



Photo: Sieve Barten.

# connect

## closing the gap one community at a time

**Improved health is just one of the outcomes of the Aboriginal Volunteer Program (AVP) in one of South Australia's most remote communities, Oodnadatta.**

Each year, since 2012, a small group of dedicated young Aboriginal volunteers from all around Australia join in with the local community, giving their time, to help build a stronger community.

Before heading north, the volunteers are trained in areas such as remote community volunteering, volunteer expectations, and policies and procedures giving them the confidence and new and upgraded skills. They are linked with community leaders and returned volunteers, gaining local knowledge to assist with their 10 week placement.

Community participation has been the key to the success of the program with all projects identified locally, giving a sense of ownership and project sustainability.



L-R: Naomi, Jess and Kasey, 2017 Oodnadatta volunteers.

**"I was trying to show that it was cool to be healthy. The kids would come round and we would go running on a daily basis. I took the speakers and we would run to music. At first I was doing it alone, but without saying anything, they started doing it too and then it was back to the house for spinach smoothies."**

Charles Rolls, 2016 AVP Volunteer

Some of the projects have included health improvement where children were involved in cooking nutritious meals, fitness runs, creating a welcoming garden at the Health Centre and 'vegie' gardens with the Elders, as well as planning over 150 citrus trees and vines and brining in tanks to enhance clean water and community water security.

Last year the program helped to significantly improve literacy rates amongst school children and supported the Oodnadatta women to explore income generation opportunities through art and craft social enterprise.

AVP is a partnership between the community of Oodnadatta, South Australia's Aboriginal Reference Group, Volunteering SA&NT and Australian Volunteers International (AVI).

**For further information please contact:**

**Jo Larkin**

**AVP Program Manager**

**M 0417 083 477**

**E [trumby64@outlook.com](mailto:trumby64@outlook.com)**