

INDIGENOUS VOLUNTEER SUPPORT AND ADVISORY PANEL,  
TERMS OF REFERENCE

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### 1. Background

#### 1.1 The Australian Volunteers Program

International volunteering has a long history in Australia, originating in the 1950s as a means of fostering cultural understanding. Through international volunteering, more than 15,000 Australian volunteers have responded to the needs and development challenges of communities internationally.

The Australian Volunteers Program is an Australian Government funded initiative that matches a broad range of skilled Australians with partner organisations in the Indo-Pacific region, to support them to achieve their own development goals. Australians are supported to undertake in-person volunteer assignments from between 1-24 months in length, across 26 countries. During this time, volunteers work with a local partner organisation to support and strengthen the important work they do in their local communities. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program also offers shorter, remote volunteer assignments, that can be undertaken online whilst in Australia.

The current phase of the program commenced in July 2018 and will run until June 2022, representing the latest chapter in the Australian Government's support of skilled volunteering for development. The program is an important part of the Australian Government's people-to-people portfolio, connecting Australians to Australia's aid program and the region.

The program is guided by a Global Program Strategy, which includes a set of high-level principles that act to inform collective efforts, inspire action and frame the results that the Australian Government seeks to achieve through the program:

1. Value volunteering
2. Support locally led capacity development
3. Build strong relationships and partnerships
4. Evolve best practice and embrace innovation
5. Enhance diversity and inclusion
6. Ensure accountability and value learning

#### 1.2 Indigenous Participation

The Australian Volunteers Program recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have unique skills, knowledge and life experience that can positively contribute to the communities we work with internationally.

There are so many areas of Indigenous expertise, and Indigenous Australians are uniquely placed to combine their personal and professional experiences with an understanding of the importance of culture, communication and sustainability in development.

In addition, many challenges faced in Australian Indigenous communities are broadly aligned to the challenges faced in developing countries, such as health, education, housing, economic development, inclusion and justice. This means that many Indigenous Australians have knowledge of the social and community contexts in which our overseas partner organisations are working.

Volunteers that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander are a key part of the Australian Volunteers Program. In 2018/19, a total of 24 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people volunteered, representing 3.9% of volunteers. Out of those 24 volunteers, five participated in the broader volunteering stream, with the majority participating in a short-term Indigenous-targeted program.

### 1.3 Indigenous Pathways

The Australian Volunteers Program has taken a strategic approach to strengthening Indigenous engagement with the program. In 2019, a new program design *Indigenous Pathways* was developed. The design of the program was Indigenous led and builds on previous research, reviews and consultations with key stakeholders and returned Indigenous volunteers.

Indigenous Pathways offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a variety of ways to engage with the program, from short-term group assignments to long-term, solo assignments. The program will enable tailored and targeted support to ensure that international volunteering is accessible and inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia, including those living in regional and remote locations.

Activities focus on reducing barriers to engagement through inclusive, equitable, flexible and strengths-based approaches and support.

As an additional support element incorporated in Indigenous Pathways, an Indigenous Volunteer Support and Advisory Panel has been established to advise the program broadly on Indigenous engagement and targeted activities, as well as provide support and guidance to Indigenous volunteers going on assignment.

## 2. Indigenous Volunteer Support and Advisory Panel

### 2.1 Purpose

The Indigenous Volunteer Support and Advisory Panel (the Panel) is a formal advisory structure, with the purpose of advising the Australian Volunteers Program broadly on Indigenous engagement and participation in international volunteering. The Panel will also provide support, guidance and mentoring to Indigenous Australian volunteers participating in the program.

The Indigenous Volunteer Support and Advisory Panel was established in 2020 to assist the Australian Volunteers Program in meeting its vision for Indigenous Pathways:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture are celebrated as an integral part of the Australian Volunteers Program through inclusive, equitable, flexible and strengths-based approaches.

### 2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Panel are to:

**2.2.1** Provide a structure for ongoing consultation between Indigenous Australians and the Australian Volunteers Program across a broad range of topics such as the Indigenous Pathways Framework, Indigenous volunteer support, assignment focus areas, promotion of assignments and recruitment of volunteers

**2.2.2** Provide strategic advice on issues pertinent to Indigenous volunteers

**2.3.3** Provide guidance, support and mentoring to Indigenous Australian volunteers participating in the program

### 2.3 Role and Responsibilities of the Panel

In order to achieve its dual advisory objectives of supporting the program and the volunteers, the Panel will be required to:

- **Provision of advice**
  - The Panel are required to provide advice to the best of their knowledge and ability that will help achieve the objectives and implementation of Indigenous Pathways. This may include:
    - Ensuring the views of Indigenous people are considered in relation to Indigenous Programs to assist in increasing cultural safety across the Australian Volunteers Program
    - Support proactive planning and development of future group assignment focus areas
    - Provide advice to the Indigenous Programs Coordinator on issues relevant to achieving group assignment objectives
    - Identifying issues pertinent to Indigenous volunteers
    - Advising on volunteer appropriateness, if required
- **Quarterly meetings**
  - Meet quarterly, in person or by video call, to discuss topics and issues relevant to Indigenous participation in the Australian Volunteers Program. One of these meetings will be the annual progress meeting.
  - Prepare for meetings by reading any relevant materials provided by the Australian Volunteers Program prior to the meeting.
- **Annual progress meeting**
  - In person attendance at the annual progress meeting (dependant on COVID-19 restrictions) to discuss Indigenous participation across the program, activities, achievements, challenges and areas for improvement.
  - Prepare for meetings by reading any relevant materials provided by the Australian Volunteers program prior to the meeting.
- **Pre-departure briefings**
  - If required, be present in person at selected pre-departure briefings to build trust with Indigenous volunteers provide culturally appropriate encouragement, guidance and mentoring. It is anticipated there will be 1-2 Indigenous targeted pre-departure briefings per year.
  - Raise any volunteer concerns or support requirements to the Indigenous Programs Coordinator.
  - Assist with general facilitating where required.
- **Volunteer support**
  - In some circumstances, Indigenous volunteers may require additional support or encouragement whilst on assignment. A phone call with a trusted Indigenous person associated with the program can be offered as an additional support method. In many cases this will be done by the Indigenous Programs Coordinator, but in some cases if a volunteer has met and built trust with a member of the Indigenous Volunteer Support and Advisory Panel, it may be requested that a phone call be set up to talk through an issue and provide guidance and support.
- **Returned volunteer workshops**
  - Be present either in person or by video-call at selected returned volunteer workshops to provide culturally appropriate guidance and mentoring to Indigenous volunteers. It is anticipated there will be 1-2 Indigenous targeted return volunteer workshops per year.
  - Raise any volunteer concerns or support requirements to the Indigenous Programs Coordinator.
  - Assist with general facilitating where required.

- **Public Diplomacy**
  - From time to time, members of the Panel may be invited to participate in public diplomacy activities, such as attendance at launch events or celebrations, such as International Volunteers Day.

### 2.4 Power of the Panel

The Panel is an advisory body only, and therefore has no decision making responsibilities or financial delegation authority. Issues submitted to the Panel for discussion will not be subject to any vote and therefore there is no requirement for a quorum.

The Panel cannot make public statements on behalf of the Australian Volunteers Program, unless requested to do so by the program.

## 3. Panel Composition, Appointment, Term and Review

### 3.1 Panel Composition

The Panel requires diversity of membership, skills and backgrounds to enable it to meet the dual advisory objectives of supporting the Program and the volunteers. Where possible the Panel will have an even gender balance and diversity of ages.

The Panel will comprise of two-three fixed panel members, and a maximum of two rotating panel members. There is also a standing invitation for any Australian Volunteers Program staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander to join the panel as a fixed panel member.

Fixed panel members will be engaged for a minimum fixed-term period of 12 months. Ideally, the combined expertise of the two-three fixed panel members will cover the following areas:

- Returned volunteer, who understands the process, challenges and rewards of going on assignment
- A mature person with good standing in the Indigenous community who can provide wisdom and mentoring in a culturally appropriate way.
- A person with the energy and passion to motivate others
- A person with experience working on Indigenous projects, that has the ability to think strategically
- A person with expertise in experience in Indigenous inclusion and the barriers faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Rotating panel members (RPMs) will be engaged based on assignment focus areas, within Indigenous Pathways. RPMs will be engaged on a fixed-term basis, with the length of appointment dependent upon program requirements. Ideally, the expertise of the rotating panel member/s will cover the following areas:

- A professional person engaged in a technical areas that Indigenous Pathways will seek volunteers (Indigenous rangers, health workers, education, youth, justice etc). This person could come from an Australian Indigenous Organisation or group that the program is engaging with on a particular assignment.
- A mature person who can provide wisdom and mentoring in a culturally appropriate way.
- A person with the energy and passion to motivate others

The role of a panel member is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander designated position, classified under 'special measures' of section 12 of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, and is open only to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to apply.

### 3.2 Appointment of Panel Members

The Indigenous Programs Coordinator, in consultation with the Program Director and DFAT AVS, will be responsible for the selection and appointment of panel members. The number of panel members may vary from time to time and will be determined by the Indigenous Programs Coordinator, dependant on the requirements of the program and Indigenous Pathways.

For Fixed Panel Members, it is preferable that panel vacancies are widely advertised so as to attract a diverse range of potential panel members. In some cases it may be necessary or appropriate to use a more targeted approach to directly target individuals, such as when approaching returned Indigenous volunteers.

For Rotating Panel members, it will be required for potential panel members to be nominated from an organisation, committee or group, relevant to the group assignment focus area. The Indigenous Programs Coordinator will then determine suitability for the panel.

New panel members will be required to be inducted by the Indigenous Programs Coordinator in person (dependant on COVID-19 restrictions), and meet other panel members.

### 3.3 Term

Fixed panel members will be engaged for a 12 month term.

Rotating panel members will be engaged for a term between 3-6 months, dependant on the requirements of the relevant assignment focus area.

### 3.4 Review of Panel Members

The Australian Volunteers Program will review the composition of panel members on an annual basis.

## 4. Meeting Schedule, Procedures and Administration

### 4.1 Meeting Schedule

The Panel will meet on a quarterly basis, with a minimum of three-weeks' notice given to all members before a meeting is called, except under exceptional circumstances.

One of the quarterly meetings will be the annual program review meeting. This meeting will aim to be held in the beginning of the new financial year, to align with reporting requirements.

Where possible meetings will be schedule at the same time as pre-departure briefings or return workshops to reduce any travel requirements.

### 4.2 Meeting Procedures

The preference is for panel members to attend meetings in person, but members may attend via video call if required.

Agenda items for panel meetings are determined by the Indigenous Programs Coordinator and the agenda will be distributed prior to meetings. However, Panel members are encouraged to provide suggestions on topics or issues to be considered for future meetings. Australian Volunteers Program staff may also submit agenda requests to the Indigenous Programs Coordinator for inclusion, if appropriate. All formal meeting discussions, decisions and actions shall be recorded and made available to all members.

### 4.3 Administration

Accountability to the Australian Volunteers Program will be through the Indigenous Programs Coordinator, who will also coordinate all meetings and travel.

Meetings will be held at the Australian Volunteers Program Melbourne office, unless otherwise notified.

## 5. Panel remuneration schedule (sitting fee, day rates and allowances)

### 5.1 Table 1A – Indigenous Volunteer Support and Advisory Panel Remuneration Schedule

| ITEM   | Fixed panel member  | Rotating panel member  | Indigenous staff panel member |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Annual sitting fee*                          | \$2,000   | N/A  | N/A                           |
| Day rate**                                   | \$450 per day   | \$350 per day  | N/A                           |
| Travel to meetings                           | Booked and paid for by the program, as required   | Booked and paid for by the program, as required  | As per staff travel policy    |
| Reimbursable expenses associated with travel | Up to \$100 per return trip, for reasonable out-of-pocket costs directly associated with travel, capped at \$1000 | Up to \$100 per return trip, for reasonable out-of-pocket costs directly associated with travel, capped at \$500 | As per staff travel policy    |

#### \*Annual Sitting Fee

The annual sitting fee set out in Table 1A is payable quarterly throughout each year. The annual sitting fee covers the following:

- Attendance at all formal meetings of the Panel either in person or by teleconference
- Any reading or preparation time for formal meetings
- Any travel time associated with attendance at formal meetings
- Periodical phone or skype calls with Indigenous volunteers for mentoring or support purposes, if required

#### \*\* Day Rate

The day rate set out in Table 1A is payable on a periodic basis throughout the year, and is the maximum payable for official duties on a given day. Official duties of less than four hours in one day will be paid at 50% of the day rate. The day rate covers the following:

- Attendance and co-facilitation at pre-departure briefings or return workshops for Indigenous volunteers
- Any reading time for pre-departure briefings or return workshops
- Any travel time associated with attendance at pre-departure briefings or return workshops
- Any other official duties as required

The remuneration schedule contained in Table 1A may be subject to annual adjustment at the beginning of each financial year.

Full-time and part-time employees of the Australian Volunteers Program are ineligible for remuneration. Any Indigenous staff members who choose to join the panel will do so in an unpaid capacity, as it will be considered a voluntary addition to their substantive role.

### 5.2 Travel

The Australian Volunteers Program will book and pay for all reasonable travel costs directly associated with attendance at panel meetings, pre-departure briefings and return workshops.

Reasonable out-of-pocket costs, directly associated with travel, will be reimbursed as per Table 1A. This is designed to cover travel to and from the airport or meeting venue such as: public transport, parking, taxis or rideshares.

### 5.3 Accommodation

If required, the Australian Volunteers Program will book and pay for all reasonable accommodation costs directly associated with attendance at meetings, and pre-departure briefings and return workshops.

## 6. Due Diligence

Advice and input provided by members of the Panel will be treated as confidential by The Australian Volunteers Program. Members of the Panel will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement, and will be cognisant that any produced material is the intellectual property of the Australian Government. All materials must be treated sensitively and maintain strict confidentiality of all data, information and documentation provided or obtained during the course of the panel appointment.

Panel members will be required to sign AVI's Child Protection Code of Conduct. Prior to confirmation of appointment, all panel members will be screened against publicly available information on the World Bank List, ADB Published Sanctions Lists, Australian National Security's website and DFAT's consolidated list for listed terrorist organisations.

Panel members must provide details of any circumstances or relationships that constitute, or may constitute, a conflict or potential conflict of interest regarding the Indigenous Volunteer Support and Advisory Panel, or any obligations under formal agreement with the Australian Volunteers Program and/or AVI. If there is no known conflict of interest, interested suppliers must include a statement in their proposal.