



FROM: The New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (Inc)

Subject: RATIFICATION – RIGHT ON!

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS APPLAUD RATIFICATION OF United Nations CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Date: 21 October, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (NZAOT) congratulates the New Zealand government for its ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This human rights treaty prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in all areas of life and was signed on Friday 26 September 2008. The CRPD contains specific provisions related to rehabilitation, habilitation, education, employment, health and access to information, public facilities and services. To date, 134 countries have signed the Convention, 73 have signed the Optional Protocol, 38 states have ratified the treaty and 22 states have ratified the Protocol.

Elizabeth Rowland, President NZAOT who attended the celebrations at Parliament on Wednesday 24 September said, "I am proud to call myself a New Zealander, by signing this convention without reservations or declarations, this government has demonstrated New Zealand's commitment to the rights of people with disabilities. Furthermore, 'occupational justice and equity' is a step closer. Now we need to begin the hard work regarding education and implementation of this convention."

Occupational justice is defined by Wilcock and Townsend (2000) as "**equitable opportunity and resources to enable people's engagement in meaningful occupations**" (p.85)¹. The term 'occupation' is used in the widest sense: "...occupation is everything people do to occupy themselves, including looking after themselves (self-care), enjoying life (leisure), and contributing to the social and economic fabric of their community (productivity)"².

The acceptance of the notion of occupational justice and equity, is also transparent in the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) Position Statement on Human Rights

¹ Townsend, E., & Wilcock, A. (2004). Occupational justice and client-centred practice: A dialogue-in-progress. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 71, 75-87.

² Townsend, E. (Ed) (1997) *Enabling occupation: An occupational therapy perspective*. Ottawa: CAOT Publications ACE.

(2006) in relation to occupation and rights, people have the right to “be included and valued as members of their family, community and society.”³

“The New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists now calls on the New Zealand government to add action to this public demonstration of commitment to disability rights, by ensuring a time bound commitment to deliver on the New Zealand Disability Strategy objective 7.5 which states, *‘Encourage equity of funding and service provision for people with similar needs regardless of the cause of their impairment.’*” says Rowland.

In addition, the New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists supports the call for New Zealand to also ratify the Optional Protocol, which relates to how individuals or groups can seek redress for violations of the CRPD once national remedies are exhausted.

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The New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists: the professional association of occupational therapists in Aotearoa/new Zealand: Promoting excellence in knowledge, standards, support and representation.
See: www.nzaot.com

³ World Federation of Occupational Therapists Position Paper. (July 2006). Human Rights.
Retrieved April 3, 2008. <http://www.wfot.org/documents.asp?cat=&state=&name=&id=&pagenum=5>