

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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UnitingCare Queensland Submission - Queensland Volunteering Inquiry

Introduction

UnitingCare Queensland (UCQ) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Queensland Volunteering Inquiry. We appreciate the Queensland Government interest in supporting volunteering by drawing on UnitingCare Queensland's extensive experience in volunteer engagement to address key aspects of the Inquiry.

UnitingCare Queensland has the great privilege of delivering health, aged care, disability, and community services to thousands of people in need every day throughout Queensland, and in the Northern Territory through Australian Regional and Remote Community Services (ARRCS).

We are continuing the legacy of community services of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches, which united in 1977 around their shared mission. Our purpose remains to offer UnitingCare services to people who need care and support, so they may live life in all its fullness.

Now, as one of Australia's largest charities, we remain grounded in the beliefs of our founders – that everyone deserves the chance to live their best possible life. This inspires us every day to change people's lives for the better, through more than 460 locations including hospitals, residential aged care facilities, retirement living and family and disability services.

UnitingCare proudly operates BlueCare, UnitingCare, ARRCS, Lifeline in Queensland, The Wesley Hospital, Buderim Private Hospital, St Stephen's Hospital and St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital.

Volunteering is fundamental to UnitingCare supporting the Queensland community with 8,575 volunteers contributing over 695,000 hours in the financial year 2023-2024. This represents a substantial volunteer workforce helping people who need our care and support, so that they may live life in all its fullness.

Recommendations

Based on UCQ's experience the following recommendations are made to enhance volunteering in Queensland:

- The Queensland Government should **actively promote diverse volunteer opportunities** to raise awareness and encourage participation. UCQ's success in increasing volunteer numbers highlights the potential for growth with proactive recruitment.
- Efforts should be made to **avoid requirements on funded programs that create any duplication** to help streamline volunteer application processes.
- Consideration should be given to **restoring in-person options for Police Checks** and exploring similar alternatives for other background checks to reduce the burden on volunteers and staff.
- The government should **invest in strategies and resources to support volunteer engagement** within organisations, recognising dedicated support is crucial for thriving volunteer programs.
- The government should explore ways to directly encourage and recognise volunteers by exploring options for free or discounted public transport or other reward initiatives.
- Support the development of **evidence-based strategies and practical resources aimed at engaging diverse groups** to improve volunteering participation, accessibility, and experience for all. The 13YARN/OurMob program is cited as a significant example of culturally appropriate initiatives.
- Explore opportunities for the government to provide **more comprehensive and coordinated support for the volunteering sector**, potentially including funded programs for volunteer checks and coordination, similar to the ACCVS model, to alleviate the burden on individual organisations.
- The Queensland Government should **leverage all portfolios and engage volunteer sector stakeholders early in community development and social policy initiatives** to support the growth of volunteering.
- Actively plan and collaborate with volunteer organisations and the Games organising committee to **leverage the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games** as a unique opportunity to inspire and engage a new wave of volunteers and ensure a lasting legacy of increased volunteerism.

Inquiry Points of Focus

The current state of volunteering in Queensland and the value it contributes, including benefits to volunteers, organisations, communities and the State.

While Queensland, like other parts of Australia, has experienced a decline in volunteer participation, **UnitingCare has seen a significant increase in volunteer numbers**, with a 55% growth in active volunteers between December 2020 and December 2023. In the financial year 2023-2024 alone, the value of volunteer contributions to UnitingCare was estimated to be over \$34 million. This highlights the ongoing value and significant potential for improving volunteer engagement throughout Queensland communities.

Volunteering provides substantial **benefits to the volunteers themselves**. The [Volunteer Impact Report](#) survey results show that volunteers are motivated by:

- A desire to give back to the community (35.77%)
- Use free time meaningfully (24.27%)
- Gain new skills (8.58%)
- Alleviate loneliness (8.79%)
- Improve their mental health (12.97%)

The [Volunteer Impact Report](#) survey results volunteers also reported:

- Volunteering has a positive impact on their own lives, with 53.94% strongly agreeing and 39.83% agreeing
- Experiencing personal growth through learning new skills (17.98%)
- Feeling valued (30.59%)
- Gaining a sense of purpose (16.13%)
- Improving social interactions (18.82%)
- Enhancing their mental wellbeing (16.47%)

Stories from the [Volunteer Impact Report](#) further illustrate these benefits, such as Suzy Molloy from Lifeline Bookfest who experienced boosted self-esteem and confidence through volunteering.

For UnitingCare, the **benefits to the organisation** include:

- Increased team productivity and service capacity (18.7%)
- Improved client/customer experience (25.3%)
- Stronger connection with the community (18.7%)

The Compassionate Companion program at The Wesley Hospital, where volunteers like Lyndie Mitchell provide crucial support to patients who lack family nearby, exemplifies how volunteers enhance the quality of care **and free up staff to focus on complex tasks**.

The diverse services supported by UnitingCare volunteers **benefit the Queensland community:**

- Lifeline Crisis Supporters answered 132,530 calls in the past year, providing comfort and reassurance to those in need. Lifeline Retail volunteers support this vital crisis line through their work in shops and Bookfests.
- BlueCare volunteers enhance the lives of aged care residents and clients through a range of activities and companionship.
- Volunteers in UnitingCare hospitals provide companionship, practical assistance, and a comforting presence to patients and visitors.

The views of volunteers, prospective volunteers and the volunteering sector on the current barriers to volunteering, including excessive legislative and regulatory burdens and other restrictions adversely limiting active volunteers

The "State of Volunteering in Queensland 2024" report identified the second biggest barrier for non-volunteers is being "Not sure how / never been asked". This highlights the importance of proactively raising awareness of the diverse volunteer opportunities available, as demonstrated by UCQ's proactive recruitment success.

UCQ's experience with third-party platforms like SEEK Volunteering and Volunteer Resource Centre's reveals potential barriers in the application process. The duplication of requiring separate applications after initial expressions of interest can be cumbersome and deter prospective volunteers. Although these platforms generally offer additional unique functionality or services to help with recruitment, it is not always aligned with the needs of large organisations like UnitingCare.

Regulatory requirements, such as Working with Children Checks, Police Checks, and NDIS checks, are generally not a deterrent to potential volunteers in themselves, but we have experienced the process of providing proof of identity and completing these checks, particularly online, can be off-putting and time-consuming for volunteers and staff. Restoring the in-person option for Police Checks at Australia Post and exploring in person alternatives for other background checks would help overcome this burden.

The current experiences, motivations and challenges for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations and their recommendations for addressing challenges and improving the volunteering experience

As noted earlier, volunteers are motivated by a variety of factors, including a desire to contribute to the community and personal growth. Their experiences are often positive, with many feeling valued and finding a sense of purpose.

A significant challenge for volunteer-involving organisations in general is limited resourcing to support volunteers throughout the volunteer lifecycle. In our experience, volunteering thrives where dedicated resources are available for volunteer engagement. UnitingCare addresses this challenge by investing in a dedicated Volunteer Experience Team to:

- **Raising awareness and recognising** the significant contributions volunteers make to the organisation's mission. The [Volunteer Impact Report](#) itself serves this purpose, recognising current volunteers and encouraging new ones.
- **Simplifying internal processes** for staff to create new volunteering opportunities and to attract potential volunteers
- **Providing meaningful support to hundreds of leaders of volunteers** by improving resources and tools to support staff to onboard and engage volunteers

The Queensland government could consider ways to further encourage new volunteers and retain current volunteers by exploring options for free or discounted public transport or other rewards programs.

The unique challenges experienced by people from diverse backgrounds, genders, age groups, abilities and locations, and opportunities to improve volunteering participation, accessibility and experience for these groups

UnitingCare is committed to recognising the long history of community giving within First Nations communities. The **13YARN/OurMob program** is a significant example of culturally appropriate volunteer opportunities designed to remove barriers and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to volunteer.

This program ensures that First Nation volunteers receive culturally appropriate training and support to answer First Nations callers. Aunty Bev Muckan, a proud Kabi Kabi Elder, plays a vital role in supervising and culturally advising volunteers within these programs, ensuring a culturally safe and supportive environment. Sheree Biondi highlights the importance of cultural fit and the healing aspect of giving back within First Nations communities.

The [Volunteer Impact Report](#) shows a higher percentage of female volunteers (82.28%) compared to male volunteers (17.30%) and further efforts could be made to understand and address potential barriers to volunteering for males in general.

Government support for the development of evidence-based strategies such as the 13YARN/OurMob program and practical resources aimed at engaging diverse groups would be invaluable in assisting organisations like ours make informed decisions about how to best invest organisational resources in this critical area.

The extent, effectiveness and efficiency of current government support at all levels for the volunteering sector in Queensland and sustainable opportunities for improvement

UnitingCare found that while initiatives like the CARE Army may achieve a high number of initial sign-ups and general training completion, the onboarding burden for individual organisations remains significant. Even when volunteers were referred to us, UnitingCare still needed to undertake its own application, induction, orientation, and relevant background checks. Attracting volunteers is only one part of the challenge; the process of effectively integrating them followed by retention is where a substantial organisational effort is required.

Funded programs to attract volunteers, complete all the relevant checks and coordinate them in a similar fashion to the ACCVS could alleviate the additional burden on individual volunteer-involving organisations. A pool of managed, trained, and vetted volunteers could improve retention while also capitalising on trends for lower commitment roles and a desire for variety among volunteers, as individuals could engage in different volunteering opportunities without the need for repeated onboarding processes with each new organisation.

Opportunities for the Queensland Government to leverage all portfolios to support growth in volunteering across Queensland, including through hosting the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games

The Queensland Government has a significant opportunity to leverage all portfolios to support the growth of volunteering by inviting relevant volunteer sector stakeholders and specialists early into all community development and social policy initiatives.

The upcoming Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games present a unique occasion to inspire and engage a 'new wave' of volunteers by providing a unique and exceptional experience to volunteers.

Further planning and collaboration between government, volunteer organisations, and the Games organising committee would be helpful in developing long term strategies to 'ride the wave' beyond the games; ensuring that the event leaves a lasting legacy of increased volunteerism across Queensland.

Conclusion

Volunteers are an indispensable part of UnitingCare Queensland and the broader Queensland community.

Their contributions are vital in delivering essential services, fostering community connections, and enhancing the lives of countless individuals. UCQ's experience demonstrates the significant impact of a strong volunteer program, even amidst broader trends of declining participation.

To further support the growth and sustainability of volunteering in Queensland, we recommend a focus on actively promoting opportunities, streamlining volunteer processes, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility, and leveraging significant events like the Brisbane 2032 Games.

UnitingCare Queensland is willing to engage further with the Committee to provide additional information and insights based on our extensive experience in the volunteering sector.



Volunteer **Impact Report** 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

UnitingCare respectfully acknowledges the sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples and Custodians of the lands, waters, seas and skies of the country.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present for their continued care for Country, traditional knowledge keeping, storytelling, bravery and welcoming.

This report was produced and recognises the impact of our volunteers and services on the sacred ancestral lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

UnitingCare follows the Australian National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033 (from Volunteering Australia) and acknowledges and recognises the following statement:

The National Strategy for Volunteering recognises that community giving has been taking place in First Nations communities for tens of thousands of years. It is committed to recognising the contribution of First Nations Peoples and celebrating the power of volunteering and community giving to promote reconciliation.

To read more about UnitingCare's commitment to Reconciliation, scan here



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Message from *Craig Barke*

CEO of UnitingCare

Welcome to UnitingCare Queensland's 2024 *Volunteer Impact Report* which was released, appropriately, on 5 December - International Volunteer Day.

We produced this report for the first-time last year and received an overwhelmingly positive response. So much so, that it inspired and galvanised representatives from various volunteering services and peak bodies throughout Queensland, other parts of Australia, and even internationally - many of whom contacted our Volunteer Experience Team to seek advice and assistance on how to produce something similar themselves.

UnitingCare Queensland's Volunteer Experience Team works under the motto of "Change Lives, Yours Included". This phrase truly encapsulates what is special about volunteering with our

organisation, the impact it has on the people we serve, our employees, and, crucially, on our volunteers. Because they gain a lot, too, including new skills and experiences, opportunities to make new friends, a sense of community, and being part of something genuinely good that helps improve the lives of others.

My heartfelt thanks go to all the volunteers who work so hard throughout the state, supporting our teams and services. This includes those assisting Lifeline Crisis Support, Lifeline Retail and Bookfests throughout Queensland; the volunteers helping in our aged care residential homes and out in the community for Blue Care; those supporting the families, young people and people with a disability in the community; those assisting our Mission team; and volunteers working in UnitingCare hospitals: The Wesley Hospital, St Andrew's

War Memorial Hospital, St Stephen's Hospital and Buderim Private Hospital.

We are so grateful for all you do to help us help those in need. Thank you for your care and compassion, your dedication and commitment, and your big hearts.

I'd like to also thank the Volunteer Experience Team, and the Volunteer Leaders for their work in creating this report, which features so many extraordinary stories about the people who are the backbone of our organisation.

I know you'll feel as inspired as I am when you read it.

Find out more about
volunteering with us here



Message from *DJ Cronin*

Volunteer Experience Manager of UnitingCare

Volunteering *matters*. It makes a positive impact on the people we help in our communities. It makes a positive impact on our staff. And it makes a positive impact on those who volunteer, too.

Producing an annual *Volunteer Impact Report* demonstrates not only the wonderful contribution volunteers make collectively but also recognises the marvellous and inspiring stories that volunteering creates every day.

Your presence as a volunteer creates an irreplaceable impact. Can you imagine a UnitingCare hospital without volunteers guiding visitors, being compassionate companions, or a welcoming and reassuring presence? Can you imagine any of our Lifeline Retail stores without volunteers? We simply couldn't run them without you. And without volunteers, who would answer calls from people in extreme distress who ring Lifeline's Crisis Support phonelines? There'd be no Lifeline Bookfest

without volunteers, either. Our Prison Ministry and Mission teams wouldn't be able to help as many people in need without volunteers. We'd not have as many people helping our homeless, assisting people to navigate the court system, or providing crucial admin support to our staff.

It's important to remember what our organisation would look and feel like without you, our volunteers. We genuinely couldn't do what we do without you. I hope you will be as proud as we are of this year's *Volunteer Impact Report*, which shines a light on all the amazing things you bring to our organisation and to the people we serve.

I would like to thank Victoria Bansey, our Better Impact Volunteer Experience Lead, and her project team: Sharon Batstone, Nancy Duran, and Sonam Pelden - (who is actually one of our cherished volunteers!), who have been working for many months to find these amazing stories and to compile the quantitative and qualitative data to

produce this report.

I'd also like to thank all of you who manage, supervise and coordinate volunteers. We recognise and appreciate your impact, too.

And finally, to you, our volunteers - thank you for choosing to work with us at UnitingCare. Your impact is profound. We will continue to reflect on this and ensure each of you can flourish and shine brightly during your time with our organisation.

Enjoy this year's report - we're privileged to be able to tell and share your stories.

Interested in finding a
volunteering opportunity?

Please visit the UnitingCare
Volunteering Portal at



UnitingCare Volunteer Stats



8,575

Number of
volunteers



15%

Increase in number
of volunteers in
FY 23-24



8%

Original 2023-
2024 Volunteer
Growth Target



695,101

Hours
Contributed by
UnitingCare
volunteers

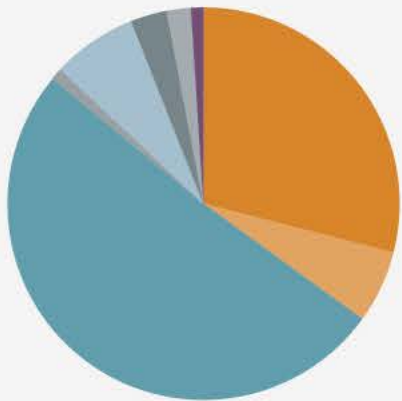


\$34M+

Value of volunteer
contributions
in FY 23-24*

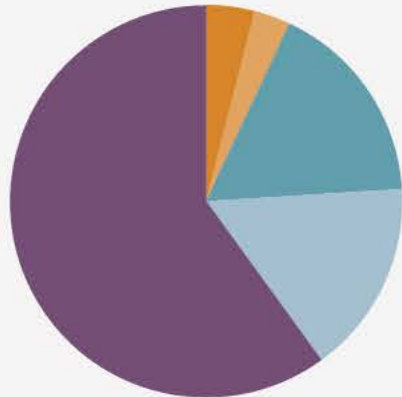
Breakdown of volunteers by service

Service	Number of volunteers	% Increase of volunteers
Lifeline Retail	2,250	21.56%
Lifeline Crisis Support	511	31.03%
Lifeline Bookfest	4,207	1.77%
Family and Disability Services	22	4.76%
Aged Care and Community Services	575	3.23%
Hospitals	303	1.34%
Mission	185	40.15%
UnitingCare Corporate	12	-33.33%



Volunteer activity hours representing UnitingCare values

Compassion	4%
Justice	3%
Leading Through Learning	17%
Respect	16%
Working Together	60%



• All Statistics are for FY2023-2024

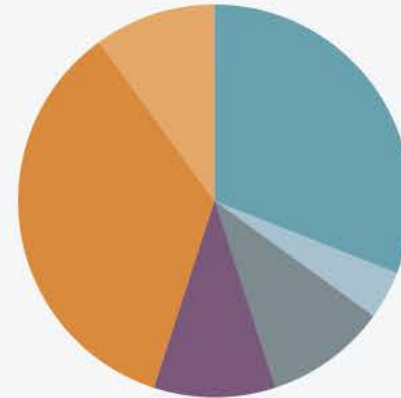
* Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics figures valuing volunteer contributions

Impact Survey Results - Supervisor



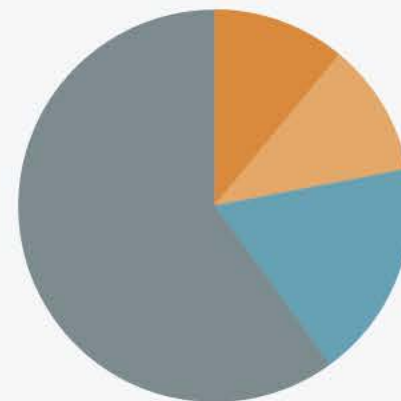
Which UnitingCare service are you from?

BlueCare	31%
Corporate	3.4%
Family and Disability Services	10.3%
Hospitals	10.3%
Lifeline	34.5%
Mission	10.3%



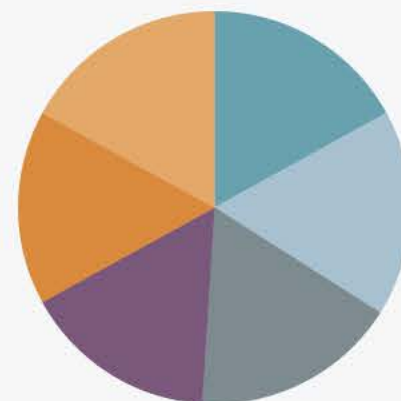
How long have you been managing volunteers in your service?

Less than 6 months	10.7%
6 months to 1 year	10.7%
1-2 years	17.9%
More than 2 years	60.7%



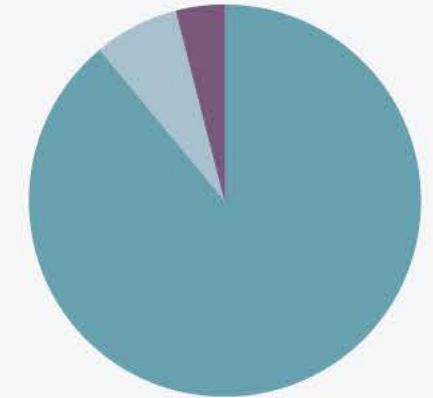
What motivated you to recruit volunteers for your service/program?

Bring innovative ideas to improve the service/program	17.1%
Increase team productivity and enable staff to focus on complex tasks	17.1%
Build a bridge between the organisation and the community we serve	17.1%
Create an inclusive and diverse environment	15.7%
Empower members of the community	15.7%
Other	17.1%



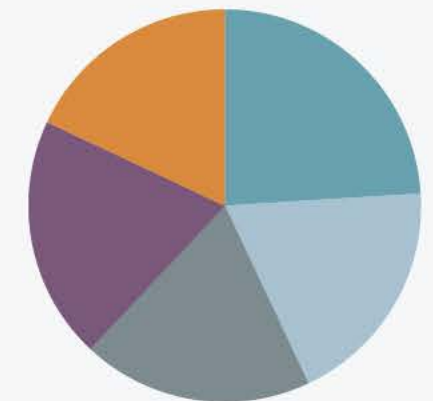
Do you feel that your volunteers have made a positive impact in your service?

Strongly Agree	89.3%
Agree	7.1%
Neutral	0.0%
Disagree	3.6%
Strongly Disagree	0.0%



How do you perceive the impact of volunteers in your service?

Improved the client/customer experience	25.3%
Increased team productivity and service capacity	18.7%
Created a stronger connection with the community	18.7%
Increased team diversity which has enriched the organisation	19.8%
Inspired clients/staff	17.6%



“Our volunteers bring solace and a sense of calm to our patients. Their involvement on the wards creates space for the staff chaplains to be able to engage with complex cases and participate in other areas within the hospital.”

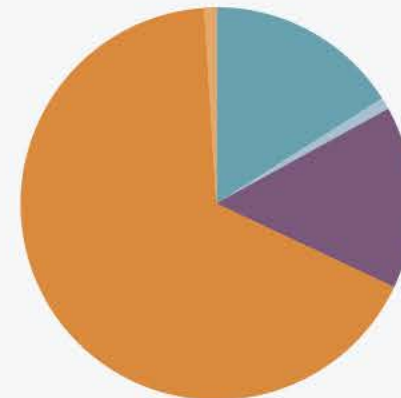
Philippa Ferrant-Smith
(Chaplain – The Wesley Hospital)

Impact Survey Results - Volunteer



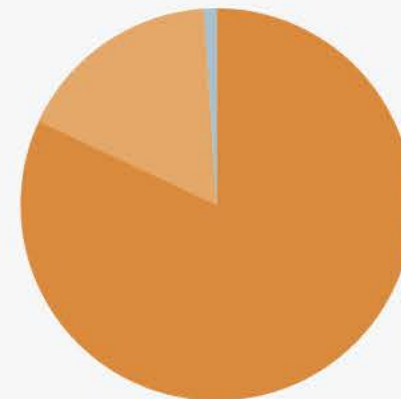
Which UnitingCare service are you from?

BlueCare	16.24%
Corporate	1.28%
Family and Disability Services	0%
Hospitals	14.96%
Lifeline	67.09%
Mission	0.43%



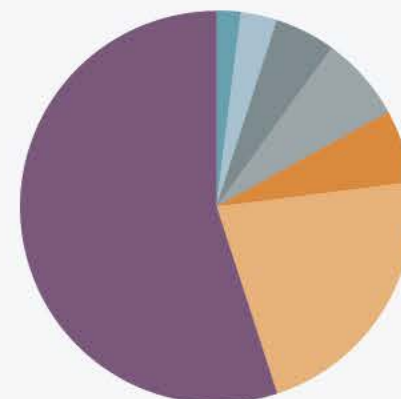
Gender breakdown of responses

Female	82.28%
Male	17.30%
Non-Binary/Other	0.00%
Prefer not to say	0.42%



Age breakdown of responses

Under 18	1.68%
18-24	2.52%
25-34	4.62%
35-44	6.72%
45-54	5.88%
55-64	22.27%
65 or older	56.30%

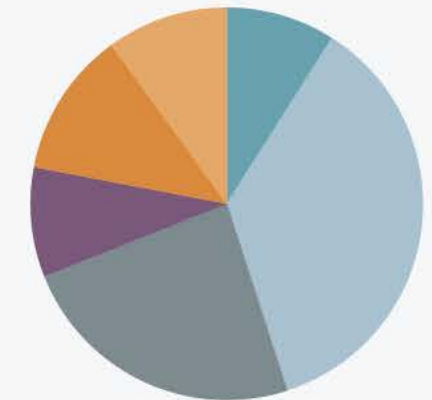


"Whenever I volunteer at Bookfest, I have always received some form of positive acknowledgement that my work and time has mattered to others. This has boosted my self-esteem and confidence."

Suzy Molloy (Lifeline Bookfest Brisbane)

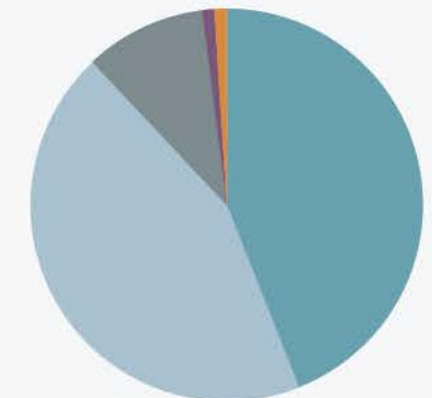
Motivations for volunteering

Gain work experience/new skills	8.58%
Give back to the community	35.77%
Use free time meaningfully	24.27%
Alleviate loneliness and social isolation	8.79%
Improve mental health and wellbeing	12.97%
Other	9.62%



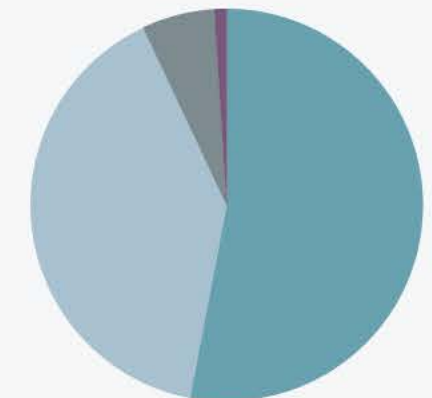
Do you feel that your volunteering has made a positive impact in the community?

Strongly Agree	43.85%
Agree	43.85%
Neutral	10.66%
Disagree	0.82%
Strongly Disagree	0.82%



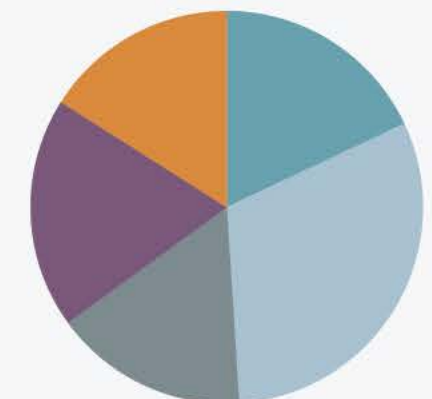
Do you feel that your volunteer work has made a positive impact in your own life?

Strongly Agree	53.94%
Agree	39.83%
Neutral	5.81%
Disagree	0.41%
Strongly Disagree	0.00%



How has volunteering impacted your personal growth and development?

I have learned new skills	17.98%
I feel valued, and I am contributing to a cause	30.59%
I have acquired a new sense of purpose	16.13%
I have improved social interactions, and I have new friendships	18.82%
I have improved mental health and personal wellbeing	16.47%



Victoria Bansey

Volunteer Impact Report Project Manager and
Better Impact Experience Lead of UnitingCare



I'm so pleased the 2024 UnitingCare *Volunteer Impact Report* is available for distribution to our volunteers, staff, customers and clients. It is also a pleasure to be able to share it with the wider Volunteer community both within Australia and internationally.

This report's purpose is to demonstrate the values that drive volunteering and to show volunteers that what they do impacts not just them, but also the staff, clients and customers.

The influence of quantitative measurement used in this report is important - numbers are measurable and can easily be compared and collected. UnitingCare's quantitative impact has been captured through our Volunteer Management system, Better Impact, and through surveys sent to both supervisors and volunteers. We have also reported on qualitative impact through interviews with volunteers and staff to recognise our current volunteers, whilst also

inspiring new volunteers.

I am fortunate to have had two members of the 2023 Project Team return to assist in the 2024 report: Sharon Batstone and Nancy Duran. We were also joined by Sonam Pelden, who has volunteered with the Volunteer Experience Team as part of her Masters of Global Development at Griffith University in Queensland. Sonam brought a unique perspective to the report and even joined the fun by volunteering at the June 2024 Lifeline Bookfest. Her volunteering story is on page 19.

One of my favourite interviewees was Lyndie Mitchell, who is a Compassionate Companion program volunteer (see page 16). Hers is a beautiful story which highlights the UnitingCare values of compassion and working together. It also demonstrates the impact that a volunteer makes on not just the people we serve but on the staff they work alongside.

Interviewing Aunty Bev

Muckan from 13YARN and OurMob was also an experience that will stay with me as she shared her history, family stories and connection to country on Kabi Kabi land. Aunty Bev's knowledge and sharing of culture comes through naturally in every conversation - see her story on Page 30.

These are just three of the many powerful stories in this year's report. It's a reminder of the kindness, compassion and generosity our volunteers show every day in so many ways - something I'm so grateful for and inspired by.

Finally, I'd like to give a thank you to staff members from outside the Volunteer Experience Team who have supported us in creating this report - Danielle Hine, Andy Tope and Anna Liu. All gave support above expectation and their assistance is truly appreciated.

Shane Harris

Volunteer Engagement Lead
of UnitingCare



The State of Volunteering and UnitingCare's Success Story

Queensland, much like other Australian states and territories as well as numerous countries around the world, is currently grappling with a significant decline in volunteerism. The number of people volunteering, as well as the overall time they dedicate, has seen a troubling decrease. From 2020 to 2023, Queensland experienced an 11.4% drop in volunteer participation. This trend is a cause for concern as volunteer efforts are integral to the social and operational fabric of many community services and non-profit organisations.

However, amidst this widespread decline, UnitingCare stands out as a beacon of success and hope. From 31st December 2020 to 31st December 2023, we welcomed a remarkable 6,154 new volunteers. The number of active volunteers surged from 4,600 to 8,280 within this three-year period; a growth of 55%. This stark contrast to the state-wide

trend raises the question: What has UnitingCare done differently?

The answer lies in a simple yet powerful principle: "You get what you ask for." At UnitingCare, the belief is that the number of volunteer opportunities available directly correlates with the number of volunteers engaged. Essentially, if you don't ask for help, you won't get it. This proactive approach has been the basis for UnitingCare's strategy and success.

The *State of Volunteering in Queensland 2024* report identified that the second biggest barrier for non-volunteers was "Not sure how / never been asked." This insight is crucial; it highlights the need for organisations to actively reach out and make volunteering opportunities known and accessible.

Furthermore, the report indicated that volunteer recruitment is the third top issue for leaders of volunteers. At UnitingCare, this challenge has been addressed through

several strategic initiatives:

1. Raising Awareness: By highlighting the substantial contributions volunteers make to the organisation's mission, UnitingCare has inspired and motivated individuals to get involved.

2. Simplifying the Process: The organisation has made it easy and accessible for both potential volunteers to find opportunities, and for team leaders to request volunteer support. This streamlined process removes barriers and encourages participation.

3. Improving Resources and Tools: Continual enhancements to onboarding resources and tools have made it easier for volunteer leaders to integrate new members into their teams. This has not only improved the onboarding experience but has also ensured that volunteers are well-prepared and supported.

Mission Impact

Message from Rev Dr Peter Armstrong

Director of Mission

Volunteering speaks to the heart of being in 'community' with and for others.

Volunteering offers the opportunity to find meaning and purpose, to give back, to contribute to something greater than ourselves, and it offers connection with others.

Volunteers with the UnitingCare's Mission Group experience a unique and impactful way to serve communities across a wide range of settings, including in prisons, hospitals, aged care, and within local communities in times of disasters. UnitingCare Queensland, as part of the broader Uniting Church in Australia, is committed to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised individuals in society. Volunteers are at the heart of this mission, providing compassion and vital support to those in need.

Working with the Mission Group as a volunteer is a profound act of service, reflecting the values of

empathy, compassion, and social justice. Volunteers contribute their time, skills, and energy to various programs and services, ensuring that those in need receive the care and support they deserve. The work is diverse and often challenging, but it is also deeply rewarding, offering volunteers the chance to make a tangible difference in the lives of others.

The following highlights a few of our areas of volunteer service. In hospitals, volunteers play a crucial role in supporting patients, families, and healthcare staff. They offer companionship to patients, assist with practical tasks, and provide a comforting presence in what can often be a stressful and uncertain environment. Volunteers may also support hospital chaplaincy services, offering spiritual care and emotional support to those who are facing serious illness or the end of life. Volunteering in hospitals requires empathy, patience, and a strong ability

to communicate effectively with people from all walks of life. Volunteers in this setting are often a source of comfort and reassurance, helping to alleviate the anxiety and fear that can accompany medical treatment.

Volunteering with the Mission Group in UnitingCare is a powerful way to contribute to the wellbeing of individuals and communities across a variety of settings. Whether working in prisons, hospitals, disaster areas, or providing pastoral care and social support, volunteers play a vital role in bringing hope, comfort, and practical assistance to those in need. By dedicating their time and skills to this important work, volunteers help to create a more just and compassionate society, embodying the core values of UnitingCare Queensland and the Uniting Church in Australia.



Prison Ministry

Anne Velu

Prison Ministry Volunteer

Anne Velu's life can definitely be described as one of service.

As a mother of nine children, Anne has volunteered at schools including delivering religious instruction. Anne and her husband, David, volunteered abroad, too, as part of the Street Ministry with the Gospel of Salvation. They'd talk to people living on the streets in Indonesia and Malaysia offering them food, a kind word and inviting them to enter a rehab program.

This program was incredibly successful. Many participants - a lot of whom had previously been in prison - ended up becoming pastors.

After returning to Australia, Anne was involved with the UnitingChurch in Mt Louisa (Townsville) and was soon recruited for the Prison Ministry program. During conversation, Anne often quotes from The Bible with Romans 12:2 being one that reflects her commitment to Prison Ministry: "Do not conform to the pattern of this

world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind".

Very quickly, Anne recognised a need for a Bible Study program within the prisons that she visits. She approached the Chairman of the State Chaplaincy Board and created a program that is now in place at both the men's and women's prisons in Townsville. Anne now hopes that it can be transferred to other prisons throughout Queensland.

Anne's commitment means that she attends both the Women's (as a chaplain) and Men's prisons (as a Bible instructor) weekly. She has also trained two other Prison Ministry volunteers to teach Bible studies in the Women's prison, saying: "People hear how life-changing it is and want to get involved."

Anne also gets to see real change and healing in participants. "We have seen people who have thought that they would never be forgiven. [But] they've seen the change in their mates who have

bloomed after 18 months on the program." They have, Anne believes, "Taken the word of God and applied it to their life."

As for the future? Anne is looking to continue her work and hopes to launch her Bible study program into other prisons so it can change lives as a self-paced study. "Because when you change a life, you're changing the generations that follow," she added.



Compassionate Companion

Lyndie Mitchell

Compassionate Companion Volunteer at The Wesley Hospital



Lyndie had never volunteered before contacting Leanne Duncan, the supervisor of the Compassionate Companion program at the Wesley Hospital, in September 2023. Her prior experience working in aged care was a motivator: "The thing that got me involved was that there were people needing aged care whose families weren't necessarily in the same area. There's a real gap there and there's so many people in our community who don't get visitors."

Taking on a role in the Vulnerable Impact Team at The Wesley Hospital as a Compassionate Companion, Lyndie started assisting a patient, Vicky, (pictured on the left with Lyndie), who attends dialysis each week. This dialysis can take up to four hours, so Lyndie spends time keeping Vicky occupied and "in her happy place" so

that she doesn't pull out her catheter in distress.

The Dialysis Unit Manager, David Rodrigues, can see the soothing effect Lyndie's presence has. "Before she met Lyndie, Vicky would get distressed, pull her catheter out, and cry and cry. As our staff are often busy attending to other patients having dialysis, it can be a difficult scenario," David said.

While Vicky has her treatment, she and Lyndie do a variety of activities like painting their nails, beading and making friendship bracelets, watching movies or discussing Vicky's main interests - rainbows, unicorns and One Direction. Lyndie supports these interests by printing out pages to colour in, brings stickers and different coloured nail polishes. Vicky also loves to have her photo taken so Lyndie has created a memory book that Vicky loves

flicking through.

When Lyndie arrives at the hospital each week, the nurses often tell her Vicky has been asking for her. "When I hear that, I know I'm doing something right," Lyndie smiles. Lyndie also appreciates that being a volunteer has given her a lot, too. "Volunteering has done me the world of good," she admitted. "I was looking for a way to make a difference."

She admitted that going into a hospital environment and seeing what people have to deal with when undergoing treatment has been eye opening. "I can't believe Vicky goes through so much every week, and she doesn't have the security of family around her. When I arrive and see her face light up, and she says, 'I'm so glad you're here', it feels good to know I'm helping her."

"The interactions are all valuable, just as all the people I see each week are individuals to be helped and supported as much as I can."

Barbara Carabott (End of Life Compassionate Companion)

UnitingCare Corporate

Elisa Fenton

Better Impact Buddy with the Volunteer Experience Team



A long career in the Australian Public Service set Elisa Fenton up with the perfect skills for her unique volunteer role at UnitingCare.

After retiring in 2018, Elisa looked to make a difference through volunteering. Her first role was with the Indooroopilly Uniting Church and their refugee support service. Although she knew her contribution was appreciated, after several years she sought a new challenge.

A friend recommended UnitingCare because of the large variety of roles available to choose from. After a stint with the Volunteer Experience Team, an opportunity arose to assist the Gold Coast Homelessness Service as a Better Impact Buddy volunteer. With the ongoing housing crisis, the service is more necessary and busier than ever so the team was very stretched and needed administrative support. They also needed Elisa's assistance

to increase the number of volunteers at the service.

Elisa loves the challenge presented by the role. She appreciates being able to use her administrative and IT skills whilst knowing she is contributing to such an important program. And, after a long career spent commuting to the city to work in the office, she relishes being able to provide her support from home, in her own time, without being tied to specific shifts. "I absolutely love that I can support a really worthwhile service in this way because I really enjoy doing administrative tasks," she said.

Her impact on the Homelessness service has been extensive, especially regarding recruitment: this includes advertising within the community and utilising Facebook to attract volunteers. Elisa then shortlists those to be interviewed by the Homelessness Service team

lead, and after volunteers have been selected, Elisa coordinates their probity requirements, ensures their information is entered into the Better Impact system and kept up to date, whilst also checking that their hours have been logged.

Elisa urged more people to consider becoming a volunteer, to not only help, but experience how rewarding it is: "There must be so many people out there, like me, who are retired and have a wealth of administrative experience who could volunteer their time. It's such a fulfilling experience and has given me a renewed sense of purpose, too."

UnitingCare Corporate

Stuart Barrell

Better Future Program volunteer,
UnitingCare Corporate Office, Townsville



After working with Veterans' Affairs in Sydney for fifteen years in the '90s, Stuart Barrell got a voluntary redundancy and moved up to Magnetic Island, where he found his passion for volunteering and giving back to the community.

He began working for a service in Townsville which supports people with disability and their families, guiding them to become more active in the community, learn new skills and grow their knowledge and confidence. This experience really made an impression on Stuart because of the positive impact the program had and cemented his determination to keep helping people with disabilities.

After a short volunteering stint with Lifeline in 2016, Stuart joined UnitingCare's Better Future Disability Support program in North Queensland as a volunteer. The program is a unique service, enabling people with disability to contribute to, and participate in their local community.

Stuart has been volunteering with the program since then, commuting twice a week from Magnetic Island to UnitingCare's Townsville office to assist with greeting visitors, and directing their enquiries to the appropriate person. Stuart also helps with paperwork and filing, as well as creating and printing fleet vehicle rosters for the program. His dedication to helping others shines through, as does his positive attitude and willingness to help anyone who needs it.

His supervisor, Kim Hutchinson, said: "Stuart is a very valued, respected and liked member of the Better Future program, and the whole Townsville site. He is so pleasant to all visitors and staff, and we miss him on the days he isn't in. He is very capable, intelligent, has a great personality and is generally a joy to be around."

Stuart also does quite a bit of work with Magnetic Island Uniting Church. Currently he

is the Secretary and, as there's no regular minister, he leads a service once a month - taking it in turn with others to do this - which involves putting a presentation together, writing a sermon and selecting songs for the service. Stuart enjoys volunteering as it keeps him active and in contact with people and the community. "I am a people person, and this role lets me practise what I like the most, talk to people and help them when I can," he reflected.

Volunteering has impacted Stuart's life positively in many ways - he is following his passion of assisting people with a disability, he is connected to the community, and he feels productive and useful. He chose to volunteer with the Better Future Program because he believes in the importance of inclusivity, and the power of helping, and vows to continue volunteering for as long as he can.

UnitingCare Corporate

Sonam Pelden

Student Placement with the
Volunteer Experience Team



Sonam is an international student from Bhutan, pursuing a Master of Global Development at Griffith University in Queensland.

Growing up in a small Bhutanese community, the spirit of kindness was deeply ingrained in her way of life. Acts like assisting an elderly person to cross the road or carrying a heavy bag for someone were spontaneous responses to the needs of those around her.

"Looking out for others and lending a hand to someone in need is second nature where I'm from," Sonam said. "You do it without even thinking about it."

After moving to Australia in 2022 to study at Griffith, Sonam found that starting a new life in a foreign country, alongside studying and working part-time limited her ability to volunteer, despite her passion for helping others.

However, things changed during the third semester of

her postgraduate studies, when she came across a volunteering opportunity with UnitingCare through a work-integrated-learning placement which was part of her degree.

She was placed with the Volunteer Experience Team to contribute to their research project on volunteer attraction and retention with the aim to enhance volunteer engagement efforts across UnitingCare services. Under the supervision of the Volunteer Engagement Lead, Shane Harris, she conducted secondary research online to analyse existing data on volunteering within Australia and identify engagement trends and best practices.

This data was useful in informing the research instruments and design of the project, with the preparation of the research framework as her internship outcome.

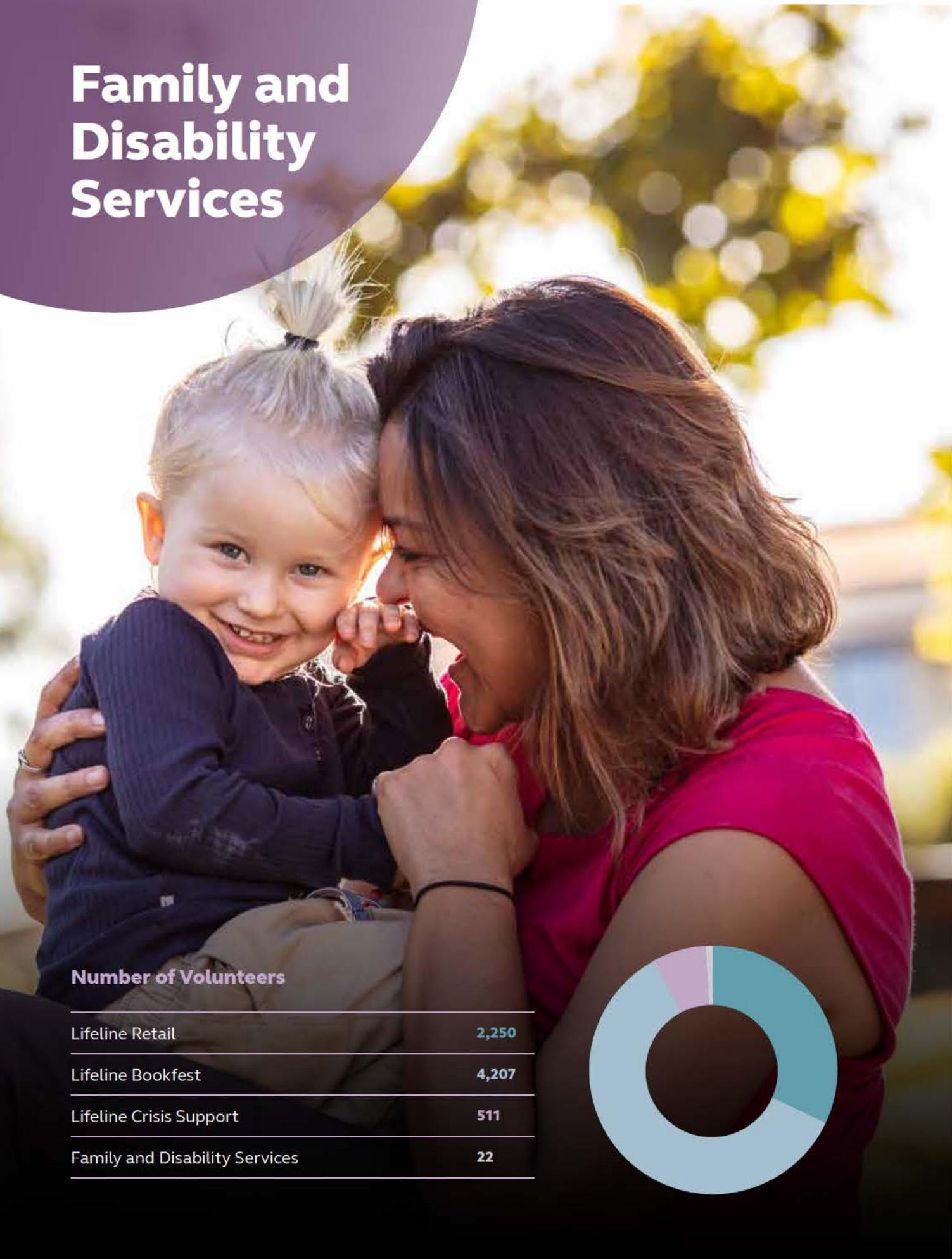
She was also given the opportunity to contribute to UnitingCare's Volunteer

Impact Report (2023-2024) where Sonam utilised her skills to assist in the creation and analysis of the quantitative data for surveys and results.

"Being part of this volunteer internship has not only enabled me to give back to the Queensland community, but it has given me invaluable skills and experience that will be crucial to developing my future career," she said.

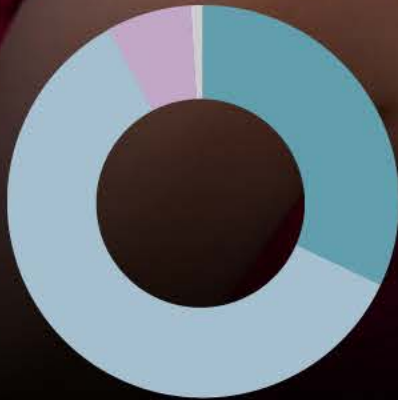
"I'd love to continue volunteering after I finish my placement at UnitingCare. Being a volunteer supports positive social change and keeps me connected to the kindness that is part of my culture," she said. "Plus, I'm so grateful for the experience volunteering has given me: from the people I've met, to the interesting things I've worked on, I've gained just as much as I've given."

Family and Disability Services



Number of Volunteers

Lifeline Retail	2,250
Lifeline Bookfest	4,207
Lifeline Crisis Support	511
Family and Disability Services	22



Message from Donna Shkalla



Group Executive, Family and Disability Services

In times of need and crisis, the power of human compassion and solidarity shines brightest. Year on year we can see examples that demonstrate we live in a society which values the skill, abilities, and contributions of everyone, and that we have the capacity collectively to make an impact in the communities we share. The work of the volunteer workforce in Family and Disability Services is testament to the power of this collective impact, of our shared commitment to ensuring people in our communities can thrive and live safely and our unwavering commitment to celebrating everyone's contributions in our society.

As the Group Executive of Family and Disability Services, which includes Lifeline, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the transformative impact that volunteers have on our communities, which are facing unprecedented challenges. People in our community have put themselves forward to volunteer, to share their skills and experience, their time

and their passion to enable our services - from one end of Queensland to the other - to help those that need us.

This is my opportunity to honour the extraordinary contributions of these selfless individuals who step forward to make a difference when it matters most.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Lifeline retail, crisis response and community recovery efforts. Their dedication and willingness to serve others provides a beacon of hope in the darkest of times, their actions paving the way for healing and recovery, fostering a sense of community and resilience.

Volunteers across the wider Family and Disability Services provide critical support to the community services teams - from supporting people experiencing homelessness, to helping young people grow and develop, to being there for families in need, and walking alongside people with a disability. Our dedicated volunteers provide much needed tangible and practical help where demand

and need often outstrips the capacity of our overstretched sector to respond to. Their contributions are vital in bridging gaps and enhancing the overall capacity of our teams to ensure people can thrive and live life in all its fullness. In many ways, our volunteers positively impact the quality of life for countless children, individuals, and families, ensuring no one is left behind during challenging times.

The sustained involvement of our volunteer workforce in Family and Disability Services is critical in achieving vibrant, resilient, and strong individuals. The contribution of every volunteer is valued, invaluable and indispensable.

So, thank you, each and every one of you. It is a privilege to have you on the Family and Disability Services team, walking with us in our mission.

Family and Disability Services

Sue Thompson

Family and Disability Services volunteer -
North Queensland Rural Family Support Service (NQRFS)

After initially working as a volunteer with UnitingCare in Townsville in 2016, Sue moved across to the North Queensland Rural Family Support Service (NQRFS) in 2022, when the supervisor Lee, gave her an opportunity.

While NQRFS is administratively based in Townsville, its support area covers Charters Towers to outback Julia Creek - a seven-hour drive from Townsville - and includes Pentland, Hughenden and Richmond. Sue often travel up to seven hours to assist support workers, often staying overnight when in remote areas such as Hughenden and Julia Creek.

Her volunteer role is varied. In Townsville she prepares welcome packs and documents for existing clients, ensuring everything is up to date. When out in the community with support workers, she helps however she can, from ensuring everyone has clean clothing

(the heat and dust make that an essential job), assisting at or facilitating events, and even helping with catering (earning her the nickname 'The BBQ Sausage Queen').

Sue is also a member of the 'Grey Fleet' which means she assists clients who arrive in Townsville for medical or hospital appointments as many don't have transport or any means of travelling from the airport to the appointments.

When travelling Sue reflects that: "you never know the sights you might see; camels that seem to appear from nowhere, cows and kangaroos on the road!"

She loves the outback and is accepted as part of the communities that she visits. She receives hugs and thanks for the little things she does and feels fortunate to be included and not left on the sideline. "I know that the things I do may be little, but it all helps the support workers to do their work in the

communities we visit.

"Volunteering with NQRFS is never boring and I am grateful for this opportunity to assist such a vital service."

Sue was a finalist in the 'Changing Lives, Theirs Included' Volunteer Award category at this year's Full Circle and Reconciliation Awards. Scan the QR code to see her nominee video:



Family and Disability Services

Brian Smith

Family and Disability Services volunteer -
Volunteer Court Support Gympie

Until 2021, Brian had been working in the public service, involved in a broad range of human service roles. Before he retired, he was looking to see where he could volunteer and was struck by the rates of domestic violence. He read books and other materials to understand as much as he could around this.

After a move to Gympie, Brian saw UnitingCare's advertisement for a Volunteer Court Support person. The role seemed to fit his interests, so he made contact and commenced in mid-2022, supporting men in the court system who are there due to involvement in domestic family violence. Some are the perpetrators and others are the victims.

The men are sometimes confused, feel misunderstood and don't fully understand why they are facing court or what the process is. Although he doesn't offer legal advice, Brian is at the court to greet

the men and offer support, provide orientation, and to explain what will happen in the courtroom, as well as answering any questions they may have.

The role can have some challenges, of course. There is a police presence, and partners can be in attendance, too, which can cause some stress. However, there is a private room available where Brian can take the attendees so they can talk for a short time. Brian says: "there is real value in listening and being non-judgemental."

"The experience is made easier for the attendee when they are supported, know how to behave and what to expect," he added.

When leaving court, often upset and stressed, men reflect to Brian that they are thankful for him being there to support them. "It warms my heart," Brian said. Admitting that volunteering has enriched his life, Brian has

a sense of gratitude because he is helping the community and sending out a positive message.

He has built up good relationships with others working at the court: the security staff, JPs, and other community workers. They have a clear understanding, collaborate well and know that they would work well in the event of an incident. Brian looks forward to continuing his volunteering as his retirement.

Brian was nominated for and won the Behind the Scenes Volunteer Award at UnitingCare's Full Circle and Reconciliation Awards. Scan the QR Code to watch his video:



Lifeline Crisis Support



25,644

Hours
volunteered by
Lifeline Crisis
Supporters
FY2023-2024



47,140

Number of calls
answered by Lifeline
Crisis Supporters
FY2023-2024



165

Number of students
completing Lifeline
Crisis Support
Workplace Training
Course FY2023-2024

Message from *Jaine Smiley*

Lifeline Operations Program Manager



As we reflect on the past year, we are immensely grateful for the dedication and commitment of our volunteers. At Lifeline Crisis Support, our mission to provide a compassionate ear and help to those in their darkest moments has been made possible by the tireless efforts of our Crisis Supporters, many of whom are volunteers.

We understand the competing demands of today's fast-paced world. Yet, despite these challenges, our volunteers have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to supporting others. From the commencement of their journey with us - starting with attending an information session, to undergoing extensive training - our volunteers show a remarkable dedication to mastering the skills needed to provide adequate crisis support.

This journey of personal growth and fulfilment is a testament to their resilience and dedication. During the last 12 months, over 165 people across Queensland completed their Crisis

Supporter Workplace Training course, and transitioned to be an accredited Crisis Supporter, answering calls and assisting people who call our 13 11 14 phoneline.

Through Lifeline's Crisis Support service, our volunteers connect with individuals in need, providing a listening ear and offering support and guidance. This past year, our Crisis Supporters have answered 132,530 calls, all of which provided comfort and reassurance to those facing tough times. Each call answered and each conversation held has the potential to change a life. And our volunteers are at the heart of this transformative process.

Those seeking support can now also access Lifeline's Human Assisted Digital Services (HADS) program. This initiative has allowed us to extend our reach to individuals who may prefer to seek help through digital channels. Our HADS volunteers have undergone specialised training to provide support via online chat and messaging platforms. This

ensures that help is accessible to all.

This past year also saw a focus on remote volunteering. By enabling volunteers to contribute from the comfort of their own homes, we have opened new avenues for those who want to engage in volunteering but may not have access to a Centre. This flexibility has allowed people from diverse backgrounds and locations to lend their support, enriching our pool of volunteers and enhancing our ability to reach those in need.

While the statistics speak volumes about the impact of Lifeline's services, the stories of hope and resilience genuinely demonstrate the difference our volunteers are making. From comforting someone in their darkest hour to guiding them towards the help they need, our volunteers are the unsung heroes behind every success story.

Lifeline Crisis Support

Rebekah Belte

Lifeline Crisis Supporter, Sunshine Coast

Rebekah Belte's volunteering journey could be summed up by the adage "If you want a task done properly, ask a busy person".

Her work as a volunteer has been done in tandem with her Psychology studies at the University of the Sunshine Coast. In 2023 alone, she volunteered in five separate roles whilst completing her thesis.

It was in 2021 that Rebekah began volunteering with Lifeline Crisis Support. "I really enjoyed my studies and achieving academic success, but I felt I was focusing too much on that side of life. So, I decided to 'ground myself' and begin assisting Lifeline Crisis Support."

Volunteering at Lifeline Crisis Support is a huge commitment, with one-year of accreditation training before volunteers can begin taking calls from the Crisis Support phone line. Rebekah

completed this training and is now a Student Mentor, supporting the next intake of young Lifeline volunteers, listening to how they handle calls to the Crisis Support line and providing constructive feedback.

This means younger volunteers can relate and communicate with Rebekah at a peer level, while at the same time, Rebekah gets to benefit and learn from older, more experienced volunteers. "I still feel like I'm developing in my volunteer role at Lifeline because I'm continually learning and growing my skills and experience," she said. "Plus, I really enjoy being part of the team and the culture there. Outside of work, we do have social events and it's a great way to connect and feel engaged with others in the team."

Rebekah has also been able to use her influence at university in another of her volunteering

roles - President of the Psych Club - to advocate for Lifeline Crisis Support volunteering and the opportunities available. "Many students I know really want to give back to the community," she told us. "And I have been able to tell them how rewarding my experience is at Lifeline, and what I'm learning and gaining from it too. The fact that you get to help people in real need, but you gain so much yourself in the process is a real motivator."



Lifeline Crisis Support

Edith Weiss

Lifeline Crisis Supporter, Mackay

Edith first volunteered on the Lifeline Crisis Support Line in 1979 for a few years before leaving to have a family, returning in 1999 when she had more time to commit to volunteering again. The former schoolteacher and school counsellor said her motivation was simple: "I was raised to volunteer and to do things for others."

When Edith returned to the Crisis Support Line, it was as an In-Shift Supervisor for around 15 years before switching to a Mentor role, which she continues to do, supporting people as they work through their training and start their first shifts.

When the terrible floods of 2011 struck, Edith decided to join Lifeline's Community Recovery team, which provides support during emergencies throughout Queensland, such as natural disasters, a role she continued with until January 2024.

She then began volunteering for Lifeline's Community

Recovery Virtual Hub, which provides phone support to people who have been impacted by a disaster. Thinking she would fill a couple of shifts each week she discovered that before the end of April she'd logged 53 shifts - around three a week. Each call can take between 3 - 50 minutes, with Edith able to use the skills she'd learnt during her stint with the Lifeline 24-hour Crisis Line.

"I'd like to think I make a difference to the life of the caller I'm speaking to," she said. "Some calls can be difficult, but you're often far more likely to speak to someone who is truly grateful and feels that you have saved their life."

"Sometimes the caller is just lonely, so you spend time building a relationship and having a friendly chat. They may not have any family and friends so you're a human connection they value," Edith reflected.

Not only does Edith give her

time generously to Lifeline, but she also knits bears, beanies, jumpers, and clothes for premature babies as well as sewing library bags, beanies, skirts, shorts, and fiddle mats for the homeless, local hospitals, and for people living with dementia. She participates in environmental activities and volunteers for the Kidney Foundation. Her giving back doesn't stop there though: Edith also volunteers for the Pyjama Angels, going into the homes of families who have foster children to help with homework, drawing, reading and just chatting or doing whatever the child would like her to do while she is there.

"Volunteering at Lifeline - and volunteering in general - gives me a sense of purpose and joy," she admitted. "I've also made lots of friends. It has saved me from loneliness and I'm grateful for what I get from doing it."



Lifeline Crisis Support

SUPERVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Mark Hennessy

Lifeline Crisis Support

Mark Hennessy has been involved with Lifeline Crisis Support since 2015 because of a desire to give back, specifically in a counselling role.

“My parents taught me to be a great listener and over the years friends would come to me to talk,” he explained. He knew of Lifeline’s role in the community and commenced training at the West Sydney centre in Parramatta, immediately finding “likeminded people ... social workers, counsellors, students. It was a great opportunity to talk to them and hear their journeys because I was trying to work out what I wanted to do”.

Mark added: “To bring your genuine self and volunteer and support someone in a time of crisis and make a difference is such a beautiful, wonderful, rewarding thing to be able to do. I felt that from

the outset, and it was lovely to be able to support people.”

A sea-change found Mark in Bundaberg where it was “such a relief to be able to continue as a volunteer” as a Lifeline Crisis Supporter whilst also taking on roles such as Student Mentor and In Shift Supervisor. Volunteering also meant that Mark was able to quickly integrate into the Bundaberg Community. He jumped at the chance to become a Crisis Support Work Trainer. In March 2022, he became the Local Services Manager for Bundaberg, a role which also supports the First Nations Crisis Support phone line, 13YARN.

Despite having never worked in a cultural program for First Nations peoples before, Mark was confident in his ability as a Crisis Supporter, a Supervisor, a Trainer and a Call Coach.

He met with the Centre Supervisor, Aunty Bev Muckan, (also featured in this report on page 30) and Team Leader, Lisa Roff (read her story in last year’s Impact Report), from OurMob and 13YARN. They talked to Mark about his journey and awareness of Culture. Although he was the first to admit that while he might not have had a background in the cultural awareness space, he had the skills and experience in guiding and supporting people in crisis.

A relationship built on respect began, with Aunty Bev telling Mark that she appreciated his honesty and that he “didn’t muck around”. Mark added: “Through us just working so closely together I have a greater understanding and deeper appreciation of Culture and the journey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.”

Mark’s advice for Lifeline Crisis Supporters? “Trust in yourself. Trust in who you are and your instincts. It was a key moment for me when I moved onto the phones and started taking calls. What makes a good volunteer Crisis Supporter is to be your authentic self.”



Mark (far right) with the 13YARN and OurMob team.

13YARN / OurMob

SUPERVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Aunty Bev Muckan

Proud Kabi Kabi woman
Queensland Centre Supervisor and
Cultural Advisor - 13YARN/OurMob



Aunty Bev Muckan has had a long journey to where she is now the Supervisor and Cultural Advisor for the 13YARN and OurMob programs.

Aunty Bev is a proud Kabi Kabi Elder who feels that life has been leading her to the role she fulfils at UnitingCare. "In life, with all the different journeys we take, we all have to take the right journey, what sits with you spiritually. For us it's a spiritual feeling. I knew my ancestors were watching over me and this was the journey I had to take".

In 2021 after becoming the first, First Nations person to complete a degree in Counselling at Griffith University (where she also spent her time mentoring other First Nations university students), Aunty Bev had many job offers and opportunities presented to her but was adamant that she wanted to maintain a focus on representing her community. After talking to her mentor, Aunty Rosemary Norman Hill, returning to Kabi

Kabi land and reconnecting to Country, Aunty Bev knew that the opportunity offered by UnitingCare was the correct choice, telling us: "the ancestors showed me that this must be my journey".

Employed to deliver Corporate Cultural Training, Aunty Bev soon took up the opportunity to join the newly formed team behind 13YARN.

Since then, Aunty Bev has been there to welcome volunteers when they join OurMob or have been identified as a First Nations volunteer for Lifeline Crisis Support, sitting in on their first training topic and assisting when needed to ensure they have a smooth transition to volunteering on the phones. Her role also includes debriefing and group supervision of volunteers as well as regular one-to-one contact with the OurMob volunteers.

Aunty Bev, along with Sheree Biondi, administrator for 13YARN and OurMob (featured opposite), and Lisa Roff, 13YARN QLD

Service Leader, also actively contribute to the Coolamon Group, a First Nations collective dedicated to cultural preservation, cultural practice and cultural advice within UnitingCare's Family and Disability Services (FaDS). This group not only strengthens ties with FaDS but also highlights the importance of cultural practices in maintaining positive work culture and relationships within UnitingCare.

In the future Aunty Bev is ambitious for both programs, saying: "OurMob is serving our mob, and I would like to have more representation for Lifeline Crisis Support lines."

Aunty Bev won the Healthy Communities Reconciliation Award at UnitingCare's Full Circle and Reconciliation Awards. Scan the QR Code to watch her video:



13YARN / OurMob

Sheree Biondi

Proud Gunindiri Kalkadunga woman
Administrator – 13YARN / OurMob



Sheree Biondi points out that First Nations peoples are always volunteering to help in the community. "There is a need to give back and it is healing," she acknowledged. Her personal life has influenced the way that she gives back to her community through volunteering: her father is part of the Stolen Generations, so there is an inherent, associated, intergenerational trauma - with both sides of the family impacted by suicide.

A proud Gunindiri Kalkadunga woman, she lives in Cairns on Yidinji country. In her paid work role, Sheree provides administrative assistance to the 13YARN and OurMob Crisis Supporters. This includes tracking their progress with training, rosters and assisting both Lisa Roff, 13YARN QLD Service Leader and Aunty Bev Muckan, Supervisor and Cultural Advisor of 13YARN and OurMob.

In her role Sheree offers crisis support by answering calls for 13YARN from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Aunties, Uncles, Brothers and Sisters. As part of their shifts, 13YARN Crisis Supporters also answer calls from the 13 11 14 general Australia-wide Lifeline Crisis Support Line. Aside from her paid work offering support for these services, Sheree also offers extra time as a volunteer for 13YARN - phone shifts, mentoring, supervision, and assisting with training and cultural work, alongside volunteering for Lifeline's 13 11 14 Crisis Support Line answering calls and mentoring. She explained that offering this extra time was a volunteering opportunity she couldn't pass up, admitting: "it really spoke to me".

She is impressed that the 13YARN and OurMob programs are so "culturally fit". She explained: "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are some of Australia's most vulnerable, meaning it is so important to get it right culturally. Because to be able to connect with a Help Seeker on the phones we need to understand history, language, lores, practices and

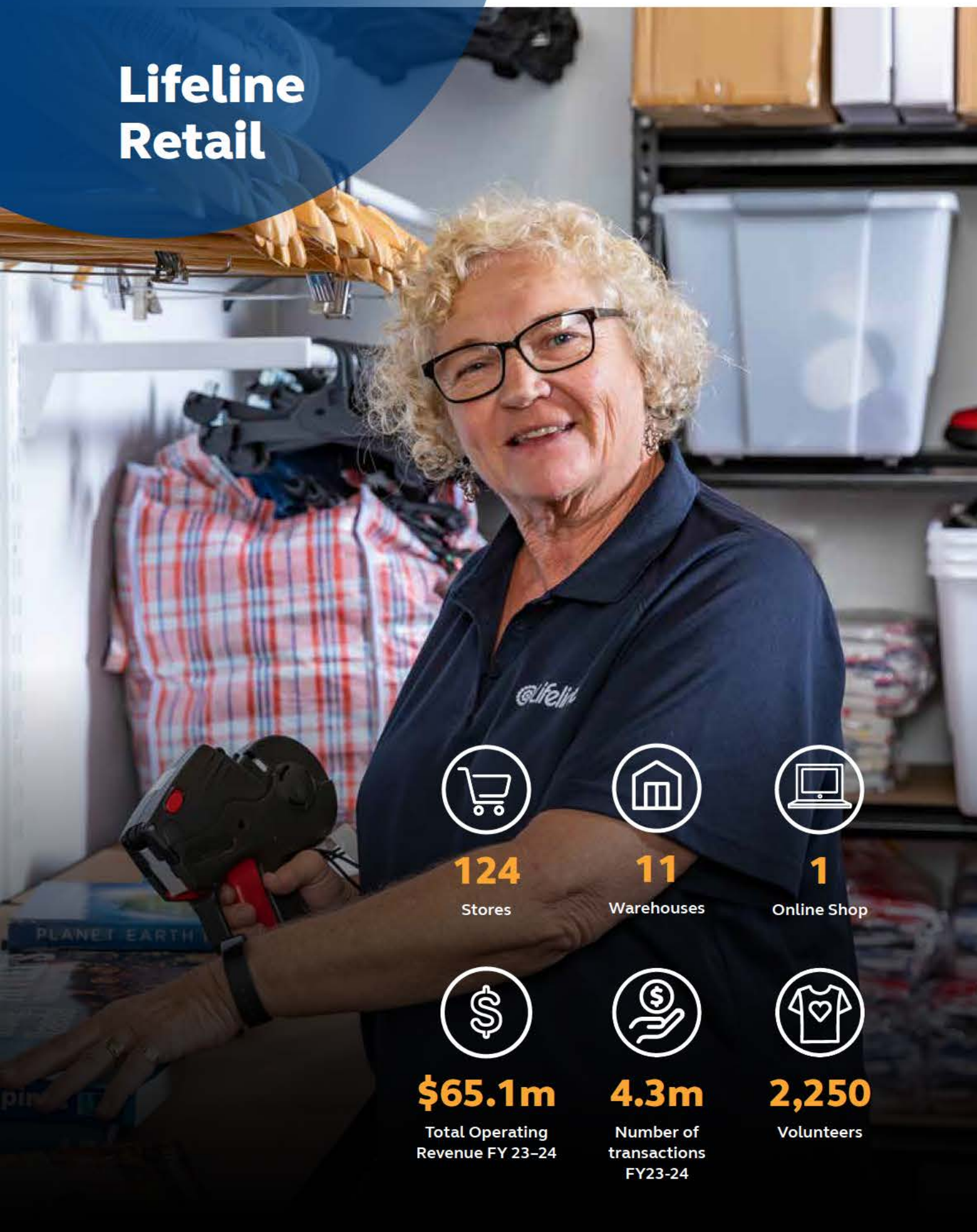
the needs of our peoples."

Sheree was amazed that UnitingCare is so "allied with Mob and open to learning" and has contributed to this by making changes to terminology so that it fits with "what one of my peoples would say".

As part of the Coolamon Group with Lisa Roff and Aunty Bev Muckan, she appreciates her role as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory board for Family and Disability Services. The Coolamon Group ensures that First Nations staff are feeling safe in the organisation and have an important role in working towards reconciliation with non-Indigenous peoples.

Another part of her role that Sheree enjoys is within the mentoring space, relishing giving support and advice to the students. "I love most when they're coming through the training, and I can give them the confidence from someone close to home to help them soar," she enthused.

Lifeline Retail



124

Stores



11

Warehouses



1

Online Shop



\$65.1m

Total Operating Revenue FY 23-24



4.3m

Number of transactions FY23-24



2,250

Volunteers

Message from Jamie Mackay

General Manager Lifeline Retail



We are not Lifeline Retail without our volunteers.

In 1964, Ivan and Iris Alcorn established the first Lifeline store in Brisbane. In Queensland, that one store has grown into a multi-million-dollar business, with 124 stores (excluding Darling Downs), 11 warehouses and one online shop.

As well as our shops, we have our Bookfest events across the state (excluding Darling Downs), that heavily depend on volunteers. Bookfests are renowned not only for the event itself, but for the people who volunteer and make the event amazing.

Lifeline Retail Queensland also imports and exports products to assist - alongside our store network - in raising funds to support our 24/7 Queensland Lifeline Crisis Line that works towards making Australia suicide free.

Volunteering with Lifeline Queensland is an extremely rewarding and fulfilling experience that can bring purpose to one's life. There are countless opportunities inside Lifeline Retail, including but not limited to: warehouse

(logistics, truck driving, sorting, forklift operations, manufacturing unique items by hand, and lots more), administration, visual merchandise, horticulture, customer service, online shop service, business analyst, inventory, procurement, in-store photography and videoing, and managerial roles.

As well as this vast assortment of experiences, volunteering provides an opportunity to become part of a team working towards achieving goals that ultimately helps, and makes a positive impact, on the broader community. Many life-long friendships have been forged when volunteering throughout Lifeline Retail.

Volunteering allows people to share their skill sets and develop new skills that create a sense of reward and enjoyment. Without the tremendous work and dedication of our volunteer team, our business would not be able to exist. That would also mean not being able to support those who call our 24/7 Queensland Lifeline Crisis Support Line.

Lifeline Retail volunteers are the core of our business. We need their drive, input, experience and ability to interact with all our customers. Volunteering is the start of a new career, not the end - lots of our volunteers have enjoyed longevity in our business. Many come into our business with so much knowledge that we ask for their support in other areas.

We are one team, no matter who you are in the business. Our volunteers are treated no differently to anyone else: they too, wear the corporate Lifeline Retail shirt and receive all the same rewards.

I would encourage anyone considering volunteering to join us and be part of Lifeline Retail's exciting journey into the future.

Lifeline Retail Volunteer

Dennis Schinkel

Lifeline Retail volunteer - Townsville City Shop

Dennis had been volunteering for a long time before moving to Lifeline where he has volunteered for over 13 years.

He was living near Townsville city back then and walked past the Lifeline shop often.

"I had a friend who had a jewellery shop nearby, he knew the supervisor and asked if she needed volunteers. The supervisor asked for a reference and the rest is history," Dennis recalled.

Since commencing that role, Dennis has moved to Magnetic Island, and commutes by ferry to the store each week. "I volunteer each Sunday and enjoy the company of

the volunteers and staff who come in each week - they're very nice," he told us. "There are regular Sunday shoppers who know exactly what they are looking for and we get to know what they like.

"I don't like discarding items that can have another use so enjoy presenting stock for sale to the next owner. I am a bit of a bin watcher, making sure nothing goes out that can have a second or third life!

"I feel strongly about being part of a community and feel the whole area around the Townsville City shop is like that."

Dennis has been volunteering at Lifeline and other organisations for over 24 years now and has had such a positive experience that he's not giving up any time soon. "I've met many lovely, really interesting people," he said.

"And I will continue to volunteer with Lifeline for as long as I can."

"I feel strongly about being part of a community and feel the whole area around the Townsville City shop is like that."

Dennis Schinkel



Lifeline Retail Volunteer

Noela De Jonge

Lifeline Retail volunteer - Nambour Shop

Noela de Jonge has been volunteering with Lifeline's Nambour Shop for 42 years, after a good friend - whose husband was involved with Lifeline - asked if she would be interested in doing voluntary work with the new shop set to open in Nambour. "I was only working as a casual at a local bakery at the time, so I thought I'd easily be able to commit to one day a week as a volunteer," Noela said.

She started when the shop first opened in 1982. Since then, Noela has volunteered there one day a week, including through four relocations within Nambour. Noela admits that Lifeline has been a blessing in her life, believing volunteering has given her more of a purpose. But, most of all, she loves that

she is helping to raise money for telephone counselling and suicide prevention, alongside providing quality second hand items to the community.

Noela gets a lot of pleasure and connection out of what she does, too. "I really enjoy doing the window dressing and displays, which are themed for special dates and events," she told us. "I must mention the lovely ladies that I work with at Nambour shop - we are always busy but do have time for lots of laughs and chats."

Volunteering has positively impacted Noela's life and wellbeing, and she looks forward to the weekly social interaction and involvement with other volunteers, staff, and customers, some of

whom have been loyal to the shop for many, many, years.

"I intend to keep volunteering with Lifeline for as long as I am able, or for as long as they will have me," Noela said. "Hopefully I still have a few more years of volunteering ahead of me!"

She'd recommend and encourage others to consider volunteering with Lifeline. "It not only assists in enabling the service to provide invaluable support and assistance to those requiring it, but it's also such a rewarding and satisfying experience for the volunteer," she added.

"I intend to keep volunteering with Lifeline for as long as I am able, or for as long as they will have me," Noela said. "Hopefully I still have a few more years of volunteering ahead of me!"

Noela De Jonge



Lifeline Retail Volunteer

Sloane McRobert and Alexandra Kanaris

Lifeline Retail volunteers - Fairfield Shop

Sloane(left) and Alexandra(right) have been best friends since kindergarten and have clocked up a combined total of 47 years as volunteers.

Alex commenced her first volunteer role at the Lifeline Fairfield shop when it opened 27 years ago, hoping to improve her confidence and fill her time with something meaningful. She still loves her work, taking immense pride in all she does, whether it's dusting, tidying the book and shoe displays, keeping the mirrors sparkling - or even writing the donation tags with her beautiful handwriting.

"I love going into the shop because I meet people, see friends, and I like meeting customers and making their days happy," she said. Store Supervisor Anne-Maree says that she would be lost without Alex: "She is loved by all of the team, and the customers."

When Alex first started

volunteering Sloane would often meet her for lunch. In time, a supervisor of the Lifeline store asked Sloane if she would like to volunteer. Thrilled, Sloane commenced with the store 20 years ago. Now she assists new volunteers settle into roles, greets customers as they arrive at the shop, helps people with their purchases and operates the till. Anne-Maree reckons that Sloane can do pretty much all the tasks in the shop now and, like Alex, is a very important and valued team member.

"I love volunteering, it's fantastic and has given me confidence," Sloane admitted. "Plus, I can help the community. I know so many people at the shopping centre and the customers who come into the shop. I like making their day. I like to be ready if Anne-Maree needs someone to come in at the last minute - I am happy to help and cover for others."

Together Sloane and Alex help with the running of the shop, enjoying their time in the store together because they have been friends their whole lives. They've volunteered under every supervisor that has run the Fairfield Lifeline shop and have even stayed in touch with previous supervisors.

They are so proud to volunteer for Lifeline, they have both kept scrapbooks of their time in the store.



Lifeline Retail SUPERVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Brad Denholm

Retail Supervisor - Lifeline Capalaba Superstore

In the big scheme of things Brad has not been with UnitingCare for very long at all. However, in that short time he has made a difference to the lives of the volunteers who work with him, his staff, his customers, and to himself.

Before commencing at Lifeline Retail in March 2023, Brad was a kindergarten teacher and had also held management roles with another community organisation. He believes this is where he gained skills to work with and lead volunteers and staff members. When problems or issues arise, Brad knows that having clear boundaries and direction as well as ensuring that people are up to speed with the processes that are required to run the shop efficiently, make for a happy and harmonious workplace.

Brad's expectation of volunteers is that they work to their level of experience initially, then he is happy to help them move to where they would like to go. "I like them to have the opportunity to try something new, and if it doesn't work out, to be able to learn from their mistakes.

And I respectfully help them to move on from the mistake," he explained.

When Brad first arrived at the Lifeline's Capalaba Superstore the volunteers each had specific roles, which they were happy with. However, Brad felt it would be more meaningful for each volunteer to know how to do a number of tasks and be able to fill in for one another in the event of illness.

Thanks to this approach, the volunteers began to feel like they were truly a part of the team. They enjoyed each other's company, mixed more and started to chat and bond as a whole team rather than just with the person who worked on the same task. And Brad ensures they each feel they play a part in the success of the business.

"As an example, if the volunteers working on the weekend have been really successful, it is recognised that the rest of the team worked hard during the week to make sure the shop looked good and the stock was prepared and well presented," Brad explained.

"Everyone contributes to the success, so it is celebrated by the whole team."

Brad's management style is popular with his team, including volunteer Tim, who said: "Brad is very personable, approachable, friendly, easy going, happy to answer questions and guide you - he is a great supervisor."

And, in turn, Brad admitted that working with volunteers has positively impacted his life, believing his interpersonal skill levels have improved as a result. "I'm a kinder person - because I've realised that you don't know what people might be struggling with in their lives. It's made me more patient and considerate, both at work and in my personal life."

Brad is determined to keep on working with and supporting volunteers. "There is a joy in getting to know people and seeing them develop," he said.



Lifeline Bookfest



63,000

Transactions



\$2.55m

Sales



4,207

Volunteers



9,098

Volunteer Hours
contributed

Lifeline Bookfest

Kit Keulemans



Lifeline Bookfest volunteer – Brisbane

Kit commenced his UnitingCare volunteering journey in June 2023, when he helped at Lifeline Brisbane Bookfest. It was his way of giving back after his own struggles with mental health brought Lifeline to his attention. And he knew that by volunteering at Bookfest the funds raised would help support the 24-hour Lifeline 13 11 14 Crisis Line.

Kit has volunteered at three Bookfests, and loves the diverse range of people who come through the door, all with a common interest: books. While working at the event, he experienced all the volunteer roles available, from greeting customers as they arrived, to pricing, working on the tills, tidying books, customer service, and trolley coordination.

Supervisory staff and volunteers noticed Kit's amazing work ethic, and the fact he is a quick learner, professional and respectful to everyone. His flexibility

and ability to switch roles on short notice was done happily and to the best of his ability. At the January 2024 Lifeline Brisbane Bookfest, supervisor Brad Denholm from the Lifeline Capalaba Superstore (read his story on page 37) was so impressed with the way Kit worked and communicated with other volunteers and staff that he offered him a volunteer role at the Superstore. Kit now works there on weekends and loves it, assisting in every aspect of retail.

But his busy life has not stopped him from thinking of others who may have struggled the way he has. Kit is a transgender man and was bullied relentlessly at school which led to mental health issues. He is currently building an app called Tomorrow's Hope which aims to reduce the stigma for parents, guardians and teens when it comes to talking about a young person's mental health. Because Kit remembers his own struggles and the impact

on his family.

After speaking to a lot of counsellors and psychologists Kit discovered that his feelings and anxiety around coping with and sharing his worries was a common issue for a lot of other young people. So, armed with his experience and the information he gained through his journey, Kit is hoping to make a difference.

Kit's experiences mean he has extra compassion and empathy for people, too, which is something he utilises in his volunteering role at Lifeline saying: "You don't know what the person standing in front of you at the counter is going through. So, if a customer is not very nice, I convince myself to smile, no matter how I'm feeling in that moment. I do the same for anybody because I know that a smile can make a real difference to someone's day."

"And by volunteering I have a unique opportunity to help raise funds to help make a difference every day."

Lifeline Bookfest

Amanda Luther



Lifeline Bookfest volunteer - Brisbane

As a Suncorp employee, Amanda takes advantage of the organisation's Corporate Volunteer Program in which employees can take time to volunteer for a charitable cause on a paid work day. And, six years ago, Amanda's first volunteer experience with Lifeline was with her colleagues at Lifeline Bookfest.

Since then, Amanda has volunteered mostly at the Lifeline Brisbane Bookfest events. Suncorp's Matched Giving Program enables staff to volunteer for a charity in their own time, and the equivalent dollar value of each hour they spend

volunteering is donated to the charity by Suncorp. Amanda chose to volunteer in her own time at the June 2023 and January 2024 Brisbane Bookfest events, taking advantage of the Matched Giving Program to support the Lifeline Queensland Crisis Support and Suicide Prevention programs.

When asked why she was motivated to volunteer for Bookfest, Amanda explained that she loves books and enjoys chatting with other volunteers and customers about what they've purchased.

"It felt like something I could do well and that would be fun, interesting, and it's a good cause," she added. Amanda believes that it is thanks to the combined effort of the huge number of volunteers at Bookfest that enables it to happen. She also knows that she is making a difference to the lives of others when the previous day's total is shared with the volunteers. "I want to help and support others. This is one way I can support the community outside of my family, friends and colleagues," she added.

Now excitedly awaiting the arrival of her first child, Amanda hopes to return to volunteering when she's back at work.

"I'm always so excited when I start to see the Bookfest dates popping up. I like to remind my friends, family and colleagues to be ready to go shopping!"

"It's important to do things that match your core values and make a difference - to your own life and others"
Amanda Luther

Lifeline Bookfest

Gamaliel Lumapas



Lifeline Bookfest volunteer - Brisbane

Our volunteers come to us for a whole range of reasons. For Gamaliel, who arrived in Australia from the Philippines in December 2022, it was because he wanted to do something meaningful while waiting to begin university. When he saw the Lifeline Brisbane Bookfest advertised, this seemed like something he might enjoy, so he applied.

Gamaliel had already heard of the amazing work the Lifeline Crisis Support and Suicide Prevention volunteers did and thought it was a great cause. The fact that the Bookfest raises funds to support the 24-hour crisis line made it even more appealing.

Now, two years later and three Bookfests under his belt, Gamaliel admitted he always has a great time volunteering at the event. "Other volunteers and staff are friendly, and everyone works well together. I feel

I'm making an impact on the lives of other people," he said. He likes to strike up a conversation with the customers and is interested in the books they have purchased and why, loving it when their faces light up and they chat back. Plus, he has met people from all walks of life which makes the role very fulfilling.

After enjoying his time at Brisbane Bookfest so much, Gamaliel signed up to volunteer with another community organisation that provides emergency services. He feels great satisfaction knowing his contribution helps other team members provide support to people impacted by disaster. He is also involved with the Ekka (and the strawberry ice-creams!) and was drawn to the role because funds raised went to support the hospital.

"I think more people should

volunteer their time to a cause they have an interest in," he urged. "I've met great people, formed valued friendships and have had a good time.

"Volunteering has helped bring me out of my shell, helped my studies and work, as well as giving me something to do in a new country where I've had to start from scratch, making friends and connections."

He's determined to keep volunteering, too. "I love it, it makes me feel good," he added.

BlueCare Impact



47

Residential Aged
Care Centres



102

Neighbourhoods



575

Volunteers

Message from *Cathy Thomas*

Group Executive, Aged Care &
Community Services and Executive Director ARRCs



Celebrating the vital role of our volunteers

For more than 71 years, volunteers have been at the heart of BlueCare's mission, making invaluable contributions from day one. Our volunteers embody our core values and have an immeasurable impact on the lives of our residents and clients. Every day, they generously give their time, enriching the social and emotional wellbeing of those we care for and helping them live life in all its fullness.

BlueCare has been shaped by the dedication and commitment of our volunteers. From fundraising to hire nurses in the early days, to providing essential equipment and services for communities, they've played a pivotal role in building the BlueCare we know today. Simply put, without volunteers, we would not be able to offer the same level of

care and support to those who need us most.

Every volunteer brings something unique and valuable to the table. Whether it's helping someone learn how to use technology, reading aloud, playing a musical instrument or simply sharing a cuppa and chat, their contributions enhance the lives of residents and clients. From gardening to cooking, assisting in the office, driving clients to appointments or leading social groups – our volunteers' versatility and passion make all the difference.

The extraordinary impact of our volunteers was also recognised at the 2023 Full Circle Awards with Cheryl Nott, who has been a BlueCare volunteer for an astonishing 55 years, winning the Behind-the-Scenes volunteer award. Our amazing teams at Grevillea Gardens and NU2U and Bower Bird

Op Shops were finalists in the 'Changing Lives, Theirs Included' VolunteerAward, 2024. Congratulations to all on a wonderful achievement!

I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the incredible staff who guide and support our volunteers across the state. Their dedication ensures our volunteers have a meaningful and enriching experience, empowering them to make a profound difference in the lives of the people we serve.

Together, the collaboration between our staff and volunteers truly embodies the spirit of living "life in all its fullness".

Grevillea Gardens Volunteers

BlueCare volunteer - Grevillea Gardens Gympie

The Grevillea Gardens team in Gympie is a truly remarkable group of people, many of whom have been volunteering at the centre for more than 20 years. Their dedication and commitment shines through in everything they do, so it's no surprise they were Finalists in the category 'Changing Lives, Theirs Included' Volunteer Award at the 2023 Full Circle and Reconciliation Awards.

Whether it's participating in activities, joining residents on outings or simply sharing morning tea together, these volunteers play a vital role in enriching the lives of our

residents and helping them enjoy their retirement to the fullest.

The volunteers often share that contributing to Grevillea Gardens is the best thing in their lives. They cherish the meaningful and personal connections they've built with the residents.

Cheryl, for instance, first volunteered when her mother moved into the home. "When she passed, I thought 'I'm going to stay', as by that time, I was totally into helping," she said. "I can't imagine not being here."

Activities officer Joyce is deeply grateful for the team of volunteers. "It's rare to have seven full-time volunteers in one home," she said.

"Collectively, they've given 75 years of service to Grevillea Gardens. I can't thank them enough. Without them I would not be able to do this job."

Scan QR Code for Full Circle Awards Nominee Video



"Everyone has bad days, and some people have really bad days, and to get them to sit and have a cup of tea and a smile, it's worth it."
Cheryl, volunteer

SUPERVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Linda Driscoll

Community Co-Ordinator for Volunteers & Support Services for Bayside



It was over two decades ago that Linda first started working for BlueCare - she'd emigrated from Ireland and after meeting with Ann Francis, the manager at BlueCare Redlands, Linda decided to help as a carer, giving it a year at most. That was 23 years ago, in August 2001.

A couple of years later Ann asked if Linda would take over the running of the Respite Centre. "I decided I would love that change," Linda remembered. "When I was told I would be working in an office as a Volunteer Coordinator I said, 'oh no, no, definitely not, I am not an office person, I really dislike paperwork!' But I decided I'd go in for a few months to help because there had been nobody in that role for quite some time."

Poring over the spreadsheet,

she figured the best way to start was to introduce herself and get to know all the volunteers - and found herself in awe of what they did and the number of hours they gave to support the staff at BlueCare.

What was most impressive at that time was the group of volunteers who came in every Friday at 7.00am and repaired clothes. Linda would go in to support them each Friday and hear their stories. They had all worked together for a long time and their camaraderie and intimacy inspired her. "I marvelled at all these little groups giving of themselves," she recalled. "And that was it, I was in, and I have now been in the Volunteer Coordinator role for 17 years."

Linda has also set up a student program at BlueCare facilities in Wynnum, Alexandra Hills and Redland

Bay. "It is remarkable to see them at work - they make my job so much easier. I love seeing who they are and what they stand for, their empathy and compassion," she enthused.

Her portfolio of volunteer opportunities is now quite large: "There is a big shed at Joe Court which offers community outreach and has run every Friday for 31 years. There is a coffee shop at Wynnum run by volunteers, too. They serve staff, palliative care residents and their families, plus our other residents and their families. The volunteers have completed a food handling course and an online course with Redland City Council which provides a certificate. They are very dedicated to what they do and to the people they serve."

"I am a real advocate for BlueCare so I am happy to talk about the incredible organisation I work for including the volunteering opportunities, the benefits of volunteering with us, and the lovely clients and residents." Linda Driscoll

Hospitals

Message from David Harper

Group Executive, Hospitals



Since joining UnitingCare in 2023, I have lost track of the number of uplifting stories I have heard about our dedicated hospital volunteers. Often the first people you will meet when arriving at one of our four hospitals, our volunteers make an incredible and vast impact on our hospital communities.

With routines in hospital focused on providing the absolute best in clinical care, at times the fast-paced ward environment can be disruptive to a patient's general wellbeing, which is where our volunteer impact is so significant. Day-in, day-out the volunteers within our hospital network take extra time to sit with patients or visitors, allowing our staff more time to concentrate on their clinical needs. This extra layer of care – be it a friendly ear to hear their worries, or a helping hand in navigating their way

around a busy hospital – is one our patients seldom expect, but never forget.

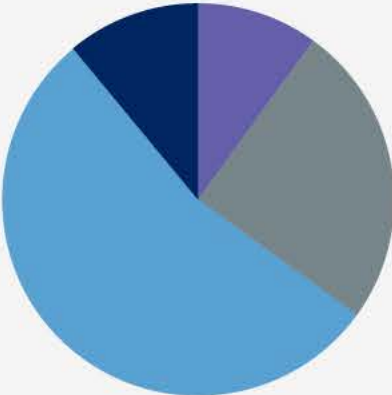
Across the network we are fortunate to have various programs that would simply not be possible without our volunteers. Programs like the Wesley's Compassionate Companions, Dementia and Delirium In-Patient Program – which connects highly trained volunteers with patients for social engagement - and Buderim's Buddy Bear Project that, to date, has provided more than 700 handmade teddy bears to young patients.

At St Stephen's, volunteers continue to inspire their local community, with long term volunteers (and friends), Gail Smith and Muriel Wroe this year featured in the Fraser Coast Volunteer Heroes Storybook. Together, Gail and Muriel have given more than 5,300 hours of their time to

touch the lives of more than 44,000 patients.

Another real highlight throughout the year has been St Andrew's volunteer, Cluny Seager, who, through her association with the Kedron-Wavell Sub-Branch of the RSL, has been able to start formally visiting DVA patients at the hospital as part of the RSL's hospital visiting program, which is all about connecting with and supporting current and past veterans.

I know I speak on behalf of the entire hospital's staff when I express how grateful we are to the volunteers who give their time and energy in service of our patients. I take comfort in knowing that our patients are being provided more than just the very best in clinical care, much of which is thanks to our fantastic volunteers.



Volunteers in Hospitals

St Stephen's Hospital	32
St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital	81
The Wesley Hospital	174
Buderim Private Hospital	35

The Wesley Hospital

Caroline McCormack and Kathy Praine



Art Collection volunteers - The Wesley Hospital

Caroline McCormack(right) and Kathy Praine(left) believe that art plays a profound role in enhancing the wellbeing of patients. They have been instrumental in curating and showcasing over 1,000 artworks throughout The Wesley Hospital, creating an environment that fosters healing through artistic expression.

The Wesley Hospital's impressive art collection includes original paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, and more. Contributed by a diverse array of artists, the collection features work from international, Australian and Indigenous artists - and even includes pieces created by a local kindergarten.

Caroline has been volunteering for nine years with The Wesley Hospital, undertaking many roles including concierge, admissions and discharges. However, she found her true calling when she was assigned

to manage the hospital's art collection. Caroline is not a professional curator but has always loved and had an appreciation for art, describing the hospital's collection as "huge, exquisite, and invaluable".

Kathy began volunteering with The Wesley Hospital two years ago, dividing her time between that and taking care of her grandchildren. Members of her family have been admitted many times to the hospital over the years, and she wants to give back to the community for the amazing care they received. Her first volunteer role at the hospital was at the day treatment unit, before she joined Caroline as an art collection volunteer.

The work they have been doing organising and displaying the art collection has caught the eye of patients, visitors, and staff.

"Kathy and Caroline rotate the artworks constantly

throughout the hospital," said Michele McInnes, Acting Volunteer Coordinator at The Wesley Hospital.

Volunteering at The Wesley Hospital has positively impacted the lives of both women, too: they feel rewarded and energised when people admire the art.

"Art has the power to transport people's minds to a happy place. It's about people enjoying it and feeling the power of healing through it," Kathy said.

They both enjoy the flexibility of their roles at The Wesley Hospital as they can swap jobs throughout their shifts, and both are planning to continue volunteering for many years to come, highly recommending it to everyone. "Find a volunteer role you can enjoy, something you are passionate about to maximise the experience and the positive impact volunteering can bring to your life," Kathy said.

St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital

Jennifer Hill

Virtual volunteer - St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital



After volunteering with the Uniting Church and other hospitals in Brisbane, Jennifer started as a volunteer at St Andrews War Memorial Hospital in 2017. She saw it as a way to give back to the staff and community after she received outstanding care there during treatment for breast cancer.

Jennifer volunteers two days a week at the hospital helping the endoscopy patients in the recovery area. She makes coffee, provides them with hot blankets, and helps to disinfect surfaces. In addition, Jennifer is the liaison between the hospital and the Virtual Volunteer Team who create beautiful craft projects for the patients. This team plays an essential role in the hospital, making a difference in the patient experience with their craft projects and hospital resources including breast care packs; colouring-in packs for children; and Cardiac Hearts which help cushion a patient's chest stitches post-surgery.

Their new 'Care Packs' project delivers beautiful, drawstring bags handmade by volunteers and filled with essential items

to help patients feel fresh and clean during their stay. The packs are available on all wards but are created especially for patients who have an unexpected admission and or end up staying longer after a procedure. The volunteers have been able to purchase the toiletries thanks to funds raised through volunteer craft stalls.

In 2023, Jennifer, along with our Virtual Volunteer Team, assisted in raising \$22,000 through the St Andrew's Auxiliary at its seasonal stalls. These funds go towards patient resources and improving patient lounges.

Her impact is truly appreciated. "She loves to help, she could take on any volunteer role easily," Volunteer Manager, Simone James said. "Jennifer is an outstanding volunteer. She goes a step beyond when caring for others. She is a natural leader, organised and resourceful."

In 2022, Jennifer was the recipient of a Queensland Moderator's Community Service Medal which is presented to individuals

who have contributed in an outstanding way to the Uniting Church's mission in community services.

She has even recruited her husband to volunteer at St Andrews, too. They enjoy their roles, and are always thinking of new ways to help.

"I recommend volunteering to everyone. It is rewarding and satisfying. You can feel people are grateful when you accompany them through their journey at the hospital," Jennifer enthused.

"I want to volunteer for many years to come. Socialising, exercise and using your memory are important in boosting wellbeing, and by volunteering at St Andrew's I get to do all three! I'm privileged to have this opportunity."

Scan QR Code for Full Circle Awards Nominee Video



Buderim Private Hospital

Lynn Gilliland

Hospital volunteer - Buderim Private Hospital



In 2000, Lynn was teaching an Aqua Aerobics class when one of the attendees asked if she would be interested in volunteering at The Buderim Private Hospital. Thinking it would be a nice thing to do, she put herself forward and has been volunteering at the hospital ever since.

During the 24 years that Lynn has been with the hospital she has seen a lot of changes: some of the roles have changed or no longer exist, and others are reasonably new, such as the concierge function where volunteers greet and direct or escort customers to where they need to be.

Former teacher Lynn has been involved in a number of roles including helping prepare the Ward Packs that are used

for recording patient details, delivering mail around the hospital, folding the menus for patients, taking lunches to doctors in theatre, or retrieving patient charts from the Cardiovascular Ward and delivering them to Medical Records.

Volunteering at The Buderim Private Hospital does not take up all of Lynn's time so she has also volunteered at St Luke's, for the Kidney Foundation, and Community Assistance of Youths, Adults and Children (CAYAC) which provides meals and other resources to the community.

"Volunteering gives me a sense of purpose, and I really enjoy it," she said.

"If the volunteers didn't do these tasks, the staff would

have to take time away from the patients to do those little jobs themselves.

"I love doing things to help others, and that benefits the community, but it also gives me something to do. I'll definitely continue volunteering at Buderim Private Hospital for as long as I can."

"Volunteering gives me a sense of purpose, and I really enjoy it."
Lynn Gilliland

St Stephen's Hospital

Muriel Wroe



Kitchen and Driving volunteer - St Stephen's Hospital

Like so many volunteers, Muriel does not look for recognition for doing what she loves.

When she retired, she travelled around Australia for six months and renovated her home, but then felt a bit lost so decided to look for something to do. After seeing an advertisement for a volunteer driver at St Stephen's Hospital, Muriel decided she could do that quite easily.

Originally joining at St Stephens' former Maryborough location, Muriel transported patients from Hervey Bay to the hospital for their treatments and procedures. When the hospital moved to Hervey Bay in 2014, Muriel started to transport patients for the reverse journey: from Maryborough to Hervey Bay and back.

Over the past 14 years Muriel has transported at least one patient per week between Hervey Bay and Maryborough. This is around a 126 km round trip, meaning she has driven approximately 88,200 km during that time.

Muriel's dedication to helping

others doesn't stop there, though. If patients require private rehab, Muriel will collect them and return them home after their session. Or if a patient is discharged and has nobody at home, Muriel takes them there and makes sure they are okay.

Occasionally, she collects visiting doctors from the airport. And while at the hospital waiting for her next driving task, Muriel is happy to help any team, whether delivering the water jugs to the wards, taking flowers to patients, putting patient charts together, or assisting the kitchen team with everything from getting cutlery ready for mealtimes to helping with meal prep and delivery. Muriel and other volunteers support patients on the Oncology Ward, sitting with them and having a chat over lunch. She also helps the day surgery team, too, offering tea, sandwiches and company to patients.

Humble to the core, Muriel stressed: "I'm not the only volunteer at the hospital - I work with a lot of others who help with all of the same tasks."

Muriel does, however, know the work and support she and other volunteers provide makes a huge impact on the life of so many patients who come to St Stephen's for treatment, not least because it enables staff to be able to get on with the job of treating and looking after patients.

When asked if she would continue to volunteer into the future, Muriel said: "While I have good health, am able and needed by the hospital, I will definitely continue to volunteer."

"It has been a wonderful experience for me and given me a reason to get up each day. It has also provided company and friendship."

Muriel was nominated for the 'Changing Lives, Theirs Included' Volunteer Award at this year's Full Circle and Reconciliation Awards. Scan the QR Code to see her nominee video:



Telephone

07 3253 4000

Address

Level 5
192 Ann Street
Brisbane QLD
Australia 4000

Mailing address

GPO Box 45, Brisbane QLD 4001

Email

volunteer@uccommunity.org.au



unitingcareqld.com.au

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