

# Volunteer Narelle mixes sewing and sustainability for Art Gallery

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In her working life, Rockhampton Art Gallery volunteer Narelle Unwin has been a waitress, a long-term Asthma Foundation volunteer and a dressmaker, so it is probably no surprise that in retirement she has become the Gallery's go-to volunteer because of her nimble sewing fingers.

Narelle has been a Gallery volunteer since 2006, but in 2019 she sewed a range of public engagement elements for the highly interactive Laser Beak Man exhibition. So when Rockhampton Art Gallery was looking for a volunteer for another sewing-related project, Narelle was first to mind.



The project is one that not only involves sewing but also sustainability – the creation of a large number of fabric slips from recycled material to cover the Art Gallery's sizeable collection of acrylic supports and displays. The Gallery uses transparent acrylic for a variety of purposes, from book risers to frame glazing, but it is prone to scratching if not cared for correctly.

Historically, acrylic is cleaned then wrapped in single-use plastic wrap for storage. But with the whole of Rockhampton Regional Council focusing on sustainability, the 'sustainable slips' project came about.

Not only do the slips cut down on single use plastic by using use recycled fabric, but they also extend the life of the Gallery's existing acrylic.

Narelle is currently about half way through the project and not even a worldwide pandemic is going to stop her! She began the project six months ago, and although she is not able to visit Rockhampton Art Gallery on site, the sewing has continued at her home during the Gallery's COVID 19 closure.

The Gallery team have continued to maintain contact with Narelle, dropping off sewing materials and pieces of acrylic for her to work on.

Rockhampton Regional Council Community Services Portfolio Spokesperson Councillor Drew Wickerson said that the project reinforced the value and importance Council places on volunteers.

"Even as the gallery prepares the multitude of tasks that are required for its relocation to the new Rockhampton Museum of Art next year, volunteers like Narelle continue to be a much valued part of the process," he said.

Narelle said that she loves volunteering at the Gallery and was happy to be able to help out on the project.

"I enjoy sewing. Some of these shapes are a bit more challenging than others but it's nice to be able to create something that is reusable and sustainable," she said.

**Rockhampton Art Gallery is owned and operated by Rockhampton Regional Council.**

**The Rockhampton Museum of Art is jointly funded by the Australian Government and Queensland Government in association with Rockhampton Regional Council.**

**PICTURED:** Narelle Unwin at work.