

**80TH ANNIVERSARY OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AUSTRALIA
AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY WEEK 2024**

REMARKS BY

**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2024

Good evening, everyone. I warmly welcome you all to Government House to mark two significant milestones—the celebration of Occupational Therapy Week 2024 and the 80th anniversary of Occupational Therapy Australia.

May I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose Country we gather. I acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as ongoing custodians of Country. I recognise their enduring culture and deep connection to land, sea, sky and waters.

Occupational Therapy Week highlights the important and valued work of over 30,000 occupational therapists nationwide, with over 430 in Tasmania.

Whether working with children, the elderly, veterans, or individuals recovering from illness or injury, occupational therapists have helped improve the quality of life for countless Australians.

Occupational therapists work professionally, patiently, and tirelessly to help people achieve independence, gain new skills, and manage the challenges in their everyday lives.

This year's theme for the week — *Empower, Enable, Adapt* — captures the essence of how occupational therapists work. With a focus on holistic care and clients' physical, emotional, and social wellbeing, therapists look at how individuals interact with their surroundings at home, work, or in their communities, and develop individualised strategies to make environments more accessible and supportive.

Over the past 80 years, occupational therapy has undergone significant changes towards its current status as a vital part of healthcare. The profession has continuously adapted to meet the changing needs of our society.

In the 1940s, the focus was largely on rehabilitation, particularly for veterans returning from war. Today, occupational therapists work in various settings, addressing physical rehabilitation, mental health, chronic illness, ageing populations, and even the impacts of social and environmental challenges.

Celebrating these 80 years of progress, let us look to the future. Demands on our healthcare system will continue to grow. However, the profession is well-positioned to address future challenges—whether supporting an ageing population, managing the increasing prevalence of chronic conditions, or addressing mental health challenges.

In closing, may I congratulate Occupational Therapy Australia on its 80th anniversary and thank all occupational therapists. Your dedication, compassion, and tireless efforts have made a difference in the lives of many people across Tasmania and Australia.

I wish you all many more years of innovation and care. Thank you and congratulations again on your 80th anniversary.