



Psychedellic
Institute
Australia

Course Brochure

Essential Skills for Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy:
A 5-day Clinical Skills intensive workshop

July 20 - 24, 2026

Byron Bay, NSW

Contents

[Background and Introduction](#)

[PIA's Bespoke Training Model](#)

[1. Learning Processes and Program Goal](#)

[2. Course Content](#)

[3. Course Structure](#)

[4. Learning Outcomes](#)

[Daily Schedule](#)

[Meet your Trainers](#)

[Workshop Details](#)

[Link to Expression of Interest form](#)

[Key References](#)

[How to contact us](#)

Why the need for Psychedelic Therapy training?

The Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) rescheduled MDMA and psilocybin as Schedule 8 Controlled Medicines from the 1st of July 2023 following increasing emerging evidence that MDMA-assisted psychotherapy and psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy are effective at treating PTSD and Major Depressive Disorder. In doing so, Australia has become the first country in the world to recognise these drugs as medicines. To ensure the safe use of these treatments in the community, *proper training is considered essential*.

Two Phase 3 Randomised Controlled Trials have examined MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. The results showed that between 67% and 71% of participants receiving MDMA-assisted therapy no longer met the criteria for PTSD, compared to 32% of participants who received a placebo. These and other studies have used the MAPS MDMA-assisted Psychotherapy Manual.

While a number of clinical trials have examined whether psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy is an effective treatment for Major Depressive Disorder, Phase 3 trials have not yet been published (Carhart-Harris et al., 2021; Carhart-Harris et al., 2016; Goodwin et al., 2023; Griffiths et al., 2016). Unlike MDMA-assisted psychotherapy, the psychotherapy component of the treatment investigated in these studies has not been *standardised*, with several treatment manuals used in research to-date (e.g., Guss et al., 2020; Harvey, 2021; Watts, 2021). Despite being informed by different schools of psychotherapy, *these manuals all outline a similar structure for psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy: preparation, administration and integration*.

Research shows evidence for the effectiveness for MDMA and Psilocybin-assisted therapy.

Two of the present trainers (PS & SB) are authors of a recent systematic review of preparation in substance-assisted psychotherapy (k = 83 studies) which found that the way in which clients have been prepared for an administration session has varied widely across the studies (Thal et al., 2022). Likewise, these authors reviewed the content of administration sessions (k = 82 studies). They found that there was a range of therapeutic approaches used in the studies to-date and that these approaches then informed the conduct of therapists in administration sessions (Thal et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the key qualities and competencies required of psychedelic-assisted therapists engaging in this work have been well defined (Phelps, 2017; Harvey, 2021), and will be a *key focus in the present training*.

PIA's Bespoke Training Model

1. Learning Processes and Program Goal

There are **3 basic processes** involved in developing new therapist skills: *acquiring theoretical knowledge* (declarative information), *learning procedural skills*, and *engaging in reflective practice*. PIA's Psychedelic-assisted Therapy Essential Skills program addresses all 3 elements.

Theoretical/didactic knowledge will be acquired through pre-course online learning and a limited amount of didactic content during the workshop.

However, **the primary focus of PIA's Psychedelic-assisted Therapy Essential Skills program will be on Skills Training**, acquired through a mix of pairs and group role-plays, demonstration, self-experiential learning, and reflective practice (Bennett-Levy, 2006).

Our overriding goal is that after the 5-day program, clinicians should feel equipped to step into the role of psychedelic-assisted therapy practitioner.



(To be clear: a prerequisite for any psychedelic-assisted therapist is that they should already have a strong foundation and experience as a therapist. We shall not be accepting anyone onto this program without that foundation. Equally, we are not suggesting that, after 5 days training, you will be a highly competent psychedelic-assisted therapist. That requires a range of clinical experience, ongoing supervision, and self-reflective practice. Our goal is that after 5 days, you will be ready to take your first steps as a psychedelic-assisted therapist - with clinical supervision and a strong self-reflective practice already in place.)

2. Course Content

The basics of psychedelic-assisted therapy are Set and Setting. To these, the PIA program adds third and fourth 'S' categories: Skills Training and Self-Reflection. Over the course of the 5 days, the focus will be on each of the S'es:

Self-Reflection

Personal practice is important for all therapists in achieving the best outcomes for their clients (Bennett-Levy, 2019). However, it is particularly important for psychedelic-assisted therapists, who may be dealing with therapeutic challenges completely outside of their previous experience. Hence, there is a focus on self-reflective practice throughout the 5-day training. Trainees will reflect on issues such as: working in a co-therapy dyad, working with their own and others' non-ordinary states of consciousness, managing clients with particularly challenging experiences, and integrating psychedelic-assisted therapy skills with their existing clinical practice.

Setting

Creating a well-managed and safe experience for the client is fundamental to good psychedelic-assisted therapy. Workshop content will include elements such as: how to set up the therapy space, the use of music, safety equipment/strategies, physical monitoring, and other aspects of managing the client's wellbeing and comfort.

Set

The client's mental set in approaching psychedelic-assisted therapy is central to achieving positive outcomes. At all points in the workshop, the focus will be on enhancing the client's mental set through attending to all aspects of preparing the client, as well as administration and integration sessions.

Skills Training

Building on trainees' existing therapist skills, there are a number of skills specific to psychedelic-assisted therapy that are used in preparation, administration and integration sessions. Trainees will be coached in the use of these skills by our trainers and will then practice them in small groups. For instance, we'll address a range of likely challenges that may occur in administration sessions, such as clients becoming agitated and wanting to leave, how to navigate difficult experiences and aspects such as boundaries related to physical contact. Crucial aspects of Integration will be covered: for instance, how to manage situations where clients have had particularly challenging experiences. External management going forward is also important and will include the role of the wider support system as well as how clients can continue to keep their experience alive, consolidating and growing the positive gains moving forward. The interface with other approaches to therapy will be covered here too, so that therapists can manage smooth integration of therapy prior to and following the experience to maximum effect.



Participants during a breathwork session at our training in February 2024, Byron Bay.

3. Course Structure

This course is delivered through a blended **Hybrid** modality: **In-person** and **Online**.

The online portion is comprised of 5 modules and is delivered through the [Psychedelics Today](#) education platform [Psychedellic Education Center](#). Once enrolled, you will receive access to the course 4 weeks before the five-day intensive.

You are not required to complete the online component before the course, but you are required to complete it in order to receive your certificate of completion.

To complete the online component, **you must pass the five quizzes**. Note: you are *not required* to watch all the videos. Competency is assessed by the quizzes.

The five day intensive will be delivered at the designated location, from 9am to 5pm daily.

4. Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of **part 1 (eLearning)** training component, participants should be able to:

- name the main categories of psychedelic substances,
- identify key events and figures of psychedelic history in western civilization,
- name the main research areas of the 50's and 60's,
- summarise the main research findings of contemporary research,
- describe Grof's model of the psyche and use it to assist in understanding a participant's psychedelic experience,
- explain the key components and dimensions of altered states of consciousness induced by psychedelics,
- describe the fundamental principles and methodologies that underlie psychedelic therapy, and
- evaluate the potential benefits and risks associated with psychedelic therapy.

Upon completion of **part 2 (in-person workshop)** training component, participants should be able to:

- understand inclusion/exclusion criteria for the treatment,
- select, administer and evaluate appropriate baseline and outcome assessments,
- manage communication and collaboration with wider treatment professionals,
- set up and manage the treatment environment,
- demonstrate an understanding of how to conduct preparation of the participant for the dosing session,
- thoroughly understand safety concerns. They will be able to set up and implement safety protocols,
- demonstrate knowledge of the principles of integration, conduct integration sessions, and be able to help participants with application of integration strategies, and
- have a thorough understanding of ethical principles in conducting this therapy.

Daily Schedule*

Day 1: Orientation

- Orientation.
- Working with Psychedelic Medicines.
- Ethical practice.
- Reflective practice.

Day 2: Preparation Session

- Therapist skills.
- Setting up the space.
- Prep session.
- Role Plays and discussion

Day 3: Experiential Day

- Experiential sessions.
- Group debrief.
- Discussion and feedback.
- Post-session guidelines.

Day 4: Dosing & Integration

- Integration circle.
- Managing the dosing session.
- Addressing challenges.
- Reflection and discussion.

Day 5: Integration & Beyond

- Introduction to integration.
- Managing the integration session.
- Managing Future sessions and ongoing support.
- Supervision, and therapist development.

Post training: a Zoom integration session will be held 2 – 4 weeks after training concludes.

*Schedule is subject to change.

Meet your trainers



Renee Harvey is a clinical psychologist who has had trial experience in studies of the use of psychedelics in the UK and in Australia, as well as over 30 years' experience working as a clinical psychologist in the mental health field with individuals with severe difficulties. During that time, she has run therapist training courses across the UK and internationally. Dr Harvey has appeared in podcasts and is a regular presenter at conferences. She has written a book chapter on the training of therapists in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. Renee has a particular interest in depth psychology and the potential for psychedelics to facilitate transformative change.



Associate Professor Petra Skeffington is a Clinical Psychologist in Private Practice, and an academic at Murdoch University in Perth. Her research and clinical expertise centres on psychological trauma and recovery, including resilience to trauma, prevention of post-trauma pathologies, and innovative approaches to treating psychological trauma. A/Prof Skeffington was one of the first Australians to achieve MAPS certification for MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy in early 2023, is a lead therapist on a clinical trial investigating MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy and is part of the therapy team on a clinical trial investigating Psilocybin-Assisted Psychotherapy.



Dr Stephen Bright is a clinically trained psychologist who has 18 years' experience working with people experiencing a substance use disorder that is co-morbid with one or more mental disorders. He is the principal investigator of Australia's first clinical trial of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy where he works as a co-therapist with Associate Professor Petra Skeffington. He is also an associate investigator and lead therapist in a Phase 2 trial of psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. He has been providing clinical training for the past 10 years and is a psychology board approved supervisor. Dr Bright is Senior Lecturer and course coordinator of the Addiction Studies program at Edith Cowan University.



Diego Pinzon Rubiano has navigated the psychedelic landscape through significant roles in the non-profit sector and the esteemed Psycae Institute. He contributes to Australia's groundbreaking psilocybin trial for end-of-life depression and anxiety at St. Vincent's Melbourne and is an educator in Psychedelics Today Vital training program. He earned a Bachelors degree in Psychology from the University of Canberra and completed a Masters degree in Transpersonal Psychology from Sofia University in Palo Alto, California.

Workshop Details:

 **Dates:** July 20 - 24, 2026

 **Cost:** 2026 pricing TBC.

 **Time:** 5 Full days 9am to 5pm

Morning and afternoon tea provided. Explore Byron cafes at lunchtime.

 **Location:** Byron Bay Community Centre
69 Jonson St, Byron Bay NSW 2481

Apply by filling out the form below:

Link to the application form:

<https://gmk2v8v9sfd.typeform.com/to/s3nKzhiT>

QR Code:



Psychedelic
Institute
Australia

Key References:

- Bennett-Levy, J.** (2006). Therapist skills: A cognitive model of their acquisition and refinement. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 34, 57-78. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1352465805002420>
- Bennett-Levy, J.** (2019). Why therapists should walk the talk: The theoretical and empirical case for personal practice in therapist training and professional development. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 62, 133-145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbtep.2018.08.004>
- Bright, S. J., & Williams, M.** (2018). Should Australian psychology consider enhancing psychotherapeutic interventions with psychedelic drugs? A call for research. *Australian Psychologist*, [Early Online]. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12345>
- Bright, S. J., Williams, M., & Caldicott, D.** (2017). Should addiction researchers be interested in psychedelic science? *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 36, 285-287. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.12544>
- Carhart-Harris, R., et al. (2021). Trial of psilocybin versus escitalopram for depression. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 384(15), 1402-1411. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa2032994>
- Carhart-Harris, R. L., et al. (2016). Psilocybin with psychological support for treatment-resistant depression: an open-label feasibility study. *Lancet Psychiatry*, 3, 619–627. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(16\)30065-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(16)30065-7)
- Goodwin, G. M., et al. (2023). Single-dose psilocybin for a treatment-resistant episode of major depression: Impact on patient-reported depression severity, anxiety, function, and quality of life. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 327, 120-127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2023.01.108>
- Griffiths, R. R., et al. (2016). Psilocybin produces substantial and sustained decreases in depression and anxiety in patients with life-threatening cancer: A randomized double-blind trial. *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, 30, 1181-1197. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269881116675513>
- Guss, J., Krause, R., & Sloshower, J. (2020). The Yale manual for psilocybin-assisted therapy of depression (using acceptance and commitment therapy as a therapeutic frame) <https://psyarxiv.com/u6v9y/download/?format=pdf>
- Harvey, R.** (2021). Training psychedelic therapists, in Papaspyrou, M. & Read, T. (eds.). *Into the deep: Integrating psychedelics and psychotherapy*. London: Inner Traditions: Bear Company.
- Kisely, S., Connor, M., Somogyi, A. A., & Siskind, D. (2023). A systematic literature review and meta-analysis of the effect of psilocybin and methylenedioxymethamphetamine on mental, behavioural or developmental disorders. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 57(3), 362-378. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00048674221083868>
- Mitchell, J. M., et al. (2021). MDMA-assisted therapy for severe PTSD: a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled phase 3 study. *Nature Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-021-01336-3>.
- Mitchell, J. M., et al. (2023). MDMA-assisted therapy for moderate to severe PTSD: a randomized, placebo-controlled phase 3 trial. *Nature Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-023-02565-4>
- Mithoefer, M. C. (2017). *A manual for MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in the treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*.
- Phelps, J. (2017). Developing guidelines and competencies for the training of psychedelic therapists. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 57(5), 450-487. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167817711304>

Key References (cont.):

Strauss, N., Bright, S. J., & Williams, M. (2016). Australia should be initiating a psychedelic research program: What are the barriers? . Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 50, 1036-1037. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867416670520>

Thal, S. B., **Bright, S. J.**, Sharbanee, J. M., Wenge, T., & **Skeffington, P. M.** (2021). Current perspectives on the therapeutic preset for substance-assisted psychotherapy. Frontiers in Psychology, 12(2501). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.617224>

Thal, S. B., Sharbanee, J. M., **Skeffington, P. M.**, Baker, P., Raimondo, B., Tobias, W., & **Bright, S. J.** (2022). Therapeutic (sub)stance: Current practice and therapeutic conduct in preparatory sessions in substance-assisted psychotherapy - a systematized review. Journal of Psychopharmacology, 36(11), 1191-1207. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02698811221127954>

Thal, S. B., Wieberneit, M., Sharbanee, J. M., **Skeffington, P. M.**, Bruno, R., Wenge, T., & **Bright, S. J.** (2023). Dosing and Therapeutic Conduct in administration sessions in substance-assisted psychotherapy: A systematized review. Journal of Humanistic Psychology. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678231168516>

Watts, R. (2021). Psilocybin for depression: The ACE model manual <https://psyarxiv.com/5x2bu/download>

Williams, M. L., Korevaar, D., **Harvey, R.**, Fitzgerald, P. B., Liknaitzky, P., O'Carroll, S., Puspanathan, P., **Ross, M., Strauss, N., & Bennett-Levy, J.** (2021). Translating psychedelic therapies from clinical trials to community clinics: Building bridges and addressing potential challenges ahead. Frontiers in Psychiatry, 12, 737738. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.737738>.



Psychedelic
Institute
Australia

How to Contact Us

Questions? Feedback? More Information?

✉ Email: info@psychedelicinstitute.com.au

🌐 Website: psychedelicinstitute.com.au