

**EDITORIAL**

# Doing, being, becoming, and belonging—A diversity, equity, and inclusion commitment

The *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal* is an international journal that seeks to represent the diverse, global occupational therapy community. As signalled by Buchanan (2021), the Editorial Board have commenced a process of reflection about diversity, equity, and inclusion in publishing. In doing so, we recognise the history of the research community and academic journals in neglecting to engage in inclusive practices. We recognise the systemic racism, biases, injustices, and prejudices experienced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples in research, and by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers and authors. Moving forward, we have a commitment for action and the development of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statement. But first we must engage in a process that increases our awareness and understanding of how the current processes, structures, and people lead to ongoing racism, bias, exclusion, and inequity.

Our aim is for the *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal* to be an inclusive, and respectful journal that is a positive experience for authors, readers, reviewers, and members of the editorial board. To achieve this outcome, we have a commitment to questioning current journal practices through the lenses of diversity, equity, and inclusion, to continue learning and dismantling inequitable practices, and progressing towards a journal that recognises and addresses the disparities and inequities experienced. We are considering this from the perspectives of First Australians<sup>1</sup> and all populations who have been excluded or discriminated against by existing systems and approaches.

As a profession, occupational therapy has a long history in the foundations of doing, being, becoming, and belonging (Wilcock, 2006). The editorial board have a clear vision towards practices and processes that support *belonging*. A vision towards inclusion, connection, mutual support, reciprocity, and equitable opportunity for all (Hammell, 2014; Hitch et al., 2014). Consistent with *becoming*, we are prepared to test our beliefs and processes and respond through a process of 'potential and growth, of transformation and self-actualisation' (pg 5) (Wilcock, 1999).

Ann Wilcock (1999) spoke about the imbalance of *doing*—the have and have nots, the rich and poor, the informed, and the illiterate. If we are to conceptualise the business of the journal and our *doing* as the publication of manuscripts then we are challenged to think about the submission, review, and publication processes. What is the imbalance of this doing and who are the disadvantaged? To understand this, we must also understand our *being*—who we are as a journal and an editorial board. What are the traits that we embody as members of the editorial board and how do these reflect the aims and scope of the journal?

The editorial board met in June 2022 and, on the foundation of doing, being, becoming, and belonging, have established three commitments for the next 12 months.

**Commitment 1.** We commit to exploring, revealing, and understanding the experiences, qualities, and values that we embody as members of the editorial board. As a first step, each editorial board member has written their positionality statement. These are included below and will be available on the journal home page. They will be used to support identification of the missing voices, perspectives, and expertise that, in turn, limits the diversity of the board and reduces the possibilities for all voices to be represented in the processes of the journal.

**Commitment 2.** We commit to the Reconciliation Action Plan of Occupational Therapy Australia and to partner with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples to explore, reveal and understand how current journal processes support bias, assumptions, injustices, and prejudices against Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We will co-create processes that support welcoming and culturally safe practices for manuscripts written about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples and by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers and authors.

**Commitment 3.** We commit to exploring, revealing, and understanding how current journal processes support bias, assumptions, injustices, and prejudices against groups who have been historically discriminated,

marginalised, or underserved. We will address these through co-creation of practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## 1 | WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We are carefully and respectfully understanding this space from the perspective of an academic journal and editorial board. We are taking small, but important, steps towards addressing the past issues. One example of these steps resulted from a discussion with members of Indigenous Allied Health Australia. This discussion led to the addition of an identity question during the manuscript submission process, providing an opportunity for the submitting author to indicate if any member of the authorship team identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Person. This change was encouraged to signal cultural safety and indicates to the Associate Editors that at least one reviewer of that manuscript should identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Person.

As outlined in commitment 1, we have commenced a process to understand our 'being' as an editorial board. Positionality statements are commonly written to position the researcher within the research conducted; however, we felt they were important to position us as individuals as members of the editorial board. These are outlined below,<sup>2</sup> and we will discuss them in coming months to identify the missing voices, perspectives, and expertise.

## 2 | POSITIONALITY STATEMENTS

**Louise Gustafsson:** I am a cisgender, heterosexual, white female who was afforded a privileged education at an all-girls school and entry into a female-dominated profession. I am an ally for the LGTBQIA+ community and have lived most of my life on the unceded lands of the Turrbul and Jaggera people. I have predominantly hospital-based clinical experience, working with older adults and adults living with a range of neurological and medical conditions. As an educator, I actively partner with First Australians to expand my understanding of our true history and decolonise the occupational therapy curriculum. As a researcher, I value the contributions of people with lived experience as equal members in research teams. As an individual, I have strong ties to family with lived experience of supporting people with chronic illness, including mental health. Formative personal and professional experiences shaped my early understanding of bias, exclusion, and injustice, and I am

on a continual path of learning to understand and dismantle the mechanisms that exclude and disadvantage priority populations.

**Carol McKinstry:** I am a cisgender, heterosexual, white female of Irish, Scottish, and English descent, living for most of my life on the unceded lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. I am an educator who actively partners with First Australians to learn and expand my understanding of other knowledges and histories to decolonise the health curricula I oversee and teach into. In my work and community involvement, I am an ally for the LGTBQIA+ community. I have lived experience of supporting people with chronic illness, including renal disease and mental health.

**Angus Buchanan:** I identify as a married, white Australian male, heterosexual, father and grandfather in a loving family. I have and continue to benefit from my white privilege, attending a private boy's school and have had numerous opportunities to engage in funded educational opportunities leading to a successful career with many supportive colleagues and sustaining networks of support. I have had the opportunity to work in Australia and internationally in female-dominated workforces. During most of my career I have held leadership roles and have had the advantage of not being impacted by career breaks or ever felt I have experienced impactful gender bias. While actively working against discrimination at all levels, as a male I cannot fully appreciate the lived experience of gender-based bias on females or people who identify in non-binary ways. Because of a perceived difference in me by others, I was the victim of sustained brutal bullying in my formative years. This has impacted on my values, passion, and commitment to eliminate the exclusion and marginalisation people experience because they are different and do not fit someone's world view. My career work has been with and for people with intellectual disabilities. I believe deeply in the power of the local and global community and make a range of ongoing contributions that utilise my advantage to hopefully ensure others gain theirs. In my work I have the privilege to work closely with Aboriginal elders who graciously and respectfully guide my journey of connection and reconciliation. I am a carer and a vocal advocate about the impact of systems on the lives of elders.

**Kate Laver:** I am an occupational therapist and researcher. I grew up in the Barossa Valley in South Australia (on the lands of the Peramangk people) and moved to Kaurana land to attend University. I am passionate about addressing the health inequities that exist for people in rural and regional areas. I am a white, cisgender, married woman and parent. I initially became interested in occupational therapy after supporting family

members with stroke, cancer, and cardiovascular disease, and as an occupational therapist, I have worked predominantly with older people in rehabilitation settings. I am committed to producing, editing, and publishing work that is of relevance and value to the community.

**Jacki Liddle:** I am an occupational therapist and researcher at a university in Brisbane (Meeanjin), Australia, on Turrbul and Jaggera lands. I am a white, middle-aged, married, cisgender, heterosexual woman, living in a metropolitan area. I have lived experience of living with chronic illnesses; living within a biracial/multicultural family; and part-time and insecure employment. I research within transdisciplinary teams with collaborators of various perspectives and expertises, who contribute specialised knowledges, ways of working and outlooks, including living experience. I have clinical experience in community, hospital, and aged care settings. I perceive my research role as one of learning and I seek to partner in my research work, and be an ally in my life generally, as part of my ongoing learning and in moving towards a more just world.

**Tammy Aplin:** As a researcher, educator, and occupational therapist I continually seek to understand and recognise how my own experience and positions contribute to my work, in particular my interpretations of people's lived experience, and how I understand and critique others scholarly work. I am a white, cisgender, married, heterosexual woman. I attended rural public schools and was first in my family to attend university. I have lived in the same area most of my life, on the unceded lands of the Jagera, Turrbal, Jinibara, and Kabi Kabi people. I collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and educators and am committed to continual learning and truth telling. I am an ally for the LGBTQIA+ community and have lived experience of supporting family members with chronic illness. My research, clinical, and personal experience drives my commitment to working towards a more just society.

**Stephen Isbel:** I strive to recognise how my own positionality shapes the way I view the world and how I interpret the experience of other people. I acknowledge that my background influences the way I create scholarly work and in the way I critique and understand the work of others. For this reason, I acknowledge I am a white male of English descent, cisgendered, heterosexual, and from a privileged background. I have spent most of my life on Ngunnawal country, and I am committed to incorporating Indigenous ways of doing and knowing into my teaching and research.

**Carolyn Murray:** As an occupational therapist, I value qualities of integrity and authenticity in my education and research practices. I engage in cross disciplinary

and collaborative work which broadens my perspective and provides opportunity to learn about and appreciate different communities and cultures. I have a background in qualitative research, which I believe has a role in sharing diverse viewpoints (when conducted with rigour). I have lived most of my life on Kaurana land but also have strong family connections to Barnjarla land in rural South Australia. I am a white, cisgender, married, woman who values education and learning for everyone. I am always reflective in my position as an editorial board member and aim to understand the scholarly work of others with consideration, open-mindedness and respect.

**Nerida Hyett:** I am a fifth generation white Australian with British and Chinese ancestors. My family have lived and worked on Dja Dja Wurrung Country (Bendigo) since the goldrush/invasion. I am a cisgender female in my late thirties and I live with my husband and two miniature dachshunds; I have lived experience as a carer for a family member with a chronic condition and disability. I have worked in Bendigo as an occupational therapist since 2006. My clinical background is in community health, mental health and alcohol and other drugs, and community development. I have worked in research and occupational therapy education for over 10 years, and I'm currently working an industry-based research project position in a rural/regional Primary Health Network. I am passionate about rural health and growing the rural workforce to ensure equity of access and outcomes for rural people. I advocate for and strive to demonstrate critical and collaborative approaches to education, practice and research informed by First Nations Peoples expertise in cultural safety and anti-racism.

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Carol McKinstry 

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Kate Laver 

Genevieve Pepin 

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**ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> As a group, we partner with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples from around Australia. We recognise that there are preferences across the different lands regarding the use, or not, of the terms First Australians or First Nations. We are using them here to represent the variable ways that we as individuals have been encouraged to use them by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

<sup>2</sup> Genevieve Pepin's positionality statement will be included when the statements are added to the journal website.

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