Bardon Kindy Nature Play Provision Guide

We would like to acknowledge Redhill Goodstart and Nature Play Qld for inspiration and knowledge that has informed the evolution of our nature play provision and this document.

Philosophy:

Bardon Kindy is strongly aligned with the philosophy of Nature Play Queensland in our advocacy for and understanding that unstructured play outdoors - nature play is fundamental to a full and healthy childhood.

Nature play provision which is intrinsically inviting and motivating promotes engagement in play that promotes diverse activity opportunities which are essential for healthy physical, social and psychological experience, growth and development.

At Bardon Kindy, we are inspired and informed by pedagogical philosophy that continues to evolve in Reggio Emilia, and advocates for the importance of the environment as the third teacher. The job of teachers is to provide provocations for thought, and to work alongside children in exploring and extending the learning



potentiality. The natural environment is an infinite source of provocation and endlessly fulfils children's innate desire for knowledge, movement and social opportunities.

We want to empower children to pursue what is innate. We believe that every child is born with an instinctual connection with and sense of curiosity for natural environments. This is not something that needs to be developed, rather, as a consequence of our society, something that is lost. Only a generation ago, it was common practice for children to spend most of their free time outside, exploring and socialising in nature. These days, it seems that the norm is to remain indoors, interacting with technology, where it is 'safe'. We want to be proactive in breaking down these barriers and allowing children's love for nature to be maintained and to grow.

If you have never had the privilege of exploring and enjoying a natural space as a child, what motivation would you have for promoting and protecting it as an adult?

We believe in a child's right to play

Evolution of the program:

Bardon Community Kindy has a long standing history of recognising the value of nature play. The commitment to providing children with natural spaces to live and learn is reflected in our outdoor learning environment. We are incredibly fortunate to offer children an outdoor learning space that is shaded by a natural tree canopy that includes a bush walking trail, timber structures, rope swings from branches, a flowing creek bed, locally sourced rocks and boulders, native and vegetable garden beds, birdwing butterfly vine fence etc. We are also fortunate to be bordered by a lush natural creek and the opportunity to share our environment with all of the native animals (most notably our Eastern Water dragon friends) that our space invites.

Many of the trees that so beautifully stand in our yard were planted by staff and families of the Kindy Community. Additionally, many of the elements mentioned above are a product of hard earned fundraising. This demonstrates a strong commitment to the natural environment as an important pedagogical tool and reflects the cultural importance of nature within our Kindy.

Further to our environment, the Kindy also has a history of venturing out of our fences to embrace natural environments through play. Over the years, Bowman park has been utilised for spontaneous explorations, as well as, community events at Mt Cootha and Slaughter Falls, excursions to Coochiemudlo Island, Bribie Island and more recently Balaangala Native Bush Food Garden space.

In the 2000's, as with most things, expanded health and safety policies imposed increased restrictions and proved to be significant barriers to incorporating spontaneous visits to our local natural spaces. These restrictions were of course put in place with the best of intentions – children's safety is always a priority – however, it came at a cost. When policy and regulation writers look at risk as an isolated element, they tend to ignore all the potential benefits. Consequently, we were forced to focus our nature play within our gates.

In 2014, having been inspired by Nature Play Qld and Redhill Goodstart, staff made a commitment to again strive towards making such a wonderful natural resource that is Bowman Park accessible as a part of our educational program. This involved digging into recently reviewed regulations and exploring our options. We decided to start small. Later that year, we embarked on mini excursions to the ovals on Bowman Park.

Since then, our nature visits have continued to grow and evolve and they now include a variety of locations and possibilities.

Where do we go?



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Our Yard

Flowing creek Bush walk Leafy green canopy Timber structures Tree swing Mud and Sand pits Open ended resources (loose parts)



Our yard is filled with a variety of natural elements, surfaces and materials that exist as open ended provocations and contexts for play. The children can bring their own interests, curiositys and knowledge to these spaces as they negotiate the focus and refine the skills and processes of their play.

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This lightly wooded hill is right on our door step Nature Walks Cross country running Native Fauna observation Picnics Being





Running

Games

Rolling

Anything and everything that is possible in a big open space under a blue sky



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Our Creek

Climbing Observing and Drawing Rock Throwing Exploring and Discovery Being Creek Care Building Stacking and Balancing



What to wear?

- Hat
- Sunscreen
- Creek appropriate shoes/gumboots (we recommend families leave a pair of shoes at Kindy).
- We recommend children wear long pants on creek days.

What do we take?

Children take nothing but a drink bottle, hats and shoes on their feet.

In the trolley, the children have access to:

- Clipboards with pens
- Magnifying glasses
- Binoculars
- Plastic bags for rubbish collection

When we go?

Our ventures beyond our gates are not limited by a schedule. Provided we have an additional adult available to join us, we are able to engage in either planned or spontaneous trips into Bowman Park. This enables us to respond to any relevent unforseen variables, interests or questions that may arise. The staff have made a commitment to strive for the provision of regular access to the park and creek space. This commitment is balanced in consideration

Who goes?

• The children and teachers from a class are accompanied by an additional educator or parent volunteer.



Risk

Providing opportunities for children to experience reasonable risk – where they can challenge themselves and develop authentic life experience in making judgements about risks and their own capabilities, is essential in building the foundations for managing the risks and challenges inherent throughout life.

Our risk assessment process is dynamic in nature due to the ever changing conditions within natural environments. Staff are constantly on the lookout for new or changing elements that may pose unreasonable risk, or risks that require a considered approach. Further to this, it is a strong part of our culture for children to engage in their own risk assessment. The children actively look out for possible risks and notify staff if they have any concerns. Spotting old pieces of glass, an unfortunate reality in our natural surrounds, is a notable favourite that the children inform us of with great passion.

When it comes to voluntary risks, such as **crossing a rock bridge** or **climbing a tree**, the children are actively encouraged to engage in self-reflection and assess whether their abilities match their desired action. The children are supported in asking themselves, will I be or will I feel safe doing this? Although, we encourage children to challenge themselves, we support their awareness that they should only do things that they feel confident trying.

One simple way the staff promote this assessment process is that we never physically help anyone to achieve a challenge such as climb to a new branch. If you can't do it yourself or don't feel confident doing it, then perhaps you shouldn't do it. This effectively limits the incidence of children getting stuck in places they don't feel confident. We often talk about strategies that could be employed, or describe the way others are doing it. This promotes a culture of observation and contemplation, where children learn from and support their peers.

"Given children's appetite for risktaking, one of the factors that should be considered is the likelihood that children will seek out risks elsewhere, in environments that are not controlled or designed for them, if play provision is not challenging enough. Another factor is the learning that can take place when children are exposed to, and have to learn to deal with, environmental hazards. Play provision is uniquely placed to offer children the chance to learn about risk in an environment designed for that purpose, and thus to help children equip themselves to deal with similar hazards in the wider world"

Managing risk in play provision: Implementation guide.



Safety

We believe children have an essential right to both be and feel safe at all times while with us at Kindy. Naturally, this extends to our ventures into Bowman Park. There are a number of protocols that we have put in place to maintain children's safety. Many of these are regularly agreed upon and discussed by the children.

The number one rule that we have at Kindy, inclusive of ventures outside of our gates, is '**Keep each other safe**'. This is achieved by:

- Being observant and attentive to any directions from teachers.
- Asking oneself, is what I am doing safe?
- Knowing it is ok to remind others if you think what they are doing is unsafe.

First Aid:

- All Kindy teaching staff have up to date First Aid, Anaphylaxsis, Allergy and Asthma training qualifications.
- Both Units (classes) have a designated back pack that is filled with First Aid supplies, individual children's medications, health records and action plans, emergency contact information and other relevant supplies.
- At least one staff member carries a smart phone at all times during one of our ventures. In the event of an incident this can be used to call back to the Kindy and if required, usually an additional staff member is available to leave the kindy to assist further.
- In the event of an emergency, a teacher will respond to the effected child with the first aid supplies. The additional adult (parent) will be asked to assist with first aid and the calling of emergency services.
 - \circ $\,$ The second teacher will gather the rest of the class and direct them to an appropriate area.
- If emergency services are required, they will be directed to a relevant address depending on the location of the incident. The three locations are as follows:
 - Bowman Park carpark, located behind the Kindy at 247 Simpsons Road, Bardon.
 - \circ $\,$ Bardon Soccer Club carpark located at 28 David Avenue, Bardon.
 - Creek Base Camp: Bike Track entrance located at 58 David Avenue, Bardon.

Supervision:

- We require an additional adult above the regular teaching staff (usually a parent volunteer) to join us for our ventures. This increases the supervision ratio and offers an additional adult to support us in the event that a teacher is required to respond one on one to a child.
- Each class will conduct supervision, and associated safety expectations, differently based on the needs of the group and staff.
- At our Creek Base Camp, a staff member (as part of the safety sweep) will place cones that mark the boundaries of the play for that day. The children are educated about the importance of staying within the designated space.
 - One staff member will remain at the elevated position on the upper bank. This provides a vantage point where they can clearly monitor the entire play space and observe all children's movements and play.

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- This space is right next to our climbing tree and therefore, is perfect for supervising activity within the tree.
- Staff members carry a whistle with them that is blown in the event of an emergency. When the whistle is blown, the children are to stop what they are doing, look for the person who has blown the whistle and calmly move towards them. Once the group is gathered, the staff member can direct them accordingly.
 - $\circ~$ This is a procedure that is explained and practiced with the children regularly across the year.
- In the event that an adult or child sees a **snake**, the agreed and practiced protocol is to freeze, observe the snake's movements and call out "snake" loudly and clearly. The closest teacher will proceed to the area and assess the situation.
 - In some cases, it may be appropriate to allow the snake to continue its direction of movement and calmly direct the children to a safe area.
 - If required, the teacher will assist the child/children move to a safe area while the other teacher directs the rest of the group to safety.
 - It should be noted that although we have had reported sightings of snakes in Bowman park and the creek, we are yet to see a snake on one of our ventures. One of the consequences, in this case a positive one, of being a large, active group of people is that most fauna vacate an area upon our arrival.
 - In the unlikely event that a snake bite occurs, staff will respond as per their first aid training. Snake bite response is reviewed annually during staff meetings.
- Due to the exposure to a diverse range of flora both within our Kindy yard and in Bowman Park, we actively engage the children in discussions regarding the potential dangers of eating **unknown/poisonous plants**. We also openly acknowledge the active and culturally significant role bush food plays for some people. Therefore, the importance of being knowledgeable about safe plants/foods is highlighted. In the absence of such knowledge amongst our staff, we promote the simple rule – Always check with an adult before eating any plant and if that adult is unsure, then avoid the plant until able to check with an informed adult. This rule is suitable outside of the Kindy context also.

Weather Considerations:

 Prior to any venture into the park, staff will consider the current and forecast weather conditions. Sessions will be postponed in the event of inclement or unsuitable weather such as electrical storm, strong winds or extreme heat.

Preparation and Safety Sweep Checklist:

- Prior to any venture into Bowman Park, staff (from the relevant class) complete the first section of our checklist to ensure all required items are packed into the class backpack and trolley.
- On the journey to the intended area of Bowman Park or our creek, a teacher always leads the group. They are monitoring for any possible hazards and will, in the event that something is identified, direct the group accordingly.
- Prior to using a specific area of the park or entering our creek base camp, one of the teaching staff will perform a safety sweep of the area and complete the checklist. Any

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identified hazards will be dealt with and the teacher will announce that the space is safe for play.

 $\circ~$ In the event that the space is deemed unsafe to use, the group will be directed elsewhere in the park.

Why Nature Play?

Play is referenced in the National Quality standards over 100 times across the document and is internationally recognised as the most essential and effective process for meaningful learning in early childhood

Outdoor learning provides 'the most memorable learning experiences, [that] help us to make sense of the world around us by making links between feelings and learning' (Great Britain. DfES, 2006, p.3). Children are intrinsically motivated to engage in nature play and consequently experience positive learning experiences that build the foundations for life long holistic love of learning.

Outdoor learning spaces are a feature of Australian learning environments. They offer a vast array of possibilities not available indoors. Play spaces in natural environments include plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud, water and other elements from nature. These spaces invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature. They foster an appreciation of the natural environment, develop environmental awareness and provide a platform for ongoing environmental education. (Early Years Learning Framework).

A natural environment that is filled with infinite and rich provocations that are unpredictable, fluid and open ended in nature promotes authentic and organic learning dispositions and opportunities. Further to this, it provides an inclusive context for children to engage in learning that is intrinsically motivated and self-guided – building the foundations for curious and engaged lifelong learners. Rather than relying on the guidance of adults and educators when determining what and how to learn, we encourage the children to guide their own learning in response to their environment and actively support them in employing effective dispositions, processes and strategies.

"Research suggests the need to re-engage learners with the world as they actually experience it – 'experiential' or 'authentic' learning. It provides a framework for learning that uses the child's own environment to enable them to construct their own learning" *Nature Play Qld*

The Early Years Learning Framework lists curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity as essential learning

dispositions. We strongly believe that nature play provision supports children's development of such dispositions for learning and living.

In addition, some key ways in which exposure to the natural environment is beneficial to human health are

- enhanced personal and social communication skills
- increased physical health, supporting the development of healthy, active lifestyles
- enhanced mental and spiritual health
- enhanced spiritual, sensory, and aesthetic awareness
- the ability to assert personal control and increased sensitivity to one's own wellbeing

Nature Play Qld

Code of Ethics

As Early Childhood Education Professionals, we passionately subscribe to the Early Childhood Australia code of ethics. It is our professional opinion that nature play provision enhances our ability to meet, most notably, the following ethical standards:

- Work with children to help them understand that they are global citizens with shared responsibilities to the environment and humanity.
- Create and maintain safe, healthy environments, spaces and places, which enhance children's learning, development, engagement, initiative, self-worth, dignity and show respect for their contributions.
- Acknowledge the uniqueness and potential of all children, in recognition that enjoying their childhood without undue pressure is important.
- Acknowledge the holistic nature of children's learning and the significance of children's cultural and linguistic identities.
- Acknowledge children as competent learners, and build active communities of engagement and inquiry.
- Honour children's right to play, as both a process and context for learning.

To play is to learn - to learn is to live - to live is to play

Nature Play Provision provides opportunities for children to engage in (but not limited to) the following Learning Outcomes within the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines

Building a	Confidence in themselves as learners
confident self-	Confidence in their strengths and abilities
identity:	• Confidence to explore the environment and engage in a variety of types of play
	and learning experiences
	Confidence when approaching tasks, people and situations
	Confidence to try new and challenging tasks
	Confidence to make choices and take considered risks.

Shows	Caring for and respecting environments
increase	 ways to investigate and understand natural and built environments
respect for	 exploring interactions between people and environments
environments:	
•••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••	Interest in the relationships among people, land, plants and animals
	Awareness of positive and negative interactions between humans and
	environments
	Awareness of ways to help sustain familiar environments
	Awareness and valuing of Australia's environmental heritage.
Explores ways	• ways to keep themselves and others safe, e.g. following rules, looking and
to promote	thinking before jumping, swinging or running.
own and	
others' health	
and safety	
Explores ways	• Confidence in developing movement skills and managing movement challenges
to promote	• Sensory skills and awareness, perceptual motor skills, kinaesthetic and spatial
physical	awareness,
wellbeing	Balance, coordination, muscle tone, strength and flexibility
	• Fundamental movement skills, including balancing, crawling, running, jumping,
	catching,
	 Hopping, throwing, galloping, skipping, leaping, kicking, striking and dodging
Is building	 Curiosity and wonder, creativity, enthusiasm, drive and motivation to learn
positive	
dispositions	• Awareness of their successes, useful strategies, skills for learning and when to use these in particular learning situations
and	
approaches	Capabilities required to make informed choices, plan and carry out plans
towards	• Ways to find out, research, investigate, inquire and solve problems
learning.	• Thinking, including inferring, predicting, hypothesising, testing, experimenting,
	evaluating and generalising
	• Active investigation of scientific ideas, processes and language in everyday life
	• Exploration of relationships, including cause–effect, e.g. "What caused the sand
	castle to
	• collapse?", "What happened when you made the ramp higher?"
	• Awareness that they can learn by copying others, repeating and practising
	actions, behaviours and language
	• Strategies for making links between ideas and experiences and applying learning
	to new situations
	Reflection by talking about and using feedback about thinking and learning.
Engage in	Imagination and experimentation with possibilities
ways to be	• Appreciation of various ways of engaging with ideas, materials, processes and a
imaginative	range of media
and creative.	• Sensory exploration of the world, objects and materials indoors and outdoors
	• The ability to generate ideas and solutions, innovate and invent
	• Exploration of and interest in multiple ways to create and represent
	 Exploration of and interest in representing and creating through imaginative,
	fantasy, symbolic and dramatic play
Explores and	 Skills for listening for different purposes and in different contexts
expands ways	 Skills for taking turns to talk and listen and engage in conversations
to use	5
language.	 Developing vocabulary for describing what they see, hear, taste, smell, touch and feel
	Developing vocabulary for describing imaginative experiences, past and present personal experiences and topics of personal interact
	personal experiences and topics of personal interest
	Developing vocabulary for exploring mathematical and scientific ideas

Dynamic Risk/Benefit Analysis

Activity	Benefit Assessment	Possible Hazards	Preliminary Risk Assessment (Consequence / Likelihood)	Mitigating measures	Risk with measures in place	Outcome / Benefit
Exploring park, bush or creek area.	Identity - opportunities for new challenges and discoveries, to take considered risk and cope with the unexpected, and persist when faced with challenges. Connectedness - develop an understanding of and appreciation for the natural world, along with an awareness of human impacts on the environment and how organisms are interdependent.	Child loses contact with class (unplanned departure from group)	M	Children educated and practiced with safety expectations and practices. A culture of keeping each other safe and together is fostered. Staff develop relationship and knowledge of each child prior to venturing out. Staff use whistle to gather group together in emergency.	L	Benefits outweighs risk
	Wellbeing- opportunities for social, emotional, and physical experiences. Confident/involved	Insect bite (mosquito, flea, tick etc.)	М	Insect activity considered during sweep. Shoes and clothing limit skin exposure. First aid pack present.	L	Benefits outweighs risk
	learners - opportunities for hands on child led investigations. Communication- opportunities for shared	Uneven ground resulting in slips/trips leading to grazes or other minor injuries.	М	Discuss and practice moving on uneven ground, encouraging mindful walking.	L	

experiences, as well as m ways to communicate the experiences with each ot using texts and ICTs.	ese branch causing injury	М	Discuss how to move past branches, passing to the person behind you.	L
	Branch falling from tree causing injury.	М	Consideration of weather conditions and safety sweep observations. Visit redirected or postponed in necessary.	L
	Insect sting (wasp, bee etc.) Possible allergic reaction (known or unknown)		Insect activity considered during sweep. Shoes and clothing limit skin exposure. First aid pack present which include specialist medication and class adrenaline. Emergency services procedure as discussed above.	М
	Snake bite (venomous or non-venomous)	Н	Snake education as discussed above. First aid pack with compression bandages. Emergency services procedure as discussed above.	
	Injury by discarded object (glass)	М	Children are educated on how to respond to observed hazards such as glass. "Freeze, call to teacher and wait for them to remove it". Larger hazards to be removed during sweep	L
	Existing Medical Conditions	Н	First Aid Pack present including specialist medication. Action plans	М

Activity	Benefit Assessment	Possible Hazards	Preliminary Risk Assessment (Consequence / Likelihood)	and relevant information stored in bags. Emergency services procedure as discussed above. Mitigating measures	Risk with measures in place	Outcome / Benefit
Exploring shallow water in creek	Confident/involved learners -Opportunities for child led discoveries and investigations of creek properties and life Connectedness -Possibilities for establishing connections with the natural world	Slipping causing bodily injury (e.g. cut, graze, bruise, broken bone)	М	Discuss slippery nature of wet rocks, encourage children to move slowly near water	L	Benefits outweigh risk Benefits outweigh risk
	Communication - during shared experiences	Children becoming cold due to wet clothing/ shoes	L	Children only get wet/ explore shallow water fully during summer months.	L	
Activity	Benefit Assessment	Possible Hazards	Preliminary Risk Assessment (Consequence / Likelihood)	Mitigating measures	Risk with measures in place	Outcome / Benefit
Climbing Tree	Identity-Challenging themselves physically and mentally, gaining confidence Confident/involved learners-Problem solving and planning (getting up and down safely)	Falling causing bodily injury	M	*Group risk assessment of climbing with children- establishing rules *Maximum height of climbing visibly marked *Children encouraged to assess risk in the moment "Do you feel safe?"	L-M	Benefits outweigh risk

	Wellbeing-Assessing risk according to their own abilities			*Adult physically present in this area for supervision		
		Other injuries not related to falling (grazes from branches, bumps, etc.)	М	Encourage mindful climbing, paying attention to branches, looking ahead to see what is next	L	Benefits outweigh risk
Activity	Benefit Assessment	Possible Hazards	Preliminary Risk Assessment (Consequence / Likelihood)	Mitigating measures	Risk with measures in place	Outcome / Benefit
	Identity- Establishing a strong self-identity Connectedness- Establishing	Dog causing injury	M	Discuss strategies for avoiding dogs (not calling them, turning away, moving towards an adult)	L	Benefits outweigh risk
Interacting with park users	a sense of community Wellbeing- Opportunities for social experiences	Unknown person causing dangerous situation	M	Adults are aware of any adults approaching group and move to interact with them before children.	L	Benefits outweigh risks
	Communication- Opportunities for verbal communication with members of the community			Adults have a plan to move children away from dangerous person (whistle)		

Risk Matrix

	Almost Certain	Possibility of occurrence more than 75% - expected to occur
ikelihood	Likely	Possibility of occurrence between 50% - 75% - probably will occur
Like	Possible	Possibility of occurrence between 25% - 50% - may occur at some time
	Unlikely	Possibility of occurrence between 5% - 25% - could occur at some time
	Rare	Possibility of occurrence less than 5% - may never occur

	Critical	 Critical incident. (e.g. Death or permanent disability of adult or child; high level of distress to other parties) Sustained negative publicity or damage to reputation from a national perspective or from the community welfare perspective
Consequence	Major	 Multiple injuries requiring specialist medical treatment or hospitalisation; and/or major occupational health safety & welfare liability incident / issue Major incident which damages public or parent confidence
	Moderate	 Serious injuries and/or illness Complex welfare and/or health care issue Serious disruption or incident, resulting in distress to children and adults
	Minor	 Minor first aid or minor occupational health safety & welfare liability incident / issue (e.g. minor cuts, bruises, bumps)
	Insignificant	No treatment required

Level of Risk

		Likelihood						
		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain		
ce	Critical	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme		
Consequence	Major	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Extreme		
used	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High		
Ŝ	Minor	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate		
	Insignificant	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate		

Risk Assessment Tool From South Australia Department for Education and Child Development

Bardon Kindy Bowman Park Checklist and Safety Sweep Form

Checklist	Yes / No	Notes
Parents informed	110	
Sign out for shoes and sunscreen		
Hazardous weather		
Temperature/UV/Winds consideration		
Emergency Kit Bag		
Specific medication in bag		
Copy of sign on sheet		
Trolley and equipment packed		
Children dressed appropriately		
House with dogs notified		

Hazard	Yes / No	Resolution discussed and actioned
Slippery areas		
Broken glass/ needles		
Vandalism/ intruder		
Standing water		
Boundary established		
Height marker in tree		
Low branches		
Signs of hazardous wildlife		
Tidy basecamp		
Branches of risk of falling		



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