



WHITEHORSE
CITY COUNCIL

Bush Kinder in Whitehorse

Guidelines for Kindergartens, Childcare Centres
and private providers



Connection to Country

Whitehorse City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land that we call Whitehorse. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



For countless generations children have been connecting to nature and learning through play in this place.

We acknowledge that the essence of Bush Kinder is a practice that has continued for thousands of years across all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We thank the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people for generously sharing ancient knowledge so that we can all connect to and care for Country.

What is Bush Kinder?

Children spending time in natural environments; experiencing daily and seasonal fluctuations in weather, exploring play opportunities, practising self-management skills and learning through play by being in nature.

No two Bush Kinders in Whitehorse are the same.

Some are:

- run weekly/monthly
- structured/Unstructured play
- walking distance/accessed by car or minibus
- educator facilitated/Parent helpers rostered
- held in local parks/small reserves/bushland
- short visits/extended play



Caring for Country

Bush environments are sensitive.

- Stick to paths and lawned areas where possible. This will ensure the environment is protected, but also provides a safer environment for children to explore.
- Please do not allow children to pull leaves or break branches from trees.
- Do not remove natural items – leave sticks and leaves as you find them for the birds to make their nests and possums to line their dreys.
- Muddy puddles are fun, but avoid overuse, as this can result in overly eroded and compacted clay pans.
- Please leave wildflowers, mushrooms and fungi undisturbed.
- Take all waste with you to compost or recycle at your centre.
- When you have finished playing, make sure that you leave the space as you found it



Safety Considerations



- Conduct a site safety survey prior to the start of each session to look for potential hazards. Exercise caution around water bodies.
- Monitor weather conditions before and during your program. Cancel Bush Kinder in the event of severe weather warnings ie. strong winds, extreme temperatures, high rainfall and Total Fire Ban.
- Advise families that children should wear long sleeves, pants and closed toes shoes in all seasons and weather conditions.
- Be aware of small mounds of stinging ants nests and avoid playing in these areas. Snakes are more active in warm weather. Avoid areas of dense vegetation.
- Carry first aid kits, mobile phones, emergency contact numbers and additional water at all times.
- Report any safety or maintenance issues using the 'Snap Send Solve' app.



Maintenance considerations

Please note that maintenance of Whitehorse Reserves and Bushland spaces involves machinery and occasional use of herbicides.

Machinery

To maintain our reserves to a high standard, Council undertakes mowing, tree works, bush regeneration works, path works etc. These works require the use of machinery. Please ensure that children are kept at a safe distance from moving vehicles.

Herbicides

Herbicide is used in our reserves to control weeds and support biodiversity. Please be aware that vegetation that has been sprayed with a blue dye has been treated with herbicide.



Additional Resources

[The Department of Education and Training \(Bush Kinder Page\)](#)

[Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Network \(ECOLN\)](#)

[Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority \(ACECQA\) \(The Legislative requirements of an in-nature program\)](#)

[The Risky Play Position Statement for Young Australian Children](#)

[Wurundjeri Council](#)

[VicEmergency](#)

[snapendsolve](#)



Before you go, let us know

Notify Whitehorse City Council of your Bush Kinder by completing this [Notification Form](#) to let us know about your visits.

Alternatively, you can scan the QR code to go to the Notification Form.



Bush Kinder Checklist



- Explore your neighbourhood parks and reserves. Even a small patch can offer plenty to discover.
- Conduct a Risk Assessment as per the requirements of your centre.
- Share the Caring for Country principles on Page 4 with your Centre and children.
- Notify Whitehorse City Council of your Bush Kinder.
- Check the weather conditions leading up to and on the day of your visit.
- Enjoy learning and playing outdoors at Bush Kinder!

*“If children grow up not knowing about
nature and appreciating it,
they will not understand it,
and if they don’t understand it,
they won’t protect it,
and if they don’t protect it,
who will?”*

- Sir David Attenborough