

Volunteer Impact Report 2025

Change lives,



yours included



Proudly representing

BlueCare | Lifeline | ARRCs | The Wesley Hospital | Buderim Private Hospital
St Stephen's Hospital | St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

UnitingCare respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and live.

We acknowledge Elders past and present, whose ongoing effort to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures will leave a legacy for future leaders and reconciliation within Australia.

This report was produced with deep respect for the First Peoples of Australia, whose ancestral lands have been touched by the work of our volunteers and services.

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 the QR code

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Message from Cathy Thomas

CEO (Interim), UnitingCare

Thank you for the difference you make.

Each year, this report offers a moment to pause and reflect on the extraordinary generosity, compassion and commitment of UnitingCare's volunteers across Queensland. It's a celebration of people who give their time, energy and heart to others – not for recognition, but because they care deeply.

This year, our volunteers have contributed over 1.2 million hours across our services: from our corporate office to hospitals, aged care and community services, family and disability services and Lifeline.

Behind every hour is a story: of kindness offered, burdens shared and lives touched. Whether it's a quiet conversation in an aged care home, a comforting presence in a hospital ward, or a voice on the other end of a Lifeline call, our volunteers are helping people feel seen, heard and supported.

Stories with heart

What stands out most in these pages is the humanity. You'll read stories of people who've turned personal challenges into purpose, who've found connection in unexpected places, and who've discovered that giving back often gives us more than we imagined. Their words are honest, moving and full of heart.

Volunteering at UnitingCare is not just about what's done – it's about how it's done: with empathy, respect and a deep understanding of what it means to support someone in their moment of need. Our volunteers bring warmth and dignity to every interaction and that's what makes their contributions so powerful.

Changing lives, yours included

I also want to acknowledge the staff who support, work and walk alongside our volunteers. Their encouragement, mentorship and care help create environments where volunteers feel valued and empowered. Together, they form a partnership that strengthens our services and uplifts the people we serve.

To every volunteer who worked with us this year – thank you. You are part of the soul of UnitingCare. Your contribution changes lives, including your own and reflects who we are – an organisation that leads with empathy, values every person, and stays true to its purpose.

With deep gratitude,
Cathy Thomas



Scan the code below to find out more about volunteering at UnitingCare and to read our previous reports.



Message from Shane Harris

**Volunteer Experience
Team Manager, UnitingCare**

Because of you, lives change.

And we produce this Volunteer Impact Report, now in its third year, to celebrate the incredible difference each of you makes to our services across Queensland. You're not just 'helping out', you're a vital part of how we support communities and change lives.

We believe volunteering creates a ripple effect of positive change. When you, our volunteers, feel valued and supported, that effect extends far beyond the task at hand: strengthening teams, uplifting communities and enriching lives.

Here's how the benefits unfold:

- **Volunteers win:** Discovering purpose, building skills, forming lasting connections and making a meaningful contribution.
- **Leaders win:** They gain extra support, freeing them to focus on more complex or strategic work.
- **The people we serve win:** Experiencing care, compassion and connection that truly make a difference.

When these three elements unite, the difference we make grows stronger and more meaningful, far beyond what numbers can capture.

Enriching lives

The personal enrichment is clear: Shoshanna Cogan, a Compassionate Companion volunteer, found her work gave her meaning and purpose, enabling the deep connections she sought.

Likewise, the impact is felt deeply by those we serve. Bernadette, a resident at our BlueCare Yarrabee aged care home, shared how visits from volunteers like Rita brighten her day and help her feel at home.

For our staff, volunteers provide crucial support, boosting team productivity and service capacity. At Buderim Private Hospital, nurses breathe a sigh of relief when Dale Lanini walks in to lend a hand, often saying: "Thank God you're here, Dale!" It shows him his support truly matters.

These are just a few examples of the heartfelt stories of transformative connections and personal growth captured on the following pages.

To each and every one of you - thank you for your time, your heart and your presence.

You're not just changing lives; you're enriching your own, too. We're so grateful to walk and work alongside you. We simply couldn't have achieved all this without your commitment, dedication and compassion.

With heartfelt thanks,
Shane Harris



Scan the QR code to check out our current volunteering opportunities.



Volunteer Statistics FY2024-2025

Number of volunteers

9,340

Hours contributed by volunteers

1,260,077*

Increase in number of volunteers in FY24-25

8.7%

Original FY24-25 volunteer growth target

20%

Value of volunteer contributions in FY24-25

73.5m

Breakdown of volunteers by service

	Number of volunteers	% Increase of volunteers
Lifeline Retail	2,385	6.0
Lifeline Crisis Support	538	5.0
Lifeline Bookfest	4,333	14.88
Family and Disability Services	195	187.0 ⁺
Aged Care and Community Services	667	16.0
Hospitals	345	5.83
Mission & Corporate	377	-46.45 [#]

“Volunteering has changed my life and I look forward to the two shifts I do each week as it adds value to not only my companion [the hospital patient she’s spending time with] but myself and the nursing staff.”

Lyndie Mitchell, Compassionate Companion volunteer.

Top 5 languages (other than English) spoken by volunteers

Chinese (Mandarin)

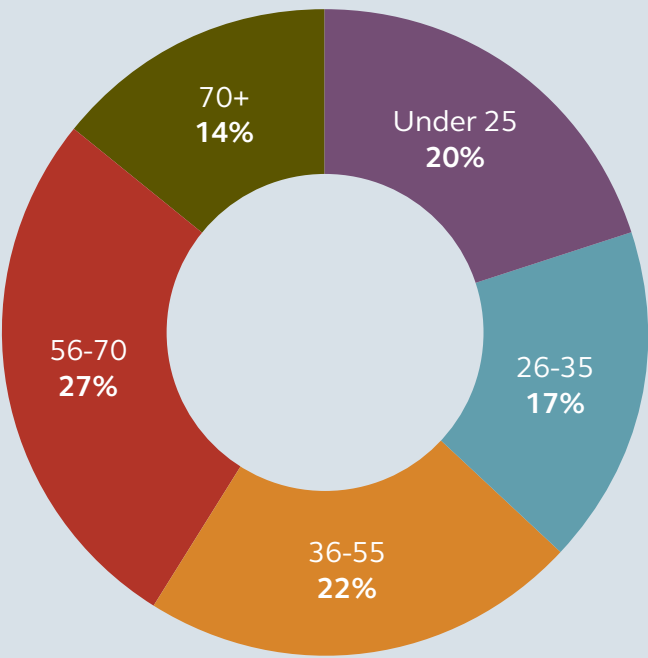
Spanish

Malay

Bahasa Indonesia

Hindi

Ages of volunteers



“I’ve had three volunteers over a couple of years - two have since gained employment with UnitingCare. I loved working alongside each of them because they brought lived experience, empathy and fresh perspectives that are invaluable.”

Dorothy from UnitingCare’s Mission team.

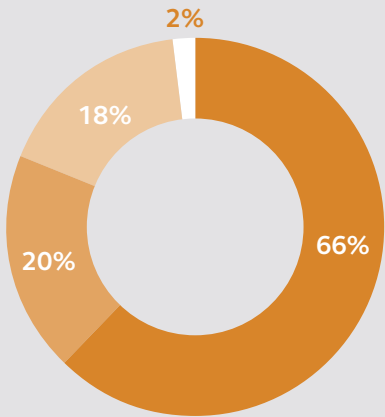
* This year’s total of 1,260,077 volunteer hours marks an 81% increase from last year’s 695,101 hours - due to improved reporting. In FY24-25, we introduced a consistent method to estimate hours for volunteers in Lifeline Retail and BlueCare who don’t log their time. These estimates are based on a conservative six hours per week per regular volunteer, even though new applicants in Lifeline Retail average 11 hours weekly. This approach gives us a more accurate and inclusive picture of the incredible contribution volunteers make across UnitingCare.

+ Knit-a-Bear volunteers were included for the first time, following strong interest in this informal volunteering role.

Internal Corporate Volunteering numbers dropped significantly after we archived volunteers who had signed up but were no longer active.

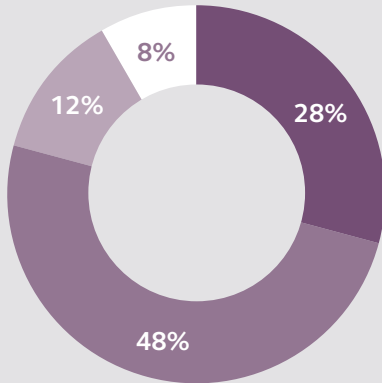
Volunteer Impact Survey: Volunteer Results

We annually survey our volunteers to understand more about their experiences and the positive impact volunteering has on them.



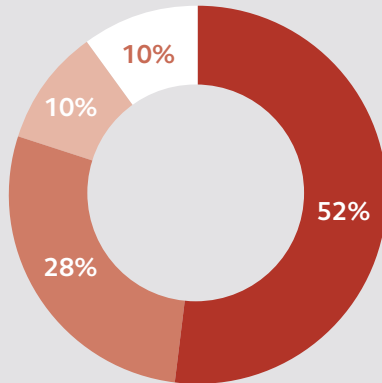
Which UnitingCare service are you from?

- Lifeline
- Hospitals
- BlueCare
- Family and Disability Services



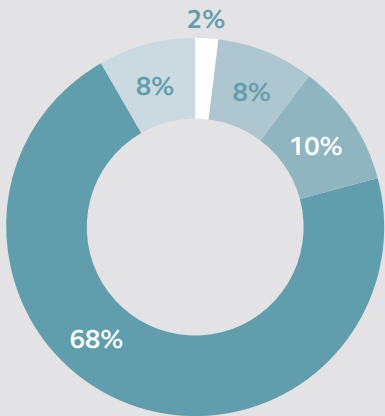
How long have you been volunteering with UnitingCare?

- More than 5 years
- 1-5 years
- 6 months to 1 year
- Less than 6 months



On average, how many hours do you volunteer per week?

- 2 to 5 hours/week
- 6 to 10 hours/week
- 11 to 15 hours/week
- More than 15 hours/week



How frequently do you volunteer with UnitingCare?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Occasionally
- Daily
- Rarely

What motivated you to start or continue volunteering with UnitingCare?



How do you perceive the impact of your volunteer work on your personal growth and development?

30%

I have improved mental health and personal wellbeing

36%

I have acquired a new sense of purpose

38%

I have learned new skills

44%

I have improved social interaction, and I have new friendships

64%

I feel valued, and I am contributing to a cause

94%

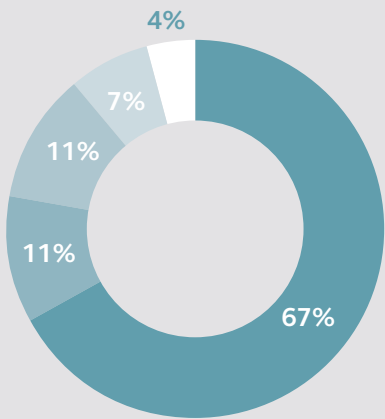
of volunteers surveyed agree or strongly agree that their volunteering work has made positive impact in the community

74%

of those we surveyed said volunteering has made a positive impact on their lives

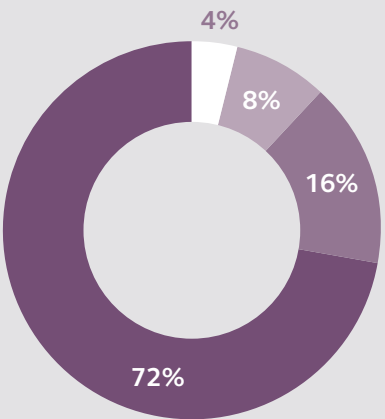
Volunteer Impact Survey: Supervisor Results

We also survey our supervisors to find out more about the difference volunteers make, exploring the impact on the workplace and the positive contribution volunteers make to the communities we serve.



Which UnitingCare service do you work for?

- Lifeline
- Hospitals
- Mission
- BlueCare
- Family and Disability Services



How long have you been managing volunteers in your service?

- More than 2 years
- 1-2 years
- 6 months to 1 year
- Less than 6 months

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

Increase team productivity and enable staff to focus on complex tasks

67%

Create an inclusive and diverse environment

59%

Empower members of the community

59%

Bring innovative ideas to improve the service/program

51%

Build a bridge between the organisation and the community we serve

48%

Other

25%

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

Increased team productivity and service capacity

85%

Improved the client/customer experience

74%

Increased team diversity which has enriched the organisation

70%

Created a stronger connection with the community

66%

Inspired clients/staff

55%

Other

11%



89%

of supervisors feel that volunteers have made a positive impact in their service



Mission Volunteers

Our Mission team helps bring UnitingCare's purpose - supporting life in all its fullness - to life. By weaving mission into our culture, leadership and services, the team ensures we stay true to the values of the Uniting Church. There are 366 volunteers each of whom plays a vital role in this work, helping us live our purpose every day.

Creating meaningful connections during the toughest times

When Shoshanna Cogan moved from New York to Australia, she knew she wanted to give back, but not just in a practical way. She was looking for something deeper and found herself drawn to The Wesley Hospital's Compassionate Companion Program – an initiative of UnitingCare's Mission team. The program supports vulnerable in-patients, including those experiencing dementia and delirium. Its focus on emotional support, training and genuine human connection aligned perfectly with her values.

"I wasn't looking to just help, I wanted to connect," Shoshanna said. "To be present with someone in a way that really matters."

With a background in mental health counselling and international consulting, alongside a master's degree, she brings both experience and empathy to her role. Volunteers also receive training to offer meaningful emotional support, and Shoshanna embraced the opportunity to spend time with patients in a way that feels personal and heartfelt.

"Sometimes we talk, sometimes we listen to music, sometimes we just sit quietly. It's about being there, however someone needs you," she said.

Shoshanna finds the hospital environment to be a perfect match for her needs, as it enables her the flexibility to truly engage with patients without rushing or following a strict schedule. Her own lived experiences, including a period of homelessness, have shaped her understanding of vulnerability and the importance of being seen, too.

She believes that volunteers not only help others but also enrich their own lives by gaining a sense of meaning and connection, which aligns with her belief in the words of renowned psychiatrist and philosopher, Viktor Frankl, who said: *"Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose."*

And for Shoshanna, purpose lives in the everyday - in listening, showing up and making space for someone to feel seen.

"It's about being there, however someone needs you."

Shoshanna Cogan
Compassionate
Companion
Program volunteer



Aurilea Augustine

Grief and Loss
volunteer



Aurilea's journey into volunteer grief support began in 2012, when she joined a church minister and fellow volunteer for facilitation training in grief and loss on the Gold Coast.

They brought the program back to Rockhampton, where Aurilea was based, and ran their first session that same year. After relocating to the Sunshine Coast, Aurilea continued facilitating the program, helping people navigate loss. "It's about creating a space where people feel safe to say, 'I'm not okay,'" Aurilea shared.

The program welcomes participants from all walks of life, many grieving the loss of a spouse. Through guided conversations, they begin to realise they're not alone, and that healing is possible. One moment that stayed with her was a man who joined a group of women. Initially quiet, he slowly opened up, forming deep connections. "His courage gave others permission to speak," she recalled. Some groups continue meeting long after the sessions end, forming lasting support networks.

Aurilea also developed a tailored program for dementia caregivers, recognising their unique grief. "Watching someone you love slowly disappear is heartbreaking," she said. These sessions offer comfort, understanding, and solidarity.

Her own experience with loss - her husband passed away in 2015 - deepened her empathy. "The tools I shared with others became my lifeline," she reflected. Now, Aurilea is focused on training new facilitators to ensure the program's future. "Volunteering has changed me," she said. "Seeing someone go from despair to hope, it's why I keep showing up."

Through her work, Aurilea has helped build a community where grief is met with compassion, and healing is shared.

"We don't fix grief," she said, "but we walk through it together."

"It's about creating a space where people feel safe to say, 'I'm not okay.'"

Helping people go from despair to hope

Offering love without judgement

For Suzi, working with the Prison Ministry isn't just volunteering, it's a calling, with her work in both women's and men's prisons a testament to the power of presence, empathy and hope.

Born and raised in New Zealand, Suzi's life has been one of service. From helping establish a food bank to supporting refugees, her commitment to community has never wavered. Professionally, she's worked across mental health, disability care, aged care, domestic violence support, court support, crisis intervention and counselling, always finding ways to serve, often volunteering on the side of full-time work and raising eight children.

Her first encounter with prison ministry came at just 19 in New Zealand, connecting with young men through touch rugby. "I saw their humanity," Suzi recalled. "And I knew I wanted to be someone who stood beside those society often overlooks and who need a second chance."

Today, 35 years later, Suzi visits two correctional facilities in South-East Queensland, offering emotional and spiritual support. "We're not there to judge or convert," she said. "We're there to listen, to love and to remind them they're not forgotten."

In the women's prison, Suzi connects with inmates grappling with self-identity and separation from children and families. She offers a safe listening space, comfort, prayer and practical guidance, especially as they prepare for life beyond the prison walls.

In the men's prison, where vulnerability is often masked by silence, Suzi gently breaks through with patience and empathy and by offering a compassionate, listening ear. "All of them need to know that change is possible and there is always hope," she said. "Even when they can't see it yet."

One moment that stays with her is a visit to a detention unit. "I didn't say much, I just waved through the window," she remembered. "Just being there mattered." An inmate later thanked her for simply showing up, a reminder that presence alone can be life changing.

"We don't have to be counsellors or evangelists," Suzi reflected. "We just show love. God does the rest."

"I knew I wanted to be someone who stood beside those society often overlooks."

Suzi Andrew
Prison Ministry
volunteer



Corporate Volunteers

UnitingCare's Corporate Services teams provide the vital support that enables frontline teams to focus on delivering care. From behind the scenes, they ensure everything runs smoothly, whether it's systems, strategy or day-to-day operations, so that those we serve receive the best possible care and support.



Making a difference, remotely

Corporate Volunteers

Living on 20 acres between Toowoomba and Goondiwindi, Lorraine and her family enjoy being surrounded by bushland and small animals. Sadly, in the 2019-20 bushfires, they lost some of their property and assets. Thankfully, everyone was safely evacuated. But because of the help and support she received during that time, Lorraine was inspired and determined to give back so she looked into volunteering. Her remote location and family responsibilities made options limited, however.

That is until an opportunity arose to help BlueCare as a remote volunteer to support a client phone call project. Lorraine found it to be the perfect fit. "As well as living in a remote area, I can't drive. So being able to volunteer home gave me balance and social interaction," she shared.

After a year supporting BlueCare, Lorraine joined UnitingCare's Volunteer Experience Team as a Remote Follow-Up Facilitator. She now helps process online applications, makes calls to volunteers and supports data entry. "Lorraine's a quick learner and a reliable team member," said Volunteer Experience Officer, Nancy Duran. "Her work gives us precious time to focus on key projects."

Volunteering has brought new energy to Lorraine's life and she's excited to keep growing in her role. "It's helped reduce isolation and lets me use my people skills to make a difference. I feel active, productive and happy with the work I'm doing."

Lorraine Hodkinson

Remote Support volunteer



Corporate hearts in action

At UnitingCare, the Business, Finance & Strategy (BFS) team is proving that connection goes far beyond the balance sheet. Across our Ann Street and Caboolture offices, 45 staff lead Thrive Groups – initiatives that foster wellbeing, culture and community connection.

Now in its fifth year, Thrive in Community brings corporate staff into frontline services through internal volunteering. From craft days in aged care homes to shadowing carers and hospital volunteers, these volunteer experiences deepen understanding and spark meaningful change in how we support those we serve. (See some of the happy BlueCare Kenmore aged care home and retirement living residents, right, showing what they've loved about spending time doing activities with the corporate volunteers.) With hundreds of volunteering opportunities for corporate staff delivered, BFS is building stronger ties to UnitingCare's mission.

We are now planning to expand the program to include creative clubs and buddy programs that continue bridging the gap between corporate and care.





Lifeline Crisis Support Volunteers

Lifeline Crisis Support in Queensland is a vital service, offering 24/7 assistance to people experiencing emotional distress, crisis, or thoughts of suicide. Staffed by trained volunteers, Lifeline provides compassionate listening, connection and guidance through its national 13 11 14 phone line, helping individuals feel heard and supported when they need it most.

25,895

Hours volunteered
by Lifeline Crisis
Supporters FY2024-2025

45,490

Number of calls answered
by Lifeline Crisis Supporters
FY2024-2025

276

Number of students
completing Lifeline Crisis
Support Workplace Training
Course FY2024-2025

A pathway to growth: from volunteer to staff member

Renee once imagined herself as a researcher, making a difference from behind the scenes. But while studying psychology at university in Townsville, she realised something was missing. The theory was rich, but the practical skills to support people in crisis weren't there. She noticed some tutors and students were training with Lifeline and it sparked her interest.

Then came a pivotal moment: Renee witnessed a car accident. One driver fled, and the woman left behind was in shock. Renee wanted to help but didn't know how. "I felt I should have had the words," she said. That moment led her to Lifeline's Crisis Supporter training in 2019.

The training aligned deeply with her values and the support from trainers and mentors was life changing. Renee thrived as a volunteer and became a mentor herself, giving back and growing further.

Working on the phones revealed to her that "there are profound moments of connection in even the shortest calls," she said. What guides her most is simple: "When you're connecting with a person, be a person."

Her dedication led to casual work, then a full-time staff role. When the Service Lead position opened in 2020, she stepped up. In 2024, Renee embraced a new challenge she was thrilled to take on: leading the Mackay Crisis Support team.

And she's still passionate about working alongside and supporting volunteers. "They give from the heart, without expectation. Saying thank you means lightening their load so they can focus on the help seeker. I absolutely love working with them, and I want to keep doing this work."

"There are profound moments of connection in even the shortest calls."

Renee Ericksen

Lifeline Crisis
Support Service Lead,
Townsville and Mackay



Making space to make a difference

Clara Mare
Lifeline Crisis
Support volunteer



When Clara immigrated to Australia from Zimbabwe in 2008, she had just completed her nursing degree and carried with her a deep desire to make a difference. In Zimbabwe, Clara explained, there's no direct word for volunteering. "It's just something you do for your community," she said.

It was while studying psychology at university in Queensland that Clara noticed a gap in her hands-on experience. "I realised the course didn't offer a lot of practical subjects," she explained. "And I didn't want to graduate without ever working directly with people." That realisation led her to Lifeline's crisis support volunteer training in 2021, which provided practical experience and the chance to give back to the community. It was exactly what she'd been looking for.

Balancing full-time study, part-time nursing and family life, Clara tackled the 12-week training with determination. "I told my family, 'If I'm breathing and walking around, I'm OK,'" she laughed. COVID-19 added challenges, shifting learning online and delaying her accreditation, but Clara stayed the course. "Persistence pays off," she said.

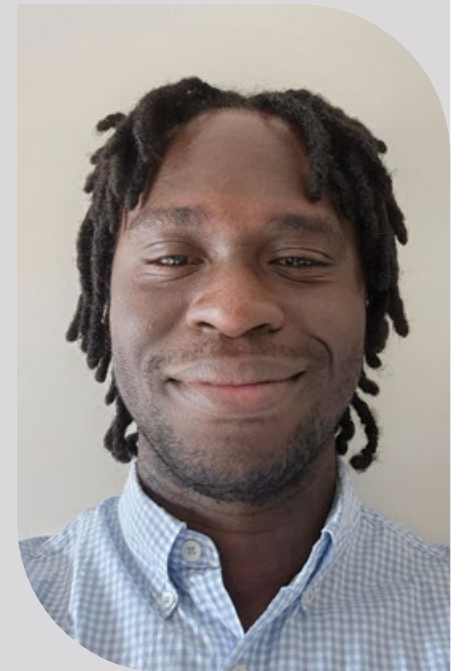
From her very first call, Clara knew that volunteering for the Lifeline Crisis Support line was more than temporary. "It felt like home," she recalled.

Today, she works as an epilepsy nurse in a non-clinical role, recently graduated with a psychology degree and is considering doing a master's degree.

Volunteering on the crisis support hotline when available remains central. "I've always aimed for balance so I can keep giving back. It's important to enjoy what you do both professionally and when you're giving back."

"I'd never volunteered before, but I knew this would be more than temporary."

Terry Botchwey
Human-Assisted
Digital Support



When Terry began volunteering with Lifeline nearly a year ago, he saw it as a way to apply what he was learning in his psychology degree. What he didn't expect was how deeply it would shape his personal growth and future aspirations.

Taking a break from his honours studies, Terry wanted a meaningful way to give back while gaining real-world experience. He found it through Lifeline's Human-Assisted Digital Support program: an online, text-based alternative to the traditional crisis phone line.

"With uni and everything else, the flexibility of the digital platform really worked for me," he said. "It allowed me to log in when I could and gave me the time to consider my responses thoughtfully."

That space to reflect became central to his development. "I've realised that people don't always come looking for answers. They're looking for someone to truly listen," he said. "I used to jump straight into solutions, but now I understand the power of simply holding space."

This shift has impacted his personal relationships too. "It's changed the way I interact with people," he reflected. "Friends are more open, knowing I'll listen without judgement."

As a first-generation Australian with Ghanaian heritage, Terry is passionate about breaking down cultural stigma around mental health. "There's a strong reliance on family and faith, which can be supportive, but sometimes people need more," he said. "I want to help bridge that gap."

His involvement with Lifeline has sparked conversations among his peers. "It's great to see people connecting the dots, not just about phone support, but the broader services Lifeline offers."

Terry plans to return to study next year, aiming to become a psychologist. "Volunteering has helped me grow into the person I hoped to become. It also taught me that people don't always need answers. They need to feel heard."

"Volunteering has helped me grow into the person I hoped to become."

Listening, learning and giving back

Couple goals: Giving back, side by side

Greg and Phyllis Johnson

Lifeline Crisis
Support volunteers



Greg and Phyllis Johnson are a couple who prove that volunteering together can be a meaningful part of life and love.

What drew you to volunteering for Lifeline?

Phyllis: “Being brought up in a church, volunteering was a normal thing. Because in those days – in the 1950s/60s, before I was married, everybody volunteered. So when I had to retire early in 1998 from my job as a high school teacher due to Multiple Sclerosis, I thought, ‘What now?’ We knew Lifeline founder Alan Walker’s story, so volunteering for the organisation felt like a natural choice because we understood his mission.”

Greg: “Phyllis started first. Before I retired, I was a teacher, then deputy, then a principal. And when I was thinking about planning for my retirement, I thought volunteering might be part of my that. As Phyllis was already doing it, it was something we talked about.”

Did you find the training helpful for life outside volunteering too?

Phyllis: “Definitely! It helped me reflect on my life and where I wanted to go next – because it gets you to look at yourself and discover things about yourself. It’s helped me with all sorts of relationships. And those wonderful values like unconditional positive regard, being non-judgmental and empowering people, as well as listening, *really* listening not just talking – are such important skills too.”

Greg: “When I began the Lifeline crisis support training, I was still working at a school. I was really appreciative to have picked up the skills that we employ on the crisis phone lines because it made me much more effective in my pastoral care of students. Things such as listening and reflecting back what someone has said to you helps people realise that you’ve paid real attention to what they’ve said.”

“I’ll keep volunteering as long as I can. It’s incredibly rewarding and life-affirming.” Phyllis

What surprised you most about volunteering for the crisis support phone line?

Greg: “Suicide is talked about more openly now. And I’m often surprised by how quickly people share their thoughts once you’ve built trust on the phones.”

How do you separate volunteering from home life?

Phyllis: “We have to leave it behind. You trust that there are other amazing Crisis Supporters there answering calls when we’re not. I do walk away at the end of a shift feeling very thankful for the life that I have.”

Greg: “It can be exhausting. I have a little ritual at the end of a shift: I tear up my notes and recycle them. It helps me let go. And we’re looked after very well in terms of supervision. Before we leave, we have to check in with our supervisor who will generally debrief us and say, ‘is there anything that’s hanging around with you?’ And of course, if there’s a call that’s staying with either of us, we can ring in and get the sort of help we need in terms of being able to debrief from that.”

What keeps you coming back?

Phyllis: “I spoke to a woman who’d been calling Lifeline for 40 years. She said it’s what’s kept her going – the contact and connections that she had made over those years was so important to her. That had a big impact on me and made me realise how important this work is.”

Greg: “Besides the fact that I think I’m getting a bit better at it each year, it’s knowing you’ve made a difference. If someone suicidal calls and you help them consider life again, that’s everything. And it’s not just us. The people selling clothing in Lifeline shops are part of this too. They’re helping fund the service, and I see their love for the community.”

What’s next?

Phyllis: “I’ll keep volunteering as long as I can. It’s incredibly rewarding and life-affirming.”

Greg: “Same here. You get so much out of giving to others. That’s what keeps me going.”

“Knowing you’ve made a difference and helped someone consider life again – that’s everything.” Greg

Glenda Nigalis

OurMob Volunteer



Glenda Nigalis spent her life quietly supporting others. As a mother of four boys, the retired teacher's aide has always been a steady presence in her beloved Bundaberg community. Encouraged by her friend and neighbour Aunty Sam, Glenda did OurMob training, a culturally responsive program that prepares Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers to support their communities through crisis lines like 13YARN [which is Australia's first Indigenous-led national crisis support line.]

"I didn't think I could do it," she says. "But Aunty Sam said, 'You'd be perfect at it. Our mob needs people like you.'"

Since June 2023, Glenda has completed training and now volunteers regularly taking calls for 13YARN and the Lifeline Crisis Support hotline, often taking early morning shifts when support is needed most. Her calm, open nature makes her someone people naturally turn to. "My husband reckons I've got an invisible sign above my head that says: 'Talk to me.'"

Glenda's own journey has shaped her understanding. A descendant of the Stolen Generations, she only learned of her Aboriginal heritage later in life. "Mum had never told us because she didn't want us treated differently," she recalled.

Despite the gaps in her family's history, Glenda has found belonging in the local Aboriginal community. "The mob here took us in. They didn't have to, but they did."

Now, she's gently encouraging others to get involved in volunteering for 13YARN. "Not everyone can do it, but those who can - we need them. I tell my niece, 'You can do it after the kids go to bed!'"

For Glenda, there's a simple reason this work is important:

"Sometimes people just need someone who listens, who's not going to judge. That's all."

Listening without judgement

Bringing lived experience to giving back

Landillimurra Yanner is a proud descendant of the Gangalidda people from the southern Gulf of Carpentaria on her father's side, and the Bindal people on her mother's side. While she's always felt connected to her father's Country, she's now actively reconnecting with her mother's ancestral lands, too.

Her commitment to healing, both personal and collective, led her to OurMob and 13YARN as a crisis support volunteer. Plus, "I've always been the one to give advice or listen," she admitted. "My friends and family came to me for comfort. I've had my own lived experience with mental health. I just felt like I had a lot to give back."

Landillimurra hadn't done formal volunteering before but says that for mob, helping is part of culture. "It's just what we do, helping family, helping community."

Through 13YARN, she found not just a culturally safe space, but a team that leads with empathy, saying: "It's probably the best place I've ever worked. Our team's very supportive. And Aunty Bev [13YARN Centre Supervisor] knows all the right words to say."

The work can be intense. Every call is different, and many bring their own language, humour and trauma. "It can be triggering, but it also helps you grow," Landillimurra shared.

She has noticed a shift in herself, too. "I speak softer now. I think more about how I show up for people." She admits to being more open with family, more patient with her siblings, and more intentional in her relationship as well.

Looking ahead, Landillimurra plans to study social work at university and hopes to see OurMob and 13YARN continuing to break down stigma around mental health in Aboriginal communities: "I'm excited for it to grow, whatever that looks like," she said. "I'm here for the journey."

"I've had my own lived experience with mental health. I just felt like I had a lot to give back."

Landillimurra Yanner

OurMob Volunteer





Lifeline Retail Volunteers

Lifeline Retail Queensland operates a network of charity shops across the state, selling donated clothing, books and household items. The proceeds help fund Lifeline's free, 24/7 crisis support phone line (13 11 14) and suicide prevention services, making every purchase part of a life-saving mission.

124
Lifeline Shops

1
Online Shop

11
Warehouses

\$68.67m
Total Operating Revenue FY24-25

At Lifeline Oxenford, the shop isn't just a place to browse, it's a community, and for many, a second family.

Manager Petrina Barrett has spent her career working in charity shops and knows that running a successful store starts with looking after her team, which is made up almost entirely of volunteers.

"We're a family," she says, "and our family is branching out and becoming a bigger!"

The shop follows a natural rhythm: mornings bring mums and bubs, midday is for restocking, and after-school hours fill with families. Petrina makes sure volunteers are doing tasks they enjoy, while also learning new skills to keep things flexible. She checks in often, making sure everyone feels comfortable and valued.

Among her team of volunteers are Shelly and Kai Robinson, a grandmother-granddaughter duo who bring warmth and energy to the shop. Shelly joined in 2022 - after moving from Melbourne, she was looking to meet people and stay active. Six months later, Kai came for a holiday and started volunteering alongside her grandmother. She loved it so much, she decided to move to Queensland.

Kai quickly found her own circle of friends through the shop and the younger volunteers often catch up outside of work. She now volunteers three days a week and is preparing to study zoology.

Together, Shelly and Kai continue to show up to volunteer on the same days (although Kai does an extra day as "she's younger!") and bring joy to the Oxenford team.

Proving that this is more than just about working in retail: it brings connection, purpose and a place to belong.

"We're a family and our family is branching out and becoming a bigger!" Petrina

Store Supervisor **Petrina Barrett** (far right) works alongside grandmother and granddaughter volunteers **Shelly** (centre) and **Kai Robinson** (far left)



Generations of giving

Diane Walker
Lifeline Retail
volunteer



What motivated you to volunteer?

“I’d been volunteering elsewhere but had to step away due to illness. When I was ready to return, I found that environment too noisy and overwhelming. I still wanted to help, but I needed somewhere quieter. By chance, I met the local Lifeline store supervisor, and she encouraged me to join. She was wonderful and let me work in the back at my own pace until I felt ready to move out front. That kindness made all the difference.”

It sounds like you get a lot of support from the people you work with?

“Yes! I have had various supervisors since I first commenced at Lifeline and all have been wonderful. In fact, I have remained friends with a couple of them. They helped to bring me out of my shell.”

Has volunteering had a positive impact on your life?

“Most definitely. I’ve battled depression, and being part of such a lovely group has really helped my health. I don’t rely on medication anymore, which is a big step. My supervisor has a calming presence which is comforting. Volunteering has been a positive experience that has given me more confidence. I have met a lot of new people. I genuinely enjoy coming in on my shift days.”

Do you feel that being a retail volunteer makes a difference to others?

“I take the time to listen and can see that it makes a difference for some people. They too might be going through a tough time or might be a little lonely and just want to have a chat. I can do that and hope it improves their day. I also like helping the team create a welcoming, successful store.”

“Volunteering has been a positive experience that has given me more confidence.”

**Giving back and
growing stronger**

Still making a difference at 88

Colleen began volunteering as a Warehouse Sorter in Mackay back in 2012. And now, at 88 years young, she’s still going strong.

In true community spirit, Colleen gives more than just her time. Each week on her rostered day, she arrives with morning tea for the team, a small gesture that speaks volumes about her warmth and generosity.

She started volunteering two days a week, but after undergoing a serious cancer operation, she scaled back to one. That hasn’t slowed her enthusiasm, though. “I enjoy the companionship, the purpose and keeping my mind active,” she says. “It’s something I look forward to.”

Before Lifeline, Colleen hadn’t volunteered formally, but she was a familiar face in Mackay as a small business owner for 21 years. She was always grateful for the support the community gave her and after she sold her business, she knew she wanted to give back. A regular Lifeline customer herself, she admired the volunteers and made a promise to join them one day.

Since then, Colleen has built lasting friendships and found real joy in her role.

“There are lots of reasons to volunteer,” she says, “but knowing you’re helping to save a life - that’s incredibly rewarding.”

As for the future, Colleen’s not slowing down. “I’ll keep volunteering as long as I can,” she says with a smile.

And with every shift, every chat and every tray of morning tea, Colleen continues to make a quiet, powerful difference.

“There are lots of reasons to volunteer, but knowing you’re helping to save a life - that’s incredibly rewarding.”

Colleen Harris
Lifeline Retail
volunteer



Lifeline Bookfest

This is the largest second-hand book event in Queensland, raising vital funds to support Lifeline's crisis support and suicide prevention services. Held twice a year in Brisbane, it brings together volunteers from all walks of life: students, retirees, corporate teams and community members, united by a shared purpose to help others.

\$3.17m

Sales

993

Number of volunteers at Bookfest events

13,395

Volunteer hours contributed



The Student Volunteer

While studying for his master's degree in business and sustainability, Royce Chang saw a newsletter inviting students to volunteer at Lifeline Bookfest. After learning more about Lifeline's work, he felt compelled to help. "It could be any of us in a dark place," he said.

With a passion for pop culture, Royce joined the Comicfest team [a pop culture zone within Bookfest, featuring comics, graphic novels, collectibles] and quickly became a valued member. He enjoys connecting with customers who collect everything from Phantom comics to Lego sets.

Royce finds the role deeply rewarding. "It's taught me empathy and given me a sense of identity. The more we sell, the more we support Lifeline services. Hopefully, we've helped save someone's life."



The Volunteer Couple

Brian and Deidre Dobbyn began volunteering at Bookfest as they approached retirement and with personal experience of suicide in the family, Lifeline's mission resonated deeply.

"We loved the event immediately," Brian said. "Now we help train other volunteers and offer support in different roles."

Deidre also volunteers at Wesley Hospital sitting with vulnerable patients, something she heard about while at Bookfest. "It's a privilege to bring comfort to someone who's scared or alone," she said.

Both bring a background in retail and sales to Bookfest, greeting customers and sharing book tips. "We want people to feel welcome and know they're supporting something important," Brian shared. Together, they've found purpose, connection and joy and plan to keep volunteering for as long as they're able.



The Corporate Volunteer Team

For seven years, staff from the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) in Brisbane have volunteered at Bookfest, helping with setup and fundraising.

Team Leader Sam Peart says the connection to Lifeline is meaningful: "We often deal with people in distress. Supporting Lifeline is one way we can help."

Through ASIC's community initiatives and volunteer leave program, staff choose causes that matter. Lifeline is a popular choice, aligning with company values and mental health advocacy.

Volunteering at Bookfest offers a chance to bond outside the office while contributing to a life-saving cause. "It's about doing something that reaches beyond our day jobs," Sam said. ASIC staff plan to continue supporting Lifeline and encourage others to get involved.





BlueCare Volunteers

BlueCare is one of Queensland's leading aged care providers, offering residential aged care, community services and retirement living, enabling clients and residents to live life their way.

39

Residential Aged Care Homes

68

Community Neighbourhoods
providing services to clients at home

630

Volunteers

Volunteer **Rita Melksham**, resident **Bernadette D’Arcy** and Activities Officer **Bec Cue** are all part of the BlueCare Yarabee family.



One of the great things about Yarabee Aged Care Facility in Redland Bay is its inclusive, family atmosphere. “We have a small, welcoming home with just 40 residents, and the close-knit community helps foster stronger relationships,” says former volunteer turned Activities Officer Bec Cue.

And this includes the volunteers who are more than helping hands - they’re part of the family too. They bring warmth, companionship and joy, whether it’s through doing activities with the residents, helping them with tasks or simply keeping them company.

For Bec it all started in 2014 when she began volunteering alongside her mum. “I love talking to the residents, connecting with them, and making their day a little brighter,” she said. What began with serving morning tea to residents soon led to a full-time staff role at Yarrabee.

Meanwhile Rita, a dedicated volunteer, has been giving her time for over 11 years. After retiring, she wanted to do something meaningful and found it at BlueCare. Her bond with resident Bernadette (they’ve known each other for six years) is testament to the power of connection and has continued to grow, with the pair making and sharing countless memories.

Rita helps Bernadette with her daily routines, whether it’s bringing her breakfast, helping her maintain dietary preferences, or even taking her on trips to the local op shop. Each week they spend time together enjoying a cup of tea and a chat. “I look forward to Rita’s visits,” Bernadette shared with a warm smile. “She brightens my day.” Rita says it’s the little things that matter most, a haircut, a chat, a moment of kindness. “It’s not just about tasks,” she said. “It’s about relationships you build and the difference you make in someone’s life.”

Even in moments of loss, the community at Yarabee holds strong. “The connections we make are worth every moment,” Rita reflected.

“It’s about the relationships you build and the difference you make in someone’s life.” Rita

Connection at the heart

A special honour for a treasured volunteer

In July, the BlueCare Wynnum team had the joy of celebrating one of their most cherished volunteers, Judith Hunt, as she received the prestigious Moderator Community Service Medal (recognising outstanding service by a UnitingCare volunteer) from Rev. Bruce Moore, Moderator of the Uniting Church Queensland Synod.

The presentation took place in the beautifully refurbished Wynnum Coffee Shop, which had recently reopened after a devastating fire earlier in the year, making the occasion doubly special.

Judith’s contribution to palliative care is extraordinary. With over 50 years of healthcare experience, she began her career as a Registered Nurse and Midwife, later specialising in end-of-life care. Since joining the palliative care unit as a volunteer, Judith has become a deeply valued member of the team, offering gentle companionship to patients and families during their most vulnerable moments. Her quiet presence and ability to “be with” rather than “do for” truly embody the spirit of compassionate care.

Judith’s dedication extends far beyond BlueCare. As she moved towards retirement, she completed Clinical Pastoral Education and volunteered as a hospital chaplain for three years. She also undertook the “Midwifing Death” course which gave her an insight into palliative care – and later supported this work further by helping to facilitate weekend workshops and adjudicating student essays.

Her volunteering journey has spanned hospices, churches, and communities across NSW and Brisbane. Surrounded by friends, family, fellow volunteers, and chaplaincy colleagues from the Gold Coast and Brisbane, Judith’s award ceremony was a beautiful tribute to a life of service.

We are so grateful for Judith’s wisdom, warmth, and unwavering commitment to compassionate care.

Judith Hunt
BlueCare volunteer



When compassion comes full circle

Dale has dedicated his life to helping others. Since graduating in 1996, he has worked in primary and special school education, earning awards and recognition for his contributions to the sector, including being nominated for Australian of the Year in 2002.

In 2024, Dale began volunteering at Buderim Private Hospital, where he was once a patient himself. “I was diagnosed with a cerebral tumour, and my experience at the hospital was excellent,” he shared. That experience inspired him to give back.

Twice a week, Dale volunteers in Day Surgery, arriving early to help with everything from folding gowns to offering snacks and assisting patients with forms. “I do it happily, even the gown folding!” he said. “When the nurses say, ‘Thank God you’re here, Dale,’ that feeling of being useful is everything.”

Dale added that volunteering at the hospital is giving him the chance to do what he enjoys the most, which is talking to people and connecting with them. “Finding a volunteer role that you enjoy is important. Our coordinator Pat is amazing; she encourages us to try various volunteer roles until we find an activity we love,” he said.

Believing people connect through stories, he advised: “You just need to ask the right questions to get them to share their experiences.

“When you are sick you are vulnerable, so I feel privileged to be there for patients, have a chat and make them feel better.”

“When the nurses say, ‘Thank God you are here Dale,’ that feeling of being useful is everything.”

Dale Lani
Buderim Private
Hospital volunteer



Hospital Volunteers

UnitingCare operates four respected hospitals across Queensland: The Wesley Hospital and St Andrew’s War Memorial Hospital in Brisbane, Buderim Private Hospital on the Sunshine Coast, and St Stephen’s Hospital in Hervey Bay. These hospitals provide compassionate, high-quality care across a wide range of specialties, supporting patients and families with dignity and respect.

35	92	36	182
Buderim Private Hospital volunteers	St Andrews War Memorial Hospital volunteers	St Stephens Hospital volunteers	The Wesley Hospital volunteers

Finding purpose and connection

Anthony Kusoy
The Wesley
Hospital volunteer



After years in IT and web development, Anthony found himself craving something more - something with heart. He wanted to use his skills in a way that gave back, that connected him to people.

Originally from Indonesia, Anthony moved to Australia to study psychology. With no family nearby and some spare time on his hands, he decided to volunteer at The Wesley Hospital, just around the corner from where he lives.

And from the beginning, he made a real impact.

"Anthony has been with us for 15 months now," said Michele McInnes, Volunteer Coordinator at The Wesley. "From day one, his warmth and cheerful smile have lifted spirits. He creates a space where people feel welcome and cared for."

He volunteers twice a week, arriving early to help with admin tasks, folding gowns, or supporting patient discharge. Michele describes him as dependable, flexible and always ready to lend a hand, or a listening ear: "He makes people feel like they're the only person in the room. His presence brings joy and lightness to the day."

For Anthony, volunteering has been deeply rewarding. "The flexibility allows me to balance study, work and volunteering. I've made many wonderful friends who treat me like family. It's helped me feel happier, more connected, and like I'm making a real difference."

He encourages others, especially international students, to give it a go.

"Volunteering is a beautiful way to meet people, learn new things, and feel part of the community."

"Volunteering has helped me feel happier, more connected and like I'm making a difference."

Pam once led a fast-paced life as a client manager, until everything changed. When her husband was diagnosed with cancer, Pam stepped away from work to care for him full-time. That chapter, though deeply emotional, opened her heart to a new purpose: supporting others in similar situations.

Feeling a strong pull to give back, Pam joined the volunteer team at St Stephen's Hospital Hervey Bay in 2017, starting in Day Surgery before moving to the Oncology ward - where her empathy and lived experience created instant connections.

"I love talking to people and making them feel better," Pam shared. "It has given me a new perspective on life. I'm grateful for that."

Pam now dedicates two mornings a week to the Forbes Cancer Unit, where her presence is a quiet but powerful force. Kim Walker, Volunteer Coordinator at St Stephen's, said, "Pam is efficient, reliable and incredibly hardworking - and really humble. She deserves recognition for the support she's given to patients and staff over the past eight years."

Beyond the hospital walls, Pam's kindness continues. She's formed lasting friendships with patients, often meeting them for coffee and conversation. Volunteering has brought joy and connection into her life and she treasures the social bonds it's helped her build.

"Every week, I look forward to my shifts," Pam admitted. "It keeps me active, gets me out of the house and reminds me that I'm making a difference. I'll keep volunteering for as long as I can."

For Pam, St Stephen's Hospital feels like home. "They make you feel valued," she said. "It's a lovely place. It feels like family."

"I love talking to people and making them feel better. It has given me a new perspective on life."

From heartache to healing

Pam Howie
St Stephen's
Hospital
volunteer



A lifetime of giving

Carole Lyall
Hospital volunteer



Carole's journey as a volunteer began at just 16, with the Australian Scouts. That early experience shaped her lifelong commitment to helping others. A promise she's kept ever since.

Now 85, Carole is one of the most cherished volunteers at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital. Since joining in 1986, she's been a familiar, friendly face for nearly four decades, offering comfort and kindness to patients, visitors, and staff alike.

Over the years, Carole has taken on many roles, from serving in the coffee shop to supporting admin tasks across wards. These days, she's a steady presence at the Help Desk, arriving by 5:30am after a 30-kilometre drive. "People often come in feeling anxious," she says. "I like to be there early so I can help ease their worries. I treat everyone the way I'd want to be treated."

Carole also donates handmade items for fundraising and toiletries for patient care packs - small gestures that speak volumes.

Her dedication hasn't gone unnoticed. In 2011, she received the Moderator's Community Service Medal - an award given by the Uniting Church in Australia's Queensland Synod to volunteers who make outstanding contributions to the Uniting Church's mission in community services.



And in 2024, she was honoured with a UnitingCare Full Circle & Reconciliation Award (given to staff and volunteers who go above and beyond) with a "Changing Lives, Theirs Included" Volunteer Award. (Check out the Hall of Fame here for this year's nominated volunteers and winner)

"Volunteering at St Andrew's is my life," Carole shares. "I love people and it feels like my second home. I've found beautiful friendships here. Our supervisor Simone is our light, and the volunteer team feels like family. I look forward to our weekly lunches after our shifts."

Carole plans to keep volunteering for as long as she can. Her message to others is simple:

"When you give from the heart, you really can change lives, including your own."

Honouring her impact

"Carole Lyall's dedication and selflessness have truly touched our hearts. Despite facing her own health challenges over the years, Carole has been a steadfast presence at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital, offering her time, compassion and expertise to support our patients and staff."

Dr Alexander Incani, Cardiovascular Clinics

"In my 12 years at St Andrew's, I can't remember many weeks that I haven't seen Carole at the Level 3 Help Desk waiting to greet patients and visitors with a smile and helpful direction. Even when dealing with her own health issues, she has shown her dedication to our hospital and turned up to volunteer with a positive and friendly attitude. And I've often witnessed her words of care and encouragement to the rehabilitation patients as they head into the gym for their daily therapy."

John Zambelli, Rehabilitation Lead



A heartfelt thank you

To every volunteer, staff member, client, customer and resident who generously shared their time and stories for the 2025 Volunteer Impact Report, thank you.

It's been a true privilege to listen to the experiences of you, our volunteers and bring them to life in this report. Your honesty, warmth and dedication are what make it so special.

Your stories remind us why we do this - and why it matters.

If you feel inspired to make a difference through volunteering, we'd love to welcome you.

Visit myuniting.care/volportal



Our Volunteer Experience Coordinator, Sharon (pictured far right) won the prestigious “You’re an Inspiration” Full Circle and Reconciliation Award this year - scan the QR code to watch it [click here](#). For more inspiring Full Circle videos go to unitingcarefullcircleawards.com



(L to R) **Nancy Duran**, Volunteer Experience Officer; **Victoria Bansey**, Project Manager; **Sharon Batstone**, Volunteer Experience Coordinator.

Change lives,

yours included

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