

# BUSH KINDER

QUALITY AREAS 1-7 | Doncaster East Pre-School version 1.0



## PURPOSE

Doncaster East Preschool recognises children are natural learners and research shows that children who spend more time outdoors in nature are happier, healthier, stronger, smarter, kinder and more social (White, 2004). Doncaster East Pre-School's bush kinder program aims to provide opportunities for children to engage in uninterrupted play in the natural environment.

The purpose of this policy is to clearly define the processes and procedures for Doncaster East Pre-School's Bush Kinder Program, including:

- delivery and collection of children
- emergency evacuation
- dog awareness
- snake awareness
- protective clothing
- visibility of children
- extreme weather
- communication between staff and parents
- respect for the environment

This policy is a special circumstance policy which augments and should be read in conjunction with the other Doncaster East Pre-School Inc. policies.



## POLICY STATEMENT

### VALUES

Doncaster East Pre-School is committed to:

- providing a Bush Kinder program that allows children to learn, play and develop in a natural outdoor environment
- ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children attending the Bush Kinder program
- being respectful of the Bush Kinder space
- facilitating open communication between families and staff to ensure the Bush Kinder program operates effectively

### SCOPE

This policy applies to Doncaster East Preschool, persons within management or control, nominated supervisor, educational leader, persons in day-to-day charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Doncaster East Preschool.

## PROCEEDURES AND INFORMATION

The information below forms the policies and procedures of Doncaster East Pre-School's Bush Kinder program. The service's other policies should be read in conjunction with this policy

### Participation and Permission Forms

All parents/guardians must complete and sign a Bush Kinder Permission Form prior to their child commencing the Bush Kinder program. This form must be returned to the kindergarten prior to the first Bush Kinder Session, or the child will be unable to participate in the Bush Kinder program.

### Communication

Parents/guardians of all children participating in the Bush Kinder program must ensure that they have provided an appropriate mobile phone number that staff can communicate with both before and during Bush Kinder sessions. This is the primary method we will use to communicate with families if there are any changes to the Bush Kinder program (for example, cancellation due to extreme weather).

Parents are also required to enter the Doncaster East Preschool mobile number: **0490 059 225** into their mobile phones to allow a direct line of communication with staff. Teachers will have this mobile on them during Bush Kinder so that they can be contacted.

Teachers will complete reflections on bush kinder sessions in the same way that they do for sessions held at kindergarten. These will be shared on Storypark.

### Cancellation

If Bush Kinder is cancelled (for example, due to extreme weather), the kinder session will be held at Doncaster East Pre-School, normal session times will apply.

In the event of a Bush Kinder session being cancelled, families will be notified by text message no later than 7:30am on the morning of the session.

If you arrive at the Bush Kinder location and no staff are present, this means that Bush Kinder has been cancelled. Please take your child to Doncaster East Pre-School for their session.

### Parent Helpers

We would appreciate parent/guardian/family helpers for each Bush Kinder session. In line with Doncaster East Pre-School's Excursions and Service Events Policy, all helpers will be required to have a valid Working with Children Check. All helpers remain under direct supervision of the Early Childhood Teacher at all times. Parent helpers are reminded that photographs should not be taken of children participating in the bush kinder program.

### Clothing

Parents/guardians are required to determine appropriate clothing based on the weather forecast, and appropriate for their child's Bush Kinder time.

Remember, there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing choices! It is possible to have fun in all weather conditions, including rain. Children will learn to be resilient and adaptable.

It is recommended that children wear clothes that:

- Allows them to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing and running
- Keeps them warm in winter and cool in summer
- Protects them from the damaging effects of the sun and from bites, scratches and stings
- Footwear that is enclosed, flexible and safe to climb/run in (gum boots are great for muddy puddles however not safe for climbing and running)
- Provide waterproof barrier, such as a light rainproof jacket, to be used in times of rain

Children will be unable to participate in Bush Kinder if they arrive at the session in inappropriate clothing and without suitable clothing to change into.

### **Spare Clothing**

All children are required to bring a complete change of clothes, including underwear, socks and footwear, as they may become wet or muddy. Recommended spare clothing includes long sleeved t-shirt, jacket/jumper, pants, underwear, 2 pairs socks, gumboots.

### **What Else to Bring**

A named water bottle with fresh water and a snack in a sealed and named container.

We ask that you consider the environment by not including packaging (any empty packaging will be sent home at the end of the session). We also remind you to observe food allergy precautions when selecting items to include.

The preschool will provide the children's own kinder hats as well as high visibility vests

On high UV days please ensure you supply sunscreen prior to the session

### **Dog Awareness**

Children may come into contact with dogs at any of the Bush Kinder locations. All children will participate in an appropriate pet/dog education session, and Doncaster East Kindergarten educators will practise safe behaviour with dogs prior to Bush Kinder sessions commencing. Particular attention will be given to recognising warning signs given by dogs, the correct way to approach a dog and what to do if approached by an aggressive dog. Staff will be trained in appropriate procedures and first aid in the event of a dog attack. Specific procedures to be followed if an aggressive dog approaches the children: • Remind children to stand still, keep eyes down, put arms by sides with hands in fists and thumbs on the inside and not touch the dog. • Encourage children to remain calm and not run away from the dog. • Locate the owner if possible and encourage the owner to take the dog away from the Bush Kinder site.

### **Drop Off and Pick Up**

Unless advised otherwise by staff, the following drop off and pick up points will be used:

The drop off and pick up location will be the car park beside the Doncaster East Girl Guides Hall/Just Dancing Hall at Zerbes Reserve. Follow the circuit road to the Hall, please refer to the map in the Bush Kinder Handbook.

### **Emergency Evacuation/Relocation**

In the event that an emergency, incident or situation occurs that necessitates evacuation of the Bush Kinder site, staff will follow the procedures below.

- Keep children calm.
- Ensure sign-in sheet, first aid kit and any medication are in the teacher's backpack.
- Count children against the sign in sheet to ensure all children are accounted for.
- With the exception of the teacher's backpack, leave all other Bush Kinder gear at the site unless the teacher deems that it is safe and appropriate to collect.
- Calmly walk children to the evacuation/relocation point in pairs, keeping close together.
- Position an adult at the front and end of the group, as well as interspersed amongst the group as appropriate.
- Notify emergency services if required.

- On arrival at the evacuation/relocation point, count children against the sign in sheet again to ensure that all children are accounted for.
- Notify parents via text message of the new location for collection (if required).
- If the evacuation/relocation is due to weather conditions, wait for the extreme weather to pass. When it does, normal activities may be resumed if it is safe and appropriate to do so. The same relocation procedures should be followed to return to the Bush Kinder site

### Identification of Children

Doncaster East Pre-School will provide high-visibility vests for all children to wear during the Bush Kinder program (note that these will not need to be worn if the child is wearing the protective clothing provided by the kindergarten).

### First Aid and Medication

Parents/guardians of children with asthma, anaphylaxis, allergies or other medical needs should discuss their child's action plan with staff prior to the first Bush Kinder session. Each child's individual medication bag and actions plans will be taken from the centre by staff to the Bush Kindergarten session and returned at the end of the session. A staff member is also required to carry a portable first aid kit with them which will include the centre epi-pen and Ventolin puffer.

### Toilets

There are public toilets accessible adjacent to the Bush Kinder site within Zerbes Reserve. Access to the toilets within the Guide Hall is also available. Children will be supervised by staff at all times when accessing toilet facilities.

### Snake Awareness

Snakes are known to inhabit all of the Doncaster East Pre-School Bush Kinder sites. Snakes are most prevalent during warmer months, and are less likely to be encountered during the months that the Bush Kinder program is run (Terms 2 and 3).

Children attending Bush Kinder will be taught Snake Awareness practices such as:

- wear appropriate clothing, including covered shoes.
- never put hands inside a hollow log or thick grass without looking first.
- if you see a snake, back away from it slowly. Do not touch it, and inform an educator.

Staff are trained in appropriate first aid procedures for snake bites, and will carry a 'snake bite first aid kit' at all times.

### Sunscreen

On days when the UV index is forecast to be 3 or above, please apply sunscreen to your child prior to the Bush Kinder session commencing.

### Training

All staff who are employed to participate in the Bush Kinder program will be given annual training in areas such as:

- emergency evacuation procedures specific to each site
- dog awareness
- snake awareness
- first aid
- other Bush Kinder procedures as appropriate.

## Weather

Bush Kinder is intended to run during a broad spectrum of weather conditions, including rain. However, Bush Kinder sessions may be cancelled in the event of extreme weather forecast, as detailed below.

- Temperature: If the temperature is forecast to be above 35 degrees Celsius, or below 5 degrees Celsius.
- Wind: If the wind speed is forecast to be in excess of 50 km per hour (moderate gale), and the kindergarten teacher determines that there is a significant risk associated with strong wind at the Bush Kinder location.
- Storm: If there is an electrical storm forecast.
- Other: Any weather warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology will be considered by the kindergarten teacher to determine its likely impact on the Bush Kinder location

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Ensuring that all staff participating in the Bush Kinder program are familiar with their responsibilities under this policy and other related service policies	√	√			
Providing appropriate training for all staff participating in the Bush Kinder program in areas such as (but not limited to) first aid, snake awareness, dog awareness, appropriate management of onlookers	√	√			
Ensuring that adult to child ratios are appropriate to allow for safe running of the Bush Kinder program	√	√	√		
Providing a fully-equipped first aid kit to be taken to the Bush Kinder location	√	√	√		
Ensuring that a risk assessment for each site is conducted prior to the Bush Kinder program commencing each year	√	√			
Ensuring that an educational program is planned for each Bush Kinder session		√	√		
Ensuring that a parent/guardian has signed a permission form for all children participating in the Bush Kinder program	√	√	√		
Supplying protective clothing as outlined in this policy					√
Ensuring that the Bush Kinder site is safe at the beginning of each session, and noting any additional risks on the risk assessment		√	√		
Ensuring that a sign advising that a Bush Kinder session is in progress is on display during each Bush Kinder session		√	√		

Ensuring the safety of all children and other staff attending the Bush Kinder program by following the procedures outlined in this policy and its attachments		√	√	√	√
Checking the weather forecast, including the SunSmart app for UV levels, the night before and on the morning of a Bush Kinder session		√	√	√	
Notifying families if a Bush Kinder session is to be cancelled	√	√			
Reading this policy and complying with the requirements of this policy to ensure their child's health, safety and involvement				√	
All staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians and children attending the Bush Kinder program are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.					

## BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION



### BACKGROUND

Doncaster East Pre-School's Bush Kinder program will operate in local parklands which are also accessible to members of the public.

### LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Safe Standards (Vic)
- Children's Services Regulations 2020 (Vic)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- National Quality Standards Quality Areas 1-7
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: [www.legislation.vic.gov.au](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au)
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: [www.legislation.gov.au](http://www.legislation.gov.au)



### DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the *Definitions* file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.



## SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

### RELATED POLICIES

- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy
- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Administration of Medication Policy
- Anaphylaxis Policy
- Asthma Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
- Emergency and Evacuation Policy
- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Excursions and Service Events Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and IllDoncaster Policy
- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Nutrition, Active Play & Oral Health Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Relaxation and Sleep Policy
- Road Safety & Safe Transport Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Water Safety Policy

### EVALUATION



In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveDoncaster
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at Doncaster East Pre-School 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk.



### ATTACHMENTS

- Bush Kinder Permission Form Template
- Site Map
- What to bring



### AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Doncaster East Pre-School on 06 May 2024

**REVIEW DATE:** March, Annually

## BUSH KINDER PERMISSION FORM TEMPLATE

In 2023 as part of our 4 year old kindergarten program we will be offering Bush Kinder sessions held at Zerbes Reserve, Doncaster East throughout the year. During bush kinder sessions, children will have the opportunity to engage and play with whatever nature has provided. They will experience the daily and seasonal fluctuations of weather and seasons, and be supported to explore the natural environment, take risks and face challenges. These regular outings will take place on Mondays from 1pm to 5pm from April to November, on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 7<sup>th</sup> August, 4<sup>th</sup> September, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Children will be transported to and from the location by their parents/guardians.

A risk assessment will be done prior to every session and a staff member will always be in attendance. A detailed risk assessment has been prepared and is available at the preschool. There will be a minimum of one educator to every seven children, with a maximum of 28 children. Parent volunteers are invited to stay and play with the children, and asked to inform staff prior to the session. Further details including drop off and pick up procedures, cancellations and emergency evacuation procedures can be found in the Bush Kinder Handbook.

To facilitate this program we ask you to please sign the consent form below and return it to the kindergarten.

Thank-you  
Staff and Committee of Management

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### Bush Kinder Permission Form (regular outing)

I give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to attend and participate in the Bush Kinder program held at Zerbes Reserve, Doncaster East during the 2023 kindergarten year.

I acknowledge there may be the risk of insect bites whilst at Bush Kinder and consent for kindergarten staff to apply insect repellent to my child during the sessions when necessary: YES/NO

I authorise the kindergarten staff to consent where it is impractical to communicate with me to my child receiving any such medical or surgical treatment that may be deemed necessary in the event of an emergency.

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## BUSH KINDER SITE MAP

Bush Kinder Location – Zerbes Reserve



Meeting Point – drop off and pick up



## WHAT TO BRING

All children participating in Bush Kinder are required to bring a full change of clothes in their backpack.

Spare clothing should include:

- Spare top and bottoms
- Spare underpants (and singlets 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 in movement they impose. Children in gum boots are not permitted to climb trees).
- Lightweight, waterproof jacket
- An extra plastic/wet bag to put wet clothing in

Please ensure all clothing and footwear is clearly named.

## WHAT ELSE TO BRING

- Named water bottle with fresh water
- A snack in a sealed and named container.

We ask you to consider the environment by not including packaging (any empty packaging will be sent home at the end of the session). We also remind you to observe food allergy precautions when selecting items to include.

The preschool will provide:

- Children's own kinder hats
- High visibility vests
- Sunscreen

**ON HIGH UV DAYS, PLEASE ENSURE YOU APPLY SUNSCREEN PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF THE SESSION.**