



Suicide Prevention Using the CAMS Model

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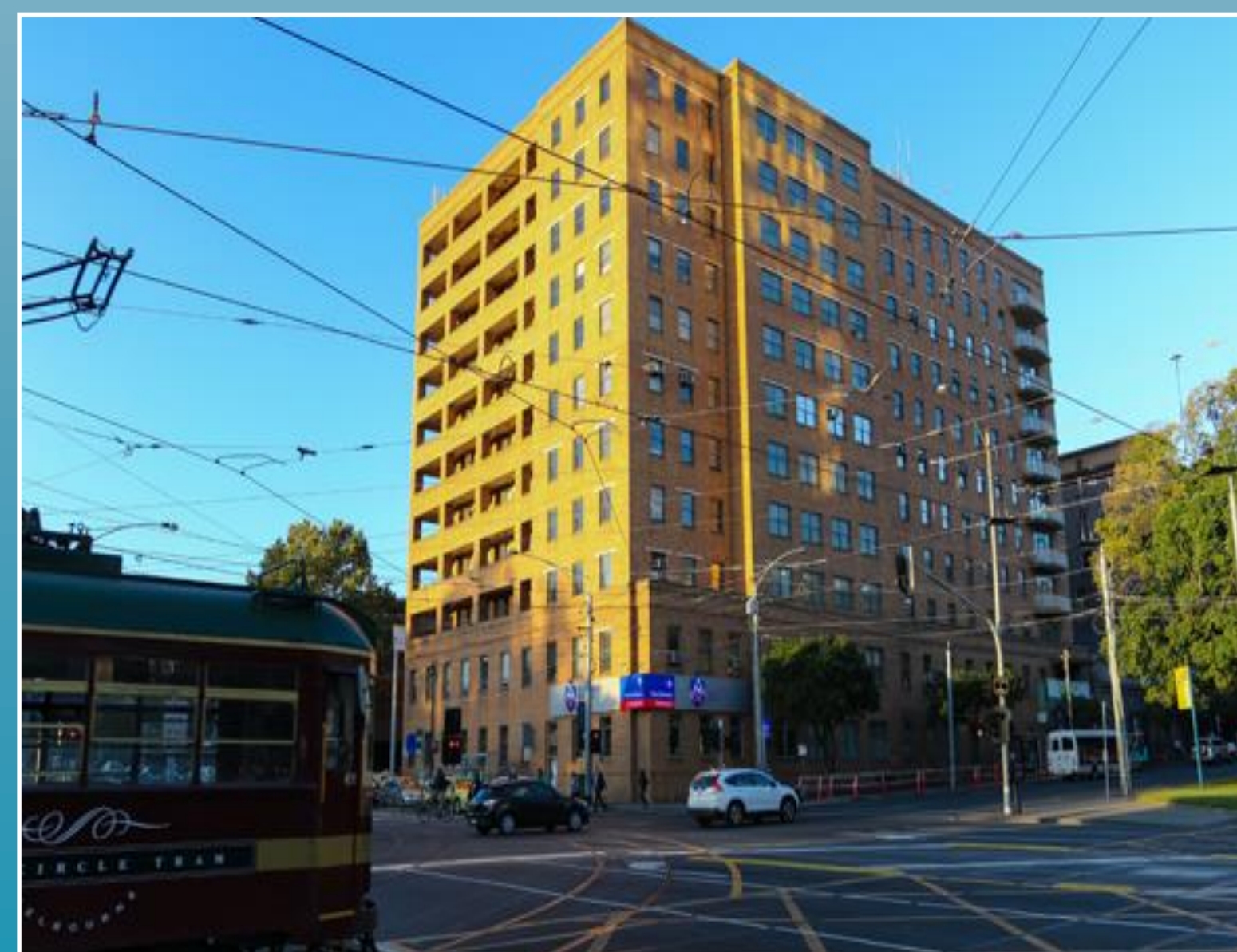
Location: Melbourne, Australia

Australia, a country in the Oceania region, is comprised of the mainland, the island of Tasmania, and the Torres Strait Islands. My placement was in Melbourne, Australia's most populous city and one of its most metropolitan areas.

Although there are substantial similarities between the US and Australia, the approaches to healthcare are markedly different. Australia has universal healthcare, which created a lot of learning opportunities in my hospital placement.

What is CAMS?

CAMS stands for Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality. Created by Dr. Steve Jobes, CAMS is a model which takes a "teamwork" approach to managing suicidal ideation in a client. Emphasis is placed on identifying a client's "drivers" for suicidal ideation or behavior, and implementing positive coping strategies which will mitigate feelings associated with the "drivers."



Global Field Placement

I was placed at St. Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM), a Catholic hospital within the St. Vincent's Healthcare Australia network. At SVHM I worked in Adult Primary Mental Health Services, on the HOPE (Hospital Outreach Post Engagement with suicide) team. The HOPE team—which had been recently created through a Zero Suicide Initiative grant—focused on suicide prevention within the healthcare system. Clients were referred to HOPE from the emergency department after incomplete suicide attempts. If they chose to engage with the program, we met with them twice a week for three months, in sessions focused on decreasing suicidal ideation, and increasing engagement with positive coping strategies.

Outcomes

Tasks

- Risk assessment/Mental state evaluation
- Individual counseling sessions
- Online medical record documentation

Projects

- "Hope Box"
 - Researched the effectiveness of the "hope box," which clients fill with items meant to encourage positive coping strategies
 - Created a sample "hope box" to present to clients at sessions
- LGBTQ Mental Health (MH) Care Provision
 - Co-presented a team professional development session on culturally responsive care to LGBTQ patients
 - Conducted specialized sessions with a client whose sexual orientation was their primary source of suicidal ideation

Developed Skills

- Advocacy
- Empathy
- Research
- Assessment and evaluation

The expansion of each of these skills in particular will be critical in the development of my professional identity, and the effective and mindful practice of social work throughout my career.

Connections

Classroom:

SW 648: Issues in Global Social Work Practice

- I had only been overseas once—thirteen years ago—prior to my global field placement. In addition to preparing me from a social work perspective, SW 648 was an integral part of expanding my knowledge of Australia, and of international travel in general.

SW 504: Diversity Social Justice in Social Work

- The knowledge I acquired about being culturally responsive in my practice of social work was helpful as I interfaced with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities.

Career:

My future career goals will frequently require me to work in multidisciplinary settings. Being placed at St. Vincent's, which utilizes an integrated healthcare approach, taught me a lot about how to combine the strengths of social work with the strengths of other fields to deliver the best possible care to those I serve.



Lessons Learned

The most impactful lesson I learned was about the importance of discomfort in a person's personal and professional growth. Being a very inexperienced traveler, one of very few people of color in my setting, and doing work around a very heavy topic was extremely uncomfortable; however, all of those things came together to make me a better social worker.

Advice

- Do a bit of learning about how universal healthcare works in Australia if you're interested in a health placement.
- Go to NAIDOC Week events. NAIDOC Week is a celebration of Indigenous Australian culture, put on by members of the community and graciously opened to outsiders.

Acknowledgments

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