



Bush Play Policy

National Regulations

Reg	99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

QA1	1.1.1	Approved learning framework - Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
	1.1.2	Child-centred Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
	1.1.3	Program learning opportunities - All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
	1.2.1	Intentional teaching -Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
	1.2.2	Responsive teaching and scaffolding -Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.
	1.2.3	Child Directed learning - Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.
	1.3.1	Assessment and planning cycle - Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
	1.3.2	Critical reflection - Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
	1.3.3	Information for families - Families are informed about the program and their child's progress.

QA3	3.2.1	Inclusive environment - Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
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QA6	6.2.2	Access and participation - Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
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QA7	7.2.2	Educational leadership - The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.
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Aim

To help children develop positive attitudes and values towards nature, and increase their inner wellbeing through nature based and independent play.

Related Policies

Delivery and Collection of Children Policy

Education Curriculum and Learning Policy

Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy

Excursion Policy

Physical Environment (Workplace Safety, Learning and Administration) Policy

Implementation

Bush Play programs can help children and the service build connections and relationships with people, cultures and places in their local community in a way which truly reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service.

Educators teaching in a Bush Play environment promote children's learning through a flexible program of off-site, child-led activities and play which promote children's confidence, self-esteem and independence. Studies show that nature based play/learning increases children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills, by for example, encouraging children's creativity and resourcefulness. They also provide many opportunities for children to interact with their peers and learn collaboratively as they connect with the land and explore the natural environment. It's not surprising therefore that nature based play promotes children's health and wellbeing, and can reduce incidents of inappropriate or challenging behaviour.

To ensure children's safety and wellbeing, the Nominated Supervisor will consider the following issues when selecting a suitable Bush Play site:

- distance from the service
- transportation requirements
- pick up and drop off areas (are they adequate)
- natural boundaries and terrain
- range of natural elements which can be integrated into the educational program

- distance from large bodies of water
- any hazards (eg ponds, nettles, wildlife) and options for addressing these hazards
- issues affecting adequate supervision (eg surveillance points and lines of sight)
- toilet facilities (eg are they adequate, is a portable toilet required, can a bush toilet be created)
- water supplies (eg access to sufficient, clean drinking water)
- options for safe handling, preparing and storing of food, including adequate cooling facilities, (may also be required for children’s medications)
- options to meet children’s sleep and rest needs
- shade
- parkland management support
- accessibility for children with disabilities or mobility issues
- accessibility for emergency services
- mobile phone coverage (is it reliable)
- nearby facilities that may offer shelter in extreme weather conditions.

The Nominated Supervisor and educators will also consider relevant issues from this list when conducting risk assessments for excursions to the environment, as well as issues like clothing requirements (suitable for weather including appropriate sun protection consistent with our Sun Safety Policy), activities (eg setting clear safety rules and boundaries with children), educator to child ratios and any additional adults required, inclusion of at least one educator with current approved first aid, asthma management and anaphylaxis management training in ratios, and any other matters outlined in our Excursion Policy.

The Nominated Supervisor will consult with families when planning and implementing Bush Play programs and ensure families have the chance to provide feedback or clarify any concerns they may have. Information may be provided to families by written notice, email or through closed Facebook groups. Consultations with families will include advice about:

- whether or not their children can be dropped off/collected from the Bush Play venue. If allowed, parents/authorised persons must sign their child in and out as they would at the service premises, and otherwise comply the requirements and procedures in our Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
- the emergency and evacuation procedures in place for the Bush Play site, including evacuation routes to specific assembly points or nearby buildings
- clothing requirements (eg whether service/family provides wet weather clothing, spare set clothing if needed).

The Nominated Supervisor and educators will obtain all necessary authorisations from parents/guardians before children participate in the Bush Play program, including an authorisation for a regular outing if the same level of risk will apply on each visit to the Bush Play site.

The Bush Play environment and activities will include some dangerous elements which do not pose an unacceptable risk to children. For example, children may have access to elements like sticks, rocks, fire pits, mud pits, water play etc which contribute to a fun, child led curriculum that encourages children to participate in independent nature based play.

Children will have the opportunity to experience Bush Play in all types of weather unless the weather conditions are extreme or there have been severe weather warnings. The Nominated Supervisor will check for weather warnings before children leave the service. When children are dressed appropriately for the conditions, for example in coats, gloves, beanies, sunhats, gumboots, rain jackets, they can safely engage in a range of activities which lead to wonderful learning outcomes.

Educators will promote learning in our Bush Play program by, for example:

- promoting Indigenous culture and connection to land (eg smoking ceremonies, welcome to country, visits by Elders)
- helping children learn sustainable practices and develop respect and responsibility for the environment
- intentionally teaching children about relevant scientific concepts (eg water cycle, mud, fire, geology, insect life)
- using strategic, open-ended questions to help children find their own answers
- modelling and encouraging children to engage in reflective thinking to consider why things happen and what they can learn
- allowing children to experience the natural environment during art and play using natural materials like wood, stone, sand, recycled materials and plants including native vegetation
- encouraging children to work independently or in a group to solve problems and engage their creativity and resourcefulness (eg building tepees, bush shelters)
- giving children plenty of time to explore and investigate without interrupting
- giving children opportunities to explore complex sensory-motor skills, movement patterns (eg walking, running, climbing trees/rocks) and increase their spatial awareness
- providing children with opportunities to take leadership roles, for example in managing sun protection (eg hat reminders), safety rules (eg boundary reminders) and group projects.

Sources

Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations National Quality Standard

Review

The policy will be reviewed annually by management, employees, families and interested Parties

Last reviewed: 01-06-2023 Date for next review: 01-06-2024