

NZAOT Graduate Award

Otago 2008



NZAOT is delighted to congratulate **Megan Brian** as the 2008 Otago NZAOT Graduate Award winner.

Megan says, 'Receiving this award has come as a real surprise to me, in fact I really had no idea! I have spent the last three years studying alongside some very talented, motivated and intelligent students, who have guided and supported me through my studies. These students have come from all walks of life and I know they will achieve great things in the future within their personal and professional lives.'

Megan describes her journey to becoming an occupational therapist as having no clear start point, and believes that the most influential has been her experiences being apart of a mixed ability dance group, 'Jolt', based in Christchurch and now also Dunedin. *'Jolt has shown me how the barriers of disability can be removed to discover an individual's strengths and abilities through the medium of dance'*, says Megan.

Highlights from Megan's time as a student include travelling from the small, big to medium towns across the North and South Islands. Although being away from home had challenges

for Megan, she also savoured her time as a 'long-term' tourist living and working among the locals. It enhanced her learning experience and she is now confident that she can go anywhere and do anything with her occupational therapy skills.

So what of the future for Megan, sadly for New Zealand occupational therapy she has set her sights beyond our shores and has accepted a job offer in Rockhampton, Queensland. However Megan says, *'I am super excited about the move but New Zealand will definitely always be home and I envisage returning at some point in the future'*. Beyond this Megan is uncertain but knows she has more to see, more to learn and more to experience as she realizes the potential that is available to her as a new graduate.

Megan wants to take the opportunity to thank those who accompanied her on journey, from the fieldwork supervisors across the country who she says, 'shared their experiences, their offices and had the faith in me to share their workload with me', to all the people, clients, patients and students, *'who allowed me to learn and practice, simply "thanks"'*. As for the Otago staff, Megan says, *'you taught, I listened and hopefully I will have the opportunity to return the favour one day. Cheers. Otago Polytechnic offers a well-rounded personable programme that supports individuals learning and Dunedin is a fantastic place to study as a student, it is a true right of passage to be based in Dunedin'*.

NZAOT Graduate Award

AUT 2008



NZAOT is delighted to congratulate Claire Bullock as the 2008 AUT winner of the NZAOT graduate Award.

Claire reports that she is extremely grateful to have been selected for this award.

"I don't think I could have achieved it, let alone made it through the last 3 years without a lot of people helping me along the way. I was very fortunate to be part of a fantastic year group and have great friends at uni, who all supported each other. "

Claire remembers the numerous stressful moments just before assignments were due or during placements and how it was great to have each other and know that everyone was in the same boat. She adds that her family has also been fantastically supportive. *"When I told them that I was planning on going back to university they all encouraged me and told me that I could do it. My fiancée has been an immense source of support; he helped me proof read assignments and listened to me talk about things that he had absolutely no idea about, but nodded in agreement anyway! But, most of all he encouraged me to achieve my goals;*

he had an enduring belief that I could do it, which I am very grateful for."

"The lecturers who were always there to answer the hundreds of questions and the clinical supervisors who shared their knowledge and provided a great environment to put the theory into practice made the degree what it was and is helping me now as a new graduate," says Claire.

Going back to university as a 'mature student' says Claire was a hard decision, but one that she is very glad that she made. After 4 years as a travel agent she decided she wanted a career that was more personally meaningful.

"Little did I know then that I would spend the next 3 years learning about the importance of meaningful occupation!!"

Following a meeting with a careers coach and some investigation, Claire decided on occupational therapy. However, her excitement waned when she realised that she had missed the cut off for applications by a couple of months. She decided to apply anyway and thought, if it was meant to be, it was meant to be. It was definitely meant to be!

Claire knew she had made the 'absolutely' right choice after her first clinical placement and as she learnt more about occupational therapy she realised that the values and philosophy behind it were a great fit with her personal values and beliefs.

Today, Claire is working at Auckland Hospital on the orthopaedic ward as part of their rotation programme. She is enjoying the work environment, and as a new graduate is feeling well supported, and has plentiful opportunities for broadening her knowledge. She describes the experience as both extremely challenging and rewarding, and how exciting it was to write NZROT next to her name on the first set of clinical notes!

On thinking of what the future holds, Claire considers that she may be entertaining the idea of doing her Masters, although adds, *'but who knows? If someone had asked me 5 years ago what I would be doing now, I would never have thought it would be occupational therapy.'*

The final word from Claire: *"Over the course of the degree I developed knowledge of occupational therapy and of myself as a person. I have gained a new career and experiences that will stay with me for a long time to come. I hope that my fellow classmates are enjoying their first year out of Uni and wish everyone success and happiness in their future careers."*

Claire's favourite quote:

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

-- Mark Twain

NZAOT would like to wish Claire and Megan and all the 2008 graduates an exciting and professionally satisfying career in occupational therapy.