



Date: 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2010

**Work hard, live long, die fulfilled: *Work* is a basic human need – and *occupation* is therapeutic - no surprise to occupational therapists**

The New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (NZAOT) fully supports the Australasian Faculty of Occupational & Environmental Medicine position statement “Realising the Health Benefits of Work” to be launched 25 May 2010 in Auckland.

The basis on which the Faculty’s position statement has been developed is aligned with the philosophy of occupational therapy. Indeed occupational therapy has much to offer in terms of evidence, knowledge and understanding of work and occupation. For occupational therapists *occupation* is considered to include (but is not limited to) work, leisure, self care, domestic and community activities.

William Rush Dunton (1868-1966), the ‘father of occupational therapy’ sought to promote the idea that occupation (including work) is a basic human need, and that occupation was therapeutic. From his statements, came some of the basic beliefs of occupational therapy, which include:

- ***Occupation* has a positive effect on health and well-being**
- ***Occupation* creates structure and organizes time**
- ***Occupation* brings meaning to life, culturally and personally**
- ***Occupations* are individual. People value different occupations**

These beliefs clearly align with the content of the Faculty’s position statement. As occupational therapy has developed, so has the knowledge and evidence between occupations and health, and this continues to evolve. Since the late 1990’s the development of a new science, occupational science, has greatly contributed to understandings of occupation including work. Therefore a significant level of research and evidence exists, which spans the profession’s history, to support the notions that have been stated in the position statement.

Without a doubt occupational science and occupational therapy have much to offer the Faculty in terms of how the value and understanding of work and worklessness contribute to health status. We would encourage, support and welcome a closer partnership between the Faculty and the profession of occupational therapy in order to address the recommendations outlined in the position statement.

###

**For further Information:**

Nikki Porteous

Ph: (04) 494 9161 or mobile 0274 710904

Email: [nikki.porteous@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:nikki.porteous@ccdhb.org.nz)

**Nikki Porteous**, an occupational therapist, WorkFirst coordinator, published author and strong advocate of how employment and educational opportunities for people with the experience of mental illness, assists with their recovery.

For copy of the Faculty position statement referred to:

<http://www.racp.edu.au/index.cfm?objectid=D7FAA935-92EB-90E8-C6A7D8BE27A8D41F>

### **More about the New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (NZAOT)**

- NZAOT is the leading representative for occupational therapists in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
- Supporting occupational therapists since 1949
- **Mission:** Promoting excellence in knowledge, standards, support and representation
- **Values:** The values that underpin NZAOT are:
  - Occupational Justice
  - Professionalism
  - Integrity
  - Collaboration and
  - Transparency
- **Web:** [www.nzaot.com](http://www.nzaot.com)