

My Future,
My Culture,
My Way.

NSW Department of Education



Case Study – Alison Stanton

Who I am?

I'm Alison, a Gamilaroi woman from Coonabarabran with connections to Burra Bee Dee Mission.

I've always lived and worked on Country, starting as a School Learning Support Officer (SLSO) with the department and holding roles as an Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO) for the last nine years.

High school is a stepping stone

Working at the high school is really rewarding, I love seeing students achieve their goals. I tell the kids we're just a stepping stone, but a step that will help define those long-term goals that they want to achieve. Planting seeds so they can see the end in sight – graduation, their formal and going out into the world to grow their own lives.

Teachers will meet you where you are

We say to our kids in Year 10 that teachers will treat you as an adult and meet you where you're at on that learning curve. In senior school there's more responsibility and the schoolwork is challenging but if they want to achieve, we're here. They know we want to see them achieve.

School is more than the classroom, it's connection and care

My role is all about building that connection with each student so they feel they can reach out when they need that support. My office is always open and it's usually hectic. They know that if they come to my door that I'll help them. They might not be feeling their best and need some positive words or help with filling out a job application.

The AEO role is diverse, and it involves not only supporting students but also community, staff, parents, grandparents and carers. It could be helping with transport or attending meetings with families so they feel safe and supported in the school. I'm the one strengthening those important connections with the school. It's a supporting role, but it's a big one.

I'll never give up on a kid and will work to break down those barriers. Attendance can be challenging, and it can often be a simple thing to overcome, like making sure there's breakfast or uniforms available at school.



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Aboriginal artwork created by Felicity Adams who is a proud descendant of the Kamilaroi people, currently living and learning on Dharug Country.



Year 7 to 12 students preparing for Dance on Country.

At our school, everyone is included

All our students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal know an Acknowledgment of Country. Giving students ownership and sharing in that knowledge makes our school a better place and it's nice to know that the school community wants to learn about our culture, it's wonderful.

We have Aboriginal subjects on offer from Year 7 to 12 and Gamilaraay is taught at the school by Gamilaroi man, Craig Ashby and he's amazing. Having these subjects on offer helps keep the students engaged culturally and with the classroom.

NAIDOC Week is always a big event at our school with Elders and community. It's also a great opportunity to involve Year 6 students who will be transitioning to high school soon, so when they start Year 7 it's not so daunting. Each year we hold a formal assembly, BBQ lunch and an afternoon of cultural activities and sport. It's always a good day and everyone just loves it.

The opportunity for Aboriginal students is unreal

Kids today can see that they can be successful in whatever they want to do. It's important to have them thinking about what they can do outside of school from an early age. Some kids take the HSC ATAR pathway and some take another, which

is fine too. It's about having that conversation around what's best for them. Which can look like selecting non ATAR subjects, they won't have the stress of sitting exams but will keep their options open into the future.

We've also had success getting students into School based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBATs). They get out into the workforce, experiencing their interests whilst still working towards their HSC.

Once they know what they want to do it's then about keeping them on the right path to achieve that. Helping them to plan for success and bring those stress levels down. You watch them grow across stages and seeing them finish school is pretty good.

Want to know more?

Visit My Future, My Culture, My Way, follow the Department of Education on social media, talk to your school, or contact your local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).