

# The Art of Volunteering



**Organisation:**

**Shire of Carnarvon**

**Website:** [www.carnarvon.wa.gov.au](http://www.carnarvon.wa.gov.au)

**Focus:** First Nations / Unemployed / Youth / Vulnerable Women / People with a disability / Newly Arrived Migrants

**“Our shared creation became a symbol of collective effort and healing. Seeing it exhibited at the Art Gallery as part of the Reconciliation Week exhibition was incredibly powerful.”**

– Jo

Jo first connected with the Art of Volunteering project while exploring a future in art therapy. She joined the program not only as a participant but as a co-designer and facilitator, playing a key role in shaping the course content and delivery. What began as an exploration of inclusive creative volunteering quickly evolved into a collaborative and deeply personal journey of community engagement and healing.

## Approach

The Art of Volunteering course was delivered to participants from all priority groups including: First Nations, people living with a disability, and vulnerable women’s groups, ensuring the content and structure were shaped by those it aimed to support. Jo, as a facilitator and emerging arts professional, modelled peer leadership and co-creation. Each session used creative processes: from self inquiry, storytelling, sharing sessions, to project planning.

The course intentionally moved beyond theory, offering real pathways into ongoing volunteering.

Following the final session, Jo and several alumni commenced a two-month collaborative art project exploring themes of reconciliation. With minimal prompting from staff, this group initiated weekly gatherings, combining painting, sculpture, and storytelling into a shared artwork. This activity fostered both informal mentoring and genuine ownership.

## Outcomes

- The alumni-led art project became a featured piece in the Reconciliation Week exhibition under the collective name The Art of Volunteering group.
- The project fostered a sense of shared ownership and interdependence among volunteers.
- Volunteers began to see themselves as contributors, artists, and changemakers.
- A separate women’s group was formed on Friday evenings, with these women participating and some taking turns to lead a session of their own – some in a paid capacity also.

## Key Learnings

- Co-design builds ownership: Involving participants in course design created stronger buy-in and longer-term commitment.
- Peer-led facilitation works: Empowering volunteers to lead created authentic, relatable pathways for others.
- Art can be a powerful tool for inclusion: Creative expression allowed volunteers to participate at their own pace and comfort level.
- Flexible post-program pathways matter: Offering space and support (but not over-direction) allowed volunteers to organically shape their next steps.