If you ever wanted to hear a story of triumph over adversity, look no further than 2018 HESTA Nurse of the Year, Gail Yarran. Her genuine warmth and compassion belies the pain of lifelong bullying and racism.

Gail was born in a January heatwave in rural Western Australia. Following her birth, Gail and her mother were transferred to the verandah of the hospital, exposed to the elements. A very different story to the other mothers who had recently given birth and were housed in wards with ceiling fans to cool the room.

Racism was rife throughout Gail's younger years – engraved in her memory was the day her class was sharing what they wanted to do when they grew up. Support was offered for everyone's dreams until Gail mentioned she wanted to become a nurse. The whole class laughed.

Gail was just 16 years-old when she left school. She visited the Matron at the local hospital and asked for a job. The Matron advised the only job that she had available was as a kitchenhand.

Gail worked hard in this role for 12-months until the Matron approached her and said, "Gail, I want you to become a nurse." Her response was "I'm just a Noongar girl from the bush, that job is for wadjelas."

Gail finally agreed to give nursing a go and travelled to Manjimup to become an enrolled nurse at a new course the Matron was running.

In 1971 Gail moved to Perth to work at Princess Margaret Hospital.

And she felt a door open a little.

Just 12 months later Gail moved to King Edward Memorial Hospital.
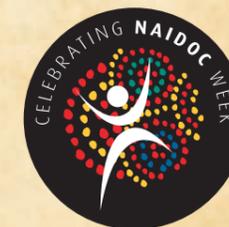
And she felt a door open a little more.

Gail worked and studied, and gained a qualification in Public Health, but there was still something missing. She applied and was accepted to a conversion course to become a registered nurse at Curtin University.

It wasn't an easy journey but she persevered and gained her degree.

And finally that door was open.

Gail now works at Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service. In 2018 she was awarded the HESTA Nurse of the Year for her work in improving and advocating for better delivery of health care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living across Western Australia.

CELEBRATING NAIDOC WEEK

BECAUSE OF HER, WE CAN!
8-15 JULY 2018

To celebrate the 2018 NAIDOC Week theme of 'Because of Her, We Can' we honour Aboriginal nurses in Western Australia and the amazing work they do.