

# Play Benefit and Risk Policy

## (Bush Kinder Specific)

### **PURPOSE**

This policy aims to:

1. Detail the benefits of outdoor play in the Bush Kinder environment, including the types of activities to be undertaken
2. Give parents/guardians comfort that while aiming to develop the children's' self awareness in managing risks, that appropriate play supervision is provided to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants at all times
3. Detail procedures for staff and volunteers to ensure that children are appropriately supervised and assisted during play and to ensure the safety of participants.

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

#### **1. Values**

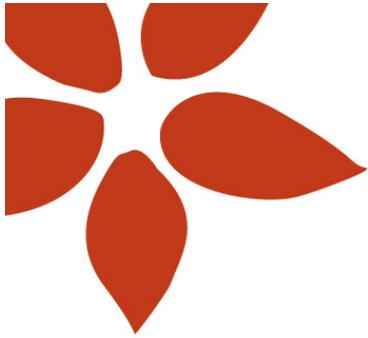
Red Apple Early Learning Centre is committed to delivering a bush kinder program which:

- Offers children opportunities to safely explore rich, diverse natural play environments while developing self confidence, teamwork and social skills and an understanding of their surrounding environment.
- Allows children, through play, to experience challenge and develop self awareness in managing risk according to ability and confidence
- Fosters child-led play at the child's pace
- Gives participants freedom to explore using multiple senses which is fundamental for encouraging creative, diverse and imaginative play.

#### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to children, parents/guardians, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at Red Apple Early Learning Centre.

#### **3. Background and legislation**



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 have also developed an over reliance on digital and electronic sources for recreation, learning, socialising.

Red Apple Bush Kinder program is intended to support young children through play, to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will even encourage early risk management 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.

Under this policy, tree climbing, for example, is encouraged on those trees deemed safe by staff in liaison with park ranger advice given at regular inspections, with support and guidance offered to children as required. Walking across logs, for example, may require staff support to provide stability until the child feels comfortable to manage the task on their own.

In a Bush Kinder setting, children learn important lessons – what is slippery, what you can trip over or fall from, how to climb.

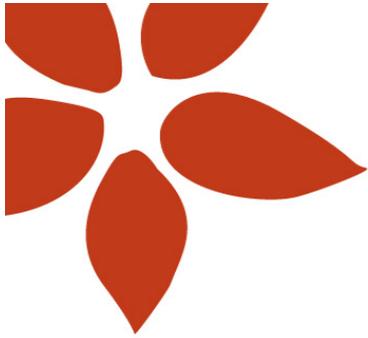
## **DEFINITIONS**

Appropriate clothing: (Refer Protective Clothing Policy)

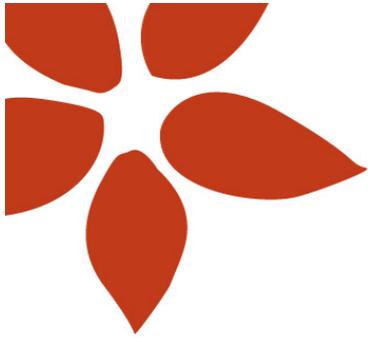
Footwear: It is important that children wear appropriate footwear (closed toe with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree climbing, balancing on rocks, logs etc) Refer to Protective Clothing Policy

Play (examples): Play activities at Bush Kinder are diverse and vast, but typical activities and goals may include (though not limited to):





rain and on walks wearing puddle suits. There are two large man made ponds at Bellbird Dell which may be encountered by the Bush Kinder group during a supervised walk or investigating frogs ducks and other types of wildlife. Children will be taught an awareness of bodies of water and associated risks, and will learn appropriate behaviour around water. See Attachment 2 for Risk Benefit Analysis and Strategies to Mitigate Risk for Water.



## **5. SOURCES AND RELATED CENTRE POLICIES**

1. 'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing' MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)
2. A Marvellous Opportunity for Children to Learn ' Liz O'Brien and Richard Murray, Forestry Commission (2006)
3. Wikipedia – 'Forest Kindergarten'.

### **Centre policies**

- 1 Extreme Weather (Bush Kinder Specific)
- 2 Protective Clothing (Bush Kinder Specific)
- 3 Communication
- 4 Hygiene
- 5 Inclusion and equity
- 6 Program participation
- 7 Supervision
- 8 Excursions and centre events

## **PROCEDURES**

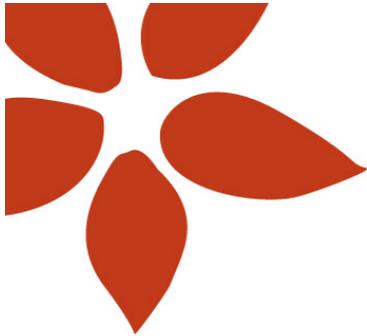
### General

The Committee is responsible for:

1. Implementing and maintaining a Play Benefit & Risk Policy which provides clarity to parents/guardians and staff as to types of activities the children may be undertaking in bush kinder, while highlighting the benefits of these activities, including improved self esteem, co-operation and ability to assess and respond to risks.
2. Ensuring a Risk Management Analysis has been completed for the Bush Kinder program
3. Ensuring that all parents/guardians are aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy at orientation sessions, in written Bush Kinder material and on the Bush Kinder website, and made available upon request.
4. Ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately educated on procedures detailed in this policy.

Staff are responsible for:

1. Supervising children at all times and ensuring their safety



2. Assess potential tree climbing trees for sturdiness in liaison with park rangers or Friends of Bellbird Dell ( A group that volunteers to keep Bellbird Dell Parklands safe and enjoyed by all local residents).
3. Ensure strategies to mitigate the risks and hazards of tree climbing (as set out in Attachment 1) are carried out as required.
4. Education of children on water risks, providing an awareness of bodies of water and associated risks, and teaching them appropriate behaviour around water. Ensure strategies to mitigate risks and hazards in relation to water (as set out in Attachment 1) are carried out as required.
5. Encouraging the children to do things for themselves e.g. putting on clothes, climbing and holding back branches, assessing risk through conversation with staff
6. Talking and listening to the children as much as possible
7. Offer help and encouragement during play whenever needed (for example, a more timid child may need support when playing Hide & Seek for the first time)
8. Encouraging the children during play to help each other, share and to solve problems together, and give praise when this occurs.
9. Encouraging children during play to reflect on how they have changed (for example, how they can now walk along a log by themselves)
10. Pointing out features, insects, plants, weather, sounds etc that children may not have noticed.
11. Take opportunities to reinforce safety routines applicable to play where ever possible

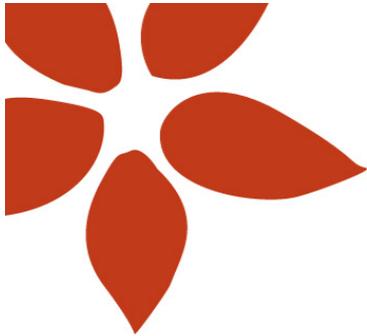
Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- 1 Ensuring protective and appropriate clothing is worn to Bush Kinder by their child in line with this policy, including closed toe footwear with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree/log climbing and balancing on uneven surfaces.
- 2 Reinforcing appropriate safety and behaviour strategies
- 3 Reading and being familiar with the policy
- 4 Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee

## Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the proprietor (committee) will:

1. Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents/guardians of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions and the annual centre survey.
2. Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy.
3. Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.



## Attachments

Attachment 1: Tree Climbing Risk Benefit Analysis and Strategies to Mitigate Risk.

Policy dated: January 2017 Review date: January 2019

## ATTACHMENT 1

### TREE CLIMBING RISK BENEFIT ANALYSIS

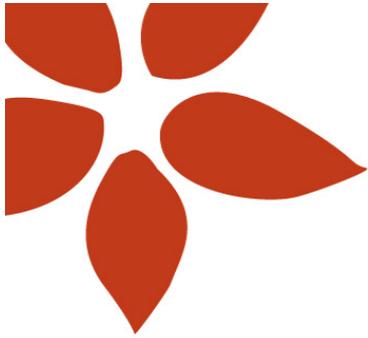
Source: 'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing' MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)

#### Benefits of Tree Climbing

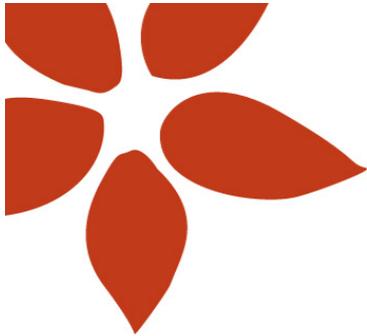
- 1 Knowledge: tree characteristics (bark/wood/branches), seasonal changes, weather implications
- 2 Develop physical motor skills
- 3 Build self confidence
- 4 Group co-operation
- 5 Group awareness
- 6 Aesthetics/spirituality

#### Risks/Hazards and Strategies to Mitigate

Hazard	Precaution
Material on the floor beneath tree	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inform children of the hazard to allow self evaluation</li> <li>2. Remove where appropriate (staff/children)</li> </ol>
Dead wood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remove dead wood branches when found</li> <li>2. Inform children of the fragility of dead wood - likely to break, encourage children to monitor</li> </ol>
Slippery surfaces	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Check condition of climbing surfaces prior to activity</li> <li>2 Evaluate weather conditions linked to hazard and desist if necessary</li> <li>3 Inform children of the hazards and allow self monitoring</li> </ol>
Drop heights	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children self assess abilities</li> <li>2. Children &amp; staff monitor landing spaces for obstacles and remove or change landing location as required</li> </ol>



	3. Staff support children when required/requested- hand held etc.
Protruding branches	1 Children self assess climbing location 2 Change climbing location or remove branches if deemed too high risk



## ATTACHMENT 2

### Benefits of Exposure to Water (Lakes, Ponds, Streams)

- 1 Children become aware of open water and associated risks and learn appropriate behaviour around water.
- 2 Awareness of seasonal and weather changes to still water and running water.
- 3 Group care and awareness
- 4 Children self risk assess open water
- 5 Raised awareness and appreciation of wild life on and near lake pond/stream
- 6 Calming effect of being near open water
- 7 Group co-operation
- 8 Group awareness

### Risks/Hazards and Strategies to Mitigate

Hazard	Precaution
Open water – lake/pond/stream: falling in the water, drowning.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Staff discuss the dangers of deep water with children</li> <li>2 Staff have a raised awareness of the risks of the pond/lake/stream</li> <li>3 Children have an awareness of the risks having done their own risk assessments of the lake/pond.</li> <li>4 Children are monitored and supervised by staff who are extra vigilant in the vicinity of water and staff/child ratios strictly adhered to.</li> <li>5 Adults count children at regular intervals while children are engaged in activities in the vicinity of water</li> </ol>
Slippery banks on pond and stream: children falling in	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Raise awareness of slippery surfaces near water edge</li> <li>2. Ratio of 1 adult to 2 children near banks of lake/pond when increased risk</li> <li>3. No access to banks after heavy rain or flooding and on recommendation by park ranger</li> </ol>
Contaminated water: illness when consumed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children have limited access to pond or stream water. Staff raise awareness of contamination. Children wash hands in clean running water after contact with lake/pond/stream water</li> </ol>