

CONNECTIONS

Supporting all people to engage in activities they find meaningful

AUTUMN 2024 | VOL 21 ISSUE 1

Progress, Pride, Empowerment, and Connection



OTA's New Strategic Plan

The Value of Experiential Learning
and Lived Experience

Tina Champagne is Coming This June!

My Burnout Story

Occupational
Therapy AUSTRALIA



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion:

How to find blind spots in your OT practice

WorkPlacePLUS

As Australia's working landscape continues to evolve, compliance requirements for occupational therapists and practice owners are increasing. For example, fostering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is not simply a 'nice to have' target – it's a requirement under the Respect at Work Act.

Quick refresh: What are D, E & I?

Workplace diversity means recognising the variety of differences between your employees and understanding the varied perspectives, approaches and talents these differences bring to your workplace.

Workplace equity means all employees are provided with fair and equal opportunities based on their individual needs. This is sometimes referred to as EEO – equal employment opportunity.

Workplace inclusion means understanding and respecting employees' differences, so that everyone feels valued in the workplace and can contribute to their full potential.

How to cultivate DEI

To foster DEI in your occupational therapy practice, it's important to be able to identify unconscious biases in the workplace, challenge them, and learn about fair and equitable work practices.

Everyone has unconscious biases; it's part of being human. We are biologically hardwired to take mental shortcuts by aligning with the 'familiar' and rejecting anything 'different'.

Unfortunately, in the workplace, unconscious biases can affect individual and collective decision-making and create inequitable work practices, which can ultimately result in unlawful discrimination.



Photo: © Getty Images/ysuri

I'm not biased! Am I?

Dozens of biases commonly occur in the workplace. Here's a snapshot of just a few:

1. The Horn Effect – Happens when you perceive something negative about a person and then cast them in a negative light permanently.
2. The Halo Effect – Happens when you perceive something positive about a person and then cast them in a positive light permanently.
3. The Anchoring Effect – Tendency to anchor onto the first piece of information you receive and base all subsequent judgments or opinions on this.
4. The Ostrich Effect – Only considering the information that matters to you and dismissing other factors.

Can you think of examples of when you have been affected by one or all of these bias effects? We're all influenced by them at least some of the time.

The good news is we can take steps to minimise our biases. Learning about unconscious biases reminds us to challenge our instincts, which is an important step towards championing diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.

Your legal obligations

If you have questions or need more information about your employer and employee obligations under anti-discrimination laws and the Respect at Work Act 2022, it is best to seek professional advice through:

- The Fair Work Ombudsman,
- The Australian Human Rights Commission, or
- An HR consultancy that works closely with the allied health sector such as WorkPlacePLUS.

OTA member benefits

OTA members receive special benefits through WorkPlacePLUS for support with human resources (HR) and Industrial Relations (IR). For more information, contact Anna on (03) 9492 0958 or visit WorkPlacePLUS.com.au (scan the QR code):

