

# Gender Affirming Occupational Therapy



## What is gender?

Gender is socially constructed, varies within and across different cultures, and can change over time. There is no one way to be or look cisgender, transgender, gender diverse, and or non-binary.

## Gender and Occupational Therapy (OT)

Gender can be expressed and affirmed through many activities of daily living (ADLs), within (safer) environments and communities, with needed skills and resources, and by exploring what brings personal meaning - which are key to OT practice!

### Why is Gender Affirming OT Practice Essential?

- **Validates** people's **lived experience**
- Supports people to feel **safe(r)** and **respected**
- **Is life affirming** and promotes improved health outcomes
- It is **imperative** that the OT code of ethics and AHPRA code of conduct are actively utilised in practice.

### OT Role in providing Gender Affirming Care

- Promote and advocate for occupations that provide **joy, purpose** and **meaning**
- Promote improved **quality of life** by respecting unique identities and needs
- Advocate for and enable (safer) **environmental** and **health service access**
- Demonstrate and advocate for consistently **respectful communication**

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*Staff at Thrive Rehab recognise the need for ongoing reflective practice and will be guided by each client on how to best support their individual needs*

# Gender Affirming OT Practice...



## Client Centred Care

- Gender is experienced and **defined by the individual**
- Clients are central in **decision making** and prioritisation of goals
- Therapy will **not** impose (pre-determined) timelines or processes for exploring gender

## Therapy feels like a Safe Space

- Clients are **respected** and heard
- Clients feel comfortable to **be themselves**
- **Gender accessible:** toilets, intake forms, and services provided
- Therapy will **not** impose gender binary and or stereotypical **assumptions**

## Consent & Communication

- Consent gained at every step (**no assumed consent**)
- **Questions are ethical**/directly relate to the client's needs
- All communication **demonstrates respect** and consistent reference to the client's identity

## Language Matters

- **Name and pronouns** are identified by the client
- **Terms** (eg, to reference body parts/functions, identities, relationships, roles, ADLs) are identified by the client
- Language will **not be assumed** and may change over time

## Enabling Occupation

- Exploring **occupations** that are **meaningful** to the client
- **Safety and access** to perform occupations is critical
- Gender affirming ADLs may include **new skills**

*(eg, grooming, clothing selection, make-up application, wearing a binder/binding tape - just to name a few!)*

## Advocacy and Rights

- **Advocacy** for the client could include:
  - Accessing needed health/ services, funding, resources
  - Addressing environmental barriers
- Every client has the **fundamental right** to feel seen, respected and safe - and on their own terms

