

## **Joanne De Vries**

Indigenous Research Fellow  
Wuchopperen Health Service QLD



### **How did you start working at Wuchopperen?**

My family clan is Wakaid from Badu Island and my totem is Crocodile in the Torres Strait. I speak Kala Lagaw Ya, Torres Strait Kirol and Australian English. I was inspired to work in health by my mother who was a nurse on Thursday Island and by my passion to make a difference to the health of Australian Indigenous people. I had worked in Education and Government Departments and I decided to go back to studies in 2002. I chose to do an Aboriginal Health Worker Certificate Diploma level, as I believed that it would enable me to better serve the community. I have been working at Wuchopperen Health service since 2004 and first started in a data entry position. I am currently the Programs Coordinator, Women's Sexual Health worker and Kanyini Research Officer. I have also been in previous roles where I coordinated women's health program, was the Healthy for Life site officer and was the acting Executive Officer for the Primary Health Unit.

### **What are some of your key experiences at Wuchopperen?**

The annual Community Days and Health Promotion Days are always spectacular and enjoyable. I also enjoy being part of the progress and development of Primary Health Care Programs and resources. I helped develop and starred in a cervical smear health education DVD for Indigenous Women titled, "Don't be Shame be Game". There are great opportunities for up skilling and personal development at annual health program workshops and conferences where there is the opportunity to build a close network with health workers nationally. There are also those key little moments that are precious to me such as when patients invite you to be part of their child's birth or when I can hold their hands through their anxious moments.

### **What do you see as your role in being Kanyini Indigenous Research Fellow?**

Research is a fundamental part of health and the Kanyini Vascular Collaboration research will have essential key outcomes in areas of engagement, service delivery and more. Importantly, the research is advocating the voice of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait people all over Australia. My role is significant, as it is the connection to the community and ensures that the research is being delivered appropriately, culturally and with integrity. I see my role as an encouragement for other Indigenous Health Workers to extend their capacity in their personal development by doing effective health research as one of the many ways to improve Indigenous health. I am excited and feel honored to be part of this collaborative project which I believe will greatly benefit the community.

### **What do you do for fun?**

I like listening to music, reading a good book and cooking. I also like to hang out with my family. It is really important to me. Life at work can be stressful but when I spend time with my family - it's all worth it.