

25 July 2002

Mr Grant Harrison  
Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Harrison

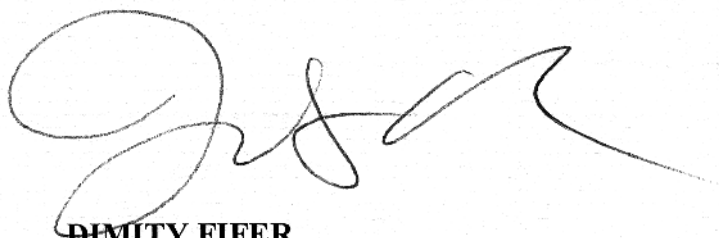
**Re: Current Review of Australia's Role in United Nations Reform**

It is with pleasure we now forward our submission from Australian Volunteers International to your review. This submission builds on the one forwarded last year which fed into the June 2001 report.

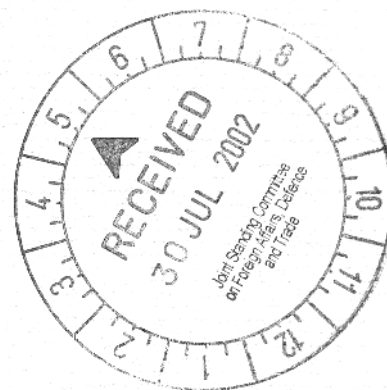
Australian Volunteers International welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review. Our involvement in the United Nations system, especially through the United Nations Volunteer program, showcases Australia's commitment to building a better world for all and provides a meaningful and practical demonstration of good global citizenship.

Yours Sincerely

**AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL**



**DIMITY FIFER**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**





## **Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Australia's Role in United Nations Reform**

**July 2002**

### **Australian Volunteers International**

Australian Volunteers International is Australia's largest international volunteer sending agency. Since 1951 some 6,000 assignments have been facilitated in 68 countries throughout Asia, Africa, the Pacific, Latin America, the Middle East and in remote indigenous communities in Australia. Successive Australian Governments have provided support to Australian Volunteers International since 1965 to manage the Australian Volunteer program.

Australian Volunteers International recruits, briefs and mobilises volunteers in response to requests from partners. Volunteers are usually paid a salary, equivalent to their local counterpart, and are generally assigned for a period of two years. In the last two decades the organisation has also provided high quality design and implementation of a wide range of personnel-based development cooperation projects funded by bilateral and multilateral sources. In 1971 Australian Volunteers International became the Australian managing agent for the United Nations Volunteer program (UNV).

### **2001 Submission**

Australian Volunteers International's earlier submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade notes that the primary mechanism for our involvement within the United Nations framework is through the placement of Australian Volunteers under the UNV program. Between 1971 and 2001 we placed some 190 United Nations Volunteers from Australia in 44 countries. A summary of volunteer placements to July, 2002 is provided in Appendix 1.

In particular, during this time United Nations Volunteers from Australia played a key role in reconstruction efforts in Cambodia and East Timor after movements towards democracy in those countries led to transitional UN-mandated systems of governance.

In addition, Australian Volunteers International has also formed positive partnerships with other UN agencies through the placement of volunteers with:

- United Nations Development Program (UNDP);
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR);
- United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF);
- World Food Program (WFP);
- United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

United Nations Volunteers from Australia are funded through the Australian Volunteer program which in turn receives core funding via the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). That is, Australia does not make a specific allocation to the UNV Special Voluntary Fund – the mechanism that funds the great majority of UNV placements worldwide. This considerably limits the number of Australian Volunteers who can be deployed annually because any Australian money going into this fund must be used for Australian UNVs.

## Recent Developments

Much has happened on the international stage since the Committee's June 2001 report, *Australia's Role in United Nations Reform*. The case for focusing our attention on matters of global stability and international cooperation has never been more compelling. The terrorist attacks of September 11, the struggle for freedom in Afghanistan and other countries where democracy and the rule of law is threatened, the on-going tragedy of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the escalation in numbers of refugees and displaced persons are issues that confront us all as global citizens.

On the domestic front, one very positive example of Australians' commitment to addressing issues of global peace and justice is the number of Australians engaging in the process of learning more about international volunteering. In 2001-2002, some 13,000 Australians approached Australian Volunteers International with an interest in international volunteering. In the same period, a record number of 1,026 Australians participated in our program as volunteers. Clearly Australians are keen to build a better world and are keen to do so by volunteering to live, work and learn in a cross-cultural context.

The commitment to voluntarism is not just a local phenomenon. The year 2001 was the United Nations General Assembly designated International Year of Volunteers. All over the world, the efforts of volunteers, part-time and full-time, domestic and international, young and old, was acknowledged for what it is – a selfless contribution to humanity. As UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, stated in 2001:

*"At the heart of voluntarism are the ideals of service and solidarity and the belief that together we can make the world a better place. In that sense, we can say that voluntarism is the ultimate expression of what the United Nations is all about."*

In the Australian context the figures above suggest a potential to place many more volunteers. However, funding limitations prevent us from drawing more fully on the reservoir of goodwill amongst the many thousands of Australians keen to contribute their services.

## Tapping the Reservoir of Potential Australian Volunteers

In *Australia's Role in United Nations Reform - Recommendation 8*, the Joint Standing Committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- Set a target ratio for ODA (Overseas Development Assistance)/GNP (Gross National Product) of not less than 0.35%;
- Develop a plan for the implementation of this ratio by the financial year 2003-2004.

Australian Volunteers International fully supports this recommendation but also urges the Australian Government to make a long term commitment to reaching the agreed UN standard of 0.70% for ODA/GNP.

Furthermore, we believe that any increase in our level of overseas aid should provide for increased numbers of Australian Volunteers in general and Australian UNVs in particular. As our Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, also noted in 2001:

*"Volunteers:  
.... Are the human face of the Australian aid program;  
.... Extend the dollar value of the Australian aid budget;  
.... Help to give our aid an Australian identity."*

Australian Volunteers International's recent experience in East Timor is clear evidence of our capacity to efficiently recruit, prepare and mobilise large numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced Australian Volunteers. We were pleased to respond promptly to the request of Xanana Gusmao (then President of National Council of Timorese Resistance) in 1999 for Australian Volunteers:

*"I urge you to consider setting up a volunteer program (Australian) in East Timor in the near future, as I believe that it would play an important role in establishing people to people links between our two countries, as well as providing essential technical assistance ..."*

Including the initial recruitment of Polling Officers and District Field Officers and volunteers under the Staffing Assistance Program for East Timor, we have managed a total of 72 volunteer placements with the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor. A further 150 volunteer placements have been facilitated with non-UN bodies in this country by Australian Volunteers International since late 1999.

Beyond East Timor, there are many areas in the world where Australian Volunteers International has partnerships and networks in place where post conflict reconciliation and reconstruction is underway (e.g. Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan) but is hindered by limited resources.

In summary; the need is there, the potential volunteers are ready here in Australia, and the networks and organisational capacity exists. What is lacking is the additional funding that will enable Australia to make a more substantive and significant contribution to the work being undertaken by UN agencies in priority areas.

## Recommendations

We recommend that the Australian Government:

- (1) Continue to support the work of the United Nations and its various instruments of international peace-making, justice and equity;
- (2) Set a target ratio for ODA (Overseas Development Assistance)/GNP (Gross National Product) of not less than 0.35% in the immediate future and not less than 0.70% in the longer term;
- (3) Contribute funding from this increased Overseas Development Assistance to the United Nations Volunteers Special Voluntary Fund. In so doing, the people of Australia, through our government will:
  - Be able to extend, in many countries around the world, the all-important people to people links and essential technical assistance referred to by Xanana Gusmao above;
  - Bring invaluable reciprocal benefit to Australia through the new insights, new partnerships and new expertise that Australian Volunteers contribute to this country on their return;
  - Provide a meaningful demonstration to the international community of Australia's commitment to good global citizenship.

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## UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS

Placed through the Australian Volunteers International program prior to July 2002

Country	Position Title	Year Placed
East Timor (cont)	UNV Polling Officer	1999
	UNV Polling Officer	1999
	UNV Polling Officer	1999
	UNV Polling Officer	1999
	UNV Polling Officer	1999
	UNV Polling Officer	1999
	UNV Polling Officer	1999
	UNV Polling Officer	1999
	UNV Polling Officer	1999
	UNV Polling Officer	1999
Eritrea	Assistant Project Officer	1997
	Food Aid Monitor	1994
	Food Aid Monitor	1994
Ethiopia	Food Aid Monitor	1996
Fiji	Computer Data Analyst/Programmer	1990
	Non-Salaried Partner	1999
	Tutor - Environmental Health	1991
	UNV Programme Officer	1999
Hong Kong	Legal Assistant	1991
	Legal Consultant/Counsellor	1993
	Senior Nurse Midwife	1991
Indonesia	ESL Teacher	1984
	Language Teacher - EFL/ESL	1988
	Radio Trade Instructor	1973
	Specialist for Conservation	1996
	Welding Instructor	1973
Kyrgyzstan	English Teacher	1997
	Non-Salaried Partner	1997
Laos	Assistant Project Officer	1991
	Conservation Officer	1999
	Documentalist	1987
	ESL Teacher	1988
	Family Carer	1991
	Food Aid Monitor	1997
	HIV/AIDS Strategic Policy Advisor	1997
	Liaison Officer	1999
	Non-Salaried Partner	1996
	Non-Salaried Partner	1999
	Non-Salaried Partner	2001
	Public Health Specialist P36	1994
	Technical Assistant in Rural Press	1997
	Tourism Advisor	2001
	UNDP Program Officer	1996
	UNV Assistant Project Officer	2000
	UNV Economist & Program Officer	1996
UNV Health & Welfare Educator	2001	
UNV Program Assistant	1986	
UNV Program Officer	2001	
UXO Advisor & Program Officer (UNV)	1999	
UXO Advisor & Program Officer (UNV)	1999	
Malawi	UNV Environmental Education & Outreach Officer	2000



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Placed through the Australian Volunteers International program prior to July 2002

Country	Position Title	Year Placed
Malaysia	Instructor in Carpentry	1986
	Trade Instructor	1984
Maldives	Pharmacist	1993
	Pharmacist	1993
Marshall Islands	Community Nutritionist	1992
Mongolia	English Teacher	1995
	English Teacher	1995
	Essential Drugs Programme (EDP) Adviser	1998
	Health Consultant	1997
	Health Educator	1998
	Non-Salaried Partner	1998
	Program Publicity Officer	1996
	Specialist (Private Sector)	1995
	UN Resident Co-ordinator's Support Officer	2000
Mozambique	UNV Program Officer	1991
	EFL Teacher	1989
	EFL/ESL Teacher	1992
Namibia	UNV Program Officer	2000
	Family Carer	1991
	Teacher	1991
Pakistan	Teacher	1991
	UNV Program Officer	1991
	Administration/Finance Manager	1990
	Regional Monitor	1994
Papua New Guinea	Government Training Specialist - Finance	2000
	Government Training Specialist - Finance	2001
	Lecturer in Cartography	1991
Philippines	Project Assistant	1996
	Project Officer	1997
	UNV Programme Officer	2000
Samoa	Computer Programmer	1992
	Computer Specialist	1993
	Gynaecologist/Obstetrician	1989
	Paediatrician (Physician)	1989
	Public Affairs Officer	1998
Solomon Islands	Entomologist	1994
Somalia	Educational Administrator	1994
	World Food Program Monitor	1992
Sri Lanka	Associate Field Officer	1995
	Programme/Public Affairs Officer	1999
	UNV Associate Field Officer	1996
Tanzania	Lecturer - Architecture	1979
Thailand	Computer Programmer	1987
	Education Program Coordinator	1989
	ESL Teacher & Bookkeeper	1980
	Field Administrative Officer	1991
Tokelau	Environmental Advisor	1992
Tonga	Biodiversity Management Advisor	1996
	Non-Salaried Partner	1996

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Placed through the Australian Volunteers International program prior to July 2002

Country	Position Title	Year Placed
Tuvalu	Lawyer	1986
	Macro Economic Planner	1991
Vanuatu	Auditor	1999
	Nurse Tutor/Educator	1988
	Public Health Nurse	1990
	UNV Women's Health Adviser	1996
	Writing Skills Trainer	1998
Vietnam	Assistant to National Project Manager	2001
	Civil Engineer	1998
	Civil Engineer	1999
	Community Development Advisor	1999
	Construction & Quality Control Engineer	1997
	Development Economist	1994
	Gender Development Specialist	1998
	Non-Salaried Partner	1998
	Non-Salaried Partner	1999
	Non-Salaried Partner	1997
	Program Officer	1997
	Project Officer - HIV/AIDS	2000
	Project Officer, Communications	1998
	Public Information Officer	1998
	Sea Dike Engineer	1994
	Sea Dike Engineer	1994
	UNDCP Field Project Coordinator - Southeast Asia	2000
	UNDCP Field Project Coordinator - Southeast Asia	2001
	UNV Program Officer	2000
	UNV Program Officer	1999
UNV Programme Officer	1995	
UNV Programme Officer	1993	
UNV Public Environment Education Program Advisor	2001	
UNV Social Worker Trainer	2000	
Zambia	Accountant	1992
	Project Engineer	1991

as at July 2002