

2020 Graduate Scholarship recipient: Alisha Davis (Mentally Healthy WA)



About me

After initially completing a Bachelor of Science majoring in Genetics, like many university students, I found myself struggling to find a career that I was truly passionate about. It was at this point that I felt I had to branch out and try something new. Being a creative at heart I thought that Architecture may be the right career path for me so I enrolled myself in a Master of Architecture degree but after the first year or so I realised that this was definitely not the right fit. I had to decipher what I really wanted out of a career and life. I narrowed my checklist down to two pre-requisites for a potential career path. The first was to find a career that is challenging and rewarding and the second, a career that will make a positive difference to people's lives and improve their health and wellbeing.

These two pre-requisites are what ultimately lead me to undertake a Master of Public Health degree at UWA and I'm so glad I did because I finally feel that I have found a field that connects both my heart and mind. During the last three months of my MPH, I completed a practicum project at Mentally Healthy WA working on extending the reach of the Act-Belong-Commit mental health promotion campaign to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities. It is through this experience that I gained a better understanding of the importance and need for targeted mental health promotion among this vulnerable population group. The project I will be completing over the scholarship period is an extension of this work.

About my Scholarship Project

Act-Belong-Commit is a community-based mental health promotion campaign run by Mentally Healthy WA that encourages people to take action to improve their mental health and wellbeing by Acting – *doing something*, Belonging – *doing something with someone* and Committing – *doing something meaningful*. WA has a large CaLD population with 39.7% of the population born overseas and 24.8% speaking a language other than English at home. CaLD individuals may experience unique social and environmental situations that can negatively impact their mental health and increase their risk of developing mental health problems. This may include experience of isolation, separation from family, friends and culture, racism, mental health stigmatisation and difficulties in communication, culture identification and employment.

My scholarship project's overall goal is to increase the awareness of positive mental health behaviours among CaLD individuals in WA and to encourage people from CaLD backgrounds to engage in behaviours that protect and promote their mental health and wellbeing. This will involve not only testing and evaluating the resources I created during my practicum (a workshop and Facilitator Guide) with CaLD sector professionals and community groups, but also the development of a train-the-trainer workshop that will enable health professionals including, Mentally Healthy WA team members, workers in CaLD organisations and Act-Belong-Commit partners to deliver the Act-Belong-Commit message to CaLD communities, to build the project's capacity and sustainability. Additionally, the project will involve the development of partnerships and an action plan for collaboration with a diverse range of WA CaLD sector organisations to ensure the sustainability of the campaign's message among this vulnerable target population.