Occupational Therapy Australia

Occupational Therapy and the Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

Occupational therapists (sometimes called OTs) support older people to continue participating in the activities that are meaningful and important to them, enabling them to live safely, independently and with confidence as they age, whether in their own home, community, or residential aged care setting. Working with a person's own strengths and abilities, OTs provide tools and support to help older people to keep doing the things that are important to them, making a difference for the older person, their carers and families.

Ageing well with occupational therapy

Occupational therapists are registered Allied Health Professionals. They often have additional training in areas such as prescribing assistive technology (e.g. powered wheelchairs and other devices), recommending changes to the home to support independence such as installing handrails, or complete bathroom modifications, or assessing a person's thinking (functional cognition) and determining whether it is safe for them to drive or if they might benefit from modifications to their car.

Occupational therapists work with older people, their families and carers to address a range of ageing specific needs. These include:



5/340 Gore St, Fitzroy VIC 3065
ABN: 27 025 075 008
1300 682 878
ACN: 127 396 945
info@otaus.com.au
otaus.com.au

Occupational Therapy and the Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

Occupational therapists are committed to providing safe, quality care aligned with the Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards.

Occupational therapists respect a person's rights, goals and identity. Occupational therapists work in a way that is culturally safe and trauma-aware, with a focus on living and ageing well.

Standard 1
The individual

- Occupational therapists' partner with the older person to set individualised goals and plans that respect identity, culture and preferences.
- They enable respect, privacy and dignity of risk through functional retraining, assistive technology (AT), environmental modification prescription and carer education.
- They document and communicate clear, accessible intervention goals, plans and outcome measures.

Standard 2
The organisation

- Occupational therapists advise on strategic priorities for access, reablement, safety and inclusion; contribute to policy, governance and quality systems.
- They build workforce capability through education and training (i.e. safe manual handling, dementia strategies, AT use) and advocate for least-restrictive practice.
- They contribute to risk, incident and information management with rigorous documentation and quality data.
- They support workforce planning, supervision and emergency/disaster functional safety planning.

Standard 3
The care and services

- Occupational therapists complete comprehensive, occupation-focused assessments across physical, cognitive and psychosocial needs, and co-develop measurable plans and goals.
- They deliver evidence-based, efficient interventions and coordinate care across services and teams.
- They communicate functional and safety requirements (i.e. AT setup, manual handling) to support shared care.
- They plan and coordinate AT trials, home modifications and rehabilitation programs across suppliers and providers.

Standard 4
The environment

- Occupational therapists assess home environments; prescribe minor-to-complex modifications and technologies to maximise safety and independence.
- They advise on the design of dementia-friendly environments that support engagement.
- They support people to engage with their local communities and natural environments.

Standard 5
Clinical care

- Occupational therapists contribute to clinical governance, quality indicators and person-centred, evidence-based care.
- They enable safe medicine use by addressing functional/cognitive aspects and adaptive aids.
- Occupational therapists manage high-impact risks (falls, pressure injury) via AT, environmental adaptation and restorative/rehabilitative approaches.
- They provide cognitive rehabilitation and environmental strategies for people with cognitive impairment.
- They support palliative and end-of-life care with comfort, positioning and meaningful engagement.

Standard 6
Food and nutrition

- Occupational therapists assess functional eating/feeding skills and posture. They partner with individuals on mealtime goals and preferences.
- They prescribe adaptive mealtime equipment and optimise dining experiences to address safety, dignity and social connection.

Standard 7
The residential community

- Occupational therapists co-design meaningful individual and group activities that maintain roles, connection, cognition and wellbeing.
- They ensure continuity of care when people transition between settings like hospitals and home.

5/340 Gore St, Fitzroy VIC 3065
ABN: 27 025 075 008
1300 682 878
ACN: 127 396 945
info@otaus.com.au
otaus.com.au

Benefits of occupational therapy

Occupational therapists use approaches backed by evidence to help older people to stay active, independent, and engaged in everyday life as they age.

Support people to live at home for longer

Evidence has shown that home hazard reduction conducted by an occupational therapist can reduce the risk of falls by 38% for those at high risk [1] with further research finding occupational therapy led home modifications resulted in positive outcomes for older people and their carers including less pain and better quality of life [2].

Enable older people to positively age

Evidence strongly supports the key role of occupational therapists in enabling participation, independence, autonomy, safety and reduced care needs through the assessment, selection and implementation of assistive technologies.[3].

Evidence also supports the highly relevant and valuable role of occupational therapy in supporting social participation and addressing social isolation for older people [4] with further evidence demonstrating that interventions designed and/or delivered by occupational therapists have the potential to promote the occupational performance of older adults living in long-term care [5].

Reduce the impacts of cognitive impairment

Evidence shows group-based occupational therapy cognitive interventions are successful in improving everyday memory function among people with early dementia [6] and that working with an occupational therapist can help to maintain independence, reduce the impact of changes in behavior and improve quality of life for people living with dementia [7].

Improve care experiences and outcomes

Evidence demonstrates that reablement-focused, multidisciplinary care teams that include occupational therapy can improve physical functioning and maintain quality of life and reduce frailty for older adults [8]. Evidence shows that occupational therapists strengthen workforce capability with multidisciplinary colleagues and carers [9].







5/340 Gore St, Fitzroy VIC 3065
ABN: 27 025 075 008

1300 682 878
ACN: 127 396 945

info@otaus.com.au
otaus.com.au

A future-ready workforce

Occupational Therapy Australia works alongside our profession to ensure our current and future workforce have the knowledge and tools needed to support older people as they age. This includes a range of easy to use practice resources and information sheets that break down the different elements of the new home-based aged care reforms and go into further detail about the alignment between occupational therapy practice and the Aged Care Quality Standards. OTA Members can access these resources by **scanning the QR code** or visiting **bit.ly/4echFkP.**

These resources are designed to complement broader standards and frameworks such as:

- Australian Occupational Therapy Competency Standards (2018),
- OTA Occupational Therapy Scope of Practice Framework (2017),
- OTA Professional Supervision Framework (2025),
- OTA Australian Evidence Based Practice Position Statement (2019),
- OTA Code of Ethics (2025)
- OTA Capability Framework for occupational therapists working with older people (Aged Care).

Occupational therapy and you

Working with an occupational therapist can help older people and carers navigate everyday challenges and make informed choices about support. To find out more about how occupational therapists can support older people, visit our website for a range of practical flyers covering topics such as dementia, driving, falls, mealtimes, and more. Access by **scanning the QR code** or visiting **bit.ly/41ZjWbP.**

To access an occupational therapist

- Contact My Aged Care 1800 200 422
- Speak to your GP to obtain a referral under Medicare or DVA
- To find out more about occupational therapy and to find an OT working with older people near you, **scan the QR code** or visit **otaus.com.au/find-an-ot.**

References

1. Clemson, L., Stark, S., Phills, A. C., Fairhall, N. J., Lamb, S. E., Ali, J., & Sherrington, C. (2023). Environmental interventions for preventing falls in older people living in the community. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, 2023(1), Article CD013258. https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD013258.pub2
2. Hutchinson, C., Block, H., Dymmott, A., Gough, C., Laver, K., Walker, R., Xiao, L., & George, S. (2025). Home modification outcomes for adults aged 50 years and over and their relatives: A scoping review. OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health, 45(1), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/15394492251361086 [journals.sagepub.com]
3. Layton, N., & Irlam, C. (2018). Assistive technology for older Australians: Rapid evidence review and economic pathway analysis. National Aged Care Alliance. https://doi.org/10.25916/5d96c9395e6ca
4. Papageorgiou, N., Marquis, R., Dare, J., & Batten, R. (2016). Occupational therapy and occupational participation in community-dwelling older adults: A review of the evidence. Physical & Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics, 34(1), 21-42. https://doi.org/10.3109/02703181.2015.1109014
5. Mitterfellner, R., D'Cunha, N. M., & Isbel, S. (2024). Occupation-based interventions to improve occupational performance among older adults living in long-term care: A systematic review. American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 78(1), Article 7801205140. https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2024.050441
6. Griffin, A., O'Gorman, A., Robinson, D., Gibb, M., & Stapleton, T. (2022). The impact of an occupational therapy group cognitive rehabilitation program for people with dementia. Australian Occupational Therapy Journal, 69(3), 331-340. https://doi.org/10.1111/1440-1630.12795
7. Bennett, S., Laver, K., Voigt-Radloff, S., et al. (2019). Occupational therapy for people with dementia and their family carers provided at home: A systematic review and meta-analysis. BMJ Open, 9(3), e026308. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-026308
8. Mo, L., Scrivener, K., Pashley, A., Gibson, D., Bail, K., D'Cunha, N., & Isbel, S. (2025). Multidisciplinary allied health reablement model of care for older people in residential aged care and community settings: Mixed-methods evaluation. Journal of Applied Gerontology. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/07334648251351690
9. Richards, K., Mills, N., & Hitch, D. (2024). Role of occupational therapy in person-centred dementia care: Exploring family member and clinician perceptions. Australasian Journal on Ageing, 43, 140-147. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajag.13269

5/340 Gore St, Fitzroy VIC 3065
ABN: 27 025 075 008
1300 682 878
ACN: 127 396 945
info@otaus.com.au
otaus.com.au