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.
Key contacts for volunteers

In the case of any emergency, immediately contact:

1) Local emergency services (if available in your location)
2) Your country office staff
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 2 902 52818
Email: sydney@internationalsos.com

Response Psychological Services
24/7 counselling and psychological services for volunteers and AADs.
Email: response@responsepsychological.com
Phone: +613 9016 0400 or 1300 854 053

Corporate Services Network (formerly Fullerton Health Corporate Services)
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
Phone: (03) 8535 1580
After Hours Assist: 1300 654 805, +617 3199 5838
Email: avi@corporatetraveller.com.au

Australian Volunteers Program – country offices
If you have any questions about this guide or other program-related enquiries while on assignment, contact your local country office. Contact details for each country office are provided to all onboarding volunteers and can also be found in your online resources.
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.
Contents

1. Becoming an Australian volunteer .9
   1.1. Australian volunteer Code of Conduct..9
   1.2. Child protection .........................9
   1.3. Police clearance ..........................10
   1.4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers .........................11
   1.5. Approved Accompanying Dependents 11
   1.6. Grievance ................................12
   1.7. Privacy disclosure and consent statement ..........................13
   1.8. Definitions ................................13

2. Before you go ......................... 14
   2.1. Confirmation of assignment .......... 14
   2.2. Pre-departure health preparation .... 14
   2.3. First aid training ........................17
   2.4. Pre-departure learning ................. 17
   2.5. Getting in touch with your country office ..........................18
   2.6. Passports, visas and work permit .... 18
   2.7. Travel arrangements ................. 18
   2.8. Postponed or cancelled assignment ... 19
   2.9. Putting your affairs in order .......... 19
   2.10. Personal financial arrangements ... 20
   2.11. Registration with DFAT Smart Traveller ..........................20
   2.12. Voting while overseas ............... 20
   2.13. Emergency contacts in Australia ... 21

3. When you arrive ...................... 22
   3.1. Arrival in-country .........................22
   3.2. Accommodation ..........................22
   3.3. Personal security ........................23
   3.4. Your assignment ..........................24
   3.5. In-country training ......................24

4. On assignment ....................... 26
   4.1. The program and you .....................26
   4.2. The partner organisation and you ....27
   4.3. The local context .........................29
   4.4. Allowances ................................29
   4.5. Leave .....................................30
   4.6. Travel ....................................31
   4.7. Assignment outcomes ....................32
   4.8. Extensions .................................33
   4.9. Early returns .............................34
   4.10. Transfers ................................34

5. Looking after your health .......... 36
   5.1. Health and medical ......................36
   5.2. 24-hour routine and emergency support ................. 36
   5.3. Mental health ............................38
   5.4. Pregnancy ................................38
   5.5. Medical evacuations and relocations..38

6. Safety and security ................. 41
   6.1. General safety ...........................41
   6.2. Travel restrictions .......................42
   6.3. Country security plan ....................42
   6.4. Personal security plan ...................42
   6.5. Accommodation security form ........ 42
   6.6. Use of a car or motorbike ............. 42
   6.7. Water travel safety .......................43
   6.8. Emergency relocation and evacuation 43

7. Insurance ............................... 44
   7.1. Insurance coverage provided by the program ................. 44
   7.2. Medical cover ............................44
   7.3. Other cover ................................45
   7.4. Exclusions ................................46
   7.5. Making a claim .........................47
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Media and public diplomacy</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1. Sharing your story</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2. Public comments</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3. Personal websites and blogs</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4. Images of children</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Coming home</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1. Planning for your return</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2. Remaining in-country</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3. Travelling after your assignment</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4. Applying for another assignment</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5. End of assignment</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6. When you are back home</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.7. Returned Australian Volunteer Network</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Index</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Australian Volunteers Program

The Australian Volunteers Program is an Australian Government initiative. The Australian Government has supported thousands of Australians to volunteer overseas as part of Australia’s aid program for over 60 years, and the Australian Volunteers Program is the next chapter in 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 people-to-people program portfolio, connecting Australians to Australia’s aid program and the region, and uses international volunteering as a people-centred approach to capacity development.

The Australian Volunteers Program aims to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Partner organisations are supported by Australia to achieve their own development objectives
2. Australian volunteers gain professionally and personally
3. The public in Australia better appreciates the value of international volunteering.

By successfully achieving these three end of program outcomes, the Australian Volunteers Program will have contributed to the following broader development and diplomacy goals:

- the Australian Government is achieving its development objectives
- Australians becoming more globally literate and connected
- Australian aid is perceived positively in Australia and internationally


The Australian Volunteers Program is managed by AVI, in a consortium with Cardno Emerging Markets Pty Ltd and Whitelum Group.
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 Australian volunteers and their accompanying partners and dependent children in the field. Adherence to the guidance will also help you meet the Australian Volunteers Program (‘the program’) standards.

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 country office staff.

An electronic copy of this guidebook is also available on our website and for current volunteers, in your online resource library.

The guidebook complements Australian Volunteers Program policies, guidelines and online learning.

In particular, you should be cognisant of the following:

- Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Code of Conduct
- Country Security Plan, for the country of your assignment and any countries you visit or travel to while involved with 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
- Program insurance policies
- Volunteer Media Guide
- Privacy Disclosure and Consent Terms and Conditions.

You have access to this additional information via your online resources.
1. Becoming an Australian 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 Code of Conduct breach occurs, your country office 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 office 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, an assignment will be terminated and the volunteer will be required to return home immediately.

1.2. 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, the program defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 years.

The program promotes a rights based approach to child protection, and encourages open discussion about children’s safeguarding and protection.

The program follows AVI’s approach to child protection, including the importance of shared responsibility, zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation 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.

1.2.1. Child Protection 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 **Child Protection Policy** and **Child Protection Code of Conduct**. Consequences of not complying with the Child Protection Policy may include terminating your assignment.

### 1.2.2. Reporting child protection concerns

You must immediately report allegations 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.

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 to the program:

- When it is due to the actions of a staff member, Australian volunteer, approved accompanying dependant (AAD) or associate of the program; 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 Adviser.

### 1.3. Police clearance

Some types of convictions in Australia and overseas may prevent you from participating in the program.

The program will not allow a person onto the program if their criminal record check includes convictions or sentences for:

- Sexual offences against a child or an adult
- Violent offences against a child or an adult
- Any child abuse offence
- Stalking of a child
- Serious drug offences (trafficking a drug or supply of a drug of dependence to a child)
- Family and domestic violence offences, and
- 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.

The cost for completing Australian and international police checks is covered by the program **for preferred candidates only**.

#### 1.3.1. Australian police check

As part of the recruitment process for the program, you must complete and clear an Australian Federal Police check.

You will be required to submit a police check every two years, if you are on consecutive assignments.

#### 1.3.2. International police check

If you have spent 12 months or more living outside of Australia in the last 10 years, you will need to arrange an appropriate police clearance, or similar certification, for these time periods from each country. Please note that in some cases you may be required to sign a statutory declaration that includes disclosing any charges or spent convictions.

#### 1.3.3. Working with children check

For some assignments that involve direct work with children, a Working with Children check (WWCC) will
also be required. Refer to your assignment description.

1.4. 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 and engaging respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As part of this commitment, the program aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers, 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 indigenous.programs@australianvolunteers.com.

1.5. Approved Accompanying Dependants

Volunteers with assignments of 12 months or longer may be eligible to receive financial support for Approved Accompanying Dependants (AADs). See 1.8 Definitions.

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.

Unfortunately, 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.

Approved Accompanying Dependants criteria

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 dependent 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;
- Provision of dental clearance (dependents under 7 years of age exempted);
- Provision of police clearances;
- Successfully attend a pre-departure briefing for AADs if 18 years and older; and
- Have a valid passport (Please see 2.6.1 Passport);
- Accompanying an Australian volunteer who is on an assignment of 12 months or more; and
- Accompany the Australian 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 country office staff.

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

AAD support

The following support is provided to AADs:

- Costs for health screening and police clearance except dental clearance (Please see 2.2.6 Pre-departure health costs);
- 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); and 24-hour routine and emergency advice and assistance and insurance coverage while on assignment (Please see 5 Looking after your health and 7 Insurance).

1.5.1. Restrictions to employment of AADs

AADs cannot seek paid work whilst accompanying an Australian 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 Australian volunteer.

1.5.2. Dependents without AAD status

Partners of Australian volunteers who do not qualify for AAD status can still accompany the volunteer. In this instance, they will not 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 dependents 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 country office staff directly.

Whilst not being subject to the Volunteer Code of Conduct, it is encouraged that partners and dependents 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 partners wish to have similar medical support to volunteers they may purchase their own coverage from International SOS at https://www.internationalsos.com/personal-travel.

There are some assignment locations which are 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 country office for more information.

1.6. Grievance

1.6.1. Grievance principles

The program seeks to ensure that Australian volunteers are able to raise any issues that arise 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 country office staff as soon as possible, and they will try and resolve the matter promptly and informally.

The program is committed to exploring all reasonable avenues for reaching a collaborative resolution, wherever possible. However, it is recognised that there may be instances when this will not be possible and, in such instances, the formal grievance procedure outlined in this section will operate.

1.6.2. Grievance procedure

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, as indicated above, then you must inform the Program Manager of the grievance in writing. If the grievance relates to the Program Manager, you are to inform the Regional Director of the grievance 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 orally 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 Australian volunteer believes that the grievance has not be resolved satisfactorily then they must inform the Program Manager/Regional Director of this in writing and request that the grievance be escalated to the Overseas Operations Team in Melbourne. 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.

If the grievance is still unresolved after a further 10 working days from the referral to the Program Manager, the matter shall be referred to the Deputy Program Director or their nominee.

### 1.6.3. Complaints


### 1.7. Privacy disclosure and consent statement

All participants on the program are required to agree to the Privacy Disclosure and Consent terms and conditions. This facilitates the sharing of program information with stakeholders. You will be asked to agree to these terms and conditions during the recruitment process.

For more information, see your online resources.

### 1.8. Definitions

**Approved Accompanying Dependant:** an immediate family member (specifically child, spouse or de facto partner) who accompanies you on assignment and who has been approved by the program as a dependant, therefore entitling you to additional support.

**Child:** your child (under the age of 18) including a child legally adopted by you, who is unmarried and ordinarily resides with you.

**De facto partner:** a person involved with a partner of a different sex or of the same sex where it is satisfied that:

- The de facto relationship has been stable for 12 months or more
- There is an intention on the part of both parties that the relationship continue indefinitely
- The couple regard themselves as de facto partners.

**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.

**Spouse:** a partner who is legally married to you.

**Unsupported Dependant:** an immediate family member (specifically child, spouse or de facto 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.
2. Before you go

2.1. Confirmation of assignment

When you receive the conditional offer of an assignment there are some additional steps that must be completed before an official confirmation of your participation in the program can be provided.

These include:

- Satisfactory health clearances;
- Satisfactory completion of the pre-departure learning modules;
- Acceptance of your nomination by the partner organisation; and
- Procurement of your visa and work permits (you will be guided through this by the program).

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

The program aims to finalise all arrangements that are within our control at least two (2) weeks prior 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.

2.2. Pre-departure health preparation

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.

Once you have been selected as a preferred candidate for the program, you will be required to complete a health clearance process which includes:

- General health clearance and mandatory vaccinations
- Dental health clearance
- Mental health clearance.

The purpose of the health clearance process is to ensure that you and your AADs are medically fit to fulfil your commitment to the program.

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 undiscovered health challenges may not be covered by our insurance and
may adversely affect any emergency intervention. (Please see section 7 Insurance)

It is essential that you start the screening process as early as possible as there are many steps involved in getting clearance to go on an assignment and limited time to complete them. 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.

2.2.1. General health clearance

You will be required to complete an online medical screening with International SOS. International SOS is contracted, amongst other things, to 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 personal health profile as well as a review of your medical history via an online questionnaire and, when required, a physical assessment by a doctor. 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:

- Completing your health screening questionnaire;
- Speaking with the International SOS medical team; and
- Going for a health check (if it is required).

If the in-country portion of your assignment is six (6) weeks or less, you will be required to sign a medical declaration stating you take responsibility for all pre-existing medical conditions, stated or otherwise. You must complete this declaration truthfully and to the best of your knowledge. If necessary, a representative from International SOS or the a member of the program will contact you to discuss further.

2.2.2. Vaccinations

We recommend you consult the relevant country guide for your assignment on the International SOS 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.

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

2.2.3. Mental health clearance

As you proceed through the recruitment process as an Australian 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.

2.2.4. Dental health clearance

Volunteers are required to have a dental clearance prior to mobilisation. This is because you will be overseas for an extended period of time and the identification and management of potential underlying dental health issues is very important from a preventative perspective.

If you have visited the dentist in the past six (6) months, evidence of this must be provided. If you have not had a dental examination in the past six (6) months, the dental health clearance must involve a dental examination. Dental clearance forms can be found on the volunteer portal and the International SOS health screening portal. You are advised to seek your dental clearance prior to beginning your medical screening. Any necessary dental work that is identified in this examination has to be completed prior to your departure, and at your own cost.
Volunteers who will spend six (6) weeks or less in-country are not required to complete a dental clearance.

Please note that you won’t be cleared by International SOS until you have been cleared by your dentist.

**2.2.5. 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 plan must take into consideration the location and any physical constraints of your assignment. This plan will need to be approved by the designated program Health Advisor at 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.

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 AVI 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).

**2.2.6. 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. 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 health examination;
- Costs of your own medical supplies;
- All other costs for pharmaceuticals and other items (e.g. pathology, mosquito nets); and
- Any cancellation fees incurred from not attending consultations.

**2.2.7. Support for volunteers with a disability**

The Australian Volunteer Program actively supports persons with disabilities to participate in the program, as volunteers and staff. It aims to make the program as accessible as possible to persons with a wide range of disabilities. To support this, Access and Inclusion plans are available for volunteers with disabilities to ensure their assignments and living/working arrangements are made more accessible.

The program also has a long history of working closely with disability organisations 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.

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 Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator in Melbourne.

2.3. First aid training

It is a requirement for you to have completed first aid training equivalent to the Australian standardised HLTAID003 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 obtained from 1 October 2019.

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.

2.4. 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.

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 mobilisation period.

2.4.1. Online learning

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

Online learning is to be completed within a two-week period prior to the pre-departure briefing.

The course can be found at https://learn.australianvolunteers.com

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

2.4.2. 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. Speak to your Mobilisation Coordinator for more information.

2.4.3. Pre-departure learning costs

The program will cover program participants’ domestic airfares to and from the pre-departure briefing, reasonable travel from your home to your nearest airport, transport costs to and from the Melbourne airport to the hotel and accommodation in Melbourne to attend the briefing. If you are overseas, you will need to return to Australia (at your own expense) for the briefing.

Please provide your receipt to your Mobilisation Coordinator. Other travel costs for attending the briefing will not be reimbursed.

Upon confirmation of your assignment, more information will be provided to you regarding these arrangements.

2.4.4. 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. These can be requested from the Learning and Development team.

The briefing program is not suitable for children under 16 years. For children over the age of 16, 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 newborn children. 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.

2.5. Getting in touch with your country office

After your pre-departure briefing, your country office will be informed and you will be invited to participate in a Skype call with them. This is your opportunity to ask questions about local information.

2.6. Passports, visas and work permit

2.6.1. Passport

Program volunteers must be Australian citizens or holders of a Permanent Residency Visa of Australia, or New Zealand residents in Australia with a Special Category Visa (SCV).

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.

Australian volunteers and AADs (with Permanent Residency Visa) but travelling on non-Australian passports need to inquire 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 them at the start of your recruitment process.

Australian volunteers and AADs 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.

2.6.2. Visa and work permit

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

- Complete application forms and other documents in order to obtain a visa and/or work permit;
- Promptly complete your medical screening prior to the visa application as some visas require certain vaccinations or clearances.

You must complete these promptly, with any supporting documents required. See the relevant Visa Guide for your assignment country.

2.7. Travel arrangements

Airfares to and from the destination of assignment are covered by the program. You are also eligible for reimbursement for reasonable travel costs from your home to your nearest airport. Please discuss this with your Mobilisation Coordinator when arranging your travel.

2.7.1. Airfares

Going to assignment

The program will organise the most cost-effective one-way air ticket(s) from Australia to your country of assignment. The program will also reimburse reasonable travel from home to your nearest airport. You are responsible for personal en route costs and any other travel-related costs.

The departure date is set and cannot be changed, as your arrival in-country is timed for you to attend the compulsory In-Country Orientation Program. See section 3.1.1 In-country orientation program (ICOP).

All travel arrangements covered by the program have Australia as the point of origin. You can mobilise from overseas, but these costs are not covered by the program.
Return

At the end of your assignment, the program will pay for your return flight/s. Please see section 9.1.1
Return ticket/s.

2.7.2. Excess baggage

The Australian Volunteers Program will reimburse any excess baggage up to a total weight of 30kg per participant (e.g. if an airline allows one 23kg bag and your bag totals 30kg, the program will reimburse the extra 7kg). The program will not reimburse overweight baggage charges if excess baggage was not arranged prior to flying.

Most airlines apply stringent rules regarding baggage limits and restrictions differ between airlines. Due to this, baggage allowances upon return from assignment may be different from those flying to assignment if the flight is with a different airline.

It is recommended that you contact the airline directly to enquire about obtaining an excess luggage allowance beyond 30kg, if required.

The resettlement and settling in allowances (see 4.4 Allowances) are also provided to ease costs such as this. However, it is recommended you are aware of your baggage allowance and organise any extra allowance you will need before your flight to avoid unexpected costs.

2.8. 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. These circumstances could include problems such as deterioration in health, an emergency situation in the place of assignment, 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.

2.9. Putting your affairs in order

2.9.1. 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.

2.9.2. 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 7.4.1 Medicare cover in Australia)

2.9.3. 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 dependent children, including non-accompanying dependent children.
2.10. 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.

2.10.1. 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 an Australian 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.


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.

2.10.2. Professional fees

Payment of professional membership 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.

2.11. Registration with DFAT Smart Traveller

All program participants must register online with DFAT Smart Traveller before you leave. If you are unable to do so, please speak with your country office staff 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 DFAT Smart Traveller travel advisories for the country in which you will be working, as this may impact your safety and security.

This information can be found at the Australian Government Smart Traveller website: http://www.smartraveller.gov.au

2.12. 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.

2.13. 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.
3. When you arrive

3.1. 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.

Upon arrival in your assignment country, you and any fellow participants will be met at the airport by a country office staff member. Information about this will be provided to you by the country office 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 registered with DFAT Smart Traveller, please do so on arrival in-country. This is a program requirement. Refer to 2.11 Registration with DFAT Smart Traveller.

3.1.1. 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 an Australian volunteer on assignment as soon as possible.

This usually includes some basic language training. Australian volunteers have access to additional language training after ICOP. (Please see 3.5.2 Additional language training)

3.1.2. 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 if they change.

3.1.3. 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.

3.2. 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 Australian volunteers or expatriates living in the community can be helpful in this process. Depending
on your country of assignment, your country office 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 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. Where your accommodation is provided free of charge, the program will deduct the portion of your allowance allocated to housing.

If your assignment includes 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 is not secure. See 6 Safety and security.

3.2.1. Share accommodation

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

3.2.2. Temporary accommodation

Where housing is not immediately available, temporary accommodation may be arranged in a hostel or hotel. In some countries, Australian volunteers and AADs are housed at guesthouses, in homestays or other temporary accommodation for an initial period.

3.2.3. 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, then 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, then 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, then 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.

3.3. 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 and the Country Security Plan, found in your online resources in the Australian Volunteers Portal.

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

3.3.1. Complete your security forms

Within three (3) weeks of finding your permanent accommodation, you are required to complete your Personal Security Plan (PSP) and Accommodation Security Form (ASF) 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 6.4 Personal Security Plan (PSP) and 6.5 Accommodation Security Form (ASF) for more information.
3.4. Your assignment

3.4.1. 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 4.7 Assignment outcomes for more information.

3.4.2. Relationship with Australian organisations (AO)

Your assignment may have the support of an Australian organisation (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 does not have an AO but you become aware of a relationship (e.g. funding) between your partner organisation and an AO, please let your country office know. This organisation may wish to formally partner with the program.

AOs contribute to the program in various ways, including:

- Providing you with context about the assignment, the partner organisation, country or sector before you start your assignment; and
- Providing you with access to technical networks or advice during your assignment.

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.

3.4.3. 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

3.5. In-country training

3.5.1. In-country meeting (ICM)

ICMs for Australian 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 Australian 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 Australian 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.

3.5.2. Additional language training

If your assignment is six (6) weeks or less in-country, no additional language training will be supported.
Language proficiency for Australian volunteers is desirable not only for achieving the assignment goals, but also as a way of engaging with the local culture. Many Australian 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 participants (volunteers and AADs) 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.

3.5.3. 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 country office. This additional training may include areas such as security, child protection and sector-driven workshops.
4. On assignment

4.1. The program and you

4.1.1. Your country office

Staying in touch with your country office

While you are on assignment, your key contact with the program will be the Program Manager or other specified country office staff. Program Managers and country office staff 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 country office staff. This includes any media requests, matters of concern, feedback and complaints.

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

Correspondence with the program

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

Email is often used to send Australian 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 a @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.

4.1.2. 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 Australian volunteers and partner organisations through country offices;
- Providing support to develop assignment plans, review and evaluation of assignments;
- Paying Australian volunteer allowances and reimbursing approved costs; and
- Providing 24-hour routine and emergency advice and assistance in-country.
4.1.3. Work and volunteering

Paid work

Engaging in any paid work and/or business enterprise for personal gain while on an Australian 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.

4.1.4. 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.

If you and your spouse separate, any program-provided support to the AAD will cease. The former AAD will, however, be eligible to have the cost of their return flight reimbursed, and will also remain covered under program insurance coverage for up to 14 days after notification of the change of status to allow for them to safely return to Australia. Cover remains in place until the earlier of 14 days or when the insured person returns home.

The program does not support adoption, fostering or hosting of children 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 5.3 Mental health.

4.2. The partner organisation and you

As an Australian 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 an Australian volunteer, the program, your partner organisation, and in some cases the Australian Government DFAT) before any decision or action is taken.

4.2.1. Hours and days at the partner organisation

Working hours for Australian 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.
4.2.2. Rights-based approach

While developing your activities, please keep in view that the program is committed to addressing the effects of gender inequalities and inequities as being fundamental to the attainment of human rights for all and the effectiveness of aid and development activity. The program is also committed to including and addressing the rights of children, people with disabilities, and other marginalised or vulnerable peoples.

4.2.3. 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, 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.

4.2.4. 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 country office staff immediately.

4.2.5. 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.

4.2.6. 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 5.3 Mental health.

4.2.7. 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.

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 Australian volunteer.

4.2.8. Grants opportunities

Many Australian volunteers obtain funding to support their partner organisation through fundraising and proposal writing. All Australian volunteers are asked to ensure that country office staff 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.
4.3. 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 country office staff for further information.

4.3.1. Laws of your host country

Australian volunteers and AADs 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 pornographic 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, country office staff 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. The Consular Services Charter can be found at: https://smartraveller.gov.au/services/Pages/consular-services-charter.aspx

4.3.2. 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 Australian volunteers in your country of assignment.

It is usually acceptable to practise your own faith, provided respect is shown for the local religion/s. Australian 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.

4.3.3. Alcohol and drugs

All Australian volunteers and AADs 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.

Australian 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.

4.4. Allowances

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

Australian volunteers with AADs 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.

4.4.1. 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.
4.4.2. 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 3.2.3 Owning a property.

4.4.3. 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.

4.4.4. Settling-in allowance

If your assignment duration is six months or less, the program will provide you with a one-off settling-in allowance (SIA) of AUD$500. For assignment of more than six months, 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.

4.4.5. 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 and expenses associated with resettling back in 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.

4.4.6. 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 country office, 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 country office.

4.5. Leave

4.5.1. Public holidays

Australian volunteers are entitled to the same public holidays as local employees.
4.5.2. 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.

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 country office.

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 4.6.1 Travel approval.

4.5.3. Sick leave

Australian volunteers are entitled to the same sick leave as local employees.

4.5.4. Time off in lieu (TOIL)

Australian 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.

4.5.5. 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 1.8 Definitions.

Medical: Where participants are relocated or evacuated from their assignment location for medical reasons. See 5.5 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 country office may advise them for you.

In some circumstances, travel and other costs may be reimbursable under insurance provisions. 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 7 Insurance.

4.6. Travel

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

You must advise your country office 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.

4.6.1. 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 DFAT Smartraveller website.

All 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 country office staff or in your online resources.

**Note:** Where volunteers and AADs have chronic/severe health conditions that create additional risk factors (e.g. need for specific medical facilities), travel plans must be discussed with the country office at least 30 days prior to travel. This will enable program 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 may invalidate your insurance cover, result in a breach of the Code of Conduct, and termination from your assignment.

### 4.6.2. 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.

### 4.6.3. 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 country office regarding local requirements and recommended arrangements for renewal. It is your responsibility to ensure your visa is current.

Please contact your country office 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.

### 4.6.4. Requesting travel

All volunteers and AADs must request personal and work-related travel using the Australian Volunteers Portal. You must seek approval at least five working days prior to your planned date of departure.

All destinations: Register with DFAT prior to departure (using Smartraveller).

Travel to DFAT Level 1 and 2 destination/s: Complete a travel request with all fields marked mandatory.

Travel to DFAT Level 3 “Reconsider Your Need to Travel” destination/s: Download the additional form from the portal to seek special approval from the program. If travel is work-related, additional approval will be sought from DFAT Head of Mission (HOM) and will take more time. Please note approval is rare and treated on a case by case basis.

Participants must not travel to DFAT Level 4 “Do Not Travel” Destinations (see 6 Safety and security) and any request will be immediately declined.

### 4.6.5. Travel approval

Your country office 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.

The program reserves the right to refuse approval for travel to those areas where the security risk is assessed to be too great.

### 4.7. Assignment outcomes

#### 4.7.1. 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.

4.7.2. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

You are required under the Australian Volunteer Code of Conduct to complete all compulsory program Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) templates. 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 templates which you and your partner organisation will have to complete and return.

4.7.3. 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 country office staff.

4.7.4. Mid-term monitoring

For assignments of 11 months’ duration or more, you will be sent a monitoring template mid-way through the assignment for you to complete within two (2) weeks of receipt. This questionnaire will provide an opportunity for you and your supervisor to review progress together, have a dialogue around issues and challenges, and ways to address them.

4.7.5. End of assignment evaluation

The final template 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 template is to be completed within a two (2) week period upon receipt. You and the partner organisation will each receive a separate questionnaire, so that the program can capture different perspectives on the assignment.

4.7.6. Exit interviews

At the end of your assignment, you will be given the opportunity to meet with your country office staff and have a discussion on 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 Skype.

4.8. Extensions

A request to extend an assignment should come from the partner organisation and requires program approval. Extension requests for assignments longer than 6 month 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
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.

### 4.9. 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.

#### 4.9.1. Volunteer early return

In accepting an assignment, Australian volunteers agree to all of the terms and conditions outlined in the assignment description and the Volunteer 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 of 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 country office staff 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 an Australian 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 country office staff.

#### 4.9.2. 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 Volunteer 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.

#### 4.9.3. 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.

### 4.10. 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 country office 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 Australian 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.
5. **Looking after your health**

5.1. **Health and medical**

5.1.1. **Managing your own health**

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.

During pre-departure learning you will complete and submit a self-care plan. This plan should be used as a guide by you and country office staff to ensure that you look after your own well-being while on assignment.

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 2.2.5 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.

5.1.2. **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 country office staff.

**It is your responsibility to notify your country office staff of any changes to your emergency contacts, both in-country or in Australia.**

5.2. **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 Australian volunteers and AADs are provided with 24-hour routine and emergency advice and assistance and insurance under the program.

International SOS is the medical and security assistance service for Australian volunteers and AADs. 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 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 an insurance related incident, you must call International SOS and your country office or other program representative as directed. In all other incidents, near misses or emergencies, please call your country office staff.

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

5.2.1. Services provided by International SOS

It should be noted that International SOS services are not just for emergencies. Volunteers 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. Volunteers may call reverse charges or asked to be called back.

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;
- Hospital case management;
- Emergency transportation to the nearest suitable hospital; and
- Emergency medical movement for the purpose of health care, if necessary.

5.2.2. 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 country office locally, 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.

5.2.3. International SOS assistance app

AVI 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.

5.2.4. 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. (Please see section 7.2.2 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 7.4.1 Medicare cover in Australia

5.3. Mental health

If you need to speak to someone, contact Response Psychological Services
Phone: +613 9016 0400 or 1300 854 053
Email: response@responsepsychological.com

Response Psychological Services has been contracted to provide confidential counselling for all Australian volunteers and AADs. 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 Australian volunteer and AAD 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 is to email (see above) – Response will reply and arrange a time to conduct the counselling session. If needed, you can ask your country office staff to assist you with contacting Response Psychological Services.

In some circumstances the program will recommend or require a volunteer or AAD 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.

5.4. Pregnancy

As an Australian 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, an Australian volunteer or AAD 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 volunteer or AAD 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 during pregnancy; and
- Their health check is not cleared.

If the Australian 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. Program insurance will not cover any costs associated with the birth of the child/children until such time as the child/children are included in the program as an AAD.

For information on exclusions to your insurance coverage please see 7.4 Exclusions.

5.5. Medical evacuations and relocations

If you are sick or injured and cannot be adequately treated in your assignment country, 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, AVI and International SOS, based on their recommendations.
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.

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. Where there is a realistic choice of treatment locations e.g. between different facilities in Australia, your preferences may be taken into account.

Volunteers should never organise their 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 7.2.5 Coverage for emergency relocation or repatriation and the insurance policy for more information.

5.5.1. 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 country office. 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.

5.5.2. 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 are 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 7.5.1 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 7.4.1 Medicare cover in Australia.

5.5.3. Leave entitlement

From the moment you are evacuated or relocated, you are considered on ‘special leave’ from the program. See 4.5.5 Special leave.

5.5.4. 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, participants may be required to consult with the 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 4.9.1 Volunteer early return.
6. Safety and security

6.1. General safety

In the case of any security incident or threat, call emergency services if required and your in-country staff 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 as an Australian volunteer or AAD.

Security advice and directives provided by program 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.

6.1.1. 24-hour security assistance from International SOS

As the dedicated assistance provider for Australian volunteers and AADs, International SOS have an extensive network of medical and security services.

You will receive a contact card for International SOS with the program 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 country office as a first port of call.**

For more information, see 5.2.1 Services provided by International SOS.

6.1.2. 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 country office 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


As Australian volunteers under the program, you are required to complete documentation as outlined in the following. Your country office may require you to complete additional country-specific documents.

The program has a zero-tolerance approach to volunteers who breach AVI’s Policy on Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

The program adopts a victim/survivor based approach to responding to incidents or threats of sexual or gender based exploitation, abuse or harassment. If you are the victim or survivor of a sexual or gender based incident that occurred on assignment, or you are threatened with such harm, please report the matter to your country office or relevant Regional Director so that we can support you and take action on your behalf as appropriate.

6.2. 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.

6.3. 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 Australian volunteers and AADs must read the Country Security Plan and familiarise themselves with the specific risks in-country.

6.4. 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.

6.5. Accommodation Security Form

The Accommodation Security Form 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 Form 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 Form. You must also notify country office staff 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 Form.

6.6. 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.
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. This is not covered under AVI Insurance. AVI 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.

Please refer to the Country Security Plan of your assignment country and the Motor Vehicle Policy.

6.7. 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.

6.8. Emergency relocation and evacuation

In case of an emergency, the program reserves the right to relocate or evacuate Australian volunteers and AADs.

Decisions about relocation or evacuation of Australian volunteers and AADs in the event of war, unpredictable and violent political situations, 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 office 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.

We typically pre-emptively relocate 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, AVI reserves the right to remove you from the program immediately.

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

6.8.1. Respite

Respite involves an Australian volunteer or AAD 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 an Australian volunteer or AAD 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.
7. **Insurance**

7.1. **Insurance coverage provided by the program**

Australian volunteers 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 (formerly Fullerton Health Corporate Services):** 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.

7.1.1. **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.

7.2. **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 **5.5 Medical evacuations and relocations**.

7.2.1. **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 AVI and the insurer.

(Please see section 7.4 Exclusions)

7.2.2. 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 AVI’s insurance policy.

7.2.3. Death and disability

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

7.2.4. 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.

7.2.5. 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 5.5 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 7.5 Making a claim.

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 AVI’s insurance.

7.2.6. Cover for incidents caused by war or invasion

The program 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.

7.3. Other cover

7.3.1. 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.

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 country office.

7.3.2. 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 7.4 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 country office before taking action. (See 4.5.5 Special leave)

7.3.3. 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 Australian 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.

7.4. 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 5.4 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 AVI 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 AVI’s insurers. There are some exclusions to the policy which, if apply, may invalidate your claim. For further details on what is covered under AVI’s insurance policy please refer to the policy, which is available in the online resources.

7.4.1. 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 Australian volunteers and AADs are required to be covered by Australia’s Medicare system. This is because AVI’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, there is no program provided medical insurance cover during that time.

7.5. Making a claim

Corporate Services Network (formerly called Fullerton Health Corporate Services) 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 Australian volunteer as claimant. The program is not involved in, nor responsible for this process.

7.5.1. 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 user name and password to access this portal advice directly from Corporate Services Network. If you experience any problems with the website or have forgotten your password, please email claims@csnet.com.au.


7.5.2. 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.

7.5.3. 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
8. Media and public diplomacy

8.1. 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 local country office staff or the Public Diplomacy Team on media@australianvolunteers.com

8.1.1. How to speak about your volunteer role

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

8.2. 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 country office 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.
8.3. 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.

8.4. Images of children

There are strict guidelines around the use of 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
- Provide an explanation of how the photograph or film will be used to the child and their parent or guardian
- Not offer or give remuneration or in-kind gifts for taking a photograph or film
- Ensure photographs, films, videos, DVDs 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.
9. Coming home

9.1. Planning for your return

Six weeks before the scheduled end of your assignment, your Australian Volunteers Portal will change to “Coming Home” 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.

9.1.1. Return ticket/s

At the conclusion of an assignment, the program covers your cost of a standard one-way air ticket to Australia.

For your return to Australia, please check if you are holding a return ticket (assignments less than 10 months) or if you need to book a flight.

When you first left Australia, you may have booked a ticket with an earlier return date for visa or entry purposes only – this may have been cancelled after you arrived in-country.

9.1.2. Booking your flight home

If you do not already have a return ticket booked, you need to discuss return dates with your country office team and book your flight with Corporate Traveller.

Complete a Returning Home Flight Request form, found in the Australian Volunteers Portal. Email this form to Corporate Traveller no later than three (3) weeks prior to your departing date.

Corporate Traveller will respond to your enquiry within three (3) working days. If the enquiry is urgent, please include “URGENT” in the subject field when emailing. You must advise your country office team of your itinerary once confirmed with Corporate Traveller.

For all program-supported flight bookings, do not approach the airline directly.

The Australian Volunteers Program policy regarding flights is ‘best available fare’ which includes booking terms and conditions. Please ensure you are aware of this when making your booking.

Once you have booked this flight, any amendments after this will be at your own cost.

Corporate Traveller is based in Melbourne.

Phone: (03) 8535 1580
After Hours Assist: 1300 654 805, +617 3199 5838
Email: avi@corporatetraveller.com.au

9.1.3. Changing your flight home

If you already have a return ticket and need to change the date of your return flight home, you need to complete a Travel Date Change Request form, found in the Australian Volunteers Portal. Email this form to Corporate Traveller avi@corporatetraveller.com.au no later than three (3) weeks prior to your departing date.

In this instance, the program will pay for the first date change only; any amendments after this will be at your own cost. Please note this does not include airline change or re-routing your flight.

9.1.4. In-transit accommodation

Some return flights may involve in-transit accommodation en-route to Australia. In-transit accommodation costs for mandatory layovers of eight hours or more should be included in
quotations for return flights. This will facilitate the cost comparison of different options for your return to Australia.

9.2. Remaining in-country

The program advises the appropriate in-country and Australian Government department/s 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.

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 stay in-country after the completion of your assignment, you should arrange your own travel insurance beyond this time. See 7.1.1 Duration of insurance coverage.

9.3. Travelling after your assignment

At the end of your assignment, the program provides a one-way ticket back to Australia. 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 7.1.1 Duration of insurance coverage.

9.4. 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.

9.5. End of assignment

9.5.1. 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 4.7 Assignment outcomes.

9.5.2. Exit interviews

Prior to the end of your assignment you must complete an exit interview with your country office staff or another program staff member (upon request). If you have not been invited to complete an exit interview, please contact your country office. See 4.7.6 Exit interviews.

9.6. When you are back home

9.6.1. Post-assignment health assessment

An international 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 Volunteer Services 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 7.5.3 Making claims after return to Australia.

9.6.2. Returned volunteer workshops

The program also offers returned volunteer group workshops to all volunteers and AADs. 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.

9.6.3. Access to counselling services after assignment ends

Returning home can be stressful and you may have difficulty settling back into life after the program. 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 5.3 Mental health.

9.6.4. 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.

We cannot provide personal references or act as a referee over the phone. 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.

9.6.5. Contact details and staying connected

Upon completing your assignment, it is important that 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 email your post assignment contact details to your country office or to Returned Volunteer team.
9.7. Returned Australian Volunteer Network

The Returned Australian Volunteer Network (RAVN) enables returned 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 returning home from assignment.

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

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

Find RAVN at: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/6985419/profile
10. Index

A

Accident, 23, 30
Accommodation, 23, 24, 36
Accommodation security form, 17, 36
Airfares
Changes, 44
Return, 13, 44
Allowances
Resettlement, 24
Settling-in, 24
Approved Accompanying Dependant, 23, 29, 31
Approved Accompanying Dependants (AADs), 5
Assignment
Assignment plan, 27
Early returns, 28
Early withdrawal, 27
End of assignment evaluation, 27
Expectations, 26
Extensions, 27
Mid-term monitoring, 27
Reporting and Monitoring, 18, 26, 45
Work and volunteering, 21

B

Baggage, 24
Insurance, 39, 41
Bank account, 24

C

Children
Pre-departure briefing, 11
Code of Conduct
Breach, 24
Contact details, 37
Emergency contacts in Australia, 15
Returned volunteers, 46
Corporate Traveller
Contact, 44
Flights, 44
Counselling services, 22
After assignment ends, 46
Country security plan, 36

D

Death, 25, 38, 39
Drugs, 23

E

Emergency
Evacuation, 37
International SOS, 31
Preparation for serious illness or accident, 30
Relocation or repatriation, 33, 39
Support and insurance, 30, 38
Evacuation, 37, 38
Extension, 32

F

Family
Definitions, 7
Illness or crisis, 25
Same-sex relationships, 23
First aid
Kit, 10

G

Government benefits, 12

H

Health
Clearance and vaccinations, 5
Insurance, 38
Holidays, public, 24

I

Insurance, 38
Abiding by local laws, 23
Baggage, 41
Death, 39
Exclusions, 40
Making a claim, 41
Pregnancy, 32
Professional indemnity, 40
War or invasion, 39
International SOS, 30, 31, 35, 38, 40
App, 31

L

Leave, 24
Annual, 25
Public holidays, 24
Sick leave, 25
Special leave, 25
Living allowance, 23
Malaria prophylaxes, 10
medical, 30, 35
Medical expenses, 31, 38

Partner organisation
Conflict resolution, 22
Grants opportunities, 22
Restrictions to donations and fundraising, 22
Termination, 28
Your role, 21

Partner Organisation
Contribution, 24
Extensions, 27
Leave, 25
Monitoring and evaluation, 27
Politics and religion, 23

Payments
Bank account, 24
Personal Security Plan, 17, 36
Pregnancy, 32, 40
Privacy and confidentiality, 20
Public comment, 23

Public Diplomacy and Media
Public comments, 42
Social media, 43
Your role, 42

Reimbursements
Approved payments, 24
Emergency assistance costs, 31
Making an insurance claim, 41
Relationships. See Approved accompanying dependants
Requesting travel, 26

Response Psychological Services
Conflict resolution, 22
Returned Australian Volunteer Network, 47
Returned volunteer workshops, 46
Returning home, 44
Medical, 45

Safety and security, 35
Accommodation security form, 17, 36
Country security plan, 36
Evacuation, 37
Incident reporting, 35
Personal Security Plan, 17, 36
Training, 16
Settling-in allowance. See Allowances, settling in
Statement of service, 46

Transfers, 32
Travel, 25
Approval, 26
Other country, 25
Restrictions, 36
Transit accommodation, 44

Visa, 5
Extensions, 28
Visa renewal, 26

Work permit
Changes in assignment, 28
Work travel, 26

Updates
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