

AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS

About the Organisation

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) is the largest humanitarian network in the world with a presence in almost every country. The Movement has almost 97 million members and volunteers.

The Movement incorporates the Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Federation) as well as National Societies in 185 countries.

At the centre of the Movement are seven core values, or Fundamental Principles, that shape and direct services and programs all around the world: Humanity. Impartiality. Neutrality. Independence. Voluntary Service. Unity. Universality.

With a vibrant and varied history - from its origins in the aftermath of battle in 1859 as the vision of founder Henry Dunant, through two world wars and up to today - the Movement is universally acknowledged as an unstoppable force of help and compassion during peace and war.

Since 1914 Australian Red Cross has been responding to the needs of Australians in suburbs and towns right across the country.

Through war, drought, flood and fire our volunteers have responded willingly and risen to the task with a passion and commitment that has become renowned. Its a reputation that is richly deserved, embodying the universal spirit of the Red Cross.

For many volunteers, such as our emergency services teams, it's a 24 hour a day, seven day a week commitment to helping people whose lives have been touched by tragedy or disaster. A fire destroys a family home ... A bus carrying young children overturns on winding road ... Floodwaters threaten a nursing home.

You can be sure that Australian Red Cross volunteers will be there, offering practical assistance and support at any time of the day or night - no questions asked.

Today we have more than 30,000 trained volunteers and deliver over 60 local programs and services around Australia mostly funded by public donation and corporate partnerships.

The South Australian Division of the Australian Red Cross reaches people in need all over the world, more than half a million people annually live here in South Australia.

Project Information: International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a body of international laws that set out the minimum humanitarian standards that apply in times of international war (between two or more countries) and internal war (within the borders of one country).

IHL limits the means and methods of warfare and seeks to protect those who are not, or who are no longer, participating in hostilities. IHL therefore protects groups such as civilians, sick or wounded combatants and prisoners of war (POWs).

Modern-day IHL is generally considered to have developed from two main sources: the law of Geneva, a body of humanitarian rules protecting victims of armed conflict, and the law of The Hague, legal principles concerning the conduct of hostilities. More information can also be found in the PDF file 'What is IHL?' downloadable from the ICRC website.

Australian Red Cross's current IHL Strategy seeks to promote an awareness and understanding of the humanitarian principles guiding IHL. The IHL Program provides seminars, training and liaises with key target groups identified as having a role to play in times of armed conflict.

The following groups are a focus for IHL dissemination:

- Australian Defence Force
- Australian Federal Police

- non-Government organisations
- emergency services
- Commonwealth Government agencies
- Key professions (Law, Medicine, Journalism)
- State Governments
- Tertiary Education sector
- Secondary Education sector
- wider community.

The IHL Program also seeks to ensure that the key priority groups are aware of the components, legal mandate and mode of operation of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Protection of the Red Cross Emblem

The Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems are protected under the Geneva Conventions Act 1957. Under Australian law, the Minister of Defence is responsible for authorising the use, and addressing any alleged misuse, of the emblems.

One of the roles of the Australian Red Cross IHL Program is to assist the Minister in monitoring the use and misuse of the Red Cross emblem.

On being made aware of an alleged misuse, an IHL Officer will make contact with the relevant person, explain the reasons for its protected status, and request corrective action. If such an approach does not resolve the matter, it is referred to the Minister for further action.

Students will be able to contribute to a better understanding of the Geneva Convention by helping the Australian Red Cross educate the community about the laws of war and the value of protecting the emblem.

Project Information: International Tracing, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Services

Every year thousands of families across the world are separated in the midst of conflict, natural disasters or other events with a humanitarian impact. In Australia the Red Cross Tracing Service is part of the International Red Cross tracing network operating in 185 countries to exchange family news, re-establish contact or clarify the fate of the missing. It is a unique service provided free of charge to the public.

Services include Tracing Requests, Red Cross Messages, Health and Welfare Reports, International Disaster Enquiries, Travel Documents and Certificates of Captivity. The Tracing Service also provides information on a broad range of services as well as referrals to other public and private agencies.

The Tracing Service acts in consultation with international and national organisations that share the one goal - to locate and reunite missing loved ones around the world. The Tracing Service actively supports and encourages initiatives such as the National Missing Persons Unit and facilitates discussion with international organisations such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the International Organisation for Migration.

The Tracing Service works directly with National Red Cross Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC. During 2003-2004, the tracing service helped 1,404 individuals and families to re-establish contact with missing relatives. Of the cases sent to Australia 73% have been successfully resolved. In addition, over 1,050 people used Red Cross messages to communicate with families in countries where postal services are no longer operating

Students may also become involved in other services provided by the Australian Red Cross. These include developing health and welfare reports, assisting detainees, assisting asylum seekers prior to the outcome of protection visas applications, and case management support for detainees living in the community.

Cost

Costs may include transport, meals and spending money.

Length of Service

6 Months

For more information:

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