

Case study: Experience and impact of inclusion

Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program

The Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program is a five-week program including a workshop series and a volunteer work placement. The workshop series includes a range of expert guest speakers, covering a variety of job related and life skills topics.

Volunteering Geelong also arrange a 50-hour volunteer work placement for each participant in a sector of their choice. The combination of workshop information and 'hands-on' work experience is designed to help participants in their journey along their pathway to employment.

Each Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program group is kept small to allow for substantial individual attention and support throughout the course. Groups sizes have ranged from eight to sixteen participants.

The first three Impacting a Pathway to Employment Programs have been run for participants aged between 16 – 23 years. The fourth program was opened to a wider age range and will be completed in August 2023.

The program has included participants from the following priority groups.

- New Migrants
- Disability
- Unemployed
- Vulnerable Women
- Youth 12- 18 years.

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Some participants apply as individuals while others are referred by an agency. Those linked with an agency have an extra layer of support while going through the program. The program helps to break down barriers between Volunteering Geelong and the agencies, as we work closely together toward positive outcomes for program participants.

A good example of this is the strengthening partnership emerging between Volunteering Geelong and Cultura. Cultura has provided several work placements for Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program participants.

While Cultura has also referred several participants to previous Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program groups, the two agencies are currently in talks to hold an Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program group with an aged care focus, rather than a general employment focus. This will require Volunteering Geelong and Cultura to work even more closely together to hold the program and reach desired outcomes for participants. This will be a significant change to the current system and will break down some barriers for those people keen to pursue a formal aged care qualification.

Some of the benefits of participating in an Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program group include:

- Increased confidence
- Gaining current job-related updates and information from expert speakers
- Learning relevant life skills such as financial management
- Making important contacts
- Updating resume/curriculum vitae and referees
- 'Hands-on' workplace experience
- Linking with Volunteering Geelong's diverse network of agencies and supporters

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Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program workshops and work placements are held in a supportive and safe manner. With the support of program coordinators and workplace host organisations we have been able to help participants facing many challenges including:

- Mental health challenges
- Physical health issues
- Learning difficulties
- Limited English language skills
- Navigating Australia's systems as a new migrant
- Being unemployed for lengthy periods
- Lack of work and life experience
- Lack of confidence
- Overcoming difficult childhoods and/or challenging home situations

The Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program has had great success in its short history. Many participants have gained confidence, skills, and paid employment as a direct result of the program. All participants have moved at least a step or two closer to their employment goals as a result of their program involvement.

The Volunteering Geelong team gain great satisfaction in helping individuals toward their goals. The success of Impacting a Pathway to Employment Program is largely due to careful planning, strategic partnerships, knowledgeable, empathetic guest speakers and host organisations, lots of listening, patience, and perseverance. The largely positive feedback received from participants has been gratifying.

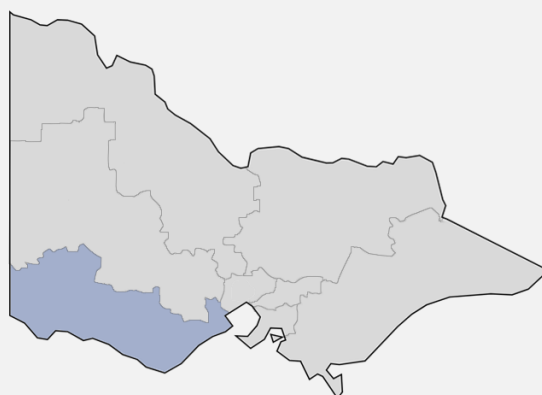
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<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/leading-volunteers/vma-2022-2026/>



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Volunteering Victoria acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.