

### Enriching a library through inclusion

With a growing population and an ever-evolving demography, the State Library needed to increase participation and inclusion across all sectors of the community. The volunteer Greeters Program initiative helps the Library meet the challenges ahead, leading the way in library service delivery and by reaching out to and engaging with an increasingly diverse community – a community that includes international students, many of whom spend a lot of time in State Library Victoria.

The State Library Victoria's challenge is to continue supporting the changing needs and aspirations of all Victorians in the face of rapid and diverse population growth. State Library Victoria's 'approach to inclusion is underpinned by a vision to be a library for all in a changing world'. For the first time, State Library Victoria has found the right program to support a diverse team, demonstrating how diversity can be such a central part of a volunteering role. Applying for the Volunteering Victoria State Award validates the Library's commitment to being truly inclusive and removing barriers.

The new volunteer Greeters Program, has completely transformed State Library Victoria's visitor experience and is making a significant contribution in removing barriers, being open and inviting and placing people at the heart of everything that is being done. There have been volunteers at the State Library Victoria for 35 years supporting programs or collection projects, but this is the first volunteer program directly involved with the visitor experience.

The Greeters Program is not only improving the visitor experience of the Library but is also beneficial to the volunteer Greeters themselves. The Greeters Program goes beyond the program itself, to make the Library a 'home away from home' for international students through genuinely welcoming and embracing them as people as well as for the diverse perspectives and many different personal attributes they bring. The impact the program is having is perhaps best described by the volunteer Greeters themselves:

*"What the Greeters Program has benefited upon me is the gift of community. Leaving my home behind to start a new life in a new place and a new continent and not knowing a single soul for thousands of miles, the Greeters Program has given me a family more than a community, who love and care for each other and are genuinely invested in being good and doing good in the community... we are all in this together, doing good for the betterment of ourselves and our world. International student volunteer."*

The volunteer Greeters Program is making a further impact in the community through the development of an international Greeters wellbeing program, to improve our volunteers' experiences of living in Melbourne and assist them to assimilate into the broader community.

Winning the Inclusion Award helped with starting conversations about groups who are often excluded from the mainstream or traditional volunteering. These conversations are increasing the possibilities and benefits of the program for both diversity and inclusion and for achieving organisational goals. Winning the Award helped with working collaboratively with organisations with similar goals for diversity to be a central part of volunteering roles, and similarly to State Library Victoria increase the proportion of diverse volunteer representation.

**Congratulations to the State Library on their well-deserved Inclusion Award at the 2018 Volunteering Victoria State Awards.**

