

Hospital story 2

My daughter, she had a heart palpitation or something more with her chest. He [the doctor] said to her, 'Are you sure your partner hasn't been beating you up?'

I stood up and I said, 'I refuse to listen to this diatribe.'

And he looked at me, and I said, 'Keep to what you are supposed to be treating her for, don't make value judgments. I don't condone domestic violence. My daughter would not be in a domestic violence relationship, because I'm her mother, and I don't agree with that sort of stuff.'

That's what we were bought up, you know... I been there and witnessed people being treated really... In undignified ways.

And now, with all the COAG [Council of Australian Governments] funding coming through, there's a lot more people working there that, you know... Aboriginal faces in the service. I'm happy about that, because I used to work in the same hospital when I was younger, in Emergency. I could see people coming through and they felt really comfortable when they seen an Aboriginal face at the counter. And they'd tell you things that they normally wouldn't disclose to someone else, coz it was that shame factor.

I just think they need to be aware of the other person's values. Really important. And no assumptions being made about, you know, all Aboriginal people drink and take drugs. And when you present an Emergency and you're limping and the assumption straight away... 'Oh, they must be drunk.' But people do have epilepsy and other conditions, you know.

I just think the story from our side of it is, we're sitting there being judged, and all we want is medical treatment. Nothing else. Nothing more, nothing less, than access to a doctor.

I think the staff need to be aware at the hospital, that Aboriginal people do have rights in terms of access to service and the quality of care that they get. But Aboriginal people themselves don't feel confident to challenge that, which is disconcerting, given that it's about health. And it's scary. And they don't seem to follow things up, or just accept that that's the way it is. It's not the way it is. If you're worried about your health, you should be able to get help and get your health checked. But they just disengage.

Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd., an initiative of the Australian Government. The views expressed in this story do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council or the Australian Government.

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