

# EARLY YEARS POLICY

<b>Early Years Services Play Benefits and Risk</b>	Policy No:	QA 2.20
	Document No:	D15/74634
	Approved Date:	1 October 2015
	Approved By:	Manager Aged and Family
	Review Date:	9 July 2021
Responsible Officer:	Manager Community Strengthening	
Authorising Officer:	Coordinator Early Years	

## 1. Purpose

This policy aims to detail the benefits of outdoor play in the Bush Kinder environment:

- To ensure that the educational programs enhance the learning and development of each child participating in Surf Coast Shire Council early years' services.
- To ensure the safety, health & wellbeing of children when participating in Early Years Services activities.

## 2. Scope

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards 1.1.1.2.

Evidence of link to Educational & Care Services National Regulations: Part 4.1, 73, 74, 75, 76.

Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Law: Section 168

Victorian Children's Services: Regulations 2009.

## 3. Application

All Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services staff/volunteers and children utilising the services.

## 4. Definitions

**Appropriate clothing:** (Refer Protective Clothing Policy)

**Footwear:** It is important that children wear appropriate footwear (closed toe with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree climbing, balancing on rocks, logs etc.) Refer to Protective Clothing Policy.

**Play (examples):** Play activities at Bush Kinder are diverse and vast, but typical activities and goals may include (though not limited to):

- Tree climbing: This activity has been singled out as it is an activity likely to cause the most unease amongst parents/guardians.
- Water play: Water play during Bush Kinder will take place from time to time in cases where water occurs naturally, for example, looking at and playing with puddles, play in the rain and on walks wearing puddle suits. There are some bodies of water in the Bush Kindergarten sites which may be encountered by the Bush Kinder group during a supervised walk. Children will be taught an awareness of bodies of water and associated risks, and will learn appropriate behavior around water.

## 5. Policy

Activity	Developmental benefit
<b>Playing imaginative games using the resources nature provides</b>	Open ended learning allows children to explore at their own pace and with their own challenges
<b>Role play</b>	Shared imagination, drama, team work, recollection of models of behaviour
<b>Building shelters or other large structures from branches, with the help of other children and adults</b>	This requires goal definition, planning, engineering, teamwork and perseverance

<b>Counting objects or looking for mathematical patterns</b>	Mathematics, visual recognition
<b>Memory games using naturally available objects</b>	Memory, naming objects
<b>Listening to stories, singing songs and rhymes</b>	Art, drama, concentration, literacy and oral language
<b>Arranging items to make a picture, or installation</b>	Art, imagination and creativity
<b>Drawing scenes</b>	Art, creativity, observation of flora, fauna and surroundings
<b>Climbing trees, walking on logs and rocks and exploring the bush (See Attachment 1 for Tree Climbing Risk Benefit Analysis)</b>	Improves gross motor strength, balance and physical awareness
<b>Walking within the parklands</b>	Improves strength and stamina, preparation (e.g., route selection) improves planning and communication skills
<b>Exploring or reflecting alone</b>	Aids self-awareness and character development. Promotes physical and emotional wellbeing
<b>Play involving water where it occurs naturally (for example puddles and on walks in the rain in the Bush Kinder area (wearing puddle suits – see Protective Clothing Policy)</b>	Experience and understanding of all weather conditions and their effect on the natural environment.
<b>Using tools</b>	Using tools safely to, for example, make items out of bark & sticks, or to plant seeds/seedlings and other gardening activities (Refer to Safe Use of Tools Policy)
<b>Observing seasonal changes and weather changes</b>	Gaining and sharing familiar and unfamiliar knowledge Broadening understanding of the world around
<b>Observing mini-beasts</b>	Gaining and sharing familiar and unfamiliar knowledge Broadening understanding of the world around

## General

### The Surf Coast Shire Early Years Management is responsible for:

- implementing and maintaining a Play Benefit & Risk Policy which provides clarity to parents/guardians and staff as to the types of activities children may be undertaking in Bush Kinder, while highlighting the benefits of these activities, including improved self-esteem, co-operation and ability to assess and respond to risks;
- providing a safe environment for all participants in the Bush Kinder program;
- ensuring that all parents/guardians are aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy on the Surf Coast Shire website, and in written form upon request;
- ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately educated on procedures detailed in this policy.

**Staff are responsible for:**

- supervising children at all times and ensuring their safety;
- all staff sign the applicable site WHS bush kinder checklist each session assessing potential tree climbing trees for sturdiness in liaison with the Coordinator of Open space operations
- ensuring all use and storage of tools during play is in accordance with the Safe Use of Tools Policy;
- ensuring strategies to mitigate the risks and hazards of tree climbing are carried out as required;
- educating the children on water risks, providing an awareness of bodies of water and associated risks and teaching them appropriate behaviour around water. Ensure strategies to mitigate risks and hazards in relation to water are carried out as required;
- encouraging the children to do things for themselves e.g. putting on clothes, climbing and holding back branches, assessing risk through conversation with staff;
- talking and listening to the children;
- offering help and encouragement during play whenever needed (for example, a more timid child may need support when tree climbing for the first time);
- encouraging the children during play to help each other, share and to solve problems together, and affirm positive behavior when this occurs;
- encouraging children during play to reflect on how they have changed (for example, how they can now walk along a log by themselves);
- helping children become aware of features, insects, plants, weather, sounds etc that children may not have noticed;
- taking opportunities to reinforce safety routines applicable to play where ever possible.

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- ensuring protective and appropriate clothing is worn to Bush Kinder by their child in line with Bush Kinder - Protective Clothing policy, including closed toe footwear with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree/log climbing and balancing on uneven surfaces;
- reinforcing appropriate safety and behaviour strategies;
- reading and being familiar with the policy;
- bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and/or Team Leader of Kindergarten programs.

**6. Records**

Records shall be retained for at least the period shown below.

<b>Record</b>	<b>Retention/Disposal Responsibility</b>	<b>Retention Period</b>	<b>Location</b>
Educational Plan	Records	Two years	Active: onsite Inactive: archived
Early Years Enrolment & Consent Form	Records	Until the child turns 25 years	Active: onsite Inactive: archived
Early Years Risk Management Plan	Records	Two years after delivery of the program	Off site
Early Years Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record Form	Records	Permanent retention	Off-site
DET Serious Incident Notification Report	Records	Permanent retention	Online Portal
Bush Kindergarten Safety Check lists	Records	Two years after delivery of the program	Off site

## 7. Attachments

Not Applicable

## 8. References

### Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Policies

D15/74620 Bush Kinder - Delivery and Collection of Children  
D15/74610 Bush Kinder - Snake awareness and first aid  
D15/74606 Bush Kinder - Protective Clothing  
D15/74583 Bush Kinder - Management of Dogs  
D15/74477 Bush Kinder - Identification & Visibility  
D15/74476 Bush Kinder - Extreme Weather  
D15/73628 Bush Kinder - Emergency Evacuation  
D15/35312 Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy  
D15/35364 Early Years Sustainability Policy

### Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

D14/28442 Family Day Care 'Active Play' Work Instructions  
D14/95703 Early Years Enrolment & Consent Form  
D15/117400 Family Day Care All about me Form  
D19/24712 Template - Excursion Parent Permission Form - 2019

### Other References

'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing' MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)  
A Marvelous Opportunity for Children to Learn 'Liz O'Brien and Richard Murray, Forestry Commission (2006)  
Wikipedia – 'Forest Kindergarten'  
'Nature Kindergartens' – Claire Walden  
'Understanding the Danish Forest School Approach - Early Years Education In Practice' – Jane Williams-Sieghfredson

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (National Law)

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (The Regulations) and the National Quality Standard (Schedule 1 of the Regulations)

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<b>Approval Date:</b>	01/10/2015	<b>Approved by:</b>	Manager Aged and Family
<b>Amendment/Review 1:</b>	03/01/2018	<b>Approved by:</b>	Manager Aged and Family
<b>Amendment/Review 2:</b>	23/08/2018	<b>Approved by:</b>	Manager Aged and Family
<b>Amendment/Review 3:</b>	09/01/2020	<b>Approved by:</b>	Manager Community Strengthening

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