

# MEDIA RELEASE



## INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY FROM THE PHILIPPINES TO FERNTREE GULLY

***Thursday 5 December is International Volunteer Day. Puffing Billy Railway is one of the largest volunteer-supported tourism organisations in Victoria, with over 600 people giving up their time for the not-for-profit Railway. Marilou Quick has been a volunteer at Puffing Billy for two years.***

Marilou Quick had never seen a steam train before moving to the Dandenong Ranges from the Philippines in 1982. At age 19, she hadn't ventured far from her village, and there were certainly no steam trains passing through where she lived.

Moving to Ferntree Gully and then Upwey, it didn't take Marilou long before she experienced the sights and sounds of one of Australia's most iconic steam trains, Puffing Billy. Little did she know that 34 years later she would be working at the Railway as a volunteer.

"My first memory of Puffing Billy is being in my backyard gardening and hearing the Puffing Billy whistle in the distance," Marilou said.

"Having lived all my life in a small village in the Philippines, I had never seen a steam train before. I was mesmerized by Puffing Billy. It has become a familiar sight and sound over the years, but I never get sick of it."

"My first ride on Puffing Billy was many years ago when my children were young. I remember how excited they were, and what a great day out it was. It is a place where we always take visiting family and friends as it really showcases the region."

"After moving to Australia, I started working as a factory hand. I moved into the automotive industry where I worked for over 17 years until the company I worked for closed down in 2017. I decided I was too young to retire and would look into some volunteering opportunities close to home. Puffing Billy was on the top of the list."

"I started volunteering in the bookings office, and am now training as a passenger guide. I love interacting with the visitors and helping to ensure they have a wonderful time at Puffing Billy – just like my family and I did all those years ago."

# MEDIA RELEASE



"Some of my favourite moments at Puffing Billy are when Filipino passengers visit and I am able to speak to them in our language. They get such a surprise that someone from the Philippines is working at Puffing Billy!" she said.

Marilou volunteers at Puffing Billy one day a week, and also volunteers at the Salvation Army op shop in Tecoma one day a week. She said there are so many benefits to volunteering, for the community and personally.

"Volunteering has helped me develop many skills that are completely different to those that I learnt in my working career," Marilou said.

"At Puffing Billy, I am interacting with people from all over the world. I'm learning about trains and railways and tourism, as well as improving my people skills. The Railway has many areas that volunteers can work in, whether you want to help with admin, retail, or the hands-on operations of the locomotives."

"Volunteering has been a great way to increase my skill base while I'm looking for work, but I can't see myself ever giving up my volunteering. I love being at Puffing Billy and I am happy to try as many different roles as I can. I think I will be helping out here for many years to come!" she said.

Puffing Billy operates under the steam of over 600 passionate and dedicated volunteers who undertake more than 20 different roles at the railway. To find out more about volunteering at Puffing Billy, please visit [www.puffingbilly.com.au/volunteer](http://www.puffingbilly.com.au/volunteer)