



## **The Queensland Mental Health Commission has sponsored Youth Flourish Outdoors in partnership with Outdoors Queensland to deliver the Outdoor Therapies and Mental Health Summit on 9th July, 2024 in Brisbane, Queensland.**

The primary objective of this summit is to explore how outdoor therapies can align with and support the objectives outlined in the Queensland Shifting Minds 2023-28 mental health plan.

Outdoor therapies offer a range of benefits, including **effectiveness, cost efficiency, community integration, utilisation of an untapped workforce, scalability, and customisation to local needs**. Throughout the summit, speakers will elucidate these aspects and provide practical examples from both Queensland and international contexts.

Despite the **widespread adoption and extensive research** backing outdoor therapies, there remains a lack of support from state governments, resulting in limited program availability and research initiatives. However, outdoor therapies have **proven to be appealing and effective** in combating stigma, as they leverage Queenslanders' affinity for outdoor activities and offer engaging interventions. Further, Queensland initiatives have tested innovative practices, purchasing and workforce processes that can readily enlist an untapped workforce.

While many outdoor therapy programs worldwide focus on young people, it is crucial to recognise their applicability across diverse demographics, including children, adults, the elderly, refugees, individuals with disabilities, and those involved in the justice system.

Outdoor therapies are particularly suitable for indigenous populations and health service users who may have experienced intergenerational trauma and unintended harm through discrimination and cultural bias.



Social isolation and loneliness are readily addressed whether the interventions are prevention and early interventions provided by community-based recreational or therapeutic organisations, or across settings such as private practice and outpatient community-based services, or for inpatient health services.

**Outdoor therapies target the social determinants of health across the lifespan** and lend themselves to peer support, regional and remote provision, localised solutions and cross-government cooperation.

The summit agenda will comprise keynote speeches and roundtable discussions. Attendees can anticipate high-level discussions with colleagues from relevant departments and outdoor therapy experts, geared towards fostering meaningful change. The discussions will follow a structured format, covering policy, practice, procurement, and provisioning aspects.

Our program will commence with an overview of the Queensland Shifting Minds 2023-28 Strategic Plan for Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Suicide Prevention by Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Ivan Frkovic.

Subsequently, leading academics in outdoor therapies will present brief research summaries, followed by a collage overview of existing outdoor therapy exemplars from Queensland by Outdoors Queensland. International examples will also be shared to enrich the discussions.

By the summit's conclusion, our aim is to achieve cross-governmental consensus on exploring cost-effective, scalable, accessible, community-based, and regionally available outdoor therapy services to complement existing mental health services.

Enquiries regarding the  
**Outdoor Therapies and Mental Health Summit**  
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