

A photograph of two women in the water. The woman on the right is wearing a black wetsuit and a diving mask, holding a large, dark, porous piece of coral or a similar marine structure. The woman on the left is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a body of water with a small orange buoy and a green shoreline in the distance.

Australian
Volunteers

Australian
Aid 

Australian Volunteers Program Tonga

Australian volunteers have supported partner organisations in Tonga to achieve their development goals since 1965. 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

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Vetekina Pau'u, Fisheries Science Assistant, and Australian volunteer Emma Krusic inspecting pearls shell growing nets in Neiafu, island of Vava'u. Photo: Darren James

Australian volunteer Counsellor Trainer, Jan Blenkinsop and Ungaeta Kata, Principal at Tupou Tertiary Institute, Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu. Photo: Darren James

Tonga Tuiono, Fisheries Officer, and Australian volunteer Jason Sheehan work together researching coral and other sea life in Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu. Photo: Darren James

Our work in Tonga

Our team in Tonga 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 Tonga, including:

- Improving health services
- Disaster management and risk reduction
- Empowerment and protection of women and girls
- Disability inclusion
- Public health and health promotion
- Economic/private sector development
- Environment/climate change
- Skills training

In Tonga, we partner with organisations working in a broad range of sectors, including health, education, and government and civil society. Program partners are mainly government agencies and local or national NGOs.

Most volunteer assignments are with partners in Nuku'alofa. The program also supports partners 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.

“

Grateful to work alongside our Australian volunteer. The staff's capacity has been improved in different ways, and our volunteer is truly an inspiration and a great mentor. Overall, this assignment is a great learning experience for all of us.”

Victorina Kioa, CEO of the Public Service Commission, Office of the Public Service Commission



Since 2018
the program
in Tonga has
supported

25+
partner
organisations

60+
Australian
volunteers

55+
in-country
volunteer
assignments

20+
remote
volunteer
assignments

6
small
grants

Small grants

Through the Impact Fund, we provide small grants of up to AUD\$10,000 to our partners to support their vital work and progress towards achieving their development objectives.

The Impact Fund has supported over 200 partners to deliver hundreds of projects. Projects have been across a range of thematic areas including gender equality, disability and social inclusion, climate action, organisational strengthening, and COVID-19 response and recovery.

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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Maureen Bolawaqatabu, volunteer Disaster Management Officer pictured with Mele Finau, Environment Officer at Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications office. Photo: Darren James

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“The Australian Volunteers program is committed to building capacity for local partner organisations, while at the same time fostering people-to-people relationships and promoting cross-cultural understanding and peace. What a great experience to be part of!”

David Wyler, Program Manager – Australian Volunteers Program, Tonga

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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Volunteer Emma Krusic with pearl farmer and artist Penisimani Lolhea at the Ministry of Fisheries facilities in the town of Neiafu, island of Vava'u. Photo: Darren James

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Australian volunteer Physiotherapist Trainer Tim Cleasby sharing knowledge about correct wheelchair customisation with Sitani Folau, staff member in the Hospital Physiotherapy Department in Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu. Photo: Darren James



In-country

International volunteering is an incredible experience. It's an opportunity for volunteers and partners to share their skills and culture, while making a tangible difference to communities.



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 Office of the Public Service Commission

The Office of the Public Service Commission, a partner of the Australian Volunteers Program since 2017, facilitates Human Resource services including the Human Resource Management Division, Workforce & Performance Development, and Remuneration Division, setting policy and standards with enforcement and monitoring of legislation and policies through the Oversight Division.

To date, the organisation has received one Impact Fund grant from the program.

Australian volunteer Alex George completed a remote assignment with the Office of the Public Service Commission as an Organisational Review Mentor, working closely with the organisational review team to build capacity of staff to independently conduct effective reviews on government ministries. With Alex's support, staff also strengthened their working relationships with human resource staff in the line ministries.

Australian volunteer Karen Jean Higgins completed an assignment as a Data Analysis and Analytics Mentor, assisting Public Service Commission staff in developing a database comprising employment data of all government ministries. With Karen's assistance, staff were trained to use Power BI dashboards and create new dashboards, which will enable the Commission to finalise a Public Service Registry, reduce errors and increase team efficiency in data analysis.

Both volunteers assisted in developing the organisation's monitoring and evaluation processes, and the improved monitoring and evaluation approaches are now embedded in the work of PSC on a day-to-day basis. Other positive changes brought about by Alex and Karen's support include improved data usage and quality, which now actively championed by Commission's leadership team.

Staff also benefitted from face-to-face training and workshops and developed skills in ICT and monitoring and evaluation, which has helped them to perform their day-to-day tasks with increased effectiveness and confidence.



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

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The Australian Volunteers Program is funded by the Australian Government.
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