



CASE STUDY

EXPLORING CAREER PATHS IN MENTAL HEALTH



ALISON HANSEN

ROLE: Credentialed mental health nurse
and senior lecturer

PLACE OF WORK: Monash University

What does your role as a mental health nurse and senior lecturer involve?

I worked as a mental health nurse in the area of forensic mental health nursing. A mental health nurse is a registered nurse who holds a recognised specialist qualification in mental health nursing. I then moved across into the academic/tertiary education system to help educate those people who are training to join the field.

What educational pathway did you take to become a mental health nurse?

I completed a Bachelor of Nursing, then a Master's degree (mine was titled, Master of Advanced Nursing Practice [Mental Health]). Some people exit the Master's degree at the graduate diploma level, which most of the time still allows people to work in the mental health field. I then became recognised as a credentialed

mental health nurse with the Australian College of Mental Health Nursing – this isn't a qualification, but rather recognition of specialist nurse status. Currently, I am enrolled in a Doctor of Philosophy – this is not needed for mental health nursing practice but does show scope for nurses.

What do you like most about working in mental health?

To be a really good mental health nurse you need to have excellent communication skills to be able to communicate well within your team and with your patients. You get to form these deep relationships with people and be curious about what they have to say, why they are where they are at that moment, and how you can help them through their recovery journey. The feeling you get when you see one of your patients feeling much better and being able to say, I helped them to be on that track is the most rewarding feeling.

What would you say to someone considering a career in mental health?

I would say to them start by picking up the phone, calling someone like me or attending a university open day to have a conversation about how you might be able to pursue a career in mental health.

Are you ready to make a difference? Take the next step and visit health.gov.au/mental-health-careers or scan the QR code to learn more about pursuing a career in mental health today!

