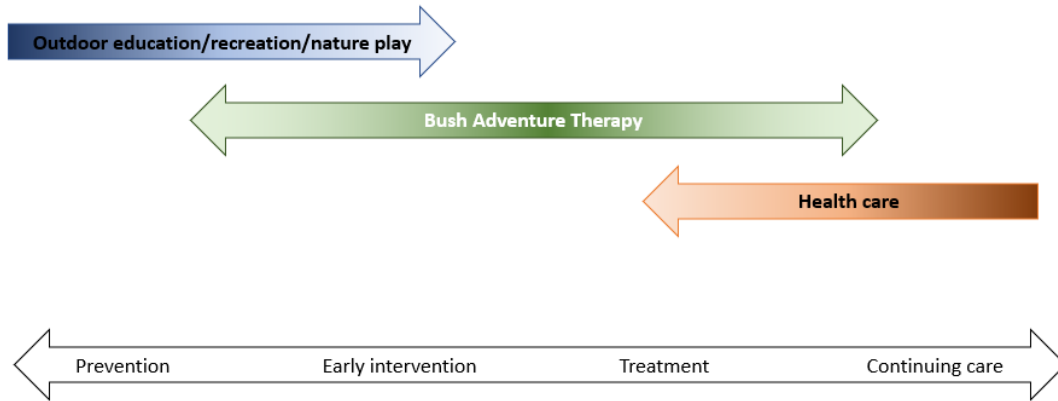


Towards A Career in Bush Adventure Therapy

What is Bush Adventure Therapy (BAT)?

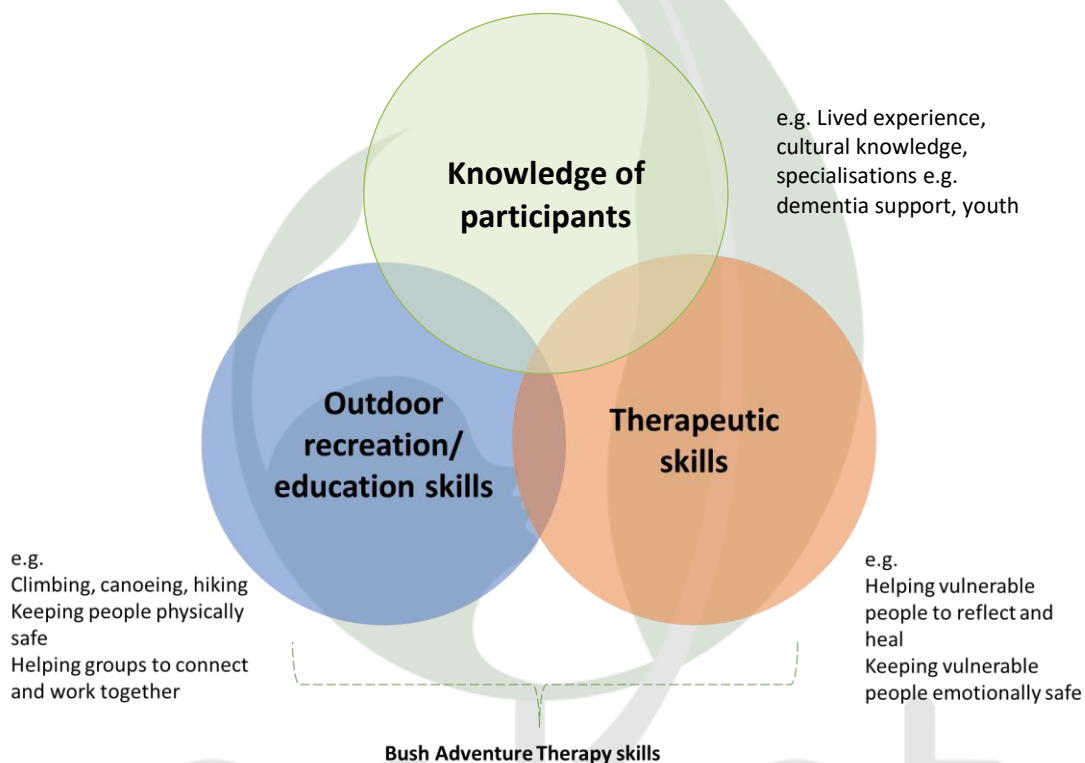
Bush Adventure Therapy is using the outdoors for the specific purpose of therapy. BAT work spans the space between outdoor education or recreation, and traditional health care. In the context of BAT, 'adventure' can mean remote peaks or it can mean a local park, depending on the needs of participants. The term 'bush' as opposed to the colonizing term 'wilderness' acknowledges the healing relationships Indigenous Australians have held with the land for millennia.



What do I need to do to start working in the field of Bush Adventure Therapy (BAT)?

Practitioners come to the field of Bush Adventure Therapy via many pathways. These include counselling, youth work, psychology, social work, outdoor education, occupational therapy or physiotherapy.

Bush Adventure Therapy work requires a mix of participant knowledge, outdoor skills and therapeutic skills. BAT services might employ people with all skill sets, or use teams of individuals with different backgrounds and strengths that work together to deliver services.



It is an exciting, rewarding, and challenging career and it's not really one you just step into out of university or reach through a simple change of occupation. It can take some time to gain experience in this field of work, but the effort can be exciting and enriching as you journey towards supporting the health and wellbeing of others through nature-based adventures.

PATHWAYS TO BAT

Workplace

Bush Adventure Therapy may be practised at your workplace. You can learn while at work or you can seek out an organisation that provides Bush Adventure Therapy and find employment with them. It may not be Bush Adventure Therapy work that you are doing but you may be building your outdoor or therapeutic skills. Or you could introduce Bush Adventure Therapy to your work by bringing in 3rd party providers and take part in the experiences with your participants so you can learn along the way.

Study

There is currently no stand-alone Bush Adventure Therapy tertiary course. By doing other very valuable degrees you can equip yourself with helpful skills and use this as an entry point to the field. These could be courses like counselling, youth work, psychology, social work, and outdoor education. Some practitioners have completed training in specific modalities of therapy, such as narrative or family therapy. If your study involves a placement, seek out an [organisation that provides Bush Adventure Therapy services](#). We recommend you start this process early as it may not always line up with your course timetable.

In your own time, volunteer and gain outdoor skills and experience. Do some short courses and get the required certificates in a few outdoor pursuits.

Volunteering

While you are working in your current job or studying, volunteering can be a way to gain experience and get a better understanding of what Bush Adventure Therapy looks like in practice.

Allow plenty of time from approaching an [organisation](#) to the first day of volunteering. Be clear when looking for places to volunteer about what you are looking for and seek to understand the needs of the organisation.

Networking with current Bush Adventure Therapy practitioners will help with your chances of gaining a volunteer position. Following AABAT's social media pages and the [eNews](#) and attending [forums](#) and regional gatherings, is a great way to get involved and network with other like-minded individuals.

Short courses

Whilst you are working (or studying), doing a short course in outdoor pursuits can help support your pathway into Bush Adventure Therapy. While pursuing activities that are of interest to you is desirable and enjoyable, you can benefit from knowing what is needed in the workforce and add those skills to your repertoire. You can also take a look at the [Australian Adventure Activity Standards](#) for standards commonly associated with the outdoor skills component of Bush Adventure Therapy practice.

AABAT's BAT 101 can be a way to get an introduction to Bush Adventure Therapy and can help you understand directions you can take it in this exciting field. There is usually a BAT 101 before AABAT's National Forum and sometimes throughout the year in different states.

Mixing careers and passions

Sometimes it can be just mixing your current career (e.g. social work, youth work, occupational therapy) with your hobbies. If you are already caring for people's wellbeing and you enjoy outdoor pursuits yourself, why not mix them together? How to do this in a therapeutic, emotional and physically safe way is, of course, the next question. Look at the volunteering options and find a mentor or supervisor. They can also help you understand areas you will need to consider as you take your work outside, for example, changes to insurance.

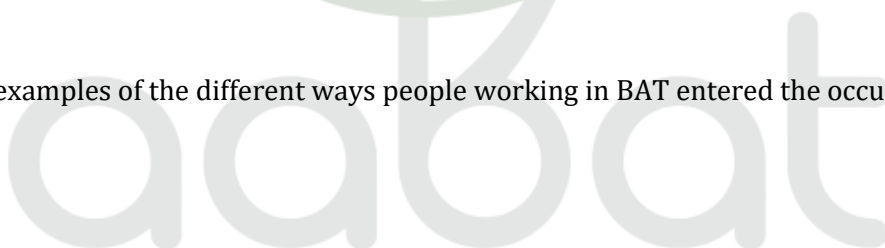
Network

Meet people who are working in the BAT field, ask them questions, seek their advice. Ask how you can help them. Keep in contact and keep networking. Adventure Therapy conferences are welcoming, exciting, and fun. AABAT's forum and international conferences provide an opportunity to connect with those most experienced in this field.

AABAT encourages practitioners to continue learning new skills, trends and ways to improve their practice and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Examples

Below are some examples of the different ways people working in BAT entered the occupation.





Uncle Ken
Bush Repair
AABAT SA
Regional Rep

Uncle Ken Jones is a Boandik Elder, gifted storyteller, author and keeper of immense Aboriginal and scientific knowledge.

For many years he was a commercial fisherman. His support and expert advice in the field of conservation is sought Australia-wide (pictured here with Costa Giorgiadis).

Uncle Ken has his own property and business delivering outdoor experiences and doing conservation work. He has also worked at a University as an Aboriginal Health Academic and has taken his knowledge and experience to work with prison inmates.



Kylie
Groundwork
Therapy
AABAT Policy Unit

Kylie is a psychologist practicing equine therapy.

She and her three horses and dog work together in an outdoor setting to break down some of the barriers that people often find in a four-walled therapy situation and offer a different way of approaching healing.



Lani
Regenerate
Past Regional
Rep

Beginning teaching drama to adults with a disability, Lani soon tapped into the strength of movement, play, creativity and groups to better social, mental and physical health outcomes.

Lani then took up studying a Diploma in Drug and Alcohol, then moved to Brisbane to work in the field and study Youth Work. Alongside studying, Lani worked with young people who were homeless running art workshops, applied theatre programs, health education programs, and recreational activities. During this time, Lani studied a Bachelor of Social Work part-time, and after a while started working with adults who are homeless. It was here Lani stumbled across BAT and never looked back.

Having to leave the dream job for a year to have a few kids and finish her degree, Lani returned to the Human Services sector choosing to work with refugees and people seeking asylum. More recently she has worked in a multidisciplinary team offering BAT to people who identify as women (and their children) who are survivors of family violence.



Image thanks to YAFT



Mark
Walk of Life
AABAT Deputy
Chair

Mark worked as a police officer for over 20 years. In 2003 he commenced working for the Juvenile Aid Bureau, working child abuse cases in Cairns and Cape York communities including Aurukun, Kowanyama, Pompuraaw, Lockhart River, Wudjal Wudjal, Hopevale and Yarrabah before moving back to South East Queensland in 2011.

In 2015 after 13 years in this field, Mark became a school-based police officer in order to trial a Bush Adventure Therapy program for use as crime prevention and child protection initiative, drawing on his background and life experiences.

The Walk of Life program has been incredibly successful and Mark has been nationally recognised for the contribution he has made to the young people he works with.

