

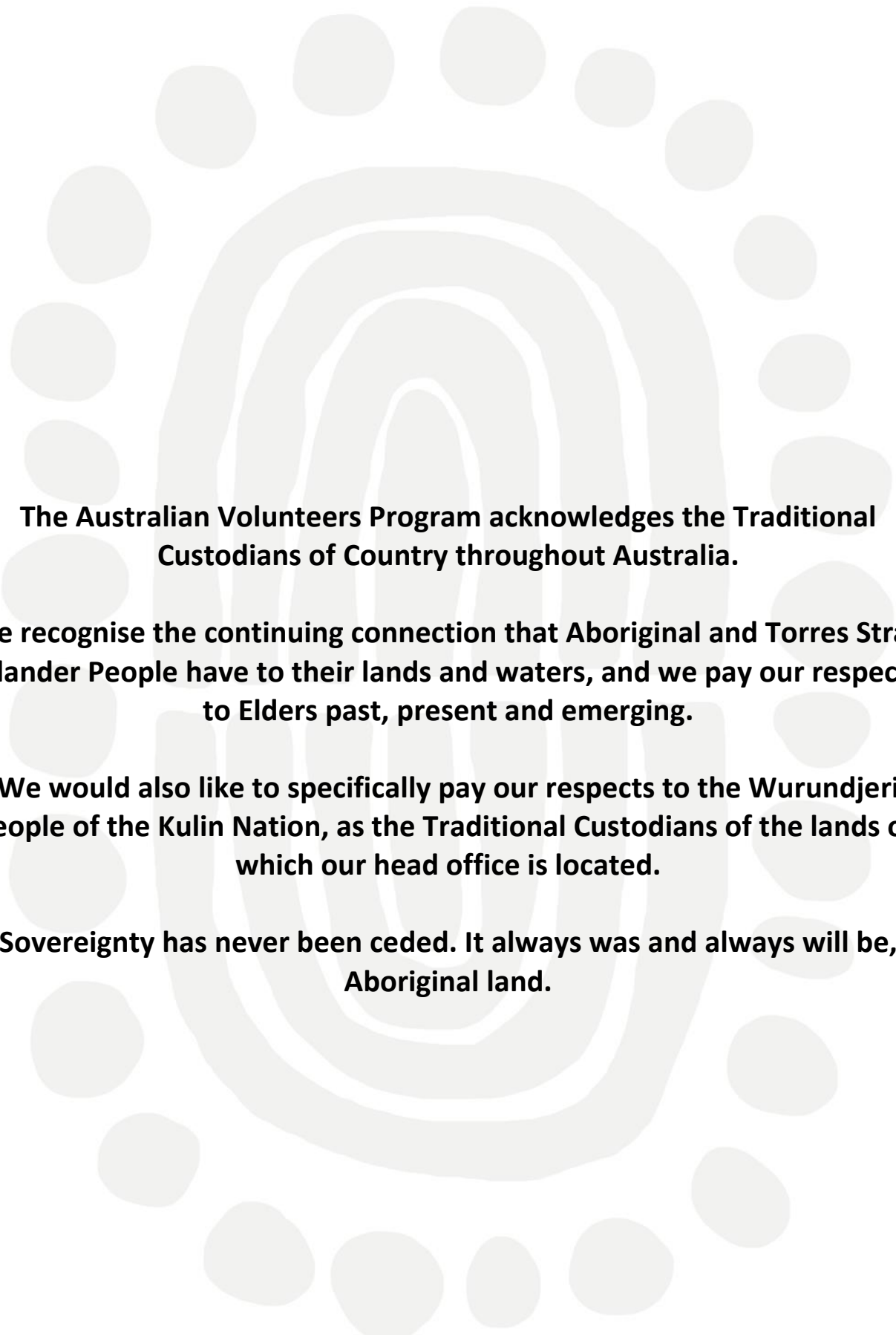
Australian Volunteers Guidebook

May 2022 Edition



australianvolunteers.com

The Australian Volunteers Program
is an Australian Government initiative.



The Australian Volunteers Program acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia.

We recognise the continuing connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have to their lands and waters, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We would also like to specifically pay our respects to the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our head office is located.

Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Key contacts for volunteers

In the case of any emergency, immediately contact:

- 1) Local emergency services** (if available in your location)
- 2) Your in-country team**
- 3) International SOS assistance centre**

Australian Volunteers Portal

Access your portal at: <https://assignments.australianvolunteers.com/>

International SOS

For medical and security assistance, contact International SOS Assistance Centre in Sydney via the app or on:

Membership number: 12AYCA789741

Phone: +61 2 9025 2818

Email: sydney@internationalsos.com

Response Psychological Services

24/7 counselling and psychological services for volunteers and AADs.

Email: response@responsepsychological.com

Phone: +61 3 9016 0400 or 1300 854 053

Corporate Services Network

Policy number: 02PP014769

Phone: +61 2 8256 1770

Online claims website, for insurance claims while on assignment: <https://avi.csnet.com.au>

For claims after you have returned from assignment: claims@csnet.com.au

Corporate Traveller

For your incoming and outgoing assignment flights.

Phone: +61 3 8535 1580

Email: avi@corporatetraveller.com.au

After hours assistance

From within Australia: 1300 654 805

From overseas: +61 7 3199 5838

Australian Volunteers Program – In-country teams

If you have any questions about this guide or other program-related enquiries while on assignment, contact your local in-country team. Contact details for each in-country team are provided below.

Country	Contact Number	Email Address
Bhutan	+975 17165005	bhutan@australianvolunteers.com
Cambodia	+855 23 22 31 28	cambodia@australianvolunteers.com
eSwatini	+27 (0) 71 853 4915	southernafrica@australianvolunteers.com
Federated States of Micronesia	+691 320 3890	northpacific@australianvolunteers.com
Fiji	+679 331 8876	fiji@australianvolunteers.com
Indonesia	+62 21 722 0305	indonesia@australianvolunteers.com
Kiribati	+686 7303 4775	kiribati@australianvolunteers.com
Laos	+856 207 604 3499	laos@australianvolunteers.com
Lesotho	+27 (0) 71 853 4915	southernafrica@australianvolunteers.com
Marshall Islands	+691 320 3890	northpacific@australianvolunteers.com
Mongolia	+976 76 00 64 21	mongolia@australianvolunteers.com
Myanmar	+95 9 5188640	myanmar@australianvolunteers.com
Nepal	+977 141 4430	nepal@australianvolunteers.com
Palau	+691 320 3890	northpacific@australianvolunteers.com
Papua New Guinea	+675 3254606	png@australianvolunteers.com
Philippines	+63 917 821 1200	philippines@australianvolunteers.com
Samoa	+685 27562	samoa@australianvolunteers.com
Solomon Islands	+677 27 737	solomons@australianvolunteers.com
South Africa	+27 (0) 71 853 4915	southernafrica@australianvolunteers.com
Sri Lanka	+94 11 257 7300	srilanka_office@australianvolunteers.com
Tanzania	+255 27 254 8392	tanzania_office@australianvolunteers.com
Timor-Leste	+670 772 452 09	timorleste@australianvolunteers.com
Tonga	+676 26464	tonga@australianvolunteers.com
Tuvalu	+688 7004607	tuvalu@australianvolunteers.com
Vanuatu	+678 77 22119	vanuatu_office@australianvolunteers.com
Vietnam	+84 913 317 159	vietnam@australianvolunteers.com

Message from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Volunteers make a valuable contribution to assisting the development of partnering countries, strengthening Australia's international connections, and importantly, helping to change lives for the better. We would like to offer our appreciation for the contribution Australian volunteers make as part of the Australian Volunteers Program.

The commitment our volunteers show to the program, and the personal and professional expertise that they have brought to assist our partnering countries, has been valuable to Australia's international connections.

As you embark on this volunteer journey we wish you all the best. Please do not hesitate to contact the Volunteers Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with any questions you may have along the way and to share your stories with us.

Australian
Volunteers

Australian
Aid 

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The Australian Volunteers Program

The Australian Volunteers Program is funded by the Australian Government as part of Australia's aid program. The Australian Government has supported thousands of Australians to volunteer overseas for over 60 years, and the Australian Volunteers Program builds on this long and rich history.

The Australian Volunteers Program matches a broad range of skilled Australians with partner organisations overseas, to support these organisations to achieve their own development goals. The program is an important part of the Australian Government's aid program, connecting volunteers to communities throughout the region, and using global volunteering as a people-centred approach to capacity strengthening.

The Australian Volunteers Program aims to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Partner organisations are supported to progress their own development objectives
2. Key stakeholders in Australia and partner countries appreciate the value of volunteering
3. Program participants gain greater cultural awareness and build stronger connections across countries

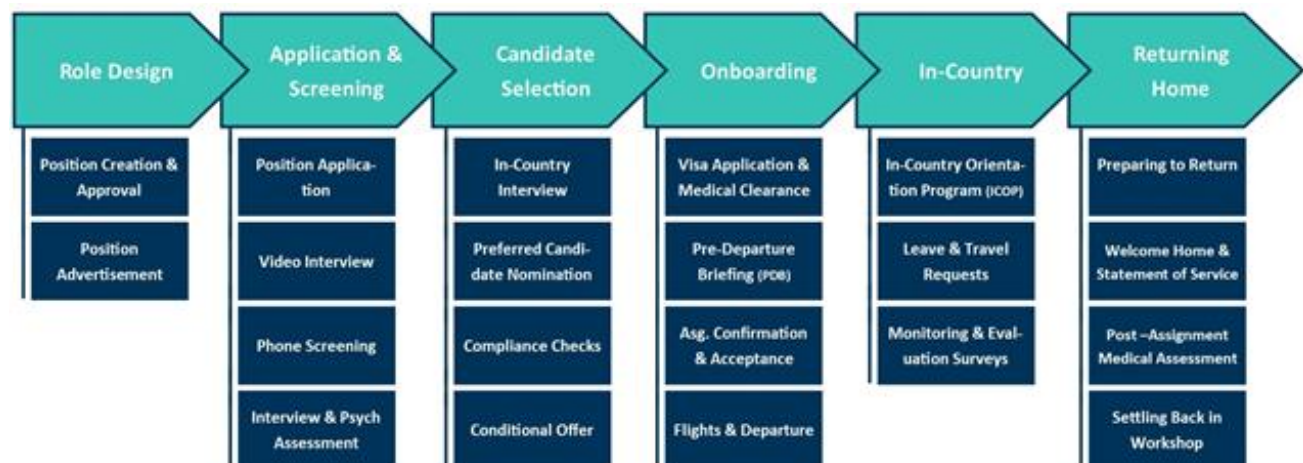
By successfully achieving these end of program outcomes, the Australian Volunteers Program supports Australia to have strong, mutual relationships with people and communities across the Pacific, Asia and Africa that contribute to achieving equitable development outcomes. The program's overarching goal is to support locally-led change and the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals through global volunteering.

The Australian Volunteers Program operates in 26 countries: Bhutan, Cambodia, eSwatini, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Laos, Lesotho, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Vietnam.

The Australian Volunteers Program is managed by AVI, in a consortium with Cardno Emerging Markets Pty Ltd and Alinea International.

The Australian Volunteers Program supports partner organisations to progress their own development objectives. It does not engage in or support any evangelical activities and is not linked to any political party. We partner with local faith-based organisations on the basis that volunteer activities do not include evangelising; and participation in activities run by the volunteer is not conditional on conversion or adherence to a particular religious denomination. We also partner with advocacy organisations on the basis that volunteer activities are not in support of a political party or candidate.

The in-country volunteer journey



About this guidebook

This guidebook has been designed to help you succeed in your assignment. The guidance provided is based on real life experience supporting volunteers and their accompanying partners and dependant children in the field. Adherence to the guidance will also help you meet your obligations as a program participant on the Australian Volunteers Program ('the program').

You should read this guidebook before you depart on your assignment. It will also be a valuable resource throughout your time on the program. Information has been structured chronologically and sequentially to help you find relevant sections quickly and easily.

If you have any questions before departure, please contact program staff in Melbourne. Once you are in-country and on assignment, you should direct any questions to your in-country team.

An electronic copy of this guidebook is available [on our website](#) and for current volunteers, in your online resource library.

The guidebook complements Australian Volunteers Program policies, guidelines and online learning. There are also supplementary guides available, such as the Remote Volunteering Supplement, the Travel Handbook and [Indigenous Volunteers Guidebook](#) found in your volunteer learning resources, which can be accessed through your portal.

In particular, you should be cognisant of the following:

- Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Policy, Child Protection Code of Conduct and Child Protection Country Guides
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy
- Country Security Plan, for the country of your assignment and any countries you visit or travel to while on the Australian Volunteers Program
- Cultural guides, for the country of your assignment and any countries you visit or travel to while involved with the Australian Volunteers Program
- Program Security Guidelines
- AVI's medical and travel insurance policies
- Volunteer Media Guide
- Privacy Disclosure and Consent Terms and Conditions.

You have access to this additional information via your online resources.

COVID-19 updates

This guidebook has been updated to include additional advice about onboarding, being on assignment and returning to Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Australian Volunteers Program continues to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on program operations, and adapt accordingly. In particular, ongoing changes may relate to:

- Shifts in the global travel and logistics environment, including commercial flight availability travelling to/from assignment
- Healthcare and medical evacuation capacity in assignment locations, including for non-COVID-related medical concerns
- Availability of resources, including medical equipment and common grocery items
- Financial stability of businesses, including our partner organisations
- Pressure on other essential services, economies and cost of living
- Additional travel requirements such as pre-trip and post-trip testing, quarantine or self-isolation
- The potential for secondary safety and security issues, such as increases in political/civil unrest, xenophobia or wider instability exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

International SOS maintains the capacity to conduct medical relocations / evacuations across the program. You can find more information about COVID-19, including risk mitigation strategies and travel advice, at the [International SOS Member Portal](#).

Acronyms and definitions

AAD (Approved Accompanying Dependant): your child, spouse or partner who accompanies you on assignment and who has been approved by the program as a dependant, therefore entitling you and them to additional support.

ACA (Accommodation allowance)

AO (Australian organisation): A Partner Organisation may be supported in their program activities by an Australian-based organisation

Child: a person who is under the age of 18.

ICOP (In Country Orientation Program)

Immediate family: parent, spouse/partner, child, brother, sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, half-brother, half-sister, fiancé(e), niece, nephew, uncle, aunt, stepchild, grandparent or grandchild.

MEL (Monitoring Evaluation and Learning)

Partner: a person involved with a partner (of any gender) where it is satisfied that:

- There is an intention on the part of both parties that the relationship continue indefinitely.
- The couple regard themselves as partners (this may be legally recognised as 'de facto').

PDB (Pre-departure Briefing)

PO (Partner organisation) - overseas organisation that is hosting the assignment and volunteer (previously referred to as a HO or host organisation)

POCF (Partner Organisation Confirmation Form)

Program Participant: a volunteer or AAD

PSEAH (Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment)

RAVN (Returned Australia Volunteer Network)

SEAH (Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment)

SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Sex Characteristics)

Spouse: a partner who is legally married to you.

Unsupported Dependant: your child, spouse or partner who accompanies you on assignment and who has not been approved by the program as a dependant, and for whom you do not receive any additional support.



1. Becoming a volunteer

1.1. Australian Volunteer Code of Conduct

1.1.1. Complying with Code of Conduct

All volunteers are expected to demonstrate the highest level of professional and personal standards while on assignment, in a manner consistent with the objectives of the program.

You must comply with the Australian Volunteer Code of Conduct. As a condition of acceptance into the program, you must indicate that you have read, understood and accept all conditions of the code and other policies relevant to the program. Please see [Australian Volunteer Code of Conduct](#) in your online resources.

1.1.2. Breach of the Code of Conduct

If a perceived or actual Code of Conduct breach occurs, your in-country team will initiate a thorough investigation. This will consider the seriousness of the breach, the intent of the participant, and the attitude of the participant to the breach. In some cases, the investigation may involve the Regional Director, Melbourne based staff and/or an independent third party.

All action will be undertaken in line with the principles of fairness, equity and transparency.

If you are found to have breached any aspect of the code, you may be issued a verbal warning, a written warning and/or placed on a management plan.

In the case of serious misconduct, your assignment will be terminated and you will be required to return home immediately.

1.2. Safeguarding

Safeguarding is about protecting people, and it informs everything we do in the Australian Volunteers Program. It is our collective responsibility to protect people by preventing harm from happening and by responding appropriately when people are harmed.

At the heart of all our safeguarding work is a commitment to survivors of all forms of abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect. Survivors can include anyone we encounter through our work, whether beneficiaries, employees, partners, volunteers, or community members.

Child protection and safeguarding and the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) are included under the umbrella term of 'safeguarding'.

1.2.3. Safeguarding policies and Codes of Conduct

As a condition of acceptance into the program, you must indicate that you have read, understood and accept all conditions of the [Child Protection Policy](#) and [Child Protection Code of Conduct](#) and the [Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment \(PSEAH\) Policy](#).

Consequences of not complying with these policies, or the **Code of Conduct**, may include termination of your assignment.

1.2.4. Child protection

The Australian Volunteers Program has a strong commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children, and the protection of children from all forms of harm, abuse and exploitation. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we define a child as anyone under the age of 18 years.

The Australian Volunteers Program is committed to promoting the rights of children, and encourages open discussion about children's safeguarding and protection.

Our guiding principles include the importance of shared responsibility, zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation, recognition of the best interests of children, and taking a risk management approach. You are expected to be alert to any child protection risks while on assignment and to seek guidance where necessary. See below and refer to the **Child Protection Policy** and **Child Protection Code of Conduct** for further advice.

1.2.5. Reporting child protection concerns

You must immediately report to the Australian Volunteers Program any allegations, suspicions, or concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or a suspected breach of the **Child Protection Policy** and **Child Protection Code of Conduct** to the program.

The report must be made immediately, or within 24 hours, of becoming aware of the incident, suspicion or risk. The report must be made to one of more of the following:

- childprotection@australianvolunteers.com
- Program Manager or Regional Director
- People and Culture
- Child Protection and Safeguards Advisor/Coordinator

Reportable concerns/allegations include:

- An observation or disclosure (by an adult or child) of child abuse/exploitation
- An observation or disclosure or potential risk of child abuse/exploitation
- Any situation or environment which poses a threat to children's rights.

A report must be made:

- When it is due to the actions of a staff member, volunteer, AAD or associate of the Australian Volunteers Program or AVI; or
- When it is due to the actions of a staff member or associate of your partner organisation.
- When it is due to the actions of an Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident, DFAT funded partner or DFAT funded personnel or volunteer, or Australian company (as per DFAT Child Protection Policy).

If you have already provided a report, and subsequently become aware of additional information, you must also report that information.

Your responsibility to report applies irrespective of local/cultural norms or prevalence/rates of child abuse and exploitation in the country where you are volunteering.

Assessment and follow up action by the program will include respect for privacy and confidentiality, and consideration for the safety and well-being of volunteers.

You may contact your Program Manager or the Child Protection and Safeguards Adviser if you have any child protection queries or concerns.

Email: childprotection@australianvolunteers.com to raise a concern with the Child Protection and Safeguards Advisor.

1.2.6. Sexual Exploitation, Abuse or Harassment (SEAH)

Fundamental to the operations of the Australian Volunteers Program is respect for the dignity and basic human rights of all people. Every person who represents the Australian Volunteers Program is expected to reflect these values in their professional conduct, regardless of who they are dealing with, or where they are working. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH) is a violation of basic human rights. The Australian Volunteers Program aims to provide a safe and trusted environment that safeguards everyone from SEAH including beneficiary communities, workers, program participants and Partner Organisations.

Program participants are expected to conform with a strict set of obligations, responsibilities and expectations which are set out in the **Australian**

Volunteers Code of Conduct, which includes adherence to the **PSEAH Policy**. Any breach of the **Code of Conduct** is taken extremely seriously; we want to assure colleagues and beneficiaries of our Partner Organisations that we will not tolerate any volunteer or member of staff taking advantage of their position to abuse, exploit or harass others.

1.2.7. Reporting SEAH Concerns

You must immediately report to the Australian Volunteers Program any concern, suspicion or allegation of sexual exploitation or breach of the relevant policies.

The program has a zero-tolerance approach to breaches of the **PSEAH Policy**.

It is important to note program participants must immediately inform their Program Manager or Regional Director if they become engaged in a personal relationship which may be perceived as inappropriate or exploitative, or where real or perceived unequal power dynamics exist. Participants and dependants who are unsure if their relationship falls into this category should discuss the situation with their Program Manager or Regional Director.

The program adopts a survivor based approach to responding to incidents or threats of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment. If you are the victim or survivor of a SEAH incident that occurred on assignment, or you are threatened with such harm, please report the matter to your in-country team or relevant Regional Director so that we can support you and take action as appropriate. All actions taken will be guided by respect for your choices, wishes, rights and dignity

You can also make an anonymous report via AVI's confidential reporting tool [Stopline](#).

1.2.8. Criminal history

As part of the recruitment process for the Program, a criminal history check must be completed. See **3.4 Criminal record checks**.

A reported criminal offence does not necessarily rule out a candidate.

The program will take under consideration the nature and currency of the offences, the role and location where the candidate will be based, and whether there are additional risks presented by the criminal history.

Some types of convictions in Australia and overseas may prevent you from participating in the program. Program participants with criminal convictions of concern cannot participate on the program.

Examples of such convictions are shown below:

- Serious drug offences (trafficking a drug or supply of a drug of dependence to a child)
- Offences that involve crimes against the person – for example
 - Sexual offences against a child or an adult
 - Violent offences against a child or an adult
 - Any child abuse offence
 - Stalking of a child or an adult
 - Family and domestic violence offences
- Substance abuse
- Fraud or other crimes of deception
- Any other offences deemed unacceptable for the particular assignment you have applied for.

You may be required to provide more information or written disclosure in order to proceed with your application, which may include an additional suitability assessment.

See **3.4 Criminal record checks**.

1.3. Grievance

1.3.1. Grievance principles

The program seeks to ensure that volunteers are able to raise any issues concerning their assignment or support provided to them under the program. The program aims to respond to any issues raised in a timely, respectful, and considered manner. Should you have any concerns relating to your assignment or support provided to you under the program, please contact your in-country team as soon as possible, and they will try and resolve the matter promptly and informally.

The program is committed to exploring all reasonable avenues first for reaching a collaborative resolution, wherever possible. In exceptional circumstances, the formal grievance procedure outlined in this section will operate.

1.3.2. Grievance procedure

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, as indicated above, then you must inform your

Program Manager of the grievance in writing. If the grievance relates to the Program Manager, you are to inform the Regional Director in writing. The Program Manager or Regional Director will, in turn, acknowledge the receipt of the grievance in writing within five (5) working days. The Program Manager or Regional Director will take required action to address the grievance (which could take some time depending on the nature of the grievance and any further investigative work required). Where possible, resolution of a grievance may include giving you and the subject of the grievance the opportunity to be heard, either verbally or in writing, before a decision is made.

The outcome of the grievance shall be communicated to you by the person responsible for handling the grievance, within 5 business days of the outcome being decided.

If the volunteer believes that the grievance has not been resolved satisfactorily then they must inform the Program Manager/Regional Director of this in writing and request that the grievance be escalated to the Deputy Program Director. Following the escalation, receipt of the grievance will be acknowledged within 5 working days and a review of the matter will be undertaken. The program will

seek to respond to the grievance as soon as practicable.

1.3.3. Complaints

Should your grievance remain unresolved following the above process, you can make a complaint to AVI. Please refer to the [AVI Complaint and Feedback Handling Policy](#).

In addition, AVI is a signatory to the [Australian Council for International Development \(ACFID\) Code of Conduct](#). Program participants can make a complaint regarding any alleged breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee.

1.4. Privacy disclosure and consent statement

All program participants must agree to the Privacy Disclosure and Consent terms and conditions. You will be asked to agree to these terms and conditions during the recruitment process.

For more information, see your online resources.



2. Inclusion

The Australian Volunteers Program is committed to ensuring that international volunteering is inclusive and accessible to Australians from a range of backgrounds, with diverse perspectives, identities and abilities.

There can be barriers, perceived or otherwise, that prevent some Australians from participating fully in international volunteering, particularly people with disability, Indigenous Australians, people living in regional and remote areas, and people with diverse SOGIESC.

We are passionate about supporting all Australians to volunteer. We recognise the unique strengths and skills that people with diverse backgrounds and experiences offer, and we work with volunteers to remove barriers they may face.

We continue to systematically work to promote and protect gender equality and women's rights in all aspects of the Australian Volunteers Program. To learn more about the Australian Volunteers Program's commitment to Gender Equality please refer to our Gender Equality [Statement of Intent](#)

2.1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers

The Australian Volunteers Program values the significant and unique skills, knowledge and experience that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can contribute to the communities we work with internationally. The program is committed to actively increasing Indigenous participation in international volunteering ensuring that the

program is a culturally-safe and supportive environment for Indigenous volunteers.

[Indigenous Pathways](#) is an Indigenous-led component of the Australian Volunteers Program, offering a variety of pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to engage with the program. There are short-term group assignments, medium-term paired assignments or long term-assignments.

The program has also established the Indigenous Volunteer Support and Advisory Panel. Indigenous volunteers can seek support or guidance from the panel throughout their volunteer journey.

We recognise that due to many factors both past and present, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may encounter additional barriers, responsibilities or concerns. If you require additional support or have a specific matter that you would like to discuss confidentially, please contact the Indigenous Programs Coordinator on indigenouspathways@australianvolunteers.com.

For more information visit:

<https://www.australianvolunteers.com/indigenous-pathways>

2.2. People with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)

People with diverse SOGIESC are supported and encouraged to bring their full selves to the

Australian Volunteers Program. The participation and contribution of diverse SOGIESC volunteers throughout our history has been key to our success across all countries and regions.

The Australian Volunteers Program strives to provide a safe, supportive and equitable environment for diverse SOGIESC volunteers, AADs, partners, and staff at all levels and in all locations. The program can support diverse SOGIESC volunteers and does so through medical support, including psychosocial, personal security, and obtaining the right visa.

To learn more about how the Australian Volunteers Program fosters a safe and equitable environment for people with diverse SOGIESC please refer to our [Statement of Intent](#)

For a confidential discussion about volunteering, please contact the Inclusion team, inclusion@australianvolunteers.com

2.3. People with disability

The Australian Volunteers Program values and supports people with disabilities to participate in the program, as volunteers, staff and partners. The program encourages an environment where disability inclusion is both a process and an outcome, promoting the full participation of people with disability. To support this, Access and Inclusion plans are available for volunteers with disabilities to ensure their assignments and living/working arrangements are more accessible.

The program also has a long history of working closely with organisations of persons with disabilities and having disability-focused assignments. This helps focus ensure that the broader program and its partners have a strong emphasis on disability-inclusion in all its work.

To learn more about the Australian Volunteers Program's approach to disability inclusion please refer to our [Statement of Intent](#)

People who identify as having disabilities or who would like to find out more information about the program's disability-inclusion approach, can contact the program's Inclusion team in Melbourne, inclusion@australianvolunteers.com

2.4. Families

The Australian Volunteers Program supports volunteers to have family accompany them on

assignment – known as Approved Accompanying Dependants (AADs). It is a big decision – there are considerations for whether having your family or partner join you on assignment is feasible. Living overseas as a family can provide incredible experiences. It can also be challenging, and the decision requires careful thought and planning.

If you decide to have your family accompany you, we will embrace them as part of the program. They will be invited to attend in-country activities as appropriate. In-country staff can provide advice regarding schooling if this is required.

While we are committed to supporting the deployment of child dependants, we also acknowledge that there are some locations that from a risk based assessment are not suitable for child dependants to deploy.

See our [Volunteering as a Family](#) guide for more information.

COVID-19 update

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are taking a more cautious approach to deploying partners or children to accompany volunteers as AADs. This has resulted in some limitations to deployments of AADs and is on account of ongoing health, safety and security concerns. Any decision to support AADs will be risk-based and approved where the program considers AADs can be adequately supported. A specific Child AAD Suitability Assessment is also conducted and supports decisions to approve or not approve the mobilisation of child AADs to a specific location.

2.4.1 Approved Accompanying Dependants (AADs)

Volunteers with assignments of 12 months or longer may be eligible to receive financial support for AADs.

The program cannot, however, guarantee this support until prospective AADs have successfully completed all required compliance checks. You are strongly advised to disclose any of your existing relationships at the start of the recruitment process. This may also affect the legal status of your presence in-country and associated visa requirements.

Please note, the limited support offered by the program may not be adequate to cover the full cost of AADs joining you in-country. You may need to

ensure that you have access to sufficient additional funds for the duration of your assignment.

Criteria for AADs

AADs must meet the following requirements:

- Be an Australian citizen or a holder of a Permanent Residency Visa of Australia, or a New Zealand resident in Australia with a Special Condition/Category Visa;
- If a dependant child, under 18 years of age, or requiring parental care if over 18 years of age;
- If over 18 years of age, be able to demonstrate a spousal relationship with the volunteer;
- Successfully complete the requisite health screening, including vaccinations;
- Provision of dental clearance may be required;
- Criminal Record Check clearance;
- Successfully attend a pre-departure briefing for AADs if 18 years and older (attendance optional for AADs 15-18 years); and
- Have a valid passport (Please see **3.7.1 Passport**);
- Accompany a volunteer who is on an assignment of 12 months or more; and
- Accompany the volunteer on assignment location for a minimum six (6) consecutive months to qualify for AAD benefits.

Note that AAD status will not be affected for those wishing to take short breaks from assignment of up to two (2) weeks. However, a break of over four (4) weeks would be considered grounds to discontinue AAD status, with the exceptions of requirement for urgent medical treatment, compassionate family circumstances or similar, in consultation with and as approved by the in-country team.

Note: Some locations are not suitable for deployment of dependant children as AADs. This will be made clear during the recruitment process.

AAD support

The following support is provided to AADs:

- Reimbursement of costs for health screening and criminal record check except dental clearance (Please see **3.2.6 Pre-departure health costs**);
- Domestic airfares and accommodation for pre-departure briefing;

- Visa and airfares to and from assignment location;
- An additional 25% of the combined applicable Living and Accommodation Allowances for each AAD will be paid to the volunteer. No allowances are paid directly to the dependant. (Partners or dependants will not receive other allowances, including those for settling in or resettlement);
- 24-hour routine and emergency advice and assistance;
- 24/7 counselling and psychological services;
- Insurance coverage while on assignment (Please see **6 Looking after your health and 8 Insurance**).

2.4.2 Restrictions to employment of AADs

AADs cannot seek paid work whilst accompanying a volunteer on assignment. For any voluntary work, AADs must first get approval from country office staff, as any work may potentially jeopardise their visa status and that of the volunteer.

2.4.3 Dependants without AAD status

Partners of volunteers who do not qualify for AAD status can still accompany the volunteer. In this instance, they will not be covered by program insurance nor have any entitlement to program support, including in the case of emergency or evacuation. Furthermore, the program cannot provide assistance with obtaining visas for partners who do not qualify for AAD status.

The program may approve partners and dependants to share program-funded accommodation, attend in-country briefings and access security transport when travelling with the volunteer in high-risk environments. Requests for these exceptional circumstances must be made to the in-country team directly.

Whilst not being subject to the **Volunteer Code of Conduct**, it is encouraged that partners and dependants without AAD status adhere to similar standards of behaviour as volunteers, including following the advice and recommendations of the program - to enhance the experience and safety of all parties while in country.

Should unsupported dependants wish to have similar medical support to volunteers they may

purchase their own coverage separately. Note that the program's insurer is unable to incorporate or sell the same coverage to non-approved dependants, as the policy covering the program is a group policy and specifically negotiated on the basis of risk controls in place. There are some assignment locations which have been assessed as not suitable for children. If the program becomes aware that an unsupported dependant child is residing in a country where the program has assessed this location as not suitable, a review of the assignment will be undertaken, including possible termination of the

assignment. The review will be made based on 'best interests of children' principles.

Approval must also be sought for unsupported dependant children visiting program participants for short-term holidays. Contact your in-country team for more information.



3. Before you go

3.1. Confirmation of assignment

Important pre-departure compliance steps must be completed before an official confirmation of your participation on the program can be provided. You will be asked to complete some of these activities during the recruitment process.

Mandatory pre-departure steps include:

- Satisfactory health clearances;
- Satisfactory completion of the pre-departure learning activities;
- Acceptance of your nomination by the partner organisation; and
- Procurement of your visa and work permits where applicable (you will be guided through this by the program).^{**}
- Current First Aid certificate
- Australian and international (as needed) criminal record checks

A confirmation letter will be issued to you once all of the above steps have been satisfactorily completed.

Flights to assignment are not booked until your place on assignment has been officially confirmed. The program aims to finalise all arrangements that are within our control at least two (2) weeks prior to your departure date.

COVID-19 update

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the current challenges of overseas travel (such as high unpredictability of flight availability and frequent changes to border rules and travel requirements),

there is a possibility that you may not receive your final confirmation until close to your departure date.

Please note that unforeseen circumstances can occur throughout the Recruitment and Onboarding process which may affect your start date and receipt of your confirmation letter. The program does not take responsibility for any irreversible decisions you make to your current employment or other areas of life during this time.

3.2. Pre-departure health preparation

Your health is primarily your responsibility. The program is committed to supporting your efforts to maintain good health and encourages you to make careful decisions and take actions appropriate to your circumstances.

COVID-19 update

For mobilisations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the medical clearance process is more comprehensive. It may involve a combination of a face to face medical checkup, direct consultation with the International SOS medical team or International SOS' Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for additional screening and to ensure participants have the opportunity to be fully informed about the medical risks and current advice for international travel and living overseas. If you wish to speak with the medical team directly, please contact International SOS via the app, via email at sydney@internationalsos.com or on +61 2 9025 2818.

During the recruitment process, you will also be required to complete a mental health clearance, conducted by a third-party provider, Response Psychological Services.

Once you have been selected as a preferred candidate for the program, you will be required to complete a health clearance process, facilitated by International SOS. This process includes:

- General health clearance
- Mandatory vaccinations
- Dental health clearance

The purpose of the health clearance process is to ensure that you and your AADs are declared fit and healthy to work in the country of your assignment.

Duty of disclosure

You must provide full disclosure of all health issues to International SOS and Response Psychological Services. This is a duty of disclosure to ensure adequate knowledge exists of any pre-existing conditions and appropriate health management plans are in place. This will help the program arrange appropriate clearance, support, risk management and insurance coverage for you. It is important to note that issues arising from undisclosed health challenges may not be covered by our insurance and may adversely affect any emergency intervention. (Please see section 8 Insurance)

It is essential that you start the clearance process as early as possible. If you do not complete the health clearance processes within a reasonable time, or are not able to gain a health clearance, you will not be eligible to participate on the program.

3.2.1. General health clearance

You will be required to complete a medical screening coordinated by the International SOS MedFit team. International SOS will manage and guide you through the general medical health clearance and destination-specific health preparations. We recommend that you begin this process as early as possible to allow enough time for follow-up appointments and any related visa application process.

The clearance process includes the completion of a physical health assessment by a doctor as well as a review of your medical history. You are also required to complete mandatory vaccinations prescribed for the location and scope of your assignment before departure.

To facilitate the process, have your vaccination records and medical history handy when:

- Speaking with the International SOS MedFit medical team; and
- Going for a health check

3.2.2. Vaccinations

We recommend you consult the relevant country information for your assignment on the [International SOS Member Portal](#). Details about the recommended vaccinations are accessible under the 'Medical, Before you go' section of the country guide. We encourage you to visit your travel doctor with that list and get your vaccinations done so that you can provide proof to the International SOS team. Required vaccinations are compulsory unless advised otherwise on medical grounds.

The program requires all participants to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to deployment, unless contraindicated for medical reasons. As the definition of "fully vaccinated" is subject to change over time, your Recruitment or Onboarding contact can advise on the current requirements. Due to the risk that the COVID-19 virus presents to program participants and to the communities in which we operate, any exemption would only be granted on the advice of International SOS as part of the pre-departure medical clearance process.

If you have any medical condition that prevents you from completing the vaccinations recommended for your destination, you will have the possibility to discuss your personal situation with International SOS once you have completed your online questionnaire.

If you visit your GP or Travel Doctor to complete your vaccinations, make sure you pay for these in full and retain the receipts for payments in order to be reimbursed (claiming a Medicare rebate will restrict International SOS' ability to reimburse costs).

For more information, please visit the [Australian Volunteers Program FAQs](#).

For any questions regarding your medical screening, call the International SOS MedFit team on +61 2 9273 2724 or email at sydneyhealthcheck@internationalsos.com

3.2.3. Mental health clearance

As you proceed through the recruitment process as an volunteer, you are required to complete an online psychological assessment.

This process is managed by Response Psychological Services.

The program covers the cost of this assessment.

3.2.4. Dental health clearance

Program Participants may be required to provide dental clearance, in order to be medically cleared. This will be determined by International SOS. Any necessary dental work that is required prior to your departure is at your own expense.

3.2.5. Health management plan

If you have a pre-existing condition (physical or mental) it is critical that you disclose this during your health screening. For pre-existing conditions that may have an impact on your assignment, International SOS may refer you to your GP/Specialist to prepare a Health Management Plan for the duration of your assignment. The Health Management Plan is separate to disability access and inclusion plans, a process which supports assessment and removal of barriers to support volunteers with disabilities participation on the program.

The Health Management Plan must take into consideration the location and any physical constraints of your assignment. This plan will need to be approved by International SOS before you are medically cleared. You are required to cover the costs related to the set-up of your Health Management Plan.

Since the Health Management Plan is designed for you to manage any pre-existing condition in-country, you are required to take it with you to your assignment. You may be required to adhere to restrictions (related to travel or other activities) as informed by your Health Management Plan.

Failure to disclose a medical issue, or changes of a medical condition prior to or during the assignment may negate insurance cover.

You must inform International SOS if the health of anyone covered by program insurance changes before travelling to assignment location. This includes any injury or illness.

Failure to notify the program may result in costs associated with medical treatment to be recovered from the participant (NB an average medical evacuation can cost AUD \$150,000).

3.2.6. Pre-departure health costs

International SOS is contracted to carry out the health screening and clearance (including further investigation, if required) and destination-specific health preparation for all program participants.

If indicated, the program will pay for cost-effective malaria prophylaxis. An initial supply of malaria prophylaxis drugs will be provided dependent upon assignment length. Prescriptions for high-cost malaria medications will be paid for when deemed medically necessary, and must be approved by the program prior to being filled.

The program will provide you with a basic first aid kit prior to your departure, . Any additional items that need to be added to the kit that might be specific to your needs or the assignment location and maintenance of the kit are your responsibility.

The program covers:

- Costs of all relevant screenings, pre-assignment medical assessment, tests and vaccination
- Costs of follow-up screening/consultation, tests and reports required to complete your medical clearance; and
- Cost of mental health assessment.

You are responsible for covering:

- Costs of a Health Management Plan from your health service providers relating to any pre-existing health conditions;
- Costs of management of existing medical conditions – including those identified during the medical assessment;
- Cost of dental consultation and any dental treatment, if required;
- Costs of your own medical supplies; and
- Any cancellation fees incurred from not attending consultations.

3.3. First aid training

It is a requirement for you to have completed first aid training equivalent to the Australian standardised *HLTAID011 Provide First Aid*, before starting an assignment.

A card or certificate of attainment, dated within three (3) years of the start date of assignment is

required to be lodged with the program before an offer of an assignment can be confirmed.

The program will reimburse valid first aid certificates.

Qualified paramedics, medical doctors and nurses with current registration can request an exemption from this requirement.

If you are spending six (6) weeks or less in-country, a First Aid Certificate is not required.

3.4. Criminal record checks

Australian criminal record check As part of the recruitment process for the program, you must complete and clear an Australian Federal Police check before your assignment can be confirmed.

An Australian Federal Police clearance is valid for 12 months unless you go on an in-country assignment, then it is valid for the duration of the assignment.

The cost for completing Australian criminal record checks is covered by the program **for preferred candidates only**.

3.4.1 International criminal record check

If you have spent 12 months or more living in a country outside of Australia in the last 10 years, you will need to arrange an appropriate International Police Check, for these time periods from each country. Criminal record checks are also required for all countries of residence.

Please note that in some cases you may be required to sign a statutory declaration that includes disclosing any charges or spent convictions.

The cost for completing international criminal record checks is covered by the program **for preferred candidates only**.

3.5. Pre-departure learning

All program participants are required to complete mandatory pre-departure learning prior to departure.

This consists of:

- an online learning course
- a three-day workshop with fellow volunteers held in Melbourne.

COVID-19 update

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some pre-departure briefings may be held online, particularly for volunteers facing travel restrictions. Your Recruitment or Onboarding Coordinator will confirm this for you.

Volunteers who will spend six (6) weeks or less in-country may be eligible to complete an abbreviated pre-departure briefing. Details of this will be discussed during the recruitment period.

3.5.1. Online learning

The interactive online learning course covers a range of topics that will prepare you for your time in-country. Completion of this foundation course is a requirement for participation in the pre-departure briefing where concepts will be further explored and applied to interactive scenarios. A catalog of resources is also available as part of the online learning and accessible throughout your assignment term.

The online learning course must be completed within a two-week period prior to the pre-departure briefing.

The course can be accessed by preferred candidates only at

<https://assignments.australianvolunteers.com/s/learning-homepage>

For any queries or assistance regarding pre-departure learning, please email learn@australianvolunteers.com

3.5.2. Pre-departure briefing

It is a mandatory requirement that all program participants attend a face-to-face three-day pre-departure briefing in Melbourne.

Failure to attend some or part of any session, or participate fully in the activities, may result in your assignment being delayed or cancelled. Briefings cover a range of topics relevant to program participants and it is essential that all sessions are attended.

If you have completed a pre-departure briefing within the 18 months prior to your assignment start date, you may be exempt from this requirement. This will be discussed during the recruitment process.

More details about the pre-departure briefing will be available in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#) at the Onboarding stage.

3.5.3. Pre-departure learning costs

Face-to-face pre-departure briefing sessions take place in Melbourne. For participants who live outside of metropolitan Melbourne, the program will cover domestic travel (flights or regional trains) to and from Melbourne and three nights of accommodation. Provide your pre-departure briefing travel and accommodation request details in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#). The program will also reimburse reasonable costs for travel to and from your home to your nearest airport or train station, and to and from Melbourne airport to the Melbourne accommodation. Other travel costs for attending the briefing will not be reimbursed.

If you are overseas, you will need to return to Australia (at your own expense) for the briefing.

More information about travel to/from the pre-departure briefing can be found in the [Travel Handbook](#).

3.5.4. Pre-departure learning for children

We have developed a series of resources to support children with their transition to moving overseas, living cross-culturally and making the most of their experience. Learning activities, which include a series of videos for children, are available in the parents online learning resources, or can be requested from the Learning and Development team.

Children 15 to 18 years are invited to attend the face-to-face pre-departure briefing in Melbourne, participation is encouraged but not mandatory. Parents are required to find alternative childcare while they are attending the briefing. In some cases, exceptions may be made for infants. The program is unable to assist with booking and arranging childcare, but may be able to provide reimbursement in some instances. Speak to the Learning and Development team for more information.

3.6. Getting in touch with your in-country team

After your pre-departure briefing, your in-country team will be informed that you have successfully completed the course. You may have the opportunity to participate in an online meeting (e.g. video call) with them.

Alternatively, use the [contact details provided](#) (see inside cover) to reach out via email - this is your opportunity to ask questions about local information.

3.7. Passports, visas and work permit

3.7.1. Passport

Program participants must be Australian citizens or holders of a Permanent Residency Visa of Australia.

You will need a current passport which is valid for at least six months beyond the expected completion date of your assignment. Your passport must also have an adequate number of blank pages in it (usually six or more). It is your responsibility to ensure that your passport meets any requirements specific to your country of assignment.

Details of how to obtain an Australian passport are available at www.passports.gov.au and from Australia Post outlets.

Program participants (with Permanent Residency Visa) travelling on non-Australian passports are responsible for enquiring well in advance about regulations for obtaining re-entry visas to Australia. It is also important that you understand the effect that the period of your participation in the program might have on your eligibility for permanent resident status, unemployment benefits and Medicare benefits in Australia.

If you have dual citizenship or residency status in countries other than Australia, you should provide us with details of this at the start of your recruitment process.

Program participants with dual citizenship are strongly advised to take their Australian passport on assignment in order to have quicker access to consular services if needed. Those with non-Australian passports are reminded that consular

matters are the responsibility of the country that issued the passport.

3.7.2. Visa and work permit

Every country has their own entry requirements. For some countries of assignment, you may be required to:

- Complete application form and complete/provide other supporting documents in order to obtain a visa and/or work permit;
- Promptly complete your medical assessment as this may be required for your visa application /work permit .

You must complete these requirements promptly, any delays could affect your departure date. See the relevant **Visa Guide** for your assignment country.

Please note, participation on the Australian Volunteers Program should not be seen as an avenue for long term residency in a country. Volunteers are assigned a visa or work permit for the sole purpose and duration of the assignment.

COVID-19 update

Some countries require one or multiple negative COVID-19 PCR tests or other medical screening prior to departure from your home country. Your Onboarding Coordinator will assist with understanding the process for your assignment country at the time of your onboarding.

3.8. Travel arrangements

Please discuss your travel arrangements with the Onboarding team. Refer to the [Travel Handbook](#) for details about arranging travel and your travel entitlements. This can be found in the Policies catalogue by accessing Online Learning via [Australian Volunteers Portal](#).

3.8.1 Postponed or cancelled assignment

If a departure has to be postponed or cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances, the situation will be discussed with you in detail and a suitable alternative sought where possible. These circumstances could include problems such as deterioration in health, an emergency situation in the place of assignment (e.g. natural disaster, epidemic/pandemic), an assignment or partner organisation ceasing to exist or operate, non-

approval of the volunteer by the partner organisation, or the denial of an entry visa.

The program cannot be held responsible for major changes in such circumstances, and reserves the right to make the final decision about your departure for assignment.

3.9. Putting your affairs in order

3.9.1. Australian Government support payments

Volunteering overseas may affect some Australian Government payments.

If you currently receive or are intending to apply for Australian Government pensions or payments on your return, you must contact the Department of Human Services or the relevant Australian Government department to ascertain your eligibility, reporting requirements or liability while away from Australia.

Failure to comply with the eligibility requirements and conditions of your payment may result in payments being cancelled, ineligibility to receive some payments on return or requirements to refund any overpayments made to you.

3.9.2. Private health insurance in Australia

It is your responsibility to investigate whether a suspension of your private health cover might affect your lifetime health cover entitlements. Guidance should also be sought as to whether your private health cover has mandatory waiting periods for reactivation of cover if returning to Australia with an illness or injury. You must negotiate this with your private health fund prior to your departure.

If you have to return to Australia for medical treatment or leave, and have not maintained private health insurance, you will be treated as a public patient under the Medicare system. Please also see section **8.4.1 Medicare cover in Australia**.

3.9.3. Will

It is strongly recommended that you make a Will, leave it in an accessible place, and tell a nominated emergency contact where the Will is located. Parents should appoint a guardian for their

dependant children, including non-accompanying dependant children.

3.10. Personal financial arrangements

We strongly recommend that you have access to additional funds while on assignment in case of unexpected events or emergencies. All personal financial commitments are your responsibility, both in Australia and while on assignment. These include mortgages, other loans, insurance premiums, taxes, family support and storage.

It is recommended that you arrange for someone in Australia to assist in managing your personal financial affairs while you are on assignment.

Please note that any payments made to you by the program will be paid into an Australian bank account and in Australian dollars (AUD). We suggest you plan well in advance if you want to transfer any money to an international account.

Options for money transfer should be discussed with your bank or financial institution prior to departure for assignment.

3.10.1. Australian income tax

The program is unable to provide advice on taxation matters, including at tax-time.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has released a Fact Sheet to provide advice on how payments you receive as a volunteer are treated for taxation purposes.

The Fact Sheet states:

"The allowances you receive are not considered to be assessable incomes. These payments are not taxable and you do not need to report these payments as income in your income tax return."

Please review the Fact Sheet for the full ATO guidance on volunteer allowances.

If you have further questions or wish to discuss your individual circumstances please call the ATO on 13 28 61. You can also email TaxAdvice@ato.gov.au to receive a call back from an ATO officer.

The Fact Sheet is also available [on the ATO website](#).

It is your responsibility to ensure that arrangements are in place to take care of your home and financial affairs in Australia during your assignment. This

includes clarifying your situation with the Australian Tax Office to ensure all tax rules are complied with.

You should also seek independent professional advice on the taxation requirements applicable to your personal circumstances and your country of assignment before departure, including advice regarding any tax implications of the allowances and other payments you receive during your assignment.

3.10.2. Professional fees

Payment of professional association, membership or registration fees while on assignment is your responsibility. Some associations may waive or reduce fees. A letter from the program, outlining the nature of work performed during an assignment can be provided on request.

3.11. Subscribing to Smartraveller

Smartraveller is an Australian Government service that provides travel advice and news by email. You can also choose to receive SMS for critical alerts. All program participants must subscribe for updates from **Smartraveller** before leaving Australia. If you are unable to do so, please speak with your in-country team as soon as you arrive in the country of your assignment.

Further to registering online, it is also your responsibility to be familiar with the Smartraveller travel advisories for the country in which you will be working, as this may impact your safety and security. You must also review Smartraveller prior to travelling (for work, personal or program reasons) and note any major security concerns in your travel request.

This information can be found at the [Smartraveller website](#).

3.12. Voting while overseas

The [Australian Electoral Commission](#) advises that Australian citizens travelling internationally for periods of three (3) years or less can register as Overseas Electors and vote by post in state and federal elections. Please contact the division where you are enrolled and inform them that you are travelling internationally and for how long. You will then be registered as an Overseas Elector. Failure to do this can result in being fined, being removed

from the Australian electoral roll, and having to apply for re-enrolment on return to Australia.

3.13. Emergency contacts in Australia

Before you depart for assignment, you will be required to provide emergency contacts in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#). Please provide the name and contact details of two people in Australia who can be contacted in the event of an emergency. You will also be required to provide two in-country emergency contacts at a later date (once you are in-country).

If your emergency contact is unable to contact you while you are on assignment, as a matter of urgency, they can get in touch with program staff in Melbourne by phone or email. The program will attempt to contact you or your in-country emergency contacts on their behalf, to ensure your wellbeing.

In case of an emergency while on assignment, information about you will only be provided by the program to those family members or friends who have been identified by you as emergency contacts.



4. When you arrive

4.1. Arrival in-country

From the date you depart home, your [Australian Volunteers Portal](#) will show as “On assignment”. You will now have access to additional resources and the ability to request leave and travel.

COVID-19 update

Many countries require inbound travellers to complete a mandatory quarantine or self-isolation on arrival in-country. This varies between countries and the situation is constantly changing. Speak with your Onboarding Coordinator and in-country team for current information about quarantine or self-isolation requirements.

Upon arrival in your assignment country (or completion of quarantine), you and any fellow program participants will be met by an in-country team member. Information about this will be provided to you by the in-country team before you depart Australia.

You may be required to stay in temporary short-term accommodation or a hotel, depending on your circumstances and assignment location. This accommodation may be of a basic standard and you may be required to share accommodation with other volunteers.

If you have not yet subscribed to updates from Smartraveller, please do so on arrival in-country. This is a program requirement. Refer to **3.11 Subscribing to Smartraveller**.

4.1.1. In-country orientation program (ICOP)

The program organises a compulsory ICOP when you first arrive in the country of your assignment. The ICOP includes important health and security information. It is designed to help you with the settling-in process and attendance at an ICOP is a requirement of the program. It also builds upon the pre-departure learning and briefing to help you become effective as a volunteer on assignment as soon as possible.

This usually includes some basic language training. volunteers have access to additional language training after ICOP. (Please see **4.5.2 Additional language training**)

4.1.2. In-country emergency contacts

On arrival in-country, you will be asked to provide the interim contact details of someone in-country (e.g. colleagues at your partner organisation) who can be contacted if we are unable to reach you in case of an emergency. You must update these details in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#) if they change.

4.1.3. Mailing address

Your partner organisation’s address will be automatically listed as your main mailing contact while you are on assignment. Please ensure that the person responsible for collecting mail at your partner organisation is notified to expect mail for you.

You can update your contact details (in Australia and overseas) on the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#).

4.2. Accommodation

Your allowance is aimed to enable you to access accommodation of a reasonable standard that is considered safe and secure.

You are responsible for finding your own long-term accommodation. Partner organisations, other volunteers or expatriates living in the community can be helpful in this process. Depending on your country of assignment, your in-country team may direct you to a rental website, put you in touch with other volunteers with a spare room in their sharehouse, show you a range of recommended accommodation options or they may already have identified some options for you.

You might find that the options available are not to an equivalent standard to what you are used to. For example, you may not have hot water, washing machines or WiFi. In these instances, you will need to consider your priorities and how you will manage your budget throughout your assignment.

Accommodation may also be provided by partner organisations in certain circumstances. Where your accommodation is provided free of charge, the program will deduct the portion of your allowance allocated to housing.

If your assignment is for six (6) weeks or less in-country, accommodation will be booked and paid for you in a safe and secure hotel or guesthouse. In this instance, accommodation allowances will not be provided.

Safety and security are paramount, so you may be given strict guidelines for accommodation, such as housing with 24-hour security or close to another volunteer. The accommodation you choose must comply with program security guidelines. It is your responsibility to notify the program immediately if you feel that your environment and accommodation are not secure. See **7 Safety and security**.

4.2.1. Share accommodation

Housing shortages in some countries can be common, especially in urban areas, and program participants may be required to share accommodation with others. Sometimes, this may also be recommended for personal security reasons.

4.2.2. Temporary accommodation

Where housing is not immediately available, temporary accommodation may be arranged in a

hostel or hotel. In some countries, program participants are housed at guesthouses, in homestays or other temporary accommodation for an initial period.

4.2.3. Owning a property

If you own a residence (house, apartment or equivalent) within a reasonable distance of your assignment location, you may choose to reside there for the duration of your assignment.

Where you choose to live in your own residence, you are not eligible to receive the accommodation allowance or settling in allowance.

If you own a residence within a reasonable distance of your assignment location, but choose not to live there for the duration of your assignment, you are not eligible to receive the accommodation allowance.

Where your residence is not a reasonable distance from your place of assignment and you therefore require rental accommodation, you may be considered for a settling in and an accommodation allowance.

For the purposes of this policy, “reasonable distance” includes the immediate region, town, city or village of your assignment. This decision is at the discretion of your Program Manager.

4.3. Personal security

There are security hazards in every country in which the program places volunteers. We recognise the importance of personal security in all assignment locations and have implemented a number of strategies to assist you in minimising your risk. However, your safety is ultimately your responsibility.

It is critical that you familiarise yourself with the **Safety and security** section of this guidebook, complete the *Staying Safe and Well* learning module and the **Country Security Plan**, found in your Online Learning via the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#).

Ensure you know or have immediate access to all phone numbers you will need in an emergency.

4.3.1. Complete your security forms

Within three (3) weeks of finding your long-term accommodation, you are required to complete your

Accommodation Security Plan (ASP) – unless your assignment duration is less than 6 weeks – and your Personal Security Plan (PSP) in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#). Both forms are program requirements and must be completed in as much detail as possible. They will increase your situational awareness and reduce your risk in-country.

See **7.4 Personal security** **7.4.2 Accommodation Security Plan** for more information.

4.4. Your assignment

4.4.1. Starting your assignment

Prior to departure, you will have received an Assignment Description outlining the main focus of your assignment and what it aims to achieve.

Once you commence your assignment, you and your partner organisation are expected to review the Assignment Description together, and make any necessary amendments to better reflect the partner organisation's current priorities.

You are also required under the Australian Volunteer Code of Conduct to complete all compulsory program Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) templates.

Refer to **5.7 Assignment outcomes** for more information.

4.4.2. Relationship with Australian organisations (AO)

The Australian Volunteer Program has formal partnerships with many Australian organisations (AOs).

Your assignment may have the support of an AO. An AO is an extra stakeholder for you to consider and be supported by, but you report directly to your partner organisation.

If your assignment has the support of an AO, the implications of this and how to contact your AO will be explained to you during recruitment and pre-departure. Making contact with your AO before your assignment will allow you to ask questions and agree on how you will communicate during your assignment.

If, through your assignment, you become aware of a relationship (e.g. funding or shared project) between your partner organisation and an Australian-based organisation, please let your in-country team know. This organisation may wish to formally partner with the program as an official AO.

4.4.3. Health Security Corps

The Health Security Corps is a niche program within the Australian Volunteers Program that places certain public health professionals to work in non-clinical roles with partner organisations in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Health Security Corps works to build the capacity of organisations in the Indo-Pacific region, with a health security focus, to avoid and contain infectious disease threats with the potential to cause social and economic harm on a national, regional or global scale.

The Health Security Corps will:

- Contribute to regional health security capacity by strengthening regional preparedness to respond to emerging health threats; and
- Build people-to-people links within regional partner organisations and countries.

For more information, see the [Health Security Corps](#) section of the Australian Volunteers Program website or contact healthsecuritycorps@australianvolunteers.com

4.5. In-country training

4.5.1. In-country meeting (ICM)

In-country meetings (ICMs) for volunteers may be held from time to time. This provides an opportunity to exchange ideas, reflect on each volunteer's experience, share lessons learnt and discuss any development trends. It also allows volunteers to raise issues of immediate concern, and provides program staff with the chance to gather feedback about assignment and program development. Refresher training on health, security and child protection may be provided at these meetings.

It is compulsory for all volunteers to attend ICMs when requested. Your partner organisation is required to allow you to take time off work to attend.

The program generally bears any travel and accommodation costs associated with attendance at the ICM.

4.5.2. Additional language training

If your assignment is six (6) weeks or less in-country, no additional language training will be supported.

Language proficiency for volunteers is desirable not only for achieving the assignment goals, but also as a way of engaging with the local culture. Many volunteers can function entirely in English for all their assignment duties, but learning the local language can further enhance integration into the local community.

All program participants in-country for longer than 6 weeks are entitled to up to AUD\$400 worth of additional language training, based on the reimbursement of actual costs. The program encourages this training to be undertaken within the first half of your assignment, to most effectively utilise the learnings while in-country.

You do not need to offer any particular justification as to why you are doing further language training. The additional training can encompass further study in the national language; or a local language; or any particular special language area (specialist vocabulary; newspaper reading; literature) you may

choose relevant to the country of your assignment. The availability and costs for this provision will vary between assignment locations.

If your additional language training costs more than AUD\$400, you may be able to request additional reimbursement. When you do so, you should provide a brief rationale, indicating specific need for higher level language training and why the cost is higher. Approval is at the Program Manager's discretion.

4.5.3. Other training

During your assignment, you may be required, or be provided the opportunity, to participate in other forms of training as directed by your in-country team. This additional training may include areas such as security, child protection and sector-driven workshops.



5. On assignment

5.1. The program and you

5.1.1. Your in-country team

Staying in touch with your in-country team

While you are on assignment, your key contact with the program will be the Program Manager or other specified in-country team member. Program Managers and in-country teams are responsible for managing the program in a specific country or region.

Once you are in-country, the majority of your questions or queries about the program or your assignment should be directed to your in-country team. This includes any media requests, matters of concern, feedback and complaints.

It is your responsibility to keep your in-country team updated on your progress, change of contact details, any change of circumstances or identified risk issues.

Correspondence with the program

The program will often distribute global information to volunteers via the in-country team, to ensure local relevance and consistency in communication.

Email is often used to send volunteers important information about the program, security updates and other news. If you are using an email system that employs bulk mail filters, please ensure that the filters enable any messages with an @australianvolunteers.com and @avi.org.au address to get through.

If you need to send the program confidential correspondence by post, please mark the envelope

‘Personal and Confidential’, and address it to the relevant staff member. While your privacy will be respected, please remember that administrative procedures may require the involvement of more than one staff member.

Please contact the program immediately if serious personal, security or financial problems arise. Staff will do all they can to assist as quickly as possible.

5.1.2. Program obligations and responsibilities

The program has certain obligations and responsibilities towards you. They include, but are not limited to:

- Negotiating, in good faith, an assignment description with the partner organisation;
- Providing online and pre-departure learning, in-country orientation and support, exit interviews, in-country and re-entry support;
- Mediating volunteer and partner organisation issues that are not able to be resolved locally;
- Maintaining communication with volunteers and partner organisations through in-country teams;
- Providing support to develop assignment plans, review and evaluation of assignments;
- Paying volunteer allowances and reimbursing approved costs; and
- Providing 24-hour routine and emergency advice and assistance in-country.

5.1.3. Work and volunteering

Paid work

Engaging in any paid work and/or business enterprise for personal gain while on a volunteer assignment or as an AAD is inappropriate and breaches the **Volunteer Code of Conduct**. This applies to all paid work including part-time, casual and consulting.

Unpaid work

If you are contemplating any unpaid part-time work or volunteering with other organisations in addition to your volunteer assignment, you must discuss with and obtain prior approval from your partner organisation and the program. Approval is not guaranteed.

It is important to be aware that such activities (paid or unpaid) may breach visa conditions and formal agreements with host country governments.

5.1.4. Personal study and research

You and any AAD are not to conduct any type of research unless agreed by the program and the partner organisation, and where it is agreed that the research is appropriate to the partner organisation and the program.

You may not publish research, including approved research, without permission from the program and the partner organisation.

You may undertake distance study, as long as it does not interfere with your assignment obligations.

5.1.5. Change of relationship or parental status

Your place in the program and the level of support provided is provided on the basis of your relationship status at the time of application (e.g. single, couple, couple with children, etc.). If this changes (e.g. de facto relationship, separation, marriage, pregnancy, birth, adoption, fostering), please notify the program immediately, as there may be implications for all involved.

If your relationship or parental status changes during your assignment, neither the program nor the partner organisation is able to guarantee the provision of any additional financial support or alternative accommodation.

If you and your spouse separate, any program-provided allowances to the volunteer and support to the AAD will cease. The former AAD will, however, still be eligible to use their flight home from assignment to Australia. This flight can be moved to an earlier date, but cannot be used any later than 13 days after notification of the change of status. These arrangements should be made with Corporate Traveller.

The former AAD will also remain covered under program insurance for up to 14 days after notification of the change of status, to allow for them to safely return to Australia. Insurance cover remains in place until the insured person returns home or 14 days' time, whichever is sooner.

The program does not support adoption, fostering or hosting of children in-country while on the program. You have made a commitment to the partner organisation for the duration of your assignment, and accommodating new additions to the family may undermine that commitment and focus. Moreover, adopting, fostering or hosting children from your country of assignment has significant political, legal and social implications, and has the potential to affect the reputation of the program.

The program reserves the right to terminate an assignment if it is substantially affected by a change of relationship or parental status.

If needed, you can also access Response Psychological Services for counselling services. See **6.3 Mental health**.

5.2. The partner organisation and you

As a volunteer, you are considered to be equivalent of an employee of your partner organisation for day to day management purposes, and your primary responsibility regarding work place activities is to your partner organisation.

Any major change to the terms and conditions of your assignment must involve discussions between all parties (you as a volunteer, the program, your partner organisation, and in some cases the Australian Government DFAT) before any decision or action is taken.

5.2.1. Hours and days at the partner organisation

Working hours for volunteers are the same as for full-time local employees in your partner organisation, as detailed in your Assignment Description.

You are advised to discuss this further with your partner organisation at the start of your assignment.

5.2.2. Use of information and communications technology (ICT)

You are expected to use the ICT resources of your partner organisation responsibly and lawfully. You must abide by the ICT policy (or equivalent) of your partner organisation, in addition to any other policies.

Some general guidelines are:

- Do not use or remove any equipment without express authorisation
- Do not access, store or transmit any materials that are in violation of Australian law and/or laws of the host country
- Do not use resources in a manner that may be deemed by others as harassment, discrimination or abuse
- Do not use resources in a manner that may be deemed by others as obscene, threatening or otherwise inappropriate
- Use resources as required to fulfil your assignment outcomes, and limit your personal usage.
- Be aware of internet access and bandwidth limitations and be sensitive to this when sending out emails with attachments.

5.2.3. Terms and conditions within the workplace

It is your responsibility to re-confirm the following arrangements during the first few weeks of your assignment:

- Hours and days at the partner organisation;
- Leave entitlements (other than the standard one week per three (3) months worked);
- Reporting requirements; and
- Available resources.

If there are serious issues concerning the terms and conditions of your assignment, please contact your in-country team immediately.

5.2.4. Restrictions to donations and fundraising

It is against the [Australian Volunteer Code of Conduct](#) to make a personal donation to your partner organisation while on assignment, as it can have unanticipated negative consequences. There is no restriction on post-assignment donations.

5.2.5. Conflict resolution

Conflicts in the workplace should initially be dealt with at a local level within your partner organisation. If resolution proves especially difficult, your Program Manager may be able to help with advice and, if required, can act as a mediator with the partner organisation.

You can also access Response Psychological Services for counselling or debriefing. See **6.3 Mental health**.

5.2.6. Work performance

It is your responsibility to work towards achieving your assignment objectives. Part of this includes maintaining regular communication with your partner organisation about your work performance. Dissatisfaction with the progress of the assignment, including work performance or the support of the partner organisation, needs to be discussed between you and your partner organisation as early as possible.

When such issues arise and cannot be resolved at a local level, the Program Manager must be consulted and will seek to mediate an equitable solution. However, the partner organisation is entitled to terminate the assignment and request the withdrawal of the volunteer.

5.2.7. Grants opportunities

Many volunteers obtain funding to support their partner organisation through fundraising and proposal writing. All volunteers are asked to ensure that in-country team are notified of any donations or grants awarded to the partner organisation as a direct result of their assignment.

You may be asked to support your partner organisation with grants applications while you are on assignment. It is at your discretion, whether to support your partner organisation with grants and funding endeavours. However, your primary focus must be your assignment objectives.

5.3. The local context

The program operates under the terms of formal agreements between the Australian Government and the governments of the countries in which the program operates.

These agreements vary by jurisdiction - as Subsidiary Agreements, Memoranda of Understanding, or similar. Please refer to your in-country team if you require further information.

5.3.1. Laws of your host country

All program participants are subject to all local laws and regulations. You should familiarise yourself with local laws as a part of the research you undertake prior to leaving Australia for assignment. Offences and penalties can differ markedly from those in Australia (e.g. for possession of drugs or child exploitation material). You should also be aware of local laws relating to same-sex relationships.

In the event of an accident or injury, non-adherence to local laws and regulations may invalidate any insurance claims.

The program is unable to provide legal advice. It is your responsibility to deal with any civil or criminal proceedings arising from breaches of local laws and any consequent judgments, such as fines or imprisonment. If legal issues arise during an assignment, either internationally or in Australia, the in-country team or the consular section of the local Australian diplomatic mission may be able to assist with advice about legal representation, but you are responsible for obtaining and funding such representation. See the [Consular Services Charter](#).

5.3.2. Politics and religion

Do not become involved in local politics, attend public demonstrations, or make any public comment (written, broadcast or your own social media) on political or religious matters. Even the signing of a petition in some countries can result in action against you. Symbols of nationalism in particular should be respected.

Any comments you make may also have a negative impact on others in your assignment community, including your partner organisation, colleagues and fellow volunteers in your country of assignment.

It is usually acceptable to practise your own faith, provided respect is shown for the local religion/s. volunteers are not to proselytise, that is preach or

attempt to recruit an individual or group to a religion. This includes volunteers who are assigned with a faith-based organisation.

5.3.3. Alcohol and drugs

All program participants are responsible for being aware of and adhering to the laws of their host country. Laws relating to the consumption, supply, trafficking, or cultivation of drugs – including alcohol and tobacco – vary from country to country. Similarly, penalties for breaking local laws vary from minor fines to mandatory death sentences. Volunteers should be aware that in almost all cases, penalties relating to drug use are more severe than in Australia.

For this reason, please check which substances are legal (and which are not) in your assignment country. The use of illegal drugs will result in the immediate termination of your assignment and possible referral to local authorities.

5.4. Allowances

Most volunteers are entitled to living and accommodation allowances. The living and accommodation allowance rates are country-, area- or region-specific.

Program participants receive an additional 25% of the combined living and accommodation allowance for each AAD. This is paid directly to the volunteer.

Note: The current allowance structure is effective from 1 October 2019. See [Australian Volunteers Program living and accommodation allowances](#) for monthly rates. You can also access a [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) document. Allowances are not negotiable.

5.4.1. Living allowance

The living allowance is designed to enable you to live a modest local lifestyle. Based on the cost of living in a particular country, it should cover food, your daily commute, communication and other local costs. It is not intended to enable you to meet financial commitments at home, such as a mortgage or a personal loan.

5.4.2. Accommodation allowance

If accommodation is provided by the program or the partner organisation, participants are not entitled to an accommodation allowance.

Where you own a property in your assignment location, you are not entitled to an accommodation allowance. Similarly, if your partner receives an accommodation allowance or your accommodation is paid for through your partner's work/organisation, you are not entitled to an accommodation allowance. See **4.2.3 Owning a property**.

5.4.3. Partner organisation contribution

In some cases, partner organisations contribute to the allowances by providing safe and secure accommodation and/or a local salary. Where the partner organisation provides a local salary or makes a monetary contribution to allowances, the amount will be converted into Australian dollars (AUD) at the beginning of the assignment. The conversion will be based on the exchange rate prevailing at the time and will remain in place for the duration of the assignment. The calculated AUD amount will be deducted from the standard allowances provided by the program.

5.4.4. Settling-in allowance

If your assignment duration is less than six months, the program will provide you with a one-off settling-in allowance (SIA) of AUD\$500. For assignment of six months or greater, the SIA is AUD\$1,000. This is to contribute towards the expenses associated with passports, excess baggage, and any other costs associated with your departure and setting up accommodation in your country of assignment. The allowance is paid prior to departure by direct transfer to your Australian bank account.

AADs are not entitled to a SIA.

5.4.5. Resettlement allowance

If your assignment duration is more than six months, a resettlement allowance (RSA) of AUD\$1,200 will be paid at the conclusion of your assignment. This is to offset some of the costs of excess baggage, departure tax, en-route costs, taxi fares and expenses associated with settling back into Australia. RSA is paid directly into your Australian bank account.

The program reserves the right to withhold the RSA in the event of a breach of the Volunteer Code of Conduct or until outstanding monies are repaid.

AADs are not entitled to an RSA.

5.4.6. Payments and reimbursements

Payments of program allowances will be made on a monthly basis. These payments will be made in AUD and will only be paid into an Australian bank account (i.e. bank, credit union or permanent building society). All payments and reimbursements from the program (including those for AAD participants) will be paid into the bank account of the volunteer. Payments cannot be made directly to a credit card account, but payments can be made to an account that is linked to a credit card.

You should discuss what options are available for transferring funds to your assignment location internationally with your financial institution prior to departure. If your financial institution does not offer easy international access to funds, it is recommended that you open a new Australian account that allows you to do so.

You are responsible for bank charges and any currency conversion costs. When determining the AUD value of local currencies for the purpose of approved reimbursements, currency conversion rates that are adjusted monthly will be used. Refund of any exchange rate gains made on payments is not expected, nor is the program able to reimburse any losses incurred due to exchange rates.

When reimbursing expenses pre-approved by your in-country team, the program will add amounts less than AUD\$100 to your next monthly payment upon receiving your receipts. For reimbursement amounts over AUD\$100, you may request to have these paid into your Australian bank account prior to your next monthly payment. All reimbursements must be negotiated and approved by your in-country team. Reimbursements should be requested in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#).

5.5. Leave

5.5.1. Public holidays

Volunteers are entitled to the same public holidays as local employees.

5.5.2. Annual leave

Volunteers are entitled to a minimum of four (4) weeks (20 working days) annual leave per year, accrued on a pro rata basis. No more than 20 days annual leave is to be taken at any one time, and not

more than five (5) days should be taken in advance of your accrued entitlements.

Please note that your local colleagues may have a leave entitlement that is much smaller than yours.

Annual leave must be requested in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#), with evidence of approval from your partner organisation (e.g. signed leave form, email from supervisor). The partner organisation is within its rights to decline or request changes to the timing and duration of leave in accordance with its own organisational priorities. If the local annual leave entitlement is greater than four (4) weeks then volunteers may be entitled to equivalent local leave conditions, as determined by the partner organisation and the in-country team.

Annual leave needs to be taken within your assignment dates. If you leave your assignment early, then all allowances stop on the day you cease work, and unused leave will be not paid out.

If you are travelling during annual leave, you must also submit a travel request. See section **5.6.5 Travel approval**.

There is no provision for “unpaid” leave.

5.5.3. Sick leave

Volunteers are entitled to the same sick leave as local employees.

5.5.4. Time off in lieu (TOIL)

Volunteers are not able to accrue TOIL for any additional hours of work. You may make informal flexible arrangements with your partner organisation to address out of hours or weekend work.

5.5.5. Special leave

Special leave comes under two categories:

Compassionate: If there is a serious illness, death or crisis involving immediate family, participants may consider returning home for a period of time. See Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found..

Medical: Where participants are relocated or evacuated from their assignment location for medical reasons. See **6.5 Medical evacuations and relocations**.

In these cases, you have up to four (4) weeks of leave where you will continue to receive your

program allowances. This limit will be reviewed over the course of your time on leave and if you are likely to be absent from the assignment for four (4) weeks or more, the ongoing viability of the assignment must be assessed.

You should let your partner organisation know that you are going on special leave or under certain circumstances, the in-country team may advise them for you.

In some circumstances, travel and other costs may be reimbursable under insurance provisions. Where your leave requires you to be in Australia, you may also be entitled to an additional ‘per diem’ payment from the insurer, where there are medical or compassionate reasons. See **6.5.2 Per diem entitlement**.

Should you wish to claim under insurance, you may need your original air ticket and any documentation concerning the reasons for return (e.g. death certificate) to submit when making your insurance claim. See **8 Insurance**.

5.6. Travel

For safety and security reasons, it is vital that your in-country team is aware of your whereabouts – particularly when travelling outside of your normal assignment area.

You must advise your in-country team of your contact details and itinerary well in advance, to ensure that your proposed travel can be properly assessed and so that they can locate you in the event of an emergency.

COVID-19 update

Global travel requirements and commercial flight capacity is subject to change. Some leisure and other travel may not be possible during the pandemic. You are likely to be able to visit Australia during your assignment but should you choose to travel internationally to another country, you may have difficulty returning to your assignment country.

The global impact of COVID-19 has required the program to take a more rigorous approach to risk management, particularly in relation to the health, safety, security and well-being of program participants whilst on assignment.

Since the impact of COVID-19, the context in which we are operating has shifted significantly. This means that we need to take additional care and

diligence in approving domestic / international travel and leisure activities. Some activities which may have been approved in the past may not be approved given this change in context. Against this background, all travel requests will be reviewed by the in-country team and may be referred to member the global risk and security team and will take into account the local context at the time of the request.

5.6.1. Knowing the risks

When you are planning to travel, you should research your destination/s and familiarise yourself with the DFAT Advice Levels. This is required when you submit your travel request. More information about this can be found on the [Smartraveller website](#).

All program participants may also contact International SOS for specific advice, referrals and assistance related to this travel.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with any regulations that may apply. Please ensure that you adhere to the relevant visa and re-entry requirements (e.g. you may require evidence of a ticket back to Australia when returning to your assignment).

If you are travelling to another country in which the Australian Volunteers Program operates, you will need to abide by the [Country Security Plan](#) of the country being visited. This can be obtained from your in-country team or in your online resources.

Note: Where program participants have chronic/severe health conditions that create additional risk factors (e.g. need for specific medical facilities), travel plans must be discussed with the in-country team at least 30 days prior to travel. This will enable staff to consult with International SOS and the Chief Medical Officer, and to ensure the risks to the volunteer's health are carefully considered and minimised. The program reserves the right to reject travel requests in certain health-related circumstances, where the risk is deemed too great.

Travel without prior authorisation will likely invalidate your insurance cover, result in a breach of the Code of Conduct, and may result in termination from your assignment.

5.6.2. Work travel

Many assignments require domestic and international travel as part of the position. If you are planning to travel outside of your normal

assignment location for work, you must follow the program travel process.

Partner organisations are expected to cover the cost of any travel required for work purposes. Your partner organisation must also provide a business case to support for any work travel – include this in your travel request.

Work travel requests are to be submitted in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#) in a timely manner, similar to all other requests, with the key difference being that there must be evidence of partner organisation approval (e.g. letter of support, request to attend, email from supervisor). The program reserves the right to not approve these requests.

5.6.3. Visa renewal travel

From time-to-time volunteers may be expected to travel outside of their assignment country to renew their visa. If your visa is due to expire while you are on assignment, you must check with your in-country team regarding local requirements and recommended arrangements for renewal. It is your responsibility to ensure your visa is current.

Please contact your in-country team for information regarding the process for your assignment country and the costs that will be met by the program. Volunteers who make their own arrangements (i.e. personal travel) to renew their visa must do so at their own cost.

5.6.4. Requesting travel

All program participants must request personal and work-related travel using the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#). You must seek approval at least five (5) working days prior to your planned date of departure.

Program Participants must not travel to DFAT Level 4 “Do Not Travel” Destinations (see **7 Safety and security**) and any request will be immediately declined.

5.6.5. Travel approval

Your in-country team will be notified of travel requests made in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#). In some circumstances, approval may be escalated to the Regional Director or to the Melbourne Office for approval.

You will receive an automated notification via email when your travel request is ‘Approved’, ‘Approved with Conditions’ or ‘Rejected’.

If your travel request is 'Approved with Conditions', you may be provided with safety and security directions for the location you are travelling to. All directions must be followed.

Travel approval is subject to compliance with DFAT travel advice, particularly in the case of areas or countries classified by the Australian Government as 'Do Not Travel', and 'Reconsider Your Need to Travel', as well as the program's own security assessments. Travel clearance may be withdrawn depending on the changing security context.

COVID-19 update

The program reserves the right to refuse approval for travel to those areas where the security or medical risk is assessed to be too great. Note that this may include destinations that were previously considered lower-risk prior to the pandemic.

5.7. Assignment outcomes

5.7.1. Your expectations

You have a detailed assignment description with set objectives. When you arrive, you and your partner organisation will develop an assignment plan to meet the objectives of the assignment. You may find that the expectations of the partner organisation differ somewhat from your own – take some time to listen and understand their context, be patient and you will soon be able to contribute.

The program will hold regular review sessions with both you and your partner organisation to get feedback on the progress of your assignment and how the benefits from your work can be sustained.

5.7.2. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) is an important part of the program. All volunteers (and partner organisations) are required to complete MEL forms while on assignment. As a volunteer, your primary relationship is with your partner organisation who will monitor your day-to-day work. Both you and the partner organisation are expected to participate in the planning and review of your assignments.

MEL is designed to allow you to establish and monitor shared expectations throughout the assignment, any challenges, and the future capacity development needs of the partner organisation. The

information provided by you and your partner organisation allows the program to target assistance where needed, and contributes to the continuous improvement of the program as a whole.

The following are formal MEL forms which you and your partner organisation will have to complete and return. All forms are completed online through your portal account.

5.7.3. Assignment plan

You must meet with your partner organisation supervisor to discuss and jointly complete the Assignment Plan template within six to eight (6-8) weeks of your arrival in the country of your assignment.

Volunteers who are in-country for a period of six (6) weeks or less are advised to complete their assignment plan in the first two (2) weeks of their assignment.

This includes re-visiting the assignment objectives outlined in the Assignment Description and establishing an agreed plan for activities and intended assignment outcomes. If you and your partner organisation identify that the assignment objectives need to be amended, this must be discussed with your in-country team.

5.7.4. Mid-term monitoring

For assignments of 11 months' duration or more, half-way through your assignment you will be notified to complete a mid-term review form. This should be completed within a two (2) week period. This provides an opportunity for you and your supervisor to review progress together, have a dialogue around issues and challenges, and ways to address them.

5.7.5. End of assignment evaluation

You will be notified towards the end of your assignment to complete an end of assignment evaluation. This form will ask you to report on the success of the assignment in meeting the objectives; any specific outcomes; provide an assignment rating; challenges faced; and future needs. This form is to be completed within a four (4) week period upon receipt. You and the partner organisation will each receive a separate form, so that the program can capture different perspectives on the assignment.

5.7.6. Exit interviews

At the end of your assignment, you will be given the opportunity to meet with your in-country team to discuss your achievements, challenges, lessons learnt and future plans.

This interview is an opportunity for you to reflect on your broader program experience, identify any issues that need to be resolved and make recommendations for future assignments with your partner organisation.

This is also a time to raise any follow up discussion that you have documented in the end of assignment evaluation. Also this is organised to have a final check done for all the requirements before leaving for Australia.

The exit interview will be conducted either face to face, via phone or online.

5.8. Extensions

A request to extend an assignment should come from the partner organisation and requires program approval. Extension requests for assignments longer than 6 months should be submitted at least three (3) months before the end of the assignment. Extension requests for assignments shorter than 6 months should be submitted at or just before the half-way mark. Extension requests are considered on a case by case basis, and their approval is not guaranteed.

Assignment extension requests will only be considered for a proposed extension period of up to half the length of the original assignment term. For example, up to six (6) months' extension for an original 12-month assignment.

You must ensure that the original arrangements including visas and permits are in accordance with the new assignment completion date.

5.9. Early returns

In the majority of cases, it is expected that you will fulfil your commitment to your partner organisation for the full duration, as outlined in your assignment description. However, the program recognises that there are some circumstances where an early return is appropriate and necessary.

5.9.1. Volunteer early return

In accepting an assignment, volunteers agree to all of the terms and conditions outlined in the

assignment description and the [Australian Volunteers Code of Conduct](#), including the duration of the assignment.

In some cases, you may have to seek an early return from your assignment. Reasons for this early return may include:

- Assignment issues
- Objectives achieved and assignment completed early
- Personal reasons
- Medical/health reasons
- Employment or study opportunities.

If circumstances arise where you need to leave your assignment more than two weeks earlier than your pre-determined departure date, you need to speak to your in-country team and complete an early return form (available in the volunteer portal).

Please have this conversation as early as possible to ensure necessary amendments can be made to your flights, insurance and allowances.

Volunteers who do not fulfil this obligation for reasons that are deemed controllable (e.g. you choose to seek fully paid employment), are liable to refund all or part of the expenses incurred as a result of their participation in the program.

Immigration and work permits are based on your status as a volunteer supported by the program. The program is obliged to advise local immigration authorities when you are no longer under the program's auspices. Insurance coverage is also conditional on program participation. Any enquiries about this should be directed to your in-country team.

5.9.2. Partner organisation termination

Partner organisations have the right to terminate assignments where necessary. This may include issues such as work performance, personal behaviours, breach of the [Australian Volunteers Code of Conduct](#), failure to follow directives issued by program and/or partner organisation staff, deterioration in security, or social and workplace adjustment.

Although the primary relationship in your assignment is between you and the partner organisation, the program must be made aware of, and be included in, any discussion concerning the ongoing viability of your assignment.

5.9.3. Program termination

Experience has shown that the earlier program staff are involved in such discussions, the greater is the likelihood of being able to negotiate an amicable and agreed resolution to assignment or workplace issues. However, while all parties are expected to make all reasonable efforts to address such issues, please note that the program or the partner organisation has the final say concerning the continuation of the assignment and may request your departure from the assignment.

When and where appropriate, program staff will seek alternative arrangements for retaining you on the program. This is not guaranteed and the program may need to make arrangements for your immediate return home.

5.10. Transfers

If you are experiencing significant and on-going difficulties with your assignment or your partner organisation, you may seek approval to transfer to another assignment in the same country. This will only be considered in circumstances where the in-country team and Regional Director, with the assistance of the Melbourne office if appropriate, have made every effort to resolve the difficulties.

Transfers generally only occur in the same country, as the aim is to utilise the skills of the volunteer in the country for which they were recruited, without generating significant additional costs.

The end date of the new assignment will be the same as the end date of the original assignment.

Where an assignment or partner organisation relationship is deemed unviable, the program team will assess a transfer request based on: reason for assignment termination, availability of another assignment at an approved alternative partner organisation, the needs of the alternative partner organisation, suitability of the volunteer to the proposed assignment.

The program will consider terminating an assignment and the transfer to an alternative assignment with a new partner organisation within the country of the original assignment only once all other avenues have been exhausted. This will only be considered after the partner organisation and volunteer have demonstrated, in good faith, their best efforts to make an assignment viable into the future. The request for an assignment transfer must

be made in writing to your Program Manager. Additionally, you will need to successfully complete the recruitment process for the new assignment and be accepted by the new partner organisation, before the transfer can be affected.

Requests will be considered on a case by case basis. There is no guarantee that the transfer request will be approved. If the transfer request is not approved, the program participant, including AADs, will be required to return home.



6. Looking after your health

6.1. Health and medical

6.1.1. Managing your own health

The program defines “health” holistically, including all physical, mental and social aspects of health and well-being and not just the absence of illness.

Your health is primarily your responsibility. The program is committed to supporting your efforts to maintain good health and encourages you to make careful decisions and take actions appropriate to your circumstances.

If you have been medically cleared with a health management plan, you are expected to follow it throughout the duration of your assignment (please see **3.2.5 Health management plan**).

It is your responsibility to ensure that your first aid kit is up-to-date and well stocked. You are encouraged to restrict the use of your first aid kit to you and your family.

6.1.2. Self-care plan

During your onboarding process, you will be asked to complete a self-care plan. Preparing a self-care plan will assist you in thinking about your own health and consider your strategies to remain well and resilient while on assignment. You must download a copy of this in the Australian Volunteers Portal and if you wish, upload a copy for your future reference and for the program team to access when providing you with support.

6.1.3. Being prepared for serious illness or accident

Ensure that you carry your International SOS card and emergency numbers with you at all times.

In the event of serious illness or accident, you may need someone else to contact International SOS to organise appropriate medical assistance or an emergency medical evacuation on your behalf. This could be a colleague, your emergency contacts in-country and/or your neighbours. Please make sure they are aware of who to contact in this circumstance. In addition, ensure that these contacts are also aware that they must contact the in-country team.

It is your responsibility to ensure your emergency contacts in the Australian Volunteers Portal are up to date. We require two contacts in-country and two contacts in Australia.

COVID-19 update

The rate of COVID-19 community transmission varies globally and the pandemic continues to be a real threat to personal health and wellbeing in many program countries.

The risk of acquiring COVID-19 may be higher in some program locations than Australia. Participants must understand this and accept the risks involved when accepting an assignment during the pandemic.

The program has guidelines for managing COVID-19-related incidents, which can be found in your Online Resources. If you test positive for COVID-19 while you are on assignment, the program and International SOS will provide any necessary support

to you within the limitations of the local government guidelines and health agency requirements.

Detailed information about COVID-19, common symptoms, impacts on travel and risk at program locations can be found on the [International SOS Members Portal](#).

6.2. 24-hour routine and emergency support

For urgent medical and security assistance, contact International SOS Assistance Centre on +61 2 9025 2818 or via the app.

All program participants are provided with 24-hour routine and emergency advice and assistance under the program.

International SOS is the medical and security assistance provider for program participants. They have an extensive network of medical and security services and should be the first call in an emergency.

You will receive a contact card (either a plastic card or online) for International SOS. Please carry this card with you at all times, as it has the contact details to call for advice or assistance. In the event of an international medical emergency, you (or someone acting on your behalf) can call the 24-hour number printed on this card or dial the nearest Assistance Centre via the one touch button in the International SOS Assistance App. Note: the number on the card is “02” as International SOS Australia is based in Sydney.

In the event of a medical or security-related incident, you must call International SOS and your in-country team or other program representative as directed. In all other incidents, near misses or emergencies, please call your in-country team.

Contact details for International SOS can be found on the inside cover of this guidebook.

6.2.1. Services provided by International SOS

International SOS services are not just for emergencies. Program participants are encouraged to call International SOS for routine queries, advice and referral services and/or to speak with a doctor (or other medical practitioner) or security specialist at any time.

Where appropriate, International SOS will provide:

- Access to a registered medical practitioner for routine medical advice and emergency assistance
- Referrals to suitable clinics, medical facilities or dispensaries
- A second opinion on treatment or surgery, if deemed necessary by International SOS medical practitioners
- Payment guarantees to hospitals, and insurance verification, where practicable, above the self-pay AUD\$250 threshold and when authorised by the insurer and AVI/the program
- Hospital case management
- Emergency transportation to the nearest suitable hospital
- Emergency medical movement for the purpose of health care, if necessary.

6.2.2. When contacting International SOS

You will need to tell International SOS your name, your status as an Australian volunteer or AAD, your contact details, and while not essential it is useful to provide the program’s International SOS Membership number. This number (**12AYCA789741**) is on your International SOS contact card and can be found in the International SOS Assistance App once you have registered.

When speaking with International SOS please clearly articulate your request for assistance and make sure that you understand what they have agreed to do and within what time frame. You have the option to ask for a call back and can make reverse charge call requests.

In the case of an emergency, if you cannot contact the in-country team, you can call International SOS who will contact the program for you. Likewise, program staff can assist you if you are unable to contact International SOS.

6.2.3. International SOS assistance app

The Australian Volunteers Program and International SOS have partnered to create a dedicated website portal and mobile app to provide you with current security and medical travel alerts. The International SOS Assistance App is an excellent resource for volunteers considering regional travel outside of the country of assignment. It also has a handy one-touch

dial to the nearest International SOS Assistance Centre.

Go to the Apple or Android app store and search for International SOS or use links below.

<https://www.internationalsos.com/assistance-app>

Once downloaded, login to the app by entering the following membership number into the “login with membership ID” box at the bottom left corner of the app screen: 12AYCA789741.

Be sure to select “remember my ID” when logging in to the app, so that you don’t need to enter your membership ID when you next use the app.

Once you have logged in, you can search for and “save” your country of assignment to ensure that alerts for that country are quickly accessible.

We also recommend you enter your profile details in the app including your local contact number and email address. Full guidelines for both the app and the portal can be found in your online resources.

6.2.4. Costs involved in emergency assistance

Hospital and medical expenses incurred internationally are covered for each insured person. Where International SOS is unable to guarantee payments to hospitals or medical practitioners, you will have to bear the costs for medical services. You will subsequently be reimbursed for those medical costs that are covered under AVI’s insurance policy, which covers the Australian Volunteers Program. (Please see section 8.2.2 Self-pay expectation).

It is important to understand that expenses covered under the Australian Government’s Medicare scheme or recoverable from any other source are excluded under the program insurance policy. See 8.4.1 Medicare cover in Australia.

6.3. Mental health

If you need to speak to someone, contact Response Psychological Services

Email: response@responsepsychological.com

Phone: +613 9016 0400 or 1300 854 053

Response Psychological Services has been contracted to provide confidential counselling for all program participants. This free service provides you with the opportunity to speak to a psychologist who

is experienced in assisting people living and working on international assignments.

This clinical counselling service generally provides short-term solution-focused support for all personal and assignment-related issues. Each program participant is allocated a total of three (3) hours of phone counselling; however, in exceptional circumstances this can be extended by prior approval.

The simplest way to get in touch with Response Psychological Services is to email (see above) – they will reply and arrange a time to conduct the counselling session. If needed, you can ask your in-country team to assist you with contacting Response Psychological Services.

In some circumstances the program will recommend or require a program participant to speak with a counsellor; for example, after a traumatic incident, or program evacuation. Additionally, you may be required to have an assignment de-brief with a counsellor in the event of an assignment extension or transfer.

Contact details for Response Psychological Services can also be found on the inside cover of this guidebook and in your online resources.

COVID-19 update

During the pandemic, participants may experience an increased feeling of isolation due to limited travel options, quarantine/self-isolation requirements and possible lockdowns or restricted movement.

It is important to prepare your self-care strategies prior to departure and to remain connected with family, friends, other volunteers and the in-country team while you are in-country.

Speak with Response Psychological Services if you are feeling isolated, require psychological support, or at any other time. Also revisit [Resilience and wellbeing](#), as part of the [Staying Safe and Well](#) module, in your pre-departure learning.

6.4. Pregnancy

As a volunteer, you have committed yourself to a partner organisation for the length of your assignment. Your partner organisation is not obliged to alter terms and conditions if you or your partner become pregnant and cannot work for all or part of that time.

Under the program, a program participants who becomes pregnant while on assignment may be required to:

- Pass a medical check on confirmation of pregnancy; and
- Return to Australia at 28 weeks to see the pregnancy to term.

For health and safety reasons, a pregnant program participant may be required to leave the assignment location prior to the 28 week mark, if:

- There is insufficient infrastructure to support the mother and child/children during pregnancy; and
- Their health check is not cleared.

If the volunteer is likely to be absent from the assignment for four (4) weeks or more, the ongoing viability of the assignment must be assessed.

Before being allowed to return to the assignment location:

- The mother and child/children must clear another medical check; and
- The assignment location must have sufficient infrastructure to support the mother and child/children for the remainder of the assignment.

Once these pre-requisites have been met, the program will consider an application to include the child/children on the program as an AAD. AVI's medical and travel insurance policy does not cover any costs associated with the birth of the child/children until such time as the child/children are included on the program as an AAD.

For information on exclusions to your insurance coverage please see **8.4 Exclusions**.

6.5. Medical evacuations and relocations

If you are sick or injured and cannot be adequately treated in your assignment location, it may be decided that you need to travel for medical treatment. In this case, International SOS may arrange travel to the nearest appropriate treatment facility and seek coverage from the insurer for the treatment. You may need to travel to Australia or another 'centre of medical excellence'.

The decision to evacuate or relocate you is made in collaboration between yourself, the Australian

Volunteers Program and International SOS, based on their recommendations.

COVID-19 update

In a COVID-19 context, it is considerably more complex to arrange evacuations and relocations. However, International SOS has the capability to conduct evacuations for urgent care across all current program locations. It must be noted that evacuations may not occur as quickly as they may under normal circumstances.

Due to border restrictions, aircraft availability and quarantine requirements, international travel for non-urgent medical care (e.g. non-emergency dental) may not be feasible.

Where possible, priority will be given to receiving medical care locally.

For each program location, the Australian Volunteers Program and International SOS have detailed knowledge of available medical facilities and services, and will work together to identify the most suitable location for the required treatment. The decision to relocate or evacuate is made in consideration of: your medical needs and diagnosis, best possible care and treatment available, access to a support network or family nearby, further rehabilitation options, and cost. Keep in mind that the intention is always to evacuate you 'in the direction of home' as it is important to consider the recovery plan and the level of support available to you. Where there is a realistic choice of treatment locations e.g. between different facilities in Australia, your preferences may be taken into account.

Program participants should never organise your own relocation. It is essential that the program and International SOS are involved in any decision regarding your medical evacuation or relocation - to make effective decisions, afford you the most appropriate level of care in the context, guarantee the best medical outcome, and to ensure that the potential costs incurred will be covered under insurance.

Refer to **8.2.5 Coverage for emergency relocation or repatriation** and the insurance policy for more information.

6.5.1. Support if you are medically evacuated or relocated

You should stay in touch with the program throughout any medical leave.

If you are medically evacuated or relocated to Australia, your point of contact for program and assignment-related matters will be the Melbourne office. If you are medically relocated to another country, your point of contact will remain with your in-country team. You are expected to keep the program updated of your progress and recovery where possible, in order to manage your return to assignment if/when you are fit and ready.

Remember that you can also contact Response Psychological Services at any time.

6.5.2. Per diem entitlement

We acknowledge that participants may incur additional expenses if medically relocated to Australia, or another country outside of their assignment location.

If you have been relocated for medical reasons by International SOS, you may be entitled to a 'per diem' (additional daily allowance) to assist with these extra costs.

In this instance you are entitled to \$25 per day (per diem) payment if staying in a hotel or hospital, and \$50 per day (per diem) payment if staying with family or friends, up to a limit of 30 days.

To claim the per diem payment, use the Corporate Services Network claims portal. See **8.5.1 Online claims**.

It is important to understand that expenses covered under the Australian Government's Medicare scheme or recoverable from any other source are excluded under the program insurance policy. See 8.4.1 Medicare cover in Australia.

6.5.3. Leave entitlement

From the moment you are evacuated or relocated, you are considered on 'special leave' from the program. See **5.5.5 Special leave**.

6.5.4. Return to assignment

The decision to return should take into account the medical outlook/prognosis, your personal circumstances, the location/context and viability of continuing with your specific assignment. You also

need to decide that you are personally ready (physically, psycho-socially, emotionally) to return to your assignment.

Before you can return to your assignment, you will need to be medically cleared by a registered medical practitioner such as your treating doctor, surgeon or psychiatrist. This medical clearance or certificate should include:

- "Fit to fly" clearance – which states that you are well enough to fly back to your country of assignment. In some circumstances, this clearance may make specific recommendations such as waiting times after surgery, seating arrangements or support required from the airline.
- Return to assignment clearance – which states that you are fit for the normal hours, normal duties and normal environment of your assignment. This clearance may provide recommendations for ongoing treatment after return to assignment.

Once you have been cleared, you should contact International SOS to arrange your return to assignment. If the initial relocation or evacuation travel costs were covered by insurance, then the travel costs for the return to your assignment after treatment are also covered.

In complex cases, program participants may be required to consult with International SOS' Chief Medical Officer as part of a Return to Assignment Assessment. This assessment is undertaken to ensure the risks to your health are carefully considered and minimised. **The program reserves the right to deny a return to assignment in certain health-related circumstances, where the risk is deemed too great.**

If you are not well enough to return, you may have to seek an 'early return' from your assignment. The program will seek to support you in wrapping up your assignment, retrieving belongings from your assignment location and any other necessary arrangements. See **5.9.1 Volunteer early return**.



7. Safety and security

7.1. General safety

In the case of any security incident or threat, call emergency services if required and your in-country team immediately.

Your safety is primarily your responsibility. It is expected that you always exercise caution in regard to all aspects of your personal safety and security. This includes road safety, such as being a licensed driver, having the appropriate insurance to drive a vehicle, wearing an approved helmet, and using a seat belt. This also includes taking care of your possessions while on assignment.

Security advice and directives provided by staff override any other protocols or advice provided by third parties. This includes advice given by locals or generally accepted local practice, but not local law.

You may be provided with updated security briefings at in-country meetings, as well as any additional information that might be important regarding your assignment and/or location.

Failure to follow a directive may result in the termination of your assignment.

7.1.1. 24-hour security assistance from International SOS

As the dedicated emergency assistance provider for program participants, International SOS has an extensive network of medical and security services.

You will receive a contact card for International SOS with the reference **12AYCA789741**. Please carry this card with you at all times, as it has the contact details to call for advice or assistance. In the event of

a security emergency, or if you feel unsafe, you (or someone acting on your behalf) can call the 24-hour number printed on this card or dial the nearest Assistance Centre via the one touch button in the International SOS Assistance App. In all circumstances, contact your in-country team as a first port of call.

For more information, see **6.2.1 Services provided by International SOS**.

7.1.2. Incident reporting

All incidents related to safety or security, even if the incident seems minor or is only a threat, must be reported to the in-country team as soon as possible, or within 24 hours at the latest.

Such incidents may have implications of which you might not be aware, and which may become apparent at a later date. Non-reporting of such incidents may have negative implications for you, the program, other volunteers, and any related insurance claims.

This includes:

- Near misses;
- Medical emergencies;
- Hospitalisation;
- Medical relocations (for treatment in another region or country); and
- Medical evacuations (medevacs) to another country or back to Australia.
- Crime
- Fraud
- Harassment
- Lost or damaged belongings, where you intend to claim them on insurance.

Please refer to the [Security Guidelines](#) and your [Country Security Plan](#).

COVID-19 update

If you or someone in your close contact (at work, at home or in the community) tests positive to COVID-19, or there is an outbreak in your assignment location, you must Follow local health directives, including around any requirements to self-isolate.

Contact your in-country team and International SOS immediately for further instructions. See the program's *COVID-19 Guidelines* in your Online Resources for more information.

7.2. Travel restrictions

Occasionally, and at times of heightened security, you may be asked to restrict your movement or abide by curfews or avoid areas classed as 'No Go Zones'. Any breach of these directives or stipulation in the [Country Security Plan](#) is reportable to DFAT as a "Level 3 incident".

Further information about travel restrictions can be found in the relevant [Country Security Plan](#) (see below), DFAT Smart Traveller advisories and in the International SOS Assistance App.

From time to time, the program may issue a standing restriction on travel to certain locations due to risk.

A breach of security guidelines may result in the termination of your assignment.

7.3. Country security plan

The [Country Security Plan](#) for your country of assignment is found in your online resources on the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#).

The Country Security Plan seeks to outline the main risks to your safety and security while on assignment, to assist you to minimise the impact of incidents and to respond appropriately should an incident occur. It also sets out procedures and actions to be taken within the context of your country of assignment, and the procedures to be followed in the case of an emergency. It may also include 'No Go Zones'.

All program participants must read the Country Security Plan and familiarise themselves with the specific risks in-country.

7.4. Personal security

7.4.1. Personal Security Plan

The [Personal Security Plan](#) is a living document that details your in-country contact details, emergency contacts (Australia and in-country) and assessment of your local area. This is one of your most important documents, as it allows the program to assist you in the event of an emergency.

It must be completed within three (3) weeks of finding permanent accommodation, updated when there is any change in the details and on a yearly basis regardless of the circumstances.

It is your responsibility to complete and regularly update your Personal Security Plan as required.

You should be familiar with your Personal Security Plan and keep copies easily accessible at home and your workplace.

7.4.2. Accommodation Security Plan

The [Accommodation Security Plan](#) is an important security document as it allows you to make an early assessment of your accommodation and any relevant risks associated with it.

The Accommodation Security Plan must be completed and uploaded in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#) within three (3) weeks of finding your permanent accommodation. Any changes to your accommodation must be updated in the Accommodation Security Plan. You must also notify your in-country team immediately.

If you are in-country for six (6) weeks or less, and accommodation has been booked for you, you do not need to complete an Accommodation Security Plan.

7.5. Security equipment

In some circumstances, program participants may be provided with security equipment. This may include satellite phone, personal locator beacon (PLB) or life jacket.

The decision to provide you with this equipment will be based on the risk assessment of your location including remoteness, likelihood of water travel and at the discretion of your in-country team.

If you are provided with security equipment then it is your responsibility to take care of it and return it

in its original condition (with reasonable wear/tear) to the in-country team upon completion of your assignment. Participants may be required to cover the costs of any equipment not returned or returned with unreasonable damage.

7.6. Use of a car or motorbike

There are strict guidelines for volunteers regarding the safety and use of motor vehicles (includes cars, motorbikes, scooters) while on assignment.

AVI has a duty of care to all program participants for the duration of their assignment. This applies regardless of whether an activity is carried out during or outside of business hours and whether or not related to their assignment. As such, the program maintains a strict policy governing the use of vehicles to minimise property damage, injury and loss of life.

Please refer to the [Country Security Plan](#) of your assignment country and the [Motor Vehicle Use Policy](#).

7.6.1 Motorbikes and scooters

Only program participants who hold a Provisional or Full Driver Licence from an Australian State or Territory or Approved Jurisdiction is allowed to drive a motorcycle on assignment. Additional restrictions apply to participants who have held their license for less than six months prior to arrival on assignment.

For information about being a passenger on a motorcycle, refer to your local [Country Security Plan](#).

A motorcycle can only be driven (or ridden) while wearing an approved motorcycle helmet. Any passengers, where a program participant is the driver, must also be wearing an approved motorcycle helmet.

For security (and other) reasons, it may not be permissible for participants to drive/ride in some locations or situations. This will be advised by the relevant Program Manager and stated in the [Country Security Plan](#), or issued as a further security directive.

Refer to the [Motor Vehicle Use Policy](#) for more information, including liability, safety, roadworthiness and insurance.

The program has the right to refuse an individual from driving any vehicle whilst on the program, on the basis of risks to safety and security - regardless

of country of assignment or individually held licenses.

7.6.2 Owning a car

If purchasing a motor vehicle, it is your responsibility to assess its roadworthiness or safety.

The onus is on the participant to do all the necessary checks and obtain insurance to drive the vehicle and protect its contents. This is not covered under AVI's insurance policy. Insurance only covers the excess payable for loss related to a hire vehicle, in accordance with the maximum limits set out in the insurance policy documentation.

Refer to the [Motor Vehicle Use Policy](#) for more information about owning and driving a car.

7.7. Water travel safety

Boat accidents are not uncommon in some countries because some vessels used for domestic services, such as taxis/excursions, are not subject to international standards. They may not be licensed or regulated depending on the laws of the country you reside in. Consequently, the vessel's construction, operation and maintenance, crew training, evacuation procedures, and safety equipment may not be of the same standards as you would find in Australia.

If travelling on a boat, you must ensure that you have a life jacket and a Personal Locator Beacon.

See [Water Travel Safety](#) in your online resources for guidance to ensure that your travel by boat is a safe and enjoyable one, and minimises any risks to your safety.

7.8. Emergency relocation and evacuation for security reasons

In case of an emergency, the program reserves the right to relocate or evacuate program participants.

Decisions about relocation or evacuation of program participants in the event of war, unpredictable and violent political situations, epidemics or natural disaster will be coordinated by the program with the Australian or other diplomatic missions in the host country.

You must follow program-issued security directives and ensure that the in-country team has your most

up-to-date contact details at all times. If a relocation or evacuation appears imminent, keep in contact with the program and in-country staff, and the authorities issuing emergency instructions.

The program typically pre-emptively relocates volunteers to a safe house in-country, and as a precursor to any out of country evacuation. Most safety and security incidents resolve and volunteers can return to their assignment locations from an in-country safe house.

As part of our duty of care, you may also be directed to relocate to a safer location in a nearby country while the security context in the country of your assignment is reassessed.

Should you be evacuated or relocated, you will continue to receive your program accommodation and living allowance for four (4) weeks. At the conclusion of one month, the program will reassess the viability of your assignment.

If you refuse or fail to follow program directives during relocation or evacuation, the program reserves the right to terminate your participation on the program immediately.

Relocations or evacuations can be stressful and we encourage volunteers to contact the program's psycho-social support service provider, Response Psychological if required.

7.8.1. Respite

Respite involves a program participant taking temporary leave from the assignment location to a safer environment. The duration and location of this respite will be discussed and agreed with your in-country staff.

Respite is typically offered in the following circumstances:

- If a program participant's experiences shock or trauma and the Program Manager or Regional Director believes some 'time-out' is needed; and
- If the security situation in the country of assignment becomes heightened, but does not yet warrant a full-scale relocation or evacuation.



8. Insurance

8.1. Insurance coverage provided by the program

Program participants are provided with insurance coverage while on assignment.

Chubb Insurance: Provides the insurance cover.

International SOS: Provides expatriate emergency medical assistance during your assignment.

Corporate Services Network : Administers claims in relation to the insurance policy.

The insurance policy gives coverage in the event of property loss, injury, illness, disability and death. Cover commences from the time you depart for your assignment includes approved travel during your assignment.

Insurance coverage does not cover every eventuality and contains certain standard exclusions. If you have concerns about the level of insurance cover provided, it is recommended that you seek additional individual cover prior to your departure.

The advice provided in this guidebook is for quick reference only. Full information regarding the program's insurance cover and general exclusions, and exceptions to the period of cover, are detailed in the program's insurance policies, found in your online resources.

An [Insurance Overview](#) has been prepared to highlight key features of the insurance policy. This document is available in your online resources on the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#).

Remember to keep all receipts to evidence your claims.

COVID-19 Update

In a COVID-19 context, the program retains a comprehensive insurance policy covering program participant and staff travel. The program may reimburse the cost of mandatory COVID tests in-country. To check whether or not the program can cover the cost, please contact the in-country team.

8.1.1 Duration of insurance coverage

Insurance coverage begins from the day you leave home for assignment and ends when you return home from assignment. This includes 14 days from the end date of your assignment to 'facilitate repatriation' i.e. allow you to time to pack up and travel back to Australia.

If you choose to remain in-country longer than the 14-day period, your coverage will cease on the 15th day.

These 14 days are not intended to include travel outside of your assignment location. If you want to undertake further travel after the completion of your assignment, you should arrange your own travel insurance.

8.2. Medical cover

It is essential that International SOS is advised immediately of any illness/injury. Failure to do so may result in your medical expenses not being covered under insurance, including costs for medical evacuation and relocation. See **6.5 Medical evacuations and relocations**.

8.2.1. Medical expenses covered

The insurance policy covers medical expenses incurred internationally for the treatment of accidental bodily injury, sickness or disease.

This includes:

- Consultations with a treating medical officer;
- Consultations with a surgeon or specialist on referral from the above practitioner;
- Follow-up treatment on referral from the above practitioner;
- Emergency dental treatment;
- Emergency optical treatment; and
- Physiotherapy or chiropractic treatment and specific medical supplies if medically necessary and if authorised by the program and the insurer.

(Please see section 8.4 Exclusions)

8.2.2. Self-pay expectation

There may be occasions where medical expenses incurred internationally do not meet the AUD\$250 threshold for the placement of a guarantee of payment (for example an AUD\$40 fee for a GP clinic visit). In these circumstances you are expected to have enough money to cover the cost of the services provided. You will subsequently be reimbursed for those medical costs that are covered under the program's insurance policy.

8.2.3. Death and disability

Insurance cover provides for death or disability that arises from accidental injury.

8.2.4. Age limitations

There are certain limitations on the medical and travel benefits of the policy for program participants who are 75 years of age, or older. These benefits are further limited when the covered person is over 80 years and 90 years respectively. For further details, please read the full policy wording.

8.2.5. Coverage for emergency relocation or repatriation

Should an illness or injury arise which cannot be adequately treated at the place of assignment, International SOS will arrange financial coverage and necessary arrangements for you to be treated in a nearby centre of medical excellence, or in some

cases, to be returned back to Australia. See 6.5 **Medical evacuations and relocations**.

It is essential that AVI and International SOS are involved in any decision-making around emergency repatriation to ensure that the proposed plan is medically appropriate, logistically feasible, and financially coverable.

You may be covered for expenses relating to transports/transfers, accommodation, medical appointment, medicines and other expenses. For specific coverage and claims enquiries, contact Corporate Services Network directly 8.5.

Return to assignment travel costs are covered as long as the initial medical evacuation/relocation from assignment was also covered by insurance.

Please note that emergency repatriation due to any undisclosed illness or injury may not be covered under the program's insurance.

8.2.6. Cover for incidents caused by war or invasion

AVI's insurance policies include a standard exclusion in the event of any injury or loss of property incurred as a result of an act of war, declared or undeclared, civil war or invasion. The insurer may decline to pay if the injury or loss is deemed to have occurred as a result of these excluded events.

8.3. Other cover

8.3.1 Baggage and personal effects

The insurance covers your baggage and personal effects for the duration of your assignment. Coverage is limited to AUD\$2,500 per item and up to a total of AUD\$10,000. Electronic equipment is covered up to AUD\$5,000 per item/per claim i.e. a claim for two laptops each worth AUD\$3,000 – total claimable is AUD\$5,000.

Please note an AUD\$250 excess applies to each and every baggage claim, to be covered by the claimant. *Note: Money and travel documents (e.g. passport) are covered to a limit of AUD\$1,000. Insurer's description of electronic equipment includes cameras. **Money and travel documents are not covered if left unattended, or if they are lost or stolen while in 'checked-in' luggage.***

All incidents regarding theft/loss or damage of property must be reported to the in-country team.

8.3.2 Death or illness of a relative

The insurance covers travel to Australia in the event of unexpected death, serious injury or illness of relatives that is not the result of a pre-existing condition (please see **8.4 Exclusions**). A relative is defined as parent, spouse/partner, child, brother, sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, half-brother, half-sister, fiancé(e), niece, nephew, uncle, aunt, stepchild, grandparent or grandchild.

Travel arrangements of this nature should be discussed with the in-country team before taking action. (See **5.5.5 Special leave**)

8.3.3 Professional indemnity insurance

Professional indemnity insurance is required for all volunteers who are acting as a medical, allied health or legal professional whilst on assignment. On these assignments, professional indemnity insurance must be provided by the partner organisation, Australian organisation (if applicable) or self-arranged by the volunteer as part of ongoing professional obligations.

For all other assignments, professional indemnity insurance is not automatically provided for volunteers. You should consult your partner organisation about the need for professional indemnity insurance for your role prior to your departure. Where required and/or you consider it essential for you to hold this insurance, you are advised to please discuss this with the Volunteer Services Manager in Melbourne prior to your departure.

8.4. Exclusions

The insurance policy has several standard exclusions:

- Expenses incurred where a journey is undertaken against the advice of a doctor or when the insured person is unfit to travel; please note that a medical clearance must be sought from International SOS when returning to assignment after an injury or illness;
- Expenses incurred where the purpose of the journey is for the insured person to seek medical attention and International SOS has not agreed to the journey;
- Expenses incurred after the period of 24 months from the date the insured person sustains an injury or sickness;
- Expenses incurred for treatment (including medication) required to manage a condition which commenced prior to the assignment and for which the insured person has been advised to continue during the assignment;
- Expenses incurred for routine medical, optical or dental treatment or consultation (**this includes routine immunisations for children who have AAD status**);
- Expenses incurred as a consequence of a condition wholly or partly caused by childbirth, pregnancy or the complications thereof, unless such expenses relate to emergency medical complications that are not considered routine treatment and are incurred before the 30th week during term of pregnancy (please note that the program requires you to return to Australia at 28 weeks). (Please see **section 6.4 Pregnancy**);
- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) or other sexually transmitted diseases. However, this exclusion does not apply to the accidental contraction following medical treatment provided by a registered medical practitioner or nurse rendered necessary as a result of injury or sickness as defined, and/or assault, and/or in respect to those insured persons who through their particular work-related activities accidentally contract HIV, provided the incident causing such contraction was reported to and documented by the program and a medical practitioner within five (5) days of such incident;
- Declared or undeclared war, civil war or invasion once an event has been publicly acknowledged by the DFAT or other such government department/agency (except for the first seven days, to allow time for evacuation);
- Suicide, attempted suicide or any deliberately self-inflicted injury or self-harm;
- Being a pilot or crew member of any aircraft, or engaging in aerial activity except as a passenger in any properly licensed aircraft;
- Training or participating in professional sports of any kind;
- Expenses covered under the Australian Government's Medicare scheme (whether in whole or in part);

- Expenses recoverable from any other source;
- Any expenses that are prohibited by law from being paid;
- Any expenses incurred whilst on approved travel or leave to unapproved locations; and
- General medicines and pharmaceuticals.

These exclusions apply to all program participants. Please note each claim will be assessed by the program's insurers. There are some exclusions to the policy which, if apply, may invalidate your claim. For further details on what is covered under the program's insurance policy please refer to the policy, which is available in the online resources.

8.4.1. Medicare cover in Australia

As outlined in the insurance policy, medical cover in Australia is **only** for ongoing matters that were first treated while on assignment, are deemed required by a medical professional, but not covered by Medicare.

During visits to Australia, or when medically evacuated to Australia, program participants are required to be covered by Australia's Medicare system. This is because the program's international medical insurance policy is not intended for use in Australia. Medicare covers you for basic medical and hospital costs. In accordance with Australian laws, program insurance does not cover any gap between the fee for service and the Medicare rebate.

Please ensure that you have Medicare or private health insurance coverage. This is particularly important should you return to Australia unexpectedly.

If you are Australian and no longer eligible for Medicare then you will be expected to reactivate Medicare cover when you return to Australia for treatment.

If you go to Australia for a holiday, AVI does not provide medical insurance cover during that time.

8.5. Making a claim

Corporate Services Network administers claims in relation to the insurance policy.

An insurance claim is the sole responsibility of the program participant. Submitting and tracking the insurance claim is the task of the volunteer as claimant. The program is not involved in, nor responsible for this process nor any related costs such as excess

8.5.1. Online claims

To make a claim while you are on assignment, please visit the Corporate Services Network claims website: <https://avi.csnet.com.au>.

You can submit medical and other claims, check the progress of claims, view and update your details 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You will receive your username and password to access this portal advice directly from Corporate Services Network. The claims portal is administered by Corporate Services Network. If you experience any problems with the website or have forgotten your password, please email claims@csnet.com.au or use the [online contact form](#).

For further information on how to use the website please read [the instructions](#) from Corporate Services Network.

8.5.2. Claims documentation

Speedy resolution of claims depends to a large extent on sufficient documentation, so the following guidelines should be followed:

- Retain copies of receipts for your records;
- Complete all relevant sections of the form;
- Forward all receipts and dockets with the claim;
- Include your bank account details in the space provided for prompt payment;
- Itemise each payment to be reimbursed;
- Calculate the total to be reimbursed in local currency and Australian dollars; and
- Submit claims direct to the insurer as per the claim form provided to you.
- Additional information for baggage and money claims:
- Always report damage, loss or theft of property to local police (with assistance from in-country staff or relevant authorities;
- Attach a copy of the official report to the claim form; and
- Provide proof of purchase or ownership of lost goods and evidence of any repairs.

It may take up to eight (8) weeks for the claim to be processed.

For a full summary of insurance cover, please refer to the insurance policy in your online resources.

Contact Corporate Services Network for specific policy coverage questions.

8.5.3. Making claims after return to Australia

Any claims made after your return to Australia should be lodged by submitting your completed

claims form directly to Corporate Services Network at: claims@csnet.com.au

Contact details of Corporate Services Network can also be found on the inside cover of this guidebook.



9. Media and public diplomacy

9.1. Sharing your story

Sharing your experiences, the work of your partner organisation and the contribution international volunteering makes to sustainable development is an important part of your volunteer assignment. It helps increase awareness of and broader participation in the Australian Volunteers Program.

Please refer to the [Volunteer Media Guide](#) in your online resources for further information about media activity, social media and approvals.

Contact your in-country team or the Public Diplomacy Team on media@australianvolunteers.com

9.1.1. How to speak about your volunteer role

When talking about your participation in the program, please refer to yourself as 'a volunteer on an Australian Volunteers Program assignment'. Always acknowledge that the Australian Volunteers Program is an Australian Government initiative.

9.2. Public comments

Volunteers are actively encouraged to share their stories by participating in media, publicity, social media and community engagement activities.

Public comments should focus on your volunteer activities and experience. These activities may be generated by DFAT, the program, requests from media outlets, or volunteers may identify opportunities themselves. The program will provide advice to volunteers participating in publicity

activities to help them share their experiences and promote the work of their partner organisations.

While you do not officially represent the program or the Australian Government, your comments or behaviour will reflect on these entities, and on Australia more broadly. Do not comment on sensitive local or global issues, local or Australian politics, Australia's aid program, emergency situations or other sensitive issues, even if asked. You must not speak on behalf of the Australian Government or comment on Australian Government policy.

You must inform your partner organisation and your in-country team before engaging in media activities, including submitting articles for publication or participating in interviews, so the necessary approvals can be gained. Allow a minimum of three (3) working days for approval to participate in a media interview and five (5) working days for approval of an article. Program staff will liaise with DFAT for approval and will inform you of the outcome as soon as received from DFAT. Media engagement might be prohibited in the case of politically sensitive issues or context, security risks or other extenuating factors.

9.3. Personal websites and blogs

You may maintain personal websites, social media and blogs to share your experiences while on assignment; however, the content of these sites should in no way bring the program, your partner organisation, the governments of Australia or your host country, the Australian Volunteers Program or AVI into disrepute.

9.4. Images of children

There are strict guidelines around photographing or filming children or using children's images

The Australian Volunteer Program bases image gathering and publishing processes on ethical standards: assessment of risk to the child (with extra care taken for especially vulnerable children); child safety; respect of the child's rights, integrity and dignity; obtaining and documenting informed consent from the child's parent/caregiver and, if possible, the child themselves.

The program prioritises the best interests and protection of children over the opportunity for advocacy and promotion.

When photographing or filming a child, or using children's images, you must:

- Take care to ensure local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a child
- Obtain informed consent from the child and/or parent or guardian of the child before

photographing, recording or filming any image of a child

- Explain to the child and their parent or guardian how the photograph or film will be used Not offer or give remuneration or in-kind gifts for taking a photograph or film
- Ensure photographs and videos present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner
- Ensure that children are adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts
- Ensure file labels, metadata or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form. This includes not providing any information that could be used to locate the child, not including any geocoding or other GPS references, and never using children's names as captions.

For more information, refer to the [Australian Volunteer Code of Conduct](#), [Child Protection Code of Conduct](#) and [Child Protection Policy](#).



10. Coming home

10.1. Planning for your return

Before the scheduled end of your assignment, your [Australian Volunteers Portal](#) will change to the “Coming Home” stage and you will be contacted by the program team in Melbourne. Keep an eye out for important information regarding your preparation to return home and services available to you on return to Australia from assignment.

10.1.1. Return ticket/s

At the conclusion of an assignment, the program provides program participants with an economy airfare to Australia, from your country of assignment.

Program participants on assignments of 6 months and less will typically have their return flight booked in conjunction with their flight to assignment. Volunteers on longer assignments will book their own travel home, through Corporate Traveller, near the end of their assignment.

For the program to cover the cost of your flight, participants must travel home within 3 months of their assignment end date.

For details on how to book your flight home, changes to your returning home flight and any in-transit supports, see the [Travel Handbook](#).

Corporate Traveller details:

Phone: +61 3 8535 1580

Email: avi@corporatetraveller.com.au

After Hours Assistance

From within Australia: 1300 654 805

From overseas: +61 7 3199 5838

COVID-19 update

Travellers to Australia may be required to complete a mandatory quarantine period upon arrival in Australia. The cost of mandatory quarantine and any related COVID-19 testing will be covered by the program. Speak with your in-country team and Corporate Traveller at the time of booking and before departure to understand the current requirements and process.

If you are required to quarantine, you will be provided with a contact person in the Melbourne office, for regular wellbeing checks and assistance with navigating the quarantine and returning home process.

10.2. Remaining in-country

The program advises relevant stakeholders of the completion of each volunteer assignment and the changed status of the individuals concerned.

Should you decide to remain in-country and seek work after the conclusion of your assignment, it is your responsibility to organise the necessary visa and work permits.

You should be mindful that remaining in your country of assignment in paid employment could be perceived as taking jobs from local people, which could endanger the reputation and operating context of the program.

AVI’s insurance cover is to facilitate repatriation, giving you reasonable time to pack up and travel back to Australia at the conclusion of your assignment. If you want to stay in-country after the

completion of your assignment, you should arrange your own travel insurance beyond this time. See

8.1.1 Duration of insurance coverage.

COVID-19 Update

If you choose to remain in-country during the COVID-19 pandemic, you accept full responsibility for your health and security from the moment your assignment is complete.

The Australian Volunteers Program cannot accept responsibility for Australian citizens and residents who are not current participants on the program.

10.3. Travelling after your assignment

At the end of your assignment, the program provides a one-way ticket back to Australia. For the program to cover the cost of your flight, participants must travel home within 3 months of their assignment end date.

If you do not want to take up this ticket and wish to travel after your assignment to another location, then this will be at your own cost.

The program's insurance coverage is to facilitate repatriation, giving you reasonable time to pack up and travel back to Australia at the conclusion of your assignment. If you want to undertake further travel after the completion of your assignment, you should arrange your own travel insurance beyond this time. See **8.1.1 Duration of insurance coverage.**

COVID-19 Update

If you choose to travel to another country during the COVID-19 pandemic, you accept full responsibility for your health and security from the moment your assignment is complete.

The Australian Volunteers Program cannot accept responsibility for Australian citizens and residents who are not participants on the program.

10.4. Applying for another assignment

The Australian Volunteers Program recognises and values the enhanced skills and expertise of returned volunteers as a result of their volunteering

experience. The program is also designed to maximise international volunteering opportunities for all Australians.

With this in mind, if a returned volunteer and a candidate who has not volunteered previously apply for the same role, preference will be given to the latter providing they meet the personal and professional selection criteria for the role.

There is no exclusion period in which a return volunteer is required to spend a particular amount of time back in Australia, before they can be considered for another assignment.

Breaches of Code of Conduct in previous assignments are recorded and taken into consideration when returned volunteers apply for another assignment.

10.5. End of assignment

10.5.2. Completing your end of assignment evaluation

Please ensure that you complete and return the End of Assignment Evaluation form, along with any outstanding reports.

See **5.7 Assignment outcomes.**

10.5.3. Exit interviews

Prior to the end of your assignment you must complete an exit interview with your in-country team staff or another program staff member (upon request). If you have not been invited to complete an exit interview, please contact your in-country team. See **5.7.6 Exit interviews.**

10.6. When you are back home

10.6.4. Post-assignment health assessment

An in-country volunteer assignment, the journey home, and re-entry into life in Australia can be emotionally and physically taxing. Any illness after returning home should be taken seriously and treated appropriately.

You are encouraged to undergo a post-assignment health assessment as soon as possible following

assignment completion, ideally within 10 weeks of the end date of your assignment.

You may also elect to undergo a face-to-face health check with a medical practitioner within this period. The program will cover the cost of a post-assignment health check with a medical practitioner if required. This includes TB testing and treatment for those volunteers returning from high-risk countries.

If you do not complete the post-assignment health assessment within the 10 weeks from the end date of your assignment, you are still encouraged to get a health check however, this will be at your own cost.

You will be provided information about how to complete your post-assignment health assessment and health check in your return support email. For any questions about this, please email rvsupport@australianvolunteers.com.

Note: Your face to face GP appointment is reimbursed by the program (not International SOS) so please be in contact with the Return Support Team in Melbourne about this.

Any insurance claims related to in-country incidents that you wish to make after your assignment, are to be made directly to Corporate Services Network.

See 8.5.3 Making claims after return to Australia.

If you are between assignments

If you are in transit before being mobilised on another assignment, please note that you won't be eligible to a post-assignment screening but will fall back under the pre-deployment screening process instead.

If you are staying overseas

If you choose to stay on in the country of your assignment or to travel elsewhere internationally, you may decide to have your post-assignment health assessment while still travelling.

In this case, you are responsible for the quality of the assessment and will need to ensure that the doctor performing the medical completes the prescribed forms and forwards these to International SOS. The program will provide reimbursement equivalent to the amount charged by International SOS for the same service.

Invoices must be forwarded to the Return Support Team in Melbourne within two (2) months of the end of your assignment.

10.6.5. Settling back in workshops

The program also offers settling back in workshops to all program participants. The workshops are designed to facilitate personal reflection on the challenges of the experiences and resettlement in Australia. It also helps to identify ways to utilise your experience gained on assignment.

COVID-19 Update

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some return workshops may be held online. See the information in your invitation email or speak with the Return Support Team for more information.

10.6.6. Access to counselling services after assignment ends

Returning home can be stressful and you may have difficulty settling back into life after your time on an assignment.

You can access up to three (3) sessions of confidential counselling services through Response Psychological Services during the initial 3 months following return from assignment. Access to further sessions after this initial 3-month period will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

See **6.3 Mental health**.

10.6.7. Statement of Service

The program will provide you with an electronic **Statement of Service** after you return from assignment. This can be found in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#) until three months after your assignment end date. The **Statement of Service** confirms details of the location of assignment, partner organisation, position held and assignment length.

The program cannot provide personal references or act as a referee. You may wish to ask a colleague at your partner organisation for assistance with being a referee, but this is at the discretion of the partner organisation.

10.6.8. Contact details and staying connected

Upon completing your assignment, it is important you provide up-to-date contact details to ensure you stay connected. There are several returned volunteer events each year across Australia which are an excellent way to share your experience.

Please update your post assignment contact details directly in the [Australian Volunteers Portal](#) .

10.7. Returned Australian Volunteer Network

The Returned Australian Volunteer Network (RAVN) enables past volunteers from all Australian Government-funded overseas volunteer programs

to connect with each other and continue to tell stories and share ideas and resources, long after completing an assignment.

The RAVN e-newsletter and RAVN networking events, held in every capital city and some regional centres each year, enable past volunteers to stay engaged with the program and each other.

The RAVN LinkedIn group and state and territory Facebook groups are great ways to stay connected and find out about past volunteer events and opportunities. The LinkedIn group is for past volunteers to post interesting articles, job vacancies, and stay informed about local, state and national RAVN events coming up. Past volunteers are also welcome to post their own volunteer events.

Find RAVN at:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1111111111111111111/>

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Updates

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