

# News, Announcements, and IASP

## In Memoriam: Dr. Allison Joy Milner (1983–2019)

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It is with great sadness that we write in remembrance of associate professor Allison Milner (1983–2019). With her untimely passing, the field of suicide prevention has lost an innovative and dynamic researcher with a passion for workplace suicide prevention, a mentor and teacher, a principled colleague, and a friend. A bright light has gone out amongst us. Allison's passing reminds us to make the most of the time available to us.

Allison completed her doctorate of philosophy on the intersectionality between globalization and suicide in 2010 at the Australian Institute of Suicide Research and Prevention, Griffith University, Brisbane. Shortly thereafter, she joined the McCaughey Centre at the University of Melbourne as a post-doctoral fellow where she is fondly remembered, not only as a fiercely astute scholar, but also a down-to-earth person with a wicked sense of humour. After a brief stint at Deakin University (2015–2016), Allison returned to the University of Melbourne in 2016 as a senior lecturer and was promoted to associate professor just last year (2018).

It is quite rare to celebrate the research legacy of someone less than 10 years post-PhD. Yet, over the course of the last several years, Allison did more to establish the link between working conditions and suicidality than any other single author worldwide. She also contributed substantially to the international literature on the patterning of suicide by occupation and employment status, workplace suicide prevention, and the relationship between job stressor exposures and mental health. She was also co-chair of the Suicide and the Workplace Special Interest Group for the International Association for Suicide Prevention, and from 2015 served as the National Academic Director of MATES in Construction – an industry-based suicide prevention program with substantial reach in the building and construction sector in Australia. And yet, she also excelled in other research areas and was just hitting her stride relative to her potential.

As a collaborator, Allison was generous, thoughtful, and engaging. Her contributions were always insightful, providing perspectives that invariably improved the focus and quality of the final work; and usually involved entertaining debates around methodology and evidence along the way. Allison was an outstanding epidemiologist, being able to bring a sensible perspective to suicide prevention debates in Australia and internationally, with an informed inter-



pretation of research evidence, and an articulate use of descriptive analytic approaches for policy audiences. But equally, she also engaged with more arcane corners of epidemiology and emerging approaches to causal inference, and was adept at bending these contemporary approaches to the application of real world questions of policy impact.

Despite her impressive accolades, Allison also never lost sight of the importance of mentoring the next generation of researchers. Her, at times, disarming honesty made her the ideal mentor as one never had to worry about ego or politics interfering when seeking Allison's guidance. A true Australian larrikin, she was not afraid to "tell it like it was." But, for those of us who were lucky enough to count Allison as a friend and mentor, her advice was always well intentioned, well received, and ultimately, always right.

The insights of her research fed policy and practice, and vice versa – this is and continues to be one of those sought-after "virtuous cycles" of knowledge translation. Her work involved as much heart as it did mind, and was always peppered with self-deprecating humour. She didn't want to be a "tall poppy" (though she was) – what she wanted was to ask important questions using the most rigorous methods of inquiry available. Allison was gifted with the human insight to ask the right questions, the intellectual rigour to provide the best possible answers, and then the caring and emotional intelligence to see the findings through to application in the real world.

It was this rare combination of gifts that made her uniquely suited to cracking the “wicked problems” facing our society. Her research legacy will live on in various ways – through her published work, through the translation of her research to policy and practice, and through a forthcoming PhD scholarship that will bear her name, created by MATES in Construction (<http://matesinconstruction.org.au>).

Allison will be greatly missed by the international suicide prevention community, her colleagues, friends, and – most of all – her husband Rohan, their two sons Byron and Theo, and her extended family.

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