



## **Dismay at cuts to international volunteering during National Volunteer Week**

**A budget cut of 30% to the government's international volunteering program during National Volunteer Week has gone largely unnoticed.**

"With international volunteering having already experienced recent cuts, no-one expected an additional 30% cut in this Budget" said Australian Business Volunteers (ABV) Chair Fiona Jolly.

According to ACFID figures the overall reduction in aid next financial year will be 20%, making the international volunteering program, known as *Australian Volunteers for International Development* (AVID), among the hardest hit aid programs.

"Government funded volunteering is one of the most visible forms of aid; there are often news stories in-country about the good work Australian volunteers do, and volunteering builds closer people to people links. Cutting a program which generates so much goodwill for Australia seems strange."

Australia has a long and proud history of placing volunteers on assignments with our developing neighbours. Tens of thousands of volunteers have worked on projects from providing health workers and teachers where otherwise there would be none, to helping establish new businesses and strengthening financial institutions.

ABV is one of several NGOs which deliver the government's volunteering program. ABV maintains a registry of highly skilled and experienced business volunteers, many of whom undertake multiple volunteer assignments.

"To be told about this cut to overseas volunteering during National Volunteer Week does feel a bit like a slap in the face of our volunteers" said Ms Jolly.

**"Ironically, ABV's work very much aligns with the Government's official aid policy, with its focus on 'aid for trade', and promoting private sector growth"** said Ms Jolly.

"One of our primary areas of focus is assisting small businesses, so as an organisation we entirely agree with the sentiment of this week's Budget – with its emphasis on small business as the driver of prosperity. Our work helps small businesses in the developing world to 'have a go'."

"If this announcement is followed through on – fewer small businesses in our region will be getting assistance to grow and drive economic development" said Ms Jolly.

According to Ms Jolly: "ABV volunteers who are placed on government funded assignments are highly skilled and experienced, and are able to bring about really positive outcomes. From social enterprises in Manila to ICT businesses in Port Moresby, I've seen businesses grow strongly and expand their staff thanks to the work of our volunteers."

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