

Delia Summers

Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer (BSW),
Launceston General Hospital

I have been working in Aboriginal organisations for many years, but I've been in my current role for 11 years now.

I am an Aboriginal woman. My heritage is from Cape Barren Island, and I am a direct descendant of Mannalargenna, an elder of the Plangermaireener nation. Like many Aboriginal children of that era, I was removed from my community by the state welfare. It was something that was supposed to benefit us, but it didn't. There was a lot of racism, and those early years were difficult and challenging.

In my late teens, I put myself through college, and later through university, eventually with a degree in social work. I started working at Launceston General Hospital in 2006. Growing up in the community, and what I went through growing up, this was the perfect opportunity for me to be a voice for the Aboriginal community.

It's so important for people in our community to know that they have somebody here they can contact, someone they can come in and have a yarn with. We have patients who come from Cape Barren Island and Flinders Island, who have been off the island for years and can be very frightened. For them to know they have someone here, who can visit them and support them, is very rewarding.

If I were to give any career advice, I would say seek out a support person or a good supervisor you can debrief with. I have a very good Aboriginal supervisor – I feel it has to be culturally appropriate. Seek support when needed. I am sure there are people throughout the state you can call upon and ask for assistance, in terms of managing your programs or improving your programs. When I first started work, I assumed I was the one who had to do everything. I believe it is important to stand up for what you believe in. If you want changes, push for change in a positive way.

The best part of my job is supporting my clients, coming in here and knowing that I'm not just going to come into the office and sit down at my computer. I never know what kind of day I'm going to have, and that's what makes work exciting for me. It could be anything. It's the unknown, but also knowing that you're going to be there for the community no matter what it is.

To any Aboriginal woman considering a career path like mine, I would say: go for it, believe in yourself, stay true to yourself, don't doubt yourself, always remember where you come from and be proud of that. To the young girls out there, I say: you can do whatever you put your mind to. You can do it, no matter what age you are, there is heaps of support available for you. Don't give up on your dreams.



“ I believe it is important to stand up for what you believe in. If you want changes, push for change in a positive way. ”