

PLAY BENEFITS AND RISK POLICY

(BUSH KINDER SPECIFIC)

NQS: Quality area 2 | version 1.1

PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Detail the benefits of outdoor play in the Bush Kinder environment, including the types of activities to be undertaken.
- Give Parents/Guardians comfort that while aiming to develop the children's self awareness in managing risks and undertaking challenges, that appropriate supervision is provided to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants at all times.
- Detail procedures for staff and volunteers to ensure that children are appropriately supervised and assisted during play and to ensure the safety of participants.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Kunyang Preschool is committed to delivering a Bush Kinder program which:

- Offers children opportunities to safely explore rich, diverse natural play environments while developing self-confidence, teamwork and social skills and an understanding of their environment.
- Allows children, through play, to experience challenges and develop self-awareness in managing risk according to ability and confidence.
- Fosters child-led play at the child's pace.
- Gives participants freedom to explore using multiple senses which are fundamental for encouraging creative, diverse and imaginative play.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to children, parents/ guardians, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteer helpers and students on placement working at Kunyang Preschool.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

In modern society, opportunities for free, outdoor play can be limited and the valuable experience of free play in the outdoors, learning to accept challenges and taking considered risks is one that is not available to all children. Some educational leaders feel that we have developed an over reliance on digital and electronic sources for recreation, learning and socialising.

Kunyang Preschool's Bush Kinder program will support young children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the consequences of their actions, for themselves and for others and will support the children in taking on challenges and accepting responsibility. This program will support the children in becoming independent, responsible and motivated learners.

Under this policy, climbing, running, rolling and balancing will all be available to children, with such support and guidance as is deemed necessary for safety. In a Bush Kinder setting children learn important lessons – what is slippery, will I trip over that, is that safe to climb, how many of us can fit in that space?

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Legislation

Relevant legislation may include but is not limited to:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (The Regulations)
- National Quality Standard, including Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

4. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- South Mornington Preschool – Bush Kinder program
- Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing – Mindstretchers Pty. Ltd. (Oct. 2009)
- 'A Marvellous Opportunity for Children to Learn' O'Brien & Murray, Forestry Commission (2006)
- Nature Kindergartens – Claire Walden

Kindergarten Policies

- Extreme Weather (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Protective Clothing (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Communication
- Hygiene
- Inclusion and Equity
- Program participation
- Supervision
- Excursions and centre events

5. 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 climbing, balancing). Refer to Protective Clothing Policy.

Play: Play activities at Bush Kinder are diverse but typical activities and goals may include (though not limited to):

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	Open ended learning allows children to explore at their own pace and with their own challenges
Role Play	Shared imagination, drama, working with others,

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	sharing ideas, recollection of models of behaviour
Building shelters or other large structures from branches, with the help of peers and adults	This requires setting goals, planning, engineering, teamwork and perseverance.
Counting found objects, categorising found objects, finding patterns in nature	Exploring mathematical concepts, visual discrimination
Observing changes in nature	Making observations, predicting patterns and outcomes
Arranging items to create transient art or an installation	Using natural materials creatively; creating with an emphasis on the “doing” rather than the outcome; Using photography to record and display outcomes
Photography	Using digital technology to record and share their learning experiences
Drawing from life	Creative; observation of flora, fauna and natural surroundings
Climbing trees, walking on logs and rocks, exploring the site, rolling down slopes	Gross motor co-ordination; body awareness in space and movement; understanding risk and considering actions
Walking within the large green space	Improve physical fitness and stamina; Making choices about activities for the day
Exploring or reflecting alone	Benefits of personal reflection and selfawareness
Play involving effects of water on our environment e.g. puddles, mud play	Awareness of effects of weather on environment; science: changes; properties of mud, soil.

Tree climbing: See Attachment 1 for Risk Benefit Analysis and Strategies to mitigate risk. Note this activity has been singled out as it is an activity likely to cause unease amongst parents/guardians.

Water play: Water play during Bush Kinder will take place from time to time in cases where water occurs naturally e.g. looking at and playing with puddles; play in the rain (rainproof clothing to be worn).

PROCEDURES

Kunyang Preschool is responsible for:

- implementing and maintaining a Play Benefit & Risk Policy which provides clarity to parents/guardians and staff as to types of activities the children may be undertaking in Bush Kinder, while highlighting the benefits of these activities, including improved self esteem, cooperation and ability to assess and respond to risks;
- providing a safe environment for all participants in the Bush Kinder program;
- ensuring that all parents/guardians being aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy, in written Bush Kinder material and on the Bush Kinder website.
- 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;
- assessing potential tree climbing trees for sturdiness
- ensuring strategies to mitigate the risks and hazards of tree climbing (as set out in Attachment 1) are carried out as required;

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- encouraging the children to do things for themselves e.g. putting on clothes, climbing and holding back branches, assessing risk through conversations with staff;
- talking and listening to the children as much as possible;
- 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 give praise when this occurs;
- pointing out features, insects, plants, weather, sounds etc that children may not have noticed;
- taking opportunities to reinforce safety routines applicable to play where ever possible.

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring protective and appropriate clothing is worn to Bush Kinder by their child in line with this policy, including closed toe footwear with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree 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 committee.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the committee of management will:

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions and the annual centre survey.
- Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy.
- Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Tree Climbing Risk Benefit Analysis and Strategies to Mitigate Risk.

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Kunyung Pre School Committee of Management on **15 May 2024**.

REVIEW DATE

This policy will be reviewed every 2nd year and is next due for formal Committee review in **2026**, unless deemed necessary earlier.

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ATTACHMENT 1

TREE CLIMBING RISK BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Source: 'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)

Benefits of Tree Climbing

- Knowledge: tree characteristics (bark/wood/branches), seasonal changes, weather implications
- Develop physical motor skills
- Build self confidence
- Group co-operation
- Group awareness
- Aesthetics/spirituality

Risks/Hazards and Strategies to Mitigate Risk

Hazards	Precaution
Material on the floor beneath tree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform children of the hazard to allow for self evaluation • Remove where appropriate(staff/children)
Dead Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove dead wood branches overhead when found • Inform children of the fragility of dead wood - likely to break, encourage children to monitor
Slippery Surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check condition of climbing surfaces prior to activity • Evaluate weather conditions linked to hazard and desist if necessary • Inform children of the hazards and allow self monitoring
Drop heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children self assess abilities • Children and staff monitor landing spaces for obstacles and remove or change landing location as required • Staff support children when required/requested - hand held etc.
Protruding branches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children self assess climbing location • Change climbing location if deemed too high risk