

Case study: Experience and impact of inclusion

Empowering young women and girls with disability

Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau partnered with Sisters Who Shine to help young women and girls with disability build confidence and explore volunteering as a pathway to employment. Through interactive workshops and tailored support, participants were empowered to discover their strengths and pursue opportunities that aligned with their interests.

Building skills and confidence

Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau partnered with *Sisters Who Shine*, an organisation that runs workshops for young women and girls living with disability, with the aim of empowering them towards a future that includes active participation in the workforce. The six-week program included training in interview skills, confidence building, dressing for the role you want, and choosing the right pathway.

A key focus of the partnership was highlighting volunteering as a practical step towards employment. One full session was dedicated to helping participants identify their skills and interests, and matching them with volunteer roles that aligned with their goals.

Creating engagement and belonging

Julia, Volunteer Engagement Specialist, noted that the group brought a range of personalities and levels of engagement. Some participants were eager from the outset, while others were initially disengaged.

“I was thrilled to meet Amanda, who was keen to take over my role as facilitator – we eventually agreed that she could be my co-presenter. Other participants took some time to warm up, but by the end the quietest participant, Jenny, was helping by facilitating our brainstorming session by writing our findings neatly on the whiteboard.”*

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“I discovered that some of the participants had a love of art and were able to connect with each other through this session, while others expressed a love for animals. I am now working to get them involved in taking care of kittens at the Animal Rescue service, while some of the artists are going to work with children at a community organisation.”

These moments highlighted how flexible, responsive facilitation can create space for participants to step into leadership and connect with others through shared interests.

A people-centred approach

The program was grounded in a people-centred approach, encouraging participants to see volunteering as both valuable and achievable. Personality exercises were used to demonstrate, in a fun and non-threatening way, that everyone has different skills and strengths. Together, the group concluded that volunteering in areas of personal interest would lead to better outcomes.

During the sessions, one participant, Emily, shared: **“I didn’t know volunteering was for people like us!”** As this realisation took hold, the group’s energy and enthusiasm grew, reinforced by the understanding that each person – and each volunteering role – is unique.

Expanding opportunities through partnerships

The involvement of a second partner, Sport Northeast, helped expand volunteering opportunities further. Through this partnership, a new cohort of six participants with disability was referred to volunteering roles across the Hume region.

Case study: Experience and impact of inclusion

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Sport Northeast supported participants by first listening to their interests, whether ponies, soccer or cooking a BBQ. They also assisted with aspects that can feel daunting, including compliance, introductions and induction, and offered a buddying system during the early days of each volunteering role.

Looking ahead

Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau looks forward to continuing and strengthening these partnerships, supporting future cohorts to move into community volunteer roles and build confidence, skills and pathways towards employment.

** Names have been changed*

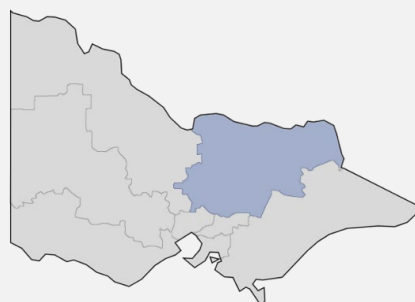
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<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/leading-volunteers/vma-2022-2026/>



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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.