



Surf Coast Kids Go Bush



Our goal was for bush/beach kinder to become mainstream.

We believed that every child should have the opportunity to experience a natural childhood and that outdoor learning should be an integral part of early childhood education not an optional extra.

Bush Kinder's are not new, Surf Coast Kids Go Bush is unique in that this is the first time a Bush Kinder program was implemented across a region back in 2014.

Every week an average of 400 four year olds from across the Shire (6 stand alone kindergartens) spend 3 hours a week outdoors in the bush or at the beach as part of their regular 15 hour kindergarten program.

By working together as a region, with families, councils, land managers and educators, we supported each other to make it happen.

The response to our Bush Kinder programs have been amazing. We have been able to create a regional movement whereby children, families, educators and services are passionate and committed to ensuring that the benefits of the program continue to grow.

This achievement is evident through:

- Our team of **passionate** and **dedicated** educators who are skilled and confident in taking children outside to embrace nature play.
- The significant **developmental benefits** observed for the children, with clear and intentional links to the learning frameworks and quality standards.
- **Families** wanting further nature play **opportunities** for their pre-kinder and junior primary children.
- Our start up **collaboration** with Kids Go Bush, BCYF, GORCC, Lyons Club, Eco Logic, Angair and YMCA.
- **Interest** from other Councils and individual kindergartens across Victoria and Australia for assistance in implementing a similar model.
- Our **partnership** with Deakin University to implement an **Australian Research Project** titled: Bush Kinders in Australia: locating the science. We will be further collaborating with Deakin University and The University of Melbourne to research the culture of Australian Bush Kinder.



ANGAIR Inc.





Jan Juc Pre-School Bush Kinder

Three groups spend three hours every week in the council nature reserve behind the kindergarten. It is a small clearing in the bush framed by eucalypts and is a special place for the children to play. From bull ants and resident magpies to miniscule green spiders, the children know this pocket of land from the ground up.

"I love how happy and relaxed the children appear to be. I love the sense of ownership they have of this space and how they feel safe here. I love how they are so involved and so motivated and how for three hours they keep busy playing, discovering, exploring and sometimes just sitting." Jane Wilson, Bush Kinder Educator

Torquay Kindergarten Bush Kinder

Four kindergarten groups alternate between a council nature reserve and a local beach site. Both sites are located 15 minutes away from the main kindergarten service and families and caregivers drop off and pick up from these locations.

The nature reserve has a combination of cleared bushland, walking tracks, a frog pond, creek bed and an oval area. Free range chickens and guinea fowls visit the site from a neighbouring farm. The beach site has a treed area, sandy beach, rock pools and grassy hills to roll down. Combined, both sites have an abundance of insects, bird life, native mammals and marine creatures to observe and explore.

"Teachers were flabbergasted at how quickly the children were making friendships and playing at a higher level than they were in the past. We're seeing so many great outcomes already and I think it really highlights the importance of natural unstructured play. This is about giving children respect and freedom by getting back to basics." Rachael Clarke, Bush Kinder Educator

Helen M Kininmonth Pre-School Bush Kinder

Our children spend three hour weekly bush kinder sessions at a bush block owned by an adjoining church. Children climb and make cubby shelters in the large number of trees on the site.

"After lunch I asked the children individually what their favourite part of 'bush kinder' was. Montana said 'I liked decorating the tree cubby with sticks, bark and dirt and then with little bits of sticks.' Reani said 'I helped Elle find some treasure.' Victor said 'I really liked the big bendy branch and making it go up and down.' Macka said 'I liked it when I put on the gumnut claws and found the spiky gumnuts. I hid them in a tree. It was the best kinder day ever. Bush kinder was too good. Can we do bush kinder every day?'" Julie Baker, Director





Anglesea Kindergarten Bush Kinder

Bush kinder sessions for two kindergarten groups are held at the YMCA Recreation Camp in Anglesea and at Roadnight Beach. The children build cubbies, have campfires and explore the surrounding bush and beach environments.

"We noticed the children become more confident and resilient at Bush Kinder. They play with different children, take more calculated risks and develop a curiosity about the environment around them." Sarah Womersley, Director

Lorne Pre-School Bush Kinder

The Lorne Pre-School children attend bush kinder on a bush block located between the kindergarten and the primary school. There are large eucalypts scattered throughout the block and a wonderful sloping embankment for the children to explore. A shared community vegetable garden is also planned for the site. The children also attend beach kinder at Erskine Paddock that is located between the beautiful river and the Lorne main beach.

KMCC Bush Kinder

The KMCC Kindergarten children attend bush kinder for a weekly session at a bush, river, beach setting. The bush/beach kinder site is located 10 minutes away from the main kindergarten building. The children are able to discover an abundance of bugs, birdlife, see schools of fish within the river system and explore the marine eco systems at the adjoining beach frontage. The site is quite protected from wind and rain due to the dense tree canopy and scattered shrubs. There is plenty of space to run, roll down embankments, climb trees and make cubbies.

