

Nature Play and Bush Kindy Policy (1Ai)

Related Frameworks

Early Years Learning Framework 2023

Learning Outcomes

- 1.1- Sense of self
- 2.2, 2.4- Sense of connection
- 3.2- sense of wellbeing
- 4.1; 4.3-love of learning
- 5.4 – diverse and effective communicators

Principles

1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships.
2. Partnerships.
3. Respect for diversity.
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.
5. Equity, inclusion, and high expectations.
6. Sustainability.
7. Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning.
8. Collaborative leadership and teamwork.

Practices

1. Holistic, Integrated and Interconnected Approaches
2. Responsiveness To Children
3. Play-based Learning and Intentionality
4. Learning Environments
5. Cultural Responsiveness
6. Continuity Of Learning and Transitions
7. Assessment And Evaluation For Learning, Development and Wellbeing

Policy Statement

We believe access to natural environments are fundamental for children’s wellbeing. We provide a nature program for children to engage in outdoor play and learning and foster a love of nature.

We believe in supporting children to be outdoors so they can reap the benefits of unstructured learning through play, meditation/ ‘dadirri’ (www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au), and physical activity.

Time spent learning outside and using natural resources supports creativity and problem solving, enhances cognitive functioning and improves academic performance.

Nature play supports physical benefits- strengthening immunity, improving physical skills and movement and eyesight, and mental health wellbeing-resilience, confidence, independence, and stress reduction. Experiences in nature as a child also leads to environmental awareness, supporting children’s sense of agency as protectors of our natural environments.

We provide a Bush Kindy program to extend children’s connection with First Nations cultural perspectives and shared knowledge, and the local community.

“Nature pedagogy is the practice of teaching and learning with and in nature. It encompasses the importance of culture, community and the sustainability of our natural world. It fosters children’s holistic development and wellbeing through play and hands on authentic and meaningful experiences. The approach fosters a sense of wonder, exploration and discovery through inquiry-based learning that is child led”.’ (Nature Play QLD, 2022).

Goals

- Our service is committed to embedding outdoor learning within the services curriculum.
- Our service Philosophy reflects the centre’s beliefs and practices about nature play and learning.
- Nature pedagogy is the key approach to curriculum delivery. Nature based learning is emergent, child-led and play based and is inquiry based through hands on experiences in nature. Program delivery aligns with the Early Year Learning Framework, Indigenous perspectives, and environmental education.

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National Quality Framework

Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice.

Standard 1.1: An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development.

Element 1.1.3: The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.

Element 1.1.5: Every child is supported to participate in the program.

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety.

Standard 2.3: Each child is protected.

Element 2.3.1: Children are adequately supervised at all times.

Element 2.3.2: Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.

Strategies

- Children will attend regular Bush Kindy sessions as an excursion. Families will be provided with detailed information about location, activities, and travel method.
- Sites within the community will be chosen on the benefits to children's learning and the potential for nature play and learning in the environment. Site analysis has been completed.
- Risk Benefit Assessments will be conducted before excursions for sites and activities, e.g., Bush area site, tool use, tree climbing, travel and public places.
- Daily safety checks are carried out by educators on the site prior to children arriving, including a weather check.
- Educators will engage in dynamic risk assessment – the continuous process of identifying hazards, assessing risk, taking action to eliminate or reduce risk, monitoring and reviewing, in the changing circumstances of an activity or site at Bush Kindy.
- Children's risk intelligence will be supported through educator practices.
- Staff ratios are maintained at 1:5 during the excursion.
- Emergency evacuations are practiced with children and more regularly "1, 2, 3 come to me" to support safety skills. Children will be supported to learn how to keep safe including with snakes, dogs, in public places, flora and fauna.
- A portable First Aid kit will be taken to sites and any children's medications etc.
- The Early Childhood Teacher [ECT] will be equipped with knowledge and skills in nature pedagogy, with training through the Nature Play QLD Bush Leader Course (or equivalent).
- All educators have reflected, reviewed, and engaged in policies and practices pertaining to Bush Kindy sessions.
- The educator team will be committed to nature pedagogy and implementing a quality Bush Kindy program, with their practices consistently reflected upon, and improved through staff meetings, further Professional Development training, mentoring and collaborating with the service's QIP/NSW self- assessment.

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Relevant legislation

*Education and Care Services
National Law Act 2010.*

*Education and Care Services
National Regulations 2011:*

Regulations 77, 78, 84-89, 90, 98,
99, 100, 101, 102, 109, 122, 123,
136, 161, 162, 165, 168 (2)(g),
170, 171, 172, 180, 342

NSW Child Safe Standards

1. Child Safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
5. People working with children are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse [and other types of harm] are child-focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse [or other types of harm] to occur
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

Strategies. Cont.

- Resources & equipment required for safety and learning opportunities are transported in the wagon and Responsible Person's backpack.
- Children will be provided with a service hat when required, safe shoes for climbing and getting wet, and provided with wet weather gear for rainy days.
- Children's normal routines will be supported, with mats and a hammock for resting if required.
- Nutritious food will be brought from home and will include a sufficient icepack to keep food cold (or service will provide icepacks in cooler container in wagon) for long day excursions.
- Children will bring a water bottle. Filtered rainwater will be available when required.
- Children can bring in fruit and vegetables to share as a group meal (excepting in times of concern, such as infectious disease outbreaks in area).
- A portable toilet, privacy screen and sanitiser will be provided and set up on site for children to use, alternatively public toilets will be accessed (checked prior by educators and accompanied by educators). Children may feel more comfortable doing 'bush wees' if educators are able to align this practice with advocating for privacy for children.
- Risky play is a natural part of children's play and the Bush Kindy sessions as supported by the National Quality Standards and builds valuable lifelong skills. Tree climbing, exploring, and observing waterways, using real tools, using fire (when fires allowed), rope play, building shelters and making adventures is key element of the Bush Kindy program.
- Sustainability is a key element of the service delivery and Bush Kindy program. An Ecological Impact Assessment considers how the service visiting may impact a site, what plan is in place to protect and preserve sites visited. Additionally, sustainable practices are embedded throughout the program, e.g. children collect rubbish on sites and on the walk to destination, they participate in regeneration with community groups – replanting natives and weeding sites.

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Relevant Policies

- Emergency and Evacuation
- Bushfire
- Excursion
- Delivery & Collection of Children
- Supervision
- Interactions with Children
- Participation of student and volunteers
- Code of Conduct
- Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness
- Dealing with Medical Conditions
- Play Benefits & Risk
- Sun Protection
- Clothing
- Toileting
- Nutrition
- Medical Administration
- Safe Transportation
- Program
- Handwashing
- Cleanliness & Maintaining the Environment
- Environmental Statement
- Providing a safe environment
- Providing a culturally safe environment
- Complaints & Grievance

Strategies. Cont.

- The program has a 'no lick, no pick' approach so children stay safe and our natural environment is looked after. Children build their knowledge of local flora and fauna and respect for their natural world through the program delivery. However, there will be times when educators promote bush tucker in their programme and will intentionally guide safe eating practices of bush foods.
- Community connections is a valued component of the program, supporting children to connect and collaborate with community members and organisations, locally and nationally to support nature play ethos.
- Nature play and learning is promoted and advocated through communication channels including documentation apps, service website, philosophy and welcome booklets, newsletters, wall displays, noticeboards, social media channels, media news and articles and education sector networking.

Practices & Procedures

Appropriate Clothing and Sun Protection

Our bush kinder program is intended to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing children to experience nature and its elements throughout all the seasons. Therefore, it is necessary for children and educators to wear appropriate protective clothing that still allows free movement and does not prevent children from participating fully in activities like running, jumping, climbing and puddle jumping.

Clothing should keep children warm and dry in cold or wet weather, as well as protect them from UV rays. Where possible, children's clothing should be made of natural materials like cotton which allows the body to breathe and is comfortable against the skin.

Footwear must keep the feet and toes covered, have a sole which is flexible and has a good grip for climbing or balancing on uneven surfaces. Children will not be taken on bush kinder excursions in thongs or sandals. The service has reef shoes in a diverse range of sizing for children attending the program. These will be washed after each session.

It is recommended that families send along spare sets of clothes for the children to change into if their clothing becomes wet or muddy.

Nature Play and Bush Kindy Policy

Sources and further information

This policy has been developed in collaboration with Nature Play QLD
www.natureplayqld.org.au

<https://www.cela.org.au/publications/amplify!-blog/july-2021/why-we-practice-bush-kindy>

<https://www.cela.org.au/publications/amplify!-blog/jan-2019/safe-bush-kinder>

<https://johnbroth-p.schools.nsw.gov.au/our-curriculum/education-program/bush-school.html>

<https://www.arpansa.gov.au/our-services/monitoring-ultraviolet-radiation-monitoring/ultraviolet-radiation-index>

Dadirri

<https://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/dadirri/>

Practices & Procedures. Cont.

Snake Awareness

During any outing into the local bushland, children are likely to encounter a variety of wildlife, including snakes. To diminish the risk of a child or adult acquiring a snake bite injury it will be necessary to:

1. Conduct a thorough risk assessment and check of the site before children are free to explore the area.
 2. Educate the children about snake bite prevention behaviours and practise them while at bush kinder sessions in such a way that they do not develop a fear of snakes. This includes practising and discussing the following:
 - Leave snakes alone,
 - Wear adequate clothing and sturdy shoes (no sandals or thongs),
 - Never put hands in hollow logs or thick grass without prior inspection,
 - When stepping over logs, carefully inspect the ground on the other side'
 - If they encounter a snake, they should stand still and alert a teacher by calling out to them straight away.
 3. Calmly move the children away from any snake that you might encounter without touching or harming it. In the case of a snake bite, it will be necessary to:
 - Stay calm and call for help from other adults.
 - Call an ambulance.
 - Reassure the victim and encourage them to remain calm and still.
 - Do not move them.
 - Do not attempt to catch or kill the snake.
- Do not wash the bite. Traces of venom left on the skin can be used to identify the snake and therefore the type of antivenom that should be used if required. Venom is injected deeply, so there is no benefit in cutting or sucking the bite. A tourniquet is not an effective way to restrict venom movement.
- The most effective first aid for snake bite is the pressure immobilisation technique. Apply a firm bandage (or suitable alternative) to the bitten area and limb, and to immobilise the victim. When applied properly, this can trap the venom in the bitten area for many hours.
- Educators will need to follow the procedures in our Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness, including contacting the parents/carers.

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Practices & Procedures. Cont.

Dog Awareness

It will be necessary for educators and children to be prepared to deal with dogs that enter the bush kinder space. It is important that educators and children know how to behave around dogs to minimise the risk of injury from a dog bite.

Our centre has participated in the “Living Safely with Dogs” program and the following strategies come from their recommendations.

- Never approach a strange dog.
- Never approach a dog without first asking permission from their owner, even if it is on a leash.
- Stand still if a dog approaches you. Do not make eye contact, stand with your head down and your hands in a fist by your side.
- Never intervene between two dogs that are fighting.
- Never disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping.

Educators are responsible for teaching children how to respond when a dog that is off lead enters the bush kinder site.

The following procedure is to be employed:

1. Call out the word “DOG” and remind children to stand still, look down at their feet and hold their arms by their side with their hands curled into fists. This is a skill that needs to be practiced constantly throughout the year, both at the centre and when out in the community.
2. Locate the owner, if possible, and ask them to move the dog away from the bush kinder site, or at least put the dog back on a leash.

If an aggressive or threatening dog enters the bush kinder site:

1. Call out the word “DOG” and remind children to stand still, look down at their feet and hold their arms by their side with their hands curled into fists.
2. Encourage the children to stay calm and not run.
3. Wait until the dog leaves the area before resuming activities.
4. Locate the owner, if possible, and ask them to move the dog away from the bush kinder site, or at least put the dog back on a leash.

If a dog attacks a child:

1. Educators will enlist the aid of the dog’s owner to contain the dog.
2. Do not act aggressively towards the dog.
3. Attempt to put an obstacle between the dog and the child.
4. Educators will follow current first aid practice to treat the child at the site.

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Practices & Procedures. Cont.

Dog Awareness. Cont.

If a dog attacks a child: Cont.

5. Educators will call an ambulance. It is likely that the child and their peers may experience some shock and will require treatment.
6. Follow the procedure for managing a serious incident.

Extreme Weather

Prior to leaving the centre it is the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor to assess the weather conditions to ensure the safety of the educators and children whilst at the bush kinder site.

The service reserves the right to cancel the excursion on the day if the educators and Nominated Supervisor consider the weather conditions to be unsuitable for the planned excursion.

Families will be informed of the cancellation of the excursion upon their arrival at the centre for the morning drop off. For those families who have already left the centre before the decision is made, they will be informed via an electronic communication channel.

Bush Kindy will be cancelled if:

- The UV index is at 'very high' (8 UV radiation level).
- The forecast temperature is 36 degrees Celsius or greater (Note: there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and layered clothing should be worn on very cold days).
- The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has issued a severe weather warning for damaging winds in the area for the time of the designated activity. A warning is triggered for predicted sustained winds gale force of 63 km/hr or more and wind gusts of 90 km/hr or more.
- The BOM has forecast electrical storm activity, flooding, or excessive rain at the excursion site.
- The Rural Fire Service [RFS] has declared the region under extreme or catastrophic fire rating. The Responsible Person will check the RFS Fires Near Me service before any excursion in the Bush Fire danger period- October- March, or when there has been bush fires in the region.

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Practices & Procedures

Extreme Weather. Cont.

If the weather becomes extreme **during** the excursion, educators should take the following actions:

Heat

- Monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke.
- Offer water for hydration at regular intervals.
- Establish activities in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade.
- Ensure appropriate protective clothing is worn.

Rain, Hail, & Cold Temperatures

- Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary.
- Ensure appropriate clothing is worn.
- Seek shelter in heavy rain or hail.

Electrical storm activity /Lightning

- Move children away from trees and conduits of electricity.
- Seek shelter indoors.

High Winds

- Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure.
- Seek shelter if necessary. If it is necessary to relocate the children.

Fire

- As soon as any smoke is detected, or communication received regarding possible fires in the area, the children and staff will return to the centre and follow the *Bush Fire* procedures and/or *Emergency and Evacuation* procedures set out in these policies.

Procedure for Relocating

If the bush kinder group is required to relocate to a safe position, the following procedure is to be followed by educators:

1. Call out: 'One two three, come to me'.
2. Keep children calm.
4. Count all children and check them off against the roll to ensure that they are all accounted for.
5. Except for the teacher's pack (with medications, first aid and phone), leave all bush kinder gear at the site.

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Practices & Procedures

Procedure for Relocating. Cont.

6. Calmly walk the children in pairs along the predetermined route back to the centre where possible. When not possible, seek shelter in a pre-determined place deemed less as risk.
7. Educators/volunteers are to be positioned at the back and the front of the group and flanking the group where possible.
8. Notify emergency services if required.
9. On arrival at the safe assembly point conduct a full roll call.
10. Wait for extreme weather to pass and return to the centre.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Approved Provider/Management Committee will:

- Work with the Nominated Supervisor/Director and Bush Kindy ECT in ensuring the programme aligns with the philosophy and policies of the service.
- Ensure all current and relative regulations, legislation, frameworks, policies, and research are being followed in the programme.
- Ensure a risk assessment is carried out for an excursion before permission is sought.
- Ensure any excursion is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the service's public liability cover.
- Support the Nominated Supervisor/Director, ECT and educators of the service by providing safe and sustainable resources required for best practices.
- Monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints, and incidents in relation to this policy.
- Revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required.
- Notify parents/carers at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

Nature Play and Bush Kindy Policy

Roles and Responsibilities. Cont.

The Nominated Supervisor/Director will:

- Work with the Approved Provider/Management Committee in the implementation, review and revision of this policy, practices, and procedures relative to the programme.
- Ensure a risk assessment is carried out before any excursion/incursion takes place.
- Ensure all staff members attending the excursion have approved first aid qualifications, as well as asthma and anaphylaxis management training.
- Ensure that a fully equipped first aid kit, mobile phone, children's medication, sunscreen, insect repellent, water and meals are taken on the excursion.
- Ensure all families receive a permission note that includes the route to and from the excursion site, modes of transport, a timeline of the excursion prior to giving permission for their child to participate in it.
- Under no circumstances will a child participate in an excursion if their parent/carer has not given them permission to do so.
- Permission must be obtained in writing for each excursion date and must identify the child and the authorising parent/carer. The form is to be retained in the child's file.
- If a parent/carer forgets to return/sign the form, they may provide permission via email. Verbal consent over the phone will not be considered sufficient.
- If a parent/carer does not give permission for their child to attend, appropriate arrangements will be made for the child to remain at the service.
- Take a list of family emergency contact details for all children participating in the excursion.
- Ensure families have access to the risk assessment.
- Ensure all families and staff are aware of this policy.
- Engage in consistent reflective practices with the learning community (staff, children, families, and the educational networks) to further explore best practices in our fluid environments.
- Promote continual professional development for educators to scaffold best practices.

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Roles and Responsibilities. Cont.

The Nominated Supervisor/Director will:

- Ensure children's voices and their sense of agency is being weaved into the curriculum, documentation, and reflections of the program.
- Ensure Indigenous Australian perspectives and culture is respected, promoted and weaved throughout the programme.
- Liaise with Indigenous Australian communities to ensure respectful practices are being followed when visiting sites.
- Liaise with local community, including local council, when visiting environments.
- Advocate for sustainable practices in all aspects of the programme.

Educators will:

- Engage in the development of the program and participate in ongoing reflective practices. Concerning the program.
- When required, attend professional development that strengthens their understanding and practices in delivering the program.
- Be respectful of children, families, community members voices in relation to environmental impact, aspects of the programme and the needs of the children.
- Foster positive outcomes for educators, children, and families to further their understandings and knowledge of Indigenous Australian culture and perspectives.

Families will:

- Have access to this policy and all relevant documentation before allowing their child/ren to attend the program.
- Formally voice any concerns or issues relating to the program, so that the ECT, Nominated Supervisor/Director and/or Approved Provider/Management Committee can meet and talk these issues through.
- Feel welcome to come on any excursions.
- Provide nutritious food, a water bottle and sun safe clothing for their child.
- Not share any images provided by Mt Warning Community Preschool with any other party without the permission of the preschool.

Children will:

- Play, learn, and have fun.

● **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

- This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every 24 months.
- Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.
- In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Approved by Management Committee	Signature:
Name:	
Date Approved:	Date of Review:
Date Adopted:	Review Cycle: Bi-annual

