

# Bush Kinder

## Handbook



**Brentwood Park  
Kindergarten**

Let's Learn and Play Together

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# BUSH KINDER

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Dear Families,

Central to the philosophy at Brentwood Park Kindergarten is respect for the environment and the way in which we learn, connecting children with their local community and encouraging creative thinkers and problem solvers who take safe risks. There are obvious synergies between this philosophy and the principals underpinning the bush kinder program.

Originating in Scandinavia 50 years ago, 'Forest School' or 'Bush Kinder' for the Australian environment, is a play-based approach to nurture children's relationships with nature. It's an opportunity for children to explore the natural environment in an open-ended and play-based way, as such, 'no tools, no toys, no art supplies'. We are fortunate to have Maroondah City Council permission to use an area of natural bushland and open recreational space for our bush kinder program. We also recognise the significance of Land and Country to the traditional Custodians, the Wurundjeri People. We recognise that Aboriginal people of Australia have a deep respect and spiritual relationship to their country and have lived, worked and played on this land for over eighty thousand years before us. The elders have passed on through their generations, their customs, traditions, beliefs and dreamtime. We share common values of Love, Respect and Gratitude for the Land we live, play and work on for Bush Kinder.

Bush kinder will provide all children explore the natural environment through open ended play, investigating and exploring, child led learning, and being able to 'just be.'

In readiness for this experience, we will also provide children with engaging safety-orientated development opportunities, including dog safety incursions and road safety training.

We really look forward to including Bush Kinder into our program at BPK.

Many thanks,

Brentwood Park Kindergarten

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# PROGRAM OUTLINE

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Following the initial transition period, bush kinder sessions will begin on site at Brentwood Park Bush Area. Educators from Brentwood Park Kindergarten will complete a 'site sweep' - looking for any potential hazards (e.g. broken glass) and then minimize or remove them. *A full Risk Assessment and Benefit can be provided upon request.*

On the days we are planning to run Bush Kinder, your child are 'signed in' at the beginning of each session at the Kindergarten. The children will walk to The Bush Kinder site at the specified time (see timetable).

## **Once we arrive at the site, we will:**

- recap the bush kinder rules discussed during our initial excursions, adding in any new rules based on hazards, conditions, etc.
- walk the site boundaries: we will make use of existing fences, gravel pathways and vegetation to avoid areas of ecological significance, starting small - we will expand the site area as children build trust and confidence in the open space
- and recognise the traditional owners of the land, the Wurundjeri People, with an Acknowledgement to Country.

Children are then free to play in nature at their own pace, exploring within the boundaries set out. After a few hours immersed in nature, we will gather as a group for a snack before walking to kinder to continue on with the session.

If your child arrives after the group has transitioned to The Kinder site, please walk your child with their backpack to The Bush Kinder site and ensure that you make contact with an educator to sign your child in for the session.

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# PROGRAM OUTLINE

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Research confirms a number of benefits where children spend extended periods of time outdoors, such as increased concentration and focus, provides opportunities to practice risk, develop social responsibility through a respect for the environment as a shared space, promote a sense of agency for decision making that is relevant and impacts their world and more as a result of the children's exposure and experiences.

Whilst the children appear to be climbing trees or looking for insects, educators will be scaffolding this learning through discussions and affirmations, following the children's lead and encouraging further thinking and reflection as influenced by the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.

Although the indoor / outdoor program at kinder provides experiences for The Framework 'outcomes' and 'principles', through a bush kinder program children are able to experience 'real-life' play.

For example, climbing across a fallen tree branch versus a fixed playground structure; or observing environmental change when visiting the site regularly. The fallen branch provides added movement, texture and can be manipulated into position where manufactured equipment cannot.

Similarly, through immersion in nature, the children experience a heightened awareness of changes in weather and seasons, sharing their understandings of the environment through storytelling and investigative discovery.

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# TIMETABLE



Each four-year-old group is offered a 15 hour per week program.  
2.5 hours of this will be run at the bush kinder site, each week during the kinder term.



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BUSH KINDER

## Timetable Sessions

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
 8:15am - 2:15am	 8:15am - 2:15am	 8:15am - 11:15am	 8:15am - 2:15am	 8:15am - 2:15am
	 9:30am - 12:00pm	 1:00pm - 4:00pm	 9:30am - 12:00pm	

# TRANSITION PERIOD

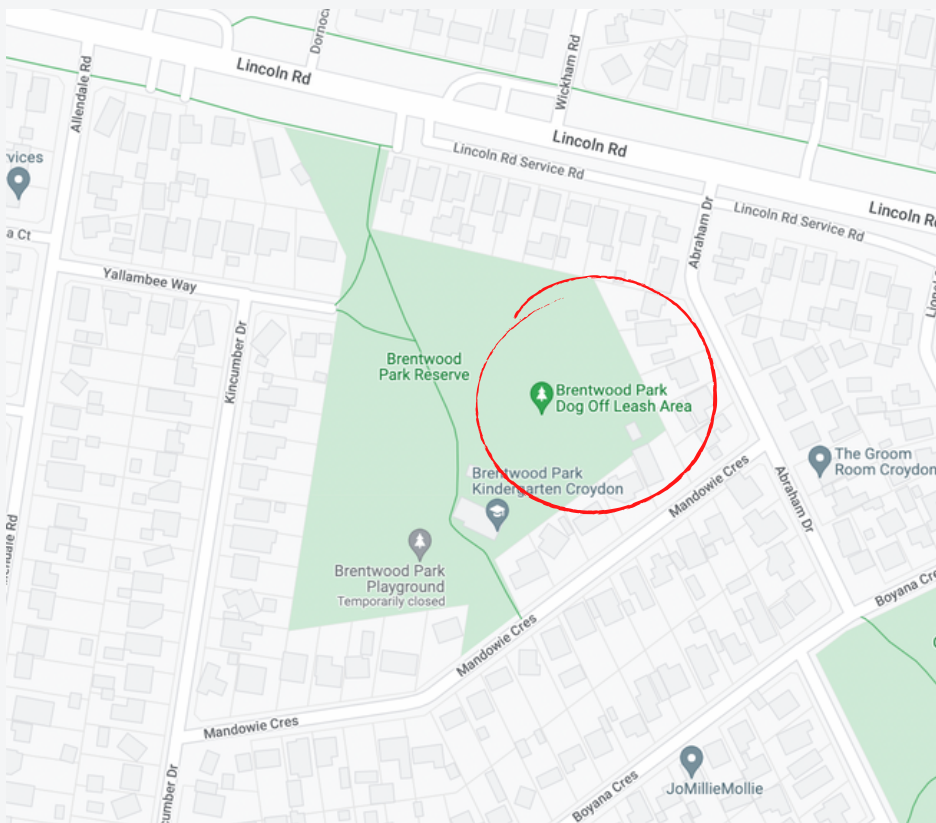
## SECOND TERM

We will be transitioning into this program during the first term as we get to know your child and your child becomes familiar with our kinder environment and their peers. We will also have incursions and education programs for the children covering topics of road, dog and snake awareness and safety to learn and practice before commencing the bush kinder program.

We'll update you via School Stream as well as with a notice at the sign-in area once the first few weeks of term have passed regarding dates and times, we will be visiting the bush kinder site through excursions. These excursions will lead up to the commencement of the bush kinder program starting on site as timetabled (page 6).

The following information contained in this handbook is written for when we begin the bush kinder program on site. For excursion purposes, we will be following the same practices and policies set out in this handbook, e.g. children will still require appropriate clothing when visiting the site.

## LOCATION



# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## TRANSITIONING TO THE BUSH KINDER SITE

We will begin the session at the kindergarten and walk the children to the bush kinder site at the specified time. As previously discussed, if your child arrives after the specified time, please ensure that your child is signed in and an educator is aware of their presence. Also, if your child needs to leave the session before the group has returned to BPK, please make sure that the child has been signed out and an educator is aware of your child leaving early from the bush kinder site. rity, once settled, educators will notify families via SchoolStream or SMS to your emergency contact details provided.

## FOOD / DRINK

Children bring their own food to kinder, including snacks, lunch, and a water drink bottle. Both the snack and lunch should be prepared as your child likes to eat it, e.g. apples chopped. As we promote healthy eating throughout our program, we ask you to leave treats (sometimes food / celebration food) for home.

You may wish to pack the snacks and lunch separately to make it easier for your child to distinguish between them and to ensure food is spread out over the day for maximum energy. Think 'Nude Food' - reusable containers with compartments or smaller snack pots and food without packaging, to reduce the waste that goes to landfill.

Hand Sanitizer and water container and soap will be available.

## SIGNING IN/OUT

As you would for a kinder day, 'sign in' your child at the beginning of each session at the service. If you and your child are to leave bush kinder early, remember to sign out when departing.

If someone other than the persons listed on the enrolment form is to collect your child, please inform an educator and complete the required form. Educators will require proof of identity (ie. drivers' licence) if they have not previously met this person.

## PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

Similar to the kinder program, we will be playing outside in almost all-weather conditions. We ask you to dress your child appropriately for the weather:

- Warm / hot temperature: sunhat, light-coloured loose-fitting clothing covering arms and legs, sunscreen applied, sturdy shoes (no flip flops)
- Cold / wet temperature: beanie, warm layers, waterproof jacket, rain boots or closed toe shoes, waterproof pants, or suit.

We also suggest you pack a change of clothes and socks for your child in their kinder backpack as well as a carrier bag for wet/dirty clothes. A spare pair of shoes (e.g., trainers) to wear for the rest of kinder session if gumboots are used for bush kinder.

Apply SPF 50+ sun cream when UV index is higher than 3. Insect and mosquito repellent can also be applied.

Please also ensure an appropriate backpack is supplied that is comfortable for your child to carry. A backpack with a waist or front chest strap can help to distribute the weight more evenly and stop the straps from slipping off the shoulders.



# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## DUTY HELPERS

We encourage parent helpers for both bush kinder and kinder sessions. A calendar will be in the entrance foyer to help on specific days. Please ensure all adults sign in along with the children so there is an accurate head-count number. We welcome observations of children from parents during their time at Bush Kinder. These can be in the form of written notes or verbal communication.

Please note: In this environment we are actively promoting the children's decision making, confidence, persistence, imagination, curiosity, problem solving and many other skills and processes. We request that you follow the children's lead, allowing the children to be the creative drivers of their play - stepping in where necessary for safety purposes or when otherwise asked.

## EXTREME WEATHER SUMMARY

The extreme weather policy details weather conditions that trigger the response to cancel, relocate or evacuate the bush kinder program / site. North Ringwood Pre-School educators and committee have the discretion to determine the site unsuitable for bush kinder purposes if one of the following conditions are forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology:

- Electrical storm activity / lightning
- Extreme temperature of 36 degrees Celsius or greater
- Bush fires risk, total fire ban or code red day
- Flooding advice
- Wind speed or damaging winds / severe weather warning
- Extreme storm conditions and / or excessive rainfall

Should the weather become extreme during a session, the bush kinder group are to return to the kinder premises (25 Mandowie Crescent, Croydon), safety of children and educators is our first priority, once settled, educators will notify families via SchoolStream or SMS to your emergency contact details provided.

## CANCELLATION

In the unlikely event bush kinder is cancelled due to extreme weather warnings (see Extreme Weather Summary over page) families will be notified via SchoolStream at short notice. The session will begin at our kinder premises 25 Mandowie Crescent, Croydon should this occur.

If the weather becomes extreme during the session, we will return to the kindergarten, as per the Extreme Weather Policy.

## MEDICAL CONCERNS

Educators will have access to first aid kits and mobile phones on site and in the event of an incident / illness will follow the same policies and procedures that apply to the kinder premises, including notifying parents / guardians. All educators maintain a current Level 2 first aid qualification, as well as anaphylaxis and asthma management training.

Should your child have medicine that requires refrigeration, there is a refrigerator available. During enrolment and orientation, please discuss your child's requirements and medical plan with educators. Educators will then carry your child's medicine with them as contents of the emergency evacuation backpack.

## ATTENDANCE

If after speaking with educators you feel the bush kinder program is not for your family, you have the option to join us 2.5 hours into the session at the kinder premises for the remaining session duration.

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## DOG AWARENESS SUMMARY

This policy outlines the tools used to deal with dogs off-lead that may enter the bush kinder space at Brentwood Park; if necessary the medical responses for dog incidents and the education framework in place for children, educators, and families for how to live safely with dogs.

The bush kinder site is adjacent to an off-lead dog area and as such, Committee and Council have implemented a number of initiatives for the children's safety following a thorough risk assessment. Some examples include: additional Council signage installed at entry points to the reserve advising dog owners to use the path and a lead as well as remove dog waste, our own portable signage that bush kinder is in session for the site, a letterbox drop to the surrounding neighborhood of our planned use for the reserve as well as 'Local Laws' - Council law enforcement next year throughout session time during the transition period. One of the main procedures children will be practicing with educators, is when a dog off lead enters the bush kinder site, to let the educators know and communicate "STOP, Dog". Children and educators then stand still, not touching the dog or making any sudden movements, whilst waiting for the owner or the dog to move away. Families can put into effect this practice at home when approached by an unfamiliar dog or dog without an owner.

## PERMISSIONS

Please ensure you have signed and returned the 'Regular Outing Permission Form' to your group teacher. We require a signed permission form before your child can commence the bush kinder program or excursions outside of the Pre-school premises

## ROAD SAFETY AND SAFE TRANSPORT SUMMARY

Road safety education aligns with outcomes of the learning framework (EYLF), by assisting young children to develop skills, knowledge and behaviour to make them safer road users. We will educate children by delivering road safety messages (i.e., discussion and story books) and practicing safe behaviours when transporting children for excursions and outings (e.g. driveway safety).

Parents / guardians can assist by role modelling safe road use and reinforcing messages discussed at kinder such as "STOP, LOOK, LISTEN and THINK" before crossing the road with their child when out and about outside of kinder hours.

We require families to sign a detailed routine outing authorisation form before commencing any excursions. Families also have the right to refuse these activities. To ensure child safety, educators will accompany children at a minimum ratio of 1:11 (ie. no more than eleven children in the care of one educator) with a maximum of 26 children per session.

## SNAKE AWARENESS SUMMARY

Unlikely as it may be, we prepare for the risk of snake's entering the bush kinder site and preventing bites similar to the dog awareness policy; using the call sign "STOP, Snake" to alert the other children and educators of a snake's presence, slowly stepping backwards to move to safety and following first aid procedures if a snake bites.

When first arriving on site, vibrations from stomping feet will alert snakes that people are present. Educators will continue to educate children that hollow logs and thick grass can be home to many creatures, they are not to be investigated without prior inspection.

## CONTACT US

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