

Annual Report 2025

Overview from the Chair

Established in May 2023, Australian Academic Volunteers Abroad (AAVA) is a registered charity supporting capacity building at universities across the Pacific, Asia and Africa. We match the strategic priorities of partner universities with highly qualified, recently retired senior academic and professional staff from Australian universities. Our focus is on long-term assignments—typically 12 months, combining in-country and remote work—rather than short-term approaches, which have often proven less effective.

AAVA is an Australian Partner Organisation with the Australian Volunteers Program (AVP), a government-funded program supporting global volunteering. Our AAVA volunteers are mobilised through AVP; they receive well-being support, travel costs, insurances, and a modest stipend.

Our unique value lies in our deep understanding of the higher education sector and our ability to engage experienced volunteers through global networks. Partner universities choose AAVA for our expertise and ability to match their ambitions with relevant, effective volunteers whose achievements meet international academic standards.

AAVA is growing rapidly. Demand from partner universities is high, and Australian academics are eager to volunteer. Looking ahead to 2026, we have 11 assignments in development at five universities in four countries. This includes assignments with three new AAVA partners, Fiji National University, University of the Western Cape in South Africa and Cavite State University in the Philippines.

Our five-year strategy focuses on consolidation, sustainability and scale. Current priorities include securing Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status with the Australian Taxation Office, with invaluable support from Baker McKenzie. AAVA is currently resourced entirely by voluntary contributions from the Board and Founders. Achieving DGR status will enable us to raise funds to support volunteer assignments and appoint a professional team to further our purpose.



*Graham Schaffer, Chair and Co-Founder
Australian Academic Volunteers Abroad*

In closing, I acknowledge the tireless efforts of Directors Professor Jioji Ravulo, Professor Sandra Kentish, Professor Emerita Marilys Guillemín and Dr Libby Mitchell.

It is my pleasure to present this summary of 2025's highlights.



On assignment at USP in Suva in 2025: From left, Professor Emerita Marilys Guillemín, Emeritus Professor Kim Halford and Honorary Professor Carol Boyle.

2025 Highlights

➤ Eight Volunteer Assignments at Four Partner Universities in Four Countries.

All assignments are hybrid, with both in-country and remote phases.

- University of the South Pacific. *Suva, Fiji*
- Solomon Islands National University. *Honiara, Solomon Islands*
- International Institute of Health Sciences. *Colombo, Sri Lanka*
- German-Mongolian Institute for Resources and Technology. *Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia*

➤ Deductible Gift Recipient Status

Application submitted November 2025, with pro bono legal support from Baker McKenzie.



AAVA volunteer Professor Julie Owens (front left) shares a group photo moment with Australia's Governor General, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, at an Australian government NGO partners event in Mongolia.

2025 Assignments

Solomon Islands National University (SINU)

Quality Assurance & Student Experience: Professor Angela Hill (17 months, 3 months in-country) supported program reviews, accreditation, governance, quality assurance and professional development for staff.

Research Capacity Building: Dr Padma Narsey Lal (12 months, 3 months in-country) led “Research for Outcomes” training, strengthening research management and grant application skills, and fostering partnerships.

Executive Mentoring: Professor Derrick Armstrong (12 months, 1 month in-country) advised the Vice Chancellor on governance reforms and institutional strengthening, emphasizing locally-led change.



SINU VC Professor Transform Aqorau accepts the Reading Machine owned by the late Professor Brij Vilash Lal and gifted by Dr Padma Lal to the SINU Research Office.

International Institute of Health Sciences (IIHS), Sri Lanka

Internationalising Nursing Education:

Professor Violeta Lopez (12 months, 7 months in-country) mentored staff and provided advice on enhancing the nursing curriculum.



Professor Lopez efforts to support internationalising IIHS nursing curriculum have been warmly recognised by the university.

University of the South Pacific (USP)

Mental Health Education: Emeritus Professor Kim Halford (12 months, 4 months in-country) supported the development of a strategy to enhance mental health training across 12 Pacific nations, implemented in part via short courses and a Masters program.

Career Progression & Gender Equity: Professor Emerita Marilys Guillemain (12 months, 3 months in-country) collaborated on the design and delivery of professional development to advance leadership and gender equity among staff.

Civil Engineering Accreditation: Honorary Professor Carol Boyle (12 months, 6 months in-country) supported the development of a roadmap for the civil engineering program and the pathway to accreditation.



After many productive months of engagement, including two in-country visits, Professor Emerita Marilys Guillemain received a very warm send-off from the USP team in October.

German-Mongolian Institute for Resources and Technology (GMIT)

Research & Innovation: Emeritus Professor Julie Owens (12 months, 3 months in-country) supported the development of commercialisation strategies for the Institute's new Research and Innovation Centre.



GMIT Vice Rector Finance, Enkhbayar Bold meets with Emeritus Professor Julie Owens in September 2025 in the first week of her volunteer assignment.