



Submission to the Summit 2020

The Australasian Occupational Science Centre (AOSC) advocates the adoption of an occupational perspective of health as an innovative and effective strategy for promoting the health and well being of all Australians.

Three key beliefs underpin an occupational perspective of health:

- People *need to participate* in a balanced range of purposeful occupations for their health and well being
- People *have a right to participate* in occupations relevant to their community
- *Participation in occupation promotes health* in individuals, communities and populations

An occupational perspective of health is derived from theories and concepts developed in occupational science.

Occupational science is an interdisciplinary science that synthesises and generates knowledge about occupations.

Occupations are activities and tasks that people do everyday to occupy their time, not just paid employment.

The theory of humans as occupational beings states that people engage in occupations to meet their survival needs, fill their lives with meaning and purpose, and satisfy social, spiritual, emotional and physical needs.

An occupational perspective offers new and innovative approaches to healthy living because it *focuses on what makes and keeps people well* rather than on what causes them to become ill.

Many lifestyle related issues that are current challenges for Australian health services can be effectively addressed if public health policies adopt an occupational perspective.

Public health policies should support community-based, occupation-focused programs to enable people to meet their occupational needs through participation in health promoting occupations.

An occupational perspective can be adopted to promote health in all stages of life. For example:

- Provision of walkways, cycle paths and adventure playgrounds will create opportunities for people of all ages to participate in more physical

occupations which will help in decreasing the incidence of diabetes and obesity.

- Health outcomes of socio-economically disadvantaged and isolated older men could be improved if they had opportunities to participate in community-based activity programs such as men's sheds to satisfy their social and emotional needs.
- Sponsorship of programs such as 'Choir of Hard Knocks' can enable people with mental health and substance abuse problems to gain a sense of purpose and life satisfaction through participation in a rewarding and supportive group program which can help them regain control of their lives.

Community-based, occupation-focused programs such as these examples are cost effective means of promoting health and preventing illness.

AOSC seeks to build healthier, more equitable and more prosperous communities through mainstreaming an occupational perspective of health.

AOSC conducts community education programs and collaborative research projects that focus on the relationship between people's health and their participation in a range of personally meaningful occupations.

For example:

Do It Now educated older people living in the Shoalhaven about the importance of planning what they are going to do in retirement and then staying involved in community activities during their retirement.

Creative Play with Everyday Things promoted innovative ways of providing low cost / no cost creative and physical play experiences which engage children in a healthy and productive lifestyle with minimal human environmental impact.

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