Occupational Therapy Australia

Elspeth Pearson Award Information and eligibility criteria



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Introduction

Elspeth Pearson (1926-2015) was a member of the first cohort of occupational therapists to be trained in Australia. She became known for her work as an occupational therapist in psychiatry, working as Chief OT at Larundel Psychiatric, based in Bundoora, which was one of the largest in-patient psychiatric hospitals in Victoria. During her 25 years at the hospital she developed industrial therapy programs, which provided long stay in-patients with the opportunity to not only be engaged in a work environment, but to participate in social interactions and practice money skills. She was also actively involved in assisting in the transition of long stay patients in mental health institutional care into the community and was one of the first to employ an art therapist in the early 1970s. In the mid-1960s Elspeth took up a secondment to Hong Kong at the request of the Victorian Government, where the government was seeking the services of an experienced therapist to assist them in developing its psychiatric services Elspeth was also one of the first awardees for the Victorian Public Service Award for her contribution to psychiatric services.

Purpose

In recognition of her dedication and contribution to her profession, the Pearson family and Occupational Therapy Australia have established an award fund to enable newly qualified occupational therapists and senior (final year) university students to broaden their education or experience within the profession.

Award

The Elspeth Pearson Award will enable successful applicants to advance their skills and expertise through access to professional development opportunities. It is to be targeted toward occupational therapists within their first three years of experience looking to establish a defined career path, and/or to final year students seeking practical or academic experience in a specific discipline of occupational therapy.

This award is given annually. Up to three recipients may be selected each year.

Award funding will be up to $15,000 per award cycle.

Professional development opportunities can include but are not limited to:

- Attending a course/workshop, within Australia or overseas, that would enhance knowledge or practice skills in a particular field of occupational therapy,
- Visiting specialised facilities, within Australia or overseas, recognised for best practice in service delivery,
- Undertaking a particular experience at undergraduate or Masters pre-entry level which is not routinely offered and adds value to the student and their future professional practice.

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Eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible for an Award, the applicant must:

- Be a current member of Occupational Therapy Australia
- Be an Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registered occupational therapist/occupational therapy student
- Be in the first three years of their occupational therapy career or be a final year student of an Australian occupational therapy program
- Not previously have been the recipient of the Elspeth Pearson Award.

Previously unsuccessful applicants for this award are encouraged to continue to submit new applications.

Application contents

In addition to satisfying the Eligibility Criteria, applicants must submit the following:

- A current Curriculum Vitae;
- Details relating to the course or program which they propose to undertake, and/or information on the organisation(s) or education facility which they propose to visit;
- A statement (<750 words) detailing: o The applicant's background as an occupational therapist/occupational therapy student, including personal background (where relevant),
    - What they hope to achieve from completing the activity, and
    - How it will benefit the profession of occupational therapy;
    - A draft itemised budget estimate of expenses, not exceeding $15,000;
- Two written professional references:
    - One which addresses the applicant's character as well as the relevance of the Professional Development Opportunity and the potential benefits it would bring to the profession, and
    - The other to be supporting the objectives of the Professional Development Opportunity, from the eligible applicant's employer, university, or from a senior member of OTA who has experience in the relevant field of learning or study.

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Application process

Applicants must provide the relevant documents as detailed above in order for the application to be considered.

Relevant documents are to be submitted no later than Friday, 16th February 2024.

Applications are to be submitted to awards@otaus.com.au

Assessment

Applications will be assessed by a Selection Committee comprised of the Donor or another person nominated by the Family, a member of OTA (to be nominated by the OTA Board), OTA's National Manager for professional development, and any other person that the Selection Committee may co-opt from time to time.

Shortlisted candidates may be interviewed by the Selection Committee.

The decision of the Selection Committee is final and no discussion will be entered into.

Successful applicants

Successful applicants will be notified by letter from the Selection Committee and will be required to submit a copy of the final plan for their program or travel prior to commencing the Professional Development Opportunity.

Successful applicants must submit all claims for reimbursement or fund distribution within 18 months of notification of outcome.

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