

CONNECTIONS

The magazine of Occupational Therapy Australia, the peak body representing occupational therapy in Australia

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Connecting with the Next Generation of OTs

Local Charm and National Support:
Launching A Career in Rural Queensland

OT Students as Therapy Assistants:
Investing in Our Profession's Future

Record to Reflect: A Look at
Video Interaction Guidance

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Occupational
Therapy AUSTRALIA 

SEE HOW YOU CELEBRATED **OT WEEK 2019**

THE NEXT GENERATION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Technology for Ageing & Disability WA, Solve Disability Solutions

Inclusive Design

In the age of inclusion, we are seeing a wave of assistive technology (AT) innovation and development across Australia. Communities, universities and service providers are joining forces and building collaborative intersections between innovative design and allied health professionals; contributing to an idea-rich, innovative, open-source AT community.

With the rising tide of sector collaboration, we are seeing greater demand for (client) inclusion, client-centricity and co-design—all with an ability focus and people with disability leading the charge.

The Age of the Virtual OT

As the demand for OTs continues to climb, wait lists grow and access has become more challenging, especially for people in rural and remote areas.

Thanks to the power of technology, clients have access to a range of options to see their therapist, remotely. Using day-to-day mobile technology (such as FaceTime, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger), professional platforms like Zoom, or universal health channels such as HealthDirect/Telehealth technology, clients are now able to connect to

their provider networks from the convenience of their home or office.

Community health centres are also a valuable link in the connective chain, with some centres providing clients with appointment spaces and access to computers, internet and cameras to attend virtual appointments.

Recycle, Repurpose, Repair!

As the world re-evaluates its carbon footprint, individuals and industry are brushing up on the art of recycling, repurposing and a throwback to a repair culture—*fixing what you already have*.

In modern, local communities throughout Australia, volunteer initiatives like Repair Café and Men's Shed are investing their social capital, with a 'make it work' philosophy, and promoting sustainability by reducing waste. Free fix-it initiatives are popping up left, right and centre, offering end-to-end value—from waste reduction to the agency of skilled volunteers, and of course, equitable solutions delivered to recipients.

TADWA: Supporting the Next Generation in WA

In Western Australia, Technology for Ageing & Disability WA (TADWA) supports the education of future OTs in offering Edith

“WE ARE CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY (NEED KNOWERS) TO CREATE THE PUBLIC DOMAIN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS.”
– TOM: MELBOURNE

Cowan University and Curtin University student placements, for first through fourth year OT students (up to eight weeks), as well as clinical supervision of OT Honours students. In 2019, TADWA facilitated eight projects involving students and supervisors at Curtin in the assistive technology and home modification space.

TADWA also accepts students in a voluntary capacity to assist with a variety of aspects of their work. This then gives OT students hands-on experience in providing support to busy work environments to diverse and unique cohorts of individuals in Western Australia.

TADWA offers OT graduates employment opportunities including a comprehensive two-week Induction. Following induction, further support is facilitated through weekly and then monthly supervision teamed up with a Therapy Service Manager. An informal mentoring program

THE NEXT GENERATION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

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is set up within the team, made available based on experience and capacity. Informal training is also taught by technical staff—for hands-on training within the specialisation of design and engineering, giving new grads first-hand experience within this specialised service sector.

TADWA offers a variety of professional opportunities, including OT placements, joint projects with the community sector, and ongoing relationships with Universities. TADWA has created an active and reputable profile in the broader OT community, highlighting the specialised work of TADWA OTs and being well placed to confidently manage an increasing demand for specialised services and technologies. Suppliers and community stakeholders up and down the WA coast engage with TADWA to assist with problem-solving and facilitating AT-user independence, safety and participation.

Solve Disability Solutions: Supporting the Next Generation in Victoria

In Victoria, TADWA's sister-site, Solve Disability Solutions, echoes a similar therapeutic focused model with ample career and inclusive collaboration opportunities for OT student and practising OTs. Like their team in WA, Solve offers a state-wide outreach service with metropolitan and regional customers and OT networks.

Through partnerships with the occupational therapy departments at both Swinburne University and Deakin University, Solve's therapy team have actively positioned themselves within the core curriculum for OT students at undergrad and post grad level. This gives students at all levels the opportunity to engage with therapists 'in the field' and

explore the clinical benefits and outcomes of fit-for-purpose, and customised technologies for people with disability. This immersive experience also provides access to over 40 years of case studies, and custom training programs for individual and group capacity building. This also provides opportunities for Solve OTs to continually refresh their theoretical knowledge and calibrate their practice.

Solve Senior Occupational Therapist Liz Doyle is a Clinical Associate at Swinburne, and selects two students per term for placements within the diverse Solve team. Working with experienced OTs and over 100 state-wide engineers and technical volunteers, students play an active role in the therapy process. The placement sees students putting client's abilities at the centre of their practice, and working in co-design environment with a multi-disciplinary team to create and improve innovative solutions for clients of all ages.

Along with fulfilling course requirements, OT students with an interest in best-practice service provision have opportunities to work with a multi-disciplinary team in a collaborative working environment. As well as standard coursework, students are encouraged to take on special projects and quality improvement opportunities.

With an inhouse Clinical Associate (through Swinburne), Solve offers post-grads an opportunity to conduct research to fulfil post-grad research requirements. One current example is a qualitative investigation into individual occupational meaning and individual changes across the lifespan.

OTs with a particular interest in targeted health literacy have access to a broad

range of disciplines, working between clinical and marketing teams, focusing on client engagement, current health literacy standards and evidence-base practice. Solve's interactive student placements emphasise the valuable role OTs have in developing current, relevant and useful clinical support resources, equipping clients and families with tools to increase their comprehension and enable informed choice.

The multi-faceted role of OTs in the modern AT space encompasses a broad skillset, from client engagement, provision of custom AT and training, to interaction with stakeholders such as the NDIS, and continually exploring and promoting the benefits of AT. Solve OTs play a critical role in the assistive technology codesign process. From assessment and prescription, to design and development, through to therapeutic intervention and training. The role of OT is essential to facilitating occupational participation and performance outcomes.

As a seasoned organisation with over 40 years' AT experience, the fresh-face value of students and the emerging OT workforce provide valuable insights as Solve continues to pave cohesive pathways linking occupational therapy and the development and engineering of assistive technologies.

About TAD Australia

TAD Australia provides occupational therapy services and assistive technology solutions—that are safe, high quality and appropriate—to help people with disability and older Australians achieve their goals. To find out more about student placements, OT practice and career opportunities, visit www.tadaustralia.org.au and connect with your local provider.