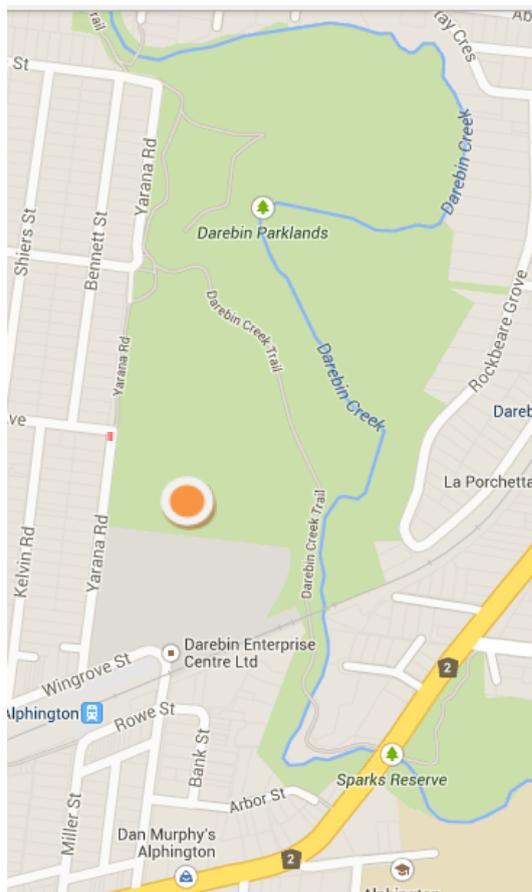




Yarralea Children's Centre

Bush Kinder Program Handbook

54 Yarralea St
Alphington



Enter here and follow witches hats to bush kinder site

Bush Kinder Site

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Yarralea Children's Centre acknowledges and honours the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which children play and learn. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, and extend this acknowledgement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who continue to nurture children and Country as they have for tens of thousands of years.

CONTENTS

Participation

Communication

Program Overview

Session Overview

Nature Play Benefits and Opportunities for Taking Risks

Staff

Attendance:

- ☐ When Shouldn't My Child Attend?
- ☐ Others in Attendance
- ☐ Volunteers

Sessions:

- ☐ Session Cancellation
- ☐ Weather

Clothing:

- ☐ Clothing to be Provided by Kindergarten
- ☐ Identification

What else to bring:

- ☐ Water
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Footprints

Location:

- ☐ Bush kinder Site
- ☐ Parking

Drop off

Toilets

Medications

Education sessions

Benefit and Risk Assessment

Policy and Regulations:

- ☐ Bush Kinder Program Policies
- ☐ Emergency Evacuation

PARTICIPATION

The Bush Kinder program is an integral and compulsory part of the overall program. Parents/carers must complete and return the Bush Kinder Excursion Form prior to their child participating in the Bush Kinder Program. Yarralea values inclusion in and accessibility to the Bush Kinder Program. Please see staff about any inclusion or accessibility queries.

COMMUNICATION

We ask parents/carers to be contactable via phone during their child's bush kinder session. This enables staff to contact parents when necessary and helps families to be aware of any updates throughout the session.

Please enter relevant numbers to your phone.
Contacts for Bush Kinder in session:

4yo Mobile Number: 0423 130 383

Nominated Supervisor/Centre Co-ordinator: Stephanie Willey
Coordinator@yarralea.com.au

Certified Supervisor/4 year old Kindergarten Teacher: Jenny van Woerkom
4yoteacher@yarralea.com.au

All Bush Kinder policies and the Benefit Risk Assessment can be viewed in the foyer.

USE OF THE DAREBIN PARKLANDS

Yarralea has a Memorandum of Understanding with the DCMC who manage the Parklands. When you enter the Parklands for drop off or pick up, please do not go through the Melbourne Innovation Centre. This breaches the MOU we have with the DCMC and jeopardises the entire Bush Kinder program.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

At Yarralea Children's Centre we believe childhood is precious and that an important part of childhood is being outside in nature. We know that children need more unstructured time outside and this knowledge is supported by research. At Yarralea we provide an indoor/outdoor program. Bush Kinder is an extension of this and forms a special part of the children's total kinder experience.

Yarralea Children's Centre is committed to embedding First Nations perspectives in all aspects of our kindergarten program. Bush Kinder provides a unique opportunity for children to engage with, and learn about, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledges, and histories – both through intentional and respectful place-based pedagogies, and connecting with Country and place. The recognition that we are learning on the unceded Lands of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people of the Kulin Nation, as well as an emphasis on creating a culturally safe and inclusive environment for all children, are integral parts of Yarralea's philosophy and program.

Bush Kinder also provides uninterrupted time in a rich outdoor environment that is ideal for children as natural learners to explore. Experiencing this play in a peer group provides opportunities for play that are not always seen at home kinder e.g. children engaging in cooperative play, children who prefer sedentary indoor play challenging themselves with physical outdoor play etc. At Bush Kinder children have the opportunity to play with the rain, roll down the grassy hill, balance along fallen logs, get involved in dramatic play, find insects, draw with sticks in the ground and make mud pies. Each child's developmental progression, advancing skill levels and particular interests are noted by their teachers and linked to the 5 Learning Outcomes in the VEYLDF. Teachers will use this knowledge to support the children's learning and also support children to manage the risks and challenges they face which are essential to well-rounded learning.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Prior to the commencement of each session, teachers assess the Bush Kinder Site for safety and areas of potential interest. Children arrive from 8.30am, (long Day kinder children from 8am) and the session goes till 4pm. Please arrive with waterproof clothing on (if necessary), sign them in on the iPad and then the children are free to engage in play within the boundaries of the Bush Kinder site. During the session the children will wash hands and come to sit together to chat, eat a snack and have a drink. At the conclusion of the session the children will be reminded to visit the toilet and collect their belongings in preparation for the walk back to kindergarten. The kinder children will be picked up at 4pm from Bush Kinder and the staff and the aftercare children will walk back to Yarralea leaving the site at approx. 4.05pm. Pick up from home kinder is from 4.30pm. If you need to collect between 4-4.30pm please call the 4yo phone.

NATURE PLAY BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR TAKING RISKS

There are many benefits to having regular unstructured play in nature and opportunities to take minor risks e.g. balancing on a log or rock pile:

- Bush Kinder gives children the opportunity to authentically connect with and learn on Country.
- Children have the opportunity to engage in active play that requires large motor movements.
- Bush Kinder fulfils children's need for excitement and provides safe avenues to explore risks and learn about the consequences of taking risks.
- Active outdoor play may avoid illness associated with reduced activity levels.
- Experiences that occur during outdoor play allow children to develop resilience and an ability to assess their behaviour and evaluate what they would do in the same situation next time. These strategies hold them in good stead when faced with serious risks and complicated challenges in the future. Risk taking in outdoor play fosters children's learning and development.
- Parents/carers can develop an understanding of realistic (as opposed to the exaggerated) risks of outdoor play and therefore provide ample opportunities for their children to engage in these worthwhile experiences.
- Loose materials like sticks, grass, leaves, rocks etc provide a multitude of rich opportunities for creative and imaginative play.

STAFF

All staff hold early childhood qualifications and are experienced educators with a passion for children learning in natural environments. Three staff attend each Bush Kinder session and adult:child ratios have been set at 1:9.

ATTENDANCE

When shouldn't my child attend?

Parents/carers are responsible for exercising their own judgement in assessing whether it is appropriate for their children 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. Please note that the session will be cancelled if the forecast weather conditions are deemed extreme as per the *Bush Kinder Program: Extreme Weather Policy*. Please see session cancellation details.

Others in Attendance

To ensure children are given freedom to play and engage with nature we ask that adults are respectful of their space at all times. During drop off times if you have a sibling present please ensure that you are aware of where your child is at all times to ensure their safety and wellbeing. We also request that dogs are not brought onto the Bush Kinder site. As part of our community connections we discuss appropriate interactions with the children and ensure that they know how to act appropriately with people they don't know.

Volunteers

Family Helpers are welcome at Bush Kinder from Term 2 and families are invited to sign up on the roster on a day that suits them. To orientate Family Helpers we run them through an induction list at the beginning of their designated session and introduce them to the children. Further explanation of roles expected of Family Helpers at Bush Kinder, and Bush Kinder limits, are also set out in Attachment 1: The Role of Family Helpers at Bush Kinder.

Volunteers remain under the direct supervision of the teachers at all times throughout the session. Volunteers are requested not to use their mobile phones whilst assisting at Bush Kinder. Volunteers cannot have other children with them.

SESSIONS

Sessions run Monday mornings from 8.30am for Walert and Thursdays from 8.30am for Dulai wurrung (8am for Long Day Kinder children).

Session Cancellation

Sessions may be cancelled ahead of time, at short notice or during a session, in the following circumstances:

Reasons for Cancellation	Notification	Contact Person
Staff Absence	SMS on morning of session	Teacher
Extreme Weather	SMS on morning of session	Teacher

Note: If on arrival, the Bush Kinder is not set up on site, this means that the session has been cancelled. In any event where Bush Kinder is cancelled, kindergarten sessions will take place at Yarralea as per normal.

WEATHER

Weather information is obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology website: <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/melbourne.shtml>
<http://www.bom.gov.au/forecasts/graphical/sectors/VIC.php>

As per the *Bush Kinder Program: Extreme Weather Policy* Bush Kinder Sessions will be cancelled where BOM forecasts:

- Temperature above 30 degrees forecast;
- Wind speeds of greater than 40km/hour;
- Thunder or electrical storms or torrential rain; and/or
- Total Fire Ban Days;
- High forecast of Thunderstorm asthma (according to Melbourne Pollen Count app).

CLOTHING

Parents are responsible for appropriately dressing their children. Children will not be allowed to attend Bush Kinder if they arrive with inappropriate clothing and footwear, and without suitable clothing to change into. It is important that children wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear which:

- allows them to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing and running
- keeps them warm and dry in cold/wet weather
- protects them 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 recommended - 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
- 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 recommended clothing, clothing which is not recommended and unacceptable clothing:

	Warm Weather	Cold Weather / Rain

Recommended clothing and footwear	Light, loose-fitting long sleeve tops and long pants, sunsmart approved hat*, closed toe shoes	Waterproofs* (supplied by Yarralea Children's Centre at the Bush Kinder site), long pants, long sleeved top, beanie, waterproof gloves, thermals in very cold weather
Not recommended	Short sleeved tops, long skirts or dresses, shorts	Skirts, dresses (incompatible with waterproof pants)
Unacceptable Clothing and Footwear	Open toe shoes, sandals, thongs, crocs, singlet tops	Non-waterproof outer clothing. (The supplied waterproofs on top of non-waterproof clothing is recommended).

Clothing Provided by Yarralea

***Kinder-issued Sun Smart hat:** this hat is required to be worn on days above UV level 3 as per the Centre's *Sun Protection Policy*.

***Sunglasses**

WHAT TO BRING

Change of clothes

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

- Waterproof clothing: Light rainproof jacket with a hood and pants, which zip up over clothing (provided by Yarralea)
- 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).

On high UV days, please ensure that you apply sunscreen prior to the session commencing. Sunscreen will be available for re-application during sessions.

Water

Parents/carers are required to provide a **clearly named water bottle of fresh water** to all sessions. There will be access to drinking water to supplement this when required on site. If you arrive without a water bottle, you will be asked to go home and bring one back for your child.

Food

Parents/carers are required to provide a full lunch box with 2 snacks and lunch in a sealed container for each session for their child to eat. We ask you to consider the environment by not including any packaging. We also ask that you continue to follow the centre's Healthy Eating Policy when selecting a snack.

Footprints

Please always take away with you what you brought in. Parents and children are asked not to bring toys along to Bush Kinder to better enable children to engage in the natural surrounds.

LOCATION

Bush Kinder Site

The Bush Kinder site is located at the southern end of the Darebin parklands at the base of Mt Puffalo.

Entry is at the corner of Yarana Road and Parklands Avenue.

Yarralea values inclusion in and accessibility to the Bush Kinder Program. Please see staff about any inclusion or accessibility queries.

Parking

Parking is available in Parklands Avenue, Yarana Road, Bennett Street and the Darebin Parklands carpark.

DROP-OFF

The drop off point is at the central point of the site where the tarp and bags are located. Bush Kinder signage will be displayed at the entrance of the parklands and around the perimeter of the site.

Drop-off

Parents and carers need to ensure they:

- Arrive no earlier than 8.30am as the site will not be ready (8am for Long Day Kinder children);
- Support children to place their bag with change of clothes on or under tarp depending on the weather;
- Assist children to put on wet weather gear if required;
- Sign the child in using the iPad and record the time of arrival.

At the conclusion of the session children will be picked up on site and the aftercare children walked back to Yarralea.

Toilets

A camp toilet is provided for children and staff to use which is housed in an appropriate tent with antibacterial hand wash available. Staff are available to attend to any children requiring assistance. Parents are also requested to encourage children to use the toilet at home prior to their session.

Medications

Parents and carers of children with anaphylaxis, asthma or any other medical condition must ensure they discuss their emergency plans with staff prior to commencing the first Bush Kinder session. Children's medication and action plan will be stored in the teacher's backpack at all times, to ensure it is always at hand. If a child is to be administered medication a medical record form is to be completed.

BUSH KINDER FAMILY SITE VISITS

A weekend family site visit will be run at the start of each year, as part of orientation for staff, children and parents, incorporating in particular dog and snake awareness. This is a good opportunity to come along for a play and ask questions.

All Yarralea staff have a Level 2 First Aid Certificate and CPR training.

BENEFIT AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk assessment, including benefit analysis, is an ongoing and continual part of the program. We therefore ask that all participants of Bush Kinder be actively involved in this process through feedback, response and discussion. A copy of the Benefit and Risk Assessment has been prepared and is available on the Yarralea website.

POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Bush Kinder is conducted as part of the Yarralea Children's Centre 4yo kindergarten program and is therefore governed by the regulations and procedures of the Centre. Due to location and environmental factors, additional policies have been identified and specific procedures created for the Bush Kinder Program to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children, staff and volunteers involved in the program. We ask parents to read through the policies regarding Bush Kinder to ensure they understand the responsibilities of the Yarralea Children's Centre Committee, staff, volunteers and parents alike.

Bush Kinder Program Specific Policies are:

Bush Kinder Program: Delivery and Collection of Children Policy;
Bush Kinder Program: Emergency Evacuation Policy;
Bush Kinder Program: Extreme Weather Policy;
Bush Kinder Program: Snake Awareness and First Aid Policy; and
Bush Kinder Program: Dogs Policy.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Should an emergency situation arise, Bush Kinder participants may be required to evacuate to a safer location to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the group. In this event, Bush Kinder staff will follow the procedures set out in the *Bush Kinder Program: Emergency Evacuation Policy* to move the children to designated safe areas and assembly points.

Attachment 1: Role of Family Helpers at Bush Kinder

The Role of Family Helpers at Bush Kinder

Being a Family Helper for Bush Kinder is very important and there are procedures that must be followed. We need 1 Family Helper for Bush Kinder and they must be willing to be involved in the program. This includes:

- Assisting to supervise the children and maintain the boundaries. The two key supervision points are on the tanbark and the hill.
- Assisting in maintaining the Bush Kinder limits. (listed below).
- Mobile phones are to be used in an emergency only (there is a Bush Kinder phone which may be used as part of the education program).
- Conversing and interacting with the children during the session.
- Observing and being involved in play without interfering. This also includes seeking staff support for issues around behaviour management/ safety.
- Sitting and chatting with children and having fun!

Bush Kinder Limits

- Children must stay within the boundaries at all times.
- When a whistle blows all children are to immediately move to the mat.
- Children must hold hands in pairs when walking back to the centre, crossing roads and the railway line.
- Sticks must stay down low (below chest height) with no contact made between sticks.
- Children need to walk with sticks.
- If a branch is thinner than a child's wrist, it is not safe to climb.
- If a rock is wobbly to put your foot on, it is not safe to climb.
- If a standing tree has no leaves, it is dead and not safe to climb.
- Loose materials can be picked up off the ground but not picked off trees/plants.