



### Devina's story

"I had absolutely no idea what I might get out of volunteering, because I have never been a gardener. The first person I met was Ruth, Kelmarina's volunteer coordinator, she just knew from our brief conversation - my anxiety, my fear of being around people, so she would put me on jobs on my own like harvesting or weeding. How many people and how many workplaces would have an ability to connect like that?"

I didn't think I would personally gain anything out of volunteering, I was thinking I would be just contributing to the gardens and that was my thought. Not in a million years did I think that I would have so many people contribute to my mental well-being and that's been just amazing.

Things really started to change when I started cooking lunches - Kelmarina has become so connected with me and now it has given me a sense of belonging and I think: Kelmarina is my family. I would sit on the bench reflecting, looking at just the beautiful things around me and the connection to the land which I didn't know was so good for my mental health, the trees and the abundance of the place.

You know it's not only about growing organic food, or the chickens, or raising lamb, it's really about a connection - the deep connection between land and human beings and mental health. You know people with mental health issues can come here and feel so much at peace with the staff and with the land itself. These days I love thinking about what to cook, it has put the joy back into cooking, which is something that had completely stopped for me. Now, I really look forward to sharing my food with people.

Then I joined the Kitchen Project. This is a scheme for people to establish a business, so I attended the Kitchen Project for six weeks and now I'm starting a business for my food, so from being someone disconnected with the world due to a personal tragedy, to now beginning a business doing something I love - and it's all because I came to Kelmarina."

