

Winston Hills Preschool

Bush Kinder Information Book

Our vision is to...
connect children with the wonder of nature



Overview

We are passionate about the outdoors. But it is not just us. There is an overwhelming amount of research to support the importance of children playing outside and being engaged with nature.

Parks Victoria is committed to children learning in nature and developing bush kinder programs and cites'

“contact with nature is critical for our physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing. It has positive effects on our ability to concentrate, to learn, to solve problems, to relax and to be creative.”

The Department of Education and Training also encourage the use of natural areas for learning which can be clearly identified in The Victorian Early Years Framework and the National Quality Standards.

“The development of Bush Kinder reflects the mounting body of evidence that outdoor activities such as exploring natural environments, are beneficial to children and contribute to improving children’s health and wellbeing.”

Learning benefits

- Children will develop a closer connection with nature which is imperative to ensuring our planet is respected and looked after.
- Children will be more physically active, which research is showing is decreasing in childhood and, contributing to a range of developmental and health problems.
- Children will gain a greater understanding and control of their large motor skills such as climbing and manoeuvring over and around obstacles. These large motor skills are required before children can successfully learn to develop and control their fine motor skills.
- Children will learn to be more creative, imaginative, and resourceful. Nature play provides endless opportunities to solve problems by utilising the natural resources that surrounds them.
- Children are happier in nature settings and display less anxiety and behavioural problems.
- Children will have more opportunities to be engage in risk-benefit experiences where the long-term benefit out-weighs the risk.

Session Overview

Parents/carers will be required to drop their child off at Greenwood Reserve/Gresswell Forest (entrance located on Greenwood Drive, Watsonia, see map on page 5) at our usual start time of **8:30am** on the specified dates on the **Bush Kinder Consent Form**. Sessions will only take place on Friday mornings (terms 2 & 3) with the regularity to be determined as deemed appropriate for the group.

Parents will say goodbye and children will form a line at Gate 1, where they will enter the reserve one at a time, be signed in and gather on the mat. We will then begin our session. Just like we do at kinder this is an important time to connect as a group, acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and discuss our plan of the day, including any potential new dangers to be mindful of.

We would then prepare ourselves to walk to an area within Gresswell Forest. While we are walking on a path, children are required to hold the hand of a partner. Once we have arrived at a specific point and outlined the boundaries of an area, children are free to explore and play. The ringing of a bell will signal to children to gather around.

We will then return to our bush base to use the toilets, wash hands and eat our snack.

Once again, we will line up and prepare ourselves for a second walk and exploration before heading back to bush base for pick-up at **11:30am**.

You can expect your child to get wet, dirty and muddy. Take this is a sign your child is experiencing the wonderful benefits of nature!



Participation

Before your child can attend a session in the bush, we will require a signed **Bush Kinder Consent Form** that will specify the intended Bush Kinder dates. As with our usual session, children should not attend if they are **unwell or excessively tired**, as this is an active session which requires children to walk.

Educators/Volunteers

Nic Cairns-Cowan (teacher) and Mel Loche (educator) will be in attendance with the support of Cait Chubb (educator) a ratio of three adults to 22 children. We would also request one session helper (you will be required to stay for the whole session). Because we would rely on the support of session volunteers, we would request no siblings attend so parents can be fully present and available to support the group and staff. All volunteers will be required to hold a **Working With Children Check** and to sign our **Bush Kinder Session Volunteer Form**.

Important Contacts

First point of contact during a Bush Kinder session should be made to our dedicated Bush Kinder mobile. If someone cannot be reached on this, please call the preschool and a mobile number of one of the staff in attendance will be released, as these will be carried as a back-up.

Bush Kinder mobile	0492 236 407
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Winston Hills Preschool	9459-7593
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Cancellation of session

A cancellation may occur ahead of time, on the morning of the intended session or in extreme circumstance, during the session. The reasons for cancellation may include;

Staff absence

Inclement weather conditions – heavy rain, extreme heat, high winds, hail, storms

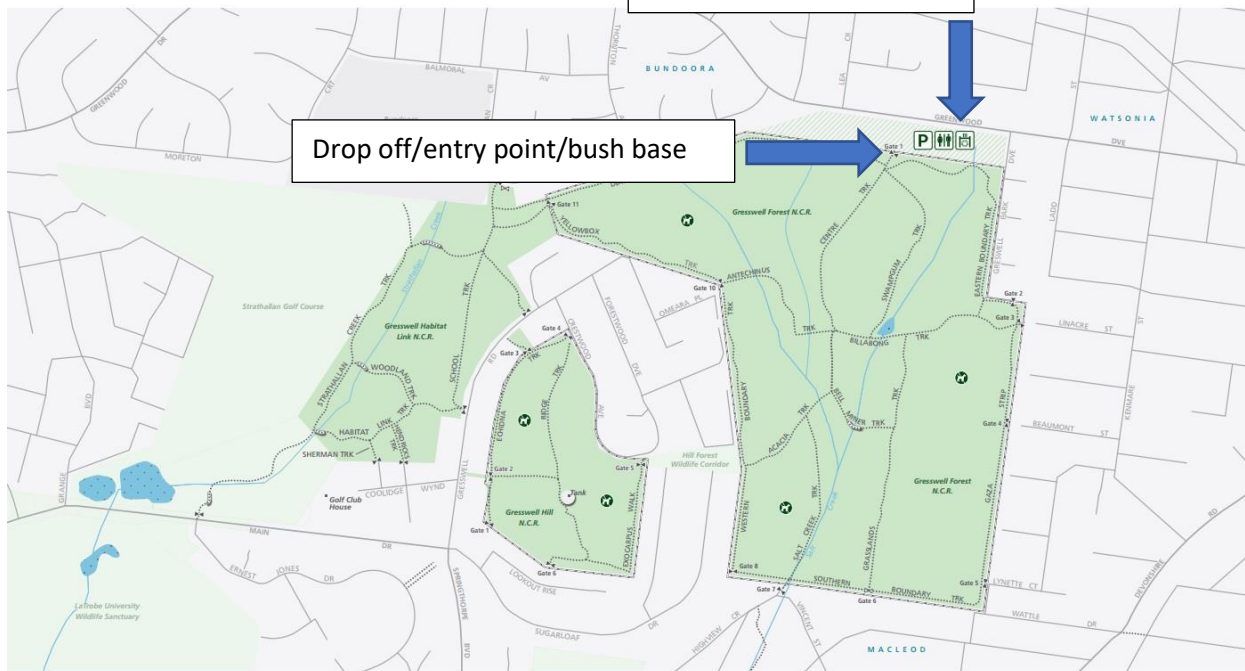
Advice from ranger

Parents will be notified of any session cancellation as soon as possible and by email and SMS. In an event that Bush Kinder is cancelled, the session will take place at Winston Hills Preschool (in lieu of the bush) with the same drop off and pick up times as specified for the Bush Kinder program on that day.

Location and Parking

Gresswell Nature Conservation Reserves

Street Parking –
Greenwood Drive



- Dogs prohibited
- Main road
- Sealed road
- Walking track
- Bridge
- Secured fence line (Access to park via gates)
- Waterbody
- Stream/Creek
- Other park/reserve
- Gated entry
- Gated entry (Management only)

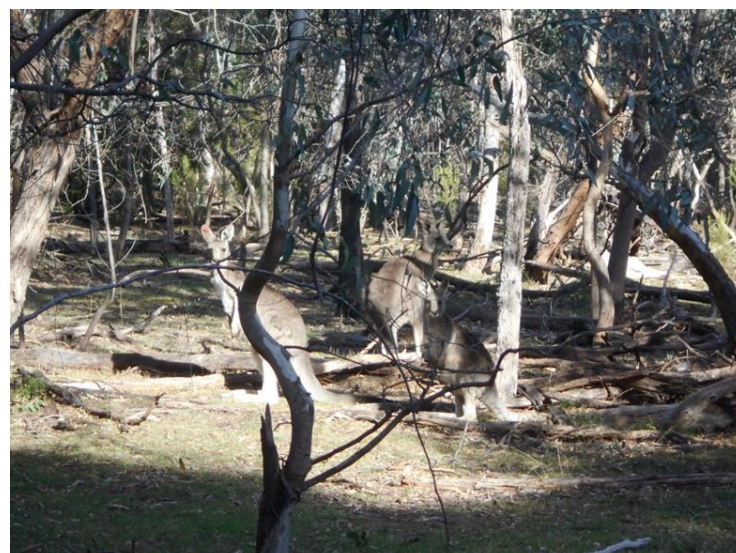
Managed by Banyule Council

- Parking
- Toilets
- Electric BBQ
- Banyule Council Reserve

www.parks.vic.gov.au

Disclaimer: Parks Victoria does not guarantee that this data is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability which may arise from you relying on this information.
Data source: acknowledgements: State Digital Mapbox, The State of Victoria and Department of Sustainability and Environment.
Cartography by Parks Victoria July 2013
For mobile App search for Avenza PDF Maps

At 50 hectares, Gresswell Forest Nature Conversation Reserve is the largest of the three reserves in Watsonia. The reserve features remnant River Red Gum woodland, walking trails and wildlife watching. Council-managed parkland on Greenwood Drive, adjacent to Gresswell Forest provides a public toilet, off-street and street parking. The reserve offers a variety of flora and fauna including...barking owl, swift parrot, sugar glider, echidna, Eastern Grey Kangaroo. The Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation are the traditional owners of the land and we promise to look after it as we explore, including leaving any special treasures we may find on our way behind.



In event of an emergency/change in weather conditions

If circumstances change during our Bush Kinder session and we need to evacuate or seek shelter we will return to the entry point and remain at our *Bush Base* or shelter under cover, adjacent to the playground located on Greenwood Drive.

Gresswell Nature Conservation Reserves



Dogs prohibited
 Main road
 Sealed road
 Walking track
 Bridge
 Secured fence line (Access to park via gates)
 Waterbody
 Stream/Creek
 Other park/reserve
 Gated entry
 Gated entry (Management only)

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Areas we will explore

Gresswell Nature Conservation Reserves



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Clothing – What to wear

What children wear to Bush Kinder is important for their health, well-being and ability to fully participate comfortably in the session.

Shoes – We suggest children should wear gumboots as a couple of the sites we will be visiting have water. Crocs, slip-on shoes, sandals, open-toed shoes are not acceptable.

Pants and Tops – These should be long, even in the warmer months to help protect children from damaging UV rays, bites, scratches and stings. Loose fitting and natural fabrics will help ensure children do not overheat. In cooler months please ensure your child has warm layers, a layer of merino/wool is ideal.

Jacket – A **waterproof** jacket with a hood is essential for every session.

Waterproof over trousers – These will help ensure your child stays dry if it rains, ground is wet, they explore water or mud.

Hat – A hat (bucket or legionnaires) is required for every session. Caps are not suitable. In cooler temperatures a beanie is advised.

If UV is predicted to be above 3, children should arrive with sunscreen on.



“There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing.”

What to bring

Children should bring one backpack containing:

- a water bottle
- a healthy snack (enough to sustain them for the activity they will be doing)
- change of clothes including underpants, socks, pants, tops
- A wet bag for any soiled/wet clothes

Toilets

We strongly encourage you to ensure your child has been to the toilet prior to arriving at Bush Kinder. There is a toilet also located at drop off to use. Because our play/exploration time is not near our bush base (where we store our bags, have group time, eat our snack) children's next opportunity to use the toilet will be mid-session, when we return to bush base to eat.

Gresswell Nature Conservation Reserves



Medical Conditions

Teachers will ensure any child with an existing medical condition has their designated medical bag carried for them containing required medication, Action Plans and Risk Minimisation Plans. We will also carry an Emergency Asthma Kit and EpiPen in the event of any undiagnosed asthma attacks or reactions as well as First Aid Kits.

Risk-benefit Assessment Plan

This will be distributed to families prior to the first Bush Kinder Session and will be reviewed after each session.

Relevant Policies

All our policies can be viewed on our website, including those relevant for Bush Kinder.

Snake Awareness Policy

Protective Clothing

Extreme Weather

Emergency Evacuation

Delivery and Collection of Children

Excursion and Service Policy

