

WA's mental health carer organisation, Arafmi, has extended its reach to Perth Aboriginal communities and in particular to Aboriginal mental health carers.

Mary Ford has taken on a big beat as Arafmi's Aboriginal family/carer Support Worker.

"My new job covers the whole of Perth's metropolitan area and obviously it's quite a challenge," says Mary, a Noongar woman with roots to the Wiilman people in the Katanning area where Mary still has family.

"Aboriginal people are very private and there's a feeling of shame and stigma associated with mental health.

"They usually don't know about services available to them as carers or mental health sufferers and are often reluctant to seek them out," said Mary who has a background in dealing with people with drug and alcohol issues.

The first in this role for Arafmi, Mary has made contact with service providers dealing with Aboriginal carers and will be looking to make more Aboriginal carers aware of Arafmi's free services, including respite, healthy activities, education support, self-help and counselling.

"There's no question about the size of the problem but we've made an important start to assist Aboriginal mental health carers," Mary said.

Arafmi membership is free. Phone 94277 7100. Country callers freecall 1800 811 747.