

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | 1 December 2023

### **Celebrating volunteers with disability**

Volunteering Tasmania is recognising International Day of People with Disability this weekend with the launch of an awareness campaign to celebrate volunteers with disability.

The awareness campaign is the result of a co-design project facilitated by Volunteering Tasmania, alongside key stakeholders, to help understand the challenges and needs of people with disability, and to support organisations to deliver more accessible and inclusive volunteering opportunities.

The experiences of seven volunteers with disability from across the State will be shared over the coming months, either as videos or written stories.

One of the volunteers profiled is Dee Alford who is a volunteer artist mentor at Interweave Arts Studio in Launceston, an active committee member of the Lilydale Progress Association and identifies as having a disability. Dee has a lived experience with mental illness which she considers to be both a challenge and a resource in her life, giving her a unique perspective on how to value and engage with self and others.

“I’m aware of my differences, but I celebrate my differences, and see that perhaps I can represent a different view in the workplace,” says Dee.

Dee contributes significantly to her community, aligned with her values of inclusion, connection and the positive benefits of art. She says she loves volunteering with Interweave Art Studio because they “not only accept diversity, but they actually embrace and celebrate diversity.”

Everyone should, but not everyone does, have equal access to the benefits of volunteering, explains Volunteering Tasmania chief executive officer Shirleyann Varney.

“While volunteering can act as a powerful driver of inclusion, it is not immune to the systemic barriers that impede participation across society.

“In recognising the benefits gained from engaging volunteers with diverse backgrounds and skill sets, significant work has been undertaken across the volunteering industry to create safe, accessible volunteering opportunities.

“Yet with minimal resourcing, volunteer-involving organisations have faced challenges in enacting organisational change that embraces, encourages and celebrates diversity at a systems level.

“We are advocating to the Tasmanian state government for funding that will support volunteer-involving organisations to provide volunteering opportunities that are meaningful, equitable and accessible for people with disability,” said Ms Varney.

To view the video and accompanying discussion guide, [head here](#).

For more information about International Day of People with Disability on 3 December, visit [idpwd.com.au](http://idpwd.com.au)

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