My name is Amanda Budby and I'm an Aboriginal and South Sea Islander proud woman. And on my Aboriginal side, I'm the Barada Barna Clan and we are down near Nebo so a bit west of Mackay.

So I started at Sarina State Primary School as a teacher aide, just working with the students. But then I saw the success that you get from students when you work from one on one and see that they can achieve, whether it's academic or sporting, and the teachers that I work with encouraged me to become a teacher. So filled out the application form, was a bit nervous, but we applied and was accepted into uni. And then I was a successful applicant for the Pearl Duncan Scholarship, so and that helped me to go through to uni.

I picked anywhere in Queensland to teach, and they put me at Koumala State School, which is 20 K's south of Sarina. Then I wanted something bigger, so I transferred to Townsville and ended up at Kelso State School, and I was there for six and a half years on class for most of it, but then came off and did a bit of community liaison work, student leadership. And then from there, I went into regional office as a Principal Advisor, working with students who have an additional language other than English. And then, yeah, then came to here to North Shore as a Deputy Principal, 3 to 6.

I think, coming to North Shore and we introduced Deadly Choices. So the first year we did with the Year 6 group and just the expressions on their faces, their faces lit up because they got to connect with their culture and they had their identity. Now they're talking about where they've come from, where their ancestors are, who their mob is. And like even the sport and I know Ms Kylie, they were talking about who their mob is and they were so proud to share that information.

As soon as you bring a program like Deadly Choices, they get that engagement and they want to know more, and it transfers back in the classroom. They're eager to learn, eager to explore. They've got that person they can go to to be that support person, whether it's good times or bad times. And then they can see that we're in these positions and that actually we can do that too.

You know, we were the first living culture. And I know students here that aren't First Nations. They enjoy learning about the culture. So it's that engagement and wanting to learn more and more and, you know, we need to keep passing on those traditions down through the generations. We need more First Nations people in the teaching profession, as they bring so much knowledge and strength to our students. And the more First Nations people that we have in the teaching arena will be will beneficial to everyone.

You will always face challenges and doubts, but there is someone out there that will be able to support you, whether it is family or other people in the profession. So don't give up. That pathway will always be open to reach your dream.