



26 October 2017

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Prime Minister
Freepost PO Box 18 888,
Parliament Buildings,
Wellington 6160

Email: jacinda.ardern@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Prime Minister,

The Presidents and Executive Council of Occupational Therapy New Zealand-Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa offer our congratulations on your appointment to the role of Prime Minister.

We reiterate our appreciation in being recognised as a profession of value by you in an earlier statement during your campaign leading up to the recent elections. Please find below our earlier letter to you for reference.

We greatly appreciate the enormous challenges facing the health sector and, in particular, the expedient use of health dollars with predicted pressure on resources, the growing elderly and the mental health population. We believe that the current systems within the school environment do not adequately accommodate education and well-being needs for students. Children with mild to moderate disability and mental health issues need more support. We are hopeful that the new government under your leadership will address these issues.

As strong advocates of equity, social and occupational justice we look forward to supporting you and your Ministers of Health and Education to meet these challenges. Indeed, we strongly believe that the competencies of Occupational Therapists can be utilised as excellent enablers in meeting strategic priorities like person/whanau centred health and education; closer to home services; preventable measures minimising hospital readmissions; promoting inclusion; and improving the health and education status of the Maori and Pacific population. Occupational therapy can be utilised as a significant medium of prudent health, education and social investment to enhance overall quality of life of New Zealanders.

In this regard our members are at your service as part of the future solution. We were wondering if we could meet in person to discuss our vision with you. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Occupational Therapy New Zealand/Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa

Georgina Davis – President tangata whenua

Harsh Vardhan - President tangata tiriti



21st August 2017

Leader of the Labour Party & MP for Mt Albert
Jacinda Ardern
PO Box 18 888, Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

Tena koe Jacinda,

As we head towards General Election 2017 the profession of occupational therapy applauds

Labour's initiative to enable occupational therapists to increase their work in school environments.

Schools offer a natural and authentic environment to support students across a variety of learning and well-being needs. Occupational therapists are experts in enabling a well-being focus that prioritises participation and engagement in the lives of students.

It is within the scope of occupational therapy to enable students to do what they need, want, and are expected to do, as set out by the differing curriculum guidelines from Te Whāriki to the National Curriculum. The complexity of pressures, skills and requirements shaping students, the tasks required of them and environmental influences are all addressed by occupational therapists. This enables support which does not require impairment labelling to ensure services, but one which addresses challenges in learning, participation and engagement in the everyday tasks.

Financial, artificial and structural barriers often limit occupational therapists' ability to work in a holistic way with students and teachers. However, a growing body of research evidence, both internationally and nationally, shows the effectiveness of occupational therapists working across a range of learning and participation needs with students. This body of research demonstrates occupational therapist's ability to work in dynamic ways from whole school universal design programs, to targeted programs for students with identified learning, participation and well-being needs.

Central government has a vital role to play in supporting families and school communities to provide what children/students and teachers need. The profession of occupational therapy applauds your consideration of additional funding. This solution has the potential to break down the health/education, illness/well-being divide and enable services that are preventative rather than reactive. The need is evident in Christchurch, but it is also evident throughout New Zealand. We look forward to policies which enable flexibility of funding, enabling schools to be a space for the development of well-being for students.

A society, and therefore the government which leads it, is measured by what it does for its children and its vulnerable populations. We look forward to a future which prioritises the rights for all citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand, to have equal opportunities to well-being through active participation in the everyday tasks of daily life.

For more information about occupational therapists / ngā kaiwhakaora ngangahau please visit our website at www.otnz.co.nz



Yours sincerely,

Karen Molyneux
President Tangata Whenua

Harsh Vardhan
President Tangata Tiriti

International research

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