

# Doing Occupational Justice Work to *Amplify Consumer Voice, Choice and Action*

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## Dr Robert B. Pereira

PhD (Social Inclusion), BOccThy (Hons), Reg OT  
OTA Endorsed Mental Health Occupational Therapist  
Adjunct Associate Professor, Faculty of Health, University of  
Canberra  
Sessional Academic, School of Health & Social Development,  
Deakin University  
Director, Pear Tree Occupational Therapy, Geelong

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**PEAR TREE**  
Occupational Therapy

# Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the traditional custodians, the **Kaurna People**, on whose land we are meeting today. I pay my respect to their Elders both past and present. I also acknowledge the **Wadawurrung people** of the **Kulin Nation**, on whose land I live and work.

I also acknowledge everyone with **lived experience including those with diverse abilities** who may be present today, and sincerely value your contributions to our community and society to make it more inclusive.

# Thank You for Your Collective Actions to Promote Social Inclusion

**TODAY IS A CALL TO ACTION**



**PEAR TREE**  
Occupational Therapy

Enabling Capabilities To:

Do

Be

Become

Belong

*Connect &*

Flourish

# Occupational Justice

...is the right of every individual to be able to meet basic needs and to have equal opportunities and life chances to reach toward [their] potential but specific to the individual's engagement in diverse and meaningful occupation

(Wilcock & Townsend, 2009, p. 193)

# Reflecting on Dr Bonnie Kirsh's Muriel Driver Lecture (2015)

*Muriel Driver Memorial Lecture 2015*

## **Transforming values into action: Advocacy as a professional imperative**



**Bonnie H. Kirsh**

Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy  
2015, Vol. 82(4) 212-223  
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## Bonnie Kirsh (2015, p. 216)

*I contend that if **occupational justice** and **social inclusion** are our goals, we must not only **analyze** and **critique** the social, institutional, economic, and political constraints that impede people's ability to participate fully in their communities; **We must also take steps to dismantle them.***

*For occupational therapy to become a profession **committed to attaining occupational rights**, we will require **political engagement** with those issues that limit people's equitable opportunities and resources.*

*We must become more **assertive** about transforming our values and beliefs into **action.***

How can we transform our values  
into action, and do OJ work?

## The CORE Approach

Pereira (2017)

Pereira, Whiteford, Hyett,  
Weekes, Di Tommaso &  
Naismith (2020)

Pereira & Whiteford (2022)

Pereira & Brown (2023)

Pereira & Whiteford (2025)



## Inclusive Occupational Therapy Process

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Pereira, R. B. & Whiteford, G. E. (2025). The Capabilities, Opportunities, Resources and Environments (CORE) approach for inclusive and occupation-centred practice. In: M. N. Ikiugu, S. D. Taff, S. Kantartzis & N. Pollard (Eds.), *Routledge Companion to Occupational Therapy: Theories, Concepts and Models* (pp. 156-169). Routledge.

# The CORE Approach:

## Capabilities as the key construct

(Pereira & Brown, 2023)

- **Capabilities** are those conditions, abilities, possibilities, and freedoms that enable people to say, and do and believe that **"I can/We Can"** and that **"I matter/We matter"** in the world.
- Capabilities are a discourse of **hope**, and enable people to have the freedoms to achieve what they value in life, and what is important to them, enabling them to reach their full potential.
- What enables me to say and do and believe that "I can" and that "I matter" (in order to **do** and **be**), and become, belong, **connect** and flourish.
- Capabilities capture what **we're capable of doing and being so that we can live lives that we have reason to value e.g.** being healthy, being educated, participating in meaningful work or social activities
- Having an inclusive lens that helps people strive towards their capabilities, helps us authentically understand their story and the values imbued in it. **Listening to the story**. And that is the launching pad for collaborative, relationship-focused work (Pereira & Brown, 2023).
- The **therapeutic use of self** is a powerful resource that inclusive occupational therapists use, that centres their practice to be one that is wholeheartedly **'capability focused'** with the people who they serve irrespective of context.



## Inclusive Occupational Therapy Process

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Pereira, R. B. & Whiteford, G. E. (In press). The Capabilities, Opportunities, Resources and Environments (CORE) approach for inclusive and occupation-centred practice. In. M. Ikiugu, S. Kantartzis, S. Taff & N. Pollard (Eds.), *Theories, Models, and Concepts in Occupational Therapy: Foundations for Sustaining the Profession*. SLACK Inc.

**As Occupational Therapists,  
we are Capability Drivers!**

**We are all about enabling  
“I/We Can”, and “I/We  
Matter”!**

CAPABILITIES	OPPORTUNITIES	RESOURCES	ENVIRONMENTS
<p>What does the person who you are working with value most in life?</p> <p>What are their values?</p> <p>What are they able to do and be?</p> <p>What do they want to be able to do and be?</p> <p>What does a person need to be able to do?</p> <p>What is the person obligated to do?</p> <p><i>What enables them to say and do and believe that “I can” and that “I matter”?</i> (Pereira &amp; Brown 2023)</p>	<p>What opportunities can bring about not only what a person needs to do, or is expected to do? But wants to do?</p> <p>What opportunities are required to enable doing and being?</p> <p>What opportunities have been explored previously for doing and being to be enabled?</p> <p>What opportunities could bring out a person’s abilities, skills, talents, positive emotions, and behaviours, or a sense of self?</p>	<p>What personal, social, cultural, material, physical, spiritual, and/or technological resources are available to enable capabilities and other opportunities?</p> <p>How can we help mobilise these resources?</p>	<p>What contextual and/or environment factors are impacting on a person’s ability to be able to do and be?</p> <p>How does the organisational political, or legislative context influence, impact , promote, disempower a person to achieve authentic occupational outcomes?</p>



#### References :

Pereira, R.B (2017): Towards inclusive occupational therapy: Introducing the CORE approach for inclusive and occupation focussed practice. Australian Occupation Therapy Journal, 64(6), 429-435.

Pereira, R.B & Whiteford G.E. (2022). Enabling inclusive occupational therapy through the Capabilities, Opportunities, Resources, and Environments (CORE) approach. In P. Liamputtong (Ed), *Handbook of Social Inclusion*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-89594-5\\_97](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-89594-5_97)

# CORE Approach, Amplifying Consumer Voice, and Human Rights

The CORE approach, amplifying Consumer voice, and occupational justice are  
**inextricably linked!**

Applying the CORE approach is a way to ‘**do**’ occupational justice work, putting the Person/People at the Centre of our “Why”, while simultaneously applying a ***Human-Rights Based Approach***

(UN Sustainable Development Group, [2023](#))



# How do we apply it?

## **INCLUSIVE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROCESS (iOT Process)**

(Pereira, 2017; Pereira et al., 2020; Pereira & Whiteford, 2022, *Pereira & Whiteford, 2025*)

1. **DOING** Occupation-centred goal setting
2. **EXPLORING** the key questions of the CORE approach acronym
3. Identifying and **APPLYING** enablement strategies to achieve authentic occupational outcomes
4. Exploring what could realised capabilities, social inclusion and wellbeing look like through regular opportunities for review and feedback (**REVIEWING & OBTAINING FEEDBACK**);

# iOT Process

5. At the culmination of the therapeutic partnership, reflection on the *iOT Process* is encouraged with the individual or group. **REFLECTING** on the process as well as any potential outcomes achieved can highlight the OT'S inclusive lens, as well as authenticity and integrity which are key qualities of authentic, values-based practice, and finally

The *iOT Process* concludes by promoting opportunities for the OT to engage in reflection with the person or group that you are working with on the process. It also encourages the OT to engage in reflective practice on the experience of working with the person or group, with peers and other colleagues or allies supportive of critical reflexivity and best practice in service improvement and psychological safety.



## Inclusive Occupational Therapy Process

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## Applying the CORE Approach to Amplify Voice and Choice

**Capabilities** are those conditions, abilities, possibilities, and freedoms that enable people to *say*, and *do* and *believe* that **“I can/We Can”** and that **“I matter/We matter”** in the world.

# Identifying and

## **APPLYING**

### enablement strategies to

### achieve

### authentic

### occupational outcomes:

Nadia\*, SWF,

Late 50s, C-PTSD,

ADHD, Social

Phobia, Living on

her own

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## Ethos of Report and Author's Positionality

While a Functional Capacity Assessment report including Home and Living Support needs in the context of the NDIS Act 2013 requires documentation highlighting deficits to a person's occupational performance across life domains for 'reasonable and necessary' funding considerations, the intention of this report is to highlight Nadia's strengths, abilities, and participation capabilities.

The report recommends disability-related supports that she requires for goal achievement, quality of life, positive wellbeing, housing and support security, and safe and enjoyable participation in life.

The recommendations documented in this report are supported by the evidence-based CORE approach for inclusive and occupation-centred practice, and the Inclusive Occupational Therapy Process (Figure 1 below; Pereira & Whiteford, 2022, 2025), where reasonable and necessary recommendations according to Sections 10, 32 and 34 of the NDIS Act 2013, also aim to promote Nadia's **capabilities** to live a life that she has a reason to value through being able to do and be; being afforded **opportunities** for meaningful, purposeful, equitable, and dignified participation; identifying **resources** needed for inclusive and equitable participation, and identifying accessible and inclusive **environments** so that Nadia can engage in the occupations that she needs and wants to do that highlight her aspirations, interests, and strengths (Pereira, 2017; Pereira & Brown, 2023; Pereira et al., 2020; Pereira & Whiteford, 2025; Pereira & Whiteford, 2021).



Identifying and

**APPLYING**

enablement  
strategies to  
achieve

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her own

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## Summary and NDIS Funding Requirements

**Please read this report in its entirety which documents specific NDIS funding requirements due to Nadia's extreme functional impairments resulting from her disabilities in context with each life domain.**

**Please note: "Requirements" is the term used throughout this report instead of "Recommendations", as I have assessed that Nadia *requires* such NDIS-funded supports due to her disability support needs being directly *attributable* to her extreme functional impairments as a direct result of her primary disability. "Requirements" are therefore non-negotiable when it comes to funding decisions for disability support.**

**Additional NDIS funding requirements will be highlighted in light green.**



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My OT:

- *Helps me with new Doctors [and supported decision making, including maximising my health literacy to be able to understand the role of Doctors, including Psychiatrist, and why I need to see them for my wellbeing and disability functioning].*
- *Has a good sense of understanding what I'm all about.*
- *Helps me by advocating for me and supporting me.*
- *Does work that is all linked to my goals. I mean, I've come so far. I feel like I'm a survivor now. I'm now telling my friend who's been through a bit that **"he can"**, and that he can find a way forward.*
- *Helps me feel confident in myself.*
- *When I first met my OT, I was stuck indoors and wasn't accepting help. Now I tell myself that I'll be right when I see new people [due to capacity building occupational therapy intervention].*
- *Everything is swimming along well so far and that's because I'm in a good routine. I have support workers around me. My routine is helping me feel grounded. Everyday is practically taken up with activities so that I can feel [and be] productive. Thanks, OT.*



Identifying and

**APPLYING**

enablement  
strategies to  
achieve  
authentic  
occupational  
outcomes:

Dennis\*, SWM,  
ID, ADHD,  
Substance Use  
Disorder,  
Incarcerated

- *"I need it [Mental Health Occupational Therapy] because I need to support my family and my sister [who is also a NDIS Participant].*
- *I don't want to hurt myself or even worse [while incarcerated].*
- *I've been suicidal for ages, and I've just started opening up to my OT.*
- *I don't trust them [mental health services available to Prisoners, and the Prison itself] because they've fucked me over time and time again.*
- *We just started our [therapy] plan together.*
- *It's fucking wrong [the thought of mental health occupational therapy ceasing until 3 months prior to end of sentence].*
- *[Without mental health occupational therapy funded through NDIS Plan] I'd be getting back into my criminal life.*
- *[Without mental health occupational therapy funded through NDIS Plan] I won't be able to properly rehabilitate.*
- *[Without mental health occupational therapy funded through NDIS Plan] I won't get out [of jail] for long, without the skills that take longer than three months to develop. They take years [to develop].*
- *With my OT, I'm not feeling abandoned.*
- *With my OT, I feel like things are working for once.*
- *I've always got shit going on in my head [implying that Dennis needs active mental health support].*
- *[Without mental health occupational therapy funded through NDIS Plan] I won't feel confident to do anything.*
- *Everything is getting me down and impacts on trust. This [NDIS-funded mental health occupational therapy] is the only thing that NDIS is doing to help me build my skills. It's my funding. I'll keep asking for my OT. Otherwise, I can't use it at all".*

Identifying and  
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Dennis\*, SWM,  
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- *"I'd finally actually get the help I've been looking for a long time.*
- *I'd start to be able to trust people.*
- *I'd be able to build the skills that I need to have my family closer to me [in the context of nature of familial relationship]. I'd be able to listen better and better manage my emotions.*
- *I'd be able to stay out of jail for once.*
- *[With mental health occupational therapy funded through NDIS Plan] I'm able to release my feelings in a confidential way, which helps me build trust.*
- *I'd be able to get a job and be more mentally stable.*
- *One day I hope to be able to live with my sister too [also a NDIS Participant].*
- *I'd be able to deal with my paranoid thinking better.*
- *I'd be able to help my sister with strategies to help [when we speak on the phone everyday]. I'd be able to help her with skills I've learnt.*
- *I'll learn right from wrong more.*
- *It will give me the skills to succeed with my mental health and life skills.*
- *I'd be able to have the power to walk away from drugs as I'd be more stable in my head, and not come back to jail.*
- *One day I'd be able to get my own place.*
- *I'll be stable enough to live more independently and not have this shit going on inside my body".*



- Can enable **Capabilities**, and inspire hope
- Can focus on the drivers that enable people to say and do and believe that they can, and that they matter
- Can explore and provide **Opportunities** for Inclusion, including Amplifying Voices so that they can be heard
- Are the **Resource**. What's your impact? If you are the only accessible resource, what are you going to do to use/maximise your skills, abilities, creativity, and savviness
- Can create inclusive and accessible **Environments** – including Amplifying Voices at the political level. Take the past 2 weeks as a case in point

# Thank you



**PEAR TREE**  
Occupational Therapy

LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/robertbpereira>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/peartreeot>

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