

Dear Mad Reading folk,

Following on from last month's discussion about Mad Studies' relationship to the Abolition movement, in October we will be looking at the topic *Alternative models of non-carceral crisis support for mental and emotional distress*.

We thought we would mix things up a little bit this month; we have chosen some media pieces, and are including the websites of some services you may be interested in learning more about (if not already familiar to you). Hopefully these will prove accessible to everyone in the midst of collective covid fatigue!

Time and date:

Thursday, 22nd October 2020

6pm-7.30pm AEST (Melbourne time)

Zoom details:

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87272499050?pwd=OGs3RzVUM1VJbDdNQ3lkaXJabkJJZz09>

Meeting ID: 872 7249 9050

Passcode: 228607

Facilitators:

Antonia and Zara

The readings we chose for this topic are:

[*When mental health experts, not police, are the first responders*](#), Zusha Elinson, Wall Street Journal, November 24th 2018

[*A beacon of help*](#), Adam Smith, Mental Health Today, February 2009

[*Theatre of strength': where the thin blue line meets the mental health crisis*](#), Mahmood Fazal, The Guardian, September 26th 2020 (note that this article contains descriptions of recent police violence in Australia that could be distressing for readers)

[*The Failures of Police as First Responders for Mental Health Callouts*](#), Sam Elkin interviews Gregor Husper from the [Police Accountability Project](#) for 3CR Community Radio's 'Done By Law' Program (approx. 20 minutes)

Some services you might want to learn more about are:

[CAHOOTS](#) (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) – the service discussed in the above article by Zusha Elinson

[Leeds Survivor Led Crisis Service](#) – the service discussed in the above article by Adam Smith. You may also be interested in some of the [reports commissioned by LSLCS](#)

[Project LETS](#)

[The Western Mass Recovery Learning Community](#)

Some questions you might want to think about are:

- *What would a non-carceral crisis response look like to you? If police were not first responders to people experiencing mental or emotional distress, and if mental health*

legislation did not allow for detention or forced/coercive treatment, what would you want to see in its place?

- *What further research would you like to see in this area, as a Mad Studies practitioner?* There's a fair amount of qualitative research looking at the effectiveness of varying models of police intervention for mental health crisis, e.g. PACER programs (where police are accompanied by a trained mental health worker to callouts). This research seems to presuppose that police have a role to play as first responders. Do you think this is true?
- There is comparatively less data collection happening around the effectiveness of peer-led crisis responses – *do you know of any research you want to share?*
- Two of our pieces look at recent issues here in Melbourne where we're based, while the other two explore radical organisations overseas. *What can people in the Australian context learn from communities in the US and UK who are developing peer-led and non-carceral crisis services?*
- In our August session we looked at Mad Studies' role in bridging theory and practice. In the words of Jasna Russo and Peter Beresford, "Mad Studies will need to challenge the deep divide that can grow between activism and theory-building...Mad Studies must work to explore and root itself in user/survivor-led organisations and disabled peoples' organisations .. it needs to be positioned in both grassroots collective and research organisations. Supporting the development of user/survivor and disabled people's organisations should be seen as an inherent part of the Mad Studies project." *Given this, what role do we have as Mad Studies practitioners in building or supporting movements and organisations aimed at ending carceral responses to crises?*

Take care and hopefully see you soon,

Antonia & Zara