

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretariat,

Please find enclosed our submission to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee on 'Adaptive sports programs for Australian Defence Force veterans' on the conduct and evaluation of Exercise BATTLEBACK.

Exercise BATTLEBACK drew on a United Kingdom program of the same name, and was a multi-disciplinary adventurous training expedition delivered collaboratively by ex-service organisation Solider On and the Australian Army Adventurous Training Wing, over the period 20-29 November 2017. Participants were purposefully serving and ex-serving. The activity was designed to develop character, social, psychological, cognitive, and physical resilience in participants to enhance their coping skills and foster direction in life through setting a pathway for future commitment.

While we understand the scope of submissions to be Adaptive sports, we believe there may be some value in considering Exercise BATTLEBACK because it provides a rigorous literature review and evaluation of an Adaptive concept in support of veterans' wellbeing and resilience.

Please note the following enclosures of our submission:

1. Final Evaluation Report - Exercise BATTLEBACK: Adventurous Training in Recovery and Reintegration
2. Exercise BATTLEBACK Evaluation Report (including literature review)
3. Article published on The Cove 'Adventurous Training During the Spectrum of Service' available online at <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/adventurous-training-during-spectrum-service>

Thank you for your time and consideration of our submission. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss further.

Many thanks

Emily & Dan

Emily Chapman PhD  
Dan Fussell



## Exercise BATTLE BACK: Adventurous Training in Recovery and Reintegration

### Final Evaluation Report

*FLTLT Emily Chapman*

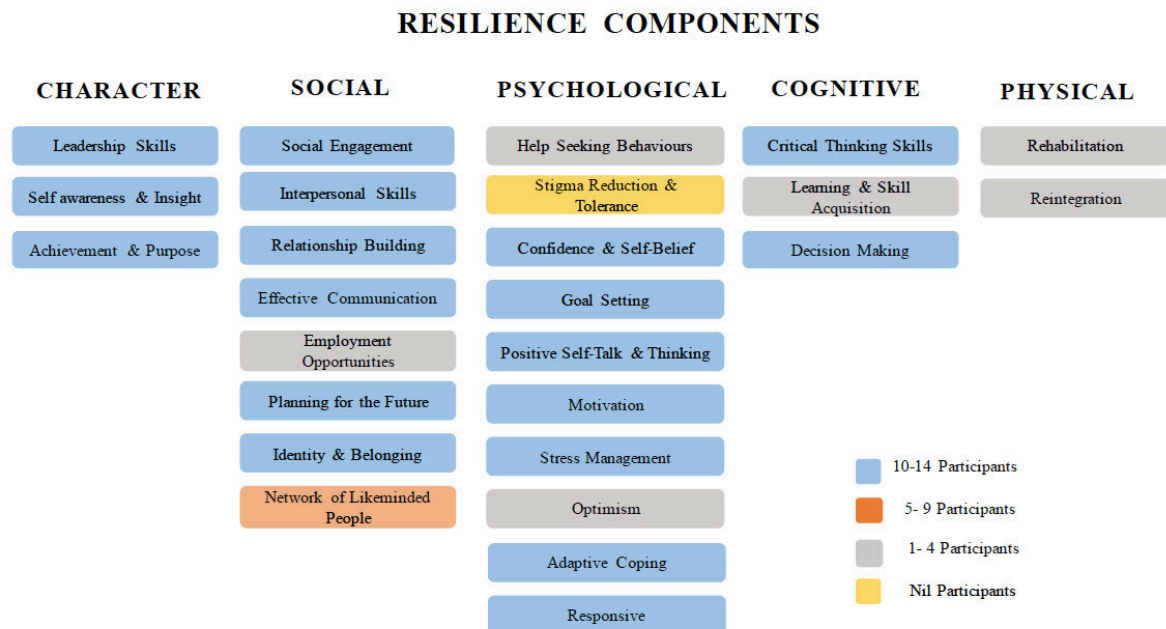
### Executive Summary

Exercise BATTLE BACK (EX BB) was a multi-disciplinary adventurous training expedition delivered collaboratively by ex-service organisation Solider On and Adventurous Training Wing, over the period 20-29 November 2017. Participants were serving and ex-serving members, with the majority of serving members drawn from 3 CSSB. The purpose of EX BB was to develop **character, social, psychological, cognitive and physical resilience** in participants to enhance their coping skills and foster direction in life through setting a pathway for future commitment.

A qualitative evaluation based on semi-structured interviews and participant observation was undertaken to examine the effectiveness, impact, relevance and sustainability of EX BB. In order to examine the extent to which the program achieved its purpose, a framework of five Resilience Domains and 26 Resilience Components were drawn from COMD FORCOMD Directive 210/15 - FORCOMD Resilience Plan.<sup>1</sup>

### Key Findings

EX BB participants self-reported or were observed to have enhanced outcomes in the majority of Components as depicted in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Mapped and Analysed Resilience Components**

<sup>1</sup> The psychological domain and components are as per COMD FORCOMD Directive 210/15 - FORCOMD Resilience Plan. No psychometric data was collected during the conduct of the evaluation.

### **Follow-Up**

Follow-up focus groups were conducted with 3 CSSB in May 2018 with participants' and their Chain of Command (CoC). Participants' CoC reported observable and positive differences in participants including motivation, self-confidence, assertiveness and adoption of an effective mentality to approach friction and challenges. The need for a follow-up activity, either RESET or additional adventurous activities in order to re-visit and consolidate the outcomes of EX BB was identified during the focus groups. This finding reflects the benefits of participants conducting a follow-up activity to consolidate the learning outcomes of adventurous training.

### **Evaluation Limitations**

Data collection was semi-structured interviews and participant observation. As a result, the outcomes are self-assessed or identified from an external source. The small sample size of the EX BB program does not enable generalisation of outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

At the organisational level, EX BB contributes to enhancing Unit and Service outcomes because it enables participants to realise their potential and bring changed behaviours back into the workplace. EX BB develops individuals to integrate effectively within teams, appreciate diversity and diverse perspectives, and develop a broad range of resilience outcomes.

With investment there is potential for EX BB to be tailored to each Brigade based on command and geographical considerations and delivered as part of adventurous training support to the RESET Brigade.

## Introduction

Over the period 20-29 November 2017, ex-service organisation Solider On and Adventure Training Wing (ATW) trialled a multi-disciplinary adventurous training program to support the recovery and reintegration of current and ex-serving members. The program was designed and delivered to achieve resilience outcomes to assist participants with physical and/or social recovery and reintegration. The activity was titled Exercise BATTLE BACK (EX BB), drawing from a UK Ministry of Defence program of the same name that uses adventurous training and sport in the aftercare of wounded Service personnel to support their rehabilitation and return to an active life.<sup>2</sup>

## Evaluation Background

A dedicated evaluation was undertaken of EX BB by a RAAF Reservist with requisite qualifications. This member is not posted to ATW and was on approved 'Voluntary Unpaid Duty' status through her Chain of Command. The evaluator attended EX BB and completed most activities, minus the caving, to collect data through participant observation. The evaluation combined self-reported data with independent observation to triangulate data sources. Psychometric tools were unable to be used during the evaluation due to data collection restrictions. The evaluator is the sole author of this Report.

The purpose of the evaluation is to document the planning and delivery of EX BB, and to provide initial evidence of individual, collective and organisational outcomes to achieve ongoing investment. It is acknowledged that an evaluation of a single instance of EX BB with small number of participants is not sufficient to provide definitive and rigorous conclusions about the program.

## EX BB Problem Statement

The ADF is increasingly coming under a media spotlight in reference to transitioning and reintegrating members into the Australian Community after their service. It is acknowledged that 'a vast majority of veterans just want to get on with their lives without being stigmatised by a popular belief they must have a permanent mental or physical injury from service.'<sup>3</sup> However, some veterans require ongoing and specialised support due to risk factors associated with transitioning to civilian life (relationship problems, mental illness, alcohol and drug misuse, employment problems, bereavement, and loss of routine and structure) and a reluctance to seek help for their problems.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.raf.mod.uk/rafactive/rafcms/mediafiles/D3E9C47F\\_5056\\_A318\\_A8DCDB6A027580BE.pdf](https://www.raf.mod.uk/rafactive/rafcms/mediafiles/D3E9C47F_5056_A318_A8DCDB6A027580BE.pdf); <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/adaptive-skiing-exercise-helps-rehabilitation-of-injured-troops>; and <http://www.army.mod.uk/events/23326.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Callender (2017) 'Getting the Balance right for Veterans' accessed online at <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/getting-balance-right-veterans-garth-callender-1/>

<sup>4</sup> McKay, K., Kølves, K. & De Leo, D. (2010). *Suicide in veterans: a psychological autopsy study*. Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, Brisbane quoted in (DVA July 2016).

Whilst serving, reintegration can also include return to Unit post-deployment or as part of recovery, rehabilitation and return to work after adversity or injury. There is no research or debate in this space to reference, however anecdotally there is opportunity to support members in rehabilitation platoons or returning to their workplace after experiencing adversity or injury. Post-deployment reintegration is not considered within the EX BB construct.

The Australian Army is facing internal challenges, with exclusion and isolation occurring in some areas due to the use of belittling, racist and sexist epithets as acceptable means of communication between some peers and colleagues.<sup>5</sup> Whilst this is not widespread behaviour, there is potential for it to have flow-on effects on morale, team cohesion and organisational effectiveness. This situation is coupled with retention challenges, with the assessment made that the 'actual percentage of women in the force ... likely to decline'<sup>6</sup> despite ongoing and concentrated effort in recruitment and retention.

EX BB was conducted against this broad and complex backdrop, based on collective recognition from ATW, Solider On and 3 CSSB that there is potential for adventurous activities to have a positive impact in the recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration space. On arrival into the EX BB program, participants reflected on organisational challenges noting '*I lost sight of why I joined the Army*'<sup>7</sup> and being '*frustrated at Army ... people speak of Army values, but not executing.*'<sup>8</sup>

### EX BB Rationale

EX BB is grounded in a body of literature that reflects positive outcomes for participants in adventure-based activities, also referred to as nature-based therapy, adventure therapy, outdoor development and nature adventure rehabilitation. Recent studies conclude that nature-based adventurous activities are a promising supplemental intervention for combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)<sup>9</sup> because it can lead to reduced PTSD symptomatology, and enhanced confidence, self-efficacy and coping ability.<sup>10</sup> A University of South Australia study found strong evidence that Rehabilitation Adventure Challenges improve social interaction, reignite a sense of camaraderie, increase self-esteem, and result in less reliance on alcohol and other negative coping behaviours. A significant finding was that 'levels of depression significantly decreased'<sup>11</sup> after participation in these activities. These

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.army.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1846/f/publications/taking\\_the\\_cultural\\_temperature\\_in\\_combat\\_brigades\\_-\\_jenkins\\_and\\_priday.pdf](https://www.army.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1846/f/publications/taking_the_cultural_temperature_in_combat_brigades_-_jenkins_and_priday.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.army.gov.au/our-work/speeches-and-transcripts/chief-of-army-address-to-the-defence-force-recruiting-conference>

<sup>7</sup> Serving Member 3: Interview 1

<sup>8</sup> Serving Member 4: Interview 1

<sup>9</sup> Gelkopf, M., Hasson-Ohayon, I., Bikman, M., and Kravetz, S. 2013. "Nature adventure rehabilitation for combat-related posttraumatic chronic stress disorder: a randomized control trial." *Psychiatry Research*, 209 (3): 485-93.

<sup>10</sup> Dustin, D., Bricker, N., AraveJ., and Wall, W. 2011. "The promise of river running as a therapeutic medium for veterans coping with post-traumatic stress disorder." *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 45: 326-340.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.unisa.edu.au/Media-Centre/Releases/2017-Media-Releases/Military-veterans-turn-to-adventure-as-an-escape-from-depression/#.W17zXJP1Wu4>

studies reflect adventurous activities should be considered in future programs for veterans with PTSD.<sup>12</sup>

Participants in the UK version of Exercise BATTLE BACK achieved psychosocial outcomes centred around two key areas. Firstly, recreating a sense of self and purpose, and strengthening or repairing relationships with family and friends. Secondly, becoming empowered to move forward with their lives because they recognised 'new horizons of possibility.' This included being valued, respected and cared for during the course, and being inspired by people around them.<sup>13</sup> Also underpinning the rationale to conduct EX BB in Australia are studies that reflect nature-based therapy was found beneficial in veterans' return to the workforce.<sup>14</sup>

### EX BB Program

EX BB participants were drawn from 3 CSSB and Solider On. Solider On identified participants through an 'Expression of Interest' approach and provided six participants: four ex-serving and two serving participants. 3 CSSB provided eight participants. This made a total of 14 participants: 10 serving and four ex-serving. EX BB purposely brought together current and ex-serving members based on peer-support concepts, including sharing experiences and learning from each other.

Some EX BB participants were medically fit, with their participation linked to self-development and team integration outcomes. These participants enabled EX BB to be assessed more broadly than the R3 space, with their outcomes proving very valuable in demonstrating the broad range of resilience-building outcomes that can be achieved using adventurous activities.

The full EX BB program is outlined below at Table 1. EX BB is characterised by:

- The integration of serving (Army) and ex-serving (Army/RAAF) members;
- The 'in-brief' of participants to capture their goals and gain knowledge of their situation to tailor adventurous activities accordingly;
- The delivery of the Joint Health Command RESET program prior to adventurous activities;
- Multi-discipline adventurous activities that were progressively scaled-up;
- One-on-one facilitation during activities; and
- Adapted adventurous activities based on physical capability.

DATE	GROUP ONE	GROUP TWO
19 Nov	Travel / Point Perpendicular	
20 Nov	<b>Individual In-Brief Interviews</b>	
21 Nov	<b>RESET (delivered by Joint Health Command)</b>	

<sup>12</sup> Poulsen, D. 2017. "Nature-based therapy as a treatment for veterans with PTSD: what do we know?" *Journal of Public Mental Health* 16 (1); 15-20. DOI: 10.1108/JPMH-08-2016-0039

<sup>13</sup> Carless of cit

<sup>14</sup> Poulsen op cit

22 Nov	<b>Abseiling &amp; Rock Climbing</b> Activity 1 - 9 metre abseil and climb Activity 2 - 30 metre abseil and climb	<b>Sea Kayaking</b> Safety Drills Kayaking around rocks
23 Nov	<b>Sea Kayaking</b> Safety Drills Kayak 14 km to Green Patch	<b>Abseiling &amp; Rock Climbing</b> Activity 1 - 9 metre abseil and climb Activity 2 - 30 metre abseil and climb
24 Nov	<b>Sea Kayaking</b> (Overnight at Camp Ground)	
25 Nov	<b>Sea Kayaking</b>	
26 Nov	Travel / Point Perpendicular to Goulbourn <b>360 Degree Reporting</b>	
27 Nov	<b>Canyoning:</b> Bungonia National Park	
28 Nov	<b>Caving:</b> Bungonia National Park <b>PM:</b> Goal-Setting Activity	
29 Nov	<b>Farewell and Mementos</b> Travel / Home	

## RESET

RESET was delivered by Joint Health Command to EX BB participants in the first two days of the program. RESET is an evidence-informed mental health prevention program developed by Phoenix Australia in conjunction with the ADF Centre for Mental Health. It utilises a coach-based, skills training approach and targets personnel experiencing mild to moderate distress with an impaired ability to function productively in the workplace subsequent to experiencing stressful events in the course of their duties. RESET aims to prevent the progression from emerging mental health symptoms to a diagnosable disorder in order to mitigate the associated costs to current and future capabilities.

RESET was not explicitly included in the evaluation, however all participants reported using the tools and techniques from RESET during the EX BB adventurous activities. All participants reflected that RESET was a critical component of EX BB, both to introduce and refresh participants of coping and response techniques.

## Evaluation Framework

An evaluation framework was developed to systematically examine EX BB, including the outcomes it achieves and the extent to which it achieves them aligned to the physical, cognitive, character, psychological and social resilience domains outlined in COMD FORCOMD Directive 210/15 - FORCOMD Resilience Plan.

The overarching evaluation question was *What resilience outcomes does EX BB achieve?* In answering this question, four criteria were identified based on OECD/DAC evaluation criteria<sup>15</sup> as follows:

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>



- a. **Effectiveness:** Measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of outputs.
- b. **Impact:** Examines the wider effects of the project on individuals, groups (serving and ex-serving) and Army. Impacts consider intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro and micro effects.
- c. **Relevance:** Assesses whether EX BB is in line with Service and individual needs based on an examination of what outcomes EX BB achieves and to what extent it achieves these outcomes.
- d. **Sustainability:** Measures how EX BB can be supported long-term, without management by ATW.

### Data Collection & Analysis

Data was collected through interviews with participants and evaluator participant observation. Thirteen (of fourteen) participants conducted two semi-structured interviews: one within two-three days of commencement of EX BB and one at the completion of EX BB. Semi-structured interviews enabled participants to put program outcomes in their own words so they become a tool to capture participant's voices, and the way in which they brought meaning to their experiences. The limitations of interviews are recognised, including that experiences may be subject to bias and poor recall. Poor recall was mitigated through interviews being conducted during the program.

Participant observation was also included as a data collection method to add another source of data, overcome potential bias and triangulate data from the semi-structured interviews. The evaluator conducted 'active participation,' where she became a member of the group and fully conducted the majority of activities with the purpose of complete comprehension.<sup>16</sup> The only activity not completed was the caving, which had been conducted previously so there was a basic understanding of the activity.

An active participant observation approach was determined to best suit the program evaluation because of the type of activities and relationship building that develops from shared experiences. The benefits are that the evaluator became closely familiar with the activities, instructors and participants, and was able to capture visible and verbalised experiences.

Due to EX BB being aligned to resilience domains, these became deductive themes during the analysis process and the report is aligned to these themes, however descriptors within the domains are the words of interviewees. If a participant verbally repeated a domain or descriptor during an interview, this was noted in recognition that interviewees repeat concepts that are important to them.

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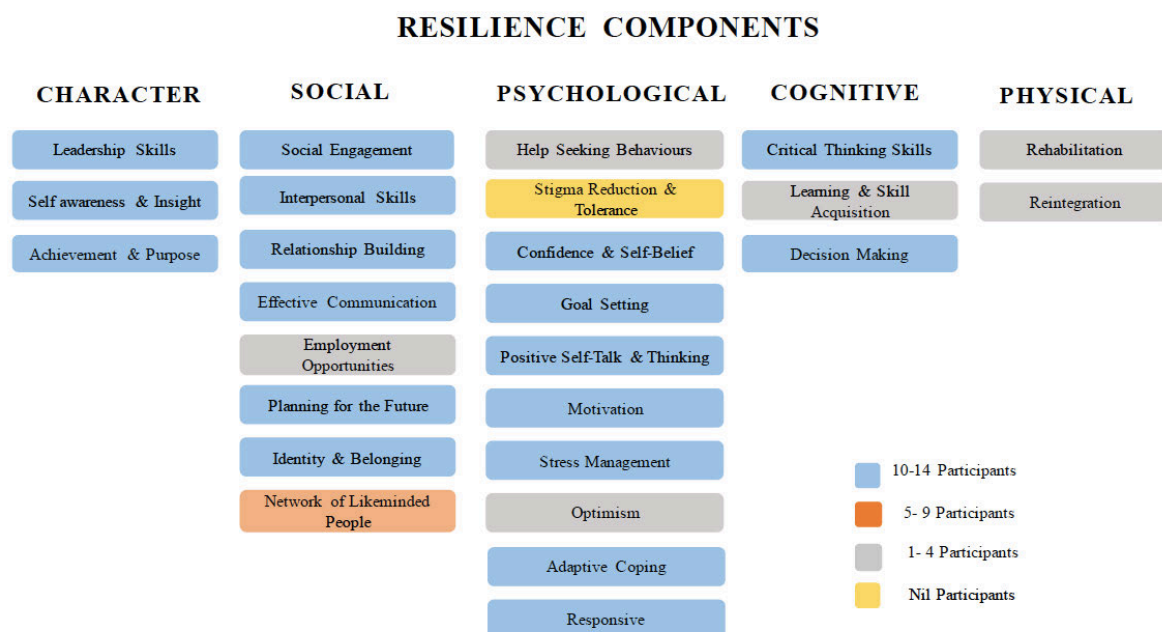
<sup>16</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participant\\_observation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participant_observation)

## Effectiveness & Impact

The effectiveness of EX BB is an assessment of the extent to which the program achieved its purpose. As agreed at the Recovery and Reintegration Working Group and specified in the Evaluation Framework, the purpose of EX BB was to develop **individual and group characteristics aligned to physical, cognitive, character, psychological<sup>17</sup> and social resilience** to enhance coping skills and foster direction in life through setting a pathway for future commitment.

The impact of EX BB is an examination of the effects of the program on individuals, groups (serving and ex-serving) and Army. Effectiveness and impact have been integrated in the evaluation report because the purpose and effect of EX BB are both closely aligned to resilience domain outcomes.

During the EX BB planning phase, **26 Resilience Components** were identified from the resilience domains as per COMD FORCOMD Directive 210/15 - FORCOMD Resilience Plan. To conduct the evaluation, these indicators were mind-mapped (Figure 1) to identify components to collect data against. The mind-map was then employed to visually represent the data analysis. In line with the legend, the outcomes have been colour-coded to indicate how many participants self-reported or were observed to achieve the resilience components.

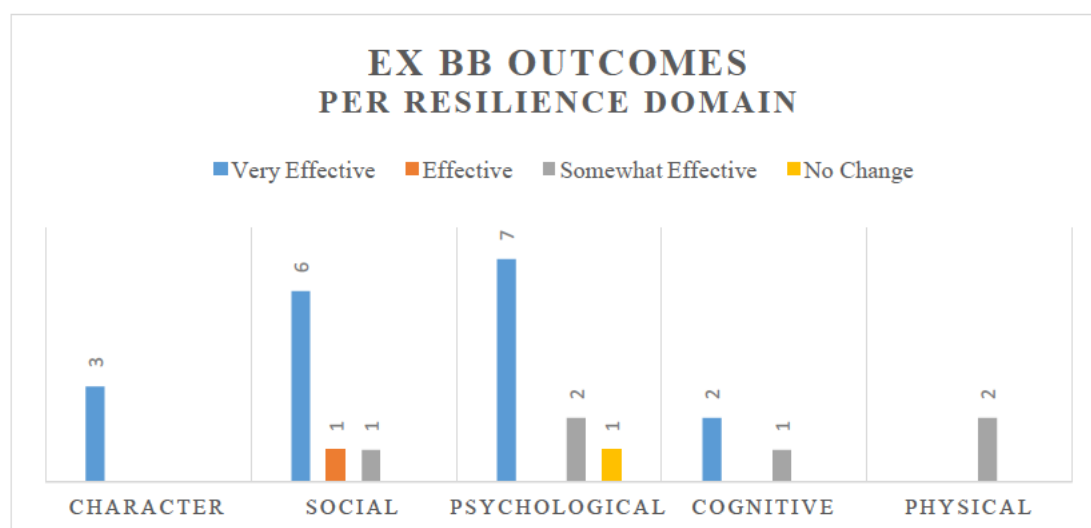


**Figure 1: Mapped and Analysed Resilience Indicators**

Based on this analysis EX BB is assessed to have achieved resilience outcomes as follows: 69% fully achieved; 4% mostly achieved; 23% partially achieved and 4% not achieved (Table 1). These results reflect that participants did not need all the achievable outcomes

<sup>17</sup> No psychological data was collected during the conduct of the evaluation. The psychological domain is as defined and outlined in COMD FORCOMD Directive 210/15 - FORCOMD Resilience Plan.

from EX BB, instead participants require tailored and targeted development in areas they self-identify or their Chain of Command identify.



**Table 1: EX BB Resilience Outcomes**

Overall, EX BB had a positive impact in a broad range of character, social, psychological, cognitive and physical domains for participants and instructors. At the organisational level, it is assessed that EX BB can contribute to enhancing Unit and Service performance through enabling participants to understand their potential.

### ***Character Resilience Domain***

Resilience in the character domain refers to enhanced inner qualities, more positive and constructive sense of self, more satisfying relationships and effective contribution to the team. All of the three components were assessed as fully achieved.

**Leadership skills:** Leadership skills developed over the duration of EX BB as relationships and rapport formed between participants. All participants were observed to take lead of activities, input experience and act as an effective team member. Participants adopted roles that suited their strengths, with one example being an ex-serving member was a qualified UATL. This participant was observed to input his experience and support other members during adventurous activities.

A specific example of leadership skills was the conduct of an assisted climb of a team member who was unable to climb due to physical limitations. The inclusion of the member in this activity and the positive response of other team members to assist reflected how individuals contributed to achieve a team outcome.

**Self-awareness and insight:** This component considers conscious knowledge of one's character and feelings and the evaluation captured demonstrated or verbalised acknowledgement of character and feelings. Eleven participants indicated that they

had limited or '*no strategy for self-awareness*'<sup>18</sup> prior to EX BB. The combination of RESET and adventurous activities was observed to provide all participants with a strategy, with a key message being '*know yourself to lead others*.'<sup>19</sup>

**Achievement and purpose:** All participants self-reported and verbalised recognition of their achievements in completing EX BB. In terms of purpose, four serving participants stated they would return to their workplaces and become role models, with one participant stating he would like to be a better role model for his children.

EX BB participants demonstrated a strong commitment to contributing to their team, because they started to '*think about other people and what they're going through ... taking time to focus on the job we're there to do as a team.*'<sup>20</sup> Towards the end of the program, most serving participants self-reported a desire to continue these processes in their workplace in order to '*deal with complex workplace issues.*'<sup>21</sup>

### ***Social Resilience Domain***

Social resilience is considered to be more socially connected, feeling more supporting, coping better with, and recovering faster, following injury. This domain considered social outcomes more broadly for people participating to achieve social outcomes, including team integration and communication skills.

**Social Engagement:** At the commencement of EX BB, three participants reflected that other participants were not normally who they would interact with. On exploration of this issue, it emerged that EX BB participants were diverse and had limited formed relationships prior to entering the program. This diversity, and how participants responded to it, was instrumental in achieving positive program outcomes.

This conclusion is made based on the evaluator's observation of acceptance of team members once participants put themselves in others shoes to see their perspective or had context put around a situation, such as other participants being the same age as family members and what this means in terms of behaviour.

All EX BB participants reported developing empathy during their time in the program and there was intent to bring this back into their workplace through seeking to understand workmates better.

- **Interpersonal Skills:** EX BB fully integrated participants and staff during group meals, activities and accommodation arrangements. It is assessed that this level of integration contributed to EX BB participants having positive outcomes in

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<sup>18</sup> Ex-serving member 3: Interview 2

<sup>19</sup> Group Leader

<sup>20</sup> Serving Member 1: Interview 2

<sup>21</sup> Serving Member 4: Interview 2

interpersonal skills. The relationships built in communal living was observed to impact communication during adventurous activities. Specific interpersonal skills observed were listening during rock climbing to ensure belaying was conducted at the required pace, verbal and non-verbal communication during sea kayaking drills, and team decision-making at meal times and campsites.

**Relationship Building:** The key theme which emerged on relationship building was the positive impact that EX BB was having on relationships with family and friends because participants were sharing experiences with their families and making a commitment to better relationships. Four participants explicitly noted the positive impact EX BB was having/would have on relationships. In the follow-up participant focus group, emphasis was placed by one member on the ongoing positive impact of EX BB on his relationships with partner and children at home.

*I spoke to my wife about the ABC model and how to apply to family life ... can use to understand children's actions and how to respond more effectively and control reactions.*

Serving Member 10: Interview 2

*My goals when I get home are to get in contact and maintain better contact with friends and family.*

Ex-Serving Member 4: Interview 1

*At home, I don't fly off the handle as quick. It's easier to see triggers and I do something about it ... go to the gym*

3 CSSB Participant Focus Group

The physical limitations of one ex-serving participant had the potential to impact interaction and relationship building that occurs during adventurous activities and EX BB was adapted to address this. On reflection, this participant noted that *'I appreciated that activities could be modified'*<sup>22</sup> because of the value the participant placed on the interaction and relationships that are built through shared experiences.

**Effective Communication:** On entering EX BB, three participants noted that communication was an identified area of improvement. One participant noted that at commencement of EX BB, her *'coping strategies were based on fight or flight ... shutdown usually'*<sup>23</sup> which had negative flow-on effects on relationships.

At the conclusion of EX BB, all participants self-reported or were observed to improve their verbal communication. This included communication to assist others during adventurous activities and assertiveness to have their opinion heard during other activities. Effective communication has been an enduring component of EX BB, with the follow-up Chain of Command focus group identifying that

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<sup>22</sup> Ex-serving Member 1:

<sup>23</sup> Serving Member 6: Interview 1



participants are more effectively communicating and interacting with workplace members and their chain of command.<sup>24</sup>

*Trying not to shut down .... trying to communicate and get the job done ... take into the workplace to focus more on the team.*

Serving Member 6: Interview 1

*Difficulty with thoughts into words, I've improved but still need to work on it.*

Serving Member 2: Interview 2

Participants were observed to learn the difference between good and bad/aggressive communication. Underpinning this deduction was that some participants provided feedback to other participants when their communication or encouragement was not helpful during an activity. The impact of this outcome in the workplace was identified during the participant follow-up focus group, with one participant noting he was able to *'tone down brashness at work'* because of the negative impact this type of communication can have.<sup>25</sup>

A critical outcome in the communication domain is that most participants were observed to verbalise their emotions and feelings, including anxiety. One participant noted they had *'learnt to verbalise anxiety ... talk to someone, calm down.'*<sup>26</sup>

Research reflects that labelling anxiety and putting feelings into words can reduce a fear response. It has also been concluded that the less aware people are of their emotions, the less likely they are to be able to regulate them.<sup>27</sup> With growing evidence that people find it difficult to effectively identify and label their emotions, EX BB demonstrates the benefits of adventure activities in developing this ability in current and ex-serving personnel.

**Employment opportunities and pathways:** One ex-serving participant reflected during their interview that the program resulted in understanding their current physical capability and the need to choose a realistic employment pathway considerate of this physical capability. This outcome links into how adventurous activities can adapt mindset.

**Planning for the future:** A dedicated 'goal-setting' activity during EX BB resulted in all participants specifying goals for 3 months, 6 months, 9 months, 1 year and 5 years due to a dedicated goal-setting session within the program. During their second interview, the majority of participants reflected this session with enabled them to apply thought to their future.

<sup>24</sup> 3 CSSB Chain of Command Focus Group May 2018

<sup>25</sup> 3 CSSB Participant Focus Group May 2018

<sup>26</sup> Serving Member 4: Interview 1

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sweet-emotion/201408/why-labeling-emotions-matters>

**Identity and belonging:** This component considers fit within the group, with all participants observed to integrate well into the group by the end of the program. The duration of EX BB and diversity of the participant group was observed to result in participants very effectively '*getting to know people and a way of working within a team.*'<sup>28</sup>

More introverted participants were observed to take longer to integrate into the team than others, however by the end of EX BB, all participants were observed to find a team identity. Many serving members stated they were going to take what they had learnt about effectively integrating into a team and apply it in their workplace.

Of note is the integration of serving and ex-serving members during EX BB. All participants considered this composition to be key in enabling positive outcomes in all resilience domains. For serving members, spending time with ex-serving members enabled them to understand their experiences. One participant noted that it was good to gain an understanding of post-service pathways which can inform their own career decision-making.

**Network of likeminded people:** All EX BB participants are connected via a dedicated Facebook Group, which reflects intent to continue relationships. Most participants engaged in discussion after the program, however this has reduced over time. The follow-up focus group with 3 CSSB identified that relationships had been maintained however not on a regular or consistent basis.

### ***Psychological Resilience Domain***

The psychological domain is defined as the development of positive and constructive strategies resulting in optimal performance and recovery from injury, adversity and challenge.

For those participants who self-reported mental health challenges, their outcomes are considered within this domain as a reflection of how EX BB achieved its purpose. It is emphasised that *no psychological data was collected*. All conclusions made are based on self-reported or observed resilience indicators as defined in COMD FORCOMD Directive 210/15 - FORCOMD Resilience Plan.

**Help seeking behaviours:** Two participants verbalised that they would be seeking formal or informal assistance after EX BB because the program enabled them to identify behaviours that need improvement. The specific examples they provided were getting into a routine and eating healthy. These behaviours reflect EX BB stimulated a desire in participants to continuing improving.

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<sup>28</sup> Serving Member 2: Interview 2

**Stigma reduction and tolerance:** This indicator is defined as the experience of discrimination associated with injury and illness. There was no self-reported or observed experience of discrimination associated with injury or illness.

**Confidence and self-belief:** All participants self-reported they experienced an increase in confidence and self-belief from participating in EX BB and a positive change in self-talk and thinking. Two participants verbalised their intent to change unhelpful behaviours and thoughts on communication and relationships into positive behaviours and thoughts. The follow-up focus group conducted with participants' Chain of Command reflected confidence and self-belief are enduring outcomes of EX BB, with one participant noted to now *'back himself when diagnosing vehicles'*<sup>29</sup> which is a behaviour that hadn't been observed before.

A key theme that emerged was how EX BB enabled participants to realise their potential as role models, both in their workplace and home life (parents, friends and family members). Interview extracts demonstrate the outcomes in this resilience component. The follow-up focus groups conducted with 3 CSSB identified a continual desire from participants to be role models within their workplace.

*I feel a lot more accomplished.*

Serving Member 1: Interview 1

*I am capable of a lot more than I thought.*

Ex-serving Member 4: Interview 2

*Given me the courage to move forward.*

Serving Member 6: Interview 1

*My confidence and self-belief is on top of the world. Not much that could break my confidence at the moment.*

Serving Member 10: Interview 1

*Pushed to be the best you can be ... demonstrate to people they have much more to give and more strength to give Army.*

Serving Member 3: Interview 2

**Motivation:** All participants were observed to engage in all program activities in a positive manner. This included adventurous activities and other program activities such as group meal preparation, de-briefing, and goal setting and 360 degree sessions. Two participants explicitly stated they were conducting EX BB to *'give it a go'* and this reflected in their positive approach to all activities. It is assessed that the adventurous activities generated motivation and a positive approach within participants, and this maximised the outcomes of the entire EX BB program.

<sup>29</sup> 3 CSSB Chain of Command Focus Group May 2018



**Stress Management:** This indicator considers participants' sense and perception of control. Based on participant interviews, it is concluded that twelve participants developed and applied stress management techniques when conducting the adventurous activities. One participant reflected on how uncertainty enabled him to manage subsequent stressful situations, stating '*I was relaxed after the capsiz. I understood uncertainty.*'<sup>30</sup> The two participants that did not demonstrate stress management were those that were not challenged by the difficulty-level of the adventurous activities.

Two key program characteristics were observed to contribute to participants employing effective stress management techniques: first was the delivery of RESET which enabled participants to refresh or learn stress management techniques to apply during adventurous activities. Secondly, group leader facilitation during adventurous activities enabled participants to employ the techniques delivered during RESET.

**Optimism:** This indicator is defined as hopefulness and confidence about the future. One ex-serving participant explicitly stated she felt optimistic for the future because EX BB gave her an understanding of her strengths and physical capability.

**Adaptive Coping:** This indicator is defined as the demonstration of techniques during challenging situations and observation of participants over the duration of the program reflect they were employing effective coping mechanisms. The delivery of RESET was a key enabler of this outcome, with all participants reporting that the program either introduced or refreshed participants about coping and response techniques that they then used during adventurous activities.

A key characteristic of EX BB were the multi-disciplinary activities progressively scaled-up. A key example is abseiling and climbing where the first activity was a Grade 7 climb and the second a Grade 9 climb. To put these activities into context, conventional adventurous training commences at a Grade 9 climb followed by a Grade 11-15 climb. The progression of activities was observed to enable participants to understand their situation and apply coping mechanisms. Mechanisms observed during the rock climbing were the use of breathing techniques, verbalising emotion and communication with team members to find a climbing route.

**Responsive:** Outcomes in this indicator were enabled through the conduct of 360-degree feedback, where participants provided feedback on each others strengths and weaknesses. The conduct of 360-degree feedback was observed to be challenging for some, who noted that it is better to focus on 'areas of improvement' versus 'weaknesses.' However, all participants reported that 360-feedback was a valuable part of EX BB and after the process, one participant noted being '*more open to receiving*

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<sup>30</sup> Serving Member 9:

*feedback, helps in the long run as may not see weaknesses, makes more self-aware.'*

<sup>31</sup> It is deducted that this tool contributed to all participants self-reporting increased self-awareness at the completion of the program.

### ***Cognitive Resilience Domain***

Resilience in the cognitive domain is considered to be the mental capacity to learn faster, make decisions and cope more effectively with ambiguity, adversity and injury. The components within this domain are critical thinking skills, learning and skill acquisition, and decision making however additional cognitive outcomes identified from EX BB, including overcoming mental barriers, positive mindset change, calmer/clear minds, confident decision making and clearer problem solving.

**Critical Thinking Skills & Decision Making:** EX BB progressively scaled up the difficulty of adventurous activities, which placed participants under increasing levels of stress and enabled them to engage problems and make decisions. All 14 participants described positive changes in their critical thinking and decision making following this process because it taught them how to break down a problem and respond to it in manageable pieces.

These conclusions are consistent with existing literature on decision making. Studies of people who voluntarily enter adventurous environments, including mountaineers and polar explorers, conclude that the best way to develop effective decision making is to train and prepare for it under stress.<sup>32</sup> It is also consistent with existing evaluations of outdoor therapy programs.<sup>33</sup>

Participants specifically noted positive changes in their thought processes as follows:

***The situation was shit, my reaction was a lot better ... actually making decisions.***

Serving Member - Interview 1

***Critical thinking skills definitely developed, after capsizing, went through drills to get out safely.***

Ex-Serving Member - Interview 2

***When situations come up, I can think of alternatives - see different outcomes, different layers, leads to better thoughts, better outcome.***

Serving Member - Interview 1

<sup>31</sup> Serving Member 1: Interview 2

<sup>32</sup> <http://brewminate.com/decision-making-under-stress/>

<sup>33</sup> Evaluation of Trojan's Trek Final Report February 2010

**Learning and Skill Acquisition:** In terms of learning and skill acquisition, three participants noted they gained skills from the conduct of EX BB which they intended to build-on and use in the future in a safe and controlled manner.

### ***Physical Resilience Domain***

Physical resilience is outlined as fit and well individuals better able to cope with adversity and recover faster from illness and injury.

**Rehabilitation:** Less than four participants self-reported being in a physical rehabilitation phase, which limited fully examination of this component. These participants were observed to be very driven to complete the full program despite their physical limitations reflecting individuals committed to their recovery.

**Reintegration:** The process of reintegration was examined from the perspective of ex-serving and serving participants, with the following deductions made:

<b>Ex-Serving</b>	<b>Serving</b>
<i>The process of transitioning and reintegrating into the Australian Community after service.</i>	<i>The process of integrating back into their Unit after injury or illness.</i>
<p>Three ex-serving participants reported challenges transitioning from service.</p> <p>One participant reported these challenges included experiencing significant health issues. In the lead-up to EX BB, he commenced a fitness program to ensure he would be able to complete the activities and not be a burden on the team. <b>EX BB gave him a goal and motivation to self-improve.</b></p> <p>Upon leaving the program, this participant self-identified the need to set another goal and to maintain closer relationships with family and friends to remain focused on improving.</p> <p>For ex-serving members, EX BB is assessed to be a positive experience that brings them back into a structured and team environment which enables them to challenge themselves, form relationships and remind themselves what they can achieve.</p>	<p>Two members reported being medically downgraded post-EX BB. Both members reported using techniques learning during RESET and experiences from EX BB in managing being medically downgraded, including frustration with medical processes and challenges with work place relations.</p>

An examination of the characteristics of EX BB and how components were achieved identifies that the program was effective for the following reasons:

1. **RESET:** Delivery of RESET to refresh and/or inform participants of cognitive, coping and stress management techniques.
2. **Instructors:** the facilitation of adventurous activities by military UATL/ALTI who were able to share and build experiences with participants was considered by participants to be a strength of the program. The experience of the instructors enabled the participants to feel safe, which maximised adventurous activity learning outcomes. The instructors were passionate and committed, and this had a positive impact on the experiences of participants and helped each participant achieve their individual outcomes. Having the right instructors were considered vital to the success of EX BB.<sup>34</sup>
3. **Diversity:** Group diversity (serving and ex-serving) to enable sharing of experiences, gaining of different perspectives and understanding of others.
4. **Nature of Adventurous Activities:** Duration and multi-disciplinary nature of the program.

## Relevance

An evaluation of relevance is consideration of whether EX BB is in line with Service and individual needs based on the resilience and organisational outcomes it achieved. In assessing the relevance of EX BB, it is important to outline what needs may exist.

## Raise, Train and Sustain

There is a growing body of literature building an evidence-base that exposure to stressors associated with adventurous environments can result in adaptive psychological responses and post-traumatic growth (PTG).<sup>35</sup> PTG includes personnel strength, appreciation of life and possibilities for the future. Research indicates expedition participants feel 'more capable of overcoming future challenges and had a different perspective of their life.'<sup>36</sup> They also reported higher scores on conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness, with lower scores reported on neuroticism when compared with the general population. These outcomes, being a high sense of adventure, drive to achieve and low susceptibility to anxiety, can be considered essential qualities for military personnel for both performance and adjustment.

## Recovery and Reintegration

EX BB had six participants that could be classified as within the recovery and reintegration space. These participants completed the same or adapted activities, and achieved comparable outcomes as those with differing resilience needs. This reflects that adventurous training can be considered a viable option to assist members in rehabilitation platoons. This will require an organisational mindset change, with it observed that '*rehabilitation is the reverse of what*

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<sup>34</sup> EX BB Participant Report/Feedback

<sup>35</sup> Smith, N., Kinnafick, F., Cooley, S.J., Sandal, G.M. (2016). Reported Growth Following Mountaineering Expeditions: The Role of Personality and Perceived Stress. *Environment and Behavior*, 49, 933-955.

doi:10.1177/0013916516670447

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

*adventurous training is supposed to do but we need to change this mindset to develop the breadth of UATL/ATLI capability and maximise potential of adventurous training.*<sup>37</sup>

### **Existing Programs**

When considering the relevance of EX BB, it is also important to examine existing programs. Comparable adventurous training activities are Exercise COLD COMFORT (EX CC), delivered by the Army Alpine Association (AAA), and Mates4Mates Rehabilitation Adventure Challenges.

EX CC is an alpine adventurous training activity for serving members delivered by the Army Alpine Association (AAA). In 2016, EX CC was a five-day activity delivered in Kosciuszko National Park that focused on sled hauling, snow-craft and snow survival skills, building snow caves, and undertaking snow and ice climbing. EX CC is designed to develop and exercise resilience, physical courage, endurance, and teamwork, and is characterised by:

- Challenging, authentic objectives in relative uncertainty;
- Careful management of stress loads on individuals;
- Exposure to a uniquely wild, hostile and beautiful environment;
- Adapting activities and exit routes based on conditions; and
- Employing high quality, seasoned instructional staff.

Anecdotally, EX CC 2016 was 'a positive event, with participants demonstrating growing confidence in their own competence, and trust in their team members, equipment and training.'<sup>38</sup> Similar to EX BB, instructional staff were critical to the success of EX CC with the benefits of adventurous programs for wounded, injured and ill 'not always realised when external providers are used to deliver activities instead of available military Adventurous Training leaders.'<sup>39</sup>

Mates4Mates is a not-for-profit ex-service organisation (ESO) that offers Rehabilitation Adventure Challenges, also termed 'psychologist-supervised adventure tourism.' Specified participant outcomes are an increase in motivation, teamwork, trust, confidence and self-worth.<sup>40</sup>

In comparison to these programs, EX BB is distinct in a number of ways:

- Integrated serving (Army) and ex-serving (Army/RAAF) members;
- Inclusion of dedicated sessions to achieve goal-setting and commitment to future direction;
- Facilitation and de-briefing of adventurous activities to build on resilience outcomes;
- Multi-discipline adventurous activities that were progressively scaled-up; and

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<sup>37</sup> Ex-serving Member 2: Interview 2

<sup>38</sup> EX CC 16 Post Activity Report

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> <http://mates4mates.org/our-services/rehabilitation-adventure-challenges/>

- Joint Health Command RESET program was delivered prior to adventurous activities.

Based on the resilience outcomes that EX BB achieved and its distinction from existing programs, it is deduced that the program meets Service needs as a tool that can be employed to develop PTG or assist in recovery and reintegration. EX BB provides Army with a template for a cheap, repeatable and adaptive adventurous training package that can be tailored based on command guidance and required outcomes. At the organisational level, the program meets Army's needs by developing individuals to integrate effectively within teams, appreciate diversity and diverse perspectives, develop a broad range of resilience components, and realise their potential

A way forward is to consider EX BB akin to a Combat Training Centre (CTC) Mission Rehearsal Exercise/training serial where participants or teams are concentrated to achieve resilience outcomes (vice operational outcomes). With deliberate planning, EX BB can be tailored to Brigade geographical locations and integrated into Brigade or Unit AT programs.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability measures how EX BB can be supported long-term. To maximise the benefit of EX BB, it is proposed that program be tailored to the command and geographical requirements of each Brigade and be included in adventurous training support provided by ATW to the RESET Brigade. Overall, it is assessed that to be sustainable, EX BB will require ongoing organisational investment (time and finances).

In the short-term, it is assessed that ATW using UATL/ATLI is best placed to deliver EX BB as part of adventurous training support to the RESET Brigade and it is recommended that ATW should be specifically resourced to achieve this outcome.

### **Follow-Up Focus Groups**

Two focus groups were conducted with 3 CSSB in May 2018 to follow-up the outcomes of EX BB. The first focus group was conducted with participants' Chain of Command (3 x LT; 1 x SGT) and the second with EX BB participants (x 5). The first focus group reflected that EX BB was an extremely successful program, to the extent that it was asked when the next iteration was being run. Changes were noticed in participants' confidence, motivation (resulting in less medical issues), communication, relationship-building and desire for positive behaviours.

Participants reported that overall, despite some setbacks, they were focusing on self-improvement in areas of communication, managing emotions and behaviours, and having positive and rationale thoughts. A repeated theme within the focus group was that participants were less likely to get frustrated at work or home, which was enabling them to build and maintain more effective relationships; they were mentally working through challenges and managing their responses. Participants identified the need for a follow-up activity to re-visit and consolidate the outcomes of EX BB, with RESET being the most

appropriate activity in order to re-visit coping mechanisms and techniques. This finding reflects the benefits of participants conducting a follow-up activity to consolidate the learning outcomes of adventurous training.

### **Evaluation Limitations**

This evaluation collected data using participant observation and semi-structured interviews, which has resulted in self-assessment or observation of outcomes. The potential for bias in these methods is acknowledged. The small sample size also limits generalisation to broader populations.

### **Conclusion**

EX BB is assessed to be an effective, relevant and sustainable program that meets identified Service needs because it is grounded in tailoring resilience initiatives to participants. The limitations of a qualitative evaluation of a trial program are recognised, however the evaluation contributes to a building evidence base of the positive outcomes that adventurous activities can have in the recovery and reintegration of serving and ex-serving members.



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Adventurous Training Wing  
Blamey Barracks, KAPOOKA NSW 2661

**Brief**

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## EXERCISE BATTLEBACK EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

### References:

- A. 170419 - Scoping Brief - ATW - Battleback initiative
- B. Agenda Recovery and Reintegration Working Group 11-12 May 17
- C. 1706-12 – ATW – Recovery and Reintegration Workshop Outcomes v2
- D. OC Directive 12-17 – ATW Professional Development – Exercise Battleback Guidance (FOUO)
- E. COMD FORCOMD Directive 210/15 – FORCOMD Resilience Plan
- F. ATW SOP 00.2 Mission
- G. Adaptive Sports Intranet Website
- H. OC Directive 1-17 Command

### SITUATION

1. At Ref A, an opportunity for a Working Group (WG) to synchronise resilience and adventurous training (AT) efforts in support of personnel during recovery and reintegration was outlined. References B and C outline the consultation and collaboration undertaken to trial an Adventurous Training (AT) activity that supports the recovery and reintegration of serving and ex-serving military personnel.
2. This activity has been titled Exercise BATTLEBACK (EX BB) after the UK version of a similar program which is a Ministry of Defence initiative that aims to improve and formalise the use of AT and sport in the aftercare of wounded Service personnel in order to aid their rehabilitation and return to an active life. Battle Back activities are tailored to the needs of participants and are designed with therapeutic outcomes in order to assist physical, psychological and social recovery as an adjunct to existing therapies.<sup>1</sup>
3. EX BB will be trialed over the period 20-29 Nov 17 and include the delivery of RESET.<sup>2</sup> Ref D outlines OC ATW direction and guidance for the conduct of EX BB in line with the ATW mission to progress AT within Army and conduct ATW professional development training. The Lead Planner (LP) and Activity OIC is CPL Oliver Schulz.

### PURPOSE

4. EX BB is an adventure-based activity that has been designed to assist personnel in a recovery phase of service<sup>3</sup> to achieve the best possible recovery and return to duty or make a smooth transition to civilian life. Its purpose is to develop individual and group characteristics

<sup>1</sup> See [https://www.raf.mod.uk/raactive/rafcms/mediafiles/D3E9C47F\\_5056\\_A318\\_A8DCDB6A027580BE.pdf](https://www.raf.mod.uk/raactive/rafcms/mediafiles/D3E9C47F_5056_A318_A8DCDB6A027580BE.pdf), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/adaptive-skiing-exercise-helps-rehabilitation-of-injured-troops>; and <http://www.army.mod.uk/events/23326.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> RESET is an evidence-informed mental health prevention program developed by Phoenix Australia in conjunction with the ADF Centre for Mental Health. It utilises a coach-based, skills training approach and targets personnel experiencing mild to moderate distress with an impaired ability to function productively in the workplace subsequent to experiencing stressful events in the course of their duties. RESET aims to prevent the progression from emerging mental health symptoms to a diagnosable disorder in order to mitigate the associated costs to current and future capabilities.

<sup>3</sup> Recovery is viewed as the process of moving from a point of adversity or trauma through a series of decompression, support and reintegration activities (Ref E).

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aligned to physical, cognitive, character, psychological and social resilience domains to enhance coping skills and foster direction in life through setting a pathway for future commitment. These outcomes have been identified from a systematic literature review of the impact of sport and physical activity on the well-being of military personnel (Flag A).

5. The purpose of EX BB is consistent with the overall purpose of AT to enhance Defence's operational performance by developing leadership, teamwork, trust, physical and mental fortitude, courage, initiative, resilience, resourcefulness, and self-discipline. The operational effect generated is supporting participants achieve their best possible recovery and return to duty.

6. The overarching participant outcomes are centered on the following:
- Building a sense of achievement and purpose;
  - Enabling goal-setting;
  - Enabling the development of commitment to future direction (including employment if applicable);
  - Developing a team, community and network of likeminded people;
  - Developing potential to change unhelpful behaviours and thoughts as required;
  - Building positive behaviours and thoughts as required;
  - Developing coping mechanisms and strategies; and
  - Building resilience to respond to adversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

7. EX BB is grounded in a body of literature that reflects positive outcomes for participants in adventure-based activities, also referred to as nature-based therapy, adventure therapy, outdoor development and nature based rehabilitation (Flag A). EX BB is characterised by the two core elements of adventure therapy: involvement in adventurous (physical) activities and therapeutic intent.<sup>4</sup>

8. EX BB has been aligned to the key components of adventure therapy as follows:
- Therapeutic principles:** EX BB participants will be encouraged to take personal responsibility; work on learning to verbalise experiences and discover new personal possibilities as part of taking responsibility for their own mental health/resilience. Activities are opportunities for personal growth, change and/or healing, and are tailored to meet the needs of participants and the collective group.
  - Social Context:** EX BB includes a focus on building healthy relationships, social skills and confidence and the use of intentional group processes, such as mutual feedback and support.

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<sup>4</sup> International Adventure Therapy 'What is International Adventure Therapy' accessed online at <https://internationaladventuretherapy.org/what-is-iat/>

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- c. **Programmed activities:** EX BB will tailor intentional therapeutic experiences that involve multidisciplinary activities. This approach reflects AT is a complex and holistic experience, not just a set of physical activities. The following theories have informed the development of EX BB:

- (1) Experiential learning – learning by doing, and the cycle of action and reflection.
- (2) Adventure activities – tailored physical, psychological and social challenges, with a use of natural consequences as opportunities for development.
- (3) Quiet times – creating space for personal reflection and the giving and receiving of group feedback.
- (4) Engagement and participation of the whole person – body, mind and spirit.

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- d. **Engagement with wider systems:** EX BB will be integrated with wider support systems surrounding participants, including inclusion of the following:

- (1) Embedded evaluation and research.
- (2) Integration with community and other agencies that have demonstrable outcomes for ongoing support.
- (3) Involvement of family and significant others where possible.

- e. **Staffing:** EX BB will be staffed by a small multidisciplinary team with the requisite skills to deliver and evaluate the activity. These include AT and outdoor leadership skills, clinical therapy and/or counselling skills if required, evaluation skills, and strong affiliation with Army and/or working with Army personnel.

- f. **Aims and intentions:** AT is practiced across the spectrum of health, including in prevention, early intervention, treatment, and continuing care for a range of health considerations. In this context, EX BB will be an adjunct to existing therapies in order to facilitate continuing care and assist participants maintain their health and wellbeing.

FIC ANALYSIS

9. In support of the conduct of EX BB, a Fundamental Inputs to Capability (FIC) analysis has been undertaken.<sup>5</sup> This analysis considers EX BB as a capability that enables the ADF to achieve an operational effect; being the capacity to support personnel who are wounded, injured or ill to achieve their best possible recovery and return to duty.

- a. **Personnel.** Consideration of participants and staffing of EX BB has been undertaken as follows:

- (1) **Participants.** The current EX BB concept is 20 personnel; 10 serving personnel drawn from 3CSSB, and 10 ex-serving selected through collaboration with SoliderOn. This group size and composition will enable the gathering of data in order to compare and contrast the efficacy of EX BB within serving and ex-serving groups.
- (2) **MEC Standards.** The current MEC standards for participation in AT is J1 or J2, with J21 and J22 only permitted with an authorized training waiver. As participants

<sup>5</sup> As per Defence Capability Development Handbook 2012 Version 1.0

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will be below required MEC standards, all participant medical conditions will be known to staff and managed through support staff in attendance and/or reachback support.

(3) **Staffing.** As per para 7. e. EX BB will be planned, conducted and evaluated by an experienced and multidisciplinary team including personnel posted to ATW or working in support of ATW for the purpose of EX BB. Ref D outlines ADF personnel identified to support the activity. Once participants are confirmed, any requirement for further support staff will be identified.

- b. **Organisation.** ATW has the requisite staffing, skills, experience and governance structures to deliver EX BB. EX BB will be delivered as professional development in order to broaden ATW experience and ability to plan and deliver AT activities that cover the spectrum of military service. The ATW Mission at Ref F dictates the requirement for the development of the AT capability. The ME of ATW is and will remain qualification of UATLs and ALTI IAW DTR, however additional effort is required to progress AT within Army and EX BB provides an opportunity to achieve this progress.
- c. **ADF Adaptive Sports Program.** EX BB incorporates physical activities to achieve R3 outcomes (recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration) in consideration of the effectiveness of ADF Adaptive Sports program. This program enhances quality through life for serving personnel, veterans and their families (Ref G).
- d. **Collective Training.** At Ref H, the requirement for continuous improvement and professional development within ATW is outlined. This applies to individuals and the team and EX BB will be undertaken as activity to broaden experience and ability for ATW to plan and execute adventure-based activities outside of the norm.
- e. **Major Systems.** Not applicable.
- f. **Supplies.** As per Ref D.
- g. **Facilities and training areas.** As per Ref D.
- h. **Support.** As per Ref D.
- i. **Command and management.** TBC

10. FIC analysis identifies that EX BB is achievable within ATW capacity and remit, and at a minimum, a number of organisational outcomes will be achieved.

- a. **ATW.** The EX BB trial achieves the following:
  - (1) Increase instructor experience and skills in supporting personnel undergoing recovery and reintegration.
  - (2) Develop skills and experience to inform innovative and future development of AT doctrine and teaching methods.
  - (3) Increase instructor experience in planning and conducting adventure training activities outside the norm and without a template solution.

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- b. **Defence.** ATW has a tri-service mandate and the outcomes of EX BB can be considered Defence-wide benefits as follows:
- (1) Develop and broaden AT capability.
  - (2) Contribute to an evidence-base on outcomes of AT in the recovery and reintegration of serving and ex-serving personnel.
  - (3) Build partnerships within ADF and externally to synchronise efforts in the recovery and reintegration of serving and ex-serving personnel.
  - (4) Enable informational exchange between ATW and SoliderOn in regards to AT disciplines and participant outcomes.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

11. An evaluation framework has been developed that will systematically examine EX BB, the outcomes that EX BB achieves and the extent to which it achieves them. Evaluation of EX BB will contribute to existing literature on the impact of AT on the well-being of military personnel, and inform the broader application of AT within recovery and reintegration. Specifically, any opportunity to consider the incorporation of EX BB into Brigade Human Performance Centres, Joint Health Command initiatives and future health and wellbeing initiatives.

12. Based on the literature review, an evaluation framework has been developed (Figure 1). As the project will be undertaken as a program evaluation, ethics clearance requirements will be confirmed through SME input.

13. **Evaluation Criteria.** Specified EX BB participant outcomes (para 6) have informed the design of the activity, with the evaluation considering these outcomes aligned to the following evaluation criteria:

- a. **Relevance:** Assesses whether EX BB is in line with Service and individual needs based on an examination of what outcomes EX BB achieves and to what extent it achieves these outcomes.
- b. **Effectiveness:** Measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of outputs.
- c. **Impact:** Examines the wider effects of the project on individuals, groups (serving and ex-serving) and Army. Impacts consider intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro and micro effects.
- d. **Sustainability:** Measures how EX BB can be supported long-term, without management by ATW.

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## EXERCISE BATTLEBACK EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

### STEP 1

#### Qualitative Strand

What resilience outcomes does EX BB achieve?

#### Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews  
Participant Observation

### STEP 2

#### Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

Basic statistical calculations if possible

Outputs: summarised data based on specified participant outcomes and serving and ex-serving groups.

### STEP 3

#### Interpret the Results

- Summarise and interpret results within and across serving and ex-serving personnel.
- Discuss the extent to which EX BB achieves specified participant outcomes.

**Figure 1: EX BB Evaluation Framework**

14. **Resilience Domains.** The physical, cognitive, character, psychological and social domains outlined in the Evaluation Collection Plan (Flag B) and aligned measures have been derived from COMD FORCOMD Directive 210/15 FORCOMD Resilience Plan (Ref E). Associated definitions have also been drawn from this reference. Use of these domains as the evaluation foundation will enable the framework to be used in subsequent activities that examine and measure resilience, and ensures a consist application of resilience.

15. **Frequency of data collection.** Data will be collected during the conduct of EX BB. The feasibility of three month-post EX BB data collection is being examined and subsequent approval will be sought for any future data collection.

16. **Responsibility for evaluation.** ATW will be responsible for the evaluation and reporting outputs. SME input will be sought to identify the requirements for ethics clearance and to request assistance with administration of measurement tools that require psychologist use only.

17. **Reporting.** Initial results from the evaluation of EX BB will be available NLT Mar 18, with a full evaluation report released NLT Jun 18.

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## CONCLUSION

18. In the UK, EX BB has achieved psychosocial outcomes which has enabled participants to move forward with their lives as a result of 'new horizons of possibility.'<sup>6</sup> More broadly, a systematic review of sport and physical activity on the well-being of combat veterans identifies that sport and physical activity enhances subjective well-being in veterans.

19. A literature review and FIC analysis reflects the opportunity and feasibility of conducting EX BB within an Australian context. Resultantly, EX BB will be trialed over the period 20-29 Nov 17 with a group of 20 personnel (10 serving and 10 ex-serving). The evaluation framework outlined in this document will be undertaken to collect data to inform the ongoing and broader application of EX BB within Army and ADF.

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<sup>6</sup> Carless et al (2013)

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Study	Participants	Design	Methods	Type of sport or physical activity	Main Findings
Hattie et al 1997	-	Meta-analysis	Synthesize findings across many studies, assess the effects of various moderators, and ascertain the major sources of variability in the program effects	Adventure Programs	<p><b>Leadership.</b> Adventure programs stimulate the development of interpersonal competence; most leadership domains high; conclude that most adventure programs impact leadership competences</p> <p><b>Self-concept.</b> Greatest effects in the self-concept domain were for independence, confidence, self-efficacy, and self-understandings</p> <p>The effects of the adventure program on physical ability self-concept are low, although the effects on actual physical fitness are high</p> <p><b>Academic.</b> Adventure programs enhance problem solving competencies (although variance in effects)</p> <p><b>Personality.</b> Effects on personality dimensions are high for assertiveness, as well as in reduction of aggression, for emotional stability, achievement motivation, internal locus of control, maturity, and reduction in neurosis</p> <p><b>Interpersonal.</b> Across all interpersonal dimensions there are marked increases, particularly noted with social competence, cooperation, and interpersonal communication</p> <p><b>Adventuresome.</b> The effects on challenge and flexibility were very high</p>
Neil and Dias 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experimental group – 49 young adult participants; 41 returned complete data</li> <li>- Control group – 31 students</li> </ul>	Quasi-experimental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resilience Scale – 25 item self-report questionnaire; Likert scale</li> <li>Social Support – Likert scale</li> </ul>	22-day multi-element Outward Bound programs in Australia with a primary focus on personal development	<p>Controlled exposure to challenge can enhance participants' psychological resilience Study demonstrates significantly greater gains in resilience for 41 young adults participating in 22-day Outward Bound programs All participants reported positive changes in their resilience</p> <p>Very high levels of perceived Social Support</p> <p>Important to consider the relationship between group process and individual growth</p>
Carless & Douglas 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 13 men and women</li> <li>- aged 24-43</li> <li>- diagnosed with a severe and enduring mental illness and all involved in some kind of sport or physical activity</li> </ul>	Narrative approach	Interviews	Various	<p>Participation in sport or physical activity can bring positive additions to a person's life Three avenues through which physical activity can support recovery among people with mental health problems</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) by providing a 'stepping stone' to personally meaningful and valued activities or occupations</li> <li>2) through helping individuals rebuild their identity; and</li> <li>3) by offering an environment to <i>re-story</i> life around action, achievement,</li> </ol>

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					and relationships
Dustin et al 2011	10 male and 3 female veterans diagnosed with PTSD (ages unspecified)	Pilot intervention study (to generate research questions, not answer questions)	Journal writing and observational methods	4-day outdoors expedition ('river running')	<p>Reduced symptoms of PTSD alongside greater confidence self-efficacy, and coping ability</p> <p>Reduced PTSD symptomatology, enhanced perceived coping skills, confidence and self-efficacy and 'ecotherapeutic' impact of nature</p>
Gelkopf et al 2013	<p>- Israeli Defense Forces</p> <p>- 22 veterans experiencing chronic combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder (CR-PTSD)</p> <p>- Control group on waiting list – 20</p>	Randomized Control Trial		1-year Nature Adventure Rehabilitation (NAR)	<p>CR-PTSD is a condition with many treatment barriers NAR as a second line or as a supplemental intervention has the potential to overcome some of these barriers and incorporate aspects of successful treatment modalities for PTSD within an experiential learning paradigm</p> <p>Posttraumatic symptoms (PTS), depression, functional problems, quality of life, perceived control over illness (PCI) and hope were measured by self report measures</p> <p>PTS, emotional and social quality of life, PCI, hope and functioning improved significantly Change in PTS was contingent upon change in PCI</p> <p>This is the first study to present NAR as a promising supplemental intervention for CR-PTSD NAR seems to work through a process of behavioural activation, desensitization, gradual exposure to anxiety evoking situations and gaining control over symptomatology</p>
Burke and Utley 2013	4 injured male veterans aged 22 to 44 years	Descriptive cross-case analysis	Multiple semi-structured interviews and observations	9-day climbing expedition on Mt Kilimanjaro	<p>Improvements in self-determination, active coping, and social support Climb facilitated the experience of determination and inner strength by providing injured veterans with a valued goal to strive for</p> <p>Suggested that aspects of the climb shared relevant features of the veterans' military experiences Being able to experience feelings drawn from inner strength was considered by the veterans as highly significant in terms of recovery (e.g. in developing the determination to return to active duty or to move on with overcoming the 'challenge of disability')</p> <p>As referenced in Caddick and Smith (2014)</p>
Carless et al 2013	<p>- Military personnel</p> <p>- 11 men aged 20-43</p> <p>- Individuals experiencing some form of disability as a result of either physical</p>	Descriptive qualitative study	Narrative life story interviews (recorded and transcribed verbatim)	5-day inclusive adapted sport and adventurous training residential course	<p>Psychosocial outcomes around two clusters:</p> <p>1) "Bringing me back to myself" → participants get back or recreate aspects of their previous life or self that had been lost in the wake of trauma/injury – 'Doing things again;' 'recreating a sense of purpose;' Return to relationships with other military personnel &amp; strengthening or repair of family relationships (respite/'breathing space')</p>

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	injuries sustained during deployment, non-battle related injuries, mental health problems or chronic illness				2) "New rooms to explore" → participants become empowered to move forward with their lives through awareness or understanding of new horizons of possibility – new activities; being valued, respected, cared for during course; inspired by people → qualities observed or experienced in others positively affect or influence some aspect of life; shifting and expansion of personal horizons of possibility
Caddick and Smith 2014	11 studies	Systematic Review	Directed content analysis reported in a narrative synthesis	Use of sport and/or physical activity in supporting combat veterans	<p>Sport and physical activity enhances subjective well-being in veterans through active coping and doing things again, PTSD symptom reduction, positive affective experience, activity in nature/ecotherapy, and quality of life</p> <p>Impact on psychological well-being includes determination and inner strength, focus on ability and broadening of horizons, identity and self-concept, activity in nature/ecotherapy, sense of achievement/accomplishment, and social well-being. Participating in sport and/or physical activity can also enhance motivation for living</p>
Carless at al 2014	Centred on 2 men	Descriptive qualitative study	<p>Narrative storytelling approach based on collaboratively written creative nonfictions</p> <p>(first-person stories constructed with two male soldiers on the basis of informal interviews and conversations)</p>	5-day inclusive adapted sport and adventurous training residential course	<p>- Meet people who have been through something similar – shared experiences</p> <p>- Realise things are possible</p> <p>- Re-appraise what can be done – overcome mental barriers</p>
Carless 2014	<p>- 11 men enlisted in the British Army who had experienced serious physical injury and/or psychological trauma through their work</p> <p>- Experienced prolonged inability to work</p>	Descriptive qualitative study	<p>- Ethnographic fieldwork</p> <p>- Narrative theory</p>	5-day inclusive adapted sport and adventurous training residential course	<p>- Second narrative transformation; stories moved toward a quest narrative, portraying immersion in an intense present, development of a dialogical conception of self, and a relational orientation</p> <p>- On basis of narrative theory, this transformation holds positive consequences for the health and well-being of military personnel who have experienced injury and/or trauma</p> <p>- Findings shed little light on the long-term consequences of the transformation, in the short term involvement in sport and adventurous training course has positive outcomes for the psychological well-being and development of military personnel</p>

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Literature Review

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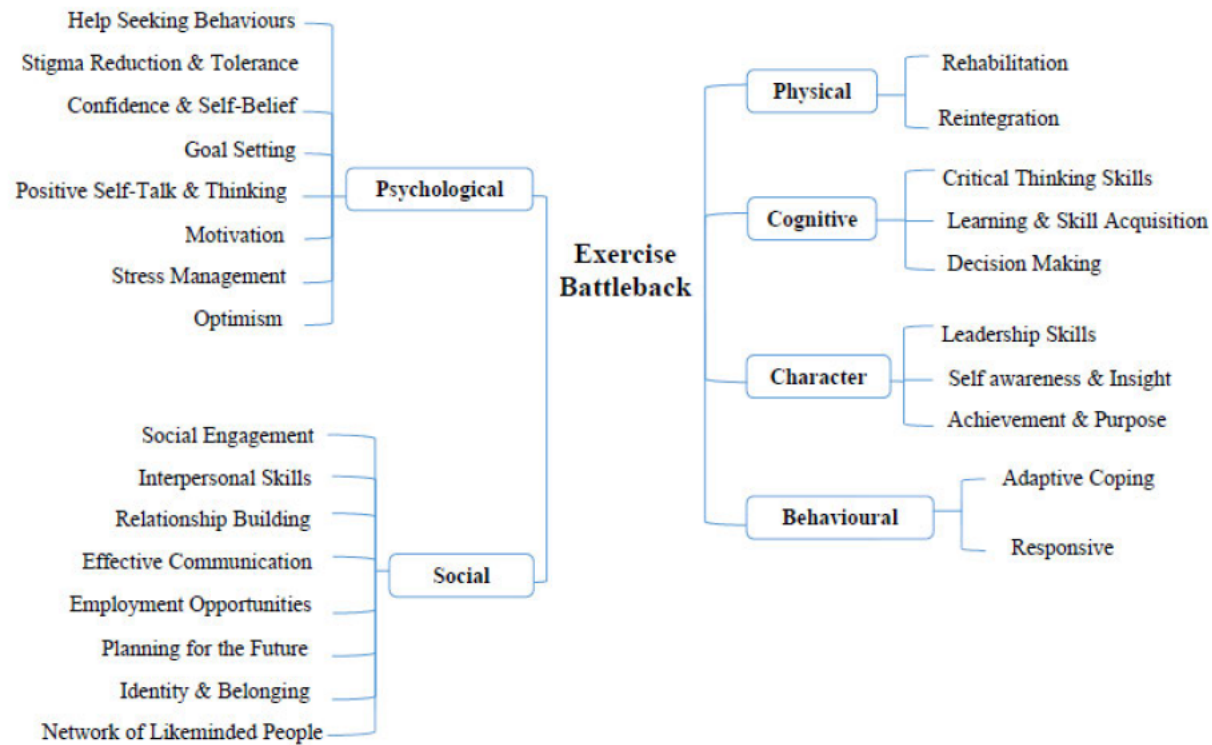
Douglas & Carless 2015	One male	Descriptive qualitative study	Performance ethnography	<i>Battle Back (Lilleshall)</i> 5-day inclusive adapted sport and AT course	Small but not insignificant number of military personnel who do not appear to benefit from the course in ways originally intended - 'compulsory' - 'another alternative ... drawing' - Need someone to talk to; not feeling like you're the only one going through it - Competition is not inherently good, vulnerability is not negative, and care and connection is foremost
Poulsen 2017	-	Conceptual analysis and general review of literature	-	Nature-based therapy – "a therapeutic intervention targeting the need of a special population, where the natural environment is specially designed or specially chosen for the particular therapeutic activity" (Corazon et al, 2010)	The findings show a wide variation according to the interventions, the nature setting, the length and frequency of the nature-based session (NBT) as well as the health outcomes measures  Studies demonstrated a positive impact on the PTSD symptoms, quality of life and hope  None of the studies found negative impact of the interventions  Being in a group of veterans facing the same problems was highlighted  Some studies measured the ability to return to workforce for veterans and found NBT beneficial in the process  The drop-out rate of veterans is high in conventional treatment, and it is found that veterans experience some side effects from medical treatment NBT is, in existing research, found to have a positive impact on veterans, and therefore, it should be part of future treatment programs for veterans with PTSD

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### Exercise BattleBack Mind Map



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FLAG B: EX BB Evaluation Collection Plan

PHYSICAL		
Description	Indicator & Definition (How is calculated)	Measures
Fit and well individuals better able to cope with adversity and recover faster from illness and injury.	<b>Rehabilitation:</b> Value of EX BB in rehabilitation	Semi-structured interviews (allowing self-reflection) and participant observation due short period of expedition.
	<b>Reintegration:</b> process of being integrated into Unit after injury or illness and role of EX BB in supporting this.	
Data Source (How will it be measured)		
Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews & participant observation during EX BB		

COGNITIVE		
Description	Indicator & Definition (How is calculated)	Measures
Enhanced mental capacity to learn faster, make better decisions and cope more effectively with ambiguity, adversity, and injury.	<b>Critical thinking skills:</b> measure the disposition to engage problems and make decisions using critical thinking	Observed stages of skill acquisition (cognitive, associative and autonomous).
	<b>Learning and skill acquisition:</b> gain a new outdoor skill apply in subsequent activities	Self-reflection during semi-structured interviews.
	<b>Decision making:</b> how well individuals make decisions	
Data Source (How will it be measured)		
Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews & participant observation during EX BB		

BEHAVIOURAL		
Description	Indicator & Definition (How is calculated)	Measures
Individuals are better able to respond to challenging situations and adversity, and be self-aware.	<b>Adaptive coping:</b> Demonstration of techniques during challenging situations.	Participant observation (e.g. use of breathing techniques or techniques to regulate stress)
	<b>Responsive:</b> Responsive to feedback.	
<b>Data Source (How will it be measured)</b>		
Qualitative: Participant observation during EX BB		

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CHARACTER		
Description	Indicator & Definition (How is calculated)	Measures
Enhanced inner qualities; more positive and constructive sense of self; more satisfying relationships; and contribute more to their team.	<b>Leadership skills:</b> ability to take lead of activities if required; input experience; performance of acts that <u>help the group achieve its goals.</u>	Self-reflection during semi-structured interviews.
	<b>Self awareness and insight:</b> conscious knowledge of one's own character and feelings and <u>demonstrated or verbalised.</u>	
	<b>Achievement and purpose:</b> recognition of achievement and articulation of purpose (short, medium and long-term).	
<b>Data Source (How will it be measured)</b>		
Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews & participant observation during EX BB		

PSYCHOLOGICAL		
Description	Indicator & Definition (How is calculated)	Measures
Development of positive and constructive strategies resulting in optimal performance and recovery from injury, adversity and challenge	<b>Help seeking behaviours:</b> formal help-seeking, informal help-seeking and self-help.	Participant observation (e.g. use of breathing techniques or techniques to regulate stress; seeking assistance during EX BB, seeking assistance post EX BB)  Self-reflection during semi-structured interviews.
	<b>Stigma reduction and tolerance:</b> experience of discrimination associated with injury or illness.	
	<b>Confidence and self-belief:</b> perception of skills, abilities, looks and behaviours.	
	<b>Goal setting:</b> self-determination.	
	<b>Positive self-talk and thinking:</b> verbalised statements of self.	
	<b>Motivation:</b> contribution to the conduct of activities and positive reasons why.	
	<b>Stress management – arousal-reduction:</b> Sense of control; understand/ measure participants' perceptions of control	
	<b>Optimism:</b> hopefulness and confidence about the future or the success of something.	
<b>Data Source (How will it be measured)</b>		
Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews & participant observation during EX BB		

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SOCIAL		
Description	Indicator & Definition (How is calculated)	Measures
More socially connected; feel more supported, cope better with, and recover faster, following injury	<b>Social engagement:</b> acceptance of other people.	Participant observation
	<b>Interpersonal skills:</b> interaction with other personnel and staff	Self-reflection during semi-structured interviews.
	<b>Relationship building:</b> effort to meet and interact with others; build and maintain effective relationships	
	<b>Effective communication:</b> mutual understanding of communication	
	<b>Employment opportunities and pathways:</b> identification of opportunities with current skills; identify opportunities.	
	<b>Planning for the future:</b> Identify important future goals	
	<b>Identity and belonging:</b> Fit within the group.	
	<b>Network of likeminded people:</b> intention to continue relationships	
<b>Data Source (How will it be measured)</b>		
Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews & participant observation during EX BB		

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### Flag C: EX BB Qualitative Data Collection Methods

#### Semi-structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of data collection that has a set of open questions (questions that prompt discussion) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further.

Suggested semi-structured questions (attempt to identify a baseline/comparison)

1. How is/has EX BB assisting you to:
  - a. Build a sense of achievement and purpose?
  - b. Enable goal-setting and put in place plans for the future for your recovery and rehabilitation?
  - c. Develop a team, community and network of likeminded people?
  - d. Develop potential to change unhelpful behaviours and thoughts as required?
  - e. Build positive behaviours and thoughts as required?
  - f. Develop coping mechanisms and strategies?
  - g. Build resilience to respond to adversity?
2. Ask for specific behavioural examples/situations from the participant's life against these outcomes.

#### Participant Observation

Participant observation involves the researcher participating in the activities of the group being studied. Participant observation seeks to uncover motives, intentions and interpretation of events, including consideration of what occurs, who is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur and why things happen as they do. Based on the type of participant observation adopted, this data collection method includes informal interviews and enumerations of events and activities.

#### Participant Observation Type Chart<sup>7</sup>

Type of Participant Observation	Level of Involvement	Limitations
Non-Participatory	No contact with population or field of study	Unable to build rapport or ask questions as new information comes up.
Passive Participation	Researcher is only in the bystander role	Limits ability to establish rapport and immersing oneself in the field.
Moderate Participation	Researcher maintains a balance between "insider" and "outsider" roles	Allows a good combination of involvement and necessary detachment to remain objective.

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participant\\_observation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participant_observation)

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Active Participation	Researcher becomes a member of the group by fully embracing skills and customs for the sake of complete comprehension	This method permits the researcher to become more involved in the population. There is a risk of "going native" as the researcher strives for an in-depth understanding of the population studied.
Complete Participation	Researcher is completely integrated in population of study beforehand (i.e. he or she is already a member of particular population studied).	There is the risk of losing all levels of objectivity, thus risking what is analysed and presented to the public.

**Generic Observation Procedure**

When conducting participant observation, the following process is suggested

- Observe
- What goes on?
- Who is involved?
- When and where do things happen?
- How do they occur?
- Why do things happen as they do?
- Record observation
- Photography
- Data entry/observation recording → Using ATLI template for recording observations

During EX BB (for example)

- What are participants' intentions?
- Who makes decisions?
- When is information shared?
- How do individuals communicate with each other?
- Why do participants make certain decisions?
- How do individuals use coping mechanisms?
- Observations on
  - Help seeking behaviours (engage with EX BB staff)
  - Change in levels of confidence (increase or decrease)
  - Documented goal setting/individual plan → planning for the future → achievement and purpose
  - Positive self-talk
  - Motivation to complete activities
  - Use of stress management techniques
  - Optimism for the activity, service and career
  - Engagement with others (participants & staff)
  - Interpersonal skills
  - Relationship building
  - Communication (effective/non-effective)
  - Belonging within group
  - Building of a network of likeminded people – commitment to continue relationships post-EX BB
  - Physical changes
  - Application of skills (critical thinking, leadership)
  - Decision-making
  - Responsiveness to feedback
  - Adaptive coping

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OPP

# Adventurous Training During the Spectrum of Service

This article discusses the value of adventurous training and the trial of Ex BATTLEBACK.

by The Cove

01/08/2017

 < 15 mins  All Corps

## The Value of Adventurous Training

Within the ADF, Adventurous Training (AT) faces a fierce battle to become a command priority in a high tempo environment with finite time and resources. It competes with physical activity but has a reputation or misconception more aligned to recreation. However, that reputation is changing as **AT learning outcomes** are being explored, defined and more widely disseminated. Extant evaluations and research identify significant benefits from AT in terms of retention, morale and mental resilience.<sup>[i]</sup> AT is also currently being used as a recruitment tool.

The role of AT is to provide an experiential learning medium in a challenging environment to set the conditions for enduring learning and development. It is differentiated from physical and recreational endeavours because it creates an environment that brings to the fore observable behaviours under adverse conditions, thereby providing the opportunity to facilitate meaningful experiential reflection. AT provides an effective medium to expose individuals to complex environments before encountering operational service and combat. <sup>[ii]</sup> It does so by categorising activities (Table 1 below) into a learning matrix providing guidance on target audience and specified learning outcomes. Of note is that only categories B-D are classified as AT with their respective time frames being linked to achieving real and lasting change.

Cat.	Type	Change and anticipated outcomes	Facilitation/Coaching required	T (d)
A	Recreation	Self-care (feelings) – new skills, energy, enjoyment and fun	Little to none and usually shared with like-minded peers. The experience of the activity speaks for itself.	
B	Education	Thinking – new knowledge, attitude and awareness, deliberate reflection	A UATL facilitates recollection and discussion of the experience and creates direct links to enable participants to transfer reflections and new attitudes back to their workplace and daily life.	3-5
C	Development	Behaviour – new ways to act and increase function.  Thinking - participants are challenged about how they perceive a problem / task, and how they step through it.	Experienced UATL/ATLI to facilitate and coach individuals to allow learning through reflection on behaviours, internal and external perceptions of behaviours and attitudes. Participants will develop tangible areas where they can commit to applying new behaviours and thought processes in response to newly-exposed blind spots in self-awareness.	5-7
D	Re-direction	Present new ways to cope, build teams and decrease dysfunction. Potential to change negative behaviours where required	In the context of longer exposure to more challenging environments, an experienced UATL/ATLI (with the guidance of a military psychologist) can assist a person in highlighting the effects of negative behaviours and promoting alternative positive behaviours. Participants will be shaped and influenced to integrate these behaviours and new self-awareness into their lives.	7-10

**Table 1:** Categories of adventurous training learning outcomes [iii]

The AT learning matrix maps outcomes to individual, small-team or unit requirements, which enables effective integration across the spectrum of service. This is because it explicitly defines objectives tailored to both the needs of participants as well as individual or organisational learning requirements.

### Adventurous Training Pathways ‘Prehab’

In the preventative space (also called ‘left of bang’ or ‘prehab’), the ADF prepares its leaders and personnel to thrive in difficult conditions. AT provides an effective medium to expose teams (small-team to unit level) to environments that physically, emotionally, intellectually and morally build capacity to mitigate or minimise the impact of significant adverse personal events. Working collaboratively with military psychologists and SMEs; Unit Adventure Training Leaders (UATL) and Adventure Training Leader Instructors (ATLI) are able to provide sophisticated coaching, mentoring and facilitation skills to achieve the requisite learning outcomes in order to enhance operational capability.

A proactive model of AT supports its integration into units. This model is founded on proposed regional AT cells located with brigades to provide input into AT activities. Such an approach centralises AT knowledge and experience to achieve tailored and collaborative outcomes for individuals and teams.

### Recovery & Reintegration

AT can also play a critical role in the aftercare of wounded Service personnel. Adventurous activities of this nature have therapeutic intent and are referred to as Nature-Based Therapy (NBT), Nature Adventure Rehabilitation (NAR), **adventure therapy** or outdoor development. A body of literature exists that outline the benefit of these activities, with the field increasingly examining the outcomes of outdoor and **adventurous activity for veterans**. [iv] Specifically, AT and sport can play a role in the aftercare of wounded personnel through aiding in their **rehabilitation** and enabling them to return to an active life.

A literature review found NBT/NAR to have a positive impact on PTSD symptoms, quality of life and hope, and is beneficial in the process of veterans returning to the workforce. None of the studies reviewed found any negative impact of participation. [v] Additional research, undertaken as a randomized control trial on a one year program, identified that adventurous therapies are a 'promising supplemental intervention' for chronic combat-related PTSD which seem to work through a process of 'behavioural activation, desensitization, gradual exposure to anxiety evoking situations and a control over symptomatology'. [vi] Of note however, is that variations are evident in activity outcomes which may be linked back to the nature setting, the length and frequency of the session and the health outcomes measured.



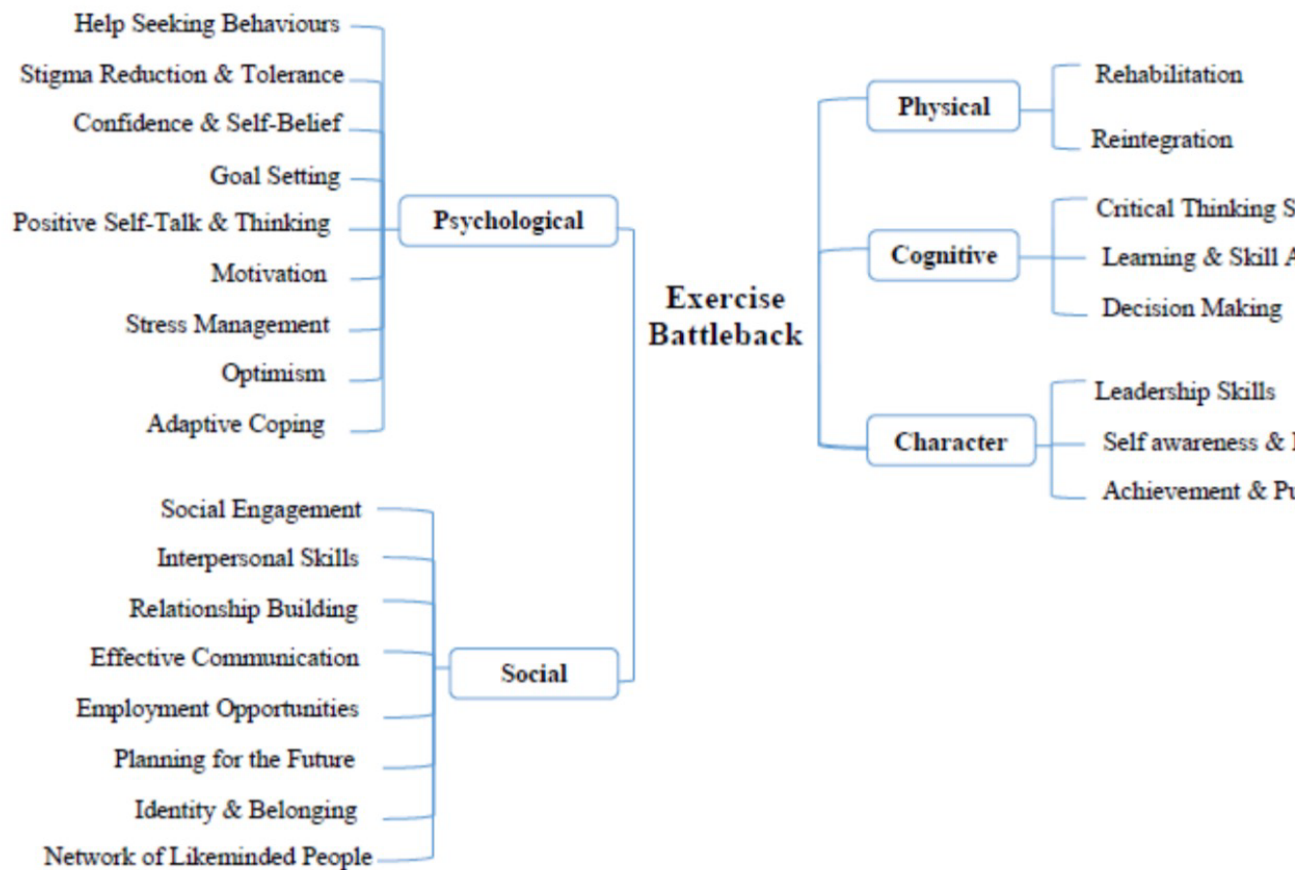
### The AUS trial of Exercise BATTLEBACK

On the initiative of Adventurous Training Wing (ATW) and **Soldier On**, a Working Group (WG) was held over the period 11-12 May 2017 to examine the feasibility of incorporating AT into the recovery and reintegration of serving and ex-serving personnel. The WG was underpinned by a scoping brief that outlined the **equifinality** of recovery and reintegration, the benefits of synchronising efforts in this space, and the use of AT as a tool to support 'reintroducing individual and group coping strategies and setting the pathway for a commitment to future direction.' [vii]

The key outcome of the WG was ATW and **Soldier On** agreeing to collaborate and conduct a 10-day multi-disciplinary AT expedition for personnel in a recovery and reintegration phase of service. Titled Exercise BATTLEBACK (EX BB), the expedition draws from a **UK Ministry of Defence**-led programme of the same name. With an abundance of physical and **rehabilitation adventure activities** available, the value of EX BB lies in its specified participant and organisational outcomes, and adoption of a robust evaluation framework to examine the wider application of AT in recovery and reintegration.

The UK implemented the **Battle Back program** in 2008 in recognition of the role that AT and adaptive sports play in enabling wounded service personnel to make a physical, psychological and social recovery. Battle Back activities are tailored to the needs of participants and are designed with therapeutic outcomes as an adjunct to existing therapies. Battle Back has also achieved psychosocial outcomes which have enabled participants to move forward with their lives as a result of '**new horizons of possibility**' [viii]

As outlined in the COMD FORCOMD Directive 210/15 FORCOMD Resilience Plan, there is potential for EX BB to achieve outcomes in physical, cognitive, character, psychological and social resilience domains (Figure 1). There are also behavioural benefits that can be explored.



**Figure 1.** Mapped Exercise BATTLEBACK outcomes.<sup>[ix]</sup>

This is supported by the Defence Learning Manual, which states that the purpose of AT is 'to enhance Defence's operational performance,' through developing leadership, teamwork, trust, physical and mental fortitude, courage, initiative, resilience, resourcefulness, self-discipline, risk management and stress management. EX BB is consistent with the purpose of AT both in terms of the mapped outcomes and its intent to generate an operational effect by supporting participants on their path to recovery and return to duty.

The flow-on effects of EX BB for ATW will be increased instructor experience and skills in supporting personnel undergoing recovery. Organisational outcomes of the trial include developing and broadening the AT capability, contributing to an evidence-base on AT outcomes, and building partnerships within and external to Defence, in order to synchronise efforts in the recovery and reintegration of wounded, injured and ill personnel.

EX BB will be framed by a robust evaluation framework, incorporating the specified individual and organisational outcomes. The knowledge gained by this will be invaluable for Ex-Service organisations working in the adventure therapy space. It is anticipated that initial results from EX BB will be delivered at DEF Aus 2017.

### The value of building partnerships and establishing networks

A number of partnership opportunities exist that will enable ongoing collaboration in the recovery and reintegration of service personnel, while also having the potential to provide greater and more varied AT experiences. Partnerships allow for the sharing of resources and help to reduce 'duplication of effort'.

### Microadventures

One key partnership opportunity is between **Soldier On** and the **Army Alpine Association (AAA)**, especially in Canberra, to integrate microadventures into Soldier On's regular schedule of activities. Introduced into physical activity nomenclature by Alastair Humphreys, **microadventures** are activities that are 'short, simple, local, cheap – yet challenging, refreshing



and rewarding.' Activities of this nature can achieve technical training outcomes and knowledge exchange, which can lay the foundations for longer and more difficult AT challenges. They can also include family involvement at completion through a social function to share and reflect on outcomes and achievements.

This proposed partnership between Solider On and AAA will enable the transfer of considerable AT experience into the ex-serving community, in-turn laying the foundations for a community of like-minded people that can be accessed, both in terms of conducting AT activities and reaching out when in need.

### **Adventurous Activity Qualifications**

Personnel in the AT community have considerable expertise that should be captured to assist transiting ADF members gain civilian employment in physical activity, tourism and outdoor areas. This includes identifying knowledge, skills and training that can translate into civilian qualifications. Working with organisations such as [Australian Canoeing](#) enhances the ability of AT personnel to provide up-to-date advice on employment options and will help to develop and grow professional relationships with activity based industries.

### **Inspiration and aspiration**

More broadly than the Army AT community is a plethora of serving and ex-serving individuals who have achieved significant benefit from adventurous activities and can provide inspiration and aspiration to personnel throughout their service. This would see people currently outside the AT space discuss their experiences in areas of leadership, adversity and resilience. The 'Cove' team are trialling the use of a 'webinar' facility for up to 100 people and it is anticipated that personnel will be able to share their AT experiences widely through this medium.

### **Conclusion**

The AT Community and AT are critical enablers for the Army and wider ADF to enhance human performance through resilience and leadership development of its personnel. There is great potential in AT being introduced throughout the spectrum of service, specifically in terms of recovery and reintegration. On the initiative of ATW, EX BB will be trialled in November 2017. A grassroots and collaborative initiative, the activity is grounded by research and will provide an invaluable foundation for similar activities to be conducted in the future.

### **About the authors:**

**Dan Fussell (RAA)** is currently OC Adventurous Training Wing. He came to appreciate the role of AT in developing stress coping mechanisms and resilience after operational service.

**Kevin Vowles** is an Australian Regular Army Psychologist, a qualified UATL, and a retired professional athlete. He has deployed several times on war-like and non-war-like operations and is currently studying a Masters of Clinical Psychology. His Masters level research project is examining the pre-trauma physiological predictors of future Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

**Emily Chapman** Emily Chapman is a RAAF Reservist Operations Officer posted to the Air Liaison Organisation. She is concurrently a PhD candidate researching civil-military interaction in disaster operations at UNSW Canberra. She has a Masters in Evaluation, and her research interests include Defence learning processes, practices and mechanisms.

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## **Bibliography**

## Biography

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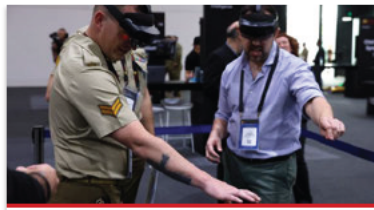
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