

Suzanne's passion prevails

Tom Wyman

Aldinga Beach resident Suzanne Caragianis has been a passionate hand therapist for over 36 years, and recently received an OAM at the King's Birthday Awards for her endeavours.

Graduating from the University of South Australia in 1985 with a Bachelor of Applied Science in Occupational Therapy, Caragianis had the goal of establishing a centre specifically to treat people with arm and hand injuries.

Having spent time studying in the United States and working with several specialists including mentor Dr Harold Kleinert, Caragianis became one of the first qualified hand therapists in Australia.

Having returned to Australia in 1991, Caragianis established SA Hand Therapy.

Now 30 years on, SA Hand Therapy has five clinics and Caragianis has trained and mentored many budding hand therapists and occupational and physiotherapy students.

Caragianis said she was honoured to receive an OAM in recognition of her work.

"I feel humbled to have received the award, and I feel it comes with great responsibility to keep on teaching and helping others who are less fortunate," Caragianis said.

Caragianis' passion and advocacy for evidence-based treatment has seen her complete more than 75 specialist courses in Australia and abroad.

Her work as keynote speaker has taken her

to all corners of the globe, from Istanbul to Buenos Aires.

Regularly invited as a guest speaker to international conferences, Caragianis has presented over 50 major talks.

Her teaching has also frequently taken her to India and then Bhutan, where she has only recently returned from.

Caragianis has raised over \$250,000 to establish hand therapy clinics in Bhutan, purchase hand surgery equipment, train surgeons and physiotherapists, and provide medical supplies to the hand therapy clinics and patients.

"I have a great love of teaching, and to be a role model for my fourth year occupational therapy students means a lot," she said.

"It just shows that anything is possible, aim for the moon," Caragianis said.

Her dedication to her craft has seen Caragianis publish peer review journals regarding chronic pain, tendinopathy and occupational injury and risk in hand therapy profession.

She has trained therapy students and junior therapists from the University of South Australia for over 26 years and recently established Aldinga Beach's Coastal Hand Therapy.

Caragianis was inspired by the sea views and the desire to continue assisting patients with hand and upper limb issues.

Caragianis is a tremendous example of what hard work and passion can lead to, and she is a deserving recipient of an OAM.



Aldinga Beach resident Suzanne Caragianis has been a hand therapist for over 36 years. **PHOTO: COASTAL HAND THERAPY**