



**Q1) Name:** Alison Barnes

**Q2) Current role:** Sessional Academic, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Western Sydney University

**Q3) How long have you been a nurse/midwife?** This is my 30th year

**Q4) Why did you want to you want to become a nurse/midwife?**

My mum worked at a large teaching hospital and had lots of nurses for friends. These women were strong and smart and passionate about the work they did, I wanted to be like them.

**Q5) What were the enablers and barriers for you to complete your degree?**

**Pathway into nursing/midwifery – how did you get to where you are today?**

from school. What got me where I am today? Being persistent and stubborn, change takes time. Believing that education is the key to reducing systemic racism in our health system and that every student who enters my classroom has the chance to leave a better nurse. I am in no way special; I just care enough to have a go at changing how the health system treats Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It matters to me to at least try; I know I have failed more than once but I get up and try again.

**Q6) Do you believe our nurses and midwives are role models for our communities? if yes do you think it is a priority that we increase our workforce and why?**

Yes, I do believe we can be role models but not in a holier than thou way. Just be good at what you do, practice with integrity and people will see that you care for them and your community. I have worked with some very disadvantaged groups (not always Mob), if people see you care and trust you as a professional you become a role model. There are people out there living perfectly ordinary good lives because I helped them not only get better but because I showed them there are other ways to be. You don't need to be defined by you past or your mistakes you can choose a different path.

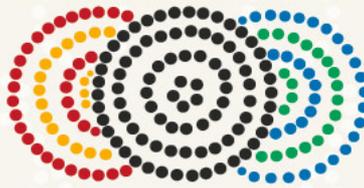
**Making a difference for community?**

Having Aboriginal nurses and midwives does this. No matter where we work or what specialty we choose what we do is important and transformative. It might be that your passion is Intensive care nursing rather than work in a community. That's more than OK, follow your dreams and be the best ICU nurse you can be. Turn up, do a great job, be kind. You can change people's perceptions from inside the system. That will make that unit a more friendly place for the next Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander patient and their family. And for every time you do that it is a win for us all.

CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NURSES AND MIDWIVES

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It can be hard; I won't sugar coat it. Change is hard and can be so slow to happen. I have been doing this work of teaching cultural safety/competency since before the kids came along and my eldest is about to turn 15. I have horror stories gathered in the last year from my last foray into clinical nursing. But I also have some good stories of students who really did leave my classroom having learnt things and had their beliefs challenged.

It will be worth it if no young nurse ever has to hide her Aboriginality like I did because I loved my starting hospital but geez it was a racist place.

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