Clarrie’s story 4

Aboriginal people don’t like asking for help. This is why you have Aboriginal Medical Services, so the staff at the counter can do an Aboriginal service. Person to person... Uncle and Aunty, and things like that. They provide a service.

You go to the AMS, you, um... You wait your turn. If you’re sick, tell them how bad you are and one of your cousins will step back and let you go in first... Doesn’t matter whether he got there before you.

White fellow, they’ll make you wait your turn. You can be bleeding to death and the other fellow, he’s only got an imaginary toothache or something, they see him first. Now it’s the service, not the medical professional... The doctor, as you walk in the door, he will see you.

No Aboriginal people going into a hospital... A waiting room... Half the trouble is in the waiting room.

The receptionist, who doesn’t even open the door for you... And don’t swear at her, she ring the cops and you go to jail... And you can die in jail... Get your sickness and you can die in jail.

Now I’ve also... I had pneumonia in [regional town]. I went in and said, ‘I’ve got pneumonia. I can feel it coming on.’

‘Oh look, you’re not to say what you’ve got. Wait till the doctor tells you what you’ve got.’ And, ‘Now will you sit over there and wait your turn.’

So I just said to her, ‘Listen here, xxx...’ I lay right down on her desk... I laid back on her desk and I says, ‘I’ve got pneumonia and it’s serious. Get me a doctor, get me seen now.’ And start kicking the computer and things off. ‘I want service now, coz I know I’ve got pneumonia. I’ve had pneumonia before.’ And the fellow that rung the next morning... When I woke up... I had pneumonia. Two hours I’d of been dead.

The medical professional, he sees you when you walk into his clinic door. Aboriginal problem is you can’t get from the front door to his clinic door. There’s all that rigmarole you got to go through... Paperwork and everything. And if you can’t read and write in the first place...

I seen Aboriginal people get up, sick as they are, go home and die, rather than put up with that. It’s the receptionist makes a difference. Yeah, people will go home and die. And that goes for the social service, anybody. You’ve got to have that cultural... Feel welcome, yeah.