

'We are 65,000 years of knowledge and wisdom': Stephanie Armstrong, OAM



By [Tom O'Callaghan](#)

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Auntie Stephanie Armstrong has been awarded an Order of Australia medal.
Picture is supplied.

Stephanie Armstrong does not just break paths in education and health, she turns back to make sure the next generation can find its way.

The [Gamilaraay-Bigambul woman](#) has received an Order of Australia medal for service to Indigenous health and education on January 26, 2024.

Among her highlights are work with the Bendigo Reconciliation Committee and [Bendigo Senior Secondary School's](#) Indigenous centre and Eaglehawk Primary School.

"You have these individual students who come and you become a bit like a parent," Mrs Armstrong said.

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"I had a number of young Aboriginal women I worked with over 10 years, supporting them from year nine or 10, through to university and their careers."

That includes early childhood educators, midwives, occupational therapists and teachers.

"I'm proud to see I've made an impact - and that I could be a part of their achievements," Mrs Armstrong said.

"Quite a few of those girls are from Bendigo, and are now working there."

Mrs Armstrong graduated from the Bendigo Teachers College in the early days of a 40 year career across many parts of Australia.



Stephanie Armstrong with granddaughter Harriet McGhee in 2016.
Picture by Noni Hyett.

She also helped shape online sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic for Indigenous allies dedicated to positive change, including in Bendigo.

"I'm only little but I like to get in and get things done," Mrs Armstrong said.

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Australia Day can be a difficult time for Indigenous people, especially coming hot on the heels of a failed Indigenous Voice referendum bid in 2023.

"Though I am thankful for everything, it is a hard week for us. It is Invasion Day for us Aboriginal people, and I lost my husband of 40 years, last year," Mrs Armstrong said.

"But when you live a life of purpose around people who joined together, you can keep going." Mrs Armstrong is currently based in the Australian Capital Territory and is a consultant working with multiple groups including Culture is Life, Children's Ground, Djirri and Indigenous Allied Health Australia.

"It brings me joy - you've got to think about justice and change to be involved in that sort of process," she said.

Top of Mrs Armstrong's mind is a better world for her granddaughter Harriett, and Indigenous people's many successes.

"We are 65,000 years of knowledge and wisdom. We have so much to offer," she said.