

Bush Kinder Parent/Carer  
handbook 2023

## ***Bush Kinder***

At Alexandra & District Kindergarten we believe in the importance of nature and outside play in a child's learning and development. Numerous studies also support the need for children to spend time outside in nature.

Children are natural learners. Bush Kinder, held at the McKenzie Nature Conservation Reserve in Alexandra, will provide the children with the ideal learning environment: time and space to play in a natural setting, materials provided by nature and their own interests and enjoyment spurring them on in their learning. They will have the opportunity to play in the rain and the mud, roll down hills, balance on fallen logs, find insects, birds, animals and plants that engage their interest, use natural materials in creative ways, explore their understanding of the natural world, climb trees, expand their knowledge and hone their skills, and share these experiences with their friends, parents and teachers.

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 Kinder). Teachers will support children as they take considered risks and face challenges essential to well-rounded learning. Stories will be told, knowledge shared, songs will be sung, and fun will be had.

At times we will seek knowledge and skills from the local Rangers. These rangers have an amazing amount of knowledge and enthusiasm to share with our children. Staff are also undertaking Professional Development to help support the children in their learning about the local Aboriginal culture and heritage and the connections to the land around us.

Through play the children will connect with and grow to respect and love the natural environment. They will connect with their land in a way that cannot be done under a roof or within walls.

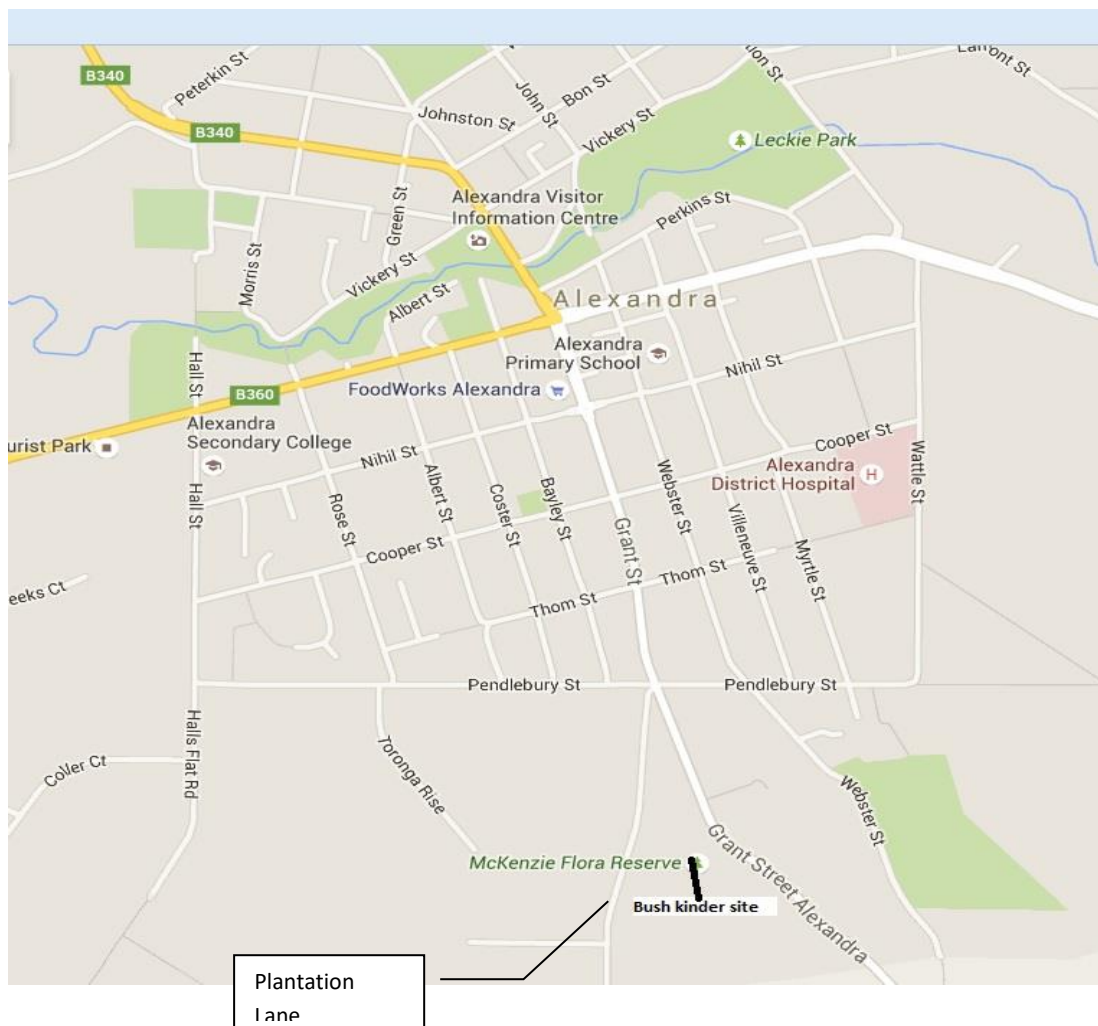
## ***Location***

The Bush kinder site will be located within the McKenzie's Nature conservation reserve. This environment provides an ideal location with the area full of grass, trees, bird life and natural habitats for frogs and other species. There are large trees that provide natural boundaries for the children. This area also offers opportunities to venture further afield (under supervision) to explore the surrounding areas.

## ***Parking***

Parking is available at the very end of Plantation Lane, which is right near our kinder site.

Please be mindful of residents along plantation lane. We would request that you drive no faster than 20km per hour down this road as there are often people walking or people on horses using the road.



## ***Participation***

For your child to participate in the bush kinder program, Parents/Guardians must have signed the Bush kinder Regular excursion form located within the confidential enrolment form.

Parents/Guardians should also provide details on your child's enrolment form of all the authorised people who are able to collect your child. Adults other than those listed on your enrolment form will not be allowed to collect your child.

## ***Communication***

We ask that you keep your mobile phone on you and turned on during bush kinder sessions so we may be able to contact you easily if necessary.

We also ask that you put the kinder mobile phone number in your mobile phone. This number is only used on Bush kinder days so any messages sent will only be checked on a Wednesday.

**Kinder mobile number: 0484 831 914**

### **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 a group meeting with the teachers, children and parent helpers. At every meeting staff will reinforce with the children exactly where the boundaries are and our rules regarding safe play. After the meeting the children will then be free to engage in play within the boundaries of the Bush Kinder site. Children will have the opportunity to have a drink and some morning/afternoon tea during their session.

### **Staff**

Staff in attendance will be Tanya Jones (Teacher) with Karen Shaw and Kelley Howell. Our staff are very enthusiastic about the Bush kinder program.

### **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 child to attend Bush Kinder. Children should not attend Bush Kinder if they are ill, excessively tired or if a Parent/Guardian is 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.

Siblings:

To ensure full supervision of the kindergarten children, and the smooth running and integrity of the Bush Kinder experience, we ask that siblings do not attend if you are choosing to stay for the session. There will be special occasions when all families and siblings will be encouraged to attend.

### **Session Times:**

Morning group Wednesdays 8.45am – 11.45pm

Afternoon Group - Wednesdays 12.45pm – 3.45pm

## Session Cancellations

Sessions may be cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. If this occurs you will be notified by SMS/email/Storypark Announcement by 6pm the night before or by 8am on the morning of bush kinder if weather changes dramatically . If you do not have mobile coverage where you live, please advise us and we will make alternative arrangements to contact you.

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

Reason for Cancellation	Notification Contact person
Staff absence	Storypark announcement on morning of session Nominated Bush Kinder Rep
Severe weather	Website/Story park announcement prior to session Nominated Bush Kinder Rep
Sudden onset Severe weather	Storypark announcement from Staff at Bush kinder
Emergency Evacuation	Storypark announcement from Staff at Bush kinder
Park ranger advice	Website prior to session and Storypark announcement where required Nominated Bush Kinder Rep or Staff in Bush

NOTE: If on arrival, Bush Kinder is not set up on site, this means that the session has been cancelled. You will have been notified by email/Storypark announcement and details will be posted on the kindergarten website. If the session is cancelled at McKenzies reserve, then the session will be held back at home kinder-15 Bayley street, Alexandra.

If the group has been evacuated or relocated, an SMS message to Parents/Guardians will specify the location of the group for pick up.

## Clothing

Parents/guardians are required to determine appropriate clothing based on the weather forecast, appropriate to their child's Bush Kinder session time.

Children will be **unable** to attend a Bush Kinder session if they have arrived with inappropriate clothing and without suitable clothing to change into. Singlet tops are unacceptable clothing.

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/cool according to the weather;
- Protects children from the damaging effects of the sun, UV rays in warm weather and high UV conditions. Parents are responsible for applying sunscreen to their child before the start of the session; singlet tops are unacceptable clothing.
- 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); Singlet tops are unacceptable clothing.
- Where possible clothing should be made of natural fabrics which allow the body to breathe and is comfortable against the skin;
- Footwear needs to be enclosed, flexible and allow safe climbing and balance on uneven surfaces; suitable footwear includes, work boots (ie, blundstones), gumboots or runners. Crocs, opened toe shoes, sandals etc are unacceptable footwear.

	Warm Weather	Cold/Wet weather
Recommended	Loose light fitting long sleeve tops and long pants, broad brimmed hat, closed shoes or gumboots.	Long sleeved top, beanie, water proof gloves, thermals in very cold weather, water proof shoes or gumboots. Wet weather pants and jacket are also suitable over clothing
Unacceptable	Long skirts or dresses, open toed shoes, sandals, thongs, or crocs. Singlet tops	Non- water proof shoes, lack of water proof clothing as provided.

Change of clothes: All children are required to bring a full change of clothes and footwear as the clothes they arrive in may become wet and muddy.

- Spare tops and bottoms must be of appropriate thickness/weight for the weather on the day

### ***Sunscreen***

On high UV days , please ensure you have applied sunscreen on your child prior to them arriving for bush kinder. Sunscreen will be available on site for re-application

### ***What else to bring***

#### ***Water***

Please ensure that your child brings with them a bottle of fresh drinking water.

## ***Food***

Children will need to bring with them a piece of fruit for morning/afternoon tea. Due to the times of the sessions children will not be having lunch at the bush kinder site however if your child will get hungry please pack them a sandwich to have for morning/afternoon tea along with their piece of fruit.

## ***Toilets***

Parents/Guardians are requested to encourage their child to use the toilet at home before they arrive for their bush kinder session. Children will have the use of a portable toilet housed in a pop up tent at the bush kinder site, if needed.

## ***Medications***

Parents/Guardians of children with anaphylaxis or asthma must make sure staff are aware of their emergency medical plans prior to commencing their first bush kinder session. All emergency plans and medication will be available at the Bush kinder site.

## ***Training and Awareness***

For the first bush kinder session, parents will be required to stay for the first 1/2 hour with their child. During this time staff will 'walk the boundaries' of the bush kinder site. Both parents and children will then be familiar with the set boundaries. Additionally, staff, children and parents/guardians will be given the opportunity to attend dog and snake awareness talks through-out the year. Where a need is identified, further training will be carried out.

All Staff are Level 2 first aid trained and certified.

## ***Risk Management***

An extensive Risk management assessment has been carried out by the Alexandra & District kindergarten along with staff from Parks Victoria.

Risk assessment is an ongoing and continual part of our program and we ask parents/guardians to be actively involved by providing feedback.

### **Policies**

Bush kinder is conducted as part of the Alexandra & District kindergartens funded 4 year old program and is governed by the regulations of the kindergarten. Full policy documents are available in the office at Alexandra Kindergarten. Should you have any queries, please contact us at [Alexandra.kin@kindergarten.vic.gov.au](mailto:Alexandra.kin@kindergarten.vic.gov.au)

## Emergency Evacuation

Should the need arise to evacuate to a safer location, see the below map for evacuation points.

Reasons for evacuation may include, but are not limited to: Fire, missing child, aggressive dog off the lead, animal intruders, uninvited stranger/s, natural events such as sudden onset of extreme weather, medical emergency or accident.

