

Occupational  
Therapy AUSTRALIA



**Being at the Political Table: Building a National Professional Profile Through Focussed Representation**

## Paper developed by



Rachel Norris, CEO  
Occupational Therapy Australia



Professor Gail Whiteford – chair  
Occupational Therapy Australia  
Research Foundation

Presented by Dr Angela Berndt,  
President, Occupational Therapy Australia

# Overview of presentation

- The current practice environment
- Our Representation Framework
- Our approach to Lobbying and Representation using position statements
- The impact of using one of our Position Statements in occupational deprivation
- Five key learnings and some recommendations.

# VUCA

## *Volatile*

Rapidly changing; 24/7 news; technology advances

## *Uncertain*

Unable to know everything; lack of predictability

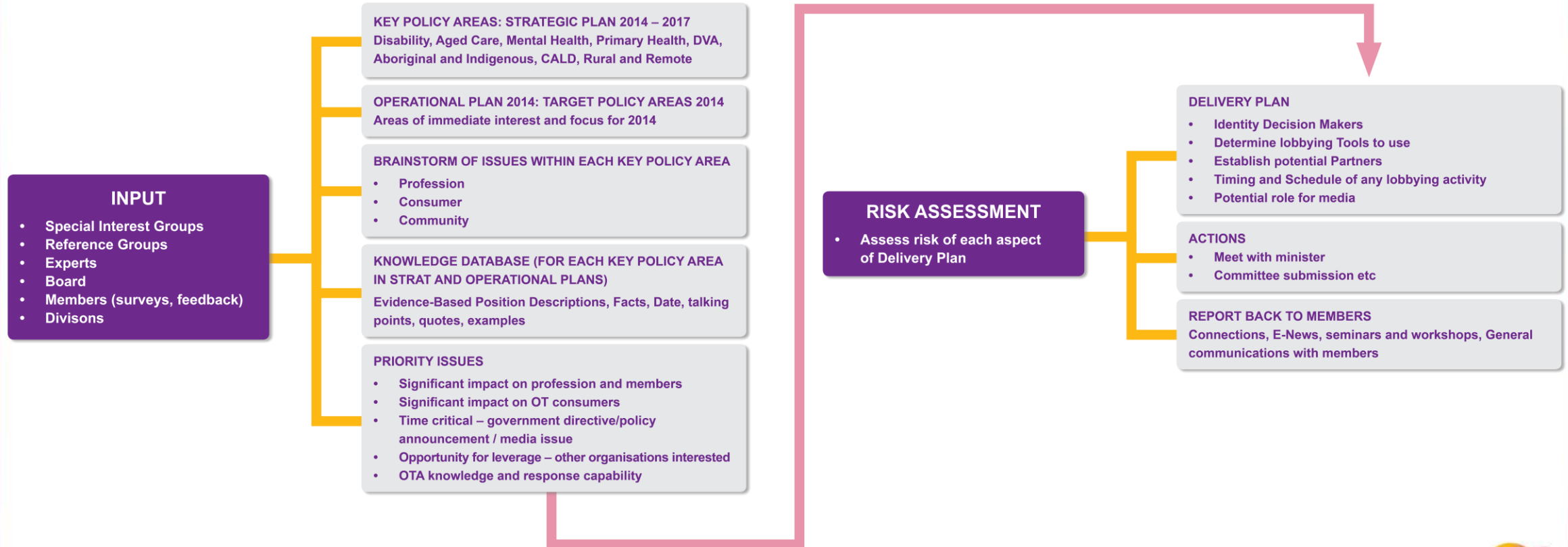
## *Complex*

Multiple forces and drivers

## *Ambiguous*

Differences in interpretation

# Our Lobbying and Advocacy Framework



# Lobbying Messages

... in order to influence politically, professional bodies like us needed to be clear about what values we represent and how these translate into “positions” on societal issues that distinguish professional organisations and the constituents it represents (members) from others...

# Position Statements...

... present the view or stance of an organisation on a topic. They are unique in their presentation of a definitive official view to public and professional audiences. They are practical and solution-focused

# OTA's Position Statement on Occupational Deprivation

“a state of preclusion from engagement in occupations of necessity and/or meaning due to factors that stand outside the immediate control of the individual”.

*(Whiteford, 2010)*





# Examples of occupational deprivation

- Individuals who are incarcerated
- Refugees and asylum seekers who are placed in detention and processing centres both in Australia and offshore
- People with disability or mental illness
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Those living in geographically isolated environments (for example, Australian rural locations categorised as “remote”)
- Those living on or below the minimum income
- People experiencing homelessness
- People experiencing long term unemployment

# Using our position statement in our submissions to Government

- In 2015,16 and 17
- OTA developed 4 submissions to National Government enquiries into areas of significance, using many of the core messages from our Position Statement.

# Using Position statement in OTA Submissions

## Senate Community Affairs References Committee

Adequacy of existing residential care arrangements available for young people with severe physical, mental or intellectual disabilities in Australia

## Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee

Conditions and treatment of asylum seekers and refugees at the regional processing centres in the Republic of Nauru and Papua New Guinea

## Senate Community Affairs References Committee

Delivery of outcomes under the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 to build inclusive and accessible communities

## NSW Government

Review of seclusion, restraint and observation of consumers with a mental illness in NSW Health facilities

# Example...

**Conditions and treatment of asylum seekers and refugees at the regional processing centres in the Republic of Nauru and Papua New Guinea** contained 62 references to occupational deprivation.

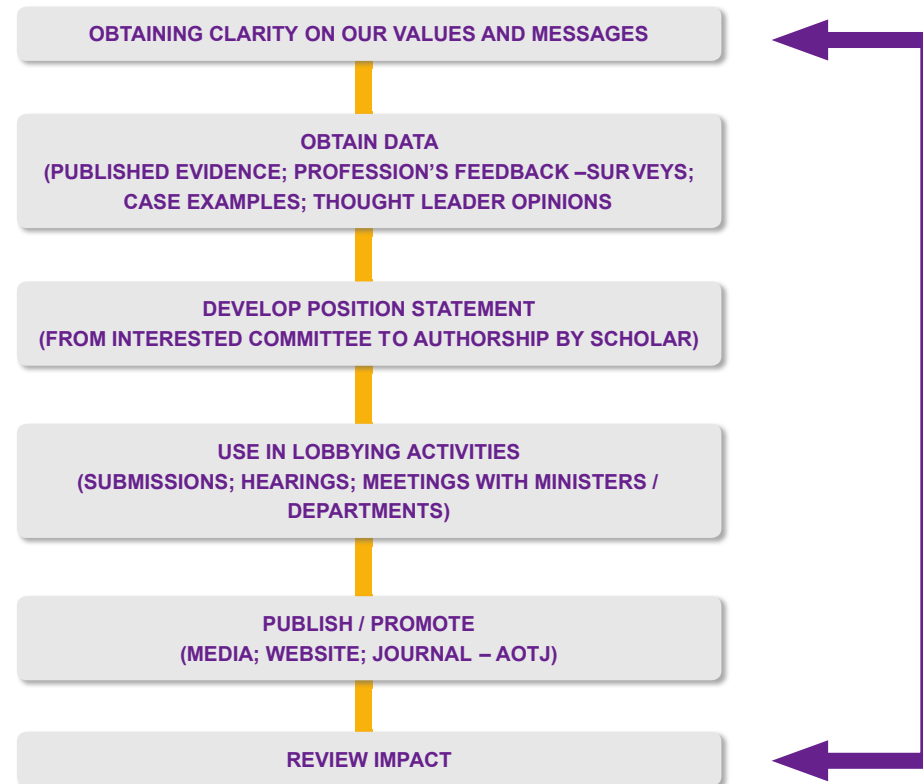
*“Occupational deprivation has serious consequences. It reduces people’s capacities and can significantly diminish physical and mental health, wellbeing, and quality of life.”*

# Example...

**NSW Government – Review of seclusion, restraint and observation of consumers with a mental illness in NSW Health facilities** contained 14 references to occupational deprivation.

*“People with disabilities who are detained also have the right to services that aim to prevent further disabilities. By allowing occupational deprivation to occur in mental health units, governments are placing consumers at risk of worsening health and therefore reducing their chances of eventually being discharged.”*

# In summary – the representation process:



# Our Reflections and Learnings

- Get clarity re values we represent
- Generating position statements is a strategic journey in culture and organisational development and capacity to clarify and represent those issues close to our domain of concern ie occupation, inclusion and participation
- Share our voice and get heard by publishing
- Importance of ensuring rigour in the process of development of position statements
- Ensure content is evidenced based – takes time to get the focus and our message right
- Include cycles of stakeholder input where appropriate – members love to be asked for opinions, data and evidence!
- Importance of reviewing position statements regularly as evidence changes / evolves
- Publish / disseminate via website; media; AOTJ – Australian Occupational Therapy Journal

# Recommendations

- Associations consider this strategy as a profiling initiative and one that engages members.
- Opportunities for synergistic and possibly unified representation
- Research into impact of Position Statements is undertaken in terms of discourse development



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