



BUSH KINDER HANDBOOK 2023



 Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve
Ashburton Drive, Mitcham



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WHAT IS BUSH KINDER ALL ABOUT?

Rangeview Pre-School is very excited to have created and introduced Bush Kinder into its four-year-old program with the help of the City of Whitehorse and Whitehorse Council's Parkside Education Program Officers.

Bush Kinder is a series of nature-based kindergarten sessions developed in line with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and held at Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve. Our Bush Kinder sessions promote and encourage a closer connection with nature, develop a greater sense of community amongst our kinder groups, develop a greater appreciation of our environment and nurture creative and resilient children.

This type of kinder session allows the children to engage with nature and their environment in many different ways and to grow and develop skills. The children gain a greater respect for their natural environment and a connectedness to local surrounds. The children also continue to develop strong relationships amongst their peers and adults within their particular group.

Current research shows that children today are spending much more time indoors, in front of screens and participating in structured activities. Being outdoors and exploring nature helps change these trends as children begin to value and appreciate the joy that nature-based activities can provide for an overall sense of well-being and positive identity.

Bush Kinder Program Aims

1. Facilitate respect and appreciation of nature through experience
2. Encourage creative play with minimal use of direct instruction, tools and manufactured resources
3. Assist in the development of risk assessment skills in a dynamic environment
4. Support kindergarten staff to integrate environmentally aware principles and nature-based play into their daily service delivery.



WHERE TO BE & WHAT TO BRING

WHAT SHOULD MY CHILD WEAR?

Parents are asked to determine appropriate clothing based on the weather forecast appropriate to their session time. Children will not be allowed to attend a Bush Kinder session if they arrive with inappropriate clothing and without suitable clothing to change into. It is important that Bush Kinder participants wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear that:

- Allows children to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing, running;
- Keeps children warm and dry in cold/wet weather;
- Protects children from the damaging effects of the sun, UV rays in warm weather and high UV conditions;

- Prevents sunburn, bites, scratches and stings. (Even in warm weather, long sleeve tops and long pants are required - this clothing should be loose fitting and light);
- Where possible is made from natural fabrics, which allow the body to breathe, and is comfortable against the skin.

In wet weather, waterproof pants will be provided at Bush Kinder.

Footwear needs to keep feet and toes covered and have a flexible sole to allow children to climb and balance on uneven surfaces. The following table provides examples of required clothing and clothing which is unacceptable:

| | Warm Weather | Cold Weather/Rain |
|---|--|---|
| Required Clothing & Footwear | Light loose fitting long sleeve tops and long pants, broad brimmed hat, closed toe shoes | Long sleeves, coat, beanie, waterproof gloves (optional) Waterproof parka/coat |
| Unacceptable Clothing & Footwear | Short sleeved tops, singlet tops, shorts, skirts or dresses, open toe shoes, sandals, thongs or crocs. | Skirts, dresses, non-waterproof outer clothing |



WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO BRING?

- Water: All participants onsite at Bush Kinder must have a bottle of fresh water. Refills will be available.
- Food: Parents/carers are required to provide a snack in a sealed container for each session for their child to eat. Please note that Bush Kinder is WRAPPER FREE, so please leave all packaging at home. We also ask that you continue to follow the pre-school's Healthy Eating Policy when selecting a snack. Please always take away with you what you brought in.
- Please do not bring toys along to Bush Kinder so children are best able to engage in the natural surrounds.

Change of clothes

All children participating in Bush Kinder must bring a change of clothes and footwear as these may become wet and muddy. It is recommended that the spare clothing include:

- Spare top and bottoms of appropriate thickness/weight for the weather on the day

- Spare underpants (and singlet in winter)
- 2 pairs of socks
- 1 pair of gumboots (it is not recommended that gumboots are worn at all times due to the restriction of movement they impose).

Parents are asked to pack a plastic bag to take home any wet clothes, boots etc. The Bush Kinder 'on-site kit' will contain some spare clothing in case of emergencies.

On days where the UV is predicted to be 3 or above, please ensure that you apply sunscreen prior to the session commencing. Sunscreen will be available for re-application during sessions.

WHERE IS BUSH KINDER HELD?

The Bush Kinder site is at Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve, on Ashburton Drive, Mitcham.

The Reserve is 2.1km from Rangeview Pre-School.

Park at the end of Ashburton Drive where signs will direct you to the Visitor Centre where sessions begin.



WHERE TO BE & WHAT TO BRING

WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE ARRIVE?

Upon arrival, parents and carers need to ensure they:

- Place their child's bag/backpack with change of clothes in the designated areas;
- Place child's water bottle in the designated area for water;
- Sign the child in using the attendance book and record the time of arrival;
- Put on one of the hi-visibility vests; these have the pre-school telephone number on them.
- Take their child to the teachers in charge.
- All children will group together until most children have arrived and the Bush Kinder session formally commences.

WHAT DO WE DO AT PICK UP TIME?

Parents and carers need to ensure they:

- Sign the child out using the attendance book and record the time.
- Ensure the staff are aware you have collected your child.
- Be mindful of not distracting/speaking with staff until all of the children have departed, so that they can supervise remaining children.
- Be responsible for the supervision of the child once signed out, while still at the Bush Kinder site.
- Collect the child's belongings (bag, water, hats)

Please refer to main Delivery and Collection of Children Policy available at rangeviewpreschool.vic.edu.au for full procedures relating to collection by authorised person, late collection and late collection fees.

CAN I BRING SIBLINGS TO PICK UP?

Of course! However to ensure our kindergarten children are given freedom to play and engage with nature we ask that adults are respectful of their space at all times. During pick/up and drop off times if you have siblings present please ensure that you are aware of where your child is at all times to ensure their safety and well-being.

WHEN SHOULDN'T MY CHILD ATTEND BUSH KINDER?

We ask that parents/carers are diligent and exercise their own judgment in assessing whether it is appropriate for their child to attend Bush Kinder. Children should not attend Bush Kinder if they are ill, excessively tired or if parents are concerned about their well-being due to forecast weather conditions.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM LATE COLLECTING MY CHILD?

Parents/carers are asked to be at the Bush Kinder site by the session end time for collection of their child as staff members are not able to care for children after the end of each session.

Late collection fees apply if parents/carers arrive late for collection of a child, as per Rangeview Pre-School late collection fee policy available at rangeviewpreschool.vic.edu.au



WHAT HAPPENS DURING BUSH KINDER?

WHAT HAPPENS DURING BUSH KINDER?

Prior to the commencement of each session, teachers will scan the bush space for safety and new areas of potential interest. Each Bush Kinder session will begin with the group meeting together with the teachers. A story or songs may be shared whilst we wait for all children to be signed in.

WHAT ABOUT MEDICATIONS?

Parents and carers of children diagnosed with anaphylaxis or asthma must ensure they discuss their emergency plans with staff prior to commencing the first session. Staff will duplicate copies of all medication and action plans which will be clearly displayed in the Visitor Centre First Aid area. All medications and copies of medical plans will be stored in the teacher's backpack at all times, to ensure it is always at hand.

ARE THERE TOILETS?

To maintain required staff ratios as set by regulations at all times, children will be accompanied by a supervising teacher in small groups to the toilets, which are located at the front of the Visitor Centre. To ensure teachers don't spend the entire session running toilet trips, parents are asked to ensure children use the toilet immediately prior to commencing at Bush Kinder.



WHEN IS BUSH KINDER ON?

Bush Kinder sessions will be running each Thursday, with Waratah & Banksia alternating a week at home kinder and a week at Bush Kinder.

All Bush Kinder sessions run **from 9:15am-12.45pm.**

WARATAH

TERM 1

Orientation Session 23rd February

Group A: 9.15am-10.45am

Group B: 11.15am-12.45pm

Thursday 9th March
Thursday 23rd March
Thursday 6th April

TERM 2

Thursday 4th May
Thursday 18th May
Thursday 1st June
Thursday 15th June

TERM 3

Thursday 13th July
Thursday 26th July
Thursday 9th August
Thursday 23rd August
Thursday 7th September

TERM 4

Thursday 12th October
Thursday 26th October
Thursday 9th November
Thursday 23rd November
Thursday 7th December

BANKSIA

TERM 1

Orientation Session 2nd March

Group A: 9.15am-10.45am

Group B: 11.15am-12.45pm

Thursday 16th March
Thursday 30th March

TERM 2

Thursday 27th April
Thursday 11th May
Thursday 25th May
Thursday 8th June
Thursday 22nd June

TERM 3

Thursday 20th July
Thursday 5th August
Thursday 17th August
Thursday 31st August
Thursday 14th September

TERM 4

Thursday 5th October
Thursday 19th October
Thursday 2nd November
Thursday 16th November
Thursday 30th November

CANCELLATIONS & CONTACT DETAILS

WHEN IS BUSH KINDER *NOT* ON?

Bush Kinder sessions may be cancelled ahead of time due to extreme weather or other circumstances. If it is your child's Bush Kinder week, your child will be able to attend Home Kinder that afternoon from 1.00pm-4.30pm. If a session is cancelled, parents will be notified via StoryPark and text message.

If during a Bush Kinder session there is a need for us to evacuate or there is an emergency, parents will be notified to collect their child and take them home.

Why a session could be cancelled

Bush Kinder sessions will run all year round and will only be cancelled in times of extreme weather. Although cancellation is unlikely, the following information can be used as a guide to determine the possibility that a session may not be run. In most instances, staff will also assess local conditions on site.

- Forecast temperature 34 degrees celsius or greater
- Forecast extreme winds
- Forecast of electrical storm activity
- Bureau of Meteorology weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall.

This information will be obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology website:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/melbourne>

WHO DO I CONTACT?

We ask parents to always have their mobile phone with them and turned on throughout the duration of their Bush Kinder session to be easily contactable when necessary and aware of any updates throughout the session. Please enter relevant numbers into your phone:

| | |
|---|---|
| Nominated Supervisor | Waratah Group Annamaria Bingham Banksia Group Andrea McCurdy |
| Pre-School mobile number at Bush Kinder | 0434 377 124 |



WHO WILL BE THERE?

STAFF

Four staff will be in attendance at all times: the group's teacher and two educators. All staff have completed at minimum Level 2 First Aid, Asthma and Anaphylaxis training.

CAN PARENTS COME ALONG?

Yes! We invite our families to be part of such a wonderful bush learning experience. Parents visiting and playing at Bush Kinder are asked to sign into the Visitors' Book and to comply with the Bush Kinder policies & procedures available at www.rangeviewpreschool.vic.edu.au, including the Protective Clothing Policy. To maintain our supervision ratios safely, it is desirable that siblings don't attend.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

TRAINING & AWARENESS SESSIONS

Sessions will be run as part of orientation for staff, children and parents for dog and snake awareness and where further training is required. Parents will be informed of these sessions at our first Bush Kinder session. Orientation sessions will be run prior to Bush Kinder sessions starting. Parents are asked to accompany their child for the duration of their first orientation session to gain an understanding of the program and to support their child to understand the boundaries and expectations at Bush Kinder.

RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Risk assessment, including benefit analysis, is an ongoing and continual part of the program. We ask that all participants in Bush Kinder be actively involved in this through feedback, response and discussion.

FURTHER POLICY & REGULATIONS

Bush Kinder is conducted as part of the Rangeview Pre-School program and therefore is governed by the regulations and procedures of the kindergarten. In addition, additional policies have been created for Bush Kinder sessions to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, staff and volunteers involved in the program.

We ask parents to view the policies regarding Bush Kinder available at www.rangeviewpreschool.vic.edu.au to gain a full understanding of the responsibilities of the Rangeview Pre-School Committee, staff, volunteers and parents alike.

The policies are as follows:

- Play Benefit and Risk
- Road Safety & Safe Transport Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Supervision of Children
- Water Safety Policy
- Bush Kinder Policy
- Snake Awareness Policy
- Delivery and Collection Policy
- Dog Awareness Policy
- Extreme Weather Policy
- Identification and Visibility Policy
- Protective Clothing Policy
- Emergency Evacuation Policy
- Stranger Awareness Policy
- Dangerous Fauna and Flora Policy
- Excursions, Incursions and Service Events Policy



WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

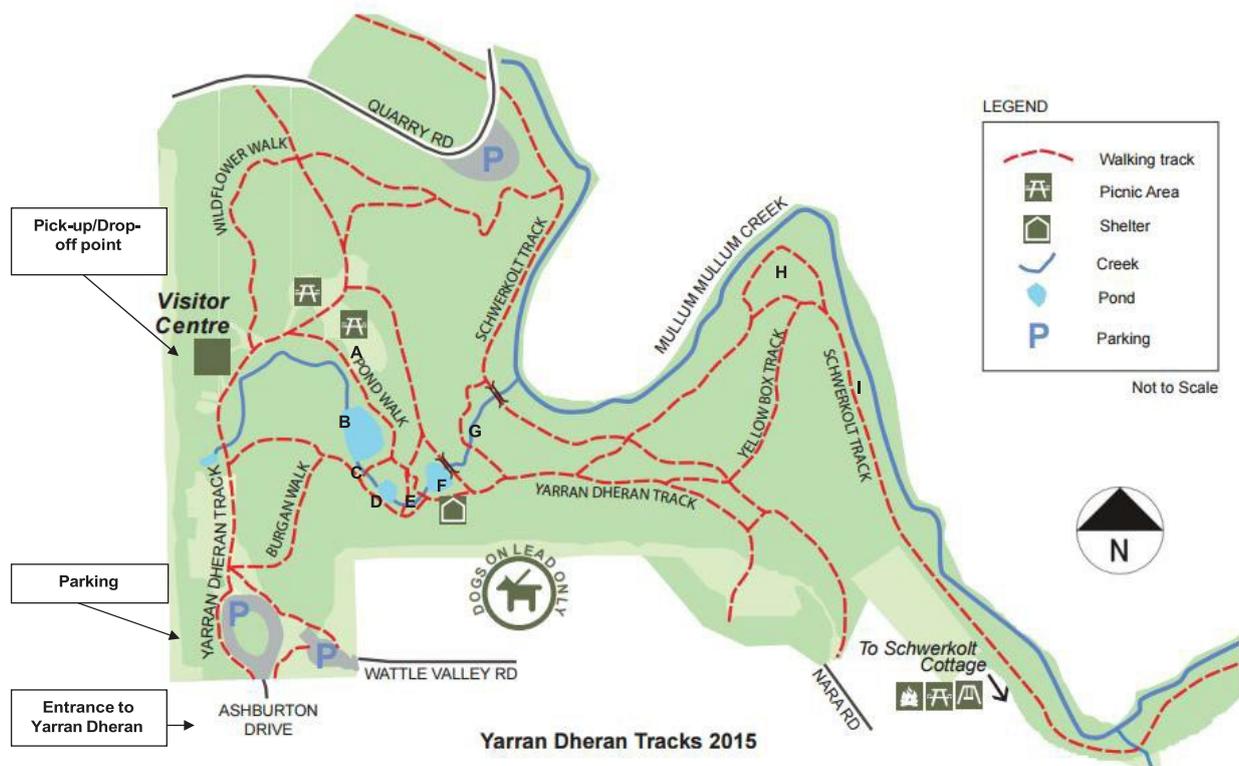
If the safety and wellbeing of the group makes it necessary to evacuate, Bush Kinder staff will notify parents via a broadcast SMS. Parents are asked to familiarise themselves with the designated safe areas and assembly points as detailed in the emergency evacuation maps on display at the site. The reasons for relocating include, but are not limited to: fire or bushfire, missing child, aggressive dogs off leads, other animal intruders, uninvited person/stranger (threatening, causing a nuisance or unease for staff and participants), natural events, such as extreme weather, floods, severe winds or thunderstorm, medical emergency or accident.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rangeview Pre-School wishes to acknowledge and thank the following people:

- Tanveer (Tina) Alvi, Whitehorse Council's Parkside Education Officer for guiding and leading our Bush Kinder sessions. Tina plans and prepares weekly learning guides for our children to participate in.
- Yarran Dheran Advisory Committee: the Committee supports the Bush Kinder Program and has co-ordinated with Tina in ensuring there is minimal impact on the natural environment.
- City of Whitehorse for funding the program.
- Westgarth Bush Kinder Program which provided valuable information and insight into the running of a Bush Kinder Program.
- Rangeview Pre-School Policy Development Officer: Tracey Edlin-Ewison worked tirelessly to draft Bush Kinder Policies for our Program in 2016.



Water Hazards:

- A. Water run off into Duck Pond (Wet Weather Only)
- B. Duck Pond
- C. Water Over Flow / Rock drain (Wet Weather Only)
- D. Dragon Fly Pond

Water Hazards:

- E. Water over flow / Rock drain (wet weather only)
- F. Mushroom Pond
- G. Water Fall (Wet Weather only)
- H. Hug Tree – Creek
- I. Un-fenced Track to Magnet Bridge

With thanks to our major sponsor

Jellis Craig

RANGEVIEW PRE-SCHOOL



ADDRESS

3 Rupert Street
Mitcham 3132



PHONE

P: 9874 5874
M: 0437 840 023



EMAIL & WEBSITE

rangeviewpreschool@bigpond.com.au
www.rangeviewpreschool.vic.edu.au