

## Play Benefits and Risk Policy

---

**Quality Area:** 2: Children's Health and Safety

**Standard:** 2.3: Each Child is protected

**Element:** 2.3.2: Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury

### 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, appropriate play 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

Heathmont East Preschool is committed to:

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

#### 2. Scope

This policy applies to parents, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at Heathmont East Preschool.

### *3. Background and Legislation*

#### **Background**

Contact with the outdoors is often limited for many children in modern society, and the vital experience of using the outdoors and being comfortable in nature is being lost.

Heathmont East Preschool's Bush Kinder program is intended to support young children through play, to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will even encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others. In so doing, children learn to take on challenges and accept responsibility.

Under this policy, tree climbing, for example, is encouraged on those trees deemed safe by staff in liaison with bushland management advice given at regular inspections, with support and guidance offered to children as required. Walking across logs, for example, may require staff support to provide stability until the child feels comfortable to manage the task on their own.

In a Bush Kinder setting, children learn important lessons such as what is slippery, what you can trip over or fall from, and how to climb.

#### **Legislation and standards**

Relevant legislation may include but is not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Education and Care Services National Law 2010
- National Quality Standard
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational health and Safety regulation 2007

### *4. 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 tree climbing, balancing on rocks, logs etc.) Refer to Protective Clothing Policy

**Play (examples):** Play activities at Bush Kinder are diverse and vast, 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
Role play	Shared imagination, drama, team work, recollection of models of behaviour , self esteem building
Building shelters or other large structures from branches, with the help of other children and adults	This requires goal definition, planning, engineering, teamwork and perseverance
Counting objects or looking for mathematical patterns	Numeracy skills, visual recognition
Memory games using naturally available objects	Memory, naming objects, concentration
Listening to stories; singing songs and rhymes	Connection to self, literacy, numeracy, creativity concentration
Arranging items to make a picture, or building a toy	Creativity, concentration
Drawing scenes	Art, creativity, accurate inspection and copying
Climbing trees, walking on logs and rocks, and exploring the nature (See Attachment 1 for Tree Climbing Risk Benefit Analysis)	Improves strength, balance and physical awareness, co-ordination and judgement skills
Playing hide-and-seek with others	Rewards accurate anticipation of the thoughts and actions of others , social skills
Walking within the bush kinder site	Improves strength and stamina; preparation (e.g., route selection) improves planning and communication skills
Exploring or reflecting alone	Aides self-awareness and character development
Play involving water where it occurs naturally (for example puddles and walks in the rain in the Bush Kinder area (wearing rainsuits – see Protective Clothing Policy)	Experience and understanding of all weather conditions and their effect on the natural environment. Calming and relaxing for the mind
Using tools	Using tools safely to, for example, make items out of bark & sticks, or to plant seeds/seedlings and other gardening activities Connection to land, understanding of natural elements. Meditative.
Resting	Awareness of physical limitations , meditative.

Mitigate Risk for Tree climbing. Note this activity has been singled out as it is an activity likely to cause the most unease amongst parents/guardians.

**Water play:** Water-related activities will take place from time to time during Bush Kinder where water occurs naturally, for example, looking and playing with puddles, playing in the rain and on walks wearing rainsuits. Dandenong Creek is near HE Parker and that may be

encountered by the Bush Kinder group during a supervised walk. Children will be taught an awareness of bodies of water and associated risks, and will learn appropriate behaviour around water.

See Attachment 2 for Risk Benefit Analysis and Strategies to Mitigate Risk for Water.

## Heathmont East policy and procedures

---

*Heathmont East Pre-School 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, co-operation 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 at orientation sessions, in written Bush Kinder material and on the Bush Kinder website and made available upon request.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately educated on procedures detailed in this policy.

*Nominated supervisor, Teachers, educators and other 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.
- Education of children on water risks, providing an awareness of bodies of water and associated risks, and teaching them appropriate behaviour around water. Also ensuring strategies to mitigate risks and hazards in relation to water (as set out in Attachment 2) are carried out as required.
- Encouraging children to do things for themselves e.g. putting on clothes, climbing and holding back branches, assessing risk through conversation 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 playing Hide & Seek for the first time).

- Encouraging children during play to help each other, share and to solve problems together, and give praise when this occurs.
- Encouraging children during play to reflect on how they have changed (for example, how they can now walk along a log by themselves).
- Pointing out features, insects, plants, weather, sounds etc. that children may not have noticed.
- Taking opportunities to reinforce safety routines applicable to play wherever possible

*Parents/guardians 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/log 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 Heathmont East Preschool 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.

## Sources and other related policies

---

### Sources

1. Forest School at Duffryn Nursery booklet (Wales), (<http://www.newportlearn.net/duffryninfants/mod/resource/view.php?id=54>)
2. 'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing' MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)
3. A Marvellous Opportunity for Children to Learn ' Liz O'Brien and Richard Murray, Forestry Commission (2006)
4. Wikipedia – 'Forest Kindergarten'.

### Kindergarten policies

- Excursion & Service Events Policy
- Bush Kinder Extreme Weather Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Snake Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Dog Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Mini Beast Sting or Bite First Aid Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Play Benefits and Risk Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Medical Emergency Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Occupational Health & Safety Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Incident, Illness, Trauma & Illness Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy

### Attachments

---

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

Attachment 2: Exposure to Water Risk/Benefit Analysis

## Authorisation

---

This policy was approved and passed by the Heathmont East Preschool Committee of Management and adopted by Heathmont East Preschool on:

5/6/2024

Authorised by: Alison Uldrich [President]

Authorised by: Sarah Black [Nominated Supervisor]

Review Date: June 2027

### **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

Hazard	Precaution
Material on the floor beneath tree	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inform children of the hazard to allow self evaluation</li> <li>2. Remove where appropriate (staff/children)</li> </ol>
Dead wood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Remove dead wood branches when found</li> <li>4. Inform children of the fragility of dead wood - likely to break, encourage children to monitor , test and select another branch/tree.</li> </ol>
Slippery surfaces	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Check condition of climbing surfaces prior to activity</li> <li>6. Evaluate weather conditions linked to hazard and desist if necessary</li> <li>7. Inform children of the hazards and allow self monitoring</li> </ol>
Drop heights	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Children self-assess abilities</li> <li>9. Children &amp; staff monitor landing spaces for obstacles and remove or change landing location as required</li> <li>10. Staff support children when required/requested - hand held etc.</li> </ol>
Protruding branches	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Children self-assess climbing location</li> <li>12. Children taught to only stand or put weight on a branch that is as big/wide as their arm</li> <li>13. Change climbing location or remove branches if deemed too high risk</li> </ol>

## ATTACHMENT 2

### EXPOSURE TO WATER RISK/BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Source: 'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Pond and stream in Auchlone woodland',  
MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2010)

#### Benefits of Exposure to Water (Lakes, Ponds, Streams)

1. Children become aware of open water and associated risks and learn appropriate behaviour around water.
2. Awareness of seasonal and weather changes to still water and running water.
3. Group care and awareness
4. Children self risk-assess open water
5. Raised awareness and appreciation of wildlife on and near stream/swamp
6. Calming effect of being near open water
7. Group co-operation
8. Group awareness



## Risks/Hazards and Strategies to Mitigate

Hazard	Precaution
Open water – swamp/pond/stream: falling in the water, drowning.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff discuss the dangers of deep water with children</li> <li>2. Staff have a raised awareness of the risks of the swamp/pond/stream</li> <li>3. Children have an awareness of the risks having done their own risk assessments of the swamp/pond/stream</li> <li>4. Children are monitored and supervised by staff who are extra vigilant in the vicinity of water and staff/child ratios strictly adhered to.</li> <li>5. Adults count children at regular intervals while children are engaged in activities in the vicinity of water</li> </ol>
Slippery banks on pond and stream: children falling in	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Raise awareness of slippery surfaces near water edge</li> <li>7. Ratio of 1 adult to 2 children near banks of pond/stream/swamp when increased risk</li> <li>8. No access to banks after heavy rain or flooding and on recommendation by Park Ranger</li> </ol>
Contaminated water: illness when consumed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Children have limited access to pond or stream water. Staff raises awareness of contamination. Children wash hands in clean running water after contact with swamp/pond/stream water</li> </ol>