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Colleen Horton

Deputy Manager, House Services,
Launceston General Hospital

I started working in this hospital 32 years ago, when I was employed as a cleaner. After about 8 months, I moved up to the position of training supervisor for cleaning within the hospital. About one year later, I became the Assistant Manager of cleaning services, and my role has just evolved from there. I've been in my current role for about 25 years. Part of my portfolio includes managing a staff of 130 people.

My passion has always been educating our staff to see themselves as an important part of the hospital – that the cleaning of a hospital is terribly important, that a cleaner can be as important as a doctor, or anybody else working here. Everybody's health depends on how healthy our patients are when they leave here, and that depends on how clean the hospital is.

With my former manager, we really worked hard over the years to professionalise the cleaning department. And every time we did a good job, we got rewarded by getting another department brought under our supervision. Our department, House Services, is now eight departments: cleaning, medical orderlies, security, telephone and communications, accommodation, parking and, most recently, transport.

In my eyes, getting new departments meant that people were realising we were doing a good job. For me, it isn't about the money. It's about the personal achievement of people looking in and saying we're doing a good job. I believe we're all here to look after each other. Our main focus is the patients, they are the defenceless people in this whole equation. I get a lot of satisfaction from knowing I've achieved something.

With such a large team, staffing can be a challenge, but I try to see a challenge as a positive. I also enjoy being able to help staff move through the ranks. You might see a staff member who has potential, and you want to help them by opening up doors for them. I always say I'd rather have a good employee for a year or two, and they move up, than have a bad employee for 50 years.

When I first started here, I thought I would work as a cleaner for a while, and then maybe get an office job. I've just been very lucky in my career. I always have high expectations of what I want to do, and I try to plug into other people who can help me achieve what I want to achieve.