

**TO: Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**  
Webpage:  
<https://engage.dss.gov.au/consultation-on-draft-lists-of-ndis-supports/#contact>  
Email: [NDISConsultations@dss.gov.au](mailto:NDISConsultations@dss.gov.au)

**Adventure Works Australia Ltd.**  
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**24<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

## **RE: Request for feedback on “draft lists” of NDIS supports**

**To whom it concerns,**

We are very concerned about the NDIS plan to exclude ‘Wilderness therapy’ from eligibility for NDIS participants.

**Our organisation, along with dozens of other organisations around Australia, provide evidence-informed Bush Adventure Therapy and Outdoor Counselling to people from all walks of life, including NDIS participants.**

**Outdoor Health approaches are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal participants of all ages. Our community-based not-for-profit organisation, Adventure Works Australia Ltd, is Aboriginal-informed. Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders are integral to our services and training programs.**

Two examples of services we provide to NDIS participants, for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, young people and adults, are provided here:

1. **Adventures 4 All**, for children, young people and adults who benefit from outdoor adventures, bush adventure therapy and outdoor counselling, and
2. **Out Bush On Country**, for children, young people and adults who have experienced severe life adversities, including family violence, parental drug/alcohol abuse, involvement with the justice systems, and a range of other complex difficulties.

In addition to providing bush adventure therapy services, our organisation undertakes research and evaluation, and trains outdoor therapy practitioners. A huge body of research supports these practices, which are already provided around Australia to many NDIS participants using a range of Core and Capacity Building codes. **See Appendix. 1. for a Reference list of Outdoor Health and Bush Adventure Therapy research we have been involved in.**

The safety, quality and efficacy of the outdoor health sector is supported by the national body for these practices in Australia, called Outdoor Health Australia. OHA ethical principles guide practitioners and services to provide safe, voluntary, tailored integrative experiences for participants.

## Our concerns:

1. **by excluding ‘Wilderness therapy’ from the list of eligible NDIS supports, participants of services like ours AND the many other evidence-informed forms of outdoor health, wellbeing and therapy being provided to NDIS participants around Australia, may miss out on receiving the benefits of evidence-informed value-for-money, effective outdoor health practices.**
2. Based on research evidence, feedback from participants, parents and referrers, and current participation rates by NDIS participants, **we request that the NDIS consider adding a new support to the list of “included supports”: Evidence-informed outdoor health, wellbeing and therapy”.**

**Based on research evidence, feedback from participants, parents and referrers, and current participation rates by NDIS participants our request is as follows:**

1. Remove ‘Wilderness therapy’ from the list of “Excluded” supports, and
2. Add ‘Outdoor health, wellbeing and therapy’ to the list of “Included” supports.

**We would greatly value the opportunity to speak with NDIS policy makers further about the evidenced benefits of outdoor practices, and the mechanisms that support bio-psycho-socio-ecological benefits for participants.**

We encourage the NDIS to meet with Outdoor Health Australia, our national body for outdoor health, wellbeing, and therapy practices around Australia. OHA supports outdoor health practices through Research & evidence, Practice & quality, Community & engagement, and Policy & advocacy for all evidence-informed nature-based health practices. **Thus, our third request is that the NDIS meet with representatives of the OHA leadership team to hear more about the research evidence, quality approaches, and bio-psycho-social benefits for NDIS participants from outdoor health supports.**

It is very important that NDIS participants continue to have access to these forms of appropriate evidence-based supports for their bio-psycho-social health, social connection, recreational, community participation and daily living needs.

Warm wishes,



Co-director

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**Appendix. 1. Reference list of Outdoor Health and Bush Adventure Therapy research we have been involved in:**

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