

Dear Rachel

I have pleasure in submitting an expression of interest for the casual vacancy on the Occupational Therapy Australia Board. This letter outlines, and addresses, my experience specific to the required criteria.

1. A summary of what interests you about being on the OTA Board

Joining the OTA Board has long been a career aspiration. This is because I understand the role that the board serves in supporting occupational therapists in Australia and being the voice for our profession on current and future health and social issues. I perceive involvement on the board would enable me to contribute to the advancement of our profession. Coincidentally, this comes at a time when Australia is experiencing a major revolution in health care. For occupational therapy to continue to advance the health and wellbeing of Australians, the OTA Board has a critical role to play in being proactive in pioneering health care in this new landscape.

2. What skills/strengths do you believe you would bring to the OTA Board

I have extensive experience as an occupational therapy clinician and educator. My work as an academic has given me the skills to preparing graduates to practise in current and future professional roles. This requires me to be 'forward thinking' about Australian occupational therapy practice, a skill that would be advantageous on the OTA Board. I also believe I have the ability to be an objective board member. My experience on the OT Australia National Advisory Committee has enabled me to critically consider the needs of the profession in an objective way that is not influenced from the perspective of the state or the workplace that I represent.

3. A short response to each of the following selection criteria:

A vision for occupational therapy and the Association

My vision is that occupational therapy is recognised as a key health profession as its utilisation and implementation enables people to engage in daily occupations. Furthermore, my vision is that government, organisations and individuals proactively seek occupational therapy input and acknowledge the value of occupation and the contribution that our professionals make to the lives of the people with whom we work. This vision requires occupational therapists to align with our theoretical foundations and views of health care and invest in developing the professional evidence base.

In my opinion, the vision for Occupational Therapy Australia is to proactively develop, advance and advocate for the professional as a whole, together with the work of its members across a wide geographical area and a vast range of practice areas. This requires the profession to assert the contribution its members can make to the lives of our clients. My vision for the organisation is that it develops from being 'a voice' to being a 'leading voice' on issues that impact our workforce, our clients and their families.

Personal attributes: Strong communication skills / ability to respect alternative viewpoints / highly motivated

My work requires excellent communication skills. As an academic, I am required to communicate and relate to colleagues/peers and students on a regular basis. Clinically, I have also had a variety of experience interacting with a range of people including medical peers, patients and families from diverse backgrounds. I have verbally presented my research at state, national and international conferences. My work with the Occupational Therapy Council (Australia & New Zealand) has required me to produce high quality written reports using appropriate professional language.

I am able to respect alternative viewpoints presented by other people. My undergraduate degree instilled in me the need to be a life-long learner and this perspective has enabled me to keep an open mind about

opportunities to learn from other people. On previous committees, I have been able to consider alternate views and to change my initial ideas based on evidence presented to me. I am reflective and endeavour to be well informed of options before making important decisions.

My passion for occupational therapy instils a high level of motivation towards the work that I commit to. I believe my previous and current involvement on state and national committees demonstrates that I am highly motivated to advance the profession. Examples of this include ensuring high quality to national tertiary educational processes and facilitating quality educational opportunities for Occupational Therapy Australia members during my time on the NSW Divisional Council.

Leadership skills

Since 2005 I have been employed as an occupational therapy academic. This has required me to take leadership on the development and evaluation of curriculum for occupational therapy students. In my current position, I am preparing the Honours strand of our Occupational Therapy program at Griffith University. This role requires considerable leadership expertise as it encompasses training the future researchers of our profession.

I have been actively engaged with Occupational Therapy Australia since becoming a member of the NSW Divisional Council of Occupational Therapy Australia in 2011. Within this committee I was responsible for the NSW Divisional Council's CPD portfolio. This required me to participate in national level discussions about directions for the profession and included reviewing policies and by-laws. I was the Co-convenor of the Occupational Therapy Australia 2014 NSW/ACT Conference and a member of the planning committee for the 2015 'OT Australia NSW OT Practice in Dementia' forum. Between 2012 and 2015, I was also the NSW representative on the Occupational Therapy Australia National Advisory Committee. Engagement in these roles has required me to be professional, ethical and demonstrate leadership.

Understanding of contemporary issues affecting the occupational therapy profession

Working as an academic and as a casual clinical therapist, I have been able to remain up to date on health care changes occurring at both state and federal levels. I am abreast of the Occupational Therapy Australia Strategic Plan and some of the specific strategies that Occupational Therapy Australia is implementing to advance our profession for future health care delivery. This includes projects relating to engaging with Primary Health Networks, training in e-health models and providing opportunities to develop our professional body through quality continuing professional development opportunities.

I keep well informed of occupational therapy literature by regularly reviewing key international occupational therapy journals including the Australian Occupational Therapy Journal and the Canadian, British and American Journals of Occupational Therapy. I have been a reviewer for the Australian Occupational Therapy Journal since 2012. This experience has enabled me to pro-actively keep aware of emerging research and research innovation within the profession.

Proven commitment to the profession of Occupational Therapy in Australia

I have been working as an occupational therapist since mid-1999, primarily in South-West Sydney. I have also held senior clinical positions with line management responsibilities and now hold a senior educational position. I have always been active in developing and expanding my understanding of the profession and our professional modalities through continuing professional development opportunities. I am driven to demonstrate the contribution our profession can make to health and well-being of Australians. In recent years, I was a member of the planning committee for the 2015 'OT Australia NSW OT Practice in Dementia' forum,

which aimed to unite and educate occupational therapists working in this practice area. I also provided two years of mentoring to occupational therapists working in a private practice owned by physiotherapists.

Demonstrated appreciation of the breadth of occupational therapy practice settings (including public, private, academia, management, regional, rural and remote)

I perceive myself to be aware of the breadth of occupational therapy practice settings. As an academic, I have been required to develop content reflective of this breadth of practice, for example, the development of case studies to explore different practice settings (hospital/community) with different clients in urban and rural areas. I have worked clinically in metropolitan and rural areas so I appreciate how different geographical spaces influence professional practice. My involvement with the NSW Divisional Council provided me with insight in the private sector of occupational therapy practice and also enabled me to consider how to provide continuing professional development activities for therapists across different geographical areas and diverse practice settings.

Proven experience and involvement in Occupational Therapy Australia, such as on the Association's Board, Divisional Councils, Committees, contributions to the AOTJ, contributions to the Association's national and state/Divisional conferences, contributions to Special Interest Groups, Member Forums, and CPD events

As previously mentioned, I have been actively engaged with Occupational Therapy Australia since joining the NSW Divisional Council of Occupational Therapy Australia in 2011. Key roles in this position included being Co-convenor of Occupational Therapy Australia 2014 NSW/ACT Conference and a member of the planning committee for the 2015 'OT Australia NSW OT Practice in Dementia' forum. Between 2012 and 2015, I was also the NSW representative on the Occupational Therapy Australia National Advisory Committee. I am a current reviewer for the Australian Occupational Therapy Journal and, this year, I have been appointed to both the Occupational Therapy Council (Australia and New Zealand) and the Scientific Committee for the upcoming 2017 Occupational Therapy Australia National Conference.

Evidence of at least five (5) years professional experience as an occupational therapist

I completed my undergraduate occupational therapy degree at the Western Sydney University in 1998. I have been employed continuously, as an occupational therapist, since 1999.

Current member of Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA) and history of membership with OTA:

I am a current member of Occupational Therapy Australia, membership number 202486, and have a history of membership with the organisation.

With my 15+ years of expertise as an occupational therapist and involvement in national and state occupational therapy activities, I consider I would be able to make a positive and enthusiastic contribution to the OTA Board.

Thank you for your consideration of this application.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Bissett