

PROFESSOR GAIL WHITEFORD

Citation for the Conferral of the Title of Emeritus Professor

Professor Whiteford has made outstanding, sustained, and distinguished contributions to the occupational therapy profession and the discipline of occupational science nationally and internationally. The esteem in which Professor Whiteford is held is evidenced by her many documented achievements, and awards from national and international academic institutions, organisations, and government agencies over the past four decades. Professor Whiteford has continually asserted influence, and become a global influencer, despite being a member of the relatively little-known profession of occupational therapy and the emerging scientific discipline of occupational science. The impact of her work extends beyond the boundaries of occupational therapy and occupational science due to her steadfast focus on, and pursuit of, rights and justice.

Professor Whiteford has always demonstrated innovation focused on day-to-day living across the age spectrum from children to seniors. Long before diversity became a public call for action, Professor Whiteford came forward as a champion for diversity, not only as an idea but in policy and program actions that linked day-to-day occupational therapy work with human rights and the World Health Organisation. Through her initiative and drive, her focus on solutions, and her ability to consider the big picture, Professor Whiteford has advocated for transformation by proposing solutions and by helping to facilitate change both in Australia and globally. Throughout her professional career Professor Whiteford has served in clinical, managerial, academic, and consulting roles. She has held numerous senior academic, executive, and conjoint appointments in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. She served as Australia's first Pro Vice Chancellor of Social Inclusion at Macquarie University and during this time received a grant for \$22 million for Widening Participation activities with vulnerable community groups. Professor Whiteford has acted as a Monitor/Evaluator for a multi-million-dollar DFAT funded program in Indonesia and has been an invited facilitator on two European Commission funded programs. In 2014 she was appointed by the NSW Minister of Health to the Board of Mid-North Coast Local Health District with oversight of seven Hospitals and nine Community Health centres.

Her outstanding advocacy and innovation for the profession nationally and

internationally has been recognised by the invitations she has received to provide keynote

presentations in 11 countries. Professor Whiteford was invited to present the prestigious 2019 Sylvia Docker Lecture at the Occupational Therapy Australia Conference. Most recently she has been invited to present the Ruth Zemke Lecture at the 2022 Society for the Study of Occupation: USA Annual Research Conference. In inviting Professor Whiteford the Board of Directors have acknowledged her deep concern for the occupational rights of all people and belief in the relationship between occupation and wellbeing, and her willingness to take risks and to insist that occupation be understood beyond traditional Western conceptualisations.

Professor Whiteford is the first Australian to receive the honour of presenting this lecture.

In addition to the national and international invitations to present keynote lectures, Professor Whiteford received the prestigious Freda Jacobs Award from the Australian Association of Occupational Therapists in 2017 and an award for Outstanding International Contribution from the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy. She has also been recognised for her work by Occupational Therapy Australia, becoming an inaugural Fellow of the Occupational Therapy Research Academy in 2017. Professor Whiteford has held adjunct professorial positions at two Australian and one Canadian university and has been an invited visiting professor / scholar in residence to 15 international universities. She is currently leading the World Federation of Occupational Therapists sponsored International Occupational Narratives project. The focus of this project is the development of an open access, inclusive database of occupational narratives that represent people from all backgrounds, ability levels, ages, socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds as they engage in their everyday occupations. Professor Whiteford is the lead on the Occupational Therapy Australia sponsored book, *Doing Our Best: Individual and Community Responses to Challenging Times*, which was published in 2022. This book is a curated collection of diverse stories from members and people in their networks about the things that people did during times of drought, bushfires, floods and COVID.

Professor Whiteford has been employed at Charles Sturt University for two separate

periods. She initially commenced work at Charles Sturt University in 1999, moving from the position of Head of School of Occupational Therapy, Auckland University of Technology. At Charles Sturt University she commenced in the role of Head of Occupational Therapy (1999-2001), moved to the Head of School of Community Health (2001-2003), and the Head of Campus, Professor of Occupational Therapy, and Director

of Centre for Research into Professional Practice, Learning and Education (2003-2008). During her time in the Head of School role, she oversaw the expansion of the School to include the professions of podiatry and speech pathology. She was also the Founder and Convener of the Banksia Program: Women in Research.

Following this appointment Professor Whiteford took on the role of Pro Vice Chancellor, Social Inclusion, at Macquarie University (2009-2014). In 2019 she returned to Charles Sturt University, taking up the position of Strategic Professor and Conjoint Chair of Allied Health and Community Wellbeing between Charles Sturt University and Mid North Coast LHD based in Port Macquarie, NSW.

In her Strategic Professor role, she has focussed on enhancing the research and knowledge translation capacity of allied health staff to strengthen service provision across the six hospitals and eight community services in which they work. This position has generated over \$2 million in research and program funding and produced research findings that have made a significant difference to the health and wellbeing of people in the Mid North Coast, a geographically and demographically unique rural context. Due to the success of her conjoint position Charles Sturt University put forward this arrangement for an Industry Collaboration Engagement Australia Award.

Professor Whiteford is highly skilled at planting seeds to create a harvest that is bigger than herself. She skilfully challenges students, mentees, and colleagues to be independent thinkers and to think ambitiously and creatively. She is an inspiring and passionate educator who is dedicated to the development of the next generation of health professionals and researchers, encouraging and enabling them to think on a global scale, and to think beyond what is and to consider what could be. She has made a significant contribution to education and to knowledge development through her many university roles, and through the supervision and mentorship of research students, many of whom have gone on to make their own important contributions to research, practice,

and knowledge translation. As a supervisor, mentor, and colleague Professor Whiteford shows genuine respect for the individual qualities and strengths of each person she works with and helps to create opportunities for people that enable career and personal development as well as important contributions to ongoing knowledge creation and facilitation of social justice.

Charles Sturt University, other universities where Professor Whiteford has been employed, as well as the many institutions where she has held honorary appointments have significantly benefitted from her expertise, leadership, and generosity. The University has enormous respect for

Professor Whiteford's distinguished contribution to the occupational therapy profession and occupational science discipline both nationally and internationally, as well as the culture and performance of research at Charles Sturt University. She has been an outstanding role model and is worthy of the title of Emeritus Professor.

**Dated this Seventh Day of September Two Thousand and
Twenty-Two**