

# Australian Volunteers Program Fiji

Australian volunteers have supported partner organisations in Fiji to achieve their development goals since 1967. The Australian Government's Australian Volunteers Program continues this rich history.

The Australian Volunteers Program develops long-term, mutually respectful partnerships with organisations across the Pacific, Asia, and Africa to contribute to locally led change and the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The program aims to:

- Support partner organisations to progress their development objectives
- Increase program participants' cultural awareness and build stronger connections across countries
- Increase key stakeholders' appreciation of the value of volunteering

Melika Ragede, Procurement Officer, and Australian volunteer Communication Mentor Susan Wilson at the Medical Services Pacific offices and clinic in Suva.  
Photo: Darren James

Australian volunteer Jessica Evans with Vika Bete, Counsellor, at Empower Pacific in Lautoka.  
Photo: Darren James

Aakash Amol Sharma, IT Specialist, and Australian volunteer IT Specialist Ayman Mahli at Empower Pacific, Lautoka.  
Photo: Darren James

## Our work in Fiji

Our team in Fiji works closely with our partners to understand their priorities and objectives. Together with our partners, we identify how the program can support them and how that support might change over time.

The program provides support across a range of development priorities in Fiji, including:

- Economic growth
- Health and education
- Governance
- Private sector development
- Gender equality
- Disability
- Climate change

In Fiji, we partner with organisations working in a broad range of sectors, including government and civil society, health, education, agriculture, forestry and fisheries and environmental protection. Program partners are local or national NGOs, government, or academic institutions.

Most volunteer assignments are with partners in Suva and Lautoka, with some in more regional areas. The program also supports partners in remote locations through remote volunteer assignments.

The program facilitates opportunities for partners to connect with each other, exchange knowledge and share experiences. For example, partners participate in online and face-to-face workshops that focus on specific sectors or topics such as disability inclusion, gender equality and safeguarding.

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With the support of an Impact Fund grant from the Australian Volunteers Program, Savusavu Tourism Association and Ocean Ventures are working to tackle reef degradation and build climate change resilience through coral restoration. Members of local communities are involved with the maintenance of the coral nurseries, helping to protect their marine resources and food security for future generations.”

Matthew Norman, Co-Founder, Ocean Ventures



Since 2018  
the program  
in Fiji has  
supported

**75+**  
partner  
organisations

**150+**  
Australian  
volunteers

**185+**  
volunteer  
assignments

**10**  
small  
grants



## Small grants

From time to time, our partners can apply for small grants to support their vital work and progress towards achieving their development objectives.

Small grants have supported over 200 partners to deliver hundreds of projects across the program. Projects have been across a range of thematic areas including gender equality, disability and social inclusion, climate action and organisational strengthening.

## Australian organisations

We also partner with Australian organisations who share our commitment to locally led change. We support existing partnerships between overseas partners and Australian organisations and identify opportunities for new partnerships. Australian partners contribute to skills and knowledge exchange and support volunteer recruitment.

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Australian volunteer Rosaline Tomsanais, known as Auntie Rose, is a Kaurareg Traditional Owner and Kala Lagaw Ya speaker from Waiben (Thursday Island). Auntie Rose shared her knowledge and skills with iTaukei women in Fiji as part of the Indigenous Pathways component of the Australian Volunteers Program. Photo: Erica Lee

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It has been a fulfilling experience to see our partners get back on track with their development objectives now that our economies are moving into post-COVID-19 recovery mode. The Australian Volunteers program continues to add a huge component to nation building by bringing in key expertise that is needed for institutional and individual capacity building.”

Isireli Vulaca, Country Program Manager – Australian Volunteers Program, Fiji

## About our volunteers

Our program is all about people – volunteers, partners and the communities in which they live and work.

We value volunteers who are open to mutual learning and skills exchange, and who are committed to contributing to partners' priorities in support of locally led change.

We are committed to ensuring that international volunteering is inclusive and accessible to Australians from a range of backgrounds, with diverse perspectives, identities and abilities. We recognise the

unique strengths and skills that people with diverse backgrounds and experiences offer, and we work with volunteers to remove barriers they may face.

Each volunteer assignment requires specific skills and experience. Australian volunteers work in a broad range of sectors including community and social development, health, science, engineering and architecture, skilled trades, education, disaster and emergency management, gender equality and child protection.

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Peni Koroivulavou, Administrative Facilitator, and volunteer Research Officer Connor Graham at Fiji National University, Suva. Photo: Darren James

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Divikash Aral Nair, Director of Grafting and Principal at The Vivekananda Technical Centre near Nadi. Photo: Darren James



### In-country

In-country volunteering enables volunteers and partners to share their skills, knowledge and culture, and form long-lasting relationships along the way.



### Remote

Through remote volunteering Australians are supporting organisations overseas to achieve their development goals anywhere, anytime.



### Hybrid

By combining remote and in-country phases, hybrid volunteering offers our partners and volunteers flexibility while still allowing for genuine connections and meaningful skill sharing.

# Spotlight on Ramakrishna Mission

Ramakrishna Mission is a registered charitable trust that provides health, education and relief services to disadvantaged members of the community.

The Fiji branch of the Mission established Vivekananda Technical Centre (VTC), which provides training programs in horticulture with a focus on farm competency-based training.

The Mission supports farmers in Fiji after floods and cyclones through the distribution of seeds and agricultural extension services. After Cyclone Winston in 2016, around 14,000 packets of vegetable seeds were distributed to farmers, school students, villagers and the general public to help alleviate possible food shortages.

Having identified that a horticultural expert with the required expertise wasn't readily available locally, Ramakrishna Mission reached out to the Australian Volunteers Program for a specialist in Production Horticulture and a Pomologist — someone who studies and cultivates fruit. Australian volunteers, Anthony Portman and Ryan O'Flaherty, took up the roles of Horticulture Trainer and Pomologist, respectively.

With support from Anthony, local instructors were guided and trained to effectively run certificate II, III and IV in Production Horticulture. Once the course is recognised under the Fiji Higher Education Commission, VTC staff will be able to train students and farmers more effectively. With Ryan's support, VTC were able to secure an Impact Fund grant. The funding is helping to enhance the practical components of the program, particularly in terms of empowering local women to learn how to better propagate fruit trees to improve fruit production and reduce the risks of climate change impacts, while boosting their community economically.

Vivekananda Technical Centre's involvement with the Australian Volunteers Program has been highly beneficial for its staff. Staff have become more confident in their work and have developed their skills in capturing data of plants and different stages of propagation. This data is helping staff plan for various seasonal fruits, improve farming methods, and better prepare their reports and budget planning.



## The Australian Volunteers Program is guided by principles that ensure we



Support locally led change



Grow strong relationships  
and partnerships



Value volunteering



Evolve good practice  
and embrace innovation



Enhance diversity  
and inclusion



Ensure accountability  
and value learning

**Australian  
Volunteers**

**Australian  
Aid**

The Australian Volunteers Program is funded by the Australian Government.  
The program is managed by AVI in a consortium with DT Global and Alinea International.

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