

**Bush Kinder Program  
Handbook 2020  
Rainbow Group**

## PARTICIPATION

To participate in this program parents/guardians must complete a **Bush Kinder Regular Outing Permission Form** and return to kinder prior to the first session.

Parents/guardians should also provide any changes to their child's enrolment records **including updating the list of authorised people to collect your child**, especially if you are car-pooling.

## COMMUNICATION

We ask parents to **always have their mobile phone with them and turned on** throughout the duration of their child's Bush Kinder session, to be easily contactable when necessary and aware of any updates throughout the session.

**Important:** Although Bush Kinder staff will have a mobile phone on-site, we ask for parent cooperation to only use this number in emergencies, as supervision of children is the educator's highest priority. For general updates, we ask that parents send a text message to the Bush Kinder mobile e.g. if you are running late for dropping off your child or if your child will be absent. Please only call the Bush Kinder mobile phone if you are running late to pickup your child, or if you need to collect them earlier than anticipated or in an emergency.

**Please enter the following relevant numbers to your phone**

### Contacts for Bush Kinder in session:

HRK Manager	Carly Conlan	<a href="mailto:manager@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au">manager@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au</a> 9391 2958 (General messages)
Rainbow Group Teacher	Sarah Rookes	9391 2958 0401 405 425 (call for emergencies only) <a href="mailto:sarah@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au">sarah@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au</a>
Educational Leaders	Tammy Gonzalez Nicole Polson	<a href="mailto:tammy@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au">tammy@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au</a> <a href="mailto:nicole@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au">nicole@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au</a> 9391 2958

### Contacts for Home Road Kindergarten:

President:	Wennie Tan <a href="mailto:president@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au">president@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au</a>
Service Manager:	Carly Conlan <a href="mailto:manager@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au">manager@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au</a>

### Contacts for Bush Kinder:

Sarah Rookes / Carly Conlan	All general messages: 9391 2958	Strictly emergencies only: 0401 405 425
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## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

At Home Road Kindergarten we believe childhood is precious and that an important part of childhood is being outside in nature. 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. Research indicates that children need more time outside in nature.

According to the World Health Organisation Statistics (2011), Australian children on average spend 52 hours a week in front of a screen and only one third play outdoors as part of recreation. Research has proven that lack of outdoor play can lead to unhealthy lifestyles, with epidemics such as anxiety, obesity, ADHD etc. on the rise amongst young children.

There are huge benefits of children spending time outdoors – better brain development, better bone and muscular development, better social and cognitive development, emotional wellbeing, and less illness. Alongside that, children develop strong physical, social and language skills, and above all self-esteem, patience, self-regulation and self-confidence, plus a great respect and love for the environment in which they live.

Nature Pedagogy has been in existence in Northern Europe for over 50 years. Bush Kinder has emerged in Australia in the last 10 years, and a number of kindergartens in Victoria have looked overseas for inspiration, with Westgarth Bush Kinder opening in 2011 and Balnarring and Somers Kindergarten opening as a Beach Kinder. Its popularity here is increasing as practitioners begin to understand the vital importance of nature pedagogy. Around 140 centres are now running a Bush Kinder program of some sort in Victoria.

Home Road Kindergarten's Bush Kinder program is intended to support young children through play, to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk self-assessment 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.

Every child deserves to be in nature; seeking adventure, exploring the wilderness, connecting with nature and our earth. They will have the opportunity to play in the rain, roll down grassy mounds, balance along fallen logs, get involved in dramatic play, build dens, get muddy, plant trees, find insects and draw with sticks in the ground. Each child's developmental progression, advancing skill levels and particular interests will be noted by their educators. The educators will use this knowledge to support the children's learning just as they do at home kinder.

Children are natural learners. Bush Kinder will provide your child with the time and an ideal environment for them to learn. Rainbow group provides 4 hours of play in the bush, using what nature has provided as learning materials. Educators will support children as they take the risks and face challenges essential to well-rounded learning.

At times we will seek knowledge and skills from the Hobsons Bay City Council (HBCC) Rangers. These Rangers have an amazing amount of knowledge and enthusiasm to share with our children.

Through play, your children will connect with and grow to respect and love this natural environment. They will connect with their land in a way that cannot be done under a roof or within walls. The children will have opportunities to learn about local Aboriginal culture and heritage and the connections to the land around us.

Bush Kinder will be a special part of your child's total kinder experience.

Nature play and community connections are a focus in our daily curriculum at Home Road Kindergarten through the use of community walks and excursions, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program, use of tools, large blocks of uninterrupted indoor and outdoor play and the use of natural materials as provocations in the learning environment.

## **SESSION OVERVIEW**

Prior to the commencement of each session, educators will conduct a risk assessment of the Bush Kinder site for safety and scan new areas of potential interest.

On arrival at the Arboretum, children must be signed in. Children will be provided with wet weather gear (when necessary), Hi Vis vests and identity wrist bands to wear for the session.

The children will start the session by walking around the boundary rope. The natural boundary markers of the Bush Kinder site will be pointed out and discussed with the children, as required throughout the session.

Each Bush Kinder session will begin with the group meeting together with the educators. A story may be told, a group discussion may take place, or a skill may be introduced and shared. This will be based on a delicate balance of following children's interests, whilst providing new challenges to the children.

The children will then be free to engage in play and learning within the boundaries of the Bush Kinder site. Mid morning the children will be gathered to sit together, share what they have been learning about, eat a snack and have a drink.

The children will then be free to re-engage in their activities. The session will conclude with a group reflection / Yarning Circle gathering, before packing their bags and gathering for the end of session collection.

We may, at times, visit other areas of Newport Lakes Reserve as part of the Bush Kinder program. If this is planned, parents will be notified prior to, or on the morning of the session. Extra volunteers may be requested for these instances.

## STAFF

Rainbow group will have three educators attending each session. The educator to child ratio is three educators to twenty-one children. This will give a ratio of 1:7.

Your Rainbow group team are:

Rainbow group Teacher – Sarah Rookes  
Rainbow group Educator – Dianne Childs  
Rainbow group Educator – Narelle Rabbidge

## ATTENDANCE

### When shouldn't my child attend?

We ask that parents/guardians are diligent and exercise 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 (have vomited or had an episode of diarrhoea within the last 24 hours), excessively tired or if parents are concerned about their well-being due to forecast weather conditions.**

### Others in attendance

To ensure our kindergarten children are given freedom to play and engage with nature, we ask that adults are respectful of their space at all times. Parents/guardians are always welcome to stay and be involved in sessions and are asked to indicate their intention at the commencement of the session. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the program, siblings are not able to attend.

### Volunteers

Volunteers must register and gain approval from educators for attendance at each session.

Volunteers will be required where the educators determine that additional adult supervision is required to ensure the safe running of the program. This may include providing additional support for a bush walk undertaken through the reserve.

Volunteers remain under the direct supervision of the educators at all times throughout the session.

Parents/guardians and grandparents/other family members are welcome to volunteer to assist with sessions, including setup, pack up and to provide extra adult supervision where required, as identified by educators.

## SESSIONS

### Session times

Rainbow Bush Kinder sessions run every week throughout Terms 2 and Term 3 (during kindergarten terms). Bush Kinder may commence from end of Term 1, when the teaching staff are confident that the group is satisfactorily prepared.

Rainbow group – Monday	8.30am – 12.30pm
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### Session cancellation

Cancellation of sessions will be unlikely, however will occur in the following circumstances:

- Forecast temperature of 35 degrees Celsius or above
- Forecast wind speed in excess of 40 kms per hour
- Forecast of electrical storm activity
- BOM weather warnings of extreme storm activity or excessive rainfall
- Restrictions from HBCC Rangers.

If sessions are cancelled ahead of time, the following notifications will apply:

Reasons for cancellation	Notification	Contact Person
Extreme Weather	Broadcast SMS	Kindergarten Teacher or Kindergarten Manager
Sudden extreme weather		
Emergency Evacuation		
HBCC Ranger advice		

Where the group has been cancelled, the Rainbow group session will take place at Home Road Kindergarten. Broadcast SMS messages will be sent by 7.30am that morning.

**Note:** If on arrival, Bush Kinder is not set up on-site, this means that the session has been cancelled. In the event of the group being evacuated or relocated, the broadcast SMS message to parents/guardians will specify the location for pickup.

## WEATHER

This information will be obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology website and app:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/melbourne.shtml>

<http://www.bom.gov.au/forecasts/graphical/sectors/VIC.php>

## CLOTHING

**Parents are required to determine appropriate clothing based on the weather forecast appropriate to their session 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 important that Bush Kinder participants wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear which:

- allows children to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing, running
- keeps children warm and dry in cold/wet weather
- protects children from the damaging effects of the UV rays 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
- In the case of footwear, keeps feet and toes covered and has 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 and please refer to our Clothing policy for more information:

	<b>Warm Weather</b>	<b>Cold Weather / Rain</b>
<b>Recommended clothing and footwear</b>	Light, loose fitting, long sleeve tops and long pants, broad brimmed hat or legionnaire's hat, closed toe shoes.	Waterproofs ( <b>supplied by HRK on-site</b> ), long pants, long sleeved top and jumper (woollen or fleece), beanie, waterproof gloves, thermals in very cold weather, waterproof shoes (eg. ski boots).
<b>Not recommended</b>	Short sleeved tops, long skirts or dresses, shorts.	Skirts, dresses (incompatible with Waterproofs).
<b>Unacceptable clothing and footwear</b>	Open toe shoes, sandals, thongs, crocs, singlet tops/ dresses.	Non-waterproof outer clothing. (Bright red, waterproof Scandinavian Rainwear will be provided by Kindergarten staff on-site).

## **Change of clothes**

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

- Spare tops 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. Children in gum boots are not permitted to climb trees as they do not have appropriate grip)
- An extra plastic/wet bag to put wet clothing in
- On high UV days, please ensure that you apply sunscreen prior to the session commencing
- Sunscreen will be available for re-application during sessions.

## **Clothing provided by Kindergarten**

Waterproof jacket and pants are provided by Home Road Kindergarten. Kindergarten staff are responsible for cleaning these clothing items each week and ensuring they are brought to each session.

## **Identification**

All children will be provided with High Visibility vests to be worn over their clothes, bearing the logo and phone number of Home Road Kindergarten. This clearly identifies them as belonging to the kindergarten and makes them clearly visible to supervising adults. On occasion, when it is wet and muddy, educators may decide not to provide these vests, as the rain jackets will be better suited.

At the beginning of each session, all children will also be provided with a silicon wrist band with the Kindergarten's name and phone numbers clearly stated, to be worn at all times during the session. These must be returned to the educators at the end of every session.

## **WHAT ELSE TO BRING**

### **Kinder Sun Hat**

Parents/guardians are asked to ensure their child's kinder hat is brought with them to Bush Kinder. The same policies apply and hats must be worn on days of risk to ultraviolet exposure, generally during the months between mid-August through to the end of April or whenever the UV levels reach 3 or higher. We will have spare hats on-site, however prefer children to wear their own kinder hat provided at the beginning of the year.

### **Water**

Parents/guardians are required to provide a water bottle of fresh water at all sessions. There will be access to drinking water to supplement this when required on-site. All participants on-site at Bush Kinder are required to have a water bottle.

### **Food**

Parents/guardians are required to provide a snack in a sealed container for each session for their child to eat. As it will be an active session, we advise that a substantial snack is provided to ensure your child has enough to eat. We ask you to consider the environment by not including any packaging (any empty packaging will be sent home at the end of the session). We also ask you to observe food allergy precautions when selecting items to include.

### **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 in Newport Lakes Reserve, Lakes Drive via Mason Street, Newport. Most Bush Kinder sessions will take place in the Arboretum at Newport Lakes Reserve, which is a few minutes' walk from the parking area. Public buses also stop near the entrance to the reserve on Mason Street, Newport. Parents are asked to drop off and pick up at the Arboretum.

On occasion, due to the rare maintenance of our allocated area, we may be directed to another site within the reserve. We may sporadically organise a walk around the lake or similar, however these will be pre-planned as we may require parent helpers.

The Arboretum site has been chosen as it gives a comfortable area for children to explore and get to know through the seasons. The Arboretum is large enough to provide the opportunity to expand into different environments when the group wishes to explore just that bit further, and always provides a known place to call Home.

### Parking Area

Parking is available in the carpark and entry is from Lakes Drive, via the Mason Street entrance of Newport Lakes (see Map 1). Please take care in the carpark and supervise children.

## PICK UP AND DROP-OFF

The meeting point for delivery and collection of children is at the Arboretum (see Map 1).

**For safety and policy reasons, we ask that parents do not bring their own dogs into the Bush Kinder site.**

### Drop off Procedure

When dropping children off in the morning, parents/guardians need to ensure they:

- Arrive no earlier than 8.30am as the site will not be ready.
- Ensure children have washed their hands on arrival.
- Assist children to put on wet weather gear (if necessary).
- Assist children to put on Hi Vis vest.
- Place silicon wristband on child's wrist.
- Apply sunscreen on high UV days (3 or above).
- Sign the child in using the attendance book, record the time of arrival and write the name of the person collecting your child.

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 siblings present, please ensure that you are aware of where your child is at all times to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

## **Pickup procedure**

Parents and guardians need to ensure they:

- Allow time to walk to the Arboretum meeting point for 12.30pm session finish time; it will take a few minutes to walk to the site.
- Make yourself known to an educator.
- Sign the child out using the attendance book and record the time.
- Please ensure the educators are aware you have collected your child.
- Be mindful of not distracting/speaking with educators until all of the children have departed.
- Be responsible for the supervision of your child while still at the Bush Kinder site.
- Collect the child's belongings (bag, water, hat, food containers, rubbish).

***Please refer to Delivery and Collection of Children Policy for full procedures relating to collection by authorised persons, late collection and late collection fees.***

## **TOILETS**

To maintain required educator to child ratios as set by regulations at all times, the public toilets at Newport Lakes will not be utilised by educators and children (unless used at drop off with their parent/guardian before walking to the Arboretum). A camping toilet will be provided for children and educators to use when necessary, housed in an appropriate tent. Educators will attend to any children requiring assistance. We ask that the broader kinder community (parents, volunteers etc.) use the public facilities available on-site.

## **DIAGNOSED MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND MEDICATIONS**

Parents/guardians of children with diagnosed medical conditions are required to provide a Medical Management Plan (completed by a registered medical practitioner) prior to the commencement of the child at Home Road Kindergarten at the start of the year.

Copies of the Medical Management Plan and Medical Risk Minimisation Plan (also completed at the start of the year) for each child will be taken to Bush Kinder by kindergarten educators in the Bush Kinder Medication Bag, along with any medications for the child which are normally kept at home kinder.

Other medications may be signed in on arrival at Bush Kinder in accordance with the HRK Administration of Medication policy, using a Medication Record Sheet, a supply of which are kept in the Bush Kinder Medication Bag.

## **TRAINING AND AWARENESS SESSIONS**

Sessions will be run as part of orientation for educators and children for dog and snake awareness and where identified further training is required. All kinder educators have First Aid Certificates.

## **BENEFIT RISK ASSESSMENT**

Home Road Kindergarten are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children and the educators participating in the Bush Kinder program. We have strict risk benefit policies in place, which are adhered to during every Bush Kinder session. Policies will be adapted and reviewed continuously throughout the program.

Children learn to take risks and learn to succeed with small, achievable tasks. If we are not exposed to risk, we cannot face many of life's challenges. Risk taking behaviour is a natural coping mechanism, and by taking a risk, children are reducing their fears by approaching their phobias head on. They learn to manage their own risk levels to achieve personal safety, under the guidance of the educators. This allows children to solve their own problems and teach them to "have a go". It gives them life skills so they can deal with disappointments, building resilience.

*'Outdoor spaces with plants, trees, rocks, mud and water invite open ended interactions, spontaneity, risk taking and a connection with nature (National Quality Standards, 2010, Element 3: Physical environment)*

Extensive risk evaluation has been carried out by the Bush Kinder team and is posted on our website.

## **SAFETY AND AWARENESS**

Bush Kinder is conducted as part of the Home Road Kindergarten program and therefore is governed by the regulations and procedures of the Kindergarten. Due to location and environmental factors, variations to policy have been identified and different procedures created which are specific to Bush Kinder to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, staff and volunteers involved in the program. We ask parents to view the policies regarding Bush Kinder available on our website to gain a full understanding of the responsibilities of the Home Road Kindergarten Committee, staff, volunteers and parents alike.

Full policy documents are available for review on the Home Road Kindergarten website.

### **Bush Kinder Policies**

- Bush Kinder Dog Awareness Policy
- Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy
- Bush Kinder Extreme Weather Policy
- Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy
- Bush Kinder Snake Awareness and First Aid Policy
- Bush Kinder Play Benefit and Risk Policy
- Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
- Clothing Policy

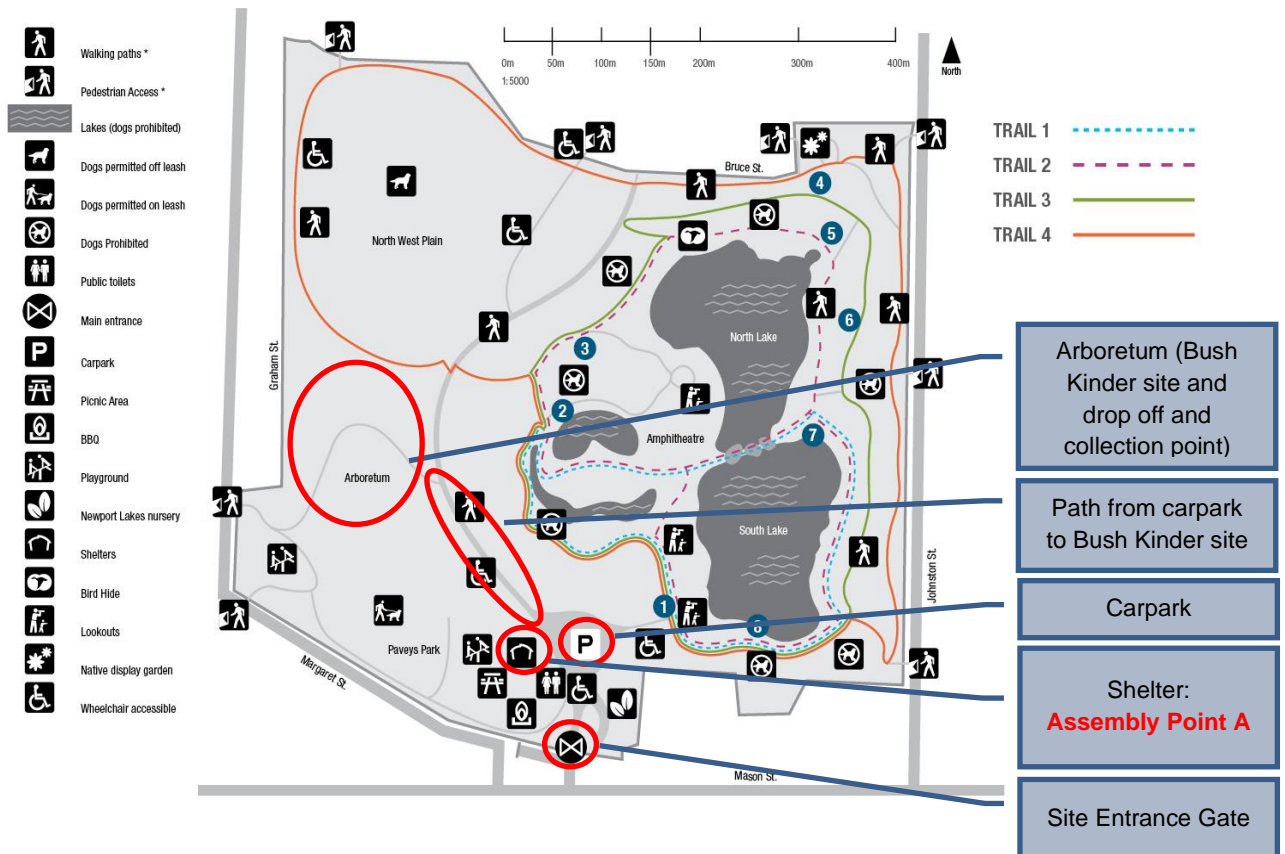
Evaluation of the Bush Kinder program will be constant and ongoing. We ask all participating families of Home Road Kindergarten to be actively involved in this process. Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide feedback and highlight any areas of improvements at any time.

Please contact us if you would like to discuss any concerns or queries –  
[manager@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au](mailto:manager@homeroadkindergarten.vic.edu.au)

## 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 educators will follow procedures set out in the Bush Kinder: Emergency Evacuation Policy to move the children to the designated safe areas and assembly points as detailed in the emergency evacuation maps.

**MAP 1**



### MAP 2

#### Emergency assembly points and evacuation routes

