



Ending the isolation.

October 17, 2007

It's all about living for those with the loneliest disability.

Senses Foundation staffer Fiona Kemp will join thousands of Occupational Therapists around the nation next week to celebrate Occupational Therapy Week (October 21 to 27) and raise awareness of the remarkable work she and her fellow health professionals do.

Based in Burswood, Miss Kemp is the Senses Foundation's only Occupational Therapist (OT) and her work with the Foundation is particularly challenging, as she has clients across a wide range of ages and who live with an enormous range of disabilities.

The Foundation provides an early childhood, school age and adult OT service.

Miss Kemp's overarching aim is to improve the wellbeing of clients through occupation, thereby enabling people to better participate in the activities of everyday life.

Occupation in this sense simply means the things that people normally do or want to do. For a child it may be holding a pencil to draw and for an adult it may be something as simple as catching a bus.

Senses is the primary advocate for people who are deafblind or blind with an additional disability. Deafblindness has been described as the loneliest, most isolating disability of all because it combines both hearing and vision loss or impairment.

It can be congenital or acquired later in life. Those with congenital deafblindness, who have never heard the spoken language or seen visual communication like sign language, are often forced to rely solely on communicating by touch.

The theme for OT Week 2007 is 'It's All About Living' and its a theme close to Miss Kemp's heart since her work is about making day-to-day living a little easier for her clients.

Her day ranges from building the fine motor skills of a toddler so they can grasp a cup to drink, to creating safe workable environments for adults who live in group homes.

"With adults, the aim is to increase independence as much as possible and to find the things that they want to be able to do," Miss Kemp said.

“For example with one client it’s important the he ride the bus rather than catch a taxi to work, so my job is to give him the skills to be able to do that.

“With the children it’s about giving them the skills so that they reach their full potential and to also give their parents the knowledge they need so that they can help with the therapy.”



Photo shows Senses Foundation OT Fiona Kemp with client Teagan O’Sullivan.

For further information or comment contact Fiona Kemp on 9473 5427 or 0432 028 360.

For further assistance contact Senses Foundation Media Liaison Officer, Kerry Faulkner on 0432098878.