



Program Handbook 2019

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PARTICIPATION

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

Parents/carers should also provide any changes to their enrolment forms **including updating the list of authorised people to collect your child** 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 bush kinder session to be easily contactable when necessary and aware of any updates throughout the session.

Please enter relevant numbers to your phone:

Contacts for Bush Kinder in session:

Director (PM Session)	Doug Fargher director@wgkg.vic.edu.au	0422 515 975
Educator (AM Session)	Annie Jenkins annie.jenkins@wgkg.vic.edu.au	0407 527 697

Bush Kinder committee representative:	Louise Macleod	0401 824 066
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Darebin Parklands Ranger	Pete Wiltshire	0417 113 458
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Contacts for Westgarth Kindergarten:

Kindergarten	Bushkindarep1@wgkg.vic.edu.au	9486 4147
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President	Sarah Spencer	0420 505 000
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Administration	Jan O'Meara	0419 899 221
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Complaints	president@wgkg.vic.edu.au	
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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

At Westgarth 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.

We know in our hearts that children need more time outside in nature. This knowledge is supported by research.

Westgarth 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.

Children are natural learners. Bush Kinder will provide your child with the time and an ideal environment for them to learn in: 3 hours of uninterrupted play in the bush, using what nature has provided as learning materials.

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

They will have the opportunity to play in the rain, roll down grassy mounds, balance along fallen logs, get involved in dramatic play, 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 teachers. The teachers will use this knowledge to support the children's learning just as they do at home kinder.

Teachers will support children as they take the risks and face challenges essential to well rounded learning.

Stories will be told, knowledge will be shared, songs will be sung.

At times a specialist may assist the children's learning. We are fortunate to have access to rangers who know and understand this natural environment. We may also engage the expertise of a musician or a crafts person if this will support the children's learning. We will invite involvement of the aborigines who have a spiritual and historic connection with this land.

Through play your children will connect with and respect this space. They will connect with their land in a way that cannot be done under a roof or within walls.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Prior to the commencement of each session, teachers will scan the bush space for safety and new areas of potential interest.

Each Bush Kinder session will begin with the group meeting together with the teachers. A story may be told or a group discussion may take place. The natural boundary markers of the Bush Kinder site will be pointed out and discussed as required with the children.

The children will then be free to engage in play within the boundaries of the Bush Kinder site. After about an hour the children will be gathered to sit together, chat, eat a snack and have a drink. The children will then be free to re-engage in play until the session concludes.

STAFF

Two qualified kindergarten teachers and an assistant attend each session. The staff to child ratio is three staff to twenty-six children. This ratio may be reduced to two staff and twenty six children if a staff member is required to leave the area [for example, to collect additional water etc]. Volunteer involvement may increase this ratio.

Teachers in attendance will be Doug and Annie for the morning & afternoon session. All are qualified teachers with a passion for seeing our children learning in natural environments. Assistant Sumi and Martin, also passionate about Bush Kinder, will be in attendance in the morning and afternoon sessions respectively.

ATTENDANCE

When shouldn't my child attend

We ask that parents/carers 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, 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 and carers are always welcome to stay and be involved in sessions, and are asked to indicate their intention at the commencement of the session.

Volunteers

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

Volunteers will be required where the staff determine that additional adult supervision is required to ensure the safe running of the program. This may include for example, the creek becoming fast flowing as a result of high rainfall during the week, or to provide additional support for a bush walk undertaken through the park.

Volunteers remain under the direct supervision of the Lead Teacher (Responsible Person) at all times throughout the session.

Parents, carers and grandparents are welcome to volunteer to assist with sessions, including setup, pack up and to provide extra adult supervision where required as identified by staff.

It is desirable that all volunteers hold a Working With Children Check (forms available from post offices, free to apply), though parents and carers are welcome to volunteer regardless.

Volunteers are required to complete a Volunteers form available from the kindergarten.

SESSIONS

Session times

Bush Kinder sessions run every Wednesday during kindergarten terms.

Group 1	9.00am – 12.15pm
Group 2	1.00pm – 4.00 pm

Groups are allocated to maintain staff ratios and appropriate group sizes for learning, and are based on preferences nominated by parents/carers.

Session cancellation

Sessions may be cancelled ahead of time, at short notice or during a session, in the following circumstances:

Reasons for cancellation	Notification	Contact Person
Staff Absence	SMS on morning of session	Kindergarten teacher
Extreme Weather	Website prior to session and broadcast SMS to advise	Kindergarten teacher
Sudden extreme weather	broadcast SMS	Kindergarten teacher
Emergency Evacuation	broadcast SMS	Kindergarten teacher
Park Ranger Advice	website prior to session and broadcast SMS where required.	Kindergarten teacher

Note: If on arrival, Bush Kinder is not set up on site, this means that the session has been cancelled

Where the group has been evacuated or relocated the SMS message to parents/carers will specify the location for pickup.

WEATHER

Weather information will be posted on the Westgarth Kindergarten website by 6pm on the day prior to the session and updated by 8am the day of the session (if possible) and will notify if a session is cancelled in advance.

<http://www.wgkg.vic.edu.au/bush-kinder/next-session>

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

<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.

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 sun, UV rays in warm weather 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:

	Warm Weather	Cold Weather / Rain
Recommended clothing and footwear	Light loose fitting long sleeve tops and long pants, broad brimmed hat or legionnaires hat, closed toe shoes	Waterproofs (supplied by Kinder on site), long pants, long sleeved top, beanie, waterproof gloves, thermals in very cold weather
Not recommended	short sleeved tops, long skirts or dresses, shorts	Skirts, dresses (incompatible with Waterproofs)
Unacceptable clothing and footwear	Open toe shoes, sandals, thongs, crocs, singlet tops	Non-waterproof outer clothing. (The supplied waterproofs on top of non-waterproof clothing is recommended).

Waterproofs: Light rainproof suit worn over clothing, which includes a jacket with a hood, and pants or overalls, which zip up over clothing (**supplied by the Kindergarten on-site**).

Change of clothes: All children participating in Bush Kinder may bring a change of clothes and footwear as these may become wet and muddy. It is recommended that the spare clothing include:
Spare top 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).

The Bush Kinder 'on-site kit' will contain some spare clothing, waterproofs and gumboots for general use.

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

Water proof jacket and pants are provided by Westgarth Kindergarten. Kinder staff are responsible for cleaning these clothing items each week as part of the home kinder session and ensure they are brought to each session.

Identification on clothing

Parents will be required to attach with masking tape the mobile phone number of the kindergarten teacher to their child's clothing on arrival at bush kinder.

WHAT ELSE TO BRING

Water

Parents/carers 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/carers are required to provide a snack in a sealed container for each session for their child to eat. We ask you consider the environment by not including any packaging. 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 Darebin Parklands, just off Yarana Rd, between Separation and Smith Streets (closer to Smith Street).

Darebin Parklands has a natural bush and country feel that is unique given it is only 7km from the Melbourne CBD. There are hidden treasures within the park including remnant orchards and crops that were grown on the fringe of a growing city during the mid-1800s. A dairy farm, vineyard, quarry and tip site were all at times active industries within the bounds of the park, and clues of this can still be found if one knows where to look.

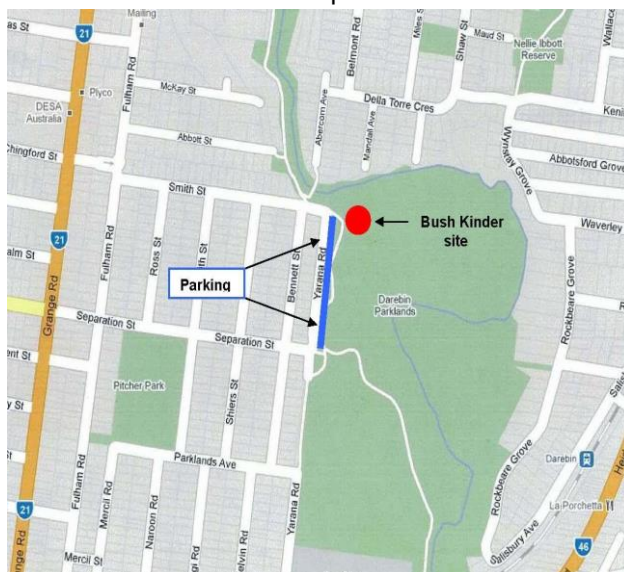
The Parklands houses the Darebin Creek Environment Centre. The Environment Centre is the working hub of environmental education in the Darebin Creek Catchment, where school, TAFE and university students, along with community groups and interested people can utilise the skills and facilities on offer.

Bush Kinder Home Base

This site has been chosen as it gives a comfortable area for children to explore and get to know through the seasons. It provides clear lines of sight with natural boundaries easily identified by staff, children and volunteers. It also offers opportunity to expand into different environments when the group wish to explore just that bit further and always providing a known place to call Home.

Parking Area

Parking is available on Yarana Road between Separation and Smith Streets.
Please take care in the car park.



PICK UP AND DROP-OFF

The drop off point is the home base as designated in the orientation session and on the above map.
Bush Kinder signage will be displayed around the perimeter of the site.

Drop-off

Parents and carers need to ensure they:

Place child's bag/backpack with change of clothes, snack and water in allocated place.

Sign the child in using the attendance book and record the time of arrival

Accompany child at home base until the session begins. All children will assemble here until the Bush Kinder session formally commences.

Apply sunscreen on high UV days

Dress in water proof pants and top and appropriate shoes for conditions at site.

Ensure identification sticker is on outer clothing

Pick-up

Parents and carers need to ensure they:

Sign the child out using the attendance book and record the time.

Please ensure the staff are aware you have collected your child.

Be mindful of not distracting/speaking with staff until all of the children have departed.

Be responsible for the supervision of the child while still at the Bush Kinder site.

Collect the child's belongings (bag, water, hats, food containers, rubbish).

Hang water proofs which may be wet/dirty out to air or return to storage bag.

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

TOILETS

To maintain required staff ratios as set by regulations at all times, the public toilets at Darebin Parklands will not be utilised by staff and children. A camping toilet will be provided for children and staff to use when necessary housed in an appropriate tent. Staff will attend to any children requiring assistance. We ask that the broader kinder community (parents, volunteers etc) use the public facilities available on site. Parents are requested to encourage children to use the toilet prior to their session.

DIAGNOSED MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND MEDICATIONS

Parents and 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 Westgarth Kinder 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 are taken to Bush Kinder by kindergarten staff 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 kinder's Administration of Medications 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 staff, children and parents for dog and snake awareness and where identified further training is required. All kinder educators have a Level 2 First Aid Certificate.

RISK ASSESSMENT

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

FURTHER POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Bush Kinder is conducted as part of the Westgarth 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 wellbeing 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 Westgarth Kindergarten Committee, staff, volunteers and parents alike.

Full Policy documents are available for review on the Westgarth Kindergarten website.

Bush Kinder Policies

- Bush Kinder Delivery and Collection Policy
- Bush Kinder Dogs Awareness Policy
- Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy
- Bush Kinder Extreme Weather Policy
- Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy
- Bush Kinder Protective Clothing Policy
- Bush Kinder Snake Awareness Policy

Please contact us if you would like to discuss any concerns or queries. bushkindarep1@wgkg.vic.edu.au

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

There are times that have been identified that require the Bush Kinder participants to evacuate to a safer location to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the group. In this event, Bush Kinder staff will notify parents via a Broadcast SMS. Parents are asked to familiarise themselves with the designated safe areas and assembly points as detailed in the emergency evacuation maps.

The reasons for relocating include, but are not limited to: Fire or Bushfire, missing child, aggressive dogs off leads, other animal intruders, uninvited person/stranger (threatening, causing a nuisance or unease for staff and participants), natural events, such as extreme weather, floods, severe winds or thunderstorm, medical emergency or accident.

Safe Zone Assembly Points and Routes

The safe zone assembly points will differ depending on the nature of the emergency:

Assembly Point A: BBQ shelter

Group to wait here until torrential rain and/or hail has passed and it is safe to resume normal activities.

Shelter may be sought in the Darebin Creek Environment Centre if the weather shows no signs of abating (see Assembly Point B below).

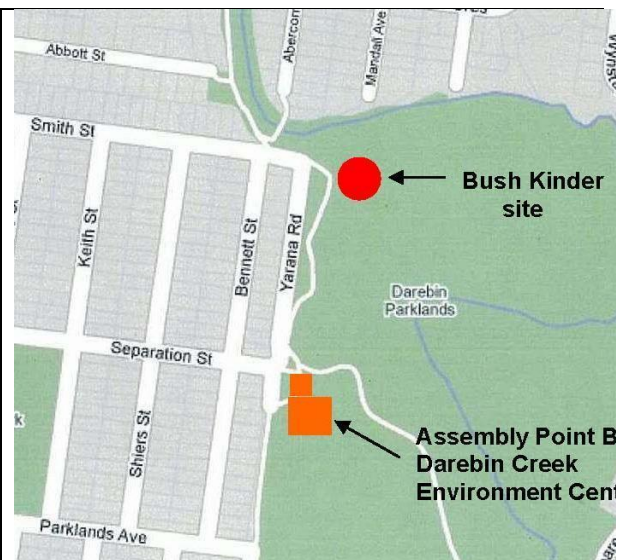
Route: Take shortest safe route possible



Assembly Point B: Darebin Creek Environment Centre (next door to Ranger's office)

Group to wait here until storm passes and safe to resume activities (recommend 30 minutes after electrical storm activity has ceased)

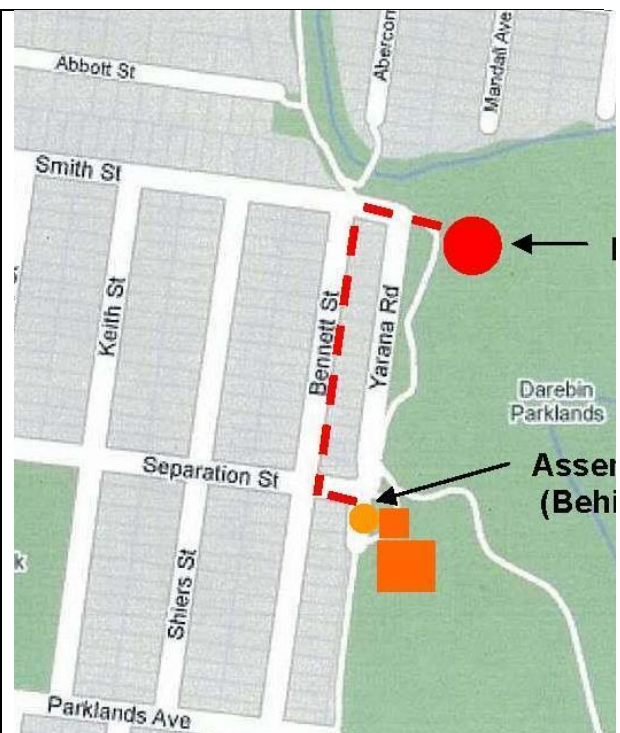
Route: Take shortest safe route possible



If it is not necessary to evacuate Darebin Parklands altogether:

Assembly Point C: Behind Ranger's Office (chosen for its central point close to Parklands staff and for ease of communications)

Route: Leave Darebin Parklands at Smith Street, turn left onto Bennett Street, and left at Separation Street and enter parklands behind the Rangers Office. (see red lines on map for route)



If it is necessary to evacuate Darebin Parklands:

Assembly Point D: Pitcher Park Playground
(Cnr Separation and Keith Streets)

Route: Leave Darebin Parklands at Smith Street, travel west to Keith Street, turn left onto Keith Street, and walk to the Pitcher Park Playground on the corner of Separation and Keith Streets.

(see red lines on map for route)

