

# Early Years Services – QA2.20 Bush/Beach Kinder Play Benefits and Risk

TRIM Reference: D15/74634

Due for Review: 4 April 2024

Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

## Purpose

This policy aims to detail the benefits of outdoor play in the Bush/Beach 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.

## Policy Principles

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

## 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 2020.

## Policy

Activity	Developmental benefit
Playing imaginative games using the resources nature provides	Open ended learning allows children to explore at their own pace and with their own challenges
Role play	Shared imagination, drama, team work, recollection of models of behaviour
Building shelters or other large structures from branches, with the help of other children and adults	This requires goal definition, planning, engineering, teamwork and perseverance
Counting objects or looking for mathematical patterns	Mathematics, visual recognition
Memory games using naturally available objects	Memory, naming objects
Listening to stories, singing songs and rhymes	Art, drama, concentration, literacy and oral language
Arranging items to make a picture, or installation	Art, imagination and creativity
Drawing scenes	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/Beach 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/Beach 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 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 wherever possible.

### **Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- ensuring protective and appropriate clothing is worn to Bush/Beach Kinder by their child in line with Bush/Beach 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.

## 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.

## Related Procedure

Nil.

## 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
Tree climbing Guidelines – are currently being developed	

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

D14/28442	Family Day Care 'Active Play' Work Instructions
Online	Early Years Enrolment and Consent Form
D19/24712	Template - Excursion Parent Permission Form - 2019

### **Other References**

'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing' MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)  
A Marvellous 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)

### **Document History**

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approval Date	Manager Aged and Family - 1 October 2015
2	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family - 3 January 2018
3	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family - 23 August 2018
4	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening - 9 January 2020
6	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 4 October 2022