



UUSU Volunteering recently spoke with Emma McPeake about her volunteering experience with VESA.

**What inspired you to get involved in Volunteering?**

“I had always wanted to do volunteering of some kind and when the opportunity came up to volunteer in Fiji, I knew I couldn’t afford to pass it up!”

**So, what did you do while volunteering for VESA?**

“Over the course of a week, myself along with 70 other volunteers renovated and restored a school in Nakelo, Fiji. New equipment was purchased for the school, inside and outside was painted, and locals from the village were employed to help renovate the school. We also taught the school children about various things including the importance of sports, waste management, sexual health, geography, maths etc. VESA also introduced new ways of waste management such as incineration, as it was preferred over dumping the waste.”

**What has been your highlights of volunteering for VESA?**

“I lived with a Fijian family and it was amazing to get to know them whilst renovating their school and seeing how the volunteers at VESA contributed to bettering the community. I got the opportunity to dive head first into Fijian culture by eating Babakau, drinking Kava, wearing my Sulu and not worrying about being late because its Fiji time! Volunteering in Fiji has allowed me to meet people from all over the world and offered a unique opportunity to experience a completely new culture.”

**What skills/qualities did you gain from volunteering for VESA?**

“Volunteering in Fiji gave me the chance to try something new and gain confidence in myself. I had never been so far away from home for that long before so volunteering with VESA allowed me to become more independent.

I have gained valuable skills and experience including communication, teamwork, problem solving and task management which I think will benefit me in future job prospects”.

**What did you enjoy most about your Volunteering opportunity?**

“It was so rewarding living with my Fijian family, eating dinner with them every night and really getting to know them. Although I was supposed to be there helping them, they taught me a lot and I have come away from my volunteering experience with a whole new perspective of the world! The people in Nakelo are all so friendly and have such a positive outlook on life; its inspiring. In Fijian, the word for hello is ‘Bula’ meaning ‘Life’. It’s such a beautiful language and culture, and I really hope I can return someday.”

**And Finally - Why should UUSU Students Volunteer?**

“Volunteering is such an amazing experience, no matter what you do. It’s so fulfilling and rewarding to know that you are making a difference in people’s lives. Aside from that, volunteering is a brilliant opportunity to meet new people from all around the world, learn about new cultures, and acquire new skills. Volunteering can definitely makes you stand out from the crowd when it comes to applying for jobs, there is no reason why students shouldn’t volunteer!”

Thank you

Emma for telling us about your volunteering experience with VESA