

# *Bush and Beach Kindy*

## *Family Handbook*





# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Bush Kindy was developed in response to research that shows outdoor activities in a natural environment are extremely beneficial to children's health, wellbeing and development. Many preschools nationally have already implemented Bush Kindy into their program with great success.

Originating in Scandinavia in the 1950's, the forest preschool approach has been used as a framework for Bush Kindy in Australia, where children are encouraged to play in, and learn from, our natural environment.

## KEY FEATURES OF THE BUSH/BEACH KINDY APPROACH INCLUDE:

- Children spend long and regular periods of time in unstructured or semi structured play in natural environments all year around
- Children experience the daily and seasonal fluctuations in weather and seasons
- Educators play a key role in promoting children as researchers, nurturing their inquiries and engaging in shared sustained conversations
- Our Aboriginal Education and Community Officer shares knowledge of the Kurna culture in particular

## CURRENT RESEARCH ON CHILDREN WHO REGULARLY PLAY IN OUTDOOR NATURAL SETTINGS HAS CONCLUDED THAT THEY HAVE:

- Increased confidence, motivation, concentration and resilience
- Increased social, physical and language skills
- Deeper conceptual understanding and respect for the natural environment
- Mud, sand, water, leaves, sticks etc. can stimulate children's immune systems, resulting in less illness
- Children are more physically active and more likely to be a healthy weight
- Children are more resistant to stress, have lower incidence of behavioural disorders, anxiety and depression, and have a higher measure of self-worth
- Bush Kindy deepens children's understanding of community and offers better opportunities for children to be present and authentically engaged in real life
- Encourages a well-connected, cohesive community that is environmentally aware

## References:

- <http://www.wgkg.vic.edu.au/bush-kinder>
- <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/australasian-journal-early-childhood/index-abstracts/ajec-vol-39-no-4-december-2014/forest-preschool-bush-kinder-inspirational-approach-preschool-provision-australia-full-free-text-available/>



# STEM FOCUS

“Children are born with a sense of wonder (Wilson, 1997). In order to maintain it, research has shown the importance of continuous experiences with the natural world.”

Ann Arbor Foundation & Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, 2007; Cobb 1977; White 2004

“An appropriate curriculum in the early years is one that encourages and motivates children to seek mastery of basic academic skills in the service of their intellectual pursuits...”

Katz, 2010



“When we allow children to explore their world through play, we see that they are already scientists, technologies, engineers, and mathematicians. We don’t create them, but rather allow the time and space in which those natural drives can flourish, and that’s how we ultimately ensure that our children not only have the narrow skills that may or may not be necessary for those jobs of tomorrow, but also for the broader purpose of living a good life.”

Teacher Tom, 2017



“It’s a great idea to pay attention to how children learn the concepts behind popular acronyms like STEM... in the early years. The trouble comes when we let the buzzwords take over and draw focus from PLAY. Children are wired to learn Science, Technology, Engineering, Music Maths, Reading, and more through their play. As a profession, we need to be better at seeing it, understanding it, and supporting it.”

STEM learning refers collectively to the disciplines of **science, technology** and **mathematics** integrated with **engineering** as a process to solve problems involving complex thinking.

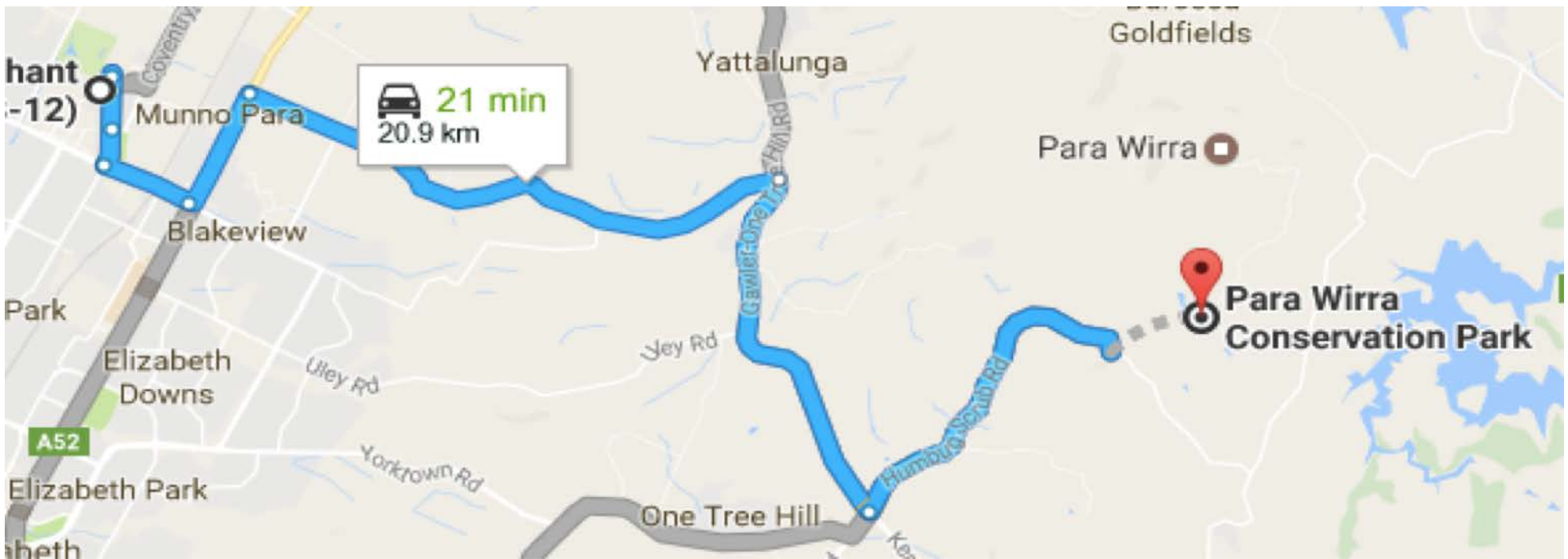
STEM learning encompasses **cross-disciplinary** approaches to learning that increases **learner disposition** in STEM related fields and their **development of skills** in **collaborative problem solving, creative thinking and critical analysis**.

STEM learning evokes **innovative pedagogies** and explores **new ways to identify evidence of learning**.

Our Goal:

To build strong STEM dispositions and pedagogical approaches through inquiry and play based environments by honouring the voice of the child and strengthening their conceptual understandings through learning design.





## LOCATION

Para Wirra was chosen as our Bush Kindy setting for reasons including:

- Closest bush setting in proximity to our Children's Centre
- Facilities including toilets and shelter
- It provides a variety of flora, fauna and natural habitats for children to explore - There are over 100 species of birds living in the park, including emus. Kangaroos, bearded dragons and sleepy lizards also inhabit the park, along with echidnas.
- Provides play spaces with natural boundaries that can be easily identified by children, staff and volunteers
- Bush setting reflective of the philosophy of Bush Kindy
- This park was intended for the people of Elizabeth to access – we want to promote this as a place families can visit together
- We are able to form relationships with the park rangers, and strengthen connections with the community
- This park is rich in history, with the traditional owners of the land including Peramangk, Ngaduri and Kaurna people. This National Park works with all three nations of people to promote and develop the cultural interpretation of the park. We see this as an authentic and exciting opportunity for us to build upon the Kaurna culture and language program we already offer, through our Aboriginal Community and Education Officer, Cherylynne Catzantariti.



## CONSENT

Children will access the Bush Kindy Program during terms 2 and 3, as this is when the threat of bushfire and snakes is low. Consent forms, making clear the exact dates, times, costs and transport model will be sent home with families.



**“Children tell us that they need excitement, that they need freedom and need to be trusted. This is how they develop resilience and the ability to cope with what life throws at them.” (Niki Buchan)**

## **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Each Bush Kindy session will include enough adults to ensure a ratio of 1:4 children (children with additional needs are staffed accordingly). We encourage families to volunteer their time. If you are interested, please talk with your child's teacher.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Staff Members are required to carry mobile phones. You will be able to contact us via the school as you normally would.

## **MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND MEDICATION**

Staff will take individual children's medication and actions plans with them to each session. Educators are also required to carry full medical/first aid packs which will contain emergency medications and equipment.

## **CLOTHING**

Parents/Guardians are required to determine appropriate clothing based on the weather forecast, and appropriate for their child's Bush Kindy time. It is recommended that children wear clothes that:

- Allow them to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing and running
- Keeps them warm in winter and cool in warmer months
- Protects them from the damaging effects of the sun and from bites, scratches and stings
- Footwear that is enclosed, flexible and safe to climb/run in. We often go on bush walks. Gumboots often rub on children's feet and are not comfortable. Gumboots may be packed in your child's bag if it is a rainy day for puddle jumping!
- All Children are required to bring a full change of clothes in the backpack
- The centre provides rain-suits (as pictured) in addition to high visibility vests for adults and children to wear. Gumboots are also available as required



## **RISK-BENEFIT ASSESSMENTS**

Thorough risk-benefits assessments have been carried out by our team of educators and is available to view (please see staff if you would like a copy). Our program involves regular and frequent dynamic (on the go) risk assessments, which are often carried out through discussion and feedback with our children. While it is unlikely that any of the identified risks or events will occur, it is our responsibility to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place in the event that something should occur.



# BEACH KINDY

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Instead of using the dates to mark the change of a season, the Aboriginal people would follow the cycle of plants, animals, water and the stars. With changes in season, people would move accordingly. In the winter months they would move more towards shelter and warmth, and in the summer toward the coast. So we were inspired to do the same!

During term 4 we visit Thompson Beach, a crabbing beach and bird sanctuary near Dublin. There are toilets and shelter with picnic table. This environment provides opportunity for children to transfer and build upon the skills in research and inquiry developed during Bush Kindy, along with building vocabulary, scientific and mathematical thinking. There are new plants, different animals - a completely different sensory experience to the bush!

Each child will carry their own backpack. Ensure that you have packed:

- Lunch, fruit, snack (include an ice brick if necessary)
- Drink bottle filled with water
- Complete change of clothes in a waterproof bag (sun safe)
- Footwear appropriate for the beach should be worn (reef shoes, crocs, sandals for example) and sun safe clothing. Long sleeve swim or cotton shirts are recommended.

Children will be conducting explorations in water up to their ankles, but will not be swimming.



# Bush/Beach Kindy Day - Rhythms and Rituals

*This is flexible and may change in response to our children and their families...*

8:30 **Preschool is open**

Families are welcomed by educators. There is soft music playing and a slideshow of pictures which promote a sense of belonging. Families support children to place their bags with their lunch, drink and change of clothes packed inside upon the group mat. Children then write their names, answer the daily question and then have an opportunity to record their thoughts and ideas for the day in the Floorbook (located on the group mat space). Teachers – work on Floorbooks with children/families

We encourage families to share a 'Book Hug' with their child before leaving. Children may access breakfast (yoghurt/Weetbix) each morning from the table set in the Pinyanthi space... Followed by indoor/outdoor play

9.10 **Group to get ready** Roll Check – Teacher

Children to consider going to the toilet before finding their backpacks. Children to line up ready to get on bus.

9:20 **Group board the bus** Roll Check - Teacher

9:30 **Group to depart for the bush**

10:00 **Arrive at Para Wirra Nature play space** Roll Check - Teacher

Educator who has taken vehicle: Conducts risk assessment of the area

Children gather for 'Welcome to Land'. Stories, songs and discussions, including those around risk assessments. Discuss the morning plan as decided from the planning in floorbooks from morning

10:30 **Prepare to leave base camp to embark upon morning planned experience**

Children to gather in their allocated small story groups and will stay with this group throughout the experience (Small Group Leaders will lead their group)

12.00 **Return to base camp for lunch** Roll Check - Teacher

Staff and children to discuss the mornings experience over lunch and to make decisions around what will occur in pm which will be in addition to explorative play in play space – re-document in floorbook – teachers facilitate and other educators promote active involvement

Play and exploration in the bush – Bronwyn based nearby to the toilet

Engage in shared sustained conversations. Observe, notice, analyse and respond. Scaffold children's inquiries. Document significant learning and PLODs

1:40 **Group to gather and prepare for return to Children's Centre** Roll Check - Teacher

Children to consider going to the toilet before finding their backpacks. Children to line up ready to get on bus.

1:50 **Group board the bus** Roll Check - Teacher

2:00 **Group to depart for Children's Centre**

2:30 **Arrive at Children's Centre** Roll Check - Teacher

3:00 **Afternoon Tea** – Our preschool community sits under the verandah to enjoy afternoon tea together. This is a joyous ritual where children sit with their peers and engage in conversation over some food. The children are exposed to a wide-range of healthy foods, and are involved in cooking for this time through the Kids in the Kitchen program. Our volunteers also help to prepare our afternoon tea.

3:30 **Preschool is finished**