

Kath Jones, General Secretary



How did you find out about ergonomics?

I only knew ergonomics as an adjective to describe knife handles until I studied an ergonomics unit in the Master of Occupational Therapy degree in 2004. Once I discovered I could apply my knowledge in organisational psychology as well as the Person Environment Occupation model of OT, I was hooked – ergonomics seemed like the perfect match!

Why a career in ergonomics?

I am passionate about maximising physical and psychological health at work, and ergonomics focuses on the prevention of negative outcomes, which I find so much more positive and rewarding than management of injuries / vocational rehabilitation.

What's been the most interesting project you've worked on?

I have been fortunate enough to work with employers in so many injury prevention strategies but one that sticks out was where I worked with management at a residential aged care facility to investigate methods to decrease aggressive behaviour from residents towards staff. After analysing incident trends and liaising with staff about antecedents and factors contributing to aggressive incidents, we were able to identify environmental design issues affecting acoustics, visual stimulation and staff movement and trial strategies to address these. I was enormously satisfied when some minor changes in high traffic corridors in the facility (carpeted walls, soft lighting and changes to wayfinding) not only resulted in a reduction in reports of resident aggression, but a boost in positive staff feedback and job satisfaction.

What do you do on a typical day?

I work in the ergonomics team for the OSH regulator in WA, and no two days are the same thanks to the huge range of workplaces I visit and liaise with; but typically I investigate employee concerns of psychological hazards (bullying, work pressure, workplace violence) and hazardous manual tasks by speaking with employers about their strategies to minimise injury risks and ways to improve their systems of work.

What do you find most satisfying about your work?

I have the opportunity to analyse complex workplace issues and apply evidence-based solutions without having to sing to the song-sheet of what executive management want to hear, which is hugely rewarding!

