

Making a difference in dementia care with Myles Godfrey



Myles Godfrey is undertaking a PhD focused on the experiences of family and friends who care for someone with dementia while living separately—known as extra-resident carers. His research addresses a gap in existing literature by exploring the unique challenges and support needs of this often-overlooked group. Funded by ARC KSS, Myles brings both academic rigour and personal commitment to his work. Highlights of his journey include conducting in-depth interviews and engaging with people with lived experience, while navigating the practical challenges of research.

Tell us about your research project:

The research is on family and friends caring for a person with dementia when they do not live together (extra-resident care). A lot of the existing literature on informal dementia care doesn't address extra-resident carers, rather focusing on co-resident or not distinguishing between different carer living situations. However, it is known that being an extra-resident carer has its own unique challenges and opportunities that set it apart and can make supporting them more complex. So my research aims to better understand their experiences as well as how they are supported and what carers think is the best way to be supported by formal services or friends and family.

What inspired you to undertake a PhD? How long will it take you to complete? And, how did you fund your studies?

After getting my MSc degree in 2020 I wanted to continue progressing as a researcher but didn't feel confident enough to pursue a PhD (and funding) at the time. After working as a research assistant for years to gain confidence and experience, as well as being supported by experienced colleagues, I was given the opportunity to apply for ARC funding and research a topic that was meaningful to me: dementia care. I currently plan to complete my PhD in September 2027.

How would you describe your journey so far as a PhD student? The highs? The challenges?

My PhD has been an enjoyable experience, but it does have challenges to deal with. The highs are the opportunities to present my PhD research, which is mostly informally in conversations with other researchers, service providers and people with lived experience of dementia care. These are always a great opportunity to not only learn and get feedback from people, but also to remind yourself that what you are doing is real and valued.

The challenges are usually related to managing my PhD, for example, administrative tasks, identifying future opportunities (conferences, recruitment), and simply keeping to schedule. Another challenge has been recruiting participants, particularly difficulties finding, accessing and translating the research aims in real-world settings.

What are the highlights of your PhD project?

The main highlight of my PhD has been conducting real interviews with participants. This is when my PhD work has felt real and valued the most, from data being collected and justifying the research aims, and from the positive feedback received from participants about the interview and research focus.

What advice / tips would you give someone thinking about undertaking taking a PhD?

Being able to stay confident in yourself and your PhD research is important. Having a knowledgeable and supportive team of supervisors is essential. Mine have helped me in both practical and emotional ways I had never anticipated when starting a PhD. And having experienced researchers express enthusiasm for your research project at high and low-points is invaluable.

What's next? What are your plans for the future?

My plans are to complete my PhD research and find opportunities to ensure it is disseminated far and wide and has maximum impact for stakeholders. Meanwhile, I will continue working as a research assistant and developing my knowledge and skills in applied health research.