

# Volunteer in **Indonesia**



A young Herb Feith in Indonesia where he worked as a translator (1951-53). Photo courtesy Herb Feith.

"Through the decades, the value and importance of volunteering has not changed. Volunteering is symbolic of human solidarity, of human equality."

— *Herb Feith* (d. 2001)

## The first volunteer sails for Indonesia

“ An Indonesian delegate once spoke to us of the value that could occur if technical experts working in under-developed lands were able to enter into the whole life of that society, rather than merely contributing their knowledge. ”

This suggestion was incorporated in the report of John Bayly and Alan Hunt, Australian delegates at the 1950 World University Service Assembly held in Bombay, India. They had been stirred by the desperate need for skilled people to work in Indonesia which was struggling to recover from the Japanese occupation and its war of liberation against the Dutch.

This report inspired a group of students at the University of Melbourne with the idea of sharing their skills and experience on the same rates of pay as local Indonesian public servants, whilst learning more intimately about the people and their lives. The group formed a sub-committee under the National Union of Australian University Students (NUAUS) to explore this idea.

**Herb Feith**, a post-graduate student in politics at the University of Melbourne, was a member of this subcommittee. In 1951 he sailed to Jakarta to take up a position as a translator with the Ministry of Information. Herb's pioneering journey helped establish the Volunteer Graduate Scheme to Indonesia, now Australian Volunteers International.

**Since 1951**, Australian individuals and families have worked for a wide range of Indonesian employers including national, provincial, and local government departments and agencies, educational institutions, NGOs, and community-based groups.

Many returned volunteers, such as Herb Feith, Harold Crouch, John Maxwell and Hugh O'Neill, have been committed to consolidating relations between the two countries after coming home to Australia and have been instrumental in establishing Indonesian study programs and Southeast Asian study programs in Australian universities.

*Australian Volunteers International is committed to work towards a peaceful and just world. It achieves this by providing opportunities for Australians to volunteer to **live, work and learn** in partnership with people of other cultures. Volunteers contribute to developing communities and bring a reciprocal benefit to Australia.*

## Who are Australian Volunteers?

Australian Volunteers are ordinary Australians doing extraordinary things. They are women and men of all ages from diverse backgrounds who are willing to put up their hand, move outside familiar boundaries and, at some personal cost, contribute towards building a peaceful and just world. Defined by their actions and attitudes, Australian Volunteers represent professionalism, commitment and dedication and join a proud tradition stretching back 50 years.

## Why be an Australian Volunteer?

Being a volunteer is a special mix of personal growth and making a contribution. Each experience is rewarding, enriching and unique. For some volunteers, the best thing about their assignment is the friendships they make; for others it is the understanding they get of another society or the satisfaction of contributing and learning new skills. Many say it is what they discover about themselves and their own society that is most important.

## What qualifications and experience do I need?

We aim to give as many Australians as possible the opportunity to make a contribution as volunteers. Many positions will require a recognised trade, professional or commercial qualification and work experience (the type of qualification and amount of experience will depend on the employer's requirements). There are some opportunities for experienced people with practical skills but no formal qualifications, and for recent graduates and tradespeople with qualifications but limited work experience. ***Graduates in Indonesian studies are recognised as valuable potential volunteers, particularly in positions where Indonesian language and contextual understanding are required.***

## Financial Package

We organise visas and permits, provide return flights to your host country, and arrange medical and emergency insurance (some exceptions apply). When our staff negotiate a volunteer placement with an employer they ensure that you receive sufficient income to live a modest lifestyle in relation to local conditions. Housing may be part of the package provided by your employer or you may need to source it for yourself and cover the costs from your salary.

## Can I make a difference?

By living, working and learning alongside local people, volunteers make a contribution towards the development of their host community and build people-to-people and community-to-community links. Once home, volunteers help advance the understanding of issues within Australia and between Australia and Indonesia.

## How long would I go for?

Most volunteer assignments are for two years, which is regarded as the optimum time for volunteers to adjust, integrate and contribute to their host communities.

## Contact us

If you would like to put up your hand for the experience of a lifetime, visit our web site or contact your nearest Australian Volunteers International office.

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## Profile

### Mark Allen

Australian Volunteer environmental planning officer, Provincial Development Planning Board, Indonesia

**"We would like our daughters to realise that not all countries are the same as Australia. We hope it will broaden their horizons and stimulate their interest in the rest of the world."**

Mark, 40, is assisting farmers in Lombok to replace traditional flood irrigation with a more effective drip irrigation system. It's early days, but he hopes that conserving water will mean more farming in marginal areas, more crop variety, less reliance on imports, and the ability to sustain communities during the long dry seasons.

Mark volunteered with wife, Margy, 39, and their two daughters, Hannah, 12, and Shenae, 10, and says that without a doubt volunteering has been the most positive thing they have done as a family. "We want to live here forever!", say the girls, who are thriving in their new environment.



Mark with Margy and their two daughters, Hannah and Shenae.

Photo courtesy Mark Allen