nine (18%) aimed to continue a formal education program during their assignment & a few expressed tentative plans to continue or commence studies after their assignment. Professionally, the background of participants was diverse. The largest occupational categories represented were Education/Training/Library & Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design (both 18% of the sample), & Community/Social Development (13%). At T1, 28 (52%) expressed an aim or a general interest to pivot their career (job, employer or sector) toward one that had stronger prosocial features (i.e. help others and produce beneficial social/environmental impacts), while 22 (41%) – especially *Transitioners* and *Launchers* - reported future career plans that were internationally oriented.

The sample comprised a mix of participants working full-time (39%), having just completed full-time studies (11%) and retirees (30%), as well as several who were seeking work but unemployed (20%), mainly due to recent departures from professional roles (redundancies & resignations). Participants' experience in their occupational field varied from nil to 41 years (mean: 13.99 years).

Thirty-two participants (59%) identified career benefits as an important motivation for volunteering. This was especially true among younger participants. For 13 (24%) of these, "career" was the primary motivator. Among the professional benefits that participants sought from their assignments were: gaining field experience to enable them to enter or transition into the International Development & Humanitarian Aid sector, enhancing their skills & experiences through working internationally or in a challenging context, or accumulating experiences to allow them to re-enter the workforce after a career setback (e.g. redundancy). Twenty-two (41%) reported a desire to develop a temporary or permanent international career & saw the volunteer assignment as a stepping-stone to achieving this.

Participants' motivations & career stages at T1 led to the classification of seven broad types of volunteers: *Career Breakers, Enhancers, Imposed Transitioners, Launchers, Non-working Partners, Transitioners* and *Veterans*. A summary of these can be found at **Figure 2** and in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019).

5.2 Career Status and Progression

Table 2 summarises participants' employment status prior to (T1) and 12 months after their volunteer assignment (T3). It shows a general increase in employment and a decline in unemployment across the study period, despite the impediments created by COVID. Nonetheless, 31% of those employed at T3 (9/29) were working in "plan B" jobs not directly related to their preferred profession, either part-time (4) or full-time (5).[146] Just one of the 22 participants seeking international careers had returned overseas to work at T3.

Table 2: Participants' employment status (T1-T3)

Employment status	T1 n (%)	T3 n (%)	Notes
Employed (full-time)	21 (39)	24 (44)	At T1, seven were working internationally, including three on volunteer assignments to which they were returning; three others had jobs to return to in Australia at the completion of their assignment. At T3, one had returned to work overseas, three were waiting to accept overseas job offers, and two were employed on remote international projects; many others had roles with strong international dimensions. Five were working in roles that were outside their main professional interest as 'plan B' careers.
Employed (part-time)	0 (0)	5 (9)	Four of those working part-time at T3 were seeking full-time work (two worked multiple jobs). Three of these were *Launchers*, only one of whom was working in their preferred professional field. All four seeking full-time work at T3 were not working at T1 (i.e. student or unemployed).
Student (full-time)	6 (11)	2 (4)	At T3, in addition to two full-time students, three participants were enrolled in part-time study. Several others had completed formal studies between T2 and T3. Just one participant was studying at both T1 and T3, having enrolled in a PG degree program based on their in-country experiences.
Unemployed (seeking work)	11 (20)	6 (11)	Just two of the 11 participants unemployed at T1 remained unemployed at T3; one of these had been offered an international role but been unable to accept it due to border closures. One participant was unable to work at T3 for health reasons.
Not working (retired)	16 (30)	17 (31)	At T3, three retirees (all *Veterans*) were working part-time and another was seeking part-time work. One *Imposed Transitioner* (T1) retired upon return to Australia (T3).

At T3, just under half the participants (24/54, 44%) had had their careers impacted by their participation in the program; for three quarters of these (18/24), that impact was positive. When *Non-working Partners* and *Veterans* are excluded[147], **nearly half of the volunteers in the study (18/38, 47%) had achieved a positive career benefit from their assignment within 12 months of it finishing.** This included 8/13 participants who identified "career" as their primary motivation for volunteering in the program. Not all of those whose careers benefitted found the assignment developmental or rewarding; the experiences of two participants (#14, #53), for instance, benefitted from greater clarity about their career direction despite generally negative experiences and little learning.

Figure 11 on the following page presents a summary of the impacts of the assignment on volunteers' careers at T3. The bar chart on the left shows the proportion of participants' whose careers have benefitted from their assignment (top), those whose careers were unaffected (centre) and those whose careers were not helped or were harmed by their participation in the program (bottom).[148] The boxes at the top centre of **Figure 11** show the pre-assignment (top) and in-country (lower) variables that distinguished those whose careers were advanced from those whose careers were stifled. It also shows the main tangible career and professional benefits that participants in this group derived from their assignments (far right). The table at the bottom centre of the page shows the pre/post professional status of the 18 (36%) participants whose assignments did not meet their career hopes.

As the boxes at the top of **Figure 11** show, when compared to participants' whose assignments were detrimental or not beneficial, participants who benefitted most were more likely to be younger, female, *Launchers*, with career motivations and pre-existing expertise or interest in the host-country. Their assignments were more likely to be evaluated as a positive experience, incorporate a designated "mentoring" role in their job title, and involve working in an international NGO. Importantly, at T3 these participants were more likely to believe the assignment enhanced their professional reputation, legitimacy, and networks, and to report developing and applying domain-specific knowledge and capabilities. They were also more likely to continue being involved in voluntary service, including support for the PO, after their assignments. In short, it seems that those whose careers benefitted most from their assignments were actively applying their expertise in paid and unpaid contributions in the 12 months since completing their assignments. Data to support this figure can be found at **Attachment 9**.

Twelve volunteers entered the program expecting and hoping to accrue career benefits that were not realised.[149] Six others experienced a "career setback"[150] (bottom of bar chart, **Figure 11**), including two whose primary motivation for entering the program was "career".[151] Several of these participants emerged from their assignment with professional precarity, although as the table at the bottom of **Figure 11** shows, most (but not all) found some employment.[152]

Three of the six participants whose assignments were detrimental to their career are unemployed; two others are working "plan B" jobs at lower levels than prior to the assignment.[153] The primary reasons for career setbacks encompassed combinations of extraneous post-assignment challenges (COVID limiting work opportunities, which directly impacted 4/6), pre-existing health conditions (affecting 2/6), as well as features of the assignment (a volunteer role that differed from the one they had expected it to be at T1) and PO (not having a well-known name and so not valued by potential employers). Common experiences among this group were: difficult transitions following repatriation (e.g. 5/6 sought counselling) and generally mixed or negative in-country experiences (including major medical incidents). *Transitioners* were the group who found the program least beneficial to their careers, with more than half not benefitting or finding it detrimental to their career.[154]

At the same time, these participants did report developmental in-country experiences.[155] Three believed they improved their professional networks and two reported improved professional confidence, although the latter has since dissipated because of difficulties finding suitable employment.

5.2.1 Making Prosocial Career Transitions

At T1, 19 participants[156] were unambiguous about **both**: (i) being motivated to volunteer by potential career benefits that their assignment would offer, **and** (ii) having a desire to use their assignment to transition in some way to a career that had a stronger "prosocial" orientation[157] (see box). The bulk of these were *Imposed Transitioners*, *Transitioners*, and *Launchers*. An additional nine[158] had career motivations and expressed broad interest in future work being more prosocial, although had less clearly defined pathways to transition and so were using the assignment to "test the waters" or explore the viability of a possible shift. Jointly, these 28 participants make up a cross-cutting group of "**prosocial career seekers**" that comprised 52% of all participants across all volunteer groups except *Veterans* and *Non-working Partners*. This amounts to 88% of participants who identified any career-related motivations for joining the program at T1, and almost three quarters (74%) of all participants who were expecting to have careers after their assignment.[159]

A "prosocial career" is one motivated, at least in part, by a desire to help others and produce beneficial social or environmental impacts.

A "prosocial career transition" is one where a participant's motivations for transitioning employment to a new position, organisation or sector is, at least in part, to better help others and to provide more beneficial social/environmental impact. In these cases, the participant perceived that their new role, employer and/or sector will help them contribute to (more) beneficial outcomes. Examples from this study include volunteers wanting to work in a role, organisation or sector that addresses sustainability, human rights, humanitarian aid or international development issues.

To make this judgment in the current study, we used participants' descriptions of their work status, and their motivations for this and for any transition at one or more interview (T1-T3). When discussing their motivations for these transitions, participants used terminology like '*meaningful*', '*passion*', '*achieve*' and '*helping*.'

Figure 11: Impacts of volunteer assignments on volunteers' careers to date and contributors to these

37% found the assignment has been beneficial to their career, even if they had not expected it to be

36% found the assignment has been detrimental to their career or has not been beneficial despite expecting it would be. Several are currently working in 'plan B' jobs

Volunteers whose careers have been more likely to benefit:

- Are young with fewer years of work experience
- Are women
- Are *Launchers*
- Had 'career' motivations for accepting the assignment
- Had an interest or past experiences in the host country

+

- Reported a positive overall experience in the host country
- Undertook a volunteer position that matched the pre-assignment PD and/or had an explicit 'mentoring' role
- Worked in international NGOs (and not government agencies)

=

Professional benefits to date
- Emerged with greater clarity about their future career direction
- Believe the assignment enhanced their professional reputation & legitimacy
- Developed domain-specific knowledge & skills (and subsequently has had opportunities to apply these in their work or civic engagement in Australia)
- Developed valuable professional networks

International benefits to date
- Developed strong international networks
- Has had opportunities to apply new international or cross-cultural skills in their work, study or life

Civic engagement benefits to date
- Undertook a remote volunteer assignment
- Sustained ongoing support for the PO after their assignment
- Has increased civic engagement levels

Pre/post professional status of volunteers whose careers have not benefitted from the assignment

Professional status	Before assignment	After assignment
Working full-time	9	10
Working part-time	-	2
Studying full-time	2	-
Unemployed	6	4
Retired	1	2

By T3, at least 14 participants – 12 of whom were identified as prosocial career seekers - had achieved a prosocial career transition**.** A summary of the main feature of these transitions, including participants' former and current roles, and examples of ways that participants described these transitions, are in **Table 3**, organised by volunteer type. From the table, just two participants did not explicate prosocial career objectives at T1,[160] although both expressed an openness to this (e.g. '*I would love to [be involved in international development]. I think there are definitely areas within the scope of […] that really interest me that I'm actively looking into now … so I think if there was an opportunity for me in some capacity to continue to contribute or be useful then I would definitely be interested'*, #28, T1). Health sector workers were over-represented in this group.[161] The data also suggest that some in-country features may have helped facilitate (or motivate) these transitions: working in POs with international staff and foci (INGOs and intergovernmental agencies), performing "mentoring" roles, and developing both international development literacy capabilities (Section 3.5) and career-related networks (Section 5.2.2).[162] Those who successfully made a prosocial transition were also more likely to have been inspired by their experiences to undertake a program of study after their assignment (model 2 in Section 5.3.2).[163]

In addition to those who succeeded in achieving prosocial work transitions, several others were inspired by the assignment (and remain committed) to transition to more prosocial employment opportunities yet, at the time of being interviewed, had not made this transition. These include participants expressing a desire to shift from private or government sectors (T1) to supporting refugee resettlement, working in humanitarian relief, mentoring Indigenous educators, and managing development infrastructure projects (T3).

Table 3: Successful prosocial career transitions

Context	Main feature of transition [former role in brackets]	Expressed motivations for new career (exemplar extracts)
Career Breakers	[Government agency manager] – Now working as a support case worker and diversity/culture educator [Corporate professional services] – Now advising on sustainability issues to large-scale government projects	• 'Making a contribution … creat(ing) the work that I find most meaningful' • 'I do feel like I'm contributing a bit more than when I was in private sector just making the rich client, richer … I feel like I'm in a good place and there's other long-term projects for me to be able to get involved and keep contributing' • 'It's an actual tangible thing now, not just the ideal - I think being in the program changed that part of it. I think I've always wanted to have a meaningful job … if my work has meaning then my life has meaning. But I think now that it's a bit more structured and a bit more holistic in terms of, it's not work and life, they're a part of the same' • 'It's making changes at the community level, that bigger structure, it takes more time … whilst the goal is to facilitate bigger change, there's also real value in that individual level connection and I just enjoy it' • 'There's something powerful about being able to do something well in a sector when you're helping people' • '(Being able to work and develop a career that had room for your passions and your concerns) is still a goal and I think that I'm very much living that. (Volunteering) was a massive learning curve for me, but it was amazing because now I think I'm able to live to the values that I wanted to live, because I've had the space to figure out how to do it, basically' • 'Exactly what I want to be doing … really passionate about it' • 'I was speaking with someone the other day about contentment, and I've felt a lot more comfortable with the path that I'm taking; for a long time I had an idea of what sort of life I wanted to lead and what sort of career I wanted to have and I think the program was good in helping me define that goal and the path to it as well'
Enhancers	[Health practitioner] – Now leading a government-funded international health development project [Engineering/Management] – Now providing oversight and governance advice to an INGO as a Board chair [Freelance IT and communication consultant] – Now providing consultancy services to grassroots social enterprises	
Imposed Transitioners	[Service coordinator] – Now leading a community development team for clients with special needs [Health practitioner] – Now working in community health promotion [Health practitioner] – Now conducting field work in disease control with an intergovernmental agency	
Launchers	[Student] – Now employed as a program manager in an international development organisation [Administrator] – Now managing programs that focus on international human rights [Communications] – Now supporting youth civic engagement [Scientist] – Now applying skills to help grassroots organisations in development contexts	
Transitioners	[Social worker] – Now working with disadvantaged CALD minorities with special needs [Agricultural consultant] – Now building a career in agricultural development	

Conversely, 16 of the prosocial career seekers (30% of all participants) had not, by T3, achieved the desired transition, and therefore one of their main aims in volunteering through the program was left unfulfilled.[164] This was most common among *Transitioners*, *Enhancers* and *Launchers*, many of whom had resigned from prior employment to accept their assignments (T1).

Five of these who did not achieve the desired transition (9%)[165] identified "career" interests as their main reason for entering the program (T1). All five had different in-country experiences from '*feeling underutilized and undervalued'* to '*couldn't have been happier with the entire experience.*' Four were on track to make their transition (including one being offered a job) before COVID. In other words, it was the unexpected disruption of

COVID rather than shortcomings in their program experiences that most strongly curtailed the career aspirations of these four. The other benefitted by realising that the sector did not suit her disposition, prompting a return to a previous employer by T3 – with new skills and greater appreciation for her old sector. All five had found jobs by T3, although three reported difficult personal circumstances after repatriation. Subsequent to T3, we learned that two had succeeded in transitioning to the sector.

Of the remaining 11 participants who did not achieve their desired prosocial transition, five[166] were on track to do so before their careers were curtailed by COVID (one of whom had been offered an international job), four[167] returned to former fields of work at various levels of progress (or decline) but believing they had learned from the experience about themselves and their jobs, while two – at the time of T3 interviews - had not benefitted professionally and had not been able to transition to a satisfying alternative career.[168]

In sum, of the 16 participants who sought but were unable to achieve a "prosocial career transition" by T3, nine were directly disrupted by COVID ("COVID career casualties") and five returned to their previous employment, albeit reluctantly and with detrimental impact for some.

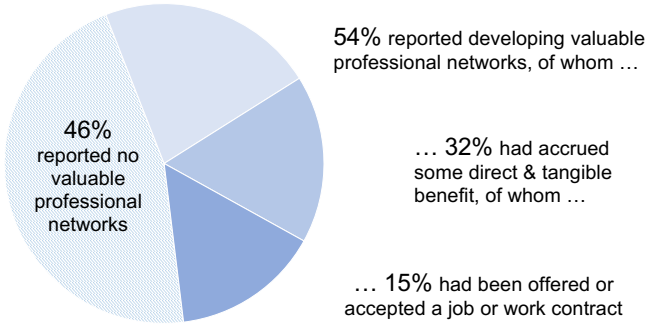
5.2.2 Developing Career-related Networks

Section 4.3 laid out the connections that participants developed that had strong international overtones. This section deals specifically with the professional/career impacts that emerged from relationships that participants established as a direct result of their involvement in the program.

Twenty-two participants[169] (41%) reported establishing some valuable professional contacts during their assignment that relate directly to their field of expertise.[170] Excluding participants who expressed no interest in future careers (most *Veterans* and *Non-working Partners*), this equates to 54% of the sample (22/41). This is represented by the shaded sections on the right side of the pie chart at **Figure 12**. As the figure shows, of the 54% who built professional networks, 32% (13 participants) had accrued some tangible and direct professional benefit from the network by T3 – mainly through access to advice/expertise that participants utilised in their work, commencing a new work project, or from professional opportunities. Six (15%) had received job offers through these networks. The other nine participants felt their relationships would be beneficial at some point but had yet to make use of these.

In terms of accrued professional/career benefit, the most beneficial set of relationships were those with **global/Australian professional agencies or organisations** (e.g. contacts within INGOs, professional associations and other institutions in participants' professional fields). While these were generally fewer and weaker than other groups (Figure 8), of the 10 participants[171] reporting these connections, six[172] derived a tangible benefit. Two others had been offered international jobs through these networks with intergovernmental agencies.[173]

Figure 12: Benefits accrued from professional networks



T2 data show that these relations were developed in both work (including representing POs at conferences or meetings) and non-work activities. Comparing participants' who established beneficial professional networks with those who did not, **those most likely to develop beneficial networks were volunteers who reported at T1 (i) strong career motivations, and (ii) knowledge of and experience in the host country, and those whose assignments were (iii) based in capitals or large cities, and (iv) with intergovernmental agencies or international NGOs (INGOs) rather than domestic NGOs or government agencies.**

While contacts with other volunteers and HCNs were primarily social, some participants had benefitted professionally from these with offers of jobs, consultancy contracts, collaborating on work projects, or assistance to access work certifications or government documents.[174]

5.3 Professional Knowledge & Capabilities

5.3.1 Developing Professional Knowledge & Capabilities

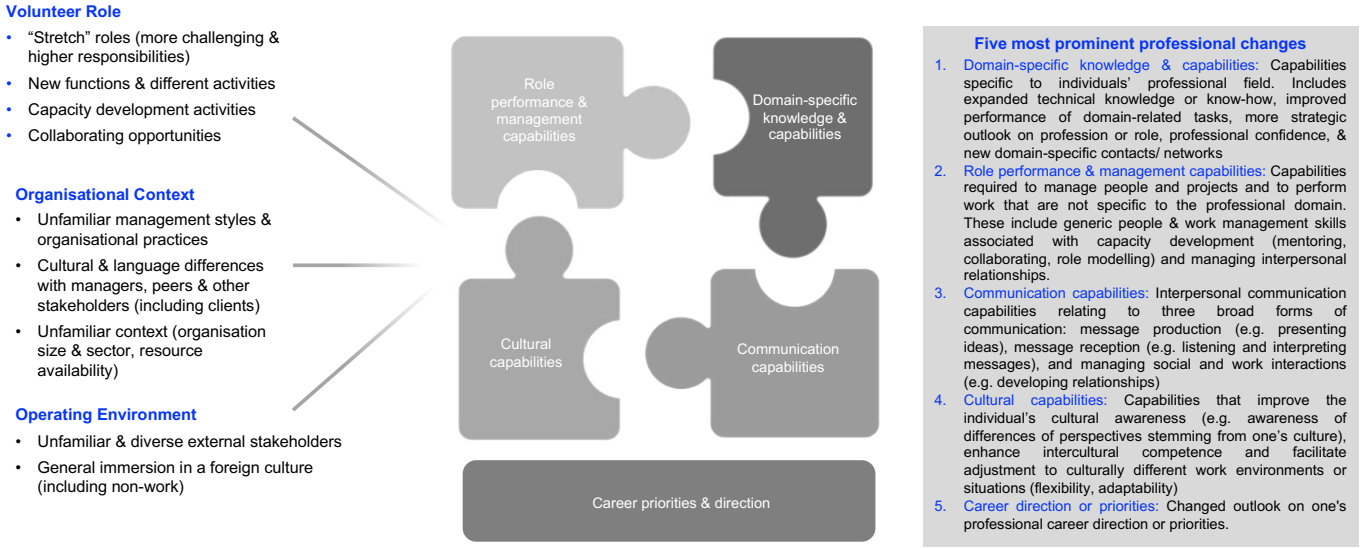
An important finding across T2 and T3 of the LSAV was the breadth of professional development outcomes that participants associated with a variety of personal, interpersonal, cross-cultural and domain-specific experiences in and out of their workplace. Three groups of volunteers – *Launchers*, *Imposed Transitioners* and *Enhancers* – identified professional/career changes as the major impacts of their volunteer assignment.

It is also clear that volunteers' careers and professional capabilities benefitted from developing "soft skills" that support communication, relationships, and problem-solving more strongly they did from developing technical, domain-specific knowledge and capabilities.

The areas of professional developmental most frequently reported at T3 fell into five broad outcome categories. Four of these relate to professional knowledge and capabilities that contribute to the performance of their work: (i) "domain-specific knowledge and capabilities"[175], (ii) "role performance and management capabilities"[176], (iii) "communication capabilities"[177], and (iv) "cultural capabilities."[178] The fifth is "career direction or priorities",[179] which resulted in participants having a new outlook on or attitude towards their professional career.

These five outcomes are represented by the five shapes on the centre of **Figure 13**. Each is defined in the box on the right. **Figure 13** also identifies, on the left, the main features of the volunteer role, organisational context and operating environment to which participants attributed their professional development.[180]

Figure 13: Overview of main professional changes and their causes



Most "communication capabilities" and "cultural capabilities" relevant to the workplace are consistent with outcomes reported in Section 4.4 (global literacy and competence). Career outcomes are discussed in Section 5.2. Consequently, this section focuses on the two outcomes at the top of Figure 13: **domain-specific capabilities** and **role performance and management capabilities**.

The question of whether participants' domain-specific capabilities benefitted is equivocal. Thirty-seven participants (69%) believed that their involvement with the program contributed to their professional (domain-specific) capabilities in some way, although for a third of these (11, 20%) the benefit was relatively modest. Excluding *Non-Working Partners*, whose assignments involved no or few professional activities,[181] almost three-quarters (73%) of participants found the assignment offered some contribution to their domain-specific expertise; for just over a half, the contribution was strong.

Pre-assignment antecedents most strongly associated with participants reporting enhanced domain-specific capabilities included pre-assignment career-related motivations (T1), objectives geared towards future international work (T1), and stronger host-country knowledge and experiences (T1).[182] Participants whose professional domains were Health and Community/Social Development – two of the most in-demand sectors from POs[183] - were generally most likely to develop domain-specific capabilities, while those from Engineering/Architecture fields were least likely; the reasons for the discrepancy is unclear from the data. Consistent with the learning outcomes reported at T2,[184] the groups of volunteers who, at T3, believed their domain-specific capabilities had benefitted most were *Imposed Transitioners*, *Launchers* and *Enhancers* (each 6/7), and *Transitioners* (9/11). *Career Breakers* (1/5), whose assignments were generally briefer, and *Veterans* (8/12), were least likely to observe benefits.

Aside from capabilities, 10 participants[185] felt their professional reputation or legitimacy was enhanced by their assignment. This was mainly attributed to one of these assignment characteristics: (i) the international dimension of the work, (ii) performing a new or more expansive role, and (iii) having experience '*in the field*'. While *Career Breakers* (3/5) were most likely to report legitimacy benefits, *Launchers* and those wanting international careers were most likely to highlight the benefits of practical field experience. An example of this is participant #46 - who summarised her assignment as offering '*a wealth of life experiences*' and who uses in her current work sector-specific knowledge and several technical and interpersonal skills gained on her assignment. She observed:

> *I'm more confident, I'm more sure of myself. It's the perception of myself and also perhaps other people's perception of me. When I talk about things, about the world, when I talk about my*

experiences, there's legitimacy there that perhaps some other people don't have when they talk about the world because I've lived in a context for so long

Three participants reported enhanced legitimacy or professional reputation yet no improvement in their capabilities, a result of being able to communicate their experiences in corporate newsletters or job applications rather than through their capabilities. At the same time, as with T2, some participants felt that collaborations with and learning from other professionals or experts was constrained. While "stretch" roles involving unfamiliar or higher levels of responsibilities were common, some participants' lack of access to expert collaborators or role models meant that features of their assignment were less developmental than they may have been.[186] This was most common in domestic NGOs where participants could be asked to '*be a bit of an allrounder.*'

One reason why participants found volunteer assignments attractive portals for enhancing or transitioning careers is the potential to capitalize on knowledge or structural asymmetries between Australia and the host country. This proved to be attractive to some participants wishing to gain experience in professional settings or with levels of responsibility that may not otherwise have been available for people with their level of experience or expertise in Australia. This has some similarities with what Seabrooke[187] refers to as "epistemic arbitrage" – for these participants, it involved filling gaps between bodies of knowledge or levels of expertise and, in doing so, carving out a set of experiences that fast-tracks entry to a field or a more senior role.

In short, these participants benefitted by accumulating professional experience in a context where their expertise was more valued and so opportunities more abundant. It also meant that several of these participants were learning from the variety and novelty of activities or responsibilities that they were taking on (identified as a major contributor to professional capabilities that participants reported learning at T2).[188]

Data at all three phases (T1-3) showed evidence that some participants were conscious of this arbitrage opportunity. This was most obvious with *Launchers* at T1, but it was also expressed by others after the assignment (T2-T3) seeking to use these experiences to access work at home or abroad. The case of Vivienne, presented in the box below, is one example of this.

Case study: Vivienne - Capitalising on a unique in-country opportunity

Vivienne, an *Imposed Transitioner*, had initially envisaged using the assignment to gain experience that would allow her to work globally with an intergovernmental agency ('*Ideally I would love to do this kind of thing in different countries, that's part of the reason why I went back & got my degree because I was looking at […] roles'*, T1). At T2 she described her assignment as '*professionally the best experience I've ever had for sure.*' She had the opportunity to expand her experiences in & passion for a specialised area in which she had studied. She explained, '*I think actually going volunteering in this role has reignited a bit of a passion in […] for me, where it was waning a little bit to be honest with you.*' However, when interviewed soon after her return to Australia (T2) she was unsure whether her expertise would be adequate in an Australian context where this professional work

> *… means something very different. You need to get a whole degree to do [that work]. That's definitely an interest for me … the good thing & the bad thing in Australia is that we are actually quite progressive with […] so a lot of the groundwork has been done. Maybe I just need to become more aware of […] here in Australia & work on that … I don't know if I have the opportunity to do that in Australia. I need to find where those gaps are*

By T3, Vivienne was thriving in a leadership role in Australia, working in the area about which she had become so inspired during her assignment. It is a position that her employer '*created for me because of my experience … a direct correlation from the opportunities that have come from that [volunteer] experience.'* She explained:

> *They wanted to bring me on board because they had a pathway for me. I've never had that before. I directly attribute getting that job to being in […] because I hadn't had that before & even though I had the experience of […], that wouldn't have been enough for me to get that role. So what set me apart was that international experience & working at that higher level & more strategic level [on the assignment] ….*
>
> *I honestly think [the assignment] had a lot to do with that because it gave me that direction & then it also gave me that confidence in my skillset & the experience so that I stepped into that role initially feeling quite confident that I knew what I was doing. And I was hired because of that background, so immediately when I stepped into that initial role most of the guys in the team were doing smaller things & community-based stuff, but I was handed a project that was on a bigger scale*

5.3.2 Applying Professional Capabilities

Sixteen participants, including Vivienne from the preceding case, reported having used their new domain-specific knowledge and capabilities in the workplace or studies since completing their assignment;[189] this represents a third of the sample, 43% of those reporting that they had improved their domain-specific capabilities, and 55% of those who were employed at T3.

Twenty-nine participants[190] (94% of employed workers and students) reported applying other capabilities identified in **Figure 13**, most commonly role performance and management capabilities. In short, **almost all participants who found post-assignment employment identified ways that they had made use of some new professional knowledge or capabilities within the first year of completing their assignment.**

The context for these varied, but included collaborating with or supervising colleagues, preparing written reports, grants, articles, and proposals, liaising with external stakeholders, introducing management structures, and conducting research. Most participants working in roles with an international development focus were able to apply their understanding of and experiences in the sector to their new roles (Section 3.5).

Several frameworks, models, or ideas that participants learned during VPLJ activities or in the host country were transferred to domestic workplaces. These included evaluating government-sector relationships (#03), mapping organisational stakeholders (#53), providing consultancy services (#09), building networks in a new setting, orienting oneself to a new environment, building rapport with colleagues (#24), or managing staff (#44). Three used their new interpersonal and cultural capabilities in working with government agencies' responses

to COVID.[191] Several relocated to new cities for work after returning to Australia; a subset of these found their relocation and acculturation to the host country a helpful experience in coping with these relocations.

Seven participants[192] reported drawing strongly on their volunteer assignment experiences during job applications, although others reported mixed responses from prospective employers due to the voluntary nature of the role, the (unrecognised) PO name, or the international location, and so downplayed these subsequently.

5.3.3 Consolidating, Extending, Inspiring and Guiding Formal Education

While the events relating to the global COVID pandemic were a major disruption, a noticeable finding from this study at both T2 and T3 is the synergistic relationship between international volunteering and formal studies. The findings indicate that **international volunteering is a powerful mechanism to consolidate and extend prior formal education, as well as a potent impetus that inspired or guided the direction of further education. In both cases, the experiences on their volunteer assignment provided volunteers a learning "premium" to the experience of their formal educational program.**

For participants in this study, this work-study interface had two different pathways or "models".

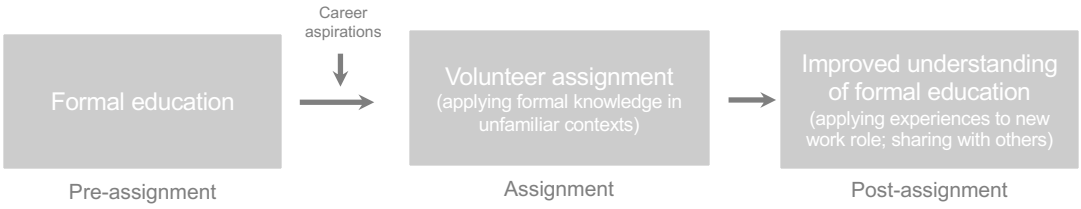
Model 1: Consolidating and extending past formal education

In these cases, depicted in **Figure 14**, participants reported developing a better or different understanding of prior formal education through experiencing it "in practice" during their assignment. Five of the 11 participants[193] who reported this were *Launchers*. Two main variations were evident:

1. Participants fulfilling a pre-assignment objective to accumulate practical experience to complement recent formal education. Most common among *Launchers,* this included those wanting to gain professional experience that might otherwise not be available to them, and/or those wanting to accumulate complementary work experience in order to build a résumé.
2. Participants experiencing a new context (e.g. culture, sector) that provided a basis to develop a better understanding of when, why or how their formal education is transferable to a different context. For some *Enhancers* and *Transitioners* this was a pre-assignment objective; for others, it was unanticipated.

Figure 14 shows that, for some participants, this form of learning was closely linked to pre-assignment career aspirations, which influenced their decision to volunteer and/or the assignment choice. The unfamiliar context provided during the assignment (e.g. international setting and/or international development ecosystem) were important contributors. As well as improved understanding, some participants were able to then apply and/or share this new knowledge in workplaces after their assignment (right of **Figure 14**).

Figure 14: How volunteer assignments consolidate and extend past formal education



Model 2: Inspiring or supporting future formal education

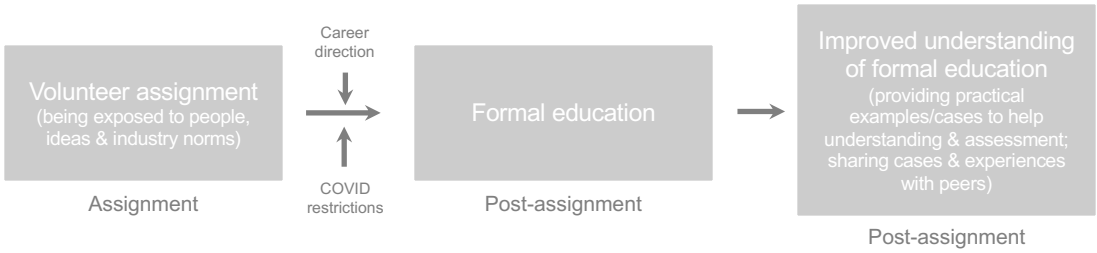
In these cases, volunteering provided the inspiration or guidance for future formal education to further a professional opportunity or to consolidate or build on an insight that arose during the assignment. This was the case for 17 participants. For 13 (24%),[194] their involvement with the program was the direct impetus for instigating a course of study in a new domain. Disaster risk management, public health, and education were fields of study chosen by multiple participants. Four others[195] reported being inspired to consider a future study program as a result of their assignment experiences and were still considering this but, at T3, were yet to act.

As shown in **Figure 15**, most commonly (11/13) the decision to undertake the studies was career-related; that is, to facilitate a career direction that was sparked by an experience during the assignment. The triggers for this varied, but included, for instance, exposure to experts in the field (e.g. observing the skillsets of the most effective actors, discussions with experts about emerging areas of interest) or introduction to a new passion/interest (sometimes through being asked to perform a new role). For others, exposure to industry expectations and norms during the assignment led them to seek to develop requisite expertise or achieve formal accreditation. In some cases, these planned programs of study related to distinctive features of the local culture and/or the cross-cultural application of their professional training or backgrounds.[196] Professional and personal restrictions created by COVID also influenced some participants' decision to study further, either by constraining alternative work opportunities or by providing time for reflection to consider their next step.

As the box on the right of **Figure 15** shows, some participants who were inspired to commence formal learning programs commented on the value of their volunteer assignment to their studies. These participants felt their assignment experiences led them to understand the practical relevance of content better ('*I have reference*

points now'), to better contribute to the learning of classmates, and to perform better by using these experiences in assessment tasks (*'it made me ask more questions, more 'why' questions … made writing papers and learning better'*). Some participants reported feedback from their instructors and peers indicating that their volunteer experiences were seen as especially valued contributions to their academic grades. Thus, some participants felt the experiential grounding that their assignments gave them led to better academic outcomes (compared to peers). One was awarded a Chancellor's commendation; one invited to co-author research papers; two others to undertake higher research degrees focusing on their volunteer experiences.

Figure 15: How volunteer assignments inspire, guide or support future formal education



5.4 Career Progression and Professional Capabilities: Key Findings and Implications

5.4.1 Key Findings

- Professionally, most participants who sought work after their assignment have found employment although, mainly due to COVID disruptions, some of these are outside participants' preferred career track. Perhaps more pertinently, some participants who have not found employment – including some whose main purpose in volunteering was for career benefit - experienced career setbacks.
- Although the professional/career outcomes of this cohort are not as overwhelming positive as other studies of international development volunteers,[197] the outcomes are generally impressive in light of the very large impact of COVID on participants' future plans, many of which had a strong international focus, and the career-related objectives of many participants when entering the program (Figure 2). The data indicate that involvement in the program can be beneficial to volunteers' careers and in a reasonably short space of time. Some participants have been able to take the first steps towards realising a more "prosocial career" that will see the civic/social contribution of the program amplified. These outcomes undoubtedly reflect, to some degree, the dispositions and education levels that characterise the sample (and other cohorts of program volunteers). Nonetheless, the program seems especially valuable for participants seeking to build a prosocial career. At the same time, the strongly negative career consequences experienced by some participants offer a cautionary tale about the opportunity costs associated with international volunteering. This would be especially true for those for whom career outcomes are high on their motivations for volunteering.
- The variety, novelty and changeable nature of experiences offered by volunteer assignments are well positioned to contribute important professional capabilities, especially interpersonal and "soft skills." Relative to domestic workplaces, "domain-specific knowledge and capabilities" are where volunteers appear to receive least benefit; indeed, the responses of some participants suggest a regression. Thus, while some impressive professional learning was reported overall, there is not strong evidence from this sample that the program has been more beneficial to volunteers' technical knowledge and capabilities than other "jobs."
- The data unearthed some examples of participants applying valued experiences, knowledge, and capabilities in the workplace. The bulk of these were "role performance and management capabilities" rather than enhanced "domain-specific knowledge and capabilities." While the transferral of these was hampered by lockdowns and career disruptions, most participants saw potential benefits of applying their newfound experiences in work settings, including capabilities associated with international development (Section 3.5) and cultural differences (Section 4.4.2). **Taken collectively, the program does offer opportunities for some volunteers to "gain valuable career experience and skills through international volunteering", although the extent and value of skills and experiences varied.[198]**
- **On balance, assignments were less beneficial at helping volunteers "develop lasting relationships and professional networks."[199]** While some participants gained from new work projects or job offers, access to beneficial professional networks, domain-related associations and mentors was limited.

5.4.2 Constraints on the Transferability of the Findings

- The transferability of the (broadly favourable) career and professional outcomes are tempered by:

- The breadth of occupational categories and volunteer roles across the sample.[200] This made comparing professional development and career outcomes of a prototypical "volunteer assignment" challenging. Our analysis focuses on several of generic assignment features reported at T2 and T3 (e.g. international context, program support) but does not allow us to pick up profession-specific patterns.
- The dispositions, experiences, motivations, and qualifications that characterise this sample. While these are broadly representative of other cohorts of international volunteers,[201] they differ from the wider Australian working populace in important ways (e.g. education levels, gender distribution).
- Recognition that all workplaces can be potent settings for professional development and learning - most of which occurs informally on-the-job rather than through planned interventions.[202] This is especially the case for international assignments, which can be intensely developmental experiences although not necessarily beneficial for careers upon return.
- The atypical circumstances of participants' return due to COVID – i.e. sudden/unexpected for most and to changed and unpredictable circumstances for all.[203]

5.4.3 Supporting Volunteers' Ongoing Career Progression and Professional Capabilities[204]

» Supporting volunteers' post-assignment career

Depending on the program's priorities, the most critical finding from the data reported in this section may relate to volunteers who entered the program with career-related objectives that they were unable to achieve. No relationship is apparent between (counterproductive) career outcomes and most demographic/experiential characteristics (e.g. ethnic identity, languages spoken, professional sector) and assignment features (expected duration, urban/rural location, accompanied by partners). While the study unveiled some evidence that the careers of women from rural backgrounds may have benefitted greatly, analysis of participants' home location in Australia (State, rurality) and career outcomes was equivocal and hampered partly by the large number of participants repatriating to different cities/States. Three of the six participants who entered the assignment with disabilities reported non-beneficial (#11, #53) or negative (#41) career outcomes, a figure slightly less favourable than others despite all three having career-related objectives at T1.

Despite the apparent benefits that some participants gained from achieving a shift to a prosocial career, the category of volunteers with the least favourable professional outcomes was *Transitioners*. They also reported relatively fewer benefits from their experiences and learning.[205] This group of volunteers viewed their assignment as a pathway to enter a new sector or context, most commonly with an international - rather than domestic – focus. At T2, all 11 *Transitioners* reported having affirmed or rejected a potential career avenue during the assignment, suggesting the assignment may have been utilised to "test" a specific (and quite fixed) career trajectory, rather than "explore" possible career options, as some other groups had done. For this group, the opportunity cost of volunteering is high and so the program bringing to their attention the range of possible career consequences, including of rare but high impact events like COVID, seems warranted. This might form part of discussions surrounding the full range of potential career outcomes that volunteers can encounter (including barriers and setbacks that they confront upon repatriation), the reasons for these, and the support available from the program and other sources to help volunteers surmount these barriers.

As well as the personal challenges of readjusting during COVID, it is feasible that the repatriation led some volunteers to experience a form of "career shock" - "a disruptive and extraordinary event that is, at least to some degree, caused by factors outside (their) control and that triggers a deliberate thought process concerning one's career."[206] The intensity of shock and type of response can vary – for participants in this study, those whose career plans were most strongly disrupted and whose post-assignment work experiences were most challenging were those who had been attached to the host country for long periods (Section 6.3.2), including several who were "referred candidates."[207] Thus, while deeper expertise in the host country was associated with a number of beneficial outcomes, volunteers' embeddedness in the country may have destabilised their career trajectory, at least temporarily, following repatriation. Stress from multiple shocks can also accumulate, and it is feasible that volunteers who entered the program at a period of career change – forced or desired – dealt with two career shocks in the space of one year. Future interviews with this cohort might identify any impacts of this. Considering targeted support for these volunteers, especially in light of the large number of volunteers with career-related motivations, is likely to lead to more productive outcomes. This could include, for instance, optional in-country VPLJ activities for volunteers during their assignments that support them to better understand, articulate, and take advantage of the many formal (via VPLJ) and informal ('on-the-job') learning outcomes that they experience during their assignments, and to articulate these in terminology recognised by prospective employers. Similarly, the program might consider ways to support volunteers to identify and document their key achievements throughout and at the end of their assignment. This could incorporate the perspective of POs, which can differ from those perceived by volunteers,[208] and could be aligned with recognised frameworks of development outcomes (e.g. program logic, SDGs), which can add legitimacy to volunteers' assignment achievements. An added benefit of this is the potential contribution that recognising these achievements can make to the sense of "meaningfulness" that volunteers derive from their assignment (Section 6.2).

The data do not allow us to canvass a full range of explanations for some negative career outcomes (which may necessitate employers' perspectives). Nonetheless, international work assignments are recognised as

intensely developmental yet not necessarily beneficial for careers.[209] Among the reasons for this discrepancy are expatriates' (and their partners') disconnection from home professional networks, their inability to articulate or transfer new skills developed on the assignment into domestic settings, their key achievements on assignment being out-of-sight and/or not verifiable to prospective employers, and their difficulties readjusting. Accompanying partners face similar workforce re-entry issues.[210] Mechanisms to assist volunteers to remain connected with (international and Australian) professional networks and/or professional associations during their assignment may facilitate pathways to the next phase of their professional career. This may involve, as a starting point, facilitating connections between volunteers and former volunteers (from the program and/or other volunteering for development organisations) from within the same professional area.

At the same time, the data show that volunteers can begin applying some of their new capabilities reasonably soon after their assignment is completed, facilitated by the relative portability of the "soft skills" that volunteers develop.[211] No data is available yet that allows us to gauge how effectively they transferred these new skills (which would necessitate independent evaluation). Nonetheless, the challenges of transferring these and the "tacit knowledge" that often comes from cross-cultural collaborations[212] to new settings and contexts can be exacerbated by volunteers returning to a different employer, sector, context and/or cultural setting.[213] Guidance to help volunteers understand their professional development and to transfer this to new settings (paid or voluntary) is likely to be viewed favourably, especially by those whose main objective/s for volunteering relates to career and/or professional enhancement.

» Overall developmental nature of volunteer assignments

Most *Veterans* were not seeking regular paid employment after their assignment and so are excluded from some analysis reported in this section. Nonetheless, a subset of *Veterans* comprised those who had recently ended a professional career and for whom the assignment was a "reverse transition" from work to retirement. Two findings pertinent to this subset but not all volunteers are: (i) some in this group reported (mainly at T2) the enjoyment they took from experiencing the assignment and its distinctive characteristics (e.g. mentoring and supporting rather than managing or leading) as part of a decompression from work to retirement ('*you were doing some things at a much lower intensity, I think it was a valuable stepping stone*', #22), and (ii) the potential benefit of the recency and relevance of their professional experiences relative to longer-term retirees.

In light of these findings, benefit may come from the program recognising its value as a mechanism for (prospective) volunteers to facilitate a meaningful pathway of transition from work to retirement, and from considering the implications of this for program recruitment, management, and volunteer support.

» Volunteering and formal education

While we are unable to evaluate whether participants' involvement in the program was more/less beneficial than other professional or life experiences for academic performance (Section 5.3.1), the findings indicate that the distinctive features of the program's assignments and structure – e.g. international settings and novel workplaces, strong volunteer and other in-country networks, support provided by VPLJ activities – do create conditions that are uniquely suited to consolidate, extend, inspire or guide formal education, and in doing so to contribute in important ways to the impact of both the program and the volunteers' education. These findings suggest that benefits would come from assisting volunteers to recognise and integrate pre-, during and post-assignment formal education with their experiences on the program.

6. Personal Circumstances and Capabilities

6.1 Overview and Background

The fourth major outcome analysed in this study is participants' personal circumstances and capabilities, directly related to the program's aim to help volunteers "gain personally" from their assignments.

This section addresses the impact of involvement in the program on:

1. The development of personal attributes and attitudes that participants identified as contributing mainly but not exclusively to their personal lives (Section 6.2);
2. Participants' day-to-day habits, hobbies, and practices which we collectively refer to as "lifestyle", and personal values (beliefs about what is right and wrong) in Section 6.3. Sub-sections are devoted to how global social movements and events (like BLM) intersected with volunteers' understanding of their experiences (Section 6.3.1), and to the causes and impacts of "protracted liminality" (6.3.2), an extended post-assignment readjustment period reported by many participants; and
3. Participants' personal relationship with family and friends (Section 6.4).

The key findings and their implications for the program are summarised in Section 6.5.

6.1.1 Research Notes

Because of the difficulty verifying sustained personal changes in the short time since assignments ended, our analysis focuses on changes that were both persistent and widespread; that is, those consistently reported by individual participants at both T2 and T3 (condition 1), those reported widely across the sample, in particular by both novice and repeat volunteers (condition 2), and by at least 4/7 groups of volunteers (condition 3).

The types of personal changes reported at T3 corresponded closely with those described at T2 and which were linked to specific activities and experiences during their assignments. In other words, **participants were generally consistent in the types of personal changes they reported across the two waves (T2-T3), and these changes appear to have remained salient during this period**. Often, participants used very similar language in describing the changes. By way of example, the interview extracts in **Table 4** show the similar terminology used by three participants to describe the main impact of their assignment at T2 (centre column) and T3 (right column). Sections of the transcripts reflecting similar terminology and sentiment are in bold.

Table 4: Consistency of responses across study period (main impact or learning outcome)

Participant	Interview extract (T2)	Interview extract (T3)
#06	'It's just reaffirmed to me **how lucky I am** to have been brought up in Australia - we're very lucky to live in a country like Australia. We don't experience the same struggles that people in [the host country] or other developing countries experience on a daily basis … we're just very lucky. Because of that, **I try to be more grateful** rather than become disgruntled or angry over little things that really don't matter'	'It's just a bit more "live in the moment", **appreciate what I have**. Being in Australia and the fact that we're dealing with this whole pandemic a lot better than other countries and **how lucky we are** to be in this country compared to America and countries like that. I think I've actually learnt to **be more grateful for what I have**'
#05	'When you're **in a different culture** and you kind of **soak up that culture** and **you take on some of it** and I feel I have a much greater understanding of what it's like to live in a developing country, both the good and bad parts of it'	'I think **living in another country**, particularly in a developing country, it **fundamentally changes everything**, your whole value system really'
#32	'**Resilience**, I think. I've learnt that [partner's name] and I are fairly resilient. That is because of the impact of the various things that occurred while we were there, that **sort of went awry**. **We made our way through them'**	'Personally, for us, it's the **resilience**, that **we can get through things, work your way through** - even if **things don't quite turn out**, you can move on'

6.2 Personal Development

The 2020 Phase Two report included a detailed summary of 522 learning outcomes reported by participants at the end of their assignment (T2), along with the primary contexts in which these occurred and (participants' views of) the primary contributors. A summary of these can be found in the figure at **Attachment 10**.[214] Learning outcomes coded as "personal development" comprised 9% of all reported learning outcomes (47/522) and included dispositions or "soft skills" such as resilience, patience, self-confidence, and humility.

When reflecting on the impact of their experiences on the program at T3, all except nine participants attributed some form of valued personal development to their experiences on the program (45/54, 83%): eight reported no noticeable changes, one felt the personal impact was generally *negative*, while a small number of others reported negative as well as positive personal changes.[215]

Distilling these, we identify a core set of six main personal changes most commonly reported: "confidence", "satisfaction", "resilience", "cosmopolitanism", "self-awareness" and "acceptance (easy going)". These are summarised in **Figure 16** on the following page, represented by the six sections of the large circle.

Figure 16: Overview of main personal changes and conditions conducive to these

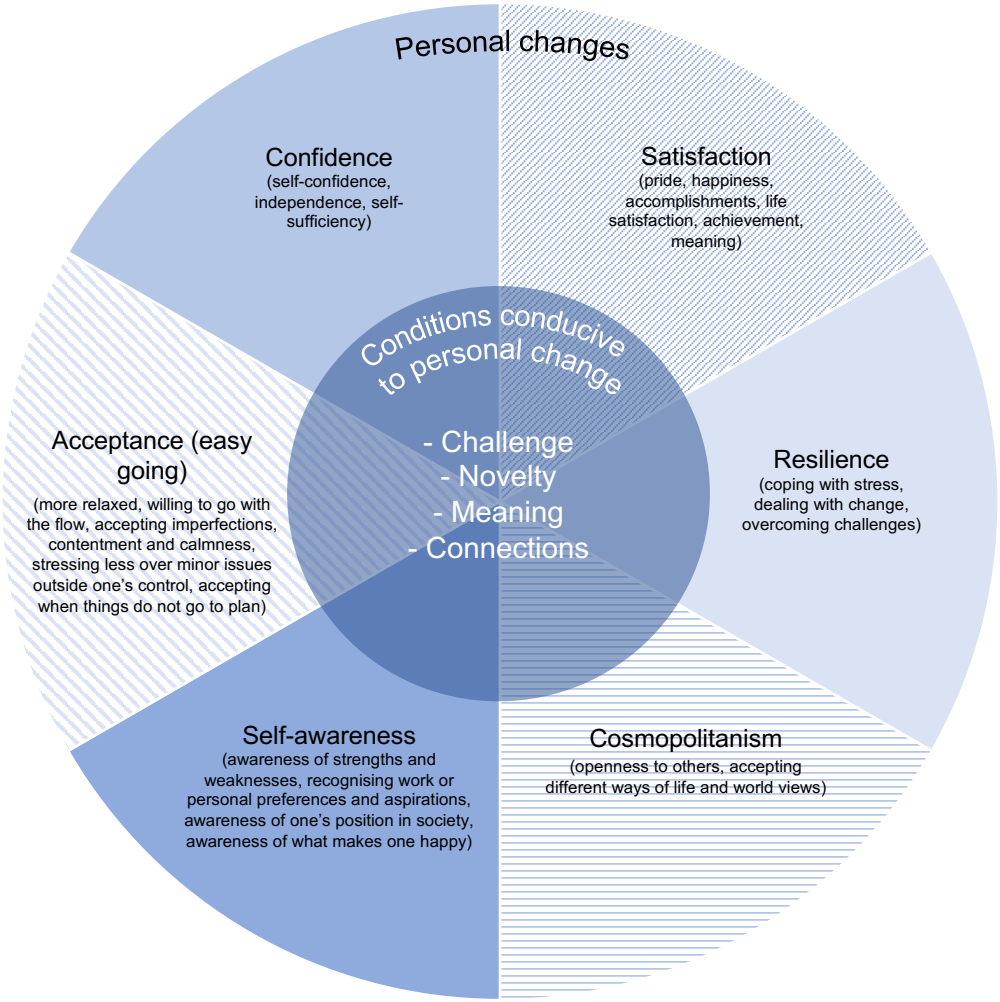
Conditions conducive to personal change:

Challenge: Confronting difficulties associated with the partner organisation, resource availability, work role, interpersonal interactions or living conditions

Novelty: Coping and performing work (or non-work) activities effectively in an unfamiliar culture, environment, language, work role and/or context

Meaning: Having work objectives, relationships and impacts that are significant and of value personally and to others

Connections: Collaborating, mentoring, socialising and sharing work/social settings with colleagues, clients, counterparts and communities



Interpreting participants' personal changes

1. While some outcomes might be universally perceived as favourable, others are open to interpretation. For instance, some participants reporting "acceptance" now plan less and prioritise quality of life over other activities. Some whose outcomes reflected a form of "cosmopolitanism" reported being less tolerant of, or having less in common with, some groups from their own culture.
2. Although all these changes are classified as "personal" they frequently arose from work situations during volunteers' assignments, and several have had practical utility in participants' current work situations. Thus, while the participants viewed these changes as primarily personal, overlap exists between these six outcomes and those more directly relating to participants' careers (Section 5.3) or international/cultural capabilities (Section 4.4).
3. All six changes arose mostly through informal and unplanned work or non-work situations during the volunteer assignment. Nonetheless, the contribution of structured learning, including VPLJ activities, was noted in earlier reports and raised by some participants. It is clear that PDBs and ICOPs provided valuable platforms to facilitate some of the changes that participants reported.
4. The changes are inter-related. Satisfaction abets confidence abets resilience; self-awareness may promote cosmopolitanism and satisfaction.
5. Some assignment features that contributed to participants' personal changes (notably challenge and novelty) also contributed to some negative feelings (stress, isolation, anxiety). These likely hindered, rather than facilitated, some volunteers performing their roles effectively. For some assignments, therefore, the right degree of challenge or novelty for the volunteer is likely an important determinant of both personal change and performance.

Figure 16 includes examples of the terminology used by participants to describe each of the six outcomes. At the centre the chart is a distillation of the four main conditions that, according to participants, contribute to these outcomes: challenge, novelty, meaning and connection. Descriptions of each are provided in the box on the left.[216] Some patterns of personal changes are apparent:

- More than half the members of four groups - *Veterans*, *Non-working Partners*, *Transitioners* and *Career Breakers* – identified personal outcomes as, overall, the biggest impact of their assignments.
- *Launchers*, several of whom were exposed to their first professional work role, reported improved "confidence" or independence more frequently than other groups.[217]
- While exceptions existed, changes described by *Veterans* tended to be "assimilative";[218] that is, reaffirming or strengthening pre-existing traits or views, rather than more radical "accommodative" changes reported by younger participants.
- Reports of personal development – and the four conditions contributing to these – were equally common among some *Non-working Partners*, suggesting that being in a community and context (not just a workplace) with these conditions were conducive to personal change.
- Two of these outcomes – "acceptance (easy going)" and "personal confidence" - were reported substantially more often at T3 than at T2. These also appear less commonly in academic literature. Yet they were also the two personal changes that, according to participants, were most likely to be noticed and commented upon by others (friends and family) as exhibited in participants' behaviours or demeanour,[219] adding some veracity to these changes beyond participants' views:

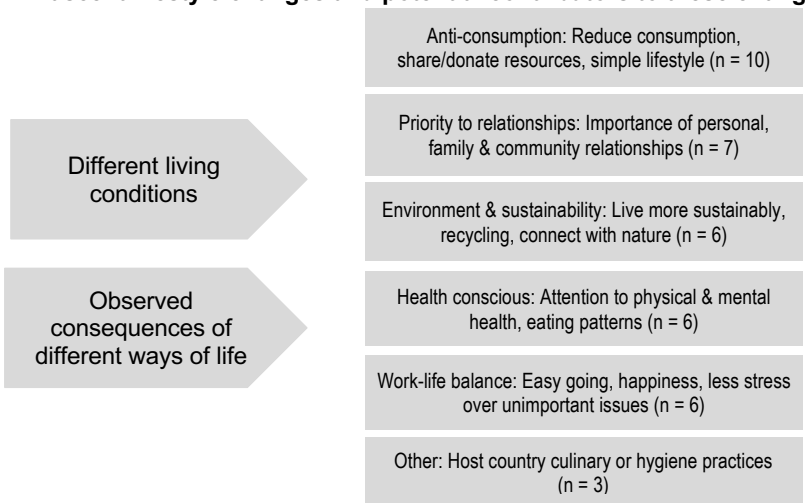
  Colleagues say, "You seem a lot more relaxed and happier" There's probably a shift at my end which I didn't realise was as noticeable as it has been (#06)

- The three main negative personal changes were: (i) health (related to stress or access to healthy food/exercise), (ii) financial precarity, and (iii) weakened, rather than strengthened, confidence.[220]

6.3 Lifestyle, Values and Attitude Changes

Twenty-nine participants (54%) reported enacting change/s to their lifestyle upon return that they linked to their assignment; four of these reported changes to multiple parts of their life. The right side of **Figure 17** summarises the six main lifestyle changes, ordered by the frequency that they were reported, and the number of participants reporting each.[221] Several of these changes were described as a desire to enact practices that aligned with new or strengthened values relating to family and community (importance of family), the environment (sustainable living, anti-consumption), the importance of work, and life priorities generally (e.g. health). In all cases, participants identified practices or attitudes that they enact in their lives now and which they attribute to experiences on their assignment. Other responses, excluded here, reported changed values or beliefs about political and social issues that were not (yet) evident in their lives.

Figure 17: Nascent lifestyle changes and potential contributors to these changes



Participants cited a number of individual experiences that provided the impetus for these changes. Broadly, they fall into two categories, shown at the left of **Figure 17**. Both relate in some way to the novelty of participants' in-country experiences and the contrasts with their past experiences or world view. The first is **different living conditions** during their time on assignment. Conditions of relative scarcity were a feature of this – for instance, limited access during the assignment to healthy food (→ health conscious) or open spaces (→ environment), separation from family and friends (→ priority to relationships) or living with fewer household possessions (→ simple lifestyle). The second is **vicarious exposure to the consequences of different ways of life and work.** These comprised both favourable comparisons with their past experiences - such as a host community's more

communitarian values (→ priority to relationships) or HCNs' perceived happiness without material resources (→ work-life balance, anti-consumption) – as well as less favourable comparisons, such as observing large tracts of litter, the detrimental effects of poor waste disposal (→ anti-consumption, environment and sustainability), or excessive alcohol consumption among expatriate communities (→ health conscious).

Lifestyle changes were reported across volunteer groups and life stages. More women than men reported lifestyle changes, although the strongest associations were with participants' "culture-general knowledge and capabilities": participants reporting lifestyle changes were more likely to develop their "global mindset" and "cognitive empathy."[222] These participants were also more likely to report challenging transitions after repatriation (Section 6.3.2).[223]

Five participants expressed disappointment they had returned to '*old habits*' when they returned home,[224] while three others had difficulty discerning the impacts of COVID from those prompted by program experiences.[225] This is discussed further in the box, "Research note: Interpreting the impact of a volunteer assignment (and COVID) on lifestyle changes." The implications of this are expanded in Section 6.5.2 and in Part III.

Research note: Interpreting the impact of a volunteer assignment (and COVID) on lifestyle changes

The data in this section draw on participants' own interpretation of questions relating to their lifestyle (and changes to it) since finishing their assignment, how any changes manifest, and the ways that their involvement in the program may have contributed to these. We therefore rely on their (typically quite broad) interpretations of "lifestyle" as opposed to confining it to particular "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977) or the coherence of certain practices (see, for example, Lorenzen 2012). In discussing this topic, most participants who identified changed lifestyles focused on new routines, practices or general re-orientations that they had made to a part of their day-to-day life & which they believed resulted from their assignments. Most were clear about the attitudes that informed these changes & the bases for these. Some began enacting these lifestyles on assignment & carried these home; others began enacting these as they settled back in Australia. Some descriptions indicate a conscious "project" for living in some participants' practices (notably, anti-consumption). Other changes seem to have been more instinctive (e.g. family orientation).

The extent to which COVID disruptions (e.g. lockdowns, work from home, separation from or 'forced' habitation with others) influenced participants' propensity to adjust their lifestyle is relevant. On the one hand, COVID introduced additional life change which have the potential to interrupt routines and prompt more mindful sensemaking. This, in turn, can trigger "periods of de- and re-routinisation" (Spaargaren & van Vliet 2000, p. 64-65) that re-set habitual patterns of behaviour (Weick et al 2004). On the other hand, reverting to familiar habits can be a mechanism to preserve precious cognitive resources at times of uncertainty, complexity or change (Kahneman 2013). These competing dynamics make it difficult to know whether COVID may have amplified or dampened any lifestyle changes that were inspired by the assignments.

COVID lockdowns may also have hindered participants' conscious or subconscious efforts to access resources, networks & social reinforcement that would assist with any proposed changes to their lifestyle. Of particular interest here is contact with & feedback from other volunteers – many of whom were valued for possessing shared beliefs & values (see Sections 4.3.2 and 6.4) - and/or particular HCNs, who may have been the indirect inspiration for some changes (Figure 17).

Finally, some participants who reported changes expressed views & values at T1 that already suggested an inclination towards a particular lifestyle. In the analysis here, we include only participants who articulated a clear impetus or inspiration for a change that stemmed from their assignment. For instance, participants #25 was '*passionate about nature*' at T1 & became a more fervent recycler at T3 ('*when I'm with the grandchildren we recycle, we reuse stuff, exactly as I did in […],we reuse stuff*') after being exposed during the assignment to '*a whole page of things that were pissing me off, the garbage was one*.' (T2).

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6.3.1 Integrating Volunteer Experiences with Major Extraneous Events

Participants' personal and professional changes must be viewed in light of the context surrounding their assignments and repatriations across the study period. Some evidence exists that their **assignment experiences appear to have provided a platform for participants to engage in different and potentially more transformational ways with global events and social movements.**

Section 4.4.2 highlights the way that, for some participants, experiencing COVID responses and their subsequent repatriations made them more sensitive to issues of inequality and their own privilege.

In a similar vein, global social movements highlighting disparities of power, privilege, and justice like Black Lives Matter (BLM) and *#MeToo* intersected with some participants' experiences in ways that led to '*deep questions'* (#07) about power in international aid/development.

Those most affected by these movements – all women who were motivated to spring-board to international prosocial careers after their assignment (T1) - saw parallels between these movements' criticisms of structural inequality and '*internalised colonialism and internationalised racism'* among recipient communities (#46) and their '*place as a white person going into different cultures'* (#07), or as a result of the changed way of thinking that they attribute to their learning on the assignment (#20):

> *One of the most important things in the AVI program is that you're going as a person from Australia, you're going overseas to a completely foreign context, and so you get a huge appreciation for culture - all the buzzwords, 'cultural diversity' and 'differences', and learning to actually have those respectful interactions. But on a deeper level it's actually having a high interest in learning about the differences and learning why certain actions are disrespectful or respectful, and actually being able to listen more,*

> *listen closely to what people are saying, which I think has just made me a lot more tuned in to what's going on in current affairs. So especially when the Black Lives Matter movement was going on, you turn on the news and you find something in the world and I guess being able to really understand. If you don't agree with them, really understand where they're coming from and being interested in learning more about that topic*

This also came from observing practitioners of international development who, as one volunteer described, '*had this attitude ... this kind of superiority ... I can't stand to be part of that mentality, it's so out-dated ... I have some really deep questions about where I sit in relation to all of that*' (#07). Several reported new outlooks on the role of foreigners in aid delivery (Section 3.5). By T3, just one of these (#04) had made tangible changes to their work and civic practices in direct response to this; another had been exploring different career options during lockdown. Two others were wrestling with this tension when interviewed at T3; one *Launcher* (#46) explained:

> *I am still keyed into some of the debates around BLM but also the consequences of that in an international development context … if I do move into international development, what's my place there … am I the right person to be doing this? I am a young middle class white woman. Yes, I have skills but the localisation aspect is not always something that I should be looking towards doing*

6.3.2 The Influence of Protracted Liminality Following Repatriation

Difficult readjustments were reported by 24 participants, or 44% of the sample.[226] Sixteen (70%) of these had been repatriated under the program's COVID protocols. Among the terms used to describe the months after their return were '*brutal* (#53), '*a rollercoaster*' (#42), '*a grief period*' (#23) and *'emotionally hard*' (#28), while participants described themselves during this time as '*homeless … alienated*' (#12), *'not in a good headspace*' (#47), '*in mourning*' (#23), '*in a bit of a hole'* (#48) and encountering '*a sense of bereavement'* (#40).

The difficulties were further magnified for some participants in this study because of the conditions of their return. These included being unable to finish project/s or inform PO colleagues before their rushed departure, leaving loved ones in the host country, returning to unfamiliar living and social settings, family bereavements or illnesses, extended isolation from family and friends or other support networks, restrictions on their movements, uncertainty about whether or when they would return to their assignments, lack of work structures and/or financial insecurity due to loss of regular income.[227]

As the interview extracts on the right show, descriptions of this period emphasised participants' sense of extended ambiguity, disconnection and precarity.

These descriptions are consistent with participants experiencing a protracted period of "liminality"[228] – feelings of being "betwixt-and-between … neither this-nor-that, here-nor-there[229] … (in) a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state"[230] and which was lengthened by the context of their return.

In the 12 months since their return, nine participants sought out professional health care for issues associated with their mental wellbeing that stemmed from the assignment, the challenges of COVID, and/or a combination of these.[231] Six others considered it, suggested they would have benefitted from it, yet were ambiguous about whether they had sought professional support.[232] Others dealt with chronic health injuries that had preceded or continued throughout their assignments. One participant believed the assignment was a prominent contributor to mental health challenges; others believed that the happiness and sense of meaning they experiences during the assignment offered some relief from issues that predated their assignment and have re-emerged subsequently. Some of those who found the assignment most (beneficially) transformational reported extended difficulties upon repatriation.[233] In contrast, difficulties were less common for participants who were able to capitalise on the career benefits of the assignment (Section 5.2).

Interview extracts: Describing protracted liminality

- *'I was kind of like, oh my god what am I doing? Feeling quite aimless or weird … how do I figure out life now?'* (#46)
- *'… time stood still really … I was very unsettled'* (#05)
- *'We were holding up some really big decision points … previously we had all these plans, they're all successive, and now it's like, okay … we're just going to roll with it'* (#21)
- *'I felt like I was perching for the first six months. You didn't know whether you were going back or not or what was happening … we had to get a job … and then the rent goes up so I move in with a friend and now I'm waiting for my contract so I can have a bit more stability'* (#24)
- *'It was very much that limbo space which is a funny psychological space to be in, and it is not always the easiest … it's not normal everyday life … ups & downs'* (#29)
- *'… basically every month after we came back we thought we'd be two months away from leaving. So I wasn't really looking to engage in anything that would require me to be here for more than two or three months. I didn't play any sport … I held back from making new friends and things like that … I thought I'd be leaving in one- or two-months' time'* (#51)
- *'From last year, everything seemed to be put on hold, it was just a non-year really. When it dragged on and dragged on, you say okay I've got to reset'* (#55)

Veterans were the only group to not identify mental health challenges; younger participants – especially *Transitioners* and *Enhancers* - were most likely. While not directly addressed in interviews, most of the in-country illnesses and injuries reported by numerous participants at T2[234] appeared to have little or no residual impacts at T3.

The assignment feature most strongly associated with participants reporting negative readjustment experiences was their level of knowledge of and engagement with the host country. In short, **participants who were deeply embedded in their host country, on the whole, were more likely than others to report experiencing sustained difficulties when readjusting**.[235] Other characteristics common in this group were a slightly higher

instances of novice (rather than repeat) volunteers,[236] lower levels of perceived program support during the assignment,[237] and greater likelihood of being from a rural area in Australia[238] and of volunteering alone (rather than accompanied).[239] Notably, this group also reported lower instances of civic participation, remote volunteering, and providing PO support since the completion of their assignment (T3).[240]

6.4 Personal Relationships

Section 4.3 identified the interpersonal connections that participants developed or bolstered during their assignment, with a focus on the type and strength of relationships with international dimensions. This section focuses on the ways in which participants' assignments influenced personal relationships with family and friends, and incidence of new friendships arising from their involvement with the program.

Many of the changed relationship patterns reported by participants are typical of those where extended separation has occurred (i.e. shedding some and gaining others), typified by participant #30 who observed:

> *there's people (at home) that you lose contact with which is not bad … but (it has) strengthened other relationships*

Participants' absence did disrupt their existing personal relationships in Australia. A common refrain was that '*we almost lost touch with some family and friends a bit … physical distancing can be a bit of a factor … other people's lives have gone on and you've had nothing to do with them, and you just become a little bit more distant' (#16)*, and that this was not always as anticipated ('*I found it interesting that the people that sometimes extended the most empathy towards me were the people who I wouldn't have thought were thinking of me'*, #46). A few who struggled during their assignment highlighted an increased willingness now to seek support from friends when needed (e.g. #20).

Four participants had ongoing romantic relationships that had been instigated during the assignment and had sustained across the study period. All had hopes to reunite with their partner in the host country (2) or Australia (2) post-COVID. All four had taken tangible steps to realise this goal through professional activities, including job offers/applications or studies that would facilitate a return to the host country or support a partner relocating to Australia.

Besides these intimate relationships, **the most important change to participants' personal relationships came from the formation of strong bonds with other volunteers, mostly (although not exclusively) with those assigned to the same host country** (see Section 4.3.3). The role of VPLJ activities in seeding these relationships was critical.[241] The strength of these new '*close friendships'* with other volunteers was raised by 16 participants ('*some of my closest friends now*', #02; '*my best friend for life'*, #52).[242] At least 11 had arranged or attended in-person get-togethers with groups of volunteers in the months prior to the final interview.[243]

Volunteer friendships tended to be diverse in terms of age groups and professional backgrounds (points noted most often by *Veterans*), as well as gender and location in Australia. Two characteristics defined the adhesive that made these new friendships so strong. The first was **a set of shared experiences** (in-country and during repatriations) that were novel, stressful and/or memorable, and which participants felt that other friends or family did not fully grasp:

> *Seeing [other volunteers] over New Years was amazing because it was like, finally, you guys understand. It's so nice to be with somebody who just understands where we're at and what our lives were and what our lives are now and how much has changed (#37)*

The second and more consequential element of these relationships was participants' **sense of shared values** and '*worldview'* with volunteers. One described '*a sense of continuity and connection'* (#15), two spoke of '*people whose values align'* (#12), another of '*a group of people who are like-minded*' (#42). For some, these shared values '*filled a gap'* (#37) when participants returned and began reflecting differently on the lifestyles of friends in Australia (#31).

Thus, as well as valued emotional support to help participants cope with their repatriation and readjustment, other volunteers were, as one participant described it, '*a community of people'* (#16) able to provide information or advice on life, career or social justice issues. These sentiments were shared across all seven groups of volunteers (including some *Non-working Partners*). For two participants, these values-based friendships were the primary impact of the assignment.[244] To the extent that the program gave participants the opportunity to connect so strongly with others who share their '*community engagement, environmental concern, social justice concerns*' (#15), it is likely to have provided the platform for some of the personal changes and lifestyle changes that the participants spoke about with some passion during their interviews (Sections 6.2 and 6.3).

The other main change to (some) participants' personal relationships was with family. Roughly equal numbers reported no major changes to family relationships,[245] on the one hand, and giving '*higher priority*' (#20) to relationships with family[246] on the other. Mostly, the latter were influenced by exposure to one of three conditions: (i) the inspiration from experiencing more collectivist cultures that tended to prioritise family relationships (Section 6.3), (ii) extended separation from family ('*not being with your family for 12 months … you do realise what things are really important to you, and I think that helps you clarify what we are going to do when we come back'*, #38), and/or (iii) the isolation of their assignment ('*that isolation really kind of pointed out to me how much I need family and friends around*', #27). A number spoke of having greater appreciation for family support '*on a deeper level'* (#06). Several reported more frequently instigating contact with family since

returning because of this appreciation; four were inspired to reconfigure living arrangements specifically to be closer to extended family ('*I definitely reassessed what's important in life'*, #08).[247]

A few participants who were accompanied on assignment by a partner felt the experience strengthened the relationship ('*working together overseas ... gave us a real thread back to our lives and we've maintained that*', #16); for one, this was the major impact of the assignment. Some found the presence of their partner helpful for establishing friendships in-country (e.g. #10, #32); for others, this seemed to limit the extent to which new networks and relationships were established, with accompanied volunteers reporting generally fewer strong in-country networks. Participants who hosted family or friends during the assignment identified the experiences in the host country as an ongoing shared topic of interest and discussion.[248]

6.5 Personal Circumstances and Capabilities: Key Findings and Implications

6.5.1 Key Findings

- The consistency and breadth of responses across time periods and volunteer types supports the conclusion that participation in the program can be the impetus for positive personal changes in volunteers and partners. These changes emerge from features of the work role that volunteers perform, the organisational context of their work, and their experiences living and socialising in the host country.
- The conditions that participants reported as being conducive to personal changes (**Figure 16**) do suggest that international development volunteering may offer unique spaces for personal development because of the relatively high levels of challenge, novelty, meaning and connection it presents.
- Participants' assignment experiences appear to have provided a platform for them to engage in different and potentially more transformational ways with issues and events they encounter. This appears to arise in part from dissonant in-country experiences (both favourable and unfavourable) that lead to reflection on their values, lifestyles and attitudes, and – for some – changes to their behaviours and ways of life, at least in the short term (Sections 6.3 and 6.3.1). These transformational moments may be more common among younger volunteers (*Launchers*) than older ones (*Veterans*).
- The program played a direct role in participants developing strong relationships with other volunteers founded on shared values and experiences (Section 6.4), most commonly those in the same host country. For some participants, the experience of being removed from family for an extended period (and being embedded in a culture that places a high value on family relationships) led to greater appreciation for, and in some cases stronger, relationships with family. For others, undergoing the experience with a partner (or hosting short-term visits from family or friends) enriched both their experience and their relationships.
- The data also indicate that participants experiencing the greatest personal changes (e.g. global mindset, lifestyle changes) were most likely to experience challenging repatriations. The uncertainty associated with COVID notwithstanding, some features that make volunteer assignments developmental - including challenge, novelty and meaning (Section 6.2) – may contribute toward volunteers' repatriations being more difficult than most international assignments.

6.5.2 Supporting Volunteers' Personal Circumstances and Capabilities[249]

» Supporting constructive personal changes and outcomes

The features that contributed to personal changes (Section 6.2) are generally consistent with theories of informal learning[250] and share some similarities with research on "learning-intensive" settings (obstacles to be overcome, variety, change, non-routine activities, and "stretch" roles that extend prior responsibility or skill levels).[251] In other words, **volunteers' descriptions of the activities that fostered personal development suggest that their workplaces and living conditions were, in fact, learning-intensive environments.** Reconciling novel experiences, in particular, appears to be a key contributor to personal (Section 6.2) and lifestyle changes (Section 6.3).

Two cautions are warranted. First, some conditions that are known to be conducive to learning in workplaces - including access to extensive professional contacts and good quality superior feedback - were deficient at T2 and T3.[252] Second, a potential trade-off exists between volunteers' personal development and achieving their capacity development objectives. Consistent with **Figure 16**, assignments that present periods of challenge, isolation, difficulty and deep immersion were among the most developmental experiences. Yet these features may also have contributed to some of the least development and most detrimental outcomes for volunteers and POs. This may be the case for volunteers whose assignments necessitate extreme "pivots" to adapt to the changing context and needs of the PO, which can be a source of extreme learning[253] but also challenge.[254]

Supporting POs and volunteers to find an optimal balance of conditions is likely critical to maximising the potential gains (including personal development of volunteers) and mitigating losses (including not achieving assignment objectives). The degree of challenge/novelty is likely complex and fluid, changing across the course of the volunteer assignment.[255] On this, it seems feasible that two of the enabling conditions at **Figure 16** – "meaning" and "connection" - may offset deficiencies in other areas. That is, program efforts to make volunteer assignments meaningful may provide motivation, information and emotional support that make volunteers' experiences especially enriching.[256] As part of this, benefit may come from designing in-country experiences

and deploy support mechanisms that are shown to enhance the "meaning" that volunteers derive from their experiences by contributing, for instance, to their self-esteem (e.g. designing roles to provide a sense of accomplishment), sense of purpose (e.g. supporting volunteers to see the significance in the work performed) or authenticity (e.g. opportunities for autonomy and self-direction on tasks that contribute to their personal/professional identity).[257] In a similar vein, volunteers are likely to benefit from support to help them access social and professional networks that will enhance their sense of "connection" arising from their assignment and facilitate contact with and feedback from respected peers and leaders (Sections 4.5.2 and 5.4.2).

» Supporting volunteers to sustain lifestyle changes

The extent to which lifestyle changes (Section 6.3) are retained, and whether the program makes such retention more likely, is pertinent but not answered by the data available. The potential for volunteer assignments to instigate transformational changes in values and ways-of-life,[258] and for these to be continued well beyond the assignment,[259] have been documented; these are not inconsistent with the experiences reported by volunteers in this study to date. In these reports, we see evidence of some volunteers modifying behaviours to create "consistent and coherent bundles of social practices" more aligned with their evolving beliefs.[260] Thus, for some at least, the lifestyle changes appear to be founded on strong values conducive to longer-lasting changes.

Attitudes relating to social and environmental issues are more likely to be acted upon when individuals perceive personal agency and believe their actions can make a difference.[261] On this front, it is feasible that by offering volunteers the opportunity to experience "development in practice" - especially on assignments where the tangible outcomes of volunteers' actions were evident to them - the program enables some of the awareness, agency and action that can contribute to the longevity of some lifestyle changes (e.g. sustainable living, reducing consumption).[262] The nature of some changes, such as work-life balance and stronger priority to family life, were not prominent outcome reported at T2 (immediately after their assignment) and so may be examples of more slowly emerging changes arising from the program, and so highlight the continual and evolving ways that volunteers, over months/years, make sense of and reap the personal fruits of their assignments.[263] Regardless, volunteers may benefit from help to understand changes in lifestyle via, for instance, encouraging discussions in VPLJ activities and/or social media, and/or through facilitating volunteers' social networks that might nurture, reinforce and/or guide such changes as they emerge and evolve during and after assignments.

» Supporting better repatriations and post-assignment experiences

The professional and personal costs of international repatriation on expatriates and their partners are well documented in academic literature. These include psychological and behavioural readjustment, integrating socially and professionally with home networks, and reacquainting oneself with work and day-to-day living.[264] The psychological consequences of liminality have been studied in various contexts, including the in-country experiences of international assignees[265] and international development practitioners.[266]

Some demographic (e.g. gender, age, marital status) and assignment (e.g. cultural distance, deep immersion in host culture, contact with HCNs) features may complicate repatriation under normal circumstances.[267] These may have been exacerbated by the forced COVID repatriations - linked to higher "risk for worsened mental health" in the months following a return home[268] - and the lack of access to support networks and loss of structures and routines created by COVID.[269] Nonetheless, the data suggest some volunteers' antecedents and in-country experiences may increase the risk of "protracted liminality" (Section 6.3.2) and thus this pivotal time in the volunteer lifecycle seems to be especially precarious for certain groups of volunteers.

It is suggested that the program acknowledge individual volunteers' differences and unique needs, remain sensitive to the varied readjustment patterns of volunteers, and make information and support available, especially for volunteers who may be vulnerable to the negative consequences or in circumstances of distress (e.g. early return from assignment). This is likely to be most effective when the support exhibits a genuine and proactive interest in the volunteers' wellbeing.[270]

» Supporting productive personal (and professional) networks with other volunteers

Findings across all four outcome areas indicate that new social networks with other volunteers which are forged around shared values and experiences are likely both an outcome and propellant of many of the changes identified in this study. In short, these social networks with other volunteers – which offer participants social, professional, civic and emotional utility - seem to be important mechanisms guiding and sustaining many of the beneficial personal and professional changes unearthed in this study.

The program's support to help volunteers establish, nurture, contribute to and benefit from these relationships before, during and after their volunteer assignment is a central feature of the recommendations that are outlined in Part III.

PART III: Key Findings and Implications

7. Distillation of Main Findings and Integrated Recommendations

7.1 Distillation of Main Findings

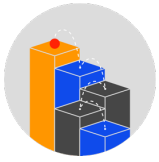
Collectively, most (although not all) participants in the LSAV have benefitted personally and/or professionally from their involvement in the program. Most returned from their assignments better informed, more culturally aware, and with new and productive relationships. Some have already achieved career benefits; others entered the program with career aspirations that are yet to be fulfilled. In a few cases, these have been harmed. Nonetheless, many participants have begun drawing on and seeding the benefits of their experiences on the program already through the application of newly formed knowledge, capabilities and relationships in their work, studies, volunteering and social lives.

In many ways, the most vibrant manifestation of volunteers' assignments continues through their ongoing social networks, especially with fellow volunteers. These networks may provide the momentum that, in the long-term, has the potential to exert sustained influences on volunteers' work and lives, and so the strongest impact on their civic, international, professional and personal outcomes in coming years.

7.1.1 Key Findings by Volunteer Type

The main outcomes for each of the seven types of volunteers are summarised in **Table 5**. It shows that, despite forced repatriations, COVID lockdowns and some challenging in-country experiences, participants across most groups have achieved, or are on the way to achieving, many of the personal or professional benefits that led them to the program in 2019. These include drawing satisfaction from making a meaningful contribution (*Veterans*), experiencing a meaningful career recess (*Career Break*), taking steps towards starting a meaningful career (*Launchers*), and establishing a new foothold after a negative career disruption (*Imposed Transitioners*). *Enhancers* have had difficulties translating their professional development into improved professional status. Meanwhile, *Transitioners* have been the least likely to achieve their primary objective for entering the program to date, with COVID a major impediment to their desire to switch to new (often international) careers or sectors.

Table 5: Main changes and learning outcomes by volunteer type

Group name	Key features of changes and learning outcomes
1. Launchers 	**Volunteers in this group are using their volunteer assignment as a stepping-stone to launch a career in a sector or profession that allows them to express their values, typically in the domain of international development (*integrating values into a meaningful career*).** • *Launchers* had the strongest and clearest career ambitions at T1 and had accrued the most career benefit by T3. • *Launchers* were the group most likely to seek (T1) and to achieve (T3) a prosocial career transition. They reported developing domain-specific expertise more often than other groups. Some of this came from the hands-on field work that enabled them to experience their prior studies "in practice." The assignment experiences also contributed to their international development literacy, especially understanding the "development landscape" and evaluating their interests and skillset within the sector. They reported professional legitimacy benefits more often than other groups. Perhaps because of these factors, they were also most likely to garner self-confidence. **In short, while the strong international career that so many *Launchers* wanted is yet to be realised, most took tangible steps toward achieving this.** • *Launchers'* experience with the program may have been the most transformational (at least to date), with a higher proportion reporting major changes to their worldview than other groups, although they are also the youngest group and so the impacts of these may be less meaningful than for older volunteers.[271] The major impacts that they reported varied greatly, although the two most prominent relate to the "growth experiences" and "career clarity" that the assignment provided. • This group was more likely than most to express ongoing interest in remote and/or in-country volunteer assignments. They were especially keen to align future volunteering opportunities with their career/professional interests.
2. Enhancers 	***Enhancers* see their volunteer assignment as a means to consciously develop or enhance a career through the acquisition of skills, experiences, opportunities, and/or networks (*progressing a career through a meaningful and developmental experience*).** • In terms of capabilities, this group arguably reported the greatest improvement in valuable professional know-how. This includes domain-specific knowledge and capabilities, role performance and management capabilities, and culture-general knowledge or "global mindset." The bulk of this group identified professional and career outcomes as the assignment's major impacts. Thus, the data suggest that most were able to enhance their professional capabilities and experiences. • At the same time, a relatively large proportion of *Enhancers* who sought a prosocial career transition at T1 were unable to achieve this by T3. They were also more likely than most groups to experience a challenging repatriation. Both outcomes were strongly influenced by COVID. **Taking these outcomes holistically, while their assignments were professionally developmental, *Enhancers* have not yet translated this to substantial improvement in their professional status.** • This group was more likely than most groups to express ongoing interest in in-country volunteer assignments.

3. Transitioners

***Transitioners* view their volunteer assignment as a pathway to enter a new sector or context, most commonly with an international - rather than domestic – focus (*entering a new sector or context that provides meaning*). At T2 many *Transitioners* reported having affirmed or rejected a potential career avenue, suggesting the assignment may have been utilised to "test" a specific (and quite fixed) career trajectory, rather than "explore" possible career options.**

- In many ways, this was the group that, professionally, had the most at stake on their assignment. Most had chosen to leave paid employment to use volunteering as a platform to test a professional transition to a new field or context. Thus, for this group the potential (negative) consequences of a rare but impactful disruption like COVID was relatively high.
- This proved to be the case, with *Transitioners* experiencing the worst career consequences of COVID. They were the least likely to achieve positive personal or professional outcomes. They were the most likely to desire a prosocial career transition at T1 but among the least likely to achieve this. Despite the relatively strong career focus, just 3/11 reported career-related influences as the major impact of the assignment. In short, **most *Transitioners'* desire to transition to a new career or profession is yet to be fulfilled.**
- The group did frequently report enhanced cultural and domain-specific knowledge and capabilities, suggesting developmental elements to their assignments with the potential to assist future career transitions, especially for the many *Transitioners* who have international career aspirations. Nonetheless, at T3 they overwhelmingly saw the major impact of their assignment as personal, rather than professional, revolving around relationships, self-awareness, and a sense of meaning/satisfaction.
- *Transitioners* were the most likely to experience a challenging repatriation and were less likely than most groups to express an ongoing interest in future international volunteer assignments.

4. Career Breakers

For *Career Breakers*, a volunteer assignment is an interlude to a career that may be returned to after the assignment is completed, but which – at the time of accepting the assignment - is not fulfilling their needs (*taking a temporary and meaningful hiatus from a career*).

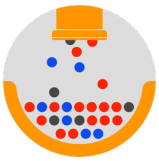
- *Career Breakers'* involvement with the program was the most professionally cautious, having employment to return to if needed after their assignment; a condition that proved valuable to some after their repatriation.
- **While the break in their career was not always as meaningful as they would have liked, most *Career Breakers* were positively changed by their experiences on the program, and this has begun filtering into their personal and professional lives.** The main professional benefits came from the legitimacy and reputation that others attached to their assignment, rather than the technical knowledge and capabilities that they developed. Most found the insight to a new context beneficial yet not transformational, although for two it was '*formative*' and the source of career inflections that are still unfolding. Like *Transitioners*, the most frequently reported major impacts amongst this group were personal, with improved confidence, personal growth and self-awareness all reported.
- *Career Breakers'* interests in civic participation appear to have shifted away from the program. They increased their overall pre/post voluntary service more than other groups yet were less likely than most to express ongoing interest in remote and/or in-country volunteer assignments.

5. Imposed Transitioners

***Imposed Transitioners* undertake a volunteer assignment in response to a negative career experience (e.g. redundancy) that leads them to consider a new profession or context (*undertaking a meaningful alternative to domestic work with career possibilities*).**

- Although they tended to come from less favourable starting points career-wise, the impacts on *Imposed Transitioners'* careers were generally positive, especially in relation to their career benefits and cultural learning.
- This group was more likely than most to report enhancing domain-specific knowledge and capabilities at T2 and T3; 4/7 reported improved career confidence among the assignment's major impacts. A relatively large proportion of *Imposed Transitioners* were seeking a prosocial career transition at T1 and most had achieved this by T3.
- *Imposed Transitioners* were most likely to report developing culture-general capabilities ("global mindset"). Improved cultural insights (either culture-specific or culture-general) were also prominent in their assessment of the assignment's major impact.
- At the same time, this group was more likely than most to report a challenging repatriation and were less likely than most groups to express an ongoing interest in future volunteer assignments (T2 and T3). This may be linked to their desire, expressed at T2 and T3, to be directing their energies towards a new (paid) professional area.

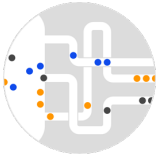
6. Veterans



Volunteers in this group are undertaking a volunteer assignment as an opportunity to apply professional expertise accumulated through a long career in order to achieve a positive outcome (*applying career expertise toward a meaningful purpose*).

- *Veterans* was the group most likely to report relatively minor changes from the assignment, and frequently qualified their reported changes as being '*not major*'. Most of their learning centred on cultural capabilities (T2 and T3). This was primarily country-specific knowledge and capabilities. Indeed, *Veterans* was the group with the largest discrepancy between reports of enhancing culture-specific as opposed to culture-general knowledge and capabilities.
- ***Veterans'* reflections on the assignment's major impacts tended to focus on personal outcomes, with improved sense of meaning/satisfaction and personal relationships most common. In this, the data suggest that *Veterans*, on the whole, have been able to meet their pre-assignment objective/s despite not all having overwhelmingly positive experiences.** They valued the diversity of the new networks that they developed through the assignment, primarily with other volunteers rather than HCNs (T3). This may have been nurtured, at least in part, by the large numbers of *Veterans* who were accompanied on the assignment by a partner.
- This group was more likely than most to express ongoing interest in remote and/or in-country assignments (T3), although strong preferences were expressed for short-term in-country assignments.

7. Non-working Partners



***Non-working Partners* accompany a partner on an international volunteer assignment as an approved accompanying dependant. While they attend VPLJ activities, they undertake no structured work or volunteer role (*experiencing a vicarious assignment and adventure*).**

- *Non-working Partners* have tended to be least strongly affected by their assignment to date. The two who reported the strongest impact had much higher levels of contact with HCNs than others in this group. Like *Veterans*, **the largest perceived impacts of the assignment overall tended to be personal and stemmed from the immersion in a vastly different culture, and the difficulties and joys of navigating this experience (e.g. improved resilience, happiness/satisfaction, and problem-solving capabilities).** Consistent with this, cultural capabilities were the most commonly reported learning outcomes.
- While most *Non-working Partners* entered the assignment with aspirations to learn new skills, including the host-country language, on the whole these went unfulfilled. However, most emerged with improved international development literacy, better awareness of and engagement with the host country, and a strong affection for the host country and the experience. Several have explored domestic volunteering options since their repatriation, although for most the direction of this appears not yet strongly influenced by their experiences on the program.

7.1.2 Key Findings by Volunteer and Assignment Characteristics

Table 6 summarises the main outcomes and changes that were associated with a range of personal and assignment characteristics. These include participants' demographic features such as their gender, age, reported disabilities, cultural and language background, and residential home (rural/urban), as well as assignment features that include the PO location (rural/urban), whether participants were accompanied on assignment by a partner, and whether they were a "referred candidate" for the volunteer role.

As the table shows, of participants' demographic features, gender was the strongest predictor of change, with female participants, on average, reporting more positive personal and professional outcomes than male participants, even when factoring in the higher proportion of male participants who were retired (9/18 men

compared with 7/35 women). Women were over-represented in groups experiencing larger professional benefit, impacts on their civic participation and lifestyle changes than men, but also more frequently reported difficult repatriations and lower levels of perceived program support during the assignment. Some evidence exists that the program may be especially beneficial for women from rural areas of Australia, although the small number of participants in this group (7) and the numerous participants relocating between rural-urban areas across the study period (i.e. pre-post) limits the extent to which this finding might be transferable.

Different patterns of outcomes were also evident between participants who were accompanied on their assignment by a partner and those who were not – for instance, accompanied participants were less likely to develop valuable international or professional networks and less likely to have a challenging repatriation - and between volunteers assigned to rural and urban POs, with volunteers in rural POs reporting stronger knowledge of, contacts in, and engagement with the host country than volunteers in urban POs.

Table 6: Main changes and learning outcomes by volunteer and assignment characteristics

Characteristic	Key features of changes and learning outcomes
Volunteers' gender	• On average, the 35 female participants reported more positive career outcomes from their assignments than their male counterparts. Areas where noticeable differences existed were tangible changes in work status from T1-T3, professional networks and professional reputation). Women were also more likely than men to report having applied their new knowledge and capabilities in the workplace since their return to Australia (T3) - a larger proportion of women than men were working in their chosen professional field at T3. • A larger proportion of women than men reported developing "higher-order" cross-cultural skills such as global mindset and cognitive empathy (T3), a pattern generally reflective of the types of learning outcomes that were reported at T2. Some evidence also exists that women's civic participation post-assignment was more strongly shaped by their assignment experiences – for instance, a higher proportion of female volunteers increased or changed the nature of their civic participation (T1-T3), developed their international development literacy and reported applying these new capabilities (T3), although this likely reflects, in part, the career stage and professional interests of the groups. • Women were over-represented in groups reporting a personal lifestyle change (T3) and a difficult repatriation (T3). Related to this, women were less likely to be accompanied by a partner and reported generally lower levels of satisfaction with the support that they received from the program during their assignment (T2) than male participants, features that are related (see 'Accompanied' below).
Volunteers' age	• Older participants were less likely to report major changes across the study period. Fewer old participants underwent lifestyle changes, and while learning outcomes related to cultural knowledge and capabilities were commonly reported, for older participants these tended to be confined to culture-specific outcomes. • Younger participants were more likely that older participants to be working or seeking work at T3 and so were more likely to report applying new skills in professional contexts or to be inspired to take up formal education. Young participants, who were more likely to be unaccompanied during their assignment, also reported more difficult repatriations and were more likely to seek counselling support after returning from their assignment (T3). • Old participants, on the other hand, were generally more likely than young participants to report a rise in civic participation across the study period (T1-T3), although responses suggest that the need to re-establish a professional career during COVID affected younger participants' commitment to civic causes, at least in the short-term. On the other hand, young volunteers were more likely to undergo a shift to more skilled volunteering post-assignment (T1-T3).
Volunteers with a disability	• Three participants reported a disability at T1. All three were motivated to enter the program, in part, by career/professional objectives (one *Launcher*, one *Enhancer*, one *Transitioner*). Two found the experience valuable in terms of developing a more global outlook, learning relevant professional knowledge and capabilities, and in clarifying their career direction (T3); both these also reported developing important personal capabilities (T3). Yet none had realised tangible career benefit at T3; one was unemployed, one experiencing job insecurity and the other working (and enjoying) a 'plan B' job at T3. Two had generally negative experiences in their POs.
Culturally and linguistically diverse volunteers	• Excluding those who had finished their working careers, those identifying as cultural minorities tended to report career-related motivations when interviewed before their assignments (T1). While most were exploring a prosocial career transition through their assignment, a larger proportion than other groups reported firm personal or professional post-assignment commitments at the start of their assignment (two were *Career Breakers*). • In general, this group had limited experience with or understanding of their host country prior to the assignment (T1) and most reported increased country-specific knowledge and interest – for instance, most developed and retained strong host-country and international networks (T3) and continued to take an active interest in events in their host country after their assignment (T3). Perhaps reflecting their multicultural upbringing, changes to their culture-general knowledge and capabilities tended to manifest through different attitudes towards Australia (especially increased gratitude) rather than attitudes and capabilities associated with global mindset (T3). On balance, they reported fewer changes in culture-specific and culture-general knowledge than other participants, although they came away with strong international networks and comparable levels of host-country engagement (T3). • None in this category reported major career changes at T3. Excluding two retirees, all were working full-time and all had gained professional clarity from their involvement in the program (T3); three had rejected a potential career change and two had reaffirmed a change to a new career direction (T3). • The six participants who spoke English as a non-native language were more likely to be accompanied by a partner (5/6) than others (14/48). They also reported generally higher levels of satisfaction with the overall volunteering experience than others (T3).
Volunteers' home residence in Australia (urban/rural)	• Ten participants entered the program from rural Australia. Discerning the impacts on this cohort was made more difficult by enforced lockdowns and relocations due to COVID, a period during which several participants relocated from rural to urban areas (and vice versa). • Compared to participants from urban backgrounds, rural volunteers were more likely to have career/professional outcomes as their main motivation, to be women, and to not be accompanied by a partner during their assignment (T1). • The outcomes or rural participants were generally positive and were comparable, and for some outcomes more favourable, than their urban peers. Most of the major changes among this group were reported by the seven women (of the three men, two were retired and one unemployed at T3). Among the favourable outcomes that this group reported more frequently were increases in professional and international knowledge and capabilities and applying these since their return to Australia, successfully transitioning to a new professional sector or career, and perceiving tangible benefits to their career from the assignment. Higher levels of ongoing PO support were also reported, with all seven rural women (and none of the men) continuing to provide support to POs at T3. Rural participants more frequently reported changing their lifestyle (T3) also. While generally less internationally-oriented at T1 than their urban peers (e.g. less likely to be seeking a career overseas), they reported higher levels of host-country engagement and contacts/networks, and greater frequency of increases in some cross-cultural capabilities (T3). They were also more likely to report a difficult repatriation to Australia than urban participants (T3).

Volunteers who were referred candidates	• All eight volunteers who were referred candidates for their volunteer assignments had worked in the host-country (6/8) or visited as tourists (2/8) before commencing their assignment.[272] They had, on average, stronger connections with and knowledge about the host-country than others before commencing their assignment (T1). All eight were planning (primarily prosocial) career transitions at T1; a significantly higher proportion than non-referred volunteers (16/41). In general, their evaluation of the program's in-country support was less favourable than non-referred volunteers. • The outcomes of this group were mixed. They retained high levels of host-country engagement at T3. They were more likely to report increased professional confidence and strong professional networks, and to report having applied their newly-gained knowledge and skills (professional and international) since completing their assignment than other volunteers (T3). Yet they were also more likely than others to report a difficult repatriation and the use of counselling services post-repatriation (T3). While six found full-time work at T3, two others (both of whom volunteered with small domestic NGOs) remained unemployed. Half reported strongly negative or no career benefit from the assignment, with their early repatriation a strong impediment. All four referred volunteers who reported career benefits were women; female referred candidates were also more likely than men (and other participants) to make lifestyle changes arising from their assignment (T3).
Volunteers who were accompanied on assignment by a partner from Australia	• Nineteen participants were accompanied by a partner from Australia during their assignments, including all five *Non-working Partners* and eight *Veterans*. This group was older and less career-oriented than other participants (T1), with 12/19 retired at T1. Participants from CALD backgrounds were more likely than others to be accompanied. Accompanied volunteers were more likely to undertake a "mentoring" role during their assignment than others (T1). • These participants were as likely as non-accompanied participants to report most personal and professional changes identified in this report. These include changes associated with cross-cultural experiences (e.g. country-specific knowledge and capabilities, global mindset, changed view of Australia). Nonetheless, accompanied participants reported lower levels of career changes resulting from their assignment and were less likely to have applied their new knowledge and skills since completing their assignment. • While the level of ongoing contact with POs was the same for accompanied volunteers, they were less likely to report developing valuable international and/or professional networks and they reported generally lower levels of ongoing engagement with the host country than other volunteers. • Accompanied participants' satisfaction with their overall in-country experiences did not differ from other volunteers, although they were generally more favourable of the support provided by the program (T2) and were more likely to report openness to future international volunteer assignments (T2 and T3). Notably, they were less likely to report a difficult repatriation or report mental health challenges after completing their assignment (T3).
Partner organisations' location in host countries (urban/rural)	• Most participants were based in a host-country capital city (n = 28), with others located in rural areas (15) or large non-capital cities (10). A relatively higher proportion of volunteers in rural POs were *Veterans* and working with host-government agencies than those in cities. They were also less likely to have undertaken a previous volunteer assignment (T1). • In terms of outcomes, the strongest differences between participants in rural and non-rural locations related to the host country. Rural-based volunteers reported stronger ongoing host-country networks, engagement and country-specific understanding (T3), although this did not always flow through to culture-general knowledge and capabilities, where volunteers based in large cities tended to report stronger changes (T3). Whereas participants volunteering in rural POs were more likely to report a lifestyle change (T3), participants in urban locations were more likely to benefit from developing professional networks (T3). • Participants based in rural locations showed stronger increases pre-post in their civic participation (T1-T3) and a slightly stronger openness to future volunteer assignments than others (T2 and T3).

7.2 Integrated Recommendations

Consolidating the results reported in Sections 3-6, we see opportunities for the program to align volunteer support and program management activities across the full volunteer lifecycle to further volunteers' personal and professional development.

Amalgamating the analysis detailed in Sections 3.6.3 (civic), 4.5.2 (international), 5.4.2 (professional), and 6.5.2 (personal), we propose four cross-cutting areas as most likely to provide the clearest guidance to continue supporting volunteers to develop and learn personally and professionally. Each is précised in the four sections that follow.

Not all these recommendations will be compatible with the program's ongoing evolution post-COVID and some suggestions may be deemed surplus to the program's main areas of interest. While outside the immediate scope of this study, tensions between supporting volunteers' and POs' development needs must be weighed when considering how to operationalise the study's main findings.

7.2.1 Helping Volunteers to Benefit from Diverse Connections

A common theme across all three phases to date has been the value that participants have attached to and derived from new informal networks. We draw attention to two features of these.

a. Enabling and supporting strong connections with other volunteers. To date, volunteers' strongest and most valuable networks are those with other volunteers. These have informed, at different stages, participants' preparation for their assignments,[273] their in-country experiences,[274] and their civic, professional and personal lives since completing their assignment. It is also clear that these offer the potential for substantial community benefit through coordinated responses and advocacy, like the example in Section 4.3.4.

Other studies have highlighted the (potential) role that volunteers' networks can play – to "provide an enduring link to development" and as a basis to "leverage" wider volunteer participation.[275] These networks also foment social comparisons against which volunteers evaluate their attitudes and behaviours, and so likely contribute to volunteers sustaining some of their (newly-formed) attitudes, capabilities and behaviours.[276]

Although few rigorous studies have examined the longevity or benefits of relationships arising from international volunteering, it seems feasible that the common experiences and shared values around which these networks form are likely to contribute to them being relatively valuable and robust, even when weaker ties are forgone. In short, **the program provides – and should continue to support its role as - a platform for participants to develop strong "bonding capital" centred on values-based relationships with other volunteers.** Seeking to manage these networks may be counterproductive. For this reason, we recommend the program

take steps to enable, facilitate and support – but not control - the formation and continuance of these communities, and so potentially benefit volunteers and the program.

Two important considerations for the program will be ensuring that these opportunities are availed to all volunteers, including from a range of backgrounds (e.g. minority groups) and assigned to a variety of contexts (e.g. remote locations), and ensuring that these networks do not crowd out opportunities to establish other relationships. This point is picked up next.

b. Enabling and supporting a diverse set of networks. Also prominent to date has been evidence of the benefits of volunteers' contacts with HCNs[277] and the ways in which strong host-country knowledge and capabilities can support learning, career and personal development opportunities arising from volunteer assignments (Section 4.5.2). In short, **close and regular contact with HCNs and a sound understanding of the local culture are important foundations for many of the valued personal and professional gains available to volunteers.**

Two tensions are apparent in this. First, deep local embeddedness came with potential costs to volunteers, notably increasing the challenges of repatriating after an assignment (Section 6.3.2). More pertinently, although strong relationships with multiple social and professional groups (volunteers, HCNs, professionals) offer benefits, limitations on volunteers' time, capabilities (e.g. language proficiency) and/or access to some groups may make this difficult for some volunteers.

Thus, we see value in the program making efforts to help volunteers balance and/or integrate their various networks (professional and social), to understand the benefits of retaining multifarious strong connections (home-country, host-country, other), and to understand how the volunteers themselves and the program can support this. In short, **at all stages of the volunteer lifecycle, the program should encourage and help volunteers be legitimate participants in diverse networks that are complementary and supportive of their goals and their emotional and informational needs.[278]** While this was rarely a stated motivation for volunteering or an expected outcome (T1), it may be the one of the most valuable mechanisms that support volunteers' personal and professional development.

For most volunteers, establishing relationships with volunteer peers is likely to be relatively easy,[279] and so the program may initially focus on making available more, and more regular, opportunities for high-quality contact. This seems especially pertinent for volunteers in isolated locations.[280] On balance, support is suggested to ensure volunteers from minority backgrounds feel included and valued members of volunteers' social groups.[281]

Building strong intercultural relationships can be more effortful, take longer, and may require certain conditions to be present[282] or particular role configurations (e.g. a designated "mentor" role). It may also require capabilities that volunteers, at least initially, lack. Some volunteers (e.g. with limited intercultural experiences) may find creating or retaining these connections more difficult. The program may also find it beneficial to help volunteers activate certain networks at different times (e.g. with volunteers for emotional support when needed, with HCNs for informational support whilst in country).

Facilitating opportunities for volunteers to establish *professional* networks may require more structure and facilitation from the program. It can be rendered more complex by, for instance, the array of volunteers' professional backgrounds (and interests) or assignment isolation. Nonetheless, the findings do suggest domain-specific network-building and learning are areas that may disadvantage volunteers - relative to those who are not involved in the program (i.e. pursuing a "standard" domestic career) – when seeking to re-enter the labour market in some sectors.

> **Recommendation 1:** In ways that do not detract from the program's primary objectives, we recommend that the program make available opportunities for volunteers to form, sustain and contribute to social networks that offer members support, friendship, information and opportunities to develop and apply newfound capabilities. These include networks comprising other volunteers, host-country nationals, others from their professional field, and other groups who are touchstones on volunteers' journey through the program.

7.2.2 Matching Volunteer to Assignments with Learning-intensive Characteristics

The findings in Sections 3-6 reveal volunteer assignments to provide "learning-intensive" conditions conducive to change. These stem from many generic features of volunteers' roles, the PO environments in which they work, and the experiences available in challenging and unfamiliar socio-cultural settings. **The features elucidated in Figures 7, 11, 13 and 16 provide the most comprehensive map of the generic characteristics that make volunteer assignments developmental. On the whole, matching individual volunteers to assignments that offer the right mix of these characteristics is expected to provide volunteers with abundant opportunities to gain personally and professionally.**

Two cautions are warranted. First, while these conditions can be learning intensive for volunteers, this must be balanced against the program's overarching objective to support locally-led change in POs. Assignments which are developmental for volunteer can elicit increased motivation, commitment, confidence and meaning; all of which can improve performance.[283] However, this should not be assumed for all individuals and all POs and is complicated by the fluid/evolving nature of assignments. Second, a further theme common in responses in all four outcome areas and across both T2 and T3 is the vast diversity of volunteer starting points, in-country experiences and (desired and accrued) personal and professional outcomes. Thus, "stretch roles" or HCN

interactions with the right degree of challenge or novelty, for instance, will vary between individuals and in different POs and settings.

Consequently, while broad principles can help support volunteers' learning and growth, attention to particular conditions and informational and emotional support for different volunteers is likely advantageous – indeed, necessary – for them to benefit personally and professionally. An indication of this comes from the inter-group differences summarised in **Tables 5 and 6**. They reveal that, while most groups on the whole have realised broadly positive outcomes, the types and degree of changes differ markedly (e.g. *Transitioners*, *Enhancers*, *Career Breakers*) and allude to potentially different support needs to help volunteers realise the full benefits of the program's impact. Certain personal characteristics (e.g. prior experiences), professions (e.g. Health), positions (e.g. "mentoring" role), or circumstances (e.g. accompanied) as well as context features (e.g. PO type, assignment locations) all influence whether and how assignments can be developmental. **In short, the LSAV's findings highlight how the combination of personal and contextual features contribute in different ways to volunteers' learning palette**.

As the diversity of volunteers participating in the program increases, the range of motivations, experiences and outcomes can be expected to broaden. We therefore see value in the program being active in recognising these diverse individuals, experiences and outcomes, and aiming to work closely with stakeholders (including POs) to enable assignment features, program structures, and support mechanisms that provide the best possible learning experiences (formal and informal) for the variety of people, assignments and goals. The findings of the LSAV to date go some way to assisting the program to do this.

> **Recommendation 2:** In ways that do not detract from the program's primary objectives, we recommend that the program make available volunteer assignments with "learning-intensive characteristics" in terms of the role, PO environment, placement setting and experiences. Importantly and where feasible, doing this should take into account individual volunteers' objectives, needs, circumstances or past experiences that may influence their potential to gain personally or professionally during and/or after their volunteer assignments.

7.2.3 Helping Volunteers to Take Advantage of Informal and Incidental Learning Opportunities

All three LSAV reports to date have highlighted the strong contribution that VPLJ activities make to volunteers' formal learning (i.e. intentional learning that occurs in structured environments like PDBs and ICOPs). **Findings across all four outcome areas and multiple waves of data (T2-T3) also emphasise the richness of the many informal and incidental learning opportunities that volunteers encounter.** In these, learning occurs as a by-product of performing other activities, and so is less structured, less predictable and may go unrecognised by the learner.[284] The LSAV brings to the fore the types of informal learning that volunteers accumulate from their time on the program (what is learned), the contexts or situations distinctive to the program that make this possible (what contributes to this learning) and subsequently how this new knowledge, capabilities and experience is applied (how these changes benefit volunteers and others).

Building on this, we see value in the program articulating as one overarching aim of the program's support for volunteers (including VPLJ and associated activities) to help volunteers to benefit from the many informal and incidental learning and developmental opportunities that are presented. This includes helping volunteers to understand, integrate and transfer their formal and informal learning for their own and others' benefits before, during and after their assignment, and facilitating these activities in ways that enable opportunities to build valuable networks. This might include, for instance, activities designed to assist volunteers to integrate formal (via VPLJ) and informal (unstructured) learning, transfer learning to new situations (including post-assignment work, civic participation and life), and articulate their personal and professional development in meaningful ways (including to prospective employers). Supplementing these with opportunities to connect to organisations or individuals that offer the chance for volunteers to further develop and/or apply their new knowledge and capabilities is also likely to strengthen the personal and professional gains that volunteers accrue, as well as augment the program's overall impact.

> **Recommendation 3:** In ways that do not detract from the program's primary objectives, we recommend that the program make available structured support and opportunities, primarily under the auspices of the VPLJ, to help volunteers understand and take advantage of the many informal and incidental learning opportunities that international volunteer assignments present.

7.2.4 Undertaking In-house information Gathering or Research

Finally, the findings point to areas, beyond the scope of the LSAV, in which program staff may benefit from additional information gathering and/or research. Most prominent is better understanding how social media is used to connect volunteers to POs, and therefore how the program might best support these ongoing exchanges. Others include understanding the distinctive features of different assignment modalities in attracting volunteers and supporting their learning. For these, insights from future iterations of the LSAV are expected to be beneficial, but each would benefit from access to informants outside the LSAV sample.

> **Recommendation 4:** In ways that do not detract from the program's primary objectives, we recommend that the program make available information for program staff to assist them to support volunteers to benefit personally and professionally. This includes efforts to understand the distinctive

features of different assignment modalities, the roles of social media in connecting volunteers to POs and other networks, and ways to customise support to certain types of volunteers to enhance their propensity to benefit personally and professionally from the program.

7.3 Implications for Future Iterations of LSAV

Finally, the LSAV is the first study, to our knowledge, to document in detail the experiences of Australian development volunteers before, during and after an international volunteer assignment. It therefore provides the clearest insight to date into the personal and professional impacts on Australian development volunteers, and the features of the program and volunteer experiences that contribute to these.

Extending the LSAV with the current sample to incorporate additional waves of data collection has the potential to expand this understanding in important ways, especially in relation to the many outcomes identified here that are expected to lead to longer-term impacts for volunteers and their communities (e.g. career transitions, lifestyle changes, social networks being formed). For these, the numerous inflection points that occurred in the 2019-21 period can be expected to evolve further in coming years. This phase of the LSAV provides three foundational elements that would support tracking this evolution: assembling a diverse and motivated sample, documenting a baseline set of indicators against which to evaluate ensuing changes, and establishing a clear and scalable methodological approach.

Drawing on these experiences, **Attachment 11** outlines some considerations about features for the next phase of the LSAV. It includes details of the research design and data collection approach, suggested data collection intervals, themes to guide future interviews and analysis, and emerging findings from the study to which future data collection and analysis could respond.

Endnotes

[1] Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Inception Report (April 2019), Table 3, Section 3.4.4.

[2] These changes are outlined in the report: Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[3] The study's recruitment and engagement strategy is outlined in Section 3.2.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019) and Section 3.4, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Inception Report (April 2019).

[4] No explanation was offered for the withdrawal of participant #13. The analysis in this report is from the final sample of 54 participants unless otherwise stated.

[5] Section 3.2.3, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019).

[6] A copy of the online survey is included as Attachment 7 in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Inception Report (April 2019).

[7] Position descriptions are for the 49 volunteers only; they exclude AADs who did not perform designated volunteer roles.

[8] For more details of longitudinal qualitative interviews, see: Hermanowicz, J. C. (2013). 'The longitudinal qualitative interview', *Qualitative Sociology*, 36, 189-208; Saldaña, J. (2003). *Longitudinal Qualitative Research: Analyzing Change through Time*, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

[9] The research team held several meetings prior to and during the data collection periods to ensure interview schedules were appropriate and questions clear and relevant. Minor refinements were made to improve the structure and clarity of questions as interviews progressed. Moreover, several changes were made to interview topics at T2 for participants who underwent forced repatriation following the escalation of COVID. Details can be found in Section 2.3, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[10] For more details on the use of interpretative interview approaches see: Geertz, C. (1988). *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*. Stanford University Press.

[11] For details, see Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Inception Report (April 2019), Section 3.4.

[12] Interviews were conducted one-to-one by one of the three Australian-based research team members (Devereux, Everingham, Fee) at a time and via a medium that suited participants.

[13] The features of these threats to the study's reliability and validity, and strategies used to prevent or mitigate them, are outlined in Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020), Section 2.3 and Attachment 2. All changes were approved by the program in April 2020 and by UTS Human Research Ethics Committee.

[14] Across the sample, the forced repatriations led to the average assignment duration being cut by 27% from 317 days (anticipated at T1, as reported by participants) to 230 days at T2 (actual duration, as reported by participants). For the repatriated participants, this amounted to a reduction in their planned assignment duration of 31% (from 366 days to 251 days).

[15] For example: Jo, J.K., Harrison, D.A. & Gray, S.M. (2021). The ties that cope? Reshaping social connections in response to pandemic distress. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(9), 1267-1282; Kenny, K. M. (2010). Beyond ourselves: Passion and the dark side of identification in an ethical organization. *Human Relations*, 63(6), 857-873; Klaver, J.S. & Lambrechts, W. (2021). The pandemic of productivity: A narrative inquiry into the value of leisure time. *Sustainability*, 13(11), 6271.

[16] Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Inception Report (April 2019), Section 4.2.

[17] See, for example, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019), Section 4.1.1 and 4.1.2, Attachment 9; Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020), Attachments 3.1-3.2.

[18] Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019), Section 4.1.3.

[19] Australian Volunteers Program Global Program Strategy 2018-2022.

[20] Interviews and analysis forming Section 3 of this report canvassed civic engagement broadly to include activities like: (i) involvement in civics issues such as attending meetings or protests, raising or donating money, volunteering labour or skills, (ii) direct contributions to discussions or discourse on civics issues, such as posting to social media, overtly advocating for positions, making written submissions or raising issues for discussions in various community settings; and/or (iii) cognitive or emotional engagement in civics issues without necessarily acting upon this engagement. This includes monitoring media, reading or watching topical content, or informing oneself about issues relevant to international development (e.g., podcasts, online courses, perusing websites). The analysis includes participants' civic participation: (i) as individuals or as a part of a group; (ii) in structured settings (i.e. with a community organisation) or in unstructured and informal settings (e.g. helping neighbours during COVID lockdown); (iii) with a local, national or international focus, including remote and/or international volunteer assignments with the program or other volunteering agencies; (iv) outside their main paid work/employment. On the latter, although most civic engagement discussed here was undertaken voluntarily, it does include activities that were not participants' primary source of income but for which some financial expenses were compensated (e.g. remote volunteering). Changes to participants' paid work roles and/or professional sector, including those involving a transition to a career with stronger prosocial concerns, are discussed in Section 5.2.

[21] The networks that participants developed within the international development sector is discussed in Sections 4.3 and 5.2.2.

[22] Participants #07, #08, #11, #16, #20, #26, #27, #30, #31, #34, #38, #39, #45, #48, #49, #53, #54 and #55.

[23] Participants #02, #03, #04, #17, #23, #32, #40, #43 and #44.

[24] Clark and Lewis' (2016) study of VSO volunteers showed that younger volunteers were more likely to increase community, social and political action after their volunteer assignment. Source: Clark, J. & Lewis, S (2016). Impact beyond volunteering: A realist evaluation of the complex and long-term pathways of volunteer impact, VSO. Available online: https://www.vsointernational.org/sites/default/files/VSO_ImpactBeyondVolunteering_MainReport_web.pdf

[25] The mean age of those whose civic engagement rose was 48.33 years at pre-departure; this compares with 42.83 years for those whose engagement declined and 42.33 years for those for whom no clear changes were observed.

[26] Participants #24, #41, #45 and #52.

[27] Evidence that participation in the program led to different patterns of voluntary service was evident in 29 participants (54%). In several cases participants were explicit about the role that their assignment played as an impetus for this change; in other cases, participants were more ambivalent about attributing causality.

[28] Examples of participants who recognised and acknowledged a shift towards more internationally-oriented volunteering include: #01, #02, #03, #06, #12, #18, #21, #23, #27, #28, #31, #35, #40, #44 and #53.

[29] Participants who expressed a view to support localised international development initiatives include: #07, #20, #30, #43 and #48.

[30] Participants whose volunteering activities at T3 moved away from international towards more domestic concerns are: #14, #24, #38, #43 and #46.

[31] Participants #08, #22 and #24.

[32] For example: participants #01, #02, #19, #35 and #44. It is noticeable that some of these participants' involvement in domestic volunteering declined in order for them to take these internationally-focused opportunities.

[33] Participants who reported being aware of using their professional skills in voluntary activities at T3 were: #04, #12, #15, #21, #22, #25, #26, #27, #28, #40, #44, #37, #46, #47 and #49.

[34] Participants #21, #25, #27, #28, #44 and #47.

[35] Participants #04, #21 and #28.

[36] Participants #02, #08, #09, #12, #21, #30, #43, #46 and #49.

[37] Examples of participants whose volunteering was consciously more communitarian were #12, #43 and #46.

[38] Participant #30.

[39] Section 5.3.2, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019).

[40] Participants #29 and #43.

[41] By "structured", we mean formalised through volunteering with community organisations or recognised domestic or international volunteering organisations.

[42] Examples of participants' unstructured volunteering activities include: language teaching to friends (#09), helping neighbours and/or friends cope during COVID (#36, #44), concerted efforts to build relationships with neighbours (#15, #16), and sharing goods (#12, #21 and #43).

[43] Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[44] Participants #03, #09, #10, #17, #19, #23 and #37.

[45] Participants #44, #24, #27, #33 and #48.

[46] The intensity and duration of participants' ongoing support for POs varied greatly, and exact figures were unclear in some interviews. This estimate is based the descriptions provided by participants in interviews and assumes that: (i) volunteers who continued to support POs at T3 had done so for the full 12-month period (12 x 12 months), and (ii) the ten participants who had discontinued their support before T3 averaged 3 months of ongoing contribution (10 x 3 months). It should also be noted that the time devoted to supporting POs varied from ad-hoc support when needed to numerous hours daily.

[47] Examples of participants who provided post-assignment support for POs are: (i) supporting POs until they were able to finish a project or specific activity/task that they had started before being repatriated: participants #07, #45 and #49, (ii) providing advice or feedback in response to ad-hoc questions: participants #01, #24, #25 and #44, (iii) participating in mentor-style discussions: participants #03, #08 and #23, (iv) reviewing grant applications: participants #22 and #49, (v) preparing COVID emergency documents: participant #27, (vi) helping develop relationships with Australian organisations: participant #26, (vii) teaching English: participants #33, and (viii) writing résumés: participant #55.

[48] Examples of participants who offered to continue providing support to POs are participants #09, #15 and #40.

[49] Excludes AADs unless stated.

[50] Repatriated volunteers: Of the 33 volunteers who were repatriated (excluding *Non-working partners* and one participant who withdrew from the study prior to T3): (i) At T2, 24 (73%) were continuing to provide some residual support and 27 (82%) had some form of ongoing contact with POs; (ii) at T3 the number of volunteers who maintained ongoing contact with PO colleagues rose to 30 (91%). Ten of these (30%) were continuing to provide some ongoing support; seven (21%) via formal ongoing remote volunteer assignments and three informally with the PO. An additional seven had continued to provide informal support for the PO after being repatriated. Repatriated participants continuing to support POs at T3 via a formal remote assignment were #03, #09, #10, #17, #19, #23 and #24. Those continuing to provide support informally at T3 were #25, #33 and #49. Those who had continued after repatriation were #14, #20, #22, #27, #37, #46, and #51. Not repatriated volunteers: Of the 16 volunteers who were not repatriated: (i) At T2, four (25%) were continuing to provide some residual support and 13 (81%) had some form of ongoing contact with POs; (ii) At T3, the number of volunteers who maintained ongoing contact with PO colleagues remained constant (81%), but just two volunteers (12%) were continuing to provide some ongoing support, although the support was substantial for just one of these, a relationship formalised via a remote volunteering assignment. Of the volunteers who were not repatriated before their assignment was completed, participant #10 was completing a remote assignment and participant #44 was providing informal support for the PO at T3.

[51] This rise in PO contact from T2 to T3 likely reflects adjustment challenges experienced by many participants in the months following their repatriation (T2) – see Section 6.3.2 – and their 'recovery' from this to more normal levels of contact by T3.

[52] Of the 12 participants providing ongoing support for POs, four were *Veterans* and three *Launchers*, as well as two *Enhancers* and one *Career Breaker*, *Imposed Transitioner* and *Transitioner*. Of the 14 participants who were accompanied by a partner during their assignment and who held volunteer assignments (excluding *Non-working Partners*), just 2 were supporting their PO at T3. for those unaccompanied, 10/35 were.

[53] Of the 12 participants providing ongoing support for POs, five completed assignments in rural/remote locations. This compares with 8/37 for those volunteers who did not continue providing support (excluding AADs). Of the 12 participants providing ongoing support for POs, six were with government agencies or domestic NGOs; this compares with 15/37 for those volunteers who did not continue providing support. It should be noted that two participants had started paid contractual work with former POs that were intergovernmental agencies.

[54] Participants #04, #07, #15, #16, #30, #41 and #52.

[55] Participants #01, #03, #06, #09, #10, #17, #19, #22, #23, #24, #26, #27, #37, #40, #44, #46, #48, #51 and #53.

[56] Excludes AADs unless stated.

[57] Excludes AADs unless stated.

[58] Participants #02, #19, #37 and #55.

[59] Participants #01, #02, #08, #27, #31, #34, #39, #44, #45, #46 and #53.

[60] As detailed at T2, a large number of participants reported that their involvement with the program changed their view about international aid or development as a sector. 'Sector-specific knowledge and skills' accounted for 9% of learning outcomes (45/522), primarily among *Transitioners*, *Veterans* and *Enhancers*. For nine participants, the experience confirmed pre-existing favourable views about Australia's commitment to aid and development in the region (participants #10, #11, #15, #17, #18, #33, #44, #50 and #51). For a smaller number of others (participants #06, #14, #41 and #50) it reinforced sceptical views about the value of foreign aid, with participants observing situations that they felt reflected bureaucracy ('*box-ticking*', #14), and myopic (#20) or ineffectual impacts (#41 and #47). Source: Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020), Section 4.3 and EndNote 92.

[61] Participants #07, #37 and #51.

[62] Participants #08, #20, #23, #37, #51 and #53.

[63] Participants #10, #11, #17, #29 and #52.

[64] Participants #01, #10, #29, #34, #40 and #42.

[65] Application of knowledge and capabilities gained on the assignment to volunteering roles (including advocacy): Participants #01, #04, #21, #26, #28 and #49.

[66] Application of knowledge and capabilities gained on the assignment to work roles: Participants #02, #03, #19, #29, #35, #37 and #40.

[67] Prior studies of UK and Canadian volunteers show increased civic engagement post-assignment, especially among younger volunteers: Clark, J. & Lewis, S (2016). *Impact Beyond Volunteering: A Realist Evaluation of the Complex and Long-term Pathways of Volunteer Impact*, VSO; Tiessen, R., Cassin, K. & Lough, B.J. (2021). International development volunteering as a catalyst for long-term prosocial behaviours of returned Canadian volunteers. *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, 16(1), 95-114.

[68] These reports estimate a combined loss of over 12 million volunteer hours across Australia per week since the commencement of COVID. Sources: Volunteering Australia (2020). Reengaging volunteers and COVID-19. Available online: https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021.02.08-Re-engaging-Volunteers-and-COVID-19-Report.pdf Also see: Biddle, N. & Gray, M. (2020). The experience of volunteers during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, ANU Centre for Social Research & Methods. May 2020. Available online: https://csrm.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2020/6/The_experience_of_volunteers_during_the_early_stages_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_0.pdf

[69] Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[70] We use the term "volunteers" here broadly to include all participants of the program, including AADs.

[71] Clark, J. & Lewis, S (2016). *Impact Beyond Volunteering: A Realist Evaluation of the Complex and Long-term Pathways of Volunteer Impact*, VSO; Tiessen, R., Cassin, K. & Lough, B.J. (2021). International development volunteering as a catalyst for long-term prosocial behaviours of returned Canadian volunteers. *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, 16(1), 95-114.

[72] Starr, J.M. (1994). Peace Corps service as a turning point. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 39(2), 137-161.

[73] Prior studies suggest a degree of longevity in civic participation among (mainly young) returned volunteers: Tiessen, R., Cassin, K. & Lough, B.J. (2021). International development volunteering as a catalyst for long-term prosocial behaviours of returned Canadian volunteers. *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, 16(1), 95-114.

[74] Some participants' shift to international volunteering, for instance, saw a decline in their contributions to domestic causes and organisations.

[75] This comprises 20 of the 54 participants (38%): Participants #01, #02, #04, #09, #12, #19, #23, #24, #27, #28, #33, #40, #42, #45, #47, #48, #49, #52, #53 and #55.

[76] Participants #19, #27, #28, #46 and #54.

[77] Examples of participants reporting these approaches to stay engaged with the host country were: (i) reading online newspapers: participants #25, #33, #36 and #53; (ii) reading host country literature: participants #16 and #22; (iii) following and commenting on online blogs: participant #01; (iv) subscribing to Google news alerts or newsletters: participants #21, #22 and #36; (v) watching news bulletins in the host-country language: participants #17, #29 and #35.

[78] Participants #17 and #34.

[79] Section 4.2.2, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[80] Participants #02, #19, #26 and #31. Also see Section 5.2.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[81] Sections 4.2.2 and 5.2, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[82] Most although not all of those who spoke the language before the assignment (8/12) had continued to practice and use the language at T3. 8/12 of those continuing to use and learn the language had previously lived in the host country.

[83] The size of nodes and connectors are not to scale. They are intended to illustrate the relative number of participants reporting an ongoing relationship with a group (nodes) and the relative strength of these connections (connectors).

[84] The five participants who had no ongoing contact with the host country at T3 were: #05, #14, #36, #38 and #50. This includes two AADs, and two who had unsuccessful assignments with their POs (i.e. departed the assignment prematurely).

[85] Participants #06, #07, #24, #35, #47 and #49.

[86] HCNs' lack of English language competence was most commonly reported as an *inhibitor* to ongoing contact; for example, participants #01, #04, #26, #31 and #55.

[87] Examples include participants #18, #21, #32, #34 and #41.

[88] Participants who reported establishing strong expatriate networks during their assignment and sustaining these subsequently include: #02, #05, #06, #07, #08, #22, #32, #35, #37, #40, #44, #46, #51 and #55.

[89] Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and Honiara, Solomon Islands, were particularly conducive to participants socialising with expatriates.

[90] The role of VPLJ activities in nurturing these relationships at PDBs and (especially) ICOPs is detailed in Section 5.3.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[91] Another potential benefit of participants' involvement in these social networks and the use of social media within them, is the symbolic advantage that comes from expressing one's values and identity to significant others; accruing self-esteem and reinforcing one's associated identity amongst a like-minded community. While not raised directly by participants, this perspective draw on theories of ethical consumption and volunteers' motivations, as well as recent studies of "virtue signalling" via social media. Sources: Devinney, T.M., Auger, P. & Eckhardt, G.M. (2010). *The Myth of the Ethical Consumer*. Cambridge University Press; Fee, A. & Karsaklian, E. (2013). Could international volunteers be considered ethical consumers? A cross-discipline approach to understanding motivations of self-initiated expatriates. In Vaiman, V. & A. Haslberger (Eds.) *Talent Management of Self-Initiated Expatriates* (pp. 88-116). Palgrave Macmillan; Wallace, E., Buil, I. & De Chernatony, L. (2020). 'Consuming good' on social media: What can conspicuous virtue signalling on Facebook tell us about prosocial and unethical intentions? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 162(3), 577-592.

[92] "Domain-specific knowledge, expertise or capabilities" are those relating to participants' professional domain. They include expanded technical knowledge or know-how, improved performance of domain-related tasks (e.g. more fluent performance), more strategic outlook on profession or role, greater professional confidence, and new domain-specific contacts/ networks.

[93] This relies on participants' judgments of how others in these networks responded to their experiences. When this was raised in interviews, most participants were confident in claiming value that they attributed to their assignment. Nonetheless, the aspects of the assignment that may have been seen as most valuable, including the reputation of the program itself, could not be reliably discerned from interviews with just volunteers.

[94] Participants #01, #12, #19, #35, #45 and #53.

[95] For instance, participant #21 and #35.

[96] Participant #53.

[97] Forbush, E. & Foucault-Welles, B. (2016). Social media use and adaptation among Chinese students beginning to study in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 50(1), 1-12; Nardon, L., Aten, K. & Gulanowski, D. (2015). Expatriate adjustment in the digital age: The co-creation of online social support resources through blogging. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 47(1), 41-55.

[98] Participants reporting improved relationship building capabilities: Participants #04, #08, #23, #28 and #35.

[99] Participants reporting better intercultural communication skills: Participants #04, #19, #39 and #48.

[100] Section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, Attachment 8.2, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[101] Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 and Attachments 7.1 to 7.3, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[102] The term "global mindset" is widely used in academic literature. While definitions vary and have evolved in recent years, it is generally used to describe someone with "a highly complex cognitive structure . . . characterized by an openness to and articulation of multiple cultural and strategic realities on both global and local levels, and the cognitive ability to mediate and integrate across this multiplicity" (Levy et al. 2007, p. 244). Source: Levy, O., Beechler, S., Taylor, S. & Boyacigiller, N.A. (2007). What we talk about when we talk about 'global mindset': Managerial cognition in multinational corporations. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 38(2), 231-258.

[103] Participants' descriptions of this change are most analogous to "cognitive cultural intelligence" used by social psychologists - see, for instance, Ang, S. & Van Dyne, L. (2015). *Handbook of Cultural Intelligence: Theory, Measurement, and Applications*. Routledge; Yari, N., Lankut, E., Alon, I. & Richter, N. F. (2020). Cultural intelligence, global mindset, and cross-cultural competencies: A systematic review using bibliometric methods. *European Journal of International Management*, 14(2), 210-250. They also share some similarities with terms used by volunteer researchers in previous studies of development volunteers: for instance, what Starr labels as "attitude" changes (e.g. attitude to the home country) and what others term "cultural awareness" or "global citizenship." Sources: Baillie Smith, M. & Laurie, N. (2011). International volunteering and development: Global citizenship and neoliberal professionalisation today. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36(4), 545-559; Clark, J. & Lewis, S (2016). *Impact Beyond Volunteering: A Realist Evaluation of the Complex and Long-term Pathways of Volunteer Impact*, VSO; Starr, J.M. (1994). Peace Corps service as a turning point. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 39(2), 137-161; Tiessen, R. (2017), *Nature, Trends and Impacts of Canadians Who Volunteer Abroad: A Study of the Literature*, Prepared for ESDC (unpublished).

[104] Participants #01, #22, #23, #43 and #44.

[105] Participants #04, #06, #07, #09, #11, #14, #36, #37, #46 and #53.

[106] Participants #12, #25, #26 and #43.

[107] Participants #12, #26 and #28.

[108] Participants #03, #21, #23, #25, #37, #44 and #46.

[109] Participants #20 and #21.

[110] Participants #16, #26, #28 and #33.

[111] Of the 27 participants who reported developing capabilities and attitudes associated with "global mindset", 14 had position descriptions articulating a "mentor" role. Of the 22 volunteers who were not classified as developing a "global mindset", just 3 had position descriptions articulating a "mentor" role. These figures exclude *Non-working Partners*.

[112] The mean age of participants who reported developing "global mindset" was 42 years at pre-departure. This compares with 45 years of age for those who did not report developing a "global mindset."

[113] Eighteen of the 28 participants who reported "global mindset" changes reported having applied the skills/knowledge they developed during the assignment to their work/study since returning. This compared with 9/26 of those who did not report changed "global mindset".

[114] Ten of the 28 participants who reported "global mindset" changes were inspired by the program to commence a program of formal education. This compared with 3/26 of those who did not report changed "global mindset".

[115] Seven of the 28 participants who reported "global mindset" changes drew parallels between parts of their assignment and how issues of disadvantage, inequity, capacity development or cross-cultural awareness related to (participants' understandings of) the experiences of Indigenous Australians. This compared with 3/26 of those who did not report changed "global mindset".

[116] Park, H., Lea Abbott, J. & Werner, S. (2014). A perspective-taking model for global assignments. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 2(3), 280-297.

[117] Empathy was reported by participants #01, #05, #06, #11, #12, #15, #18, #19, #20, #21, #24, #28, #29, #31, #33, #36, #46 and #49.

[118] We derive the term "privilege awareness" from: Case, K.A. (2007). Raising white privilege awareness and reducing racial prejudice: Assessing diversity course effectiveness. *Teaching of Psychology*, 34(4), 231-235. Also see Stewart, T.L., Latu, I.M., Branscombe, N.R., Phillips, N.L. & Denney, T.H. (2012). White privilege awareness and efficacy to reduce racial inequality improve White Americans' attitudes toward African Americans. *Journal of Social Issues*, 68(1), 11-27.

[119] Privilege awareness: Participants #01, #04, #10, #12, #19, #21, #22, #29, #40, #43, #51 and #52.

[120] The experience of participants' perceiving insider/outsider status and how their "volunteer" designation influences this is addressed in Section 3.2.2, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[121] This represents 31/39 participants for whom this outcome arose in interviews. Just 8/39 (21%) reported no change in their view of Australia or being "Australian".

[122] This is higher than earlier studies of development volunteers. For instance, Starr's (1994) longitudinal study of Peace Corps volunteers reports 25% developing better understanding and appreciation of the United States; Starr, J.M. (1994). Peace Corps service as a turning point. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 39(2), 137-161.

[123] Participants #01, #04, #05, #09, #10, #14, #26, #28, #35, #39 and #49. Participants were from five of the seven categories of participants. They were more likely than other participants to report proficiency and interest in the host-country language (5/11; in two cases this pre-dated their assignment).

[124] Participants #01, #04 and #10.

[125] Participants #09, #28, #35 and #39.

[126] Participants #09, #28, #35 and #39.

[127] Participants #04, #12, #15, #28 and #49.

[128] Examples of participants who offered explanations for not applying their cross-cultural capabilities since their return were: not finding employment (#45), restrictions on social contacts (#35), dealing with personal/family demands (#41), having to work remotely and so lacking direct interpersonal or cross-cultural exchanges (#35), and being over-burdened with work that prevented opportunities to experiment with new ways of working (#44).

[129] Most who were applying "culture-specific knowledge and capabilities" were doing so through either (i) ongoing support for POs, either formally via structured remote volunteering assignments or informally, or (ii) through work projects or placements that placed them in direct contact with HCNs (e.g. #02 and #19).

[130] These include participants #02, #09, #19, #27, #28 and #46. Others expressed the possibility of exploring this further post-COVID without a strong commitment (as at T3), such as #22 and #45.

[131] Australian Volunteers Program Global Program Strategy 2018-2022.

[132] Australian Volunteers Program Global Program Strategy 2018-2022.

[133] We use the term "volunteers" here broadly to include all participants of the program, including AADs.

[134] Outside the program's main remit, benefit may also be gained from efforts to support, advocate for or otherwise facilitate efforts to improve POs' access to reliable and affordable Internet/social media.

[135] The role of ICOPs in stimulating interest in the political, social and historical landscape of the host country is reported in Section 5.2.1 of Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[136] Network theorists differentiate between interpersonal networks based on: (i) their relative strength ("weak" or "strong" ties) according to whether the relationship is more psychologically distant/close and require less/more investment of energy and resources, and (ii) who those networks connect – people who share similar demographic characteristics ("bonding capital") or more expansive outward-focused ties with those who differ in identity or profession ("bridging capital"). See, for example,

Gittell, R. & Vidal, A. (1998). *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy*. Sage; Granovetter, M.S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380; Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon and Schuster.

[137] Putnam, R.D. (2000). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. In *Culture and politics* (pp. 223-234). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

[138] Górska, A.M., Dobija, D., Staniszewska, Z. & Prystupa-Rządca, K. (2021). Women's journey to the top: The role of bonding and bridging social capital. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-01-2021-0004; Leonard, M. (2004). Bonding and bridging social capital: Reflections from Belfast. *Sociology*, 38(5), 927-944.

[139] Putnam, R.D. (2000). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. In *Culture and politics* (pp. 223-234). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

[140] Szreter, S. & Woolcock, M. (2004). Health by association? Social capital, social theory, and the political economy of public health. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 33, 650–67.

[141] Cutrona, C.E. & Russell, D.W. (1990). Type of social support and specific stress: Toward a theory of optimal matching. In B.R. Sarason, I.G. Sarason, & G.R. Pierce (Eds.), *Social Support: An Interactional View* (pp. 319–366). John Wiley & Sons. Hobfoll, S.E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, 44(3), 513-524.

[142] Cutrona, C.E. & Russell, D.W. (1990). Type of social support and specific stress: Toward a theory of optimal matching. In B.R. Sarason, I. G. Sarason & G.R. Pierce (Eds.), *Social Support: An Interactional View* (pp. 319–366). John Wiley & Sons; Jo, J.K., Harrison, D.A. & Gray, S.M. (2021). The ties that cope? Reshaping social connections in response to pandemic distress. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(9), 1267-1282, p. 1276.

[143] Jo, J.K., Harrison, D.A. & Gray, S.M. (2021). The ties that cope? Reshaping social connections in response to pandemic distress. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(9), 1267-1282.

[144] Section 4.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019).

[145] Several studies in Australia and elsewhere across many years highlight the career/professional motives of international development volunteers. These include: Brook, J., Missingham, B., Hocking, R. & Fifer, D. (2007). *The Right Person for the Job: International Volunteering and the Australian Employment Market*. Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements & Australian Volunteers International, Monash University; Meneghini, A. M. (2016). A meaningful break in a flat life: The motivations behind overseas volunteering. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 45(6), 1214-1233; Okabe, Y., Shiratori, S. & Suda, K. (2019). What motivates Japan's international volunteers? Categorizing Japan overseas cooperation volunteers (JOCVs). *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30(5), 1069-1089. Schech, S., Skelton, T., Mundkur, A. & Kothari, U. (2020). International volunteerism and capacity development in nonprofit organizations of the global south. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 49(2), 252-271.

[146] Participants working part-time at T3 were #04, #11, #27, #35 and #37. Participants working in roles not directly related to their preferred profession were #11, #12, #20, #21 and #27.

[147] No *Non-working partners* or *Veterans* experienced major career impacts. The potential career benefits for *Non-working partners* were constrained by them being unable to work during their time in country; *Veterans* were constrained by not having a professional career to resume upon their return to Australia (although some did pick up part-time work). Nonetheless, participants from both these categories reported (sometimes major) personal and professional changes resulting from their time on the program.

[148] Those who were classified as "Benefitted career and had expected or hoped it would" included five *Launchers* (#19, #27, #37, #46, #51), four *Imposed Transitioners* (#01, #23, #28, #40), four *Enhancers* (#02, #09, #14, #53), and three *Transitioners* (#08, #12, #54). Those who were classified as "Benefitted career although had not expected it to" included two *Career Breakers* (#04, #43). Those who were classified as "No major benefit to career and no expectation that it would" included eleven *Veterans* (#05, #10, #15, #17, #21, #25, #33, #34, #48, #49, #55). Those who were classified as "Did not benefit career despite expecting or hoping it would" included four *Transitioners* (#24, #35, #39, #52), two *Career Breakers* (#30, #47), two *Enhancers* (#03, #31), two *Imposed Transitioners* (#26, #36), and two *Launchers* (#11, #20). Those who were classified as "Detrimental to career" included three *Transitioners* (#07, #29, #41), one *Enhancer* (#45), one *Imposed Transitioner* (#42) and one *Veteran* (#16).

[149] Participants who did not find a career benefit despite hoping and expecting that it would: #03, #11, #20, #24, #26, #30, #31, #35, #36, #39, #47 and #52.

[150] Participants who experienced a career setback: #07, #16, #29, #41, #42 and #45.

[151] Participants #07 and #45.

[152] The researchers have also been informed that another participant (#45) in this group who was unemployed at T3 but who has since found full-time work that directly relates to the volunteer assignment.

[153] Unemployed: Participants #41, #42 and #45. Working 'plan B' jobs at lower levels: Participants #07 and #29.

[154] Of the *Transitioners*, three (#07, #29, #41) were classified as "Detrimental to career", five (#06, #24, #35, #39, #52) as not benefitting their career (either "Did not benefit career despite expecting or hoping it would" or "No major benefit to career and no expectation that it would"), and three (#08, #12, #54) as "Benefitted career and had expected or hoped it would."

[155] Examples of participants whose assignments were generally developmental but whose careers did not benefit: #07, #16 and #42.

[156] Participants #01, #04, #07, #08, #11, #14, #19, #20, #23, #24, #26, #27, #29, #35, #37, #51, #52, #53 and #54.

[157] For more reading on volunteering as prosocial action see: Snyder, M. & Omoto, A.M. (2009). Who gets involved and why? The psychology of volunteerism. In Liu, E.S.C, Holosko, M.J. & Lo, T.W. (Eds). *Youth Empowerment and Volunteerism: Principles, Policies and Practices* (pp. 3-26). City University of Hong Kong Press. For more reading on prosocial careers see: Duffy, R. D. & Raque-Bogdan, T.L. (2010). The motivation to serve others: Exploring relations to career development. *Journal of Career Assessment,* 18(3), 250-265.

[158] Participants #02, #03, #09, #30, #31, #39, #40, #45 and #46.

[159] Excludes 12 *Veterans* and four *Non-working partners*.

[160] Of the 14 participants who had achieved a prosocial career transition by T3, four had identified "career" as their primary motivation for entering the program (#09, #37, #40 and #46) and seven had identified career as a subordinate motivation (participants #02, #03, #08, #19, #23, #47 and #51).

[161] Four of the 14 came from Health related professions; three from Community/Social Development.

[162] Of the 14 participants who succeeded in undertaking prosocial career transitions: three worked with INGOs and one with an intergovernmental agency, seven performed a "mentoring" role, 13 reported increasing their "international development" literacy and 10 reported developing valuable professional networks. All these figures are over-represented relative to those who did not make this career transition.

[163] Eight of the 13 participants whose assignment inspired or guided them to subsequent formal education had achieved a prosocial career transition. Thus, more than half of those making this career transition (8/14) had enrolled in formal education program because of their experiences on the program.

[164] Participants: #01, #07, #11, #14, #20, #24, #26, #27, #29, #30, #31, #35, #39, #41, #52 and #53.

[165] Participants #14, #24, #27, #29 and #31.

[166] Participants #01, #07, #35, #52 and #53.

[167] Participants #20, #26, #30 and #39.

[168] One was working two part-time jobs and reported financial insecurity; the other was unable to work due to health problems that were exacerbated by an unhappy experience in-country.

[169] Participants #01, #02, #05, #06, #09, #19, #22, #27, #28, #29, #31, #35, #37, #40, #42, #44, #45, #46, #47, #51, #53 and #54.

[170] These were not the only networks that benefitted participants professionally; as noted in Section 4.3, networks with volunteers and POs that were primarily social also contributed career benefits.

[171] Participants #02, #06 #19, #28, #35, #37, #40, #44, #45 and #54.

[172] Participants #02, #28, #35, #40, #44 and #45.

[173] Participants #02 and #40.

[174] Participants #01, #19, #22, #37, #46 and #53.

[175] Participants reporting improved "domain-specific knowledge or capabilities" as a principal professional outcome at T3: Specific technical knowledge and capabilities (#08, #17, #25, #26, #35, #36, #37, #40, #45, #47, #48, #51, #54 and #55), overall professional confidence (#01, #03, #07, #10, #23, #31, #40, #42, #44, #45 and #51).

[176] Participants reporting improved "role performance & management capabilities" as a principal professional outcome at T3: Role modelling or mentoring (#09, #22, #24, #26, #33 and #44), change management (#15 and #29), interpersonal capabilities (#03, #06, #08, #09, #28, #31 and #35), managing in a new area (#01, #19, #40, #43 and #45), other (#45, #47).

[177] Participants reporting improved "communication capabilities" as a principal professional outcome at T3: Participants #01, #06, #07, #09, #24, #26, #28, #31, #37, #39, #47, #48, #49 and #53.

[178] Participants reporting improved "cultural capabilities" as a principal professional outcome at T3: Cross-cultural awareness & competence (#03, #04, #07, #09 and #37), adaptability/flexibility (#06, #09, #17, #26, #30, #39, #46 and #47).

[179] Participants reporting career direction or priorities as a principal professional outcome at T3: Participants #04, #08, #09, #10, #19, #22, #23, #33, #44 and #53.

[180] The summaries in Section 5.3.1 and Figure 13 draw on data from both T2 and T3. T2 interviews collected more fine-grained examples of specific learning outcomes and the factors that contributed to those. The details of these are reported in Section 4.2 of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020). T3 interviews focused on participants' view, 12 months later, of the strongest changes to their professional knowledge and capabilities, and the assignment features that they most strongly associated with these.

[181] One *Non-working Partner* who provided direct but informal support to the PO of their partner reported developing domain-specific capabilities from this "discretionary volunteering" (see Section 3.4.2).

[182] Results of comparisons between participants whose assignments were deemed beneficial to their domain-specific capabilities at T3 (n = 36) and those whose assignments had not benefitted (n = 13), excluding *Non-working Partners*, on some relevant variables are: (i) Had lived in the host country prior to the assignment: benefitted = 11/36, not benefitted = 1/13; (ii) spoke the host-country language at T1: benefitted = 7/36, not benefitted = 1/13; (iii) had strong or moderate host-country connections at T1: benefitted 13/36, not benefitted 1/13; (iv) career-related motives were identified as the main motive for volunteering at T1: benefitted = 12/36, not benefitted 1/13; (v) reported a strong international focus for future plans at T1: benefitted = 19/36, not benefitted = 2/12; (vi) reported a strong international focus for future plans at T3: benefitted = 18/36, not benefitted = 2/12; (vii) professional domain was in Health: benefitted = 5/36, not benefitted = 0/12; (viii) professional domain was in Community/Social Development: benefitted = 7/36, not benefitted = 0/12; (ix) professional domain was in Engineering/Architecture: benefitted = 1/36, not benefitted = 4/12; (x): beneficial career outcomes achieved at T3: benefitted = 20/36, not benefitted = 2/12.

[183] Australian Volunteers Program Global Program Strategy 2018-2022.

[184] At T2, the groups reporting the highest proportion of domain-specific learning outcomes were *Imposed Transitioners* (21%), *Launchers* (17%), *Transitioners* (16%) and *Enhancers* (12%). *Career Breakers* (9%), *Veterans* (7%) and *Non-working Partners* (9%) reported smaller proportions. Full details can be found at Attachment 8.1 of Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[185] Participants reporting legitimacy benefits from their assignment were #01, #02, #04, #14, #28, #35, #44, #46 and #47. The three who reported no noticeable improvement in domain-specific capabilities were #14, #44 and #47.

[186] This finding is consistent with the results of T2, where over third of domain-specific learning outcomes stemmed from participants performing "stretch" roles (24/71). Just 13% (9/71) came from collaborations or consultations with others, and

4% from being able to observe (positive) role models. See Section 4.2.3, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[187] Seabrooke, L. (2014). Epistemic arbitrage: Transnational professional knowledge in action. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, *1*(1), 49-64; Seabrooke, L. (2014). Identity switching and transnational professionals. *International Political Sociology*, *8*(3), 335-337.

[188] Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[189] Participants #01, #04, #08, #09, #19, #23, #26, #28, #29, #31, #35, #39, #40, #46 and #53.

[190] Participants #01, #02, #03, #04, #05, #06, #07, #08, #09, #17, #19, #23, #24, #25, #26, #27, #28, #29, #30, #31, #33, #35, #39, #43, #44, #46, #47, #53 and #55.

[191] Participants #02, #21 and #33.

[192] Examples of participants who emphasised their volunteer experiences during job applications were: Participants #01, #04, #24, #27, #28, #29 and #43.

[193] Participants #01, #12, #19, #20, #27, #29, #33, #35, #37, #51 and #54.

[194] These 13 came from all seven volunteer types, mainly *Launchers* (5/8). Participants: #02 #03, #06, #08, #11, #20, #28, #33, #37, #43, #46, #51 and #54.

[195] Participants #09, #23, #26 and #29.

[196] Participants whose study plans reflect a distinctive feature of the local culture: #08, #09, #29, and #43; participants whose planned studies involve the cross-cultural application of their professional training or backgrounds: #08 and #33.

[197] Clark, J. & Lewis, S (2016). *Impact Beyond Volunteering: A Realist Evaluation of the Complex and Long-term Pathways of Volunteer Impact*, VSO.

[198] Australian Volunteers Program Global Program Strategy 2018-2022.

[199] Australian Volunteers Program Global Program Strategy 2018-2022.

[200] Participants in the study came from 13/15 occupational categories identified under ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019); 13/14 if Youth/Student/Other is excluded.

[201] Section 2.3.2, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019). Also see Clark, J. & Lewis, S (2016). *Impact Beyond Volunteering: A Realist Evaluation of the Complex and Long-term Pathways of Volunteer Impact*, VSO; Australian Red Cross (2015). *Strengthening Global Development through International Volunteering: How Returned Volunteers Contribute and Build Development Capacity*. Melbourne: Australian Red Cross; McWha, I. (2011). The roles and relationships between expatriates, volunteers, and local development workers. *Development in Practice*, 21(1), 29-40.

[202] Approximately 70% of workers' professional development occurs informally on the job rather than through formal training programs. See, for instance, Skule, S. (2004). Learning conditions at work: a framework to understand and assess informal learning in the workplace. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 8(1), 8-20. Prior studies of international development volunteers report similar outcomes (Fee, A. & Gray, S.J. (2011). Fast-tracking expatriate development: The unique learning environments of international volunteer placements. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 22(03), 530-552).

[203] COVID generally impeded participants' professional development by truncating some assignments and reducing career options; however, it should be noted that at least three participants (#02, #21, #33) found employment in roles relating to COVID response interventions in Australia that provided outlets for them to apply knowledge and skills developed during their assignments.

[204] We use the term "volunteers" here broadly to include all participants of the program, including AADs.

[205] No noticeable differences existed in the nature or quantity of learning outcomes reported by *Transitioners* and other groups at T2.

[206] Akkermans, J., Seibert, S.E. & Mol, S.T. (2018). Tales of the unexpected: Integrating career shocks in the contemporary careers literature. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 44(1), 1-10; Akkermans, J., Richardson, J. & Kraimer, M.L. (2020). The COVID-19 crisis as a career shock: Implications for careers and vocational behavior. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 119, 103434.

[207] Participants #12, #41 and #45.

[208] Fee, A. & Michailova, S. (2020). How host organizations prepare for and learn from expatriate assignments. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 62(4), 329-342.

[209] Kierner, A. & Suutari, V. (2018). Repatriation of international dual-career couples. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 60(6), 885-895; Kimber, J.A. (2019). Repatriation: A qualitative study of repatriates after returning from China assignments. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 7(4), 381-394; Szkudlarek, B. (2010). Reentry - A review of the literature. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34(1), 1-21.

[210] Kierner, A. & Suutari, V. (2018). Repatriation of international dual-career couples. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 60(6), 885-895; Kimber, J.A. (2019). Repatriation: A qualitative study of repatriates after returning from China assignments. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 7(4), 381-394; Szkudlarek, B. (2010). Reentry - A review of the literature. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34(1), 1-21.

[211] Marsick, V.J. & Watkins, K. (1990). *Informal and Incidental Learning in the Workplace*. Routledge; Stasz, C. (2001). Assessing Skills for work: Two perspectives. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 3, 385-405.

[212] Bird, A. (2001). International assignments and careers as repositories of knowledge. In M.E. Mendenhall, T.M. Kuhlmann & G.K. Stahl (Eds). *Developing Global Business Leaders - Policies, Processes, and Innovations* (pp. 19-36). Quorum Books; Nonaka, I. (1994). A dynamic theory of organizational knowledge creation, *Organization Science*, 5(1), 14–37.

[213] Feldman, D.C. &Thomas, D.C. (1992). Career management Issues facing expatriates. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 23(2), 271-293; Pea, R.D. (1987). Socializing the knowledge transfer problem. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 11(6), 639-663; Royer, J.M. (1979). Theories of the transfer of learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 14, 53-69.

[214] Full details can be found in Sections 4.2.2, 4.2.3, and Attachment 8.1 of Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[215] Participants reporting no noticeable personal changes from their time on the program were: participants #20, #29, #34, #36, #50, #51, #52 and #54. Participant #41 reported generally negative personal consequences. Others (e.g. #14, #45) weighed negative consequences with some positive changes.

[216] The definition of "meaning" is adapted from: Pratt, M.G. & Ashforth, B.E. (2003). Fostering meaningfulness in working and at work. In K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, & R.E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline* (pp. 309-327). Berrett-Koehler.

[217] For example, participants #11, #19, #20, #27, #37, #46 and #51.

[218] Piaget, J. (1955). *The Child's Construction of Reality*. Routledge; Rumelhart, D.E. & Norman, D. (1978). Accretion tuning and restructuring: Three modes of learning. In J. W. Cotton & R. Klatzky (Eds.), *Semantic Factors in Cognition* (pp. 37–60). Erlbaum.

[219] A third change - gratitude and appreciation for one's opportunities in life – discussed in Section 4.4.1 was also a change that received strong external validation by being commented upon by participants' associates, family or friends ('*My mum said she's incredibly grateful that I went on the program because I came home, not a different person, but more appreciative of all that we have … you live a little bit differently*', #53).

[220] Participants #14, #41 and #45.

[221] Participants reporting each of the six categories of lifestyle change are: (i) Health conscious (participants #04, #07, #09, #20, #25 and #37); (ii) Priority to relationships (participants #01, #09, #20, #37, #43, #46 and #55); (iii) Environment and sustainability (participants #11, #18, #25, #35, #43 and #46); (iv) anti-consumption (participants #05, #10, #12, #18, #21, #30, #34, #42, #47 and #55); (v) Work-life balance (participants #02, #06, #26, #39, #49 and #53); and (vi) Other (participants #31, #33 and #40).

[222] Of the 28 participants who developed capabilities that were classified as "global mindset", 19 reported lifestyle changes; of the 26 who did not develop their "global mindset", 10 reported lifestyle changes. Of the 18 participants who developed capabilities that were classified as "cognitive empathy", 13 reported lifestyle changes; of the 36 who did not develop their "cognitive empathy", 16 reported lifestyle changes.

[223] Of the 24 participants who reported a challenging repatriation, 16 reported lifestyle changes; of the 24 who did not report challenging repatriation, eight reported lifestyle changes. See Section 6.3.2 for details of challenging repatriations.

[224] Participants #11, #17, #24 and #55.

[225] Participants #16, #45 and #47.

[226] Participants #04, #05, #07, #08, #09, #10, #12, #14, #20, #21, #23, #24, #28, #29, #37, #41, #42, #43, #45, #46, #47, #48, #52 and #53.

[227] Examples of those describing these challenges were: (i) being unable to finish project/s or inform colleagues before their rushed departure from the host country – most repatriated participants; (ii) unfamiliar living and social settings - participants #24, #26, #28, #38, #46 and #54; (iii) family bereavements or illnesses - participants #09, #22, #32 and #36; (iv) extended isolation from family, friends or other support networks - participants #22, #43 and #45; and (v) financial insecurity due to loss of regular income – participants #12, #24, #41, #42 and #45.

[228] The two classic texts that describe liminality and the liminal state are: Arnold van Gennep, A. (1908/1960). *The Rites of Passage – A Classical Study of Cultural Celebrations*, The University of Chicago Press; Turner, V. (1969/1995). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Aldine de Gruyter.

[229] Turner, V. (1977). 'Chapter III: Variations on a theme of liminality', Secular Ritual, Assen: Gorcum, 36-52.

[230] Turner, V. (1969/1995). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Aldine de Gruyte, p. 375.

[231] Participants #14, #20, #21, #28, #29, #41, #42, #45 and #46.

[232] Participants #07, #12, #43, #47, #52 and #53.

[233] These include participants #21, #23, #43 and #46.

[234] Section 5.3.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[235] Of the 9 participants who did seek out professional support for mental health challenges and the 15 participants who either sought it out or who considered seeking professional support: all 15 had lived overseas, 5/9 and 7/15 had lived in the host country; 5/9 and 6/15 spoke the host country language, 5/9 and 9/15 had strong international orientations at T1 (i.e. were seeking a future that was based or involved large portions of their time overseas), and 4/9 and 7/15 had strong connections with the host country at T3.

[236] Of the 9 participants who did seek out professional support for mental health challenges and the 15 participants who either sought it out or who considered seeking professional support: 5/9 and 8/15 were first-time volunteers.

[237] Of the 9 participants who did seek out professional support for mental health challenges and the 15 participants who either sought it out or who considered seeking professional support: none reported program support as being positive during the assignment and 2/9 and 6/15 reported program support as primarily negative (T2).

[238] Of the 9 participants who did seek out professional support for mental health challenges, 3/9 reported living in a rural area at T1.

[239] Of the 9 participants who did seek out professional support for mental health challenges and the 15 participants who either sought it out or who considered seeking professional support: 8/9 and 12/15 were not accompanied. 4/19 accompanied participants reported challenging repatriations, compared with 18/35 of those who were unaccompanied.

[240] Of the 9 participants who did seek out professional support for mental health challenges and the 15 participants who either sought it out or who considered seeking professional support: 0/9 and 1/15 reported increasing their civic engagement from T1-T3; 1/9 and 2/15 reported remote volunteering; 4/9 and 6/15 reported being open to future in-country volunteering at T3; and 0/15 reported ongoing PO support at T3.

[241] The role of VPLJ activities, notably PDBs and ICOPs in helping forge friendships among volunteers was a key finding in earlier reports: see Section 5.3.2, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019) and Section 5.3.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[242] Participants #02, #04, #05, #07, #08, #11, #12, #21, #31, #34, #37, #48, #50, #52, #54 and #55.

[243] Participants #02, #04, #16, #17, #18, #36, #40, #49, #50, #51 and #53.

[244] Participants #05 and #52.

[245] These included participants #17, #32, #41, #42 and #51.

[246] Just one participant reported a decline in the quality of relationships with family, unrelated to the program. Participants reporting giving higher priority to family relationships were: participants #01, #09, #20, #28, #37, #38, #43, #46 and #55.

[247] Participants #08, #27, #28 and #36.

[248] Examples are participants #05, #12, #22 and #34.

[249] We use the term "volunteers" here broadly to include all participants of the program, including AADs.

[250] See, for example, Eraut, M. (2004). Informal learning in the workplace. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 26(2), 247-273; Fee, A. & Gray, S.J. (2011). Fast-tracking expatriate development: The unique learning environments of international volunteer placements. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(3), 530-552; Marsick, V.J. & Watkins, K. (1990). *Informal and Incidental Learning in the Workplace*, Routledge.

[251] Studies identifying the features of "learning intensive" work environments are: Billett, S. (2001). *Learning in the Workplace: Strategies for Effective Practice*, Allen & Unwin; Cheetham, G.& Chivers, G. (2001). How professionals learn in practice: An investigation of informal learning amongst people working in professions. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 25(5), 246-292; Fuller, A. & Unwin, L. (2004). Expansive learning environments: Integrating organizational and personal development. In H. Rainbird, A. Fuller & A. Munro (Eds). *Workplace Learning in Context* (pp. 126-144). Routledge; Skule, S. (2004). Learning conditions at work: A framework to understand and assess informal learning in the workplace. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 8(1), 8-20; van Gelderen, M., van der Sluis, L. & Jansen, P. (2005). Learning opportunities and learning behaviours of small business starters: Relations with goal achievement, skill development and satisfaction. *Small Business Economics*, 25(1), 97-108.

[252] Skule, S. (2004). Learning conditions at work: A framework to understand and assess informal learning in the workplace. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 8(1), 8-20.

[253] Fee, A. & Gray, S.J. (2013). Transformational learning experiences of international development volunteers in the Asia-Pacific: The case of a multinational NGO. *Journal of World Business*, 48(2), 196-208.

[254] Section 3.2.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[255] See, for instance, Section 3.2.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[256] Pratt, M.G. & Ashforth, B.E. (2003). Fostering meaningfulness in working and at work. In K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, & R.E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline* (pp. 309-327). Berrett-Koehler; Rosso, B.D., Dekas, K.H. & Wrzesniewski, A. (2010). On the meaning of work: A theoretical integration and review. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 30(1), 91-127.

[257] For research on meaningfulness in work, see: Pratt, M.G. & Ashforth, B.E. (2003). Fostering meaningfulness in working and at work. In K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, & R.E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline* (pp. 309-327). Berrett-Koehler; Rosso, B.D., Dekas, K.H. & Wrzesniewski, A. (2010). On the meaning of work: A theoretical integration and review. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 30(1), 91-127.

[258] See, for example, Fee, A. & Gray, S.J. (2011). Fast-tracking expatriate development: The unique learning environments of international volunteer placements. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *22*(03), 530-552; Starr, J.M. (1994). Peace Corps service as a turning point. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 39(2), 137-161; Tiessen, R., Cassin, K. & Lough, B.J. (2021). International development volunteering as a catalyst for long-term prosocial behaviours of returned Canadian volunteers. *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, 16(1), 95-114.

[259] Starr, J.M. (1994). Peace Corps service as a turning point. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 39(2), 137-161.

[260] Evans, D. & Abrahamse, W. (2009). Beyond rhetoric: The possibilities of and for 'sustainable lifestyles'. *Environmental Politics*, 18(4), 486-502.

[261] Goldblatt, D.L. (2005). *Sustainable Energy Consumption and Society: Personal, Technological, or Social Change?* Springer.

[262] In some cases, these opportunities to experience "development in practice" were available vicariously to partners.

[263] These changes may also reflect, at least in part, the changing circumstances created by COVID. See, for example: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey (14 July 2021). Available online: https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/household-impacts-covid-19-survey/latest-release#life-after-the-covid-19-pandemic

[264] Kierner, A. & Suutari, V. (2018). Repatriation of international dual-career couples. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 60(6), 885-895; Szkudlarek, B. (2010). Reentry - A review of the literature. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34(1), 1-21.

[265] Guimaraes-Costa, N. & Cunha, M.P.E. (2009). Foreign locals. *Organizational Dynamics*, 2(38), 158-166.

[266] Heathershaw, J. (2016). Who are the 'international community'? Development professionals and liminal subjectivity, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 10(1), 77-96.

[267] In general, demographic characteristics associated with psychological distress and social difficulties readjusting include being female, single and young. Assignment features include substantial HCN contact, large distance between the home and host culture, and the extent of disengagement from home-country nationals (i.e. immersion in the host culture). For a review of the literature see: Szkudlarek, B. (2010). Reentry - A review of the literature. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34(1), 1-21. Also see Van Gorp, L., Boroş, S., Bracke, P. & Stevens, P.A. (2017). Emotional support on re-entry into the home country: Does it matter for repatriates' adjustment who the providers are?. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 58, 54-68.

[268] Fanari, A. & Segrin, C. (2021). Longitudinal effects of US students' reentry shock on psychological health after returning home during the COVID-19 global pandemic. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 82, 298-310.

[269] See, for example, Jo, J.K., Harrison, D.A. & Gray, S.M. (2021). The ties that cope? Reshaping social connections in response to pandemic distress. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(9), 1267-1282; Klaver, J.S. & Lambrechts, W. (2021). The pandemic of productivity: A narrative inquiry into the value of leisure time. *Sustainability*, 13(11), 6271.

[270] Section 5.3.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[271] For instance, Mezirow (1991, p. 193), the most prominent "transformation learning" theorist, argues that "transformations likely to produce developmentally advanced meaning perspectives usually appear to occur after the age of thirty." Source: Mezirow, J.D. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, Jossey-Bass.

[272] These eight volunteers were "referred" by the PO for the position and so had some prior contact with the PO before applying for the assignment (#01, #02, #08, #39, #41, #45, #46, #53). Most referred candidates were involved in creating or commenting on the position description in some form before it was formalised. Thus, positions for referred candidates were commonly designed with the individual volunteer in mind. These volunteers came from a range of professional backgrounds. Six of the eight had prior experience working in the host country; four were in the host country when the position became advertised. The other two had visited the host country as tourists.

[273] Section 5.3.2, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report (October 2019).

[274] Sections 3.2.4 and 4.2.3, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[275] Australian Red Cross (2015). *Strengthening Global Development through International Volunteering: How Returned Volunteers Contribute and Build Development Capacity*. Melbourne: Australian Red Cross.

[276] Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2) 117-140; Gerber, J.P., Wheeler, L. & Suls, J. (2018). A social comparison theory meta-analysis 60+ years on. *Psychological Bulletin*, 144(2), 177.

[277] Section 3.2.4 and 4.2.3, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[278] The suggestion to retain close connections with contacts from home- and host-communities has parallels to Berry's well-know model of acculturation. Numerous studies emphasise the benefits of this "integrated" approach. Sources: Berry, J. W. (1992). Acculturation and adaptation in a new society. *International Migration*, 30, 69–85; Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), 697-712; Chia, A. L., & Costigan, C. L. (2006). A person-centred approach to identifying acculturation groups among Chinese Canadians. *International Journal of Psychology*, 41(5), 397-412.

[279] The basis for this claim is "similarity attraction hypothesis", which posits that we are attracted to, and prefer to spend time with, people who are similar to us. Sources: Byrne, D. (1971). *The Attraction Paradigm*. Academic Press ; Montoya, R. M., & Horton, R. S. (2013). A meta-analytic investigation of the processes underlying the similarity-attraction effect. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30(1), 64-94.

[280] This point was raised in T2 interviews by several volunteers whose assignments were based in remote locations. See Section 5.3.1, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[281] It may be more difficult for volunteers from minority backgrounds to establish relationships with other volunteers. See: Byrne, D. (1971). *The Attraction Paradigm*. Academic Press ; Montoya, R. M., & Horton, R. S. (2013). A meta-analytic investigation of the processes underlying the similarity-attraction effect. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30(1), 64-94.

[282] See, for example, Fee, A., Heizmann, H., & Gray, S.J. (2017). Towards a theory of effective cross-cultural capacity development: The experiences of Australian international NGO expatriates in Vietnam. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28(14), 2036-2061.

[283] Ellström, P. E. (2011). Informal learning at work: Conditions, processes and logics. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, K. Evans & B.N. O'Connor (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Workplace Learning* (pp. 105-119). Sage.

[284] Marsick, V.J. & Watkins, K. (1990). *Informal and Incidental Learning in the Workplace*.

List of Attachments

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Attachment 1

Procedures used to manage the study's main ethical concerns

Issue	Description	Procedures used to manage
1. Informed consent	• Participants' understanding and provision of informed consent prior to each wave of data collection for each phase of the LSAV	• All 55 participants read and signed a participant information sheet and consent form at two points prior to being interviewed (Phases 1 and 2). • All interviews were preceded with a brief discussion to confirm participants' understanding of the consent obligations.
2. Conflict of interest	• Participants' perceptions of real or perceived conflict of interest between the program and research team due to funding arrangement or participants' reporting commitments to the program	• The independence of the research team from the program was sustained throughout the study and communicated to participants via university branding and addresses in emails, project website, and promotional materials. • The study complied fully with the data management strategy outlined in the Inception Report and the approved ethical research framework. • Full disclosure was made to participants about how data would be used and the project's funding arrangements.
3. Perceived pressure to participate	• Discomfort or inconvenience to participants due to implicit pressure or sense of obligation to participate in ongoing interviews in subsequent phases	• During recruitment and prior to each interview, participants were advised about the use of their data, expectations on them regarding their involvement in future phases of the study, and details for how to withdraw from the study. • Separate consent forms and protocols were used at different phases.
4. Confidentiality/ privacy breaches	• Participants' discomfort about disclosing personal details or confidential information • Participants' discomfort about being identified in publications or in communication with the program	• When recruiting participants, the research team made no proactive contact with any prospective participants - all 55 participants initiated contact with researchers to indicate their interest in participating. • Prior to interviews commencing, all participants were informed, and indicated explicit awareness, of: (i) confidentiality provisions relating to the use of the data, (iii) how the project outcomes would be used and the mechanisms instilled to ensure anonymity, (iii) the data management protocols. • Where appropriate, confidentiality protocols were reinforced during interviews, notably when participants indicated concerns about how their comments might be perceived. • All interview transcripts were de-identified during transcription. All extracts in written reports use pseudonyms or codes; some extracts are modified to remove or disguise identifying details. • UTS Guidelines for the Management of Research data were complied with in full. • Participants were invited to review and comment on summarised versions of draft findings and reports.
5. Consequences of negative appraisal	• Participants' discomfort about disclosing negative information about the program • Participants' discomfort from findings that may present their experiences unfavourably	• Interviewers remained sensitive to participants' discomfort throughout interviews; in multiple interviews, the study's confidentiality protocols were reiterated. • Participants were invited to review and comment on summarised versions of draft findings and reports.

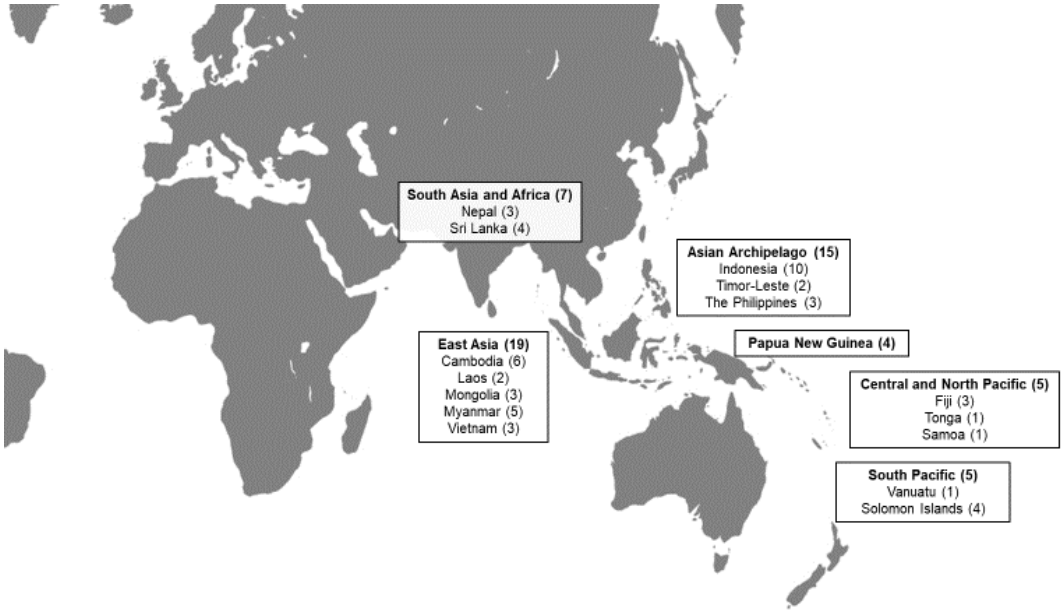
All aspects of the study's design and procedures, as well as amendments to incorporate modifications due to COVID (27 March 2020), were pre-approved at multiple stages by *UTS Human Research Ethics Committee.* Approvals HREC-ETH 19-3663 and HREC-ETH 19-4445 relate.

Attachment 2

Sample and assignment composition

Details of the study's 55[1] participants and the assignments they completed can be found in the *Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase One Final Report* (October 2019). In short:

- Participants' ages at pre-departure ranged from 22 to 74 years (mean: 42.9 years), with larger representation among young and elderly participants. Sixty-four percent (35/55) were female; one participant indicated 'prefer to self-describe' as their gender identity. The largest proportion of participants identified as being 'Australian (Other)' (36/55). Other national identities (by ancestry) reported by participants included Scottish, Chinese, French, Australian Aboriginal, Irish, Malaysian, German, Italian, Welsh and English. Six participants (11%) reported being from homes in which a language other than English (LOTE) is spoken. Three (5%) reported having a disability.
- Participants were drawn from all Australian States and Territories, with the largest proportion being from New South Wales (20/55, 36% of participants) and Victoria (13/55, 24% of participants). Queensland, which comprises 9% of the sample and 20% of the Australian population, and South Australia (4% and 7%) had the lowest representation in terms of sample composition compared with Australia's population distribution. Ten participants (18%), including five from New South Wales, reported living in non-urban areas of Australia (i.e. regional/rural).
- Ninety-five percent of participants (52/55) held either a bachelor degree (25/55, 45%) or masters/doctorate degree (27/55, 49%). The largest occupational categories represented were Education/Training/Library and Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design (both 18% of the sample), and Community/Social Development (13%). Participants' work experience in their occupational category varied from nil to 41 years (mean: 13.99 years).
- Participants' assignments were hosted in all six geographic regions and 16 of the 26 countries in which the program operates, primarily 'East Asia' (19/55 assignments, or 35%) and 'Asian Archipelago' (15/55 assignments, or 27%). 'Government agencies' (22 assignments) and 'domestic NGOs' (20 assignment) comprise a total of 84% of the 50 assignments being undertaken by the participants. The figure below shows the geographic distribution of assignments by country and region.
- Comparisons between the assignments undertaken by the study's participants and other assignments revealed no significant differences in relation to assignment duration or partner organisation type. A halt on assigning volunteers to Africa[2] was in place at the time participants for this study were recruited, meaning that none of the sample were deployed to Africa, a region hosting 10% of the program's volunteers.[3]



[1] One participant was unable to be reached for the final interview (T3), leaving the final sample at 54 (retention rate 98%).

[2] Volunteer assignments were temporarily halted while DFAT confirmed geographic priority locations of the program.

[3] Based on data provided by program staff for all program assignments during financial year 2018-19; 97/1017 assignments in Africa, comprising: Republic of South Africa (57), Tanzania (28), eSwantini (7) and Lesotho (6).

Attachment 3 (panel 1)

Final sample: Participant characteristics

Participant	Gender	Residence in Australia	Age at pre-departure	Highest qualification	Occupation category	Years in profession	Region of assignment
1	Female	Urban	50-59	Doctorate	Education/Training/Library	26	South Pacific
2	Female	Regional/Rural	30-39	Masters Degree	Health	8	Papua New Guinea
3	Male	Urban	50-59	Masters Degree	Engineering/Architecture	10	Central & North Pacific
4	Female	Urban	60-69	Masters Degree	Community/Social Development	35	Papua New Guinea
5	Female	Regional/Rural	70-79	Doctorate	Community/Social Development	30	South Pacific
6	Female	Urban	30-39	Bachelor Degree	Agriculture/Veterinary	3.5	East Asia
7	Female	Urban	30-39	Masters Degree	Community/Social Development	4.5	East Asia
8	Female	Urban	40-49	Masters Degree	Community/Social Development	7	Asia Archipelago
9	Female	Regional/Rural	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	5	Asia Archipelago
10	Female	Urban	60-69	Masters Degree	Education/Training/Library	30	South Pacific
11	Female	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	2.5	Asia Archipelago
12	Male	International	30-39	Bachelor Degree	Education/Training/Library	1	East Asia
14	Female	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Management/Admin/HR	2.5	Asia Archipelago
15	Female	Urban	70-79	Doctorate	Education/Training/Library	15	South Asia & Africa
16	Male	Urban	70-79	Doctorate	Education/Training/Library	5	South Asia & Africa
17	Male	Urban	50-59	Masters Degree	Information/Knowledge Management	40	Asia Archipelago
18	Female	Urban	50-59	Bachelor Degree	Management/Admin/HR	15	Asia Archipelago
19	Male	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Community/Social Development	0	Asia Archipelago
20	Female	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	1.5	Asia Archipelago
21	Female	International	30-39	Masters Degree	Management/Admin/HR	2.5	East Asia
22	Male	Urban	50-59	Masters Degree	Engineering/Architecture	36	East Asia
23	Female	Urban	30-39	Bachelor Degree	Health	8	Central & North Pacific
24	Female	Regional/Rural	40-49	Bachelor Degree	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	25	Central & North Pacific
25	Female	Urban	60-69	Bachelor Degree	Education/Training/Library	41	South Asia & Africa
26	Female	Urban	40-49	Bachelor Degree	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	26	Asia Archipelago
27	Female	Urban	20-29	Masters Degree	Health	1	Central & North Pacific
28	Female	Regional/Rural	20-29	Masters Degree	Health	3	South Pacific
29	Female	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Information/Knowledge Management	4	Asia Archipelago
30	Female	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Engineering/Architecture	7.5	South Asia & Africa

continued over

Attachment 3 (panel 2)

Final sample: Participant characteristics (cont)

Participant	Gender	Residence in Australia	Age at pre-departure	Highest qualification	Occupation category	Years in profession	Region of assignment
31	Female	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Media/Communications/Public Relations/Fundraising	6	East Asia
32	Female	Urban	60-69	Bachelor Degree	Education/Training/Library	30	East Asia
33	Male	Urban	60-69	Masters Degree	Education/Training/Library	34	East Asia
34	Male	Regional/Rural	60-69	Bachelor Degree	Engineering/Architecture	40	Asia Archipelago
35	Female	Urban	20-29	Masters Degree	Community/Social Development	2	South Pacific
36	Male	Urban	60-69	Doctorate	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	30	East Asia
37	Female	Urban	20-29	Masters Degree	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	1.5	East Asia
38	Male	Urban	60-69	Bachelor Degree	Education/Training/Library	20	South Asia & Africa
39	Male	Urban	30-39	Bachelor Degree	Law & Justice	4	East Asia
40	Female	Urban	50-59	Masters Degree	Health	13	East Asia
41	Prefer to self-describe	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	6	Asia Archipelago
42	Male	Regional/Rural	50-59	Diploma/Advanced Diploma	Skilled Trades	30	East Asia
43	Female	Urban	20-29	Masters Degree	Information/Knowledge Management	8	Asia Archipelago
44	Female	Urban	40-49	Doctorate	Natural Sciences/Environment	20	East Asia
45	Male	Urban	30-39	Masters Degree	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	0.5	Asia Archipelago
46	Female	Regional/Rural	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Community/Social Development	2	Asia Archipelago
47	Female	Urban	30-39	Masters Degree	Engineering/Architecture	8	South Asia & Africa
48	Male	Regional/Rural	70-79	Diploma/Advanced Diploma	Finance/Economics	10	East Asia
49	Female	Urban	50-59	Masters Degree	Education/Training/Library	37	Papua New Guinea
50	Male	Urban	60-69	Diploma/Advanced Diploma	Information/Knowledge Management	40	Papua New Guinea
51	Male	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Natural Sciences/Environment	0	East Asia
52	Male	Urban	30-39	Masters Degree	Finance/Economics	13	Central & North Pacific
53	Female	Urban	30-39	Bachelor Degree	Law & Justice	8	East Asia
54	Male	Urban	20-29	Bachelor Degree	Agriculture/Veterinary	5	East Asia
55	Female	Regional/Rural	60-69	Bachelor Degree	Business/Marketing/Tourism/Art & Design	3	East Asia

Attachment 4 (panel 1)

Research overview: Phases T1-T3

T1: 2019 (55 participants)

Purpose statements:

- To identify and classify relevant characteristics and experiences of volunteers that will provide a baseline to analyse personal and professional continuities or changes that are relevant to the program and which are attributed to volunteers' participating in the program.
- To understand volunteers' experiences of their pre-assignment contact with the program in order to (i) allow analysis of data collected in Phase Two to consider the impact of these on volunteers' personal and professional outcomes arising from their participation in the program, and (ii) identify ways that volunteers' initial contact with the program might be improved.

Research questions:

1. What are the personal and professional characteristics of volunteers entering the program, including their motivations and expectations?
2. What are volunteers' current (a) behaviours, (b) capabilities, and (c) attitudes that are relevant to the program's objectives (civic, international, professional, personal)?
3. What are volunteers' experiences of their pre-departure contact with the program (recruitment, selection and preparation)?
4. How might volunteers' initial contact with the program be improved to create more favourable experiences and outcomes for volunteers?

Interview schedule:

Section	Topics & example questions
1. Introduction	• Introductions, overview & permissions
2. Personal details	• About yourself and why volunteering (what hope to get, how relate to current stage of your life, family & friends' response) • Expectations for your time in-country (role, partner organisation, culture, support from the program, challenges, personal changes)
3. Contact with the program	• Contact with the program to date (experience with recruitment/selection processes – how find position, involvement of partner organisation, program support, advice) • Value of pre-departure preparation activities (relevant/interesting, any change attitude, what learn, what take forward to placement, missing)
4. Current attitudes, capabilities and behaviours	• Current cultural acumen (how well informed about conditions on the ground – language, connections, sources/research, general cultural intelligence) • Current community & civic engagement (involvement, feelings toward – interest groups, social groups, volunteering, host country, host country contact) • Current employment & professional status
5. Future plans	• What does the future hold for you? [where do you see yourself in five years (on all four outcomes)?] • Prompts: influence of program experiences on plans, continued contact with partner organisation/social contacts, future volunteer assignments, future RAVN contact
6. Conclusion	• Key features or omissions of discussion • What happens next

Attachment 4 (panel 2)

Research overview: Phases T1-T3

T2: 2020 (55 participants)

Purpose statements:

- To provide an overview of the depth and breadth of in-country experiences reported by participants;
- To identify the nature of personal and professional changes (self-)reported by participants to date, and the reasons attributed for these;
- To present a critical review of participants' perceptions of the quality and the impact of their contact with and support from the program and program staff

Research questions:

1. Overall, how did participants experience their volunteer assignments (personally and professionally)?
2. What features of the volunteer assignment (including work and non-work aspects) had major influences on these experiences (and in what ways)?
3. What are the main personal and professional changes that participants reported arising from their involvement with program to date?
4. What features of participants' in-country experiences (appear to) have had the strongest impact on their reported personal and professional changes?
5. Overall, how did participants perceive their contact with and support from the program and its staff during their volunteer assignment?
6. What features of participants' program contact and support contributed positively/negatively to their in-country experience (and in what ways)?
7. Based on participants' in-country experiences, how can the program improve the way it interacts with and supports its volunteers during assignments?

Interview schedule:

Section	Topics & example questions
1. Introduction	• Introductions, overview & permissions • Current status (professional & personal)
2. Overall in-country experience	• About your experiences on the assignment personally & professionally (major challenges & opportunities relating to the role, partner organisation, living in the host country & non-work life; expected vs realised experiences; emotions)
3. Individual changes	• Ways in which you think you've changed (examples of changes - what is (or do) different now, current skill/knowledge levels, perspective on – relating to four main outcome areas; attributed reasons for any changes; examples of changes being enacted) • Features of the assignment have had the biggest impact & how these have changed you • Application of knowledge, capabilities and experiences to work/life
4. Contact with the program	• Extent, nature & quality of contact with the program in-country (how well prepared for the assignment were you, in-country contact & support, suggestions for improving preparation & support, impact of PDB/ICOP)
5. Future plans	• What does the future hold for you? [where do you see yourself in five years (on all four outcomes)?] • Prompts: influence of program experiences on plans, continued contact with partner organisation/social contacts, future volunteer assignments, future RAVN contact, impact of early repatriation
6. Conclusion	• Key features or omissions of discussion • What happens next

Attachment 4 (panel 3)

Research overview: Phases T1-T3

T3: 2021 (54 participants)

Purpose statements:

- To explicate the nature of personal and professional changes in participants across the study period that are of relevance to the program;
- To offer explanations for these changes, drawing on participants' experiences to date with the program (pre-, during and post-assignment) and their reflections on their experiences with the program;
- To present a critical review of participants' contact with the program since the completion of their assignment, excluding their repatriation.

Research questions:

1. Overall, what have been the main impacts on participants (personally and professionally) of their involvement in the program?
2. To what extent and in what ways are any changes enacted by participants in their professional or personal lives?
3. What features of participants' involvement with the program have had the strongest impact on their reported personal and professional changes?
4. How can the program improve the way it supports the personal and professional development of its volunteers?

Interview schedule:

Section		Topics & example questions
1.	Introduction	• Introductions, overview & permissions
2.	Current status	• Participants' overview of events and changes since T2 (personal & professional)
3.	Post-assignment experiences:	• Overview of key features of participants' post-assignment experiences: current situation professionally and personally; major challenges, opportunities and events
4.	Individual changes	• Ways in which you think you've changed (examples of changes - what is (or do) different now, current skill/knowledge levels, perspective on – relating to four main outcome areas; attributed reasons for any changes; examples of changes being enacted) • Features of the assignment have had the biggest impact & how these have changed you • Application of knowledge, capabilities and experiences to work/life (evidence of changes being enacted)
5.	Contact with the program	• Participants' contact with the program after completing their assignment, including contact with RAVN and 'Settling back in workshop', peer mentoring or remote volunteering and overall experience with Melbourne teams, the pertinence of particular features of this contact to their experience, and their suggestions for improving engagement and procedures
6.	Overall reflections	• Participants' reflections on changes (perceived changes and responses to noted changes, T1-T3)
7.	Future plans	• What does the future hold for you? [where do you see yourself in five years (on all four outcomes)?] • Prompts: influence of program experiences on plans, continued contact with partner organisation/social contacts, future volunteer assignments, future RAVN contact
8.	Conclusion	• Key features or omissions of discussion • What happens next

Attachment 5

Challenges and opportunities of longitudinal research (and strategies to address these)

Challenge/Opportunity	Suggested management strategies (literature)	Integration into LSAV
1. Attracting participants to a long-term study with a high commitment	1. Make effort to minimise respondents' commitments during data collection 2. Make it easy for respondents to indicate willingness to participate via multiple contact points & mediums 3. Make effort to demonstrate flexibility so that participating is as convenient/easy as practical for respondents 4. Emphasise benefits of participation for individual and program 5. Emphasise opportunities for participants to withdraw at any time in the future if change of heart	1. **ACTION** → Interview schedules were confined to germane questions relating to a core set of topics directly relevant to the study's outcomes; where feasible, factual data were sought outside interviews to avoid repetition (e.g. job description documents were sought prior to the first interview, an online survey was used for some data) 2. **ACTION** → Multiple contact options for the research team (e.g. mobile/text, email) were provided when recruiting participants to allow prospective participants to use their preferred approach to contact research team 3. **ACTION** → Prospective participants were provided with multiple options for how & when interviews might be conducted. This was detailed in the content of the participant information sheet, introductory email, and project website 4. **ACTION** → Recruitment approaches (email, information sheet, website) emphasised personal & program benefits of the project 5. **ACTION** → Details of options to withdraw from the study (and how to do so) were included in participant information sheets and at the project website; participants' ability to do this without comprising their relationship with the program or researchers was highlighted
2. Retention of participants across multiple waves (voluntary & involuntary attrition)	1. Request multiple contact details from respondents to ensure no involuntary attrition as a result of inability to contact 2. Develop rapport & establish professional & friendly relationships with respondents 3. Careful framing of contact to ensure importance & benefits of participation is highlighted 4. Full disclosure to ensure respondents understand their commitment & the reasons for multiple interviews	1. **ACTION** → Where feasible, multiple contact points for respondents were obtained during interviews or via email prior to interviews (e.g. LinkedIn, email, telephone, postal address) 2. **ACTION** → Pre-interview contact with researcher was offered; time was allocated at the start of each interview to establish rapport; follow-up thank you messages were sent after interviews; the same interviewer was used in all three interviews with each participant 3. **ACTION** → Prospective participants were advised of potential benefits to themselves and others via the content of emails, the project website, information sheet and other materials 4. **ACTION** → Full issues surrounding use of data, nature of publications & the project structure (i.e. multiple data collection points) were provided to prospective participants during recruitment (email, information sheets, website, interview introduction)
3. Presenting sufficiently credible, rigorous & persuasive 'evidence' to demonstrate change (qualitative data to demonstrate cross-time changes)	1. Sufficient time between interviews to ensure changes can be identified 2. Identical questions that allow direct comparison across time periods and with other categories of respondents 3. Attention to coding data around themes of change/consistency (Saldana 2003). Saldana suggests three types of questions to guide the data analysis process: (a) framing questions deal with the contextual features of the experience (e.g. What contextual & intervening features appear to influence participants' changes through time?). This analysis focuses on what causes the changes, (b) descriptive questions provide descriptive information to help answer the framing questions and to inform the analytical and interpretative questions (e.g. What increases or emerges in respondents through time? What kinds of epiphanies happen?). This analysis focuses on the nature & extent of changes/continuity, and (c) analytical and interpretive questions integrate the descriptive information and provoke richer analysis (e.g. Which changes interrelate through time? What is the 'through-line' of the volunteer experience?). This analysis focuses on the relationships between the patterns from descriptive (and framing) questions.	1. **ACTION** → The research design ensured sufficient intervals between each interview (12 months) 2. **ACTION** → The inclusion of replicable questions in each interview schedule for all waves of data collection allowed direct comparisons of responses (and for impetus for change/continuity to be discussed with respondents during interviews where applicable) 3. **ACTION** → Pilot studies were conducted to test the interview structure & sample analytical procedures; changes were made to the wording of interview questions (after pilot studies) to ensure the data collected aligned with an analytical approach of this kind; clear analytical frames were deployed in the data analysis procedures
4. Ethical challenges relating to ongoing anonymity & confidentiality of respondents	1. Code respondents using pseudonyms in all project materials linked to data	1. **ACTION** → Content of all transcripts, case files and publications used pseudonyms; the participant database was managed separately by the chief investigator only; adequate data security provisions were used to protect the integrity of

	2. Clear delineation of 'factual' data (assignment, career, demographics) from interview transcripts to ensure confidentiality 3. Where appropriate, use 'members checks' to seek respondents' agreement with how specific case/situational data is presented in case summaries and reports. 'Member check' is the term used when researchers ask study participants to provide input/feedback on the data analysis as a means of increasing its ecological and/or external validity (i.e. does this make sense to their experiences as volunteers? Are they satisfied with the presentation of their experiences?).	identifying information (e.g. password protected, limited access folders) 2. **ACTION** → Identifiable data pertaining to participants' personal circumstances and assignments were maintained separately from interview transcripts to ensure transcripts were de-identified 3. **ACTION** → Opportunities were provided for respondents to comment on draft analysis and summaries prior to publication or communication of results (including a formal 'member check' phase)
5. Ethical challenges relating to ongoing consent of participants across the study duration	1. Ensure respondents' full informed consent at start of project, including the request for commitment to multiple interviews 2. Manage respondents' consent as a process rather than an event	1. **ACTION** → Clear details of the study's purpose, duration, commitment, and obligations were communicated to prospective participants during recruitment via the content of the consent form and information sheet, project website, email, and at the start of interviews 2. **ACTION** → Consent issues were raised when approaching respondents prior to subsequent interviews; each interview commenced with a reminder of the study's consent requirements and ethical obligations; the project website, maintained throughout all phases of the study, included details of informed consent and how respondents could withdrawal after the study has started
6. Ensuring security of data across study duration	1. Maintain database of contact details separately to research data/analysis, with access limited to chief investigators	1. **ACTION** → Data security provisions consistent with UTS 'Guidelines for the Management of Research Data' were used to protect the integrity of respondents' identifying information (e.g. password protected folder, access by chief investigator only)
7. Power dynamics between respondent & researcher biasing data or leading to attrition (e.g. respondents feel they are being taken advantage of, or feel they are indispensable to the study's success)	1. Manage relationship carefully & pay attention to rapport & trust building 2. Frame contact carefully (i.e. non-judgmental analysis, data collated at group rather than individual level) to reduce respondents' concerns about being evaluated 3. Include a detailed account of how this dynamic was managed in publications to explain how collected & analysed data	1. **ACTION** → During the recruitment stage, prospective participants were offered opportunities to discuss uncertainties prior to the interview (correspondence included telephone and email contact details of the chief investigator); time was devoted at the start of interviews to build rapport; 'thank you' notes were sent to respondents following interviews; the same interviewer was used in all three interviews 2. **ACTION** → Wording of information sheet, consent form, and email invitation ensured that the study's purpose and how data were used was clearly explained; time was devoted at the commencement of interviews to ensure participants understood the use of data 3. **ACTION** → All academic publications & final reports included details of how data were collated and analysed to ensure this process was transparent
8. Respondents' unfavourable reactions to analysis & findings leading to withdrawal or negative attitudes toward the project or the program	1. Be upfront with respondents about how results will be used and why 2. Include explicit statements about the intention to publish anonymised results in consent form and during contact 3. Outline study objectives to respondents at the outset 4. Make available brochure summarising aggregated results for respondents so they can see benefits/outcomes without individual analysis	1. **ACTION** → Wording of the study's consent form and participant information sheet made clear the use of data; time was devoted at the commencement of interviews to clarify this before the consent form was signed 2. **ACTION** → Wording of information sheets included an explicit statement about anonymity of responses and the use of data (including publications) 3. **ACTION** → Content of emails & participant information sheets articulated the study's purpose; time was devoted at the commencement of interviews to ensure respondents understood the study's objectives 4. **ACTION** → Summarised 'reader-friendly' versions of the findings were made available to respondents
9. Potential impact of the research on respondents' lives (intrusion) or responses (participant bias)	1. Structure interviews so they are not excessively long or perceived as irrelevant 2. Seek publicly available factual information from other sources rather than during interviews 3. Be sensitive to demands on time; offer flexibility about when & how interviews are conducted	1. **ACTION** → Interview schedules were confined to germane questions relating to a core set of topics directly relevant to the study's outcomes 2. **ACTION** → Where feasible, factual data was sought outside interviews to avoid repetition (e.g. job description documents and brief online survey prior to interviews) 3. **ACTION** → Interview schedules and logistics were arranged with respondents at a time/place/medium to suit them, where feasible; content of information sheets & the project website indicated flexibility in how interviews could be conducted
10. Turnover in research team or program liaison staff	1. Diverse team composition; multiple contact points 2. Full and transparent audit trails of procedures; multiple researchers involved in research design, data collection and analysis 3. Shared access to pertinent contacts & data	1. **ACTION** → Data management procedures were documented in the program design with contribution from both lead researchers; relevant non-confidential project documents were shared within the research team via a password protected Dropbox folder
11. Inconsistency of relationships with respondents, data	1. Well defined interview schedules to allow consistent interviews to be conducted by multiple staff	1. **ACTION** → A clear & robust interview schedule that could be reproduced relatively consistently at different times & by

collection or analysis due to involvement of multiple researchers across different stages of the study	2. Inter-rater reliability checks of analysis	different researchers was developed, pilot-tested & used in data collection at all three waves of interview 2. **ACTION** → Data analysis procedures included inter-rater reliability checks to ensure replicable coding results
12. Capitalising on the utility of the method to study particular types of phenomena relating to transitions and change	1. Focus on particular phenomenon related to contingency/change, transitions, how pathways are constituted, how changes or adaptations result	1. **ACTION** → Interviews were based on broadly replicable schedules for all waves of data collection to allow direct comparison and for the impetus for change/continuity to be discussed with respondents during interviews were appropriate
13. Capitalising on the flexibility to take advantage of emergent themes and multiple analytical perspectives (including cross-sectional)	1. Commence data analysis early in data collection process, and maintain useful researchers' notes and case files on ongoing basis 2. Pursue emerging themes, including option to consult or introduce new team members 3. Cross-sectional comparison as well as longitudinal comparison	1. **ACTION** → A constant comparison data analysis approach was used (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This approach involves commencing data analysis early in the data collection process to allow emerging themes and patterns to be identified and incorporated into subsequent interviews 2. **ACTION** → The research team consulted additional experts from outside the team during the analytical process as unexpected themes were emerged 3. **ACTION** → Categories of respondents included in the agreed stratified sampling structure were used to undertake within- and between-group comparisons at each data collection period (cross-sectional) and across the study's duration (longitudinal comparisons)

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Attachment 6

Overview of strategies used to mitigate bias due to forced repatriation of participants

Risk to study	Mitigating approaches used
a. Attrition due to lack of interest: Participants perceiving that their forced repatriation renders their (reduced) volunteer experiences somehow less relevant to them or to the study, and so may lack motivation to continue participation.	• Participants were contacted as soon as practical after repatriation to reiterate the study's continuation and its support from the program, and to reassure them of the value of their contributions (including of their perceptions of the repatriation process). • The LSAV website at UTS was updated to reinforce the continuation & value of the study. • Where necessary, multiple points of contact were used to contact participants (e.g. Skype, text, email).
b. Different interview contexts: Interviews conducted post-repatriation, rather than in-country may be biased by the repatriation experience (e.g. overlooking key features of the assignment, post-hoc re-evaluation of experiences).	• T2 interview schedules were modified by: ○ Devoting a brief section to the forced repatriation & clearly delineating this from other topics (e.g. 'Can we go back to the months before you left & talk about your time on a day-to-day basis in …?') . ○ Structuring questions to help participants 'locate' themselves when answering questions (e.g. 'I'd like you to take you mind back to the office environment. What was it like?'). ○ More regularly seeking specific examples to validate responses. ○ Where appropriate, probing to clarify temporal aspects of responses (e.g. 'Is that something you felt during your time in country or has that realisation emerged since you've been home?'). ○ Directly addressing the impact of the forced repatriation on responses where appropriate (e.g. 'Do you think those views have been influenced by you returning before the end of the assignment?'). • T3 interview schedules were modified by seeking to delineate the impact of COVID from those of the assignment ('To what extent do you think those changes stemmed from your assignment or from other things, like the COVID lockdown?').
c. Reduced depth of in-country experience: Volunteers' reduced time in-country may limit the extent of (noticeable) personal or professional change across the study period.	• A schedule was devised that retained the proposed timing of interview T3 to allow for the longest possible post-assignment periods for individual changes to manifest or be realised (i.e. not adjusting further the scheduled data collection activities due to the repatriations). • Interview schedules (T2 and T3) were modified to include a specific question addressing the impact of the repatriation (e.g. 'In what ways do you think the early return influenced your overall time in country?'). This was reported separately in the mid-contract report (October 2020) and considered in analysis in the current report. • Structured comparisons were conducted between responses of those participants who were forced to repatriate (n = 38) with those whose T2 interviews were completed prior to the closure of the program (n = 16) in both T2 and T3.
d. Disruption to post-assignment intentions: The discontinuity created by the repatriation & subsequent economic & social impacts (post-assignment) are expected to have substantial consequences for participants' personal and professional activities, especially those whose assignments were linked to specific career objectives.	• For repatriated participants, a segment of interview T2 was devoted to address this experience & its (perceived) personal & professional influence. While this provided useful insights for the program in relation to participants' lived experiences, it also enabled comparisons between participants' experiences and outcomes/responses reported at T2 and T3. • Throughout the interview, interviewers remained vigilant of the potential impact of this experience on participants' other responses and probed this where appropriate (e.g. 'Do you think returning early influenced that in any way?'). • The repatriation was discussed directly during interviews via the following additional interview questions: - e.g. 'In what ways do you think the repatriation will influence the next stage of your life?' (interview T2), and e.g. 'In hindsight, (how) do you think the experience of being repatriated early might have influenced …?' (interview T3). • Structured comparisons were conducted between responses of those participants who were forced to repatriate (n = 38) with those whose T2 interviews were completed prior to the closure of the program (n = 16) in both T2 and T3.

Attachment 7

List of main variables used in data analysis

Category[1]	Data collection period	Variable	Variable description
Participants' demographic and experiential features (includes survey and interview responses)	T1	Age	Age category
	T1	Gender	Gender identity
	T1	Current residence (pre-assignment) (x 2)	Current residential location (State; urban/rural/remote)
	T1	Previous international volunteering (x 2)	Details of prior international volunteering; previous assignments with the program
	T1	International experiences	Details of prior international work or living
	T1	Host country experience	Previous experience travelling or living in host country
	T1	Identity and ancestry	Details of ancestry and identity
	T1	Languages spoken (x 2)	Languages spoken at home other than English; other languages spoken
	T1	Disability	Whether identify as having a disability
	T1	Educational qualifications	Highest educational qualification achieved
	T1	Profession	Main job/profession[2]
	T1	Years in profession	Number of years in current profession
	T1	Firm post-assignment plans	Did the volunteer express firm plans for after the assignment (Yes/No)
	T1	Motivations	Motivations for volunteering
	T1, T2	Continue to study	Continue formal study during the assignment (planned, actual)
	T1	Career stage	Career considerations when entering program
	T1	Interest in program	Reason for being attracted to program
	T1	Major concerns/challenges	Major concerns about or challenges expected on assignment
	T1, T2, T3	Future plans	Future plans (personal and professional)
Participants' assignment features (includes interview responses and PD details)	T1	Assignment location (x 2)	Assignment host country & host country region; urban/rural location
	T1	Assignment duration (planned)	Planned assignment duration (days)
	T1	Assignment role (x 2)	Formal role title; assignment features
	T1	Mentor role	Does the position description explicate a 'mentoring' role
	T1	Partner organisation	Partner organisation type (category)
	T1	Accompanied	Accompanied on assignment by partner (Yes/No)
	T1	Referred candidate	Recruited via referred candidate process (Yes/No)
	T1	PO contact (recruitment)	Contact with the PO during recruitment process (Yes/No)
Participants' experiences with the program	T1	Recruitment experience	Overall experience during of recruitment
	T1, T2, T3	VPLJ	Experiences with VPLJ activities and content
	T1, T2, T3	Perceived program support	Perceived support from the program (features; overall evaluation)
	T3	In-country management team	Contact with in-country management team
	T2, T3	Health/medical services	Use of counselling or medical/health services

	T2, T3	RAVN engagement	Engagement with RAVN (actual or intended): nature and frequency
Participants' in-country experiences	T2	Repatriation	Whether participant was forced to repatriate due to COVID (Yes/No)
	T2	Early return (x 2)	Finished their assignment before the schedule end date for reasons unrelated to COVID (Yes/No): reason/s
	T2	Accuracy of position description	Extent to which volunteer position description was perceived as accurate (features)
	T2	Assignment duration (actual)	Actual assignment duration (days)
	T2, T3	Medical/health incident	Experienced major medical incident
	T2	Assignment extension	Planned extension to assignment before or at time of repatriation
	T2	In-country experience	Overall evaluation of in-country experience
Participants' civic participation, engagement & literacy	T2, T3	PO contact	Ongoing contact with PO (current and planned); nature and extent
	T2, T3	PO support	Ongoing support for PO (current and planned); nature and extent
	T3	Remote volunteering	Involvement in or attitude toward remote volunteer assignment (applied; commenced; open to; not interested)
	T2, T3	In-country volunteering	Attitude toward to future in-country volunteer assignment (applied; commenced; open to; not interested)
	T1, T2, T3	Civic engagement	Overall nature and extent of civic engagement, including interest in social issues, activities, donations
	T1, T2, T3	Structured civic participation	Volunteering activities and events (nature, extent)
	T1, T2, T3	Civic participation (sector)	Sector in which structured civic participation occurs[2]
	T2, T3	Unstructured civic participation	Nature of unstructured civic engagement changes across the study
	T2, T3	Civics - attitude	Changed view of civics, reasons for change
	T2, T3	Volunteer networks	Relationships/contacts with other program volunteers (nature, extent)
	T1, T2, T3	International development - engagement	Understanding of and engagement with international development sector
	T1, T2, T3	International development - attitude	Expressed attitudes towards international development sector and practices
	T1, T2, T3	International development - literacy	Knowledge and capabilities relating to international development (non domain-specific)
	T2, T3	Applying international development literacy	Evidence of applying international development literacy to work/life (details)
Participants' international knowledge, capabilities and networks	T1, T2, T3	Host country knowledge & capabilities	Knowledge of and capabilities specific to the host country
	T1, T2, T3	Host country engagement	Engagement with host country (media, visits, associations, prior or planned experiences)
	T1, T2, T3	Contact with HCNs	Networks/contacts with host country and/or HCNs (including diaspora; nature & extent of networks)
	T1, T2, T3	Host-country language	Using or studying host-country language (proficiency, extent)
	T1, T2, T3	International orientation	Whether participant expressed international focus for work, living or extended travel when talking about future
	T2, T3	Shift of focus (international-domestic)	Indicates a shift in future work/life relating to international/domestic location (direction)
	T2, T3	International networks	Relationships/contact with others from outside the host country arising from the program experience (nature, extent)
	T2, T3	Host-country partner	Entered relationship with a HCN partner during the study
	T2, T3	Culture-general knowledge & capabilities	Reports of culture-general knowledge & capabilities (nature)
	T3	Cognitive empathy	Reported evidence of cognitive empathy (learning/change)
	T3	Privilege fluency	Reported evidence of privilege fluency (learning/change)

	T3	Global mindset	Reported evidence of global mindset (learning/change)
	T2, T3	View of Australia	Changes to perspective of Australia, being Australian and/or Australia's role in the region
	T3	Applying cultural/international knowledge & capabilities	Applying cultural/international knowledge & capabilities in work or life (details)
Participants' professional status and capabilities	T1, T2, T3	Work status	Participants' current work/employment status
	T1, T2, T3	Professional field (change)	Participants' professional field (and whether changes)
	T2, T3	Career development or change	Change in the status or direction of participants' job/career (details)
	T3	Prosocial career	Participants' involvement or expressed interest in a 'prosocial' career
	T2, T3	Change/instigate study	Whether participant reported instigating or changing future study plans (and whether attributed to the program experience)
	T2, T3	Career clarification	Whether assignment led participant to pursue, reject or reaffirm a future career
	T2, T3	Career impact	Whether volunteer experience was perceived as valuable for career or professional life
	T2, T3	Professional knowledge & capabilities	Knowledge and capabilities relevant to profession (domain-specific) (and impact of volunteer experience)
	T3	Professional attitude	Attitude towards profession - change (Yes/No) and reasons
	T2, T3	Legitimacy/reputation	Perceived impact of assignment on professional legitimacy/reputation
	T2, T3	Professional networks	Nature and extent of professional networks arising from assignment
	T2, T3	Applying knowledge, capabilities or experiences (domain-specific) to work/career	Applying domain-specific knowledge, capabilities or experiences from assignment to work/career, including in job interviews (details)
	T2, T3	Applying knowledge, capabilities or experiences (other) to work/career	Applying other knowledge, capabilities or experiences from assignment to work/career, including in job interviews (not domain-specific) – (details)
Participants' personal circumstances and capabilities	T2, T3	Personal changes	Reported personal changes (nature)
	T3	Noticed changes (external)	Whether friends, family or colleagues had observed changes in participants (details)
	T2, T3	Social networks & friendships (including volunteers)	Impact on personal networks and friendships (outside family)
	T2, T3	Family relationships	Impact on family relationships, including with partner
	T2, T3	Hobbies, interests	Reported hobbies or interests arising from the assignment
	T2, T3	Lifestyle change	Reported changes to lifestyle attributed to assignment

[1] Sourced from interview data unless otherwise stated

[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics classification

Attachment 8

Participants' feedback on draft report

Response	Comments
1	A very thorough report. Will we get feedback on accepted recommendations and how they are implemented?
2	Hope you are keeping well. Thanks for your report - apologies for the delayed response - got caught up in a number of other activities, and the time got away! I have had a quick read of the report - esp the key findings. Overall, your report rings true with me, and I can relate to most of these findings. I have provided some additional comments, based on my experience. You may already have covered these in your report. • My assignment is still continuing - I have transitioned to a remote basis, and my PO seems interested in having my continued assistance. • My objective for volunteering was to contribute my skills (after a long career), experience another culture, and where possible learn more. I feel I achieved this. The program may not have worked as effectively for people wishing to learn on the job (i.e. use the Volunteer experience as an experience gaining venture). This may be due to the POs expecting a level of experience and knowledge from the volunteer, and an established level of capability. Therefore this may not have been as beneficial to the volunteers Professional Development. • The Volunteer Program has been focussed more on meeting the requirements of the PO, rather than the volunteer's objectives for personal and professional development. Maybe this is an area where the program can do better - i.e. better align the volunteer to the assignment based on their objectives? • Covid has been a major skewing factor in the perception of volunteers. Many volunteers planned their personal and professional lives based on the planned assignment of a specified duration. The curtailment due to covid would have a significant negative impact on their personal and professional circumstances. • A large number of assignments are being continued on a "remote" basis, although my perception is that this is proving to be very challenging to many volunteers - because of the level of engagement from the PO stakeholders, and the difficulty of connecting via poor internet connections for regular meetings and reviews. Also, unless you have spent some time in-country, I feel it is difficult to do an assignment remotely, unless the scope is very specific and well defined. There are some benefits to remote volunteering for the volunteer and the PO, but some of these disadvantages may be stumbling blocks. • Engagement / connections with the host countries and POs decline after the engagement, even with remote volunteering, because of the reasons mentioned above. • The returned volunteer network (RAVN) is a good social network, but does not provide enough networking opportunities for professional development. This is presently the responsibility for individual volunteers This is a quick summary - my experiences are mainly positive, since I had the right expectations and objectives, I had good support from the in-country team, I had a reasonable duration in country (9 months) to effectively transition to a remote basis, and my PO continues to be supportive and engaged.
3	Hi again - so sorry that I just didn't have time to read in detail or to respond. I am completely overwhelmed with [details of work commitments]. I'm sure you get it, but I really do want to keep up with the project and report and hopefully, positive results! So my apologies for not offering anything of use at this time.
4	Sorry I have had personal health issues [details] and have not had a chance to catch up on emails. I have skimmed through some of the report and am sure it will be OK and a good representation of the info you have received. As a veteran type my experience was impacted a lot by the PO's political situation within [an environment of external stakeholder/s].

Attachment 9

Comparison of results: Volunteers whose careers benefitted and those whose did not

T1 data	Career benefit (n = 18)	Career setback (n = 18)
Participants age at pre-departure	33.4 years (mean)	37.8 years (mean)
Years of professional experience at pre-departure	7.4 years (mean)	11.4 years (mean)
Gender identity (female)	14/18	10/18
Volunteer category (Launcher)	5/18	2/18
'Career' as primary motivation for assignment	8/18	5/18
Prior experience living in the host country	7/18	3/18
Considered location as reason for choosing assignment	6/18	3/18
T2 data	**Career benefit (n = 18)**	**Career setback (n = 18)**
Reported a positive overall experience in the host country	11/18	6/18
Accuracy of position description of volunteer role*	Accurate: 4/18, Inaccurate: 8/18	Accurate 3/18, Inaccurate: 12/18
Undertook a designated 'mentoring' role	8/18	2/18
Accepted an assignment in an international NGO (rather than government agency)	INGO: 3/18, Government agency: 4/18	INGO: 0/18, Government agency: 8/18
Emerged with greater clarity about their future career direction	11/18	3/18
T3 data	**Career benefit (n = 18)**	**Career setback (n = 18)**
Believe the assignment enhanced their professional reputation & legitimacy	6/18	2/18
Develop domain-specific knowledge & capabilities (and subsequently have opportunities to apply these in their work or civic engagement in Australia)	Developed:16/18, Applied: 11/18	Developed:12/18, Applied: 6/18
Develop valuable professional networks	12/18	5/18
Develop strong international networks	11/18	6/18
Have opportunities to apply new international or cross-cultural skills in their work, study or life	14/18	7/18
Interest in undertaking a remote volunteer assignment	8/18	1/18
Sustain ongoing support for the PO at T3	5/18	2/18
Increase civic engagement across the study	5/18	1/18

* Some responses were equivocal and so unable to be classified as either accurate or inaccurate

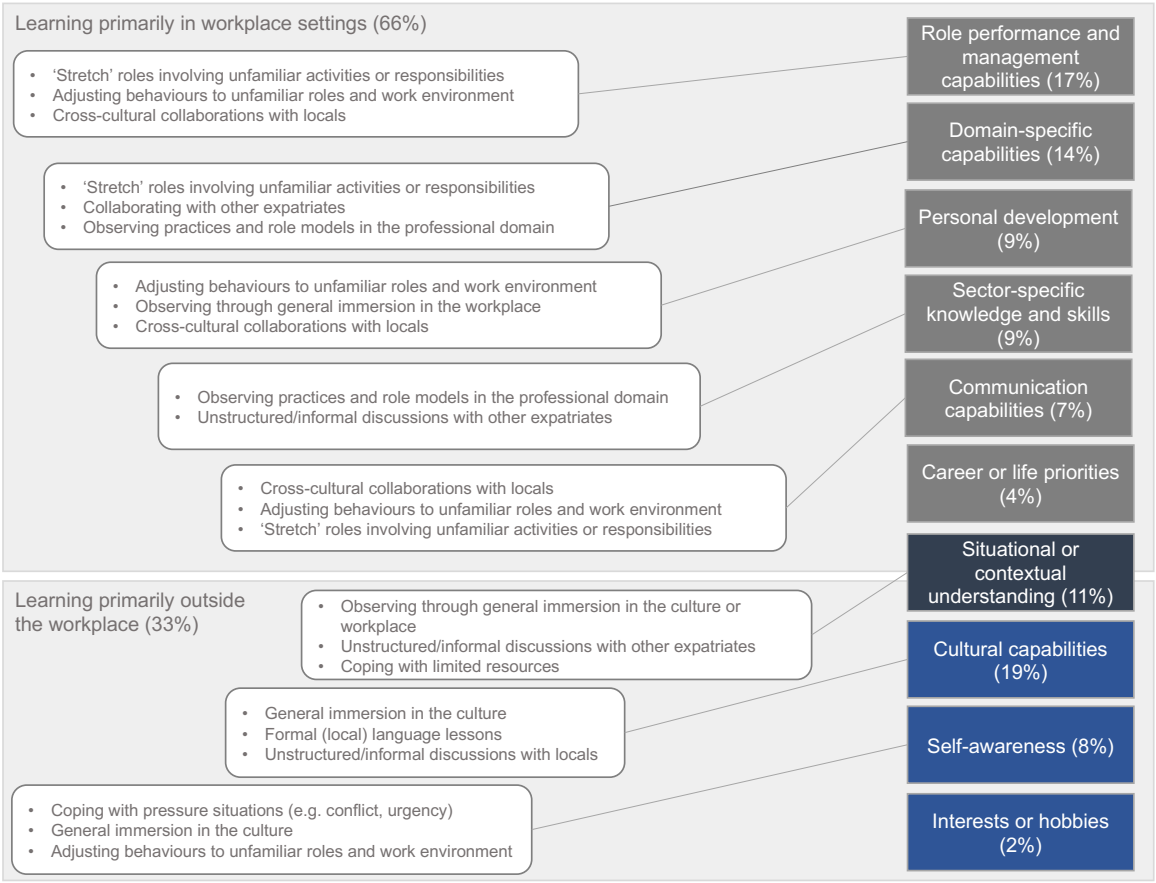
The 'Career benefit' category comprises 18 participants who were classified as either 'The assignment benefitted their career and they had expected or hoped it would' (n = 16) or 'The assignment benefitted their career although they had not expected it to' (n = 2)

The 'Career setback' category comprises 18 participants who were classified as either 'The assignment did not benefit their career despite them expecting or hoping it would' (n= 12) or 'The assignment was detrimental to their career' (n = 6).

The results in the table report the frequency of responses or mean between the two groups.

Attachment 10

Reported learning outcomes by category, context and cause (T2)



Notes:

The 55 participants identified a total of 522 discrete learning outcomes at T2. The figure above identifies the main categories of learning outcomes reported by the sample, the contexts in which these most commonly occurred (i.e. work/non-work), and the main learning approaches used by participants. The dark boxes on the right show the 10 categories of learning outcomes and the percentage of total learning outcomes that each comprised, arranged vertically from those that occurred most often in workplace settings (large grey box at the top) to those occurring most often outside the workplace (large grey box at the bottom). Learning outcomes relating to 'Situational or contextual understanding' fell evenly in work/non-work settings.

The figure also identifies the main learning approaches used by participants for the eight main categories of learning outcomes (white boxes on the left): five that occurred primarily at work (top), two that occurred primarily outside work (bottom), and 'situational and contextual understanding.'

More details and operational definitions of the categories of learning outcomes can be found in in Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 of *Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report* (December 2020).

Future phases of the LSAV: Considerations and recommendations

» Research design and data collection approach

An important outcome of the LSAV (2019-21) is the assembly of a detailed database capturing the nature of learning outcomes and changes that participants have reported (to date), the types of experiences that prompted these, and the ways in which participants are beginning to apply these in their work and lives.[4] Future iterations of the study should be designed to examine how these changes (good and bad) manifest, evolve and impact participants' lives in coming years, and their connections to the features of the program which nurtured or facilitated these.

The numerous variables used to indicate changes within each of the four outcome areas of this report - identified by participants as important - provide useful markers to track ongoing changes among the sample (and potentially other cohorts). It is feasible that a validated survey instrument focusing on just these pre-defined outcomes could measure future changes with relative efficiency. While potentially lengthy, a survey with these datapoints could be integrated with or complement RAVN surveys and be replicated periodically in coming years as a "thermometer" of some of the main outcomes identified thus far.

On balance, however, we recommend that future iterations retain the use of longitudinal qualitative interviews (LQIs) as the primary data collection mechanism, with periodic interviews that allow participants to expand and reflect in detail on their volunteer journey and to partake in the interpretation of any changes, their causes and consequences. This approach is conducive to identifying unexpected outcomes, including those yet to fully emerge. These are likely important in coming years as participants' personal and professional lives develop in response to the nascent changes identified here and other events, including those resulting from relationships established throughout their volunteering journey. This approach also provides opportunities to collate respondents' open reflections on impactful features of the program that are more difficult to collect by survey. LQIs are also well suited to unearthing and documenting narrative case studies like those included in this and earlier reports, which track individuals' trajectories and draw on interview responses across multiple data collection periods.

One consideration in the design of future iterations relates to participant retention. The current retention rate (98%) across three lengthy interview protocols and under sometimes trying personal circumstances reflects favourably on participants' commitment to the program, and on their interest in the study's outcomes and in making their experiences heard. The value and pleasure that participants took from their involvement was a recurring theme in (many, not all) interviews at T2 and T3. Importantly, this was the case for participants whose experiences were not always (or even not mostly) positive, as well as *Non-working Partners*, whose insights were especially helpful in discerning features related to volunteers' roles. The presence of a motivated and engaged sample of participants like those in the LSAV bodes well for future phases.

» Data collection intervals

This report documents a diverse - and in some cases extreme – set of impacts and changes that occurred in the first 12 months of the volunteers' repatriation. Three interviews across 24-months were beneficial during this phase to capture each of the three stages of volunteers' contact with the program (pre, during and post assignment). For future iterations we would suggest that interviews at 2-3-year intervals, rather than annually, would suffice to enable longer-term patterns of change to be observed while ensuring sufficient recall to reduce memory errors.[5] Thus, the next LSAV interviews could reasonably be scheduled for:

- 2023 (biennial structure): T1 = 2019, T2 = 2020, T3 = 2021, **T4 = 2023, T5 = 2025.**
- 2024 (triennial structure): T1 = 2019, T2 = 2020, T3 = 2021, **T4 = 2024, T5 = 2027.**

» Outcome areas and interview themes

Table 6 on the following page presents an overview of the main thematic areas that future interviews should address (right columns, T4-T5) in comparison to those used in the current study (T1-T3).

[4] Details of these are documented in this report and its predecessor, Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers: Phase Two Final Report (December 2020).

[5] If the study's main interest in future iterations is on one particular type of outcome (e.g. career only), it may be possible to articulate a more theoretically-sound interval period for subsequent interviews. For instance, longitudinal studies of formal learning interventions tend to have relatively brief intervals (6-12 months) whereas career stages tend to extend across 5–10-year periods, and so may dictate a longer interval or more flexible scheduling (e.g. when participants reach a particular age category). See, for example: Hermanowicz, J. C. (2013). The longitudinal qualitative interview. *Qualitative Sociology*, 36, 189-208; Smart, R., & Peterson, C. (1997). Super's career stages and the decision to change careers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 51(3), 358-374.

Table 6: Summarised interview schedule (T4-T5)

Theme	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Personal details: Demographic and background information including motivations for and expectations of the volunteer assignment	X				
In-country experiences: Anticipated (T1), actual (T2) and reflections on these (T3)	X	X	X	-	-
Current situation, capabilities and attitudes in relation to main study outcomes: Civic, international, professional and personal*	X	X	X	X	X
Program contact and support: Contact with program staff and support mechanisms	X	X	X	X	X
Future Plans: Future personal and professional plans (5 years)	X	X	X	X	X
Personal and professional changes: Perceived changes in attitudes, behaviours and capabilities, and the main reasons for these		X	X	X	X
Reflections: Reflections on changes (impact of program)			X	X	X

* Potential to modify these to address each area more holistically around areas of interviewee's lives, as per notes below.

One caveat exists on this. The four outcome areas analysed in this report (asterisked in **Table 6**), derived from the program's objectives and articulated in the study's operational framework, have been especially helpful analytical and organising tools during this phase of the LSAV. They have supported interviews and analysis by framing participants' responses in the context of outcomes that were of interest to the program.

Notwithstanding this, the results make clear that the impacts of the program on volunteers overlap these categories. We propose that the distinction between these four areas is likely to further blur as participants' assignments become more historically distant. Thus, while we recommend retaining a clear analytical emphasis on these four outcome areas to align with the program's objectives and the baseline indicators that this report explicates, future interviews may effectively elicit evidence of change/stability of these through more holistic discussions of how participants have built on their volunteering experiences in different areas of their lives (e.g. career, relationships, lifestyle).

» Responding to emerging data and evolving patterns of work and volunteering

Future iteration of the LSAV should incorporate and analyse emergent findings which allude to future points of impact and/or interest for the study's main objectives. Eight to emerge to date have been:

- *Changes to types of volunteering modalities.* The introduction of remote volunteering in 2021 and the now widespread use of videoconferencing technologies have opened volunteering options to a broader and more diverse suite of participants. Our results (Section 3.4) indicate that the motivations for different modalities may vary in tangible ways. Participants attracted to remote or hybrid volunteering may, in fact, have little in common with those in the current study. In this sense, the current study may well document in rich detail the last of the "in-country only" cohort of volunteers to enter the program. Whether and how volunteers engage with new forms of volunteering in this and other programs will be of interest in helping to recruit and match prospective volunteers to roles, and to support them and their ongoing program engagement. It will also complement in-house research suggested in Section 7.2.4.
- *The nature and impact of volunteers' social networks.* Three issues arising from Section 4.3 seem pertinent to future studies: (i) how do the strong connections volunteers establish with other volunteers manifest in coming years in terms of their personal and professional impacts, and/or their engagement with the program?, (ii) In what ways are participants' ongoing relationships with former volunteers different to their other personal relationships? (i.e. what distinctive personal/professional utility do these networks provide)?, and (iii) Because some participants tended to prioritise volunteer networks over others when coping with their repatriation, do (and if so how do) participants reactivate or build on the networks with other groups that have been relatively neglected in the years since their assignment ended?
- *How different groups of volunteers' post-assignment careers evolve in coming years.* The findings reported in **Tables 5 and 6** indicate emerging differences between groups of volunteers in relation to career progress that seem to be attributable, in part, to demographic features or pre-assignment motivations. In light of the brief post-assignment timeframe to date and COVID disruptions, monitoring how the careers of these different groups transpire is important to understanding how the program impacts volunteers with different career interests, backgrounds or personal characteristics.
- *The impact of prosocial transitions on other outcomes.* For some participants, involvement in the program appears to have assisted (and in a few cases inspired) a "prosocial career transition" (Section 5.2). It is feasible that, over time, volunteers whose careers take on greater prosocial characteristics may diminish

or change the pattern of their voluntary service (Section 3.2).[6] It is feasible also that the structured, coordinated and skilled contributions afforded through their paid roles lead to different impacts than some voluntary activities.[7] In this, the program's direct contributions to inspiring or enabling these professional transitions represent important contributions to the program's objectives and should be monitored.

- *Whether and how volunteers integrate their international and domestic civic participation.* The orientation of some participants toward more global and skilled forms of voluntary service at T3 (Section 3.2.1) suggests that the cognitive separation between volunteer assignments and other forms of civic engagement (Section 3.1, "Civics baseline") may have diminished for some. Although COVID disruptions and the recency of their assignment may have inflated this shift, examining whether this represents a temporary or more genuine inflection point is warranted. This should be evaluated in light of changed patterns in emotional engagement, support and contact with POs and host countries (Sections 3.3 and 4.3.1) to ascertain whether these contributions are most strongly related to interpersonal connections and affect, or more cerebral decisions (e.g. weighing up perceived impacts or personal benefits).
- *How challenging repatriations affect future outcomes of different groups.* In light of the difficulties that some participants experienced during their repatriations (Section 6.3.2), understanding how different types of volunteers continue to be influenced by these (e.g. those accompanied by a partner who shared the repatriation experience) and why, offers opportunities to improve pre- and post-repatriation support available to volunteers and to better explain the program's enduring impacts on volunteers.
- *The impact of "discretionary volunteering" on ongoing civic participation and/or support for POs.* Tracking the continuity of discretionary civic participation (Section 3.4.3) provides insight into the long-term "residual" impact of these hidden contributions to the program's outcomes.
- *The extent to which lifestyle changes are sustained.* Reinforcing habits and/or aligning values/intentions with behaviours in ways conducive to long-term lifestyle changes can be difficult in new settings, can take time, and can be easily disrupted. Thus, while the nascent patterns reported in Section 6.3 reflect some effort by participants to align behaviours with their evolving worldviews, future iterations of the study should track the continuity and impact of these changes.

» Ongoing academic publications

Finally, to date two academic conference presentations have drawn, in part, on the planning undertaken in preparing for and conducting the LSAV:

- The personal and professional effects of long-term international volunteering by Australians (2021)
- The paradoxes and possibilities of decolonising (capacity) development of Australian international volunteers (scheduled for July 2022)

The wealth of data collected in this study to date – a fraction of which is distilled in the current report – has potential to be utilised in several future academic publications and/or conference presentations that contribute directly to promoting better understanding of issues associated with enabling, supporting and measuring the full impact of international development volunteering. These include articles expanding on the career and prosocial motivations of volunteers (drawing on ideas informing Figure 2), the "invisible" discretionary contributions in international volunteer assignments (box at Section 3.4.3), the learning and development landscape of international volunteer assignments (as summarised in Attachment 10), the contributions of VPLJ activities to volunteers' experiences and learning (expanding the July 2022 conference paper), and the variations of capacity development approaches deployed by volunteers in different contexts. All future publications will ensure participants' anonymity and comply with standards of ethics and data management that guided this project.

[6] This was not the case in the current study, where prosocial career transition was not related to the intensity of civic participation, although those who transitioned to a prosocial career were more likely to express interest in remote volunteering than others in the sample.

[7] For more evidence of the relationship between international development volunteering and pro-social careers, see Tiessen, R., Cassin, K. & Lough, B.J. (2021). International development volunteering as a catalyst for long-term prosocial behaviours of returned Canadian volunteers. *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, 16(1), 95-114.