

REIMAGINING OUTWARD BOUND



OUTWARD BOUND

Executive Chair of Outward Bound Australia (OBA), Dr Loren Miller, takes on the leadership of this iconic outdoor adventure organisation, repositioning OBA for a brave 'new world' where adventure learning is a powerful pathway to unlock our full potential.

Loren shares the story of the recent bushfire and COVID-19 challenges, outlining the opportunity for renewal through a time of change. This story aims to invite those passionate about the purpose and mission of Outward Bound to share their ideas for the future, and lend their support to OBA's revival.



DR LOREN MILLER

If there is one thing Outward Bound Australia knows about – it's challenge.

Growth through challenge is what we do.

Over the last 60 years, nearly 500,000 people have taken up this challenge and journeyed with us on our outdoor adventure programs – building their confidence, growing with others, and connecting with our unique natural landscapes. As a community organisation, Outward Bound has also been challenged over the years, evolving with each bump in the road. However, this bushfire season and the COVID-19 pandemic have been particularly demanding for Outward Bound Australia.

The bushfires caused the majority of our summer programs to be moved, postponed or cancelled, with a business impact of over \$500k. Our base at Tharwa, ACT was evacuated with flames at the doorstep; leaving a dusting of pink fire retardant and a weary team. In the Snowy Mountains we lost equipment and grieved the loss of much loved, remote bushland and wildlife. Overall, we estimate 80% of our operational areas have been bushfire affected, with many parks to remain closed for months. Significant work is needed to re-plan our program footprints, mindful of the vulnerable landscape.

COVID-19 saw all operations cease at the end of March. We put OBA into hibernation, releasing all staff but a few, packing our gear away in Tharwa and aiming to weather the storm. Government support has made this possible. JobKeeper is now in place for forty of our crew, who are working passionately to map out our future. We have now secured a \$500k government disaster relief loan to provide the working capital to see us through.

These challenging times have been hard. Yet they have created an opportunity for renewal at Outward Bound. We are embracing this with both hands. We are renewing our strategic vision, restructuring our business model and progressing with a roadmap to re-establish operations as COVID-19 restrictions ease.

Outward Bound Australia is first and foremost a community. There is large, widespread community of people who have been on our programs, worked with us, or connected with us in some way over the last 60 years. The passion and commitment to OBA within our community is extraordinary. In challenging times like this, communities come together. This is happening. The future of Outward Bound Australia is in safe hands. It is in the hands of our OBA community - ready to do the hard work required to pave our way forward. There is a role for all of us to play.

Reach out and join in!

Dr. Loren Miller

GOVERNANCE



Our governance is strong. We've restructured the OBA Board into a small, fit for purpose team during this challenging period.

As Executive Chair, Loren Miller is leading this time of change. Loren appreciates the spirit of Outward Bound, having worked as an instructor in the 1980s. She knows outdoor education well from working with OEG and Sport and Recreation Victoria. Her career has extended to management consulting with the Boston Consulting Group and senior executive strategy and finance roles with Monash, RMIT and Melbourne Universities. With CPA, AICD, MBA and Doctorate of Education qualifications, she brings an exemplary skill set to steward OBA through this pivotal period.

As Deputy Chair, Campbell Hudson - Senior Restructuring and Recovery Partner at Dentons in Sydney- brings crucial expertise in managing risk through uncertain times and hands on legal advisory support for restructuring.

Located in Western Australia, Robin Moustaka brings over 20 years business development, technology, and healthcare (ICU nursing) experience. She combines those caring and strategic values with a focus on our partnerships, growth and safety.

Jessica Bulger has been on the OBA Board for 5 years. An executive with CareerTrackers, Jess builds our strength in community partnering and our understanding of country through Indigenous perspectives.

We will look to further complement this team with skills and experience to support our renewed vision and business model.

AOBDF

The Australian Outward Bound Development Fund

The Board of the Australian Outward Bound Development Fund (AOBDF) retains the governance continuity, philanthropic expertise and passion needed to focus efforts on enlisting community support to extend our impact and help disadvantaged Australians. Chaired by Simon Lewis, founder of Goodwolf Partners, the AOBDF Board includes Non-Executive Philanthropic Director Angus White; and Jon Bradshaw, Director at Brand Traction.

A RENEWED STRATEGIC VISION

Over the past two months we have engaged with over 100 people – outdoor educators, academics, OB schools overseas, school clients, community partners, past and present staff – online, through strategic think tanks and interviews. The community has been extremely generous in sharing ideas and views. The input has been rich and wise; the consensus loud and clear.

Outward Bound needs to adopt a more contemporary, future focused vision; respectful of, but not captured by our history.

This requires us to hold to the essence of OBA, yet have the courage to innovate, to excite and engage current and future generations. Four key themes have emerged:



Take OB to the people.

We must sell our story so that it resonates with today's needs in terms of solutions and benefits. We must make our experiences more accessible.



Deliver great programs.

We need to create new adventures, evolve our experiential pedagogy and further develop our program impact – in collaboration with our clients, addressing their needs.



Engage with the community.

We have the opportunity to learn from others, build partnerships, contribute to the sector – to be 'outward' bound.



Celebrate our unique culture.

Our strength is our people, in how we work hard together and care for others. This strength is realised when our people are empowered.



Clarity of purpose is critical. Our focus is working with young people and people at a time of transition in life – to be better equipped for life experiences in 2020 and beyond. Through challenging, adventure-based programs, we facilitate self-discovery; enabling people to find ideals and communities to **serve**, purpose to **strive** for, and **resilience** (not to yield) in the face of life challenges.

A NEW BUSINESS MODEL

Our business model needs to be streamlined, fit for purpose and more resilient. The pause in operations is enabling us to restructure, through four major initiatives:

We are developing a strategy for Tharwa to become a vibrant centre. On the banks of the Murrumbidgee River and a gateway to Namadgi National Park, we have an amazing, yet under-utilised asset. With accommodation for 150 people, collaborative learning and work spaces, and extensive ropes course and outdoor activities, Tharwa will be re-invigorated to be fully utilised. Two exciting opportunities are currently being explored:

- Community organisation partnerships for co-location – offices and programs
- Development of a Year 9, term long, residential outdoor program (potentially in a similar model to the Victorian School for Student Leadership)

We have exited the Uki Northern NSW base, an area significantly impacted by fires. This has resolved longstanding issues with the lease, a misalignment of culture from an acquired business and duplicity of operating base costs.

We are developing a new model for mobile operations. Taking people into Australia's extraordinary natural landscapes is core to OBA. How and where we do this needs review – in light of contemporary needs, climate change and cost parameters. We are committed to the much-loved WA Walpole area, but need to be smarter about how this works.

We have outsourced our corporate services, currently through pro bono arrangements, to improve and simplify systems and reduce overheads. This is being supported by a digital transformation grant to streamline and optimise our use of technology. **Going forward, our organisational overhead is projected to be around 40% of its previous cost.**



OBA: A ROADMAP FORWARD

PROGRAM DELIVERY

We are actively partnering with clients to 'get back out in the bush', working through the complexities of program rescheduling and terms. We are capping our concurrent group capacity to ensure safety and program quality. Our plan is to cautiously commence small Duke of Ed and public programs in July, with a return to major program operations in late August. From there, the program schedule through to December is looking close to full - if COVID-19 remains at bay!



ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

People are the lifeblood of OBA and our key resource. We need to rebuild our organisational capacity – fit for purpose, aligned with our vision, values and business model. A network search is underway for new executive leadership. Short term flexibility and financial constraints will need to be balanced with the goal of building a talented stable team, dedicated and enabled to deliver our mission.

FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Capitalising on the government support programs, OBA has developed a financial plan to support re-established operations. Additional philanthropic financial support is needed to strengthen this position and enable us to more quickly progress with rebuilding the strength of our team and implementing the new Tharwa strategy. Further to the \$500k bushfire loan from the Government, we estimate we will need another \$1m over the next 3 years to assist us in the rebuild. Our associated Foundation, the Australian Outward Bound Development Fund (AOBDF) has Public Benevolent Institution status and provides an opportunity for supporters to make tax-deductible gifts to OBA programming in support of socially disadvantaged individuals and community.





YOUR INVITATION TO HELP OBA

Share your ideas with Loren and the team



Dr. Loren Miller



0408 749 419



loren.miller@outwardbound.org.au

Offer financial assistance, or grants, alongside continued support of AOBDF



Simon Lewis (Chair of AOBDF)



0432 321 898



simon@goodwolf.com.au

Tax deductible gifts to AOBDF



www.outwardbound.org.au



mailbox@outwardbound.org.au

Thank you in anticipation for your encouragement and support, and for believing in this next stage of transformation for OBA.