

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade – Human Rights Subcommittee
Inquiry into the rights of women and children

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

003 – Inquiry into the rights of women and children

Hearing Date: 16 August 2023

Topic: Orphanage Trafficking

Senator Linda Reynolds

Question

Are there some lessons in things you have observed that we could share and have a look at, ways perhaps as Parliament we can, and not just on that one issue, but more generally assist Australians with how they volunteer and donate and support programs overseas?

Answer

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) provides information to support responsible volunteering.

The DFAT Smartraveller website provides advice for travellers on responsible volunteering, including volunteering with children: <https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/before-you-go/activities/volunteering>. This information is also accessible from DFAT's Volunteers webpages (via the page on 'Responsible Volunteering' tab at <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/volunteers/volunteer>).

DFAT engages in quarterly intergovernmental meetings with the International Forum for Volunteering in Development, a global network of non-government and state organisations that work with volunteers. The Forum shares information, develops good practice and enhances cooperation across the volunteering in development sector, including through convening research and developing standards.

DFAT raises awareness around responsible and child safe volunteering through the Australian Government's international volunteering program, the Australian Volunteers Program. The program includes dedicated information on child protection on its webpages (via the page <https://www.australianvolunteers.com/our-resources/child-protection/resources/>) as well as links to a range of resources promoting child safe volunteering (via the page <https://www.australianvolunteers.com/our-resources/child-protection/resources/>).

The Australian Volunteers Program's safeguards are aligned with DFAT's mandatory safeguard policies and advocate for the protection of children. The volunteers and partner organisations selected to participate in the program are carefully selected and undergo a strict screening process.

The Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission also provides information for members of the public seeking advice on donating or volunteering (via the page <https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-public/helping-charity/donating-and-volunteering>).