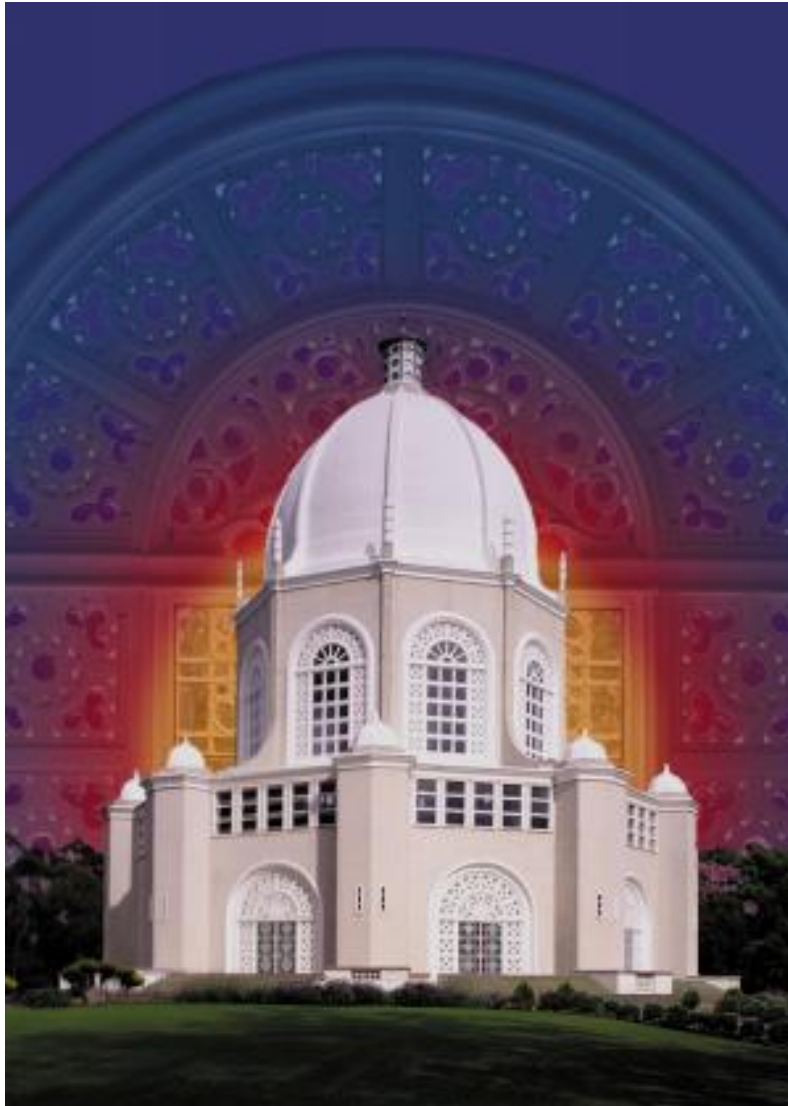


Service at the Bahá'í National Centre



A u s t r a l i a

Youth Year of Service Information Pack

Revised: December 2005

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Photo: National Bahá'í Centre, Australia

SERVICE AT THE BAHÁ'Í NATIONAL CENTRE

An individual must centre his whole heart and mind on service to the Cause, in accordance with the high standards set by Bahá'u'lláh. When this is done, the Hosts of the supreme Concourse will come to the assistance of the individual, and every difficulty and trial will gradually be overcome.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 6 October 1954, *Living the Life*, p.36

The Youth Year of Service (YYS) Volunteers programme at the National Bahá'í Centre in Australia is for Bahá'í youth between the ages of 18 and 30. The programme is designed to empower youth through the bounty of sacrifice and service to the Cause at the site of the House of Worship in Sydney. YYS Volunteers through their voluntary service contribute to the work of the National Spiritual Assembly and the care and maintenance of the National Bahá'í Centre.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia supports YYS Volunteers by having in place resources, policies and procedures to both protect and empower the volunteers during their period of service.

SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT

The Youth Year of Service Programme has a three-fold focus. Firstly to empower the youth by providing them with the bounty of serving the Faith through sacrifice. Secondly to empower the youth spiritually by attending deepenings; being involved in the three portals for growth - devotional meetings, study circles and children's classes, including Bahá'í Education in State Schools (an education programme unique to Australia); and social empowerment by giving the youth the opportunity to live, work and mix with people of diverse cultures while learning about the uniqueness of Australian culture. All of this within a safe and loving environment provided by the National Spiritual Assembly.

This bounty brings with it certain obligations:

1. Obedience to Bahá'í Laws.

My earnest desire is that you will all strive and work for this glorious end; that you will be faithful and loving workers in the building of the new spiritual civilization; the elect of God, in willing joyful obedience carrying out His supreme design!

‘Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, Pages: 34-35

2. Adherence to the policies and procedures of service at the National Bahá'í Centre.
3. YYS Volunteers attending, and sometimes hosting, weekly deepenings on site.
4. YYS Volunteers are expected to bring with them their police clearance documents so that they may be enrolled in the Child Protection Policy training and obtain the Child Protection Accreditation, which enables them to teach Bahá'í Education in State Schools and work on projects which involve children and youth under the age of 18 years in community and cluster activities, and is also useful to act as a guide at the House of Worship.

TYPES OF SERVICE

When applying to serve at the National Bahá'í Centre you will be assigned to areas of service that fill the needs of the National Spiritual Assembly. Consideration is given to the skills and preferences of the volunteer but the priority will always be the needs of the Assembly. Areas of service include: janitorial, gardens and grounds, maintenance of buildings and facilities including the House of Worship, administrative work within the Secretariat, guiding at the House of Worship, assisting with group projects on site, and assisting with major events held at the National Centre.

The National Bahá'í Centre and House of Worship attracts a large number of visitors to the site and therefore all public areas must be constantly maintained to a high standard of cleanliness and beauty which is why a great deal of service is channelled to janitorial and gardening duties.

WORKING CONDITIONS & WORKING HOURS

- Volunteers are not expected to work longer than 35 hours per week spread over five days, unless otherwise agreed to with the supervising staff member.
- Volunteers will be rostered to work on either Saturdays or Sundays but will always be provided with two consecutive days off. For example: a YYS Volunteer that works five days from Tuesday to Saturday will have Sunday & Monday as days off, or if a volunteer works five days from Sunday to Thursday they will have Friday & Saturday as days off.
- For YYS Volunteers who come for one year or less, there is no leave period allocated, therefore it is recommended that any plans to travel within Australia should be done prior to or after the completion of your designated period of service. As the National Spiritual Assembly has a limited number of visas it can use for YYS Volunteers, a maximum of 3 weeks of the visa period can be used by a youth, serving for approximately a year, for travel within Australia prior to after the completion of the designated period of service.
- Local YYS Volunteers who serve for eighteen months or more are entitled to four weeks leave per year which can be taken at a time that is satisfactory to the Supervisor and the Facility Manager.
- YYS volunteers can ask for special leave, for up to five days per year of service, for planned travel teaching, attendance at conferences or other seminars of interest. Approval of special leave is at the discretion of the National Secretary in consultation with supervising staff member(s). Such activities must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance through the standard reporting channels. The decision of the National Secretary is final.
- Assisting as a Bahá'í Education in State Schools teacher during the day is considered part of the volunteer's regular working hours.
- Costs related to travel and attendance for conferences and other Bahá'í activities, while in Australia, are to be covered by the YYS Volunteer. However YYS Volunteers from developing and island nations of the Pacific, or YYS Volunteers from Australia experiencing financial constraints, may apply to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia Inc. (through the Office of Personnel) for financial assistance to attend Bahá'í conferences or activities to ensure these friends are enabled to participate in activities which will develop their skills and Bahá'í experiences.
- Other Activities: YYS Volunteers can undertake classes and study courses in their own time (e.g. days off or after working hours). Volunteers will have opportunities to offer service in their free time to the community or to special projects on site.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements apply to the special program visa applied for by YYS Volunteers:

- Volunteers must have comprehensive health insurance for the period of their stay in Australia. This must be arranged before the Volunteer arrives in Australia.
- Volunteers must have a return airline ticket or an airline ticket out of Australia before the one year visa expires. This should be arranged prior to the Volunteer arriving in Australia.
- YYS Volunteer is disallowed from volunteering/working for any other organisation than Bahá'í institutions without permission in writing from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

ACCOMMODATION

- All YYS Volunteers between the ages of 18 and 30 years are provided with accommodation in a designated furnished residence free of charge. Priority for accommodation in the Youth House is given to long term volunteers, 3 months and over. The Youth House is a two-winged domicile with 4 single bedrooms with private wash basins, shared showers and toilets in each wing. There is also a kitchen with

full facilities in each wing and a furnished lounge area with TV and sound system. There is a computer in the Youth House for checking and sending emails.

- There is an on-site Youth Mentor available to assist all YYS Volunteers with their integration and practical day to day issues including shopping and transportation.
- There is a curfew in place (weeknights: 12 midnight and weekends: 1.30am) and procedures that must be followed by YYS Volunteers when leaving the site for any reason, to ensure safety.
- It is mandatory that all aspects of Bahá'í Law are adhered to by residents and their guests. This includes observing prohibitions against alcohol and backbiting, and following Bahá'í guidance in such areas as morality and cleanliness.

A chaste and holy life must be made the controlling principle in the behaviour and conduct of all Bahá'ís, both in their social relations with the members of their own community, and in their contact with the world at large. It must adorn and reinforce the ceaseless labours and meritorious exertions of those whose enviable position is to propagate the Message, and to administer the affairs, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, Pages: 29-30

FOOD AND COOKING

You will be responsible for purchase of food and personal care items and for your own cooking. After your arrival someone from the Bahá'í National Centre will assist you in locating the most convenient shopping areas. If your cooking experience is limited you should start practicing your favourite recipes before leaving home and perhaps bring a book with your favourite recipes written in it.

CLOTHING

The choice of clothing and the cut of the beard and its dressing are left to the discretion of men. But beware, O people, lest ye make yourselves the playthings of the ignorant. Bahá'u'lláh

The Bahá'í principle of moderation in all things, including “all that pertains to dress” is clearly seen in the above quotation and should be applied in the manner of dress at the National Bahá'í Centre.

Imposing definite rulings to do with dress standards are extremely difficult both to prescribe and to enforce. It is asked that every volunteer consider whether his or her mode of dress and behaviour is appropriate to the National Bahá'í Centre. Clothing suitable for one's work depends on the nature of the work and the location in which it is performed. One does not always have to be dressed formally; informal or casual wear is entirely appropriate for certain times and places; but to be slovenly or immodest would not be acceptable. It is mandatory to wear safety clothing provided for maintenance and gardening duties.

CLIMATE

Lying in the temperate zone of Australia, Sydney experiences four distinct seasons with summer running from December to February and winter from June to August. Average temperatures range from around 12 degrees Celsius (53 degrees Fahrenheit) in the winter to 24 degrees Celsius (75 degrees Fahrenheit) in the summer with occasional days exceeding 30 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit). Being close to the ocean, hot days are often tempered by cooling sea breezes and balmy evening temperatures. The sea temperature ranges from 16 degrees Celsius (60 degrees Fahrenheit) in the winter to 22 degrees Celsius (70 degrees Fahrenheit) in the summer and rainfall is lowest in the spring at 74 millimetres (three inches) per month and highest in the autumn with 126 millimetres (five inches) per month.

SERVICES ON SITE

A variety of services are available at the Bahá'í National Centre.

Telephone calls:

One five minute long distance or overseas call is permitted free each week. Any other long distance calls must be paid for. It is possible to receive international calls to the Youth House telephone. There are restrictions on calls to mobile phones from on-site land lines in the Youth House. There is no restriction on local land line calls.

You may choose to bring with you a personal mobile telephone. You will then be responsible for maintaining the services to your mobile telephone.

Computer & Email facilities:

There is a computer in the Youth House for the convenience of the YYS Volunteers to access their emails during non-working hours. There are policies and procedures for accessing or downloading programmes from the internet or installing software other than that provided.

The computer is shared by all the YYS Volunteers. However, depending on your area of responsibility and the period of your service, you may be assigned your own electronic mail address within the Secretariat.

Laundry facilities:

Washing machines, dryers and other essential facilities are provided for volunteers living on site.

WHAT TO BRING

All personal items should be limited to the permitted luggage weight allowance. The electric service in Australia is 240 volts, therefore any electrical appliances such as shavers, sound equipment and hairdryers should have capacity and/or adaptors/transformers to facilitate 240 volts.

We suggest that some of the essentials to bring would be:

- Alarm clock (battery or wind-up, not electric)
- Large torch (flashlight) as many of the areas on site are unlit at night
- Personal books (there is access to a Bahá'í bookshop and a National Bahá'í Reference Library)
- Camera
- Cookbook, favourite recipes
- Musical instruments and songs
- National costumes are encouraged for special events
- Shaver
- Sports/recreation items (for swimming, tennis, hiking, etc)
- Sun protection items (hats, scarves, sunscreen - high UV factor)
- Transformer (for your electric items not adapted to 240 volts)
- Clothes and shoes suitable for cleaning and gardening duties
- SIGNED Parental consent form.
- Police clearance document.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The average YYS Volunteer spends approximately \$60-70 AUD (minimum) per week on food. Transportation on public transport, buses and trains to off site activities on your days off would cost approximately \$15 AUD per round-trip to the Sydney central business area. Food, personal items such as toothpaste etc, and travel are probably the major expenses and it is therefore recommended that a weekly allowance of \$85 AUD be budgeted for. Most essentials, other than food, associated with your comfort and accommodation are provided free of charge.

ACTIVITIES

There is a variety of activities for you to pursue in your leisure time. You should note that any costs associated with these activities should be budgeted for before your arrival. Some of the activities are:

- Deepening Classes - Deepening classes are held once a week to provide opportunities to enrich your understanding of various aspects of the Faith.
- Study Circles – Volunteers are encouraged to join study circles and undertake Ruhi and other institute courses on offer.
- Reading - Volunteers can purchase Bahá'í books from the Bookshop or are able to access a small selection of Bahá'í books available at the National Reference Library.
- Fitness – there are many facilities nearby, charging varying fees, including sport centers with basketball, tennis, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, well equipped gymnasiums, local beaches and hiking trails. We also have a ping pong (table-tennis) table on site.

HOW TO GET TO THE NATIONAL CENTRE IN SYDNEY

The Sydney Bahá'í House of Worship and the National Bahá'í Centre is located on the north shore area of Sydney and the airports, domestic and international, are in the southern part of the metropolitan area approximately 60 Kilometres away (over 100 kilometres return).

Volunteers are

The National Bahá'í Centre will pick up YYS Volunteers from overseas who are serving at the National Bahá'í Centre for 3 months or more. These YYS Volunteers should provide their arrival details – date, time and flight number – to the National Bahá'í Centre as soon as possible.

Other Volunteers are generally responsible for making their own way to the National Centre. However, if extenuating circumstances exist, the National Bahá'í Centre should be contacted to organise for the YYS Volunteer to be met at the airport.

Transport options:

Train:

There is a train that travels from the Airports to Central station. From Central station it is possible to catch a train to most parts of Sydney.

Option 1.

- Catch a train from Central Station to Chatswood station on the North Shore Line and transfer to a “Forest Coachline” bus number 285 which leaves from near the station and goes to the Bahá'í Temple on Mona Vale Road, Ingleside. The bus drivers on that route know where to stop.

Option 2.

- Catch a train from Central Station to Gordon station on the North shore Line and transfer to a “Forest Coachline” bus number 196 which leaves from near the station and goes to the Bahá'í Temple on Mona Vale Road, Ingleside. The bus drivers on that route know where to stop.

Options 1 and 2 cost about \$20 (AUD).

Option 3.

- Catch a train from Central Station to Pymble station on the North Shore Line and get a taxi (cab) from there to the Bahá'í Temple at 173 Mona Vale Road, Ingleside.

NB: Pymble station is approximately 15 minutes away and is the nearest station to the Temple but buses do not run from Pymble to the Temple.

Options 3 costs about \$50 (AUD).

Taxi (cab) from the airport to the Temple: Cost is approximately \$100.00 (AUD)

Shuttle from the airport to the Temple: If requested the National Bahá'í Office can book a shuttle service to meet you at the airport. A shuttle service is a small bus for transporting passengers and luggage within the metropolitan area. Approximate cost is \$50.00 (AUD). To make the booking, the National Bahá'í Centre will have to be notified of your arrival details - date, time, airline and flight number – at least 7 days before your arrival.

We recommend you log onto the Sydney public transport website to obtain useful information to plan your trip – <http://www.131500.com.au> and click on “plan your trip” then click on “trip planner”. Alternatively you can telephone 131500 for further information.

The National Office telephone number is +61 2 9998 9222 during working hours (weekdays); +61 2 9998 9220 on weekends 9am - 5pm.