

Alison Salisbury (SANE Australia Hocking Community Grant Recipient 2019-2020)

Alison is a Clinical Nurse Educator and former Primary school teacher. In 2017, her son, who had no known mental illness, attempted suicide, at the aged of 17. He completed suicide two and a half years later at age 19. Alison, as primary carer for her son, became acutely aware of the stress, fatigue and burnout associated with the caring role and lack of integrated support services available to mental health carers in Tasmania.

Alison says: “From my lived experience, carer stress and fatigue impacts on carers' ability to continue to effectively advocate and support the person they are caring for, as well as negatively affecting their own wellbeing”.

The project will allow unpaid primary carers to express their lived experiences on factors that contribute to carer stress, fatigue and burnout, when caring for those with complex mental health issues. The project will compare and contrast the lived experience of carers, operating under different models of community mental health care across three jurisdictions: Australia, United Kingdom and Trieste, Italy. Through survey, interview and personal storytelling, carers will be able to share their lived experience of the support services and networks that are of most value to them to continue their caring role.

The project will examine the relationship between frequencies of caring demands; length of time in the caring role; the types of caring tasks; challenges of the caring situation and carer stress levels; and the impact of carer stress on their lives.



Alison says: “My project will provide an important voice to highlight the unmet self-care and care support needs of mental health carers in Australia”. It will include recommendations on international best practice mental health carers support services and she will disseminate these findings widely through a written report, public speaking engagements and lobbying with carer advocacy groups and organisations to support better service funding and integration.

Alison hopes the project will further national conversations to allow carers to have their rightful place at the centre of the dialogue of effective, integrated care provision; to support continuity of care for vulnerable and mentally unwell consumers and empower carers to advocate more effectively on their own behalf and for those they care for.

If you are caring for someone and would like to take part in Alison’s project please contact Alison via admin@mhffamiliesfriendstas.org.au by the end of January 2020. Or complete the [survey](#). The survey will be open till the end of April 2020.