**World Teachers’ Day Podcast Transcript**

**Announcer:** This is a Queensland Department of Education podcast.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** World Teachers’ Day is a day to celebrate and acknowledge the wonderful work of all teachers across our state.

I’m Virginia Bowdidge from the Department of Education and I’ll be talking to some of Queensland’s extraordinary teachers about the teaching moments that have inspired them.

Today Catholic Education teacher Barbara Dewis, from St Therese’s School, Bentley Park, joins me to talk about her teaching moments.

Hi Barbara, thanks for talking to me as part of our World Teachers’ Day series.

**Barbara Dewis:** Thank you for having me Virginia. I’m so excited!

**Virginia Bowdidge:** How long have you been a teacher and what inspired you to choose teaching as a career?

**Barbara Dewis:** Well, I’ve been teaching now for just over thirty-three years. It was an opportunity I grasped because I had a lot of encouragement from other people that I worked with whilst being a teacher aide. And I thought, well, maybe this is my time, to give back to somebody else.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** How long were you a teacher aide for?

**Barbara Dewis:** I was a teacher aide for one month short of seven years and I learnt so much. So, it was a natural progression. I enjoyed the time. It taught me how to deal with students. It helps me now even today when I’m teaching.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** How did you make the transition from teacher aide to teacher?

**Barbara Dewis:** I did my study in JCU James Cook University when they had the ATIEP program, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Program. I did a bridging course. So, I did the six months and then finished with my diploma in three and a half years. But then when I finished that I set myself a goal to have my Bachelor of Education completed by the year 2000, which I accomplished, so I was excited about that.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Congratulations, that’s a fantastic goal.

**Barbara Dewis:** Thank you. And I use those experiences to share with my students. How I had to discipline myself and develop a good work ethic whilst at Uni because I didn’t have anyone around to say, “you know, you need to get this done. You know this is coming up, it’s due, have you done it?”. So, I impart that kind of wisdom onto my students.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What is it that you love about your job?

**Barbara Dewis:** I can say many a stories but the most I enjoy are seeing the smiles on the students’ faces, as well as the diversity of students that I have in my class. I’m so interested in their culture, their traditions, their backgrounds. I just learnt so much from them as well as them learning from me.

Also, the stories, that the students share. And I always think that sharing of stories from the students and you sitting there, as a teacher to listen to them, tells the students, you know, this teacher is listening to me.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And as a Torres Strait Islander woman, do you share stories from your culture with your students?

**Barbara Dewis:** Oh definitely. I always tell my students that they’re very lucky to have me as a teacher, because I can impart that knowledge of my background, my culture, my traditions with them. So, we learn from each other. It’s not just a case of me just being the teacher. I’m also can be the student as well, because I’m learning from them.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** That’s a great way of looking at it. What is it about teaching that makes it so rewarding, do you think?

**Barbara Dewis:** I think seeing the achievements that the students do. Because I’ve always been a teacher that I teach from bottom to top, not top to bottom. If I know I can engage those students who have those difficulties, then I feel like I’ve done my job. Even though inspiring students is always challenging, but it always comes back to knowing your students and what they value and what you value when I create lessons for them to make it exciting and to engage them. You can deliver exciting and interesting and engaging lessons but you challenge them. I like to challenge my students in their thinking but I also enjoy it when they challenge me as well.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Are there any memorable moments in your career that have shaped the teacher you are today?

**Barbara Dewis:** Most definitely and I’ve always been a big advocate of getting students to read. And I had a student when I first started teaching, had a young boy, he just refused to read. Didn’t like it at all. Didn’t matter what I did I just couldn’t get him to read. I even brought a bed in to the classroom and he just totally disliked it. So, I thought I’ll have a chat with one of my colleagues and it was decided that we’d have a look at what’s in the library and thankfully it was a very small school at that point where we could go through all of the books in the library. And we decided to categorise them at different levels and we took the student back to books that just had no print it was just picture books. And we gradually introduced print, until he worked his way up to novels, and now his mum sees us, “can’t put a book down”, she tells us. That was one of the biggest changing moments for myself to see the importance of reading and how much you can change one person.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** That’s a lovely story and it must feel wonderful to see that?

**Barbara Dewis:** It does, because now I can go over the years as a teacher, it’s made me realise the importance of reading.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** As well as teaching full timeI understand you’re also involved in the Yarning Circle. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Barbara Dewis:** Yes, the Yarning Circle was introduced to encourage First Nations People who worked in Education settings, whether it be school offices or teaching or in administration to just come in to have an informal chat about, you know how they are enjoying their work, what is their role in their school. But also, during that yarning circle sometimes issues arise that we then pass onto our fellow Union members to say, you know, are you experiencing the same and then we look at what we can do in the Union. But it’s just an informal setting.

And then I’m also part of the working group for the RAP. And I also, as part of the Union, was the inaugural recipient of the Theresa Nunn First Nations Member award

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And so, what’s the RAP that you spoke about**?**

**Barbara Dewis:** The reconciliation action plan for the Union.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And the award that you won. What was that for?

**Barbara Dewis:** That was for contribution as a First Nations member to the Union. I didn’t even know I was nominated for it. You just do these sorts of things, you don’t’ do it, well I don’t, personally do anything for recognition.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And what advice would you give students thinking about studying teaching or career changes moving into teaching?

**Barbara Dewis:** I always say to them, “be open to new suggestions”. In teaching thirty-three years, I still learn from those new teachers that come in, new graduates and we learn from each other.

But also, be open to new ideas and challenges and to get to know their student’s backgrounds and family life, because if you don’t know your students then you don’t know, how they’re going to engage with you, or develop a relationship with you, in the classroom.

But also, another piece of advice I often say, because I do this myself and it’s to reflect on your own practices, to address the challenges that students these days can bring with them to the classroom. In addition to all of that, the bottom line is, never assume.

**T**eaching is a profession that, I would never have thought of but I think what really influenced me to make that next step was being, a teacher aide.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And how will you or your school be celebrating World Teachers’ Day this year?

**Barbara Dewis:** We’re celebrating it with some school officers, as well because of the support that they give us as teachers we’ll be having a special morning tea.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Well, congratulations on a wonderful and rewarding career Barbara and happy World Teachers’ Day.

**Barbara Dewis:** Thank you very much Virginia. I’ve so enjoyed this and you helped me to reflect on, why I am teaching.

**Announcer** You have been listening to a Queensland Department of Education podcast.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** The Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands from across Queensland. We pay our respects to the Elders, past and present, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.