

Interim Report February-October 2025 – Women's Certificate I in Active Volunteering Program

Summary

The Women's Volunteer Program (WVP) pilot provides women in custody and post-release with pathways to education, volunteering, and community reintegration. Delivered in partnership between SERO4 and Volunteering Queensland (VQ) and Corrective Services (QCS), the program currently has 18 participants across two centres and in community. Early results show strong engagement and interest, though administrative and logistical challenges persist. Continued collaboration and refinement will guide scalability across Queensland correctional facilities.

Overview

The Women's Volunteer Program (WVP) provides incarcerated women in custody and newly released women into the community with a pathway to participate in community engagement and skill development through the Certificate I in Active Volunteering.

Following extended negotiations with QCS, Helena Jones (HJ) and Numinbah Correctional Centre (NCC) were confirmed as pilot sites. The program focuses on South East Queensland (SEQ) for accessibility of placements.

A co-marking arrangement was established between SERO4 and Volunteering Queensland (VQ) to ensure compliance with qualification standards. Trauma-informed resources for volunteer organisations are being developed by SERO4 to support reintegration and community readiness.

Program Progress

Area	Status
Participants	5 women enrolled at HJ and commenced training on 16/10/25; 1 woman in the community pending approval; 4 women at NCC pending approval and 8 women awaiting eligibility assessment and USI verification.
Course Delivery	Training is self-paced, paper-based, and completed within custody and community settings. SERO4 provides fortnightly support and observes the practical assessment components.
Placements	SERO4 provides individual support and coordinates volunteer organisation placements post-release.
Eligibility Criteria	Participants should be within six months of release to ensure feasibility of completing the practical component.
Partnerships	VQ manages course enrolments and certification; QCS Education Officers support USI applications; SERO4 coordinates placements and case management.

Key Metrics Summary (as of October 2025)

Centre / Location	Women Interested	Pending Applications	Active Participants	Completed Theory	Completed Placement	Withdrawn / Loss of Interest
Helena Jones (HJ)	5	–	5	In progress	Pending release	–
Numinbah (NCC)	12	8	4	Pending approval	–	–
Community	1	–	1	Pending approval	–	–
Total	18	12 pending	10 active	In progress	Pending	

Benefits and Impact

- Provides structure, purpose, and motivation pre- and post-release.
- Offers SPER Work and Development Order (WDO) contributions up to \$1,000 per month.
- Encourages self-belief and confidence-building, measured through a validated self-belief tool used mid- and post-program.
- Strengthens pathways to employment and community reintegration.

Challenges Identified

- Administrative Delays: QCS education response times vary significantly across centres; approval chains are lengthy.
- Security Restrictions: High-security centres (BW and SQ) face frequent lockdowns and transfers, impacting continuity.
- Participant Turnover: Women are often transferred or experience court-related release delays that disrupt enrolment, coordination and progression.
- USI Process: SERO4, not being an RTO, faces barriers to independently generating USIs for incarcerated participants.
- Volunteer Organisation Readiness: Limited placement capacity and hesitation to engage with women who have convictions.

Lessons Learned

- Flexibility in enrolment and delivery is essential to accommodate frequent participant transfers and releases.
- Strong collaboration with QCS Education Officers is critical to streamline USI creation and approval.
- Individualised support rather than group facilitation reduces logistical complications and increases engagement.

- Volunteer organisations require additional engagement to address stigma and build readiness.

Next Steps

1. Continue fortnightly follow-ups with enrolled women to track progress and provide study support.
2. Finalise the USI process workflow and documentation for incarcerated participants.
3. Engage with QCS Education officers at the centres to identify further eligible women who could benefit from the Certificate 1 in Active Volunteering program.
4. Identify and secure suitable volunteer organisations aligned with participant interests and eligibility.
5. Continue developing trauma-informed resources for volunteer organisations.
6. Collect pre-course survey data to support future scalability and sustainability reporting.

Conclusion

The pilot has demonstrated strong potential for the Women's Certificate 1 in Active Volunteering Program to contribute to rehabilitation and reintegration outcomes so far. While logistical and administrative barriers persist, the collaborative framework between SERO4, VQ and QCS continues to evolve. Ongoing evaluation and adaptation will inform scalability and sustainability recommendations in the next report.