



Evolving Futures



Evolve: Working With Young People to Create New Stories

Evolve is all about making a difference before 'at-risk' becomes serious, life-shaping disadvantage. We're about addressing the cause, not the symptoms – helping young people chose a more positive future where they avoid what they often think is 'the inevitable' – homelessness, poverty, unemployment, addiction, juvenile detention and poor family relationships.

The young people we work with in the Evolving Futures programs recognise that there's something – someone – somewhere – they don't want to be anymore and make the courageous choice to join us and learn how to make changes for a more positive future. This voluntary participation is one of the keys to the success of our programs, and reflects a wider maxim at Evolve – providing a hand up, not a hand out.

This approach creates the space and opportunity for young people to explore and recognise their own strengths and ability to change, and as a result, develop a level of self-esteem and self-belief not experienced before. Our programs are structured in a way that creates spaces for boys and girls to be challenged and frustrated, to be in a position where nature requires them to 'have to', and remove the power dynamic in the counsellor/young person relationship.

Unique in Australia, our Evolving Futures programs offer something different to young people struggling against a life less lived, against challenges in their lives at home, at school and in their communities. Our success rate of 85% retention speaks for itself.

How & Why These Programs Work

We use a combination of Narrative and Bush Adventure Therapy in a two-year program to offer young men and women aged 14 to 17 an opportunity to reshape their lives with new tools, approaches, skills and attitudes they may not have had access to before.

Our program philosophy is based on several core aspects:

- * Working with young people away from familiar places which might reinforce negative ideas about who they are & how they fit
- * Creating spaces and opportunities for them to think, feel and experience themselves in a different, more preferred way through new, unfamiliar and challenging environments
- * Deep and long-term therapeutic-based engagement with young people and the people around them to support continuing change

The first stage of the program involves a stay at one of our remote rural properties and includes an intense bush expedition over 10-12 days, providing a powerful setting for participants to reflect on their lives and develop a range of new skills. In the second stage, Evolve staff continue a relationship with the young people through ongoing, regular contact in their home, school and communities.

To enhance the experience, we also have return visits to those rural properties and in local wilderness areas to enable boys and girls to reconnect with the positive experiences in those places, and develop new skills.

Case Study: Tim's Journey from Anger to Hope

"My problem was that I had anger issues, but I was also hurt inside. Mum took me to fifteen counsellors to help but they did nothing for me..." This was the start of Tim's remarkable journey with Evolve. His mum, Uta, turned to our Evolving Futures Programs after nothing else seemed to be helping Tim work through his challenges. He had dropped out of school and by his own admission, would probably be in juvenile detention had it not been for Evolve's early-intervention program.

The hike was a turning point for Tim, as it is for many of our young people. "I went through my mind so much and realised what I was doing. A lot of guilt came to me and I felt hurt and angry, but I was closing the door to that anger," says Tim, "It was hard but it worked. It was like a new Tim was born."

It is probably mum Uta who has been able to see the transition most clearly: *"Through the two year commitment with Evolve, Tim has been able to reprocess his thoughts and feelings. In the past counselling has only had a limited time frame. They can't be as focused or committed as Evolve has been. Tim's future just seems to be getting brighter and brighter."*

