

Name: Magenta Staar Pittman-Highfield

Current role: Casual Pool Registered Nurse at Lismore Base Hospital

How long have you been a nurse/midwife?

I have been nursing for 8 years and Registered for 6 of those years, in that time I had the NSW Health Aboriginal Nursing and Midwifery Cadetship whilst I was studying and had received a secondment position as the Project Officer for the Aboriginal Nursing and Midwifery Strategy.

Why did you want to become a nurse/midwife?

I wanted to become a nurse because I saw the lack of Aboriginal nurses in the healthcare system. I saw the lack of willingness from my people in seeking the help that they are entitled too due to the racism and judgement that we feel when entering a healthcare setting.

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?

Being one of the three only Aboriginal girls in my entire High School I was lucky enough to have a Careers Advisor who really poured her heart and soul into making sure I would further my education and not go off the rails. She found Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology Sydney where I undertook a few days of tests to see if I was suitable for University. There I was accepted into a community that helped me with my confidence and gave me a sanctuary that allowed me to be myself with people I felt comfortable with. I was terrible at maths and they provided me with a tutor for as long as I needed to be able to succeed. Another enabler for me was having the Aboriginal Cadetship through NSW Health. The Cadetship encouraged me more to go to Uni and complete the hours I needed in the Cadetship. Most of these positive influences arise from me having mentors is huge within the Aboriginal community and I feel as though if I did not have the mentors that I did, I probably would not have completed my degree.

Barriers I faced was the racism around me, especially being an international University and often students in my Aboriginal Health and Well-Being subject asked 'why is this subject necessary' without even realising I was Aboriginal or thinking before they spoke. Luckily, it motivated me more to want to complete my degree and make change from the inside.

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?

I believe our nurses and midwives are role models for our communities immensely. I think it is so important having more Aboriginal nurses and midwives as it helps to increase the rates of our people accessing the healthcare services they require and decreasing the morbidity and mortality rates between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people. By increasing the numbers of Aboriginal nurses and midwives all over Australia means that closing the gap between these statistics of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people will actually happen because we know how to be culturally safe and culturally appropriate which means we can provide the best care possible for our community.