

AVI COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)

Period covered by this Communication on Engagement

From: December 2016

To: December 2017

Part I. Statement of Continued Support

5 December 2017

I am pleased to confirm that AVI continues its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption. Through collaboration and innovation AVI also continues its broader strategic support for UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact.

About AVI:

A leader for 66 years, AVI is an Australian not-for-profit organisation committed to achieving economic and social development outcomes across Asia, the Pacific and the world. AVI connects people to bring about change by sharing their skills, knowledge and experience through international pathways and networks.

AVI collaborates with extensive cross-sector networks and applies an evidence-based approach to contribute to economic, social and environmental change for communities in our region and beyond. Through co-designed locally driven initiatives that help stimulate sustained outcomes, rewarding relationships between Australians and our international peers are made.

Continuing AVI's long-term commitment to skilled volunteering, AVI will deliver the Australian Government's new Australian Volunteers program from January 1, 2018, with our partners [Cardno](#) and the [Whitelum Group](#). The new program will replace the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program, which AVI has delivered since 2011. The program builds upon the strengths of AVI's 66 year history in international volunteering for development.

A copy of AVI 2016-2017 Annual Report is attached as an Appendix to this Communication of Engagement. The joint Board Chair and CEO report on pages 4- 5 outlines other cross-sector partnerships that have been successfully undertaken this year.

Our aim is threefold:

- 1. To provide the high-quality support and scale needed to drive multi-generational change that significantly improves peoples' lives and creates life-changing experiences.
- 2. To respond to the social and economic aspirations of communities by realizing development opportunities through mutual learning and knowledge exchange.
- 3. To enhance cross-cultural understanding and engage Australians to embrace new experiences that will have an ongoing positive impact both abroad and at home.

What we value

- **Locally driven change:** because we know that better development outcomes occur when local communities, governments and organisations identify the challenges and drive and own the solutions.
- **Mutual value:** because we've been seeing the value flow in every direction for more than 65 years between people, communities, organisations, and with our government and corporate partners.
- **Shared expertise:** because attracting and connecting people to people through skills and expertise is the cornerstone of our development approach.
- **High-quality experiences:** because we want Australians and individuals in every country to report positively about the work that they do, the people they meet and the places they encounter.

- **Responsive service provision:** because the care and support of people throughout the entire process as they live and work together in different places is critical to development outcomes.
- **Innovative partnerships:** AVI's approach seizes opportunities to work together and achieve outcomes that no one partner could achieve on their own.
- **Personal pride in our work:** AVI employees are committed, passionate advocates of a more equitable world.

In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for an organization like ours. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

In pursuing our mission AVI continues to see value in endorsing, and collaborating with, the UN Global Compact to strengthen our collective effort in creating positive and sustainable change.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Bird', with a large, stylized loop at the beginning.

Paul Bird
Chief Executive Officer

Part II. Description of Actions

As a public sector organisation, AVI aims to enhance the Australian Global Compact Network and to promote mutual collaboration and progress towards achieving tangible outcomes across the 10 principles.

In 2015-16, AVI focused on building relationships with organisations that drive sustainable outcomes for development initiatives around the world. At the heart of this development is the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #17 - enabling partnerships that focus on achieving outcomes that could not be achieved alone.

AVI recently sponsored a research paper on the measurement of volunteering for development and the Sustainable Development Goals demonstrating the organisation's commitment to innovative approaches to measurement. The outcomes of the research project highlighted the value of working collaboratively with other development organisations to measure the collective impact of volunteering for development.

Committed to innovative and transformative partnerships for the achievement of the SDGs, AVI is an active member of the [International Forum for Volunteering in Development \(Forum\)](#) - a global network of organisations involved in international volunteering for development through policy engagement, mutual learning and by sharing innovative and good practices. The CEO of AVI also chairs Forum's Research, Policy, Practice and Learning Group, which is carrying out a global joint project on measuring the impact of international volunteering on the SDGs.

AVI is also a committed member of the [Volunteer Groups Alliance \(VGA\)](#). The global nature of the alliance reflects the universality of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by bringing together members from civil society and the public and private sectors from diverse locations. Together we promote the contribution that volunteers make to sustainable development and gain recognition for the important role volunteers play at local, regional and national levels and in the UN processes.

AVI is also a proud signatory to the Australian Council for International Development [\(ACFID\) Code of Conduct](#). The aim of the Code is to improve the outcomes of international development and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency and accountability of signatory organisations. AVI is an active member of ACFID, and is currently leading on an ACFID Practice Note on Responsible International Volunteering

for Development. AVI is a member of ACFID's Child Rights Community of Practice, and input to ACFID's Resolution and Position Paper on Residential Care (2016).

Tasked by the Australian Government in early 2017, AVI led on creating a [responsible volunteering](#) policy that is now featured on Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Smart Traveller website. This website is accessed by Australians before they travel overseas and the policy itself provides guidance on safe and ethical volunteering practices.

Principle 1 – Businesses should support and respect the protection of international proclaimed human rights

AVI uses human rights principles including the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights to integrate rights-based perspectives in our development approach and all of our work. We are committed to socially inclusive development practice, with a particular focus on child rights, protection and safeguarding; gender equality; disability inclusion; and the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

AVI's Gender Equality Policy outlines AVI's gender equality intent and commitments, setting the standard and guiding implementation of our gender equality and equity priorities across both our organisation and our programs. AVI recognises gender equality as an essential human right. Using a rights-based approach, our recognition of gender issues and inequitable gender outcomes enables us to develop affirmative policies and actions to support and promote the human rights of all.

Principle 2 – Businesses should make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses

Core to AVI's values in practice is the rigorous appraisal of stakeholders to our work, including partner organisations from diverse sectors and across the globe; staff, directors and contracted personnel; and volunteers and program participants. Our appraisal processes include:

- Child protection and safeguarding assessment through behavioural interviewing, verbal reference checking, reporting, codes of conduct, and sanctions for policy and codes of conduct breaches
- Counter-terrorism checks in accordance with the Australian Government's Consolidated List
- Values alignment assessments.

Principle 3 – Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

AVI has an active 4-year Enterprise Agreement with the Australian Services Union, and which includes mechanisms for staff cultural leave and a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) comprised of members of the Executive, human resources team and a union representative, providing a forum to discuss employment matters of interest or concern to AVI's employees including matters related to the Enterprise Agreement and its application. The JCC meet regularly, with agreed agendas and minutes to ensure transparency.

As an international volunteer coordinating organisation (IVCO), AVI advocates for and supports the system of international volunteerism; that is, the use or involvement of volunteer labour in effecting positive change in global development. As a member of the International Forum for Volunteering in Development's (Forum) Volunteer Groups Alliance, in 2017 AVI contributed to the [Volunteer Groups' Sectoral Position Paper to the High Level Political Forum \(HLPF\) of the United Nations on the unique contribution of volunteering to sustainable development](#). The Position Paper asserts that 'volunteers and volunteer effort are essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda... Without the contributions made by millions of volunteers, properly supported and enabled [by international volunteer coordinating organisations], the aim of eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity will not be realised.'

AVI with our Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group peers contributed to the successful advocacy campaign for the explicit recognition of volunteer groups as actors in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Principle 4 – Business should uphold the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour

Principle 5 – Businesses should uphold the effective abolition of child labour

AVI has been particularly proactive in establishing and promoting Child Protection in the volunteering sector. We have a Child Protection Adviser who has been integral in promoting Child Protection policy and education for AVI Australian-based and international staff, and representing AVI's values at federal government and international levels.

As a [ReThink Orphanages Network](#) working group member, AVI's contribution has included:

- feedback to DFAT to assist the raising of public awareness on responsible volunteering and 'paper orphans'
- recommendations to the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for further development of their 'Smartraveller' website
- inviting an exploration of orphanage tourism and associated risks to with staff of AVI's global offices and partner organisations; such a conversation critical in countries such as Myanmar where there is a growing tourist (and orphanage) industry
- support for submissions to the Parliament of Australia's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's Inquiry into establishing a Modern Slavery Act in Australia.

In 2016-2017, AVI delivered targeted training to AVI's new global office-based 'child protection focal points' which has expanded our child protection support to volunteers and their host partner organisations, including child protection training to more than 60 staff from individual partner organisations in Papua New Guinea, Tanzania and South Africa. AVI Indonesia staff provided child protection training to more than 100 government school teachers and principals in West Sumatra province.

AVI's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct assert the following commitments:

'Fundamental to the operation of AVI is respect for the dignity and basic human rights of people within Australia and throughout the world. Every person who represents AVI is expected to reflect these values in their professional conduct, regardless of who they are dealing with, or where they are working.'

Principle 7 – Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges

Principle 8 – Business should undertake initiatives to promote greater environment responsibility

Principle 9 – Business should encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies

AVI has established an Environmental Sustainability Committee whose primary purpose is to assist the organisation to develop, maintain and enhance environmentally responsible and sustainable practices.

AVI's approach to environmentally sustainable practice must consider:

- Government directions and legislative requirements
- Overarching organisational values and commitments
- Partner and Volunteer participation

- Research and evidence informed practice
- Continuous Improvement and best value” practice

This is achieved by ensuring that AVI:

- Maintains up-to-date, innovative, effective and environmentally sustainable policies, procedures and programs
- Complies with relevant legal and regulatory obligations
- Develops, maintains and enhances mechanisms for partner and volunteer participation
- Communicates, trains and develop its people to support the efficient, effective application of organisational environmental sustainability policies and procedures
- Has environmental champions to implement, lead and mentor environmental sustainable best practice initiatives and approaches
- Continuously and systematically reflects upon and improves its practices.

The Environmental Sustainability Committee reports directly to the AVI’s Executive and provides information on relevant policy and legislative compliance to the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee of the Board.

Principle 10 – Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery

AVI is committed to maintaining an organisational culture that ensures effective fraud and corruption prevention is an integral part of our operations. AVI’s Fraud and Corruption Policy sets an explicit framework for the control, detection and management of fraudulent activity.

Our Finance, Audit and Risk Management (FARM) Committee oversees governance of AVI’s financial management, internal audit, fraud control and risk management. AVI has dedicated Security and Risk Advisers to support institutional and program operations, as well as a comprehensive Risk Management framework supported by an online global reporting system.

AVI also has an institutional relationship with Transparency International with two Transparency International Board members who are also members of the AVI Board. This connection informs AVI thinking at its highest levels.

Part III. Measurement of Outcomes

Through GCNA and its members, this year AVI has engaged:

- the Global Compact Network in South Korea to seek their engagement in the global conference on international volunteering in Seoul in October 2017;
- Unilever in Myanmar to determine joint opportunities; and
- In the Voluntary National Review process with DFAT

AVI has also participated in GCNA workshops (such as the recent Business and Climate Change day) and meetings, including the AGM.

Conclusion

Our organisation embodies and exemplifies the practical means of engaging broader and deeper engagement of cross sector partnerships in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

AVI is pleased to confirm its continued support for the principles of the United Nations Global Compact as our organisation continues striving towards attainment of sustained well-being of developing communities around the world.