



Mary Ward International Australia Volunteer Programme

1. Purpose of Mary Ward International Australia Volunteer Programme

Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA) creates opportunities for people associated with Loreto in Australia to collaborate in local and international works for justice and development of the Loreto Sisters. MWIA Volunteer Programme forms partnerships for development and justice through the exchange of skills and knowledge between Loreto ministries and projects and the Loreto network in Australia.

Volunteering with MWIA provides an opportunity to gain a rich insight into the work of Loreto Sisters in Australia and abroad. Volunteers use their skills, abilities, qualifications and experience to provide technical assistance in these works for justice and development; and communities benefit from their enthusiasm and passion. It is important that volunteers be prepared to receive more than they give. The aims of the MWIA Volunteer programme are to facilitate cross-cultural experiences, build the capacity of partner organisations and contribute to a greater understanding of the work of Loreto Sisters locally and overseas.

The MWIA Volunteer Programme is directed at Loreto past-pupils, staff and members of the wider Loreto network wishing to undertake short-term, self-funded volunteer placements in Australia or overseas. MWIA does not offer placements for 'Gap Year' or long-term volunteer of over 12 months.

The values and principles of the IBVM and MWIA underpin the MWIA Volunteer Programme.

Values:

- Justice - just relationships, just structures and the dignity of each person
- Freedom - mutual acceptance and respect
- Sincerity - integrity and openness in actions and relationships

Principles:

- In all aspects of mission and life, no one culture is superior to another culture.
- Those involved in cross-cultural exchange are committed to learning the language and the culture of the local people.
- MWIA chooses to stand with people who are poor, marginalised and oppressed.
- Reflection on self, others and the situation is essential to a more meaningful volunteering experience.

2. Models of MWIA Volunteering

MWIA facilitates two models of volunteering

1. Volunteers wanting to spend less than 3 months working in a Loreto ministry or project (generally as part of travel plans)
2. Volunteers wanting to spend 3-12 months working in a Loreto ministry or project

These volunteers would be fully self-funded and would undertake a specific project in a Loreto ministry in Australia or overseas. The volunteers are expected to assist in building the capacity of the receiving community through the exchange of their skills and knowledge, while working side by side with local people. Volunteers need to have a specific skill, qualification or experience that matches the need of a Loreto ministry or project.

Volunteers wanting to spend more than 12 months (long-term) can be referred to a MWIA partner agency. The volunteer would have to meet the requirements of both MWIA and its partner agency.

MWIA Volunteer Programme is not able to offer “Gap Year” placements and is best organised through other organisations that have the expertise, experience and specialises in this type of volunteering.

3. Selection process

MWIA volunteers have to be at least 20 years old with more than a year of tertiary education or full time work as well as meeting the qualities listed under our Selection Criteria. Exceptions may be considered depending on the circumstance and with the approval of the receiving community.

MWIA volunteering is a response to requests from IBVM Provinces for volunteers with expertise to meet particular needs in a project or ministry. Placement of a person offering ‘expressions of interest’ in becoming a volunteer will depend on the volunteer’s skills, qualifications and experience matching the need/s of a particular project or ministry. It is vital, in both instances, that the volunteers share the mission, vision and values of MWIA and the IBVM.

a) Time frame

The selection and pre-departure preparation processes ideally require a period of between two and six months. This allows for both parties to share information and expectations. Discernment is central to any decision made by both parties. Timelines may vary depending to the circumstances.

b) Selection Criteria

- Openness to IBVM and MWIA mission and values
- Openness to cross-cultural experience/cultural sensitivity
- Specific and demonstrated skills/experience/qualifications relevant to placement
- Commitment to attending pre-departure preparation and re-entry/debrief program

- Realistic self-assessment of strengths/limitations
 - Capacity to reflect on self, others and situation
 - Demonstrated experience of conflict resolution or problem solving
 - Capacity for team work
 - Inter-relational skills
 - Life and work experience
 - Experience of volunteering in local area
 - Good physical health
- c) Stages in the selection process**
- Initial contact with MWIA
 - Application process including written application and interview with MWIA Executive Officer
 - Selection panel
 - Communication of panel decision
- d) Required documentation**
- Resume listing education and employment experience
 - 2-3 references – personal and professional
 - Medical Health Check
 - Evidence of Travel and Medical Insurance
 - Police check
 - Working with children check (if applicable)

e) Interview process

After initial application and interview with MWIA Executive Officer is complete, the applicant is to have a second interview with one of the following:

- representatives of the MWIA Advisory and Executive Committees
- former IBVM project directors
- others with previous volunteering experience

This will be arranged by the MWIA Executive Officer.

4. Pre-departure preparation

All MWIA volunteers are required to attend a pre-departure preparation program. Pre-departure preparation will take between 1 and 6 months depending on the nature and duration of the placement, and will be provided by MWIA (or its associate), Loreto Sisters or by other designated volunteer agencies. Volunteers attend a number of sessions focussing on different areas of the volunteering experience. Regular communication between sessions is desirable in order to finalise details and ease concerns.

Pre-departure preparation will include the following topics:

- MWIA Code of Conduct
 - This outlines expectations of volunteers while on placement and is signed by the volunteer prior to departure.

- Spirituality and Charism
 - Ignatian Spirituality
 - IBVM values
 - MWIA mission and values
- Cross-cultural
 - Cross-cultural preparation
 - Language studies
 - Specific country/region briefings
 - Political and human rights activity
- Expectations and Wellbeing
 - Setting of personal goals
 - The volunteer's project
 - Supervision during placement
 - Expectations on return from placement
- Practicalities
 - Health issues
 - Financial arrangements
 - Insurance
 - Security and evacuation procedures

5. Volunteer Placement

Placements usually take place where MWIA has the most knowledge of and the strongest relationships with the host Loreto communities.

In order to make the experience positive for all involved it is important that both the volunteer and the receiving community have realistic expectations of the volunteer placement. Prior to the departure of volunteer/s, MWIA will negotiate with the host communities and the volunteer/s the terms of the placement.

Support and Work Supervision

Each volunteer will be assigned a contact person at the receiving community who will be the volunteer's main point of contact and support. The contact person will either provide work supervision and guidance or organise another person in the ministry/community.

6. Debriefing and appraisal

During placement

The volunteer's supervisor will undertake a final appraisal of the volunteer which may include:

- A community review with the volunteer
- An evaluation session focussing on the project the volunteer contributed to
- A brief report of the experience written by the volunteer before returning from placement

- Provision of someone outside the Loreto community with whom the volunteer can talk through her experience
- A short structured questionnaire to help the volunteer reflect on her experience

On return from placement

The model of debriefing will be tailored to the particular volunteer but can include:

- Interview with the MWIA Executive Officer (or other relevant person).
- An opportunity to reflect on the experience in a group setting with others who have had similar experiences.
- Possibilities to speak in public education forums about the experience.
- A sponsored retreat with a director who can help the volunteer reflect on her experience.
- Counselling by a professional if required.

7. Responsibilities of all parties

Volunteer

- To comply with MWIA selection processes by providing a resume and references, police check and working with children check as well as attending any meetings or interviews.
- To acknowledge that MWIA cannot provide financial (including medical and other travel insurance) assistance related to the volunteer placement, and to make all necessary financial, medical and travel insurance arrangements prior to and for the duration of the placement.
- To organise flights, visas, health and insurance arrangements related to overseas travel and residency prior to and for the duration of the placement independently (with guidance from MWIA if required).
- To attend and complete all pre-departure sessions and tasks.
- To sign MWIA Code of Conduct prior to departure.
- To advise MWIA Executive Officer of any changes to circumstances affecting travel arrangements or volunteering placement.
- To accept that the terms of placement may change as a result of circumstances in the receiving community.
- To carry out placement with a positive attitude keeping in mind the mission and values of MWIA.
- To comply with MWIA Code of Conduct while on placement.
- To maintain communication with MWIA Executive Officer during placement and advise of any serious or ongoing problems.
- To attend and complete debriefing sessions and tasks on return.
- To be available to speak about her experience to the Loreto network (school, past pupils association, etc).

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- To respond to expressions of interest from potential volunteers.
- To provide MWIA policies and guidelines to all applicants and make sure they are aware of conditions of volunteering.

- To communicate with IBVMs in receiving communities to identify potential volunteer placements.
- To facilitate the selection process by:
 - receiving applicant's details and application documents
 - conducting initial interview with applicant
 - preparing a second interview with another relevant person
 - informing applicants of final decision
- To facilitate pre-departure process by:
 - making sure volunteer has made all necessary flight, visa, health and insurance arrangements
 - arranging for preparation to be undertaken by MWIA or another recognised organisation.
 - conducting or organising sessions around established topics
 - advising on additional preparation for volunteers if appropriate (eg. Language classes, first aid training etc.)
 - maintaining communication with volunteers between sessions
- To facilitate debriefing and appraisal by:
 - Meeting with the volunteer on his/her return and talking through the experience
 - Organising group debriefing sessions
 - Keeping the volunteer informed of activities which he/she may have an interest in as a result of their volunteering experience
 - Providing the volunteer with opportunities to speak in public forums about his/her experience or about the projects he/she was involved in
 - Arranging for a sponsored retreat or counselling if required by the volunteer.

Receiving community

- Responding to initial invitations from MWIA to receive volunteers.
- Advising MWIA as to projects volunteers may be required for and outlining expertise required.
- Approving or disapproving recommendations made by MWIA of volunteers and timelines.
- Providing necessary information regarding living and working arrangements for the volunteer (eg. food, accommodation, daily routines, work environment, prayer).
- Welcoming and providing orientation to the volunteer as well as any necessary training (only in relation to local requirements).
- Providing ongoing supervision to volunteers.
- Advising MWIA if there are serious or ongoing problems.
- Final appraisal of volunteer.

8. Volunteer expenses and Insurance

- Administration Fee:
Student/Concession: AU\$350.00
Employed: AU\$500.00

Above fees can be negotiated especially for longer placements.

The above fee covers the pre-departure preparation and in country orientation and organisation.

- Accommodation and Food:

Costs vary according to the country and length of time of placement. An estimate of the costs will be provided prior to departure.

- Travel and Insurance Costs:

Volunteers are to arrange their own flight, visa, medical requirements and their travel and medical insurance. Evidence of travel and medical insurance is required prior to departure.

9. Confidentiality

Personal details of staff, volunteers and service users are treated in the strictest of confidence. Information of a confidential nature should not be disclosed to anyone outside MWIA or the receiving community, without prior permission or explicit consent.

10. Complaint Procedures

If a volunteer has a complaint about another volunteer or staff member within MWIA or at the receiving community, they should in the first instance talk to the person concerned, to try to informally resolve the issue.

If this is not possible, the volunteer should speak to their supervisor / contact person. If the volunteer is not happy with the result they should put a complaint in writing to the Executive Officer of MWIA.

11. Terminating the Volunteer Agreement

On failure to comply with the standards of the MWIA Volunteer Code of Conduct, MWIA reserves the right to terminate a volunteer placement.

Volunteers who terminate their placement for any reason will be invited to an exit interview. The volunteer will still be required to complete a short structured questionnaire and report on their placement in order help improve the support given to volunteers and to record all our volunteers' experiences and achievements.