

## MEDIA RELEASE

28 June 2017

### Nurses celebrate and acknowledge NAIDOC Week

Going home with the feeling that she'd made a difference in someone's life that day is what Sharon Bilney says is the best part of being a nurse.

"When I was working at the hospital, it was just so nice to feel as though I'd made a difference, whether it was to an Aboriginal patient that day or educating a non-Aboriginal person about Aboriginal culture," Ms Bilney, who belongs to the Kokatha family group, said.

The mother of four, who is Manager of Client Services for Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service, began her early career working at Port Lincoln Hospital.

She also had a two-year stint lecturing in nursing at TAFE South Australia's Port Lincoln Campus.

"Deciding to become a nurse is a decision that I've never regretted," Ms Bilney said.

"It's a career that you can have around children and I've loved the opportunities that have come with it as well – I loved that I've worked in a hospital setting but also been able to lecture and have the chance to mentor and support young Aboriginal students on their path into nursing."

Ms Bilney is speaking about her nursing career to help highlight NAIDOC Week, which runs from Sunday, July 2-9, and is urging young Indigenous people to explore nursing as a career option.

The theme for this year's NAIDOC Week is *Our Languages Matter*.

"I highly recommend nursing. Even if you don't want to work in a hospital, the possibilities and options are endless. Take every opportunity that comes your way," Ms Bilney said.

"NAIDOC week is an important week to celebrate our history and culture."

Ms Bilney said the best thing she had ever done was switch from her previous career in office work to nursing.

"Once I knew that I would be able to study at home part-time while I still had my youngest little boy at home with me, I thought the opportunity was just amazing," she said.

"Once I was enrolled, I just wanted to focus on getting through the next five years of study and really achieve that goal of becoming a nurse."

In her final year of study, Ms Bilney received the Federal Government-funded *Rural and Remote Undergraduate* scholarship, through the Australian College of Nursing (ACN).

ACN Chief Executive Officer, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN, said Ms Bilney was a perfect example of how diverse a career in nursing could be, and how it could be explored at different stages in life.

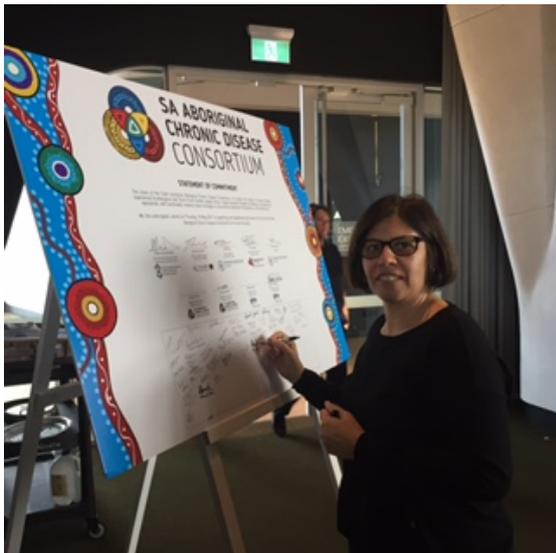
“Sharon was a mum at home caring for her young son when an opportunity came her way to be able to study nursing,” Adjunct Professor Ward said.

“On completing her studies, she has had the opportunity to work in a hospital and experience theatre work, accident and emergency, the surgical and medical wards and has also had the chance to work in palliative care and mental health.

“She has also lectured in nursing and been able to mentor young Indigenous students and is now leading the way in providing health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Port Lincoln.”

-ENDS-

**For interviews, please Narelle Barrie, Executive Assistant to ACN Chief Executive Officer Kylie Ward, on 02 6283 3459 or 0450 908 920**



Above: Sharon Bilney, Manager of Client Services for Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service.



**Notes to Editors:**

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is the national professional organisation for all nurse leaders and its aim is to ensure that the Australian community receives quality nursing care now and in the future. ACN is a membership organisation with members in all states and territories, health care settings and nursing specialties. ACN is also the Australian member of the International Council of Nurses headquartered in Geneva. An organisation not afraid to challenge industry issues affecting the nursing profession or Australia's health care, ACN is a well-connected and educated national body that drives change with people of influence to enhance the delivery of health services to the Australian community. ACN's membership includes nurses in roles of influence, including senior nurses, organisational leaders, academics and researchers.

**Social media channels:** Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acnursing>  
Twitter: [https://twitter.com/acn\\_tweet](https://twitter.com/acn_tweet)  
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/australian-college-of-nursing>  
Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/acn\\_nursing](https://www.instagram.com/acn_nursing)