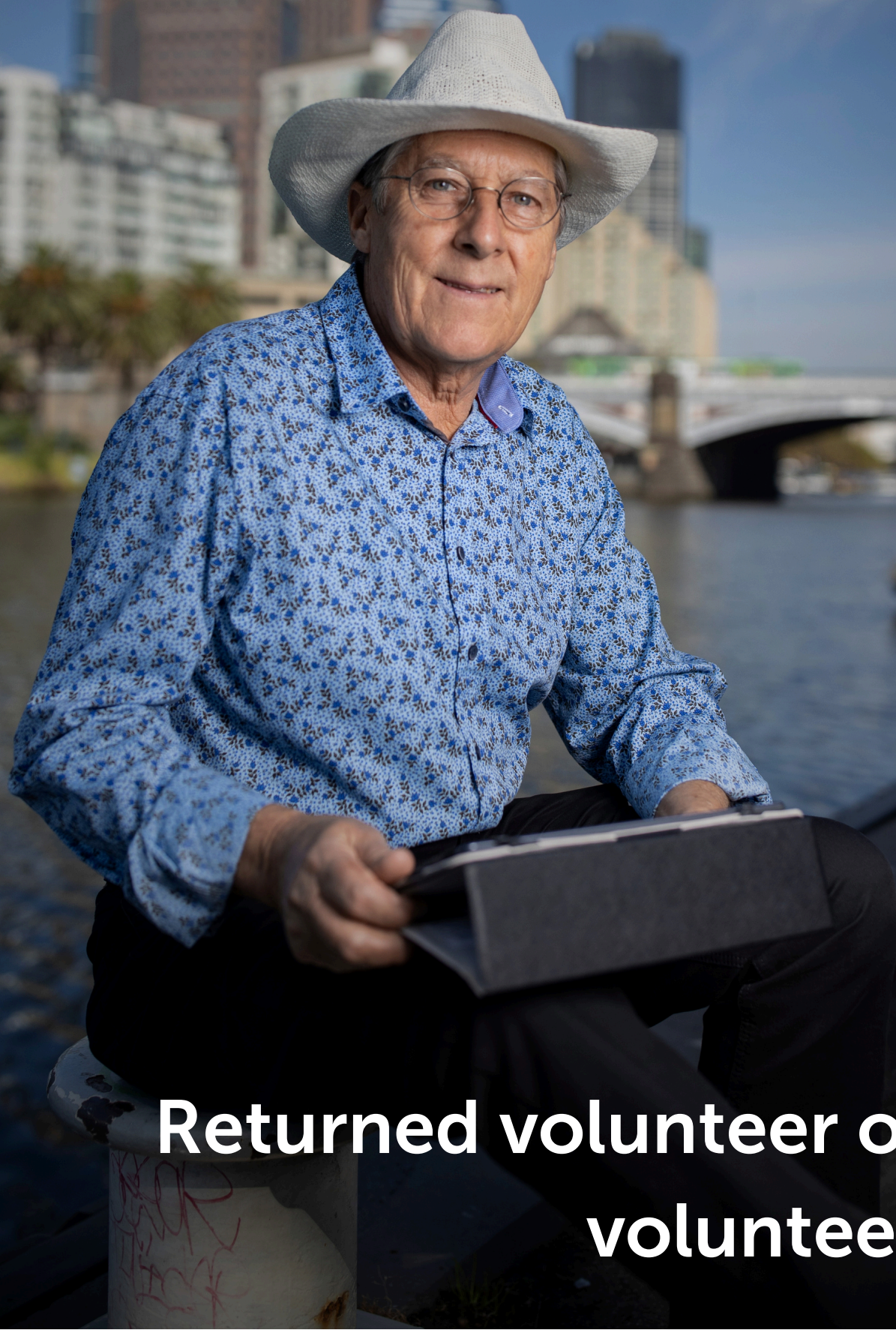


# Australian *Volunteers*



**Returned volunteer open  
volunteering**



# Returned volunteer open volunteering

Exploring mixed-mode volunteering, where volunteers spend time volunteering in-country followed by time volunteering online.

**Complete**

Apr 2019 - Oct 2019



# Summary

We were interested in how mixed-mode models could be implemented in a way that both partners and volunteers found successful.

Previous volunteers helped us explore possibilities by completing an assignment that took place both in-country and remotely from Australia.

## Our objectives

- Explore what changes to systems, processes and policies are necessary to facilitate a mixed-mode volunteering model.
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- Learn if partner organisations are willing to consider mixed-mode assignments.
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- Explore what kinds of assignments might work well for a mixed-mode model.
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- Discover if open volunteering assignments lead to a broader and more diverse group of Australian volunteers.

## Our approach

Returned volunteers were chosen as an ideal group to participate in this first prototype because they had a strong familiarity with the Australian Volunteers Program, the country of their assignment, and with their partner organisation. This allowed us to focus our test on questions and assumptions around systems and processes and ensure the validity of the model with a receptive group of individuals.

Our staff were consulted and asked to nominate suitable countries to participate in the prototype, factoring in visa considerations, workloads and availability of suitable partner organisations. Papua New Guinea ultimately did not receive any applications, and Tuvalu was selected as a late inclusion in the prototype.

As a result, the following countries participated in the prototype: Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vietnam.

To ensure a clear framework of the prototype, several decisions were made:

- All assignments would be comprised of two to four weeks in-country, followed by two to three months of remote volunteering. The exact duration would be determined by volunteers and partner organisations.
- The in-country portion of the assignment must start in June, 2019. Some flexibility was given for earlier departures, no flexibility was given for late departures.
- Volunteers and partner organisations would create the assignment description together, which would provide a range of assignment types to assess.

## What we learned

- That assignments that are time-bound and can be completed online are better suited to Open Volunteering.
- There is great interest in mixed-mode assignments, with many people having suggestions on how this might be possible.
- There is a necessary adjustment of expectations on remote volunteers' time constraints. The work-life balance for partners and volunteers is different when there is no in-country component.
- It is possible to develop a new, faster mobilisation process for shorter assignments.
- The above changes led to wider policy and system changes that catered better to a greater variety of assignment types.
- A longer and more structured lead-in time before the assignment start date better prepares volunteers and partner organisations for the assignment.