

# Bush Kindy Handbook

**NATURE CONNECT**



Thanks for your support :) LCK 20/03/2017

Part of our 2015 pilot program involved securing financial sponsorship to purchase our waterproof jackets, backpacks and first aid packs.

We wish to acknowledge the valuable contribution from the Onkaparinga Rotary Club and Onkaparinga Lions Club in providing this initial sponsorship, as well as their ongoing support.

Thank you also to The Friends of Bushland Park and the Adelaide Hills Council for their ongoing support of our program.

**Lobethal Community Kindergarten  
Nature Connect Program 2017**

*We acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of the Peramangk people and we recognise their connection with the land. We will help care for and respect this land together.*

#### **4. Children are confident and involved learners**

Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, co-operation, confidence, creativity. Commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity.

Children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, enquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating.

Children transfer and adapt what they have learnt from one context to another

Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, Place, technologies, and natural and processed materials.

#### **5. Children are effective communicators**

Children react verbally and non verbally with others for a range of purposes.

Children engage with a range of text and gain meaning from these texts.

Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media

Children begin to understand how patterns and number systems work.

Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking.

The Numeracy and literacy indicators are a set of indicators which along with BBB help guide us in identifying and reporting against all facets of your child's ongoing development in literacy and numeracy. We strongly believe that children's literacy and numeracy development is a very holistic process and is deeply ingrained and evident in all children's play and exploration throughout their lives. We are excited to have the opportunity to observe, gather information, reflect on practice and provide as many opportunities as possible to support and extend their development. We will also share with you the amazing ways we see this development blossoming as part of our Nature Connect Program.

RRR is the document that provides us with the tools to gather data to support our beliefs about children's learning, their engagement levels in the program, their sense of wellbeing, relationships, and the quality of the learning environment. These provide baseline and ongoing data collection to guide our reflective practice, and program.

As you can see, there are many factors influencing our observations, reflections and programming cycle which ensure we are providing a high quality program to meet the needs of every child, every day.



Our every day program and practice is guided by several documents which focus on providing a framework to guide best practice programming and reflective practice, and generate positive and successful outcomes for our children. Of course all the same links can be made with our Nature Connect program and we hope the following will give you a small insight into Belonging, Being, Becoming - the Early years learning framework (EYLF), Reflect, Respect, Relate (RRR document) and our new Literacy & Numeracy indicators (part of results plus)

BBB provides opportunities for educators to create "a clear focus on children's learning and well being" Through our own experience, and current research we know that the provision of a nature based program enhances and enriches both of these in a way that is just not possible with in the regular 'walls' of our kindergarten site. The opportunities to grow and develop deep, reciprocal relationships between children, staff, environment and community free from the distractions of a 'regular' and often highly structured Kindy programme are amazing. We are also able to embrace "including families and community in children's learning" in a practical and meaningful way to extend and enhance all of our play based learning opportunities.

Looking at the EYLF outcomes it is easy to see how well they fit with our Bush Kindy program....

### **1. Children have a strong sense of identity**

Children feel safe secure and supported

Children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency.

Children develop knowledgeable and self confident identities

Children learn to interact in relation to others with empathy care and respect.

### **2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world**

Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and the understanding of reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation.

Children respond to diversity with respect

Children become aware of fairness

Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

### **3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing**

Children become strong in their emotional and social wellbeing

Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.



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# Nature Connect Belief Statement

(to be read in conjunction with our kindy philosophy statement)

The bush for us is a space to be,  
a space to learn,  
a classroom which has no walls,  
a roof simply made of tree canopies and sky.  
It has endless possibilities to the imagination.  
It nurtures reciprocal relationships with each other  
and ones self.  
It promotes a culture of guardianship for the future  
of our environment.  
It helps us learn about our place in the world and  
how significant our impact can be.  
Although we are small and the world is huge, we  
can all make a big impact and a positive  
difference to our world today and in the future.



Written by Lobethal Kindy staff 2015  
(with input from staff, parents, and students)

## Children's voice 2015...

**'How does the bush make you feel?'**

**"What does the bush mean to you"**

**"What do you do outside"**

"I like to jump on the trees and it makes me feel like I'm falling down a mountain"  
Cooper

I always feel like there is going to be a big hole that I'm going to walk in" Christian  
"Super, super, super happy" Morgan

"I do like climbing up the bushes. I feel happy" Louis

"we might do some playing and singing songs and planting plants. There are pretty roses. Red roses. There are butterflies all the colours of the rainbow" Evelyn

"We might see kangaroos and have adventures" Axel

"I don't know how I feel about the bush" Rylan

"I play. I've never been camping or bushwalking" Albert

## Children's Voice - Reflections from 2016

**"What did you like most at Bush Kindy?"**

'Making Shelters" Sarah ; "Climbing trees and hiding and collecting flowers and sticks. Chelsea; "Go exploring, hanging in trees" Jude

**"What is your favourite special place to visit at Bushland Park?"**

"walking to the dead forest" Anthony; "The Troll Bridge" Charlotte; "The birthing tree" Oliver; "The Summit track" Amaya; "My Loopy Tree" Lucy; "The Dead Forest and the Fairy Castle" Grace; "The dams cause I throw rocks in" Lucas; "The dinosaur forest because its my favourite place" Katara

**"What have you learned about at Bush Kindy?"**

"Making flower necklaces" Kloe; "climbing trees and making maps" Tate; "be safe from the ants and the snakes and the bees" Lola; Seeing water, and a birds nest and a koala" Chase; "Sticks and Mud" Landon; "how to build Shelters" Amelia; "How Nature Changes" Caley; "Not getting water in your boots" Symphony; "I learned playing with sticks, I put them to make a track" Calum; "Rainbows, sun, reading books, making necklaces out of flowers" Estella; "Well..I've learned about playinh, playing firemens, and pretending with sticks" Tobi.



## Emergency Evacuation

There are times that have been identified that may require Bush Kindy participants to evacuate to a safe location ie the main building, to ensure the safety of the group. If it becomes necessary for children to be evacuated from the site during a session parents will be notified via our emergency SMS system. It is expected that should this situation arise and you could not collect your child ASAP you would arrange another of the emergency contacts to collect your child and notify staff of this.

The reasons for relocating the group and possible evacuation include, but are not limited to, Fire/Bushfire, missing child, aggressive dogs off leads, uninvited persons (threatening, causing a nuisance or unease for staff and participants), natural events such as extreme weather, floods, severe winds, hail or thunderstorms, medical emergency or accident.

*It is highly unlikely that any of the identified risks or events will eventuate, however it is our responsibility to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place in the unlikely event that something should occur.*



## Pilot Program Vision Statement

- To provide a full day, off site, outdoor, nature based session to each group once a fortnight
- To use a local natural bush setting to host this session, and to build a relationship with that place, its history, its indigenous heritage, and its current needs in relation to preservation and conservation.
- To build strong links with the children and the natural environment and strengthen reciprocal relationships amongst all stakeholders – staff, children, families, the wider community and the environment both locally and globally.
- To strengthen our families links with nature and all of its potential, and promote their ongoing willingness to immerse themselves in nature as part of their everyday lives outside of their kindy experience.
- To acknowledge that there are many other educators following our journey as they embark on different stages of their own. To endeavour to share our journey and provide inspiration and support to them whilst still giving 100% to our own children and program.

“Children learn most effectively through play experiences. This is about creating interactions with people and the places where they play, learning to care for nature and the world in which we live. The concept of sustainability is best understood through experiential learning. Being outdoors in a natural setting enables children to develop a connection with the natural world that can lead to long-term environmental awareness, understanding and positive action” <http://owlscotland.org/local-options/forest-kindergarten>



## Projected outcomes

To build children's independence and self-esteem through meaningful and authentic experiences in nature. We recognising this can only be achieved by providing the opportunity to revisit these experiences on an ongoing basis.

To develop children's skills to take and manage risk, and perform their own dynamic self-motivated risk assessments.

To build resilience in all those involved.

To promote the skills required to learn, practice and transfer a variety of questioning and exploration methods to any time, place or situation.

To support children to be independent lifelong learners.

To foster the relationships our children and their families have with the natural environment. Creating a relationship of respect and nurturing, the culture of sustainability, and the development of an innate desire to help conserve and protect our natural environment.

To encourage staff, children, families and our local community to extend their knowledge about and relationship with our local bush land.

To increase the awareness about the use of the outdoors for learning - discovering, exploring and connecting to the natural world.

To increase opportunities for staff to develop pedagogical skills, and implement pedagogical change to suit the program and encourage depth, breadth and progression in learning outcomes for staff and children.

To explore and increase understanding of the positive impacts of learning outdoors on health, wellbeing and learning outcomes across all curriculum areas.



## Risk/Benefit Assessments

Extensive bush kindy specific risk/benefit assessments have been carried out by the staff team and are available to view (please see staff if you would like a copy). Risk assessment is a fluid and ongoing process, which forms an integral part of our program and practice. Staff and children are constantly performing on the go risk assessments and we ask that all participants be actively involved in this process though feedback, response and discussion.

## Policies & Regulations

Nature Connect is an off site program which is conducted as part of the Lobethal Community Kindergarten and is therefore governed by the regulations, policies and procedures of the kindergarten. Due to the off site location of Nature Connect, and changed environmental factors, variations to policy may have been identified and different procedures and bush kindy specific policies will be created where needed to ensure the safety and well being of all staff, children and volunteers involved in the program. We ask that all parents take the time to view the policies which are located in our policy folder in the parent library to gain a full understanding of the responsibilities of the staff, parents/carers and volunteers.

Relevant DECD policies may be viewed online at <http://decd.sa.gov.au/childrenservices/pages/policies/NQFpolicies/>

Please contact us if you would like to discuss any queries or concerns.



## Location

### **Our bush Kindy site is at BUSHLAND PARK**

Bushland Park is located 1.5km outside the Lobethal township on Gumeracha Rd. The carpark entrance is opposite Brettig road and is clearly sign posted.

*Bushland Park is one of the largest areas of remnant bushland in the upper catchment zone of the Onkaparinga Valley, and as such it provides a habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna.*

*During the 19th and early 20th century, before reticulated water was available to the towns in the Onkaparinga Valley, two reservoirs on the 118 hectare property provided the water supply to Lobethal and its major industry the Onkaparinga Woollen Mill.*

*In 1982 it was declared surplus to E & WS requirements and offered to the then Onkaparinga Council on the condition a heritage agreement was placed on most of the land, ensuring it remained in its natural state.*

We are looking forward to exploring all the park has to offer, and building a deep and sustainable relationship with the park. We will discover the unique flora and fauna, explore the biodiversity of eco systems and learn about the cultural heritage of the area and its significance to the Peramangk people. We hope to become involved in the current preservation and conservation projects that will ensure the parks viability and accessibility for future generations.



## Session Overview

Prior to the children's arrival at the site staff will conduct a visual risk assessment of the area to be used, and will encourage children's ongoing risk assessments of the bushland during the day. Each days Bush Kindy session will begin with the staff and children meeting at our home base, which will be located adjacent to the main building at Bushland Park. Once most of the children have arrived we will move into the bush and begin our play and exploration. We will gather together again at various times during the day. We acknowledge the children's need for some down time during our long and active days, and for this reason will all gather together for lunch and a relaxation time at the main building in the middle of the day.

If your child is unable to attend a session, please notify a staff member via text message to their mobile phone (list supplied) prior to the session beginning (if possible) or via the Facebook group.



## Staff & Volunteers

All available kindy staff will be at each of the sessions. Where possible we will advise of any changes to the attending staff on our facebook group prior to the session. We are all passionate advocates for outdoor nature education and the massive benefits we believe the Nature Connect program will bring to your child's overall Kindy experience.

We will also require (at least) two parent volunteers at every session. A roster will be displayed at kindy prior to each session for you to add your name to if you are interested.

Parents will be expected to attend in appropriate protective/weather appropriate clothing. Staff and volunteers will wear distinctive and easily identifiable jackets/vests (provided by the Kindy) during all sessions to make them visible to both the children and other visitors to the park, and identify them as part of our Kindy group.

We will have teaching students, work experience students, other teachers or visitors from associated departments with us at various times. They will also be expected to attend in appropriate protective/weather appropriate clothing and wear a jacket/vest provided by the Kindy whilst on site to identify them as a part of our group.



## What to bring

- A change of clothes (see previous page)
- A morning snack and afternoon snack ( Please pack in a small container to avoid being squashed in backpacks) and lunch.

Lunches will not be refrigerated, so please ensure they are in a cooler bag with an ice pack if required. A thermos is a great idea for hot lunches if your child prefers them.

Remember we are outdoors and busy all day, your child will most likely be hungrier than usual, so please take this into consideration when packing food. We will also be engaged in some campfire cooking experiences, and may provide a hot milo at lunch times. Staff will discuss options for those with specific dietary requirements. We ask that you consider the environment by providing lunches with minimal (if any) packaging.

- A water bottle - all children onsite at bush kindy are required to have a water bottle at every session. We will provide access to water to refill bottles when required. **Please ensure that water bottles will not leak.**

**PLEASE CLEARLY NAME ALL YOUR CHILDS BELONGINGS**

## Medication

For those children with medication plans, staff will bring any medications usually kept at kindy to each bush kindy session, and have available if required.





## Pick Up & Drop Off

Bush Kindy sessions commence from 8.30am Please DO NOT arrive prior to this as staff require this time to set up for the day. If you are running late and the group has moved away from the building area, please sign your child in and find a staff member to hand your child over to.

Sessions finish at 3.15pm. All children MUST be collected from the site by an authorised person by this time. Ensure your child is signed out and farewelled by a staff member.

*PLEASE ADHERE TO THESE TIMES TO ENSURE STAFF ARE RELEASED FROM THEIR DUTY OF CARE TO ATTEND TO SET UP, PACK UP AND THE DAILY REFLECTION AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM.*

### **PRIOR TO ARRIVAL...**

Dress child in waterproof pants, apply sunscreen if required  
Check they have all required items for bush kindy session

### **ON ARRIVAL...**

Sign your child in on the attendance sheet

Ensure all belongings are placed in the designated area/s

Take your child to the toilet

Take your child to the group meeting point and ensure staff are advised of their arrival.

### **AT PICK UP...**

Sign your child out on the attendance sheet

Ensure staff are aware you have collected your child and have farewelled your child

Collect ALL belongings

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUPERVISION OF YOUR CHILD ONCE SIGNED OUT AND STILL AT THE BUSH KINDY SITE, AND IN THE CARPRK AREA.



## Attendance

### **When shouldn't my child attend?**

Please be diligent and exercise your own judgement in assessing whether it is appropriate for your child to attend Bush Kindy sessions. **Children should not attend if they are ill, excessively tired or if you are at all concerned about their well being due to the forecast weather conditions.**

Bush kindy is an all weather program, if your child is unable to participate in the program due to weather conditions we will contact you to collect them from the site.

### **Parent Volunteers**

Those parents that have indicated that they wish to volunteer for a day of the program will be added to the parent help roster. You will be required to attend a compulsory short induction at the beginning of the session on your rostered morning. Please make yourself familiar with the expectations as outlined in the handbook, policies and nature connect pilot program mission statement. It is desirable (but not essential) that parent volunteers hold a volunteer criminal history screening.

### **Siblings**

To ensure we meet duty of care requirements and have adequate supervision of children and the smooth running and integrity of our Nature Connect program, we ask that siblings do not attend on your rostered day.

We will provide special occasions where it will be possible for families and siblings to experience the wonder of bush Kindy with us.



## Communication

We ask parents /carers to **always** have your mobile phone with you, and tuned on, during your child's bush kindy sessions, so that you are easily contactable if necessary and can be made aware of any updates throughout the session.

### The staff contacts during Bush Kindy Sessions

Lee

Nell

Kerry

Janice

Nic

(please be respectful of the above numbers as they are staffs private mobiles that are to be used during Bush Kindy sessions.)

All children must have a bush Kindy consent form completed and returned to staff, and have all emergency contact details and the list of people authorised to collect your child current and updated, prior to the first bush kindy session.

Our blog will be updated regularly with articles about our Nature Connect program, and regular updates will be shared on our private Facebook page. You can find our blog via the link on our kindy web site.



## Clothing

Bush Kindy is an all weather program. Everyone involved **MUST** be wearing appropriate clothing for the weather conditions. Children and staff will be required to wear waterproof pants during all sessions in terms 2 & 3 (unless advised by the director) (Please contact Lee if this may cause financial hardship) Children should arrive already wearing these. All participants in the program will be provided with red jackets/vests on arrival at each session which must also be worn over their clothing.

It is important that all children wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear which

- Allows them to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing, running
- Keeps them warm and dry in cold wet weather...We will provide red waterproof jackets on each session when weather is wet. Several lighter layers underneath the waterproof jackets are preferable to a heavy thick jumper. This allows them to remove a layer if required as the jackets keep them very warm.
- Rubber boots should be bought to every session but are not a comfortable or practical choice for extended walks or climbing etc. Please ensure your child also has sturdy well fitting shoes with them.
- During term 2 & 3 beanies are a suitable option for warmth as relying on just a hoody can make it difficult for children to see around them. Please pack a sun smart kindy hat if required.

Please pack a full change of clothes (including several pairs of socks) as they may become wet or muddy. Ensure all clothing/footwear is **clearly named**. Please include a plastic bag/reusable wet bag for wet and muddy clothing.

**CHILDREN WILL BE UNABLE TO ATTEND BUSH KINDY IF THEY HAVE ARRIVED WITH INNAPPROPRIATE CLOTHING AND WITH OUT APPROPRIATE CLOTHING TO CHANGE IN TO.**