

Credit: *"In Our Own Right: Black Australia Nurses' Stories"* – edited by Sally Goold OAM and Kerryne Liddle - 2005

Name: Dr Sally Goold

Current role: Retired Registered Nurse, Registered Midwife and Nurse Educator.

How long have you been a nurse/midwife?

Sally practiced as a nurse for many decades.

Why did you want to you want to become a nurse/midwife?

For as long as I can remember, I had wanted to be a nurse. It is wonderful when you are a little child and people ask you what you wanted to be when you grew up and I would reply "I'm going to be a nurse" and they would politely say, "that's nice!"

I have loved being a nurse and living my dream. Nursing has been very good to me and I believe I have made a very strong contribution to nursing and also contributed to helping my people.

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?

I applied to my local hospital, the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPAH). Mum and I were interviewed by the matron, Miss Evelyn Lawrie. I was accepted! How wonderful to be given this opportunity! I will never forget Miss Lawrie for giving me the chance to achieve my dream.

I applied to undertake midwifery at King George V Memorial Hospital, and I enjoyed midwifery and the study. It was during this time that I learnt that I was able to teach. During my final exam, I was asked to explain the placenta. I apparently did it so well that it was suggested by the examiner that I consider exploring a teaching pathway. On completion of this course, I then became a staff nurse (junior sister) at RPAH. While there I worked in the operating theatres and on night duty. I next gained a staff position (now known as a senior nurse) at King George V Memorial Hospital and I was promoted to Sister-in-Charge of one of the wards soon after.

In 1972 I was approached by Dulcie Flowers and Fred Hollows to help set up and run the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern. It was a great privilege to work there, with and for my people, and to work with Fred Hollows and the other doctors who worked there on a voluntary basis after they had finished their working days at their hospitals.

After a few years in the clinical setting, I undertook a Diploma in Nurse Education. I then specialised in cardio-thoracic and coronary care nursing and worked in that area for many years. I conducted the Post-Basic Cardio Thoracic Nursing Course at the Prince Charles Hospital, Queensland. I then moved to another hospital to deliver this course. I was there for three years, but was told the funding ran out, so I was dismissed! I was devastated. It came as a shock because nothing had been said to me prior to that fateful Friday.

I undertook further study and received my Bachelor of Applied Science (Nursing). I eventually moved into the tertiary education sector, to the School of Nursing, Queensland University of Technology (QUT). During this time I also obtained my Master of Nursing Studies (Flinders University). I lectured at QUT for six years. It was another wonderful time in my life.

During my time at QUT, I was seconded to the Queensland Health Department as the coordinator of nursing services for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait health program, and then as acting director of that area. I also served a term on the Queensland Nursing Council.

I was fortunate to have served a term in the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, as a member of the council, and was a member of the National Indigenous Advisory Committee for SOCOG.

I was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1985 for Service to Nursing Education and Aboriginal health. I was also awarded the Royal College of Nursing (Queensland chapter) Distinguished Nursing Award 2000.

In 2000 I was also honoured to be a torchbearer and 'Mayor for the Day' at the Olympic village

In 2002, I was awarded a Doctor of Nursing, Honoris Causa, from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), for service to the community and to the profession.

I have also been awarded Adjunct Professorships from James Cook University and Griffith University and I have sat on numerous advisory boards and committees in a number of different universities and acted in an informal advisory role for others.

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 used to find it interesting and somewhat distressing that it appeared to be okay to be an Aboriginal registered nurse, so long as you didn't really assert yourself too much and if you 'compliant' then you were accepted! I noticed as soon as you climbed the ladder, things became a little testy and the barriers go up with some non-Aboriginal nurses. They often joined forces to keep you out and in 'your place'. I had a few problems in overcoming these barriers, but they were not insurmountable.

An area that I found extremely difficult is the issue of what I called the 'invisibility' of Indigenous Australian nurses. There were very few nurses, if any, in senior administrative positions in mainstream health care settings. I cannot recall seeing another Indigenous nurse in all the time that I was at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

When I undertook my Masters degree, I researched, 'why are there so few Aboriginal registered nurses?' I found many reasons for this, mainly, student-to-student and academic-to-student racism and discrimination, as well as inadequate, or lack of, support systems for students. I thought there was no point in having this knowledge and not doing something

about it, so I left QUT because I believed that there were other things I needed to do. The system needed to change!

Following consultation with the Australian Nursing Federation and, with the support of Robyn Coulthard and Judy Uren, a forum was held during August 1997 that was attended by 28 Indigenous registered nurses. It was at this forum that the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses (CATSIN now CATSINaM) was born!