

Bridge to Belonging:

Peer-Led Community Volunteering Hub for Empowerment and Inclusion



Volunteer Stories and Profiles

Acknowledgement and Thank You

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The Bridge to Belonging: Peer-Led Community Volunteering Hub for Empowerment and Inclusion project would not have been possible without the support, collaboration, and commitment of many individuals and organisations who believe in the power of volunteering, inclusion, and community connection.

We sincerely thank **Volunteering WA for their support through the Volunteer Management Activity, funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.** This support enabled Umbrella to create a culturally safe and inclusive space where volunteers from diverse backgrounds could connect, build confidence, share their experiences, and develop their leadership potential.

We also acknowledge and thank the Volunteering WA team for their encouragement, guidance, and commitment to strengthening volunteer participation across Western Australia. Your support has helped create opportunities for volunteers who may experience barriers to participation, including newly arrived migrants, vulnerable women, and people experiencing unemployment, isolation, or challenges accessing community connections.

A special thank you goes to our volunteers, peer leaders, and community participants who embraced this opportunity with openness, courage, and generosity. Your willingness to share your stories, support each other, lead activities, and create welcoming spaces has been the heart of the Volunteer Inclusion Hub.

Thank you to the Umbrella team, community partners, and supporters who contributed their knowledge, time, and passion to make this project a success. Your collaboration helped build a stronger pathway for volunteers to feel valued, connected, and empowered.

Most importantly, we thank every volunteer who shared their journey. Your stories remind us that volunteering is not only about what we give to others — it is also about the friendships we build, the confidence we gain, and the belonging we create together.

Together, we have demonstrated that when people are supported to share their strengths and experiences, volunteering becomes a powerful pathway to inclusion, connection, and community wellbeing.



About These Volunteer Stories

The Bridge to Belonging: Peer-Led Community Volunteering Hub for Empowerment and Inclusion was a new initiative designed to strengthen participation and reduce social isolation among volunteer groups who may experience additional barriers to connection, including newly arrived migrants, vulnerable women, and unemployed individuals.

The Volunteer Inclusion Hub created a dedicated space where volunteers could connect with others, share experiences, build confidence, and participate in meaningful community activities. By combining peer-led leadership with structured support, the Hub encouraged volunteers to recognise their strengths, develop new skills, and feel a greater sense of belonging.

At the heart of the Hub was the belief that every person brings valuable knowledge, culture, skills, and life experiences. The project supported volunteers to become leaders in their own way — whether through sharing their stories, supporting others, facilitating activities, or simply creating connections within the community.

The Volunteer Wellness Officer played an important role in supporting volunteers by building relationships, encouraging emerging leaders, and helping create inclusive practices where peer-led activities could grow. This support helped volunteers overcome challenges such as isolation, cultural adjustment, confidence barriers, and uncertainty when starting a new volunteering journey.

The volunteer profiles featured in this resource celebrate the diverse journeys of people who found connection, purpose, and empowerment through volunteering. Their stories highlight how a welcoming and culturally safe environment can help people move from feeling disconnected to becoming active contributors and valued members of the community.

These stories remind us that volunteering is a two-way journey — where people give their time, skills, and care, while also gaining friendships, confidence, wellbeing, learning opportunities, and a stronger sense of belonging.

Every person has a story. Every person has strengths to share. Every person deserves to belong.

JOANNA



For the past 11 months, Joanna has been actively involved with Umbrella's Volunteer Hub as a Peer Leader, providing support, encouragement, and a welcoming presence for participants and volunteers. Through her role, she has enjoyed meeting new people, sharing her experiences, building connections, and helping others feel included and confident in their volunteering journey. Joanna chose to volunteer because she wanted to support people in the community, build meaningful connections, and help create a welcoming and inclusive environment for others.

"As a Peer Leader, I hope to encourage new participants and potential volunteers by sharing my experiences and offering support. Volunteering has also allowed me to develop my leadership skills, give back to the community, and contribute positively while building friendships and learning from others."

Joanna's connection to Umbrella's mission comes from her belief that everyone deserves dignity, inclusion, and equal access to support, regardless of their cultural background, language, identity, or circumstances. As someone from a Polish background, she understands how important it is to feel understood, connected, and supported within the community.

"Umbrella's commitment to culturally appropriate care, inclusion, independence, and social connection strongly aligns with my values."

"I enjoy seeing participants become more confident and open over time, creating a space where people feel included, heard, and supported. I also value leading reflection activities that help others manage stress and feel calmer in their daily lives."

Living in a multicultural community has strengthened Joanna's awareness of the challenges people may face when adapting to a new environment, building social connections, or accessing support services. These experiences influence her approach as a Peer Leader, encouraging inclusiveness, patience, and creating a welcoming space where people feel heard, respected, and comfortable participating in the community.

As part of her role, Joanna facilitates and leads small-group workshops, including sessions on mindfulness and positive thinking. Through these activities, she shares practical strategies to support emotional wellbeing, stress management, and resilience.

"I aim to encourage reflection, build confidence, and promote a positive and inclusive community environment."

One memorable experience occurred during a mindfulness workshop when participants were initially quiet and hesitant to engage. As the session progressed, participants became more relaxed, began sharing ideas, and actively participated in the discussion.

"One participant later said the session helped her feel calmer, more confident, and that she had learned how to manage stress in difficult situations."

For Joanna, one of the most rewarding aspects of volunteering is seeing people grow in confidence and feel supported.

Through her volunteering experience, Joanna has gained confidence in facilitating discussions and strengthened her reflective practice skills. She has become more aware of group dynamics and her own responses as a leader, while also developing stronger communication and interpersonal skills and building meaningful social connections. Joanna encourages anyone considering volunteering to take the first step.

"Don't be afraid to start, even if you feel unsure or inexperienced. Volunteering at Umbrella has shown me that your presence and willingness to support others can make a real difference. It is a great opportunity to connect with people from different backgrounds while contributing to a more inclusive community. There is no better and more welcoming place to start."

One aspect of volunteering that Joanna values is the flexibility it offers, allowing volunteers to remain engaged while balancing other commitments. She also appreciates the welcoming, respectful, and culturally safe environment created by Umbrella.

"The organisation values diversity and ensures participants and volunteers feel included regardless of their background. This creates a safe space where people can share experiences, learn from one another, and participate confidently."

JACINTA



Jacinta brings a rich cultural heritage and a lifetime of community involvement to her volunteering with Umbrella's Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS). With a Sri Lankan father and an English mother, Jacinta migrated to Western Australia with her family in 1972 when she was 11 years old. After spending nearly five decades in Queensland, she returned to Western Australia in 2024, where she sought meaningful ways to reconnect with her community.

A long-time community volunteer and supporter of Lions initiatives, Jacinta has always believed in the importance of giving back. Joining Umbrella provided an opportunity to make a direct difference in the lives of older people who may be experiencing loneliness and social isolation. For Jacinta, volunteering is about much more than simply visiting someone.

"The role involves being a good listener and a friend. It is important that the person you are visiting feels safe to discuss or say what's on their mind without being judged."

Through regular visits to older people living in residential aged care, Jacinta has built meaningful relationships based on trust, companionship, and genuine human connection. She believes that often the smallest moments can have the greatest impact.

One visit in particular remains close to her heart.

"One day, one of my ladies decided we should go for a coffee. The facility had a café overlooking an intersection with traffic lights. She also wanted her husband to join us, so we went to the dementia section and received permission from staff to take him with us. As we sat together drinking coffee and watching the world go by, her husband suddenly said, 'This is nice.' I was blown away. Just being able to see the cars, traffic lights, and hear the sounds of everyday life brought him pleasure."

Moments like these remind Jacinta that connection does not always require grand gestures. Sometimes simply sharing a cup of coffee and being present can brighten someone's day.

"What starts out as a stranger becomes a friend, and a wonderful human connection is made. It is so rewarding."

Jacinta encourages others to consider volunteering, especially those who enjoy meeting people and hearing their stories.

"If you like meeting people and conversation, this is the best volunteering opportunity. Seniors in our community have lived in a different era to ourselves, and their stories are amazing, sometimes even inspiring."

One of the aspects Jacinta appreciates most about the ACVVS program is its flexibility. Her care recipients live in residential aged care facilities where visiting hours are accommodating, including weekends and public holidays. She often varies her visiting days and finds that unexpected visits can be especially meaningful.

"I generally have no fixed day. Sometimes a surprise visit can really cheer someone up if they are having a bad day."

She also values the welcoming environment created by facility staff and the variety of spaces available for visits, whether in residents' rooms, communal lounges, gardens, or cafés.

Since joining Umbrella, Jacinta has felt genuinely supported and inspired by both staff and fellow volunteers.

"ACVVS and Umbrella are amazing organisations. I have had the absolute honour of meeting wonderful staff who are always welcoming and genuinely caring. I have also met other volunteers who I have learnt so much from. The years of service some volunteers have given has blown me away. I am truly grateful to be a volunteer with this organisation."

Through her compassion, openness, and commitment to building meaningful relationships, Jacinta is helping older people feel seen, heard, and valued.

VANESSA

"I like being part of something bigger than myself, where giving and receiving happens beyond money, based on generosity rather than financial exchange."

For Vanessa, the impact is found in the small moments.

"I don't have one grand story, but seeing her smile or knowing she is having a good time is very meaningful. When she thanks me and says kind words, I feel it is a mutual exchange of generosity."

Vanessa encourages other migrants and community members to consider volunteering.

"Give it a try and go for it — your language and your migrant experience are a gift. There are people out there who need exactly what you have to offer."



Vanessa joined Umbrella as a volunteer six months ago and has already become a valued member of the volunteer community. Through her role as an Aged Care Volunteer Visitor and her involvement in the Volunteer Hub activities, Vanessa has found meaningful ways to connect with others, share her culture, and contribute to the wellbeing of older people.

Vanessa currently visits a resident originally from Spain who came to Australia more than 60 years ago with her four children. Being able to speak Spanish together has created a special connection and means a great deal to the resident, allowing her to share stories, memories, and experiences in a familiar language.

For Vanessa, volunteering is about being part of something bigger than herself.

As a migrant and Spanish speaker, Vanessa brings her own personal experiences and understanding to her volunteering role. She recognises the importance of feeling connected when living in a new country and believes language and shared experiences can help people feel understood and valued.

"When you are a migrant, you know what it feels like to navigate a new country. That empathy is powerful and can help you connect with others."

During her visits, Vanessa focuses on building a genuine connection with the resident she supports. When she arrives, she takes time to understand how the resident is feeling, whether she remembers her, and what she would like to do that day. They may go for a walk, participate in activities at the facility, or simply spend time talking together.

Alongside her visits, Vanessa enjoys participating in Volunteer Hub activities, where she connects with others and continues building relationships within the Umbrella community. She appreciates the flexibility of volunteering, which allows her to balance her commitments while continuing to contribute.

"I have always felt welcome and supported."

Through her kindness, cultural understanding, and commitment to connection, Vanessa is helping create a community where older people feel valued, heard, and never alone.

AJIT



"I don't do anything extraordinary. I simply spend time with him and listen to his stories. By helping him revisit the proud and memorable chapters of his life, I see his face light up with joy and pride. In return, I walk away with valuable lessons, motivation, and a deeper appreciation for life."

"After joining Umbrella, I truly understood that volunteering is not just about helping others. It is also about learning, growing, and building meaningful connections. Every visit leaves me with a smile and a valuable lesson."

Ajit describes his role as simple but rewarding. Many people think volunteering requires special skills, but in my experience, all you need is a little time and a willingness to connect with people. A simple conversation, a listening ear, or a few moments of companionship can brighten someone's day. You may start with the intention of helping others, but along the way you will find yourself learning, growing, and receiving far more than you expected."

Ajitkumar (Ajit) Kalariya joined Umbrella as a volunteer in 2025 and has quickly become a valued member of the volunteer community. Motivated by a strong desire to give back, Ajit sees volunteering as an opportunity to contribute to the community that has given him so much throughout his life. "Whenever I go volunteering, I remind myself that this community and world have given me so much throughout my life. Volunteering is my way of giving something back, and I cherish every opportunity to do so."

For Ajit, Umbrella's mission is deeply meaningful. He recognises that many of the older people supported by Umbrella have made significant contributions throughout their lives and now seek something simple yet invaluable—companionship and connection.

"The mission of Umbrella is truly inspiring. Many of the people we support once left their mark on the world through their contributions and life experiences. Today, when they seek nothing more than companionship and someone to share a conversation with, I feel privileged to give a little of my time in return."

Being part of a multicultural community has strengthened Ajit's appreciation for the unique stories and experiences that each person brings. He enjoys meeting people from diverse backgrounds, listening to their life journeys, and helping them feel valued, respected, and connected.

One of the moments Ajit treasures most is hearing the warm greeting he receives at the beginning of a visit.

"When he says, 'I've been eagerly waiting for you. It's been ages since I saw you,' it always makes my day."

Through volunteering, Ajit has developed stronger communication and active listening skills, while also gaining a greater understanding of different cultures and life experiences.

Since joining Umbrella, Ajit has come to realise that volunteering is about much more than helping others.

He encourages anyone considering volunteering to take the first step.

One aspect of Umbrella that Ajit particularly appreciates is the flexibility of its volunteering opportunities, which allow people to contribute while balancing work, family, and other commitments.

"As someone from a multicultural background, I have always felt supported, respected, and encouraged to be myself while making meaningful connections with others."

Through his kindness, commitment, and genuine interest in others, Ajit is making a positive difference in the lives of older people while enriching his own life through the power of connection.

LIUDMYLA



Liudmyla joined Umbrella as a volunteer after moving to Australia four years ago, following the start of the war in Ukraine.

Before coming to Australia, she lived in Kyiv, where she volunteered for many years at a Christian church. Helping people has always been an important part of her life, and she enjoys finding ways to support others.

"I enjoy helping people."

When Liudmyla's friends in Perth shared information that Umbrella was looking for Ukrainian-speaking volunteers, she immediately applied and was very happy to join Umbrella's friendly volunteer team.

Through the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS), she now visits a Ukrainian woman in an aged care facility, offering companionship and connection in their shared language.

"I hope it helps her not feel lonely."

Beyond her visiting role, Ludmila has also been actively involved in the Volunteer Hub. She attended the Hub to share her volunteering experience with new volunteers, improve her English, and connect with people from different cultures.

The Volunteer Hub provided her with a welcoming space to learn, practice language skills, and build friendships across diverse communities.

Liudmyla values the opportunity to be part of a multicultural environment where she can both give and receive support.

Her involvement reflects her commitment to learning, connecting, and contributing meaningfully to the community while continuing her volunteering journey with Umbrella.

HANA



For the past seven and a half years, Hana has been making a meaningful difference in the lives of older people through her volunteering with Umbrella's Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS).

As a first-generation migrant from Mongolia, Hana understands the importance of connection, belonging, and community, values that inspire her volunteering journey.

Hana visits her care recipient in residential aged care every one to two weeks, depending on her availability. During her visits, she spends quality time chatting, sharing stories, asking questions, and enjoying friendly conversations. Sometimes they take a walk around the facility or sit on the balcony together to enjoy some fresh air.

"My role is simple," Hana explains. "I spend time with her, listen, talk, and help her feel connected. Sometimes the smallest things can make the biggest difference."

Volunteering has always been an important part of Hana's life. In addition to volunteering with Umbrella, she actively contributes to her local community through organisations including the City of Belmont, Laugh WA, and the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO). Through these roles, she has built strong connections within her community and embraced opportunities to support others.

"The main reason I volunteer is to engage with my local community, help people around me, and give back. I believe that together we can do more."

Hana's personal experiences closely align with Umbrella's mission of supporting people who may be experiencing loneliness and social isolation. This motivated her to join the ACVVS program and provide companionship to older people who would benefit from regular social connection.

One of Hana's proudest achievements is the relationship she has built with her care recipient over the years.

"The impact I have made is that she looks forward to my visits. She often asks, 'When will you come and visit me again?' That means a lot to me."

Hana's volunteering story was recognised in Umbrella's "25 Stories for 25 Years" publication, highlighting the positive difference she has made through her dedication and compassion.

Throughout her volunteering journey, Hana has developed valuable communication skills and learned the importance of understanding people beyond words.

"I have learned how to communicate better, how to support someone when they have questions or concerns, and how to understand body language without a single word being spoken."

Beyond the skills she has gained, Hana values the friendships and connections she has formed through volunteering.

"I feel like I am part of the Umbrella family."

For Hana, volunteering is also about personal growth and lifelong learning.

"I enjoy volunteering because I learn new skills and continue to grow as a person."

When asked what advice she would give to others considering volunteering, her response is simple and enthusiastic:

"Say YES to volunteering! Volunteering may open many doors for you."

Hana also appreciates the flexibility offered by Umbrella, which allows volunteers to fit their role around their personal commitments while contributing close to home.

"Umbrella Multicultural Community Care provides a friendly, welcoming, safe, and supportive environment. I am grateful to be part of it."

Through her kindness, commitment, and genuine care for others, Hana continues to make a lasting impact on the lives of older people while strengthening connections within her community.

PYASEE



Always willing to share her talents with others, Pyasee led a Volunteer Hub peer support session where she introduced volunteers to the benefits of laughter yoga.

Her enthusiasm and positive energy created a fun and engaging experience that encouraged participants to focus on wellbeing, connection, and joy. She also facilitated a yoga workshop during Umbrella's Volunteer Hub Holiday Gathering Day, helping volunteers relax, recharge, and experience the benefits of mindfulness and movement.

Pyasee's contribution extends far beyond her volunteer role. Through her willingness to share her experiences, support other volunteers, and advocate for cultural inclusion, she has helped shape a stronger and more connected volunteer community.

Pyasee joined Umbrella around three years ago and has been an invaluable member of our volunteer community ever since.

What began as a volunteer visitor role has grown into a much broader contribution, with Pyasee supporting not only older people through regular visits but also helping Umbrella strengthen its understanding of culturally inclusive volunteering.

From the beginning, Pyasee dedicated her time to visiting an older person in their home. When her care recipient later moved into residential aged care, Pyasee continued her visits, demonstrating her commitment to maintaining meaningful relationships and providing ongoing companionship during times of change.

Beyond her volunteer visits, Pyasee has generously shared her knowledge, experiences, and insights with the Umbrella team. As someone from a culturally diverse background, she has provided valuable feedback on cultural perspectives of volunteering, helping staff better understand the challenges, motivations, and experiences of volunteers from multicultural communities.

Pyasee also played an important role in Umbrella's "Bridge to Belonging" project, lending her voice and experiences to help tell the story of inclusive volunteering and the importance of creating welcoming spaces where everyone feels valued and connected. By sharing her journey, she helped inspire others from diverse backgrounds to consider volunteering and become involved in their communities.

A passionate advocate for volunteer wellbeing, Pyasee embraced many of the opportunities offered through the Volunteer Hub. She regularly attended wellness sessions and after-hours activities, enjoying the chance to connect with fellow volunteers, learn new skills, and build friendships.

Her journey demonstrates that volunteering is not only about giving time—it is about sharing knowledge, building understanding, creating belonging, and inspiring others to become involved.

Pyasee's warmth, generosity, and commitment continue to make a lasting impact on the people she visits, the volunteers she supports, and the wider Umbrella community.

ADRIANA

I believe the impact of volunteering is that we leave a positive mark on the lives of others and our communities.

My advice to others is simple: life is not only about receiving, but also about giving. Volunteering allows you to do both, and in return, it often gives you a sense of connection, purpose, and belonging that you never expected.

Volunteering has been part of my life in Mexico, the United States, and Australia because I believe that while values and ethics are important, it is our actions that make a positive difference in the world.

The support, friendships, and sense of purpose I found through the Volunteer Hub have made my volunteering journey even more meaningful, and I plan to continue volunteering for many years to come.



I first joined Umbrella around five years ago as an ACVVS volunteer. As a migrant from Mexico, moving to Australia was both exciting and challenging. Like many migrants, I spent years trying to find my place, build connections, and truly feel that Australia was home. Being far away from family, friends, and everything familiar was not always easy, and at times it could feel isolating.

While I enjoyed volunteering with Umbrella, it was only about six months ago, just before Christmas, that I rediscovered the Volunteer Hub and became actively involved again. Looking back, rejoining the Volunteer Hub was one of the best decisions I have made.

The Volunteer Hub gave me much more than opportunities to volunteer. It gave me a sense of belonging. Through the Hub, I connected with people from different backgrounds, attended activities and workshops, and built stronger relationships with the Volunteer Hub Officers, staff, and fellow volunteers. I felt welcomed, valued, and supported, and for the first time in a long time, I felt part of a community that genuinely cared about my wellbeing and contribution.

The encouragement I received through the Volunteer Hub gave me the confidence to become more involved in Umbrella. Today, I am proud to be part of Umbrella's office-based volunteer team while continuing my role as an ACVVS volunteer. These opportunities have allowed me to contribute in different ways, develop new skills, and create meaningful connections with people across the organisation.

Having lived, studied, worked, and volunteered in different countries, I have always appreciated the value of cultural diversity. The Volunteer Hub strengthened this passion by creating a welcoming environment where people from all walks of life can come together, share experiences, learn from one another, and support each other. For migrants especially, these connections can make a tremendous difference in helping us feel included and accepted.

VIVIENNE



After coming to Australia, Vivienne found a new opportunity to continue her passion for volunteering by supporting older people. She first volunteered with ISHA in Mirrabooka for around two months before learning about Umbrella Community Care. Inspired by the organisation's mission, she decided to join Umbrella and continue making a positive difference.

After completing her application, Vivienne met with Mrs Natalie on 18 December 2023, and her first volunteer visit took place on 6 February 2024. "I was delighted at the time. I will never forget that meaningful moment."

Vivienne believes that genuine care and kindness can overcome barriers of language and culture. "I always believe that if we love to share and help everyone from our heart, we can do it well, even beyond the barriers of language and culture."

"I always remember a sentence that client told me whenever I visit her. She said she was worried about what happens to me if she cannot see me for two weeks. This message reminds me to arrange my schedule and come to visit my elderly."

As a mother of three children, Vivienne believes strongly in the importance of teaching the next generation the value of kindness, compassion, and giving back to the community.

At To inspire her children to become helpful and caring members of society, she actively participates in meaningful activities that create a sense of belonging and inclusion, including volunteering, donating blood, and protecting the surrounding environment.

Alongside her volunteering, Vivienne runs her own business to support her family, cover living expenses, school fees, and provide a better life for her children. Balancing work, family responsibilities, and volunteering can sometimes be challenging, and she occasionally feels low on energy, but she always tries to maintain balance, clear her mind, and stay positive.

Vivienne's passion for helping others began many years ago in Vietnam, where she spent around 10 years involved in volunteering activities. She regularly visited orphanages, spending time with children, including children with mental health challenges, providing care, companionship, and support.

"I always communicate and talk with them to express my love for them as well."

For Vivienne, volunteering with older people is about showing respect, care, and appreciation for their lives, stories, and experiences.

"When I came to Australia, I had the chance to support the elderly, whom we should show respect and care for. That is why I love to volunteer at aged care centres. Umbrella gives me a meaningful chance to fulfil my wishes."

During her visits, Vivienne brings warmth, kindness, and positive energy to the people she supports.

"When I visit my client, I try to listen and show my respect and emotion to their past stories. More importantly, I consider them my grandparents, so I share and talk with them with happy feelings."

Through volunteering, Vivienne has developed new skills including social connection, confidence, and greater awareness of herself and others. She has discovered that supporting others also brings personal growth and a sense of peace.

One of the most meaningful moments in Vivienne's volunteering journey was hearing how much her visits meant to the people she supports.

For Vivienne, this shows the importance of regular connection and how simply being present can help someone feel valued, cared for, and included.

Vivienne encourages others to consider volunteering and experience the joy of building meaningful relationships.

SOPHIE

Sophie's volunteering journey with Umbrella is a beautiful example of lifelong kindness, community connection, and the belief that we all have something valuable to give.

Sophie arrived in Australia from Germany in 1949, beginning a new life in a country that was very different from the one she knew. Her family arrived with only suitcases and lived in tents in Goomalling. From a young age, Sophie learned the importance of resilience, respect, and helping others.

"I was brought up with the idea of helping one another. I was taught respect for elders and the importance of supporting each other."

These values have guided Sophie throughout her life and continue to shape the way she volunteers today.



Sophie's connection with Umbrella began when she brought her mum to Umbrella's social group. While supporting her mum, Sophie became more involved and decided to stay, volunteering to help with the kitchen and lunch service. Her dedication and commitment were recognised, and she also took on paid work in the kitchen.

Over time, Sophie's involvement continued to grow. She first began visiting a friend and then moved into volunteering with Umbrella, where she now shares her time and companionship as an Aged Care Volunteer Visitor.

Sophie visits her client once a week, and their friendship has become a meaningful part of both of their lives. They attend church together, share a cuppa and lunch, and enjoy spending time talking and laughing together.

"We don't seem to run out of things to talk about and laugh about."

For Sophie, the impact of volunteering is seen in the simple moments of connection.

"My person always says she is happy to see me, and my visit cheers her up. I know the visits make a difference to her life."

Sophie believes volunteering creates a positive impact not only for the person receiving support but also for the volunteer.

"Volunteering makes a difference personally, gives you purpose, and allows you to make a difference in someone's life while contributing to the community."

Sophie also enjoys being an active part of the Umbrella Volunteer Hub by attending events, training sessions, and workshops. One of her favourites is Art with Graeme, where she enjoys creativity, learning, and connecting with others. She values the opportunity to meet other volunteers, share stories, and exchange ideas.

"Coming away from the visit, knowing you've put a smile on someone's face and that the visit makes a difference — it makes me happy too."

After many years of life experience and volunteering, Sophie's advice to new volunteers is simple:

"Have patience and take time to listen."

Sophie appreciates that Umbrella continues to focus on people and creating meaningful volunteering opportunities.

"Umbrella engages with people who want to volunteer. It is a forward-thinking and innovative organisation, always looking at improvements and how to do things better. The client is the focus."