Des’s story 1

I’ll tell you a story about when I was at the [regional hospital] working. They had an Aboriginal elder, he was a traditional Aboriginal… He was more like a chief sort of person. He suffered a stroke and all the complications that go with it. They sent him down to Royal Perth and he spent some time down there.

This old chap… He wasn’t old, he was a lot more younger than me... But he was bedridden, disabled, and he was confined to a wheelchair and he was put into the hospital.

They brought him back to [regional hospital]. But while he was in there, they had this young medical nurse looking after him. She was, oh I don’t know how old, but in her 20s. She’d obviously had no interaction with Aboriginal people before... You know, from my estimation... She had no idea about cultural awareness. She treated this old man with contempt.

She sort of stood over him and demanded that he do this... Things that he couldn’t do. Obviously he was bedridden and he sort of wet himself and that sort of thing and which annoyed her. She wanted him to do things like change himself, which he couldn’t do coz he couldn’t move.

And this sort of upset him and really disturbed him... And he sent a message to me, as the Aboriginal Health Worker in the region or in the hospital, to go see him, which I did. I went and seen him and he explained all this to me. And I could see, you know, when the nurse came in... She was very abrupt and rude. She wasn’t the person that should have been there. Coz, you know, I had a bit of authority in the hospital like, as a health worker, so I asked the medical staff if we can discuss this. Which we did.

And I suggested, because he was getting into a state where he was getting very stressed and it wasn’t doing him any good if it was affecting him... I asked if we could send him back home to Wiluna to spend a week with his family. Even though he was handicapped and that, but the family wanted him. So we took him back there and he spent a week with them. And after a week they brought him back to the hospital and put him in the aged care centre.

And it wasn’t long after that he passed away.

But just the fact that he’d been... I don’t know, ridiculed or, you know, been tormented by this young nurse... I think, you know, sort of aggravated a lot of his... Himself. I used to go
and see him after, but he was never the same man. But somehow or another I think it sort of affected him and he passed away.

That’s a story which I experienced and I’m always keen to tell, because there was a confrontation between two different cultures and it was just that one culture was overpowering or more demanding than the other.