



APAC-DBT Annual Newsletter

ASIA-PACIFIC
ASSOCIATION FOR DBT

January 2025



SOFT LAUNCH ATTENDEES

Dear Members and Friends of the APAC-DBT,

It is with immense gratitude and excitement that I welcome you to the inaugural issue of our APAC-DBT newsletter. As Chair of this dynamic and passionate community, I am thrilled to connect with all of you through this platform—a space where we can share knowledge, celebrate achievements, and foster deeper connections within the DBT community across the Asia-Pacific region.

Dialectical behaviour therapy has profoundly transformed countless lives, providing hope and effective tools for individuals struggling with emotional dysregulation and other mental health challenges. The growth of DBT in the Asia-Pacific region is a testament to the dedication of practitioners, researchers, educators, and advocates who tirelessly work to ensure this evidence-based intervention reaches those who need it most. Through this newsletter, we aim to further this mission by offering insights, resources, and updates that support your invaluable work.

In this issue, you will find highlights of our APAC-DBT soft launch conference in September 2024, an article describing implementation of a culturally-informed DBT skills group in Western Sydney, Australia, as well as our planned events for next year. Our long-term goal is to make this newsletter not only informative but also inspiring—a reminder of the meaningful impact we collectively create.

As we continue to expand our reach, I am reminded of the importance of community in advancing the practice and principles of DBT. Together, we can overcome barriers, address stigma, and ensure that high-quality, culturally sensitive care is accessible across our diverse region. Your involvement—whether as a clinician, researcher, trainer, or advocate—is the cornerstone of our success, and we encourage you to actively engage with APAC-DBT's initiatives.

Looking ahead, we have an exciting journey in store. Our upcoming events include regional workshops and webinars featuring renowned DBT experts to meet the unique needs of our culturally rich and diverse populations. I invite you to participate, contribute, and share your insights as we grow together.

This newsletter is also your platform. We welcome submissions of articles, case studies, creative ideas, and feedback that reflect the vibrant tapestry of our community. Please reach out to us anytime if you wish to contribute articles for our future newsletters. Your voice matters, and your contributions will help shape the future of DBT in our region.

Finally, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the dedicated team behind this newsletter, particularly Ms Cathryn Pilcher (Australia) and Dr Michelle Tan (Singapore). Their hard work and passion have brought this vision to life. To all of you reading this, thank you for being part of APAC-DBT. Your commitment to fostering emotional resilience and well-being inspires us all.

Let us continue to build a future where DBT is accessible, impactful, and tailored to the diverse needs of those we serve. I look forward to the meaningful exchanges and collaborations this newsletter will spark in the months and years to come.

Shian-Ling Keng, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Psychology
School of Medical and Life Sciences
Sunway University, Malaysia
DBT-Linehan Board of Certification, Certified Clinician™

Chair, Asia-Pacific Association for Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (APAC-DBT)

Newsletter Highlights:

A Message from the Chair

Introduction to APAC-DBT

Highlights from the APAC-DBT Launch

Member Article: Carolyn Minchin (Australia)

Schedule of Events 2025

About the APAC-DBT

Our Mission

The Asia-Pacific Association for DBT (APAC-DBT) is a regional Chapter of the World DBT Association (WDBTA). We share the goals of WDBTA and seek to implement these at our regional level by:

- Promoting training and best practices of DBT in the Asia Pacific, in accordance with up-to-date scientific evidence and generally accepted principles and methods of DBT;
- Supporting dissemination and utilization of DBT in the Asia Pacific;
- Encouraging and enhancing the international cooperation of people working in the spirit of evidence based DBT;
- Fostering the communication, understanding, and integration of research findings, in order to enhance the effectiveness of DBT;
- Encouraging the development of scientific research on DBT and related fields;
- Maintaining treatment integrity and advocating adherence to guidelines for treatment and training in DBT;
- Extending the range of applications of DBT.

Stay Connected

Website

<http://apacdbt.org>

Email

admin@apacdbt.org



@apacdbt



<https://www.facebook.com/apacdbt>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/apac-dbt/>



Transitional Board

The APAC-DBT is in an early development stage. A transitional board of directors was established at the inaugural membership meeting on 4 August 2023

Please see the website for more information.

Exploring New Horizons in the Asia-Pacific Region: Highlights from the APAC-DBT Launch

written by Cathryn Pilcher (Australia)



The soft launch of the Asia-Pacific Association for DBT (APAC-DBT) was held online, in conjunction with the inaugural International Chinese DBT Conference (made available exclusively to registrants via a hybrid format), on the 7th September 2024. The theme of the launch was “Promoting Dissemination of DBT in the Asia-Pacific Region”. The conference brought together leading experts from around the globe to share cutting-edge research, ideas related to cultural adaptations, and other innovative practices in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). With speakers live-streamed from Nanjing, China, the event emphasised the importance of tailoring DBT to diverse populations and evolving needs. Here are some key takeaways from the keynote speeches:

Reconceptualising Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

Dr. Martin Bohus opened the conference by exploring BPD as a trauma-related disorder. He highlighted how social degradation and exclusion can mirror physical threats in their impact on mental health. With new studies emphasising the link between BPD and abuse or neglect, Dr. Bohus proposed adapting DBT to address trauma more effectively, particularly for individuals with somatic or sexual trauma. His parting advice? “Stay cool”—a reminder of the importance of mindfulness and composure in treatment.

The Evolution of DBT

Dr. Zach Rosenthal reflected on DBT’s journey, from its origins in treating suicidal behaviour to its current applications across diagnoses. Highlighting DBT’s East-meets-West ethos, he emphasised its adaptability and future directions: personalised treatments, cultural adjustments, and real-time support via digital health tools. He also identified the growing need for brief treatment options as alternatives to the standard comprehensive model.



Adapting DBT Across Cultures

Dr. Shian-Ling Keng shared insights on adapting DBT for Asian contexts. Her case studies demonstrated how culturally relevant examples—like drawing parallels between mindfulness and Islamic prayer—can enhance engagement. In Nepal, a DBT manual tailored to include symbolism and imagery due to the high proportion of women who are illiterate. They also excluded skills that may be considered culturally inappropriate.

DBT for Eating Disorders

Dr. Leslie Karwoski Anderson presented DBT adaptations for treating eating disorders (EDs). She noted that ED behaviours often stem from emotional dysregulation, making DBT's emotion-regulation focus invaluable. Variants like RO-DBT for anorexia and MED-DBT for multi-diagnostic EDs integrate tailored approaches, such as meal plans and addiction skills, to meet people's specific needs.

Addressing Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI)

Dr. Wang Chun discussed the rising prevalence of NSSI in China, highlighting a nationwide study on DBT's effectiveness. Network analyses revealed that NSSI often functions to reduce emotional pain. Findings from the study underscored the importance of integrating neuroscience and epigenetics into DBT to understand and address these behaviours.

Indigenous Perspectives on DBT

Local speakers for the APAC-DBT launch included *Jamie Kampen* and *Horiana Jones*, who shared their reflections on culturally appropriate DBT for Māori populations in New Zealand. They emphasized the significance of storytelling, genealogy, and connection to the land in teaching DBT skills. Recognising intergenerational trauma and weaving indigenous language and knowledge into therapy were central themes, showcasing the profound impact of cultural identity as a protective factor.

Looking Ahead

Other speakers to the local APAC region included *Dr Sian Jeffery* (Australia), *Dr Natalia Dewi Wardani* (Indonesia) and *Michelle Tan* (Singapore), generating lively discussions by the audience who were interested in applying new concepts to their own clinical settings. As DBT continues to expand globally, these insights remind us of its core purpose: meeting people where they are and helping them build lives worth living.

A recording of sessions by the local presenters is available to APAC-DBT Members on our website: <https://apacdbt.org/past-events-members-only/>



"INTERCONNECTEDNESS" WITHIN THE GLOBAL DBT COMMUNITY



PUBLISHED WITH PERMISSION FROM GUIR

Member-Contributed Article: Gamarada “Friends with a Purpose”, Embedding Culturally-Informed and Aboriginal-Led DBT Skills as An Evidence-Based Therapy Across Professional Services for Better Outcomes

written by Carolyn Minchin, Phill Good and Kir’a-Dhàn, Ken Zulumovski, Hon DHSc (Australia)

The Gamarada Community Healing and Cultural leadership program is a community-led trauma recovery program that is delivered weekly and after hours in Redfern, Sydney. The program emerged from community leadership in mental health and began in 2006. The program is entirely run by volunteers and this independence from government funding makes the program unique in its capacity to respond directly to local needs in Redfern and Western Sydney, and to maintain consistency and sustainability in program delivery and training for its participants. We are fortunate to have members who have trained directly with Professor Marsha Linehan, when she ran several introductory DBT and skills training in Sydney hosted by Byron Clinic. We have continued to prioritise formal DBT skills training online with Behavioral Tech and are creating booklets and other resources to support participants and trainers to share culturally-informed DBT skills across a wide range of settings.

Gamarada’s weekly sessions are grounded in Indigenous cultural protocols and ‘Dadirri [da-did-ee]’ (deep listening with quiet still awareness). Dadirri is a practice shared with permission from Nauiya elder Dr Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann, a prominent artist, educator and author who has recently published work on Dadirri as a research methodology. Gamarada acknowledges the inspiring work of Emeritus Professor Judy Atkinson, a pioneer who applied Dadirri in the field of trauma recovery, creating new ways of speaking about trauma in her groundbreaking 2002 text: “Trauma Trails, Recreating Song Lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australians”. Ken Zulumovski has guided the group through a trauma-informed, community empowerment approach, a story recorded in the documentary “Gamarada, A Spiritual Awakening”. This can be found on the ‘Indigitube’ web page.

A graduate of the Djirruwang Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Education and Training Program, Ken has engaged proactively in international evidence-based approaches to trauma recovery and has been recognised with an honorary doctorate through the University of Sydney for leading the Gamarada team and building a bridge between third wave behavioural therapies and Indigenous practice wisdom.

The roots of Gamarada trace back to the personal journey of its founder, Ken Zulumovski, Kir'a-Dhàn, who transformed his life from a vulnerable child and youth to a community organiser. By age 17, Ken overcame juvenile crime convictions and embarked on a 10-year career in the Australian Army Reserve, serving as an Artillery Crew Commander and Defense Career Advisor. This period shaped his leadership and resilience and fueled his commitment to support vulnerable communities.

At the heart of Gamarada is a strong culture of resilience, healing, and leadership, rooted in Indigenous values and knowledge. The company's approach is holistic, recognising the importance of cultural safety and the need for local, community-led solutions. GUIR is committed to fostering environments where individuals and communities can thrive, emphasising collaboration and inclusion in all its projects.

Gamarada's corporate social responsibility project is Gamarada Indigenous Healing and Life Training Pty Ltd. The objects of the registered charity with DGR and TE status include responding to the need for culturally safe programs that focus on reducing and preventing; family violence, addiction, suicide and family dislocation, while promoting access to education, justice and health care. In 2010, this work was recognised by the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet with an Excellence Award for Building Leadership in Indigenous Communities.

Gamarada will be celebrating its 1000th group session in 2025 and we are extending an invitation to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clinicians, community practitioners, volunteers and researchers to the event. We are particularly keen to connect with clinicians working in Comprehensive DBT programs in Sydney, in the hope of improving community access to evidence-based treatments programs and sharing our knowledge of what works in Indigenous communities. Please contact Ken Zulumovski, Principal Director and Founder of Gamarada Universal Indigenous Resources Pty Ltd at ken@guir.com.au for further information on celebrations in 2025 and opportunities for volunteers.

Carolyn Minchin is a social worker and addiction counsellor, training in mental health with a focus on program co-design. Phill Good is a researcher and has recently submitted his PhD thesis with a focus on Aboriginal children as health ambassadors, an approach to improving health, wellbeing, and learning outcomes for Aboriginal children and communities.



Enjoyed reading this article?

The APAC-DBT and its initiatives are fully volunteer-run. We welcome all contributions from members for future content - do contact us via email if you are interested to share about your / your team's work, and have expertise in writing, design, organizing events or other skills.



2025 Schedule of Events

Hosted by APAC-DBT

- Training workshops across the year; see below for more information
- Research Forum in July 2025; *hosted by Dr. Emily Cooney (New Zealand)*
- Joint Case Consultation in September 2025; *hosted by Dr. Michelle YL Tan (Singapore)*
- Annual General Meeting - date and time to be confirmed

In the Asia Pacific

- Live DBT Intensive training (Part 2) in Jakarta, Indonesia, organized by Behavioral Tech, February 2025; *trainer(s): Dr. Anthony DuBose (United States) and team*
- Live DBT Intensive in Nanjing, China, organized by the Nanjing Brain Institute, October 2025; *trainer: Prof. Martin Bohus (Germany)*

First Event Announcement of 2025:



APAC-DBT *presents*

VALIDATION IN DBT: THE FUNDAMENTALS AND THE CHALLENGES

Mike Batcheler
Clinical Psychologist, New Zealand

19 March 2025
3 TO 4:30 PM, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND
10 TO 11:30 AM, BEIJING, CHINA

sign up at <https://apacdbt.org>

Validation is one of the core acceptance strategies in DBT and forms the bedrock of DBT practice. While familiar to most clinicians, accurate validation requires a level of intention and precision which can be particularly challenging amidst dysfunctional or therapy interfering behaviour. This 90-minute webinar will review the fundamentals of validation and then consider how to approach some more challenging scenarios. The webinar will include opportunities to discuss participant questions.

All are welcome to register. Workshops are free for APAC-DBT members, and chargeable for non-members.

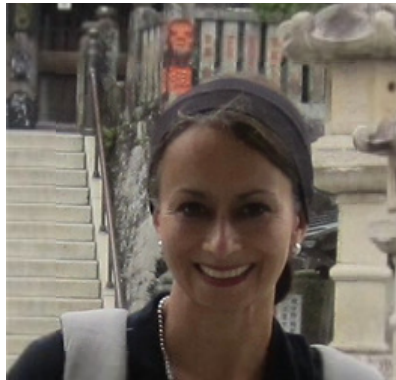
Mike Batcheler is a New Zealand-based clinical psychologist who has worked mostly in public mental health settings since the mid-1990s. He was a founding member of New Zealand's first dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) programme in 1998 and works as a DBT therapist, skills trainer and programme coordinator in an adult public mental health clinic. He is a founding member, director and trainer for DBT New Zealand and DBT Training Australia. Mike has considerable experience consulting and training in DBT and he is a trainer and consultant for US-based Behavioral Tech. He is a DBT-Linehan Board of Certification Certified Clinician™ and is trained and calibrated in DBT adherence coding.

Upcoming Training Workshops



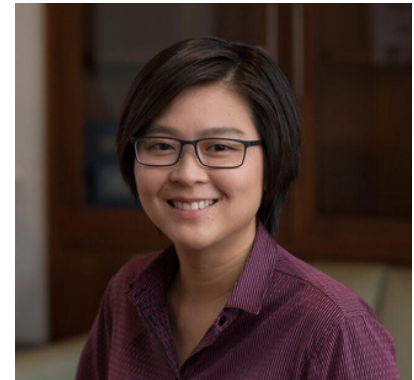
March 2025
For Mandarin-speakers:
**如何快速学会链式
分析的工作坊**

Chen Luo (骆琛)
Psychotherapist
(China)



April 2025
**The “D” in DBT:
Teaching Dialectics
in Concepts and
Practice**

Dr. Pamela Buck
Clinical Psychologist
(United States of America)



May 2025
**Running an
Effective DBT Skills
Group**

Prof. Shian-Ling Keng
Clinical Psychologist
(Malaysia)



June 2025
**Mastering Chain
Analysis: Basics and
Beyond**

Dr. Sian Jeffrey
Clinical Psychologist
(Australia)



August 2025
**Considering
Adaptations to DBT
for Neurodiversity**

Ms. Cathryn Pilcher
Occupational Therapist
(Australia)

Registration and Other Details:

- Workshops are conducted in a fully online format, to ensure that these can be made available to all members
- The timing of each session is determined by the speaker's schedule and time zone
- More details about each session will be sent out to members closer to these dates - do ensure that you are on our mailing list!