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## Allied health workers need placement pay

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### Allied health workers need placement pay

WE support Federal MP for Indi Helen Haines who moved an amendment on Wednesday to require the government to include all allied health sectors in paid placements.

We urge the government to address the desperate shortage of Occupational Therapists (OT) by supporting them to enter the profession by expanding the practical paid placement scheme.

Vulnerable populations across Australia, including one in four school-aged children with a disability, depend on occupational therapy (OT) services.

In the past year, waitlists have surged for clients – these wait times are exacerbated due to almost 75 per cent of the country's OTs experiencing significant financial distress, with many being forced to close their practices.

We must encourage, retain and inspire our student base - more than 90 per cent of which are women - and strongly urge the government to consider OTs' inclusion in the Commonwealth Practical Placement Payment scheme.

This will promote greater equity for students entering the allied health profession and alleviate a major financial barrier that hinders many from pursuing this vital field of practice.

To exclude occupational therapy would be reckless and jeopardise the future for OTs serving rapidly growing numbers of vulnerable populations across Australia.

Occupational Therapy Australia urges the government to address the desperate shortage of OTs by supporting them to enter the profession by expanding the Commonwealth Practical Paid Placement Scheme.

The profession is required to undergo 1000 hours of placement work before graduating as a registered and qualified OT.

This places an unrealistic burden on students with instances of students being

unable to continue studying due to financial hardships.

It creates inequity in education opportunities – those who can afford to finish their studies, and those who cannot, and perpetuates a lack of diversity across allied health professions.

The number of Australians requiring occupational therapy services continues to surge with one in four school-aged children with a developmental delay or disability, depend on occupational therapy (OT) services, and 4.2 million Australians over 65 whose ability to live independently and actively can be enhanced by an OT.

In the past year, waitlists have surged for clients – these wait times are exacerbated due to almost 75 per cent of the country's OTs experiencing significant financial distress, with many being forced to close their practices.

We need to encourage and enable students to enter into our allied health professions, the future health of our nation depends on it.

We must encourage, retain and inspire our student base - more than 90 per cent of which are women – to enter a profession that must continue to expand in numbers to meet the growing needs of our community including, people with disabilities, children with developmental delays and our aging population.

Occupational therapy's inclusion in the Commonwealth Practical Placement Payment scheme is a necessary step in securing the workforce for the future.

To exclude occupational therapy would be reckless and jeopardise the growth of a profession that serves the rapidly growing numbers of vulnerable populations across Australia.

**Samantha Hunter, CEO of Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA)**