

Javier, a volunteer from our [Out & About - Connecting older LGBTI Victorians](#) program talks about volunteering, the importance of community connection, and what the Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) means to them:

"When I met Graeme we hit it off immediately. Graeme's love for music for life was on par with mine. He instantly shared his stories of meeting Annie Lennox and Chrissie Hynd with me, and we both laughed as he enjoyed the reminiscing as much as I enjoyed the stories.

Our friendship formed fast but it also grew. What I was discovering was that he indeed lived a full life. A life through times that I had only read about.

Graeme lived in an aged care home surrounded (as he said) by old ladies that he had nothing in common with. I attempted to take Graeme back out into the world that he once lived within.

Graeme was in his prime when deeply involved with the Drag Culture. As part of Switchboard's events, we partook in the Midsumma Pride March in January 2020. After the march, I was keen for him to experience the visual spectacle of our beautiful community. I sighted a spectacular Drag Queen and pushed his wheelchair as close to her as I could. They met eyes and then to my surprise they both instantly recognised each other! They had been friends that had lost touch over the decades and due to this chance meeting, a reconnection was reborn.

Throughout the years, I took him to many Drag shows and learned many (especially the older performers) all knew him. Here were the stories first hand I was privileged to hear of a time when this culture wasn't as accepted as it is now. The bravery and courage the comradeship. These experiences gave Graeme new life igniting memories and colouring his days as he continually shared photos and stories.

Unfortunately, like for many others, the next two years were fogged by the pandemic with restrictions. We kept up the momentum as best we could with phone calls, and with each phone call, I learned something new. It was mutually beneficial, as him talking about past stories gave him a spark, while they also brought me great pleasure to be able to hear them.

Sadly, Graeme passed away suddenly in January 2022. So, to answer, 'what does CVS means to me? It's the honour of being able to be an active participant in someone's life, and hopefully, make a difference in their day. The opportunity that Switchboard gives us to do this is a privilege, and it's an honour to be a part of filling a much-needed gap in our community."

Rest in peace and pride, Graeme. 