

Statement from the LOC on the water crisis

With less than four months to go before the start of the WFOT 2018 Congress, we are in the final stages of preparation. This congress comes at a time when we are reminded yet again about sustainability issues and the unequal access to resources, which affects those who are placed at the margins of society the most.

Cape Town is facing a water crisis due to very limited rainfall for the last three years, coupled with the lack of development of water infrastructure to keep up with population growth in the context of rapid urbanisation. Initiatives to save water have become an important and necessary responsibility for all Capetonians and visitors to our beloved city. Our rainy season usually starts in May, which means that the crisis may have been averted in time for the congress. However, we have to put contingency plans in place, in case we do not get significant rain in time. Having considered a variety of arguments for or against proceeding with the congress (feasibility, practicalities and ethical implications), our decision is to continue, based on the following:

- Tourism (including conferences) forms an integral part of the Cape Town economy and many people rely on tourism-related activities for a livelihood.
- For many households in South Africa (and the rest of Africa) fetching clean water at a communal point is a daily reality. There are important lessons in relation to how families generally cope under these conditions, but also in view of our commitment, as a profession, to occupational justice.
- The City of Cape Town has advised that the Central Business District (where the congress will be hosted) will continue to have water, while the people of Cape Town in general, will have access to water for essential activities (such as drinking, washing and cooking).

Attending the congress will provide an opportunity for us as occupational therapists, to engage and reflect on our society and how we organise ourselves around issues of social justice, and climate change. As members of the local organising committee, we hope you will decide to visit Cape Town for the 2018 Congress. We understand that many will hesitate, or rethink a prior decision to participate, however, we believe that the measures that are in place allow us to proceed and have a rich, shared experience.