

Millville Bush Kinder HANDBOOK

2024



Contents

Acknowledgment of Country	3
Bush Kinder Overview	3
Locations	4
3 Year Old Kinder	5
– Barongarook Creek & Hugh Murray Reserve	5
4 Year Old Kinder	6
– Birnam Station (Beechy Line Picnic Area)	6
Bush Kinder Times	6
Consent Form	7
Drop Off and Pick up Procedure	7
Communication	8
Attendance	8
Medical Conditions and Medications	8
Cancellations	9
Safety & Awareness	10

Acknowledgment of Country

Millville Children's Centre respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Gulidjin, what is now known as Colac. For many thousands of years, Aboriginal people have lived in harmony with a carefully managed Country, with which they have a deep spiritual connection. Contemporary Aboriginal people are proud of their ancestry and in addition to their inherent rights, have ongoing spiritual and cultural obligations to ensure that their ancestral land and culture is managed responsibly and appropriately. The children will be encouraged to undertake an Acknowledgment of Country before commencing bush kinder. An Acknowledgement of Country shows an awareness of, and respect for, the Traditional Owners of the land on which the children are on.

Bush Kinder Overview

Bush kinder was developed in response to research that shows outdoor activities in a natural environment are extremely beneficial to children's health, wellbeing and development. Many Victorian preschools have implemented Bush Kinder into the Kindergarten program with great success.

We are excited that we get to support young children to play and explore in nature, it's such a natural match – kids love the outdoors, it helps them learn better and to grow into healthy and happy people throughout life. Outdoor learning in early childhood involves visiting a local space such as a park, reserve, beach or bushland during regular teaching hours. The activities involved in outdoor learning are incredibly varied, ranging from free play, climbing and experimenting, to guided walks and more structured sessions. Despite differences in delivery style, unifying principles of outdoor learning are to encourage child-led learning, enquiry and play.

Why Take the classroom outside?

Parks and reserves are fantastic places for children to run, jump, explore and learn. Research shows it's good for them. Children who learn outdoors are less disruptive, show improved social skills, motor skills and physical health, and develop resilience, self-awareness, self-esteem and independence. Early education services are uniquely placed to re-invite nature into the lives of young children by routinely taking their services outdoors. Outdoor sessions allow children to engage in a variety of activities, scenarios and demonstrations not typically available in the four walls of a classroom. In addition, children who learn outdoors improve their nature-literacy, becoming more confident and empathetic towards the natural world. Shifting the classroom

outdoors will help children connect with nature, building the future generation of advocates and custodians of healthy parks for the benefit of all. The Department of Education and Training (DET) encourages the use of natural areas for learning. The importance of learning outdoors is clearly identified in the Early Years Framework and National Quality Standards for Early Childhood.

Learning Outdoors in the Early Years Framework and National Quality Standards

Identity - Children develop a sense of security with familiarity. Regular sessions learning outdoors helps children build and explore their identity.

Community - Through firsthand experience children develop an awareness of their impact on the local environment and can get involved in caring for nature.

Wellbeing - Regular contact with nature relieves children's minds and ignites curiosity. Outdoor environments allow children to expand and refine their abilities, mentally and physically.

Learning - Ever changing outdoor environments invite hypothesising, imagination, interaction, problem solving and experimenting.

Communication - Children can share stories, use natural materials to create art and interact with each other and their surroundings to create drama and music.

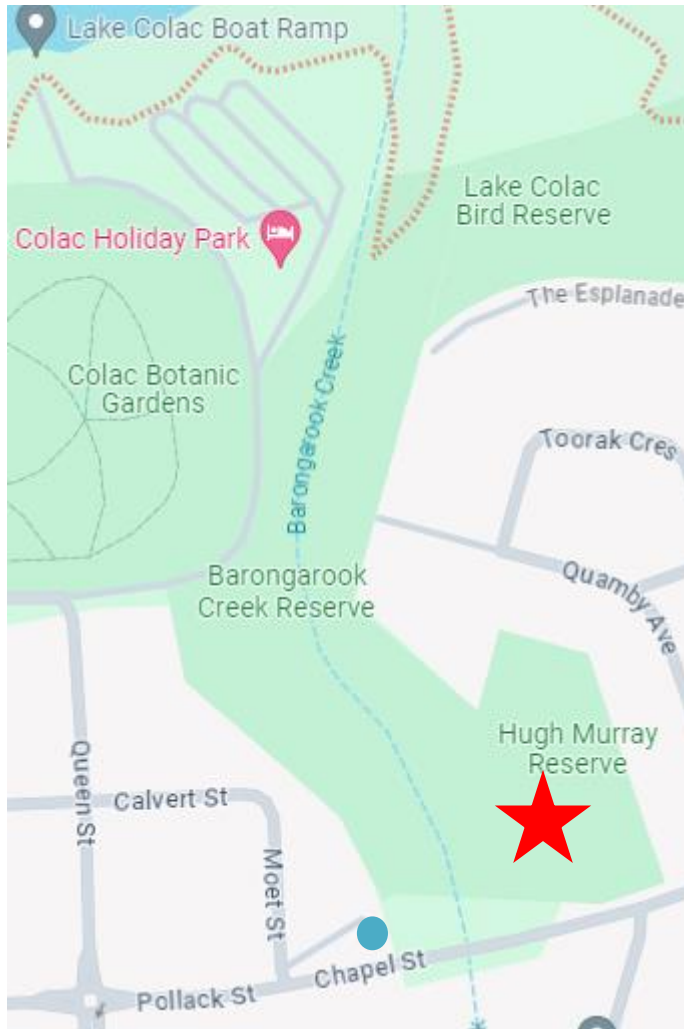
A child's ability to access nature and learn outdoors is fundamental within the National Quality Framework. Learning outdoors promotes a child's health (Quality Standard 2) through relaxation, physical activity and spontaneous experiences. By placing children in a natural outdoor setting (Quality Standard 3), they have the opportunity for independent exploration and to participate in real life projects and care for the environment they live in.

Locations

This year we have decided on two different locations for the 3 & 4 year old bush kinder programs, this allows the 4 year olds who participated in the program last year new challenges and opportunities.

3 Year Old Kinder

– Barongarook Creek & Hugh Murray Reserve



● Bus drop off/ pick up point

★ Bush kinder main area, toilet/first aid

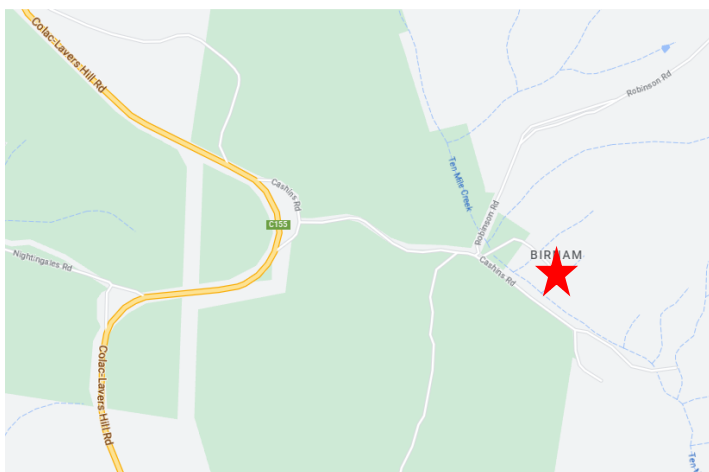
We have chosen the Hugh Murray Reserve as our 3 year old Bush Kinder location. It is situated just over the bridge on the walking track at the end of Pollack Street and has walking tracks to Lake Colac and the Lake Colac Bird Reserve. It is located less than 5 minutes' drive from Millville Children's Centre.

It was chosen for various reasons as our Bush Kinder setting:

- Close proximity the Millville
- A variety of natural play spaces away from hazards such as traffic and rail.
- It provides a variety of flora, fauna, and natural habitats for children to explore.
- Accessible to emergency Services

4 Year Old Kinder

– Birnam Station (Beechy Line Picnic Area)



We have chosen Birnam Station for our 4 year old Bush Kinder location. This area is situated just next to the Old Beechy Line Rail Trail on Cashins Rd (near Robinson's Rd turn off) in Birnam which is just past Barongarook. This area is located approximately 15 minutes from Colac.

It was chosen for various reasons as our Bush Kinder setting:

- A variety of natural play spaces away from hazards such as traffic and rail.
- A more challenging environment with a variety of natural habitats to explore, a creek bed that is accessible and easily supervised, a picnic area located in the area with picnic tables and fire pit.
- Accessible to emergency services

This area does not have public toilets so we will have a portable toilet and tent set up for bush kinder program.

Bush Kinder Times

4yo Bush Kinder – Birnam Station

Term 2 – Fridays (from 19/4/2024-28/6/2024)

Term 3- Mondays (From 22/7/2024-16/9/2024)

Sessions will run for 3.5 hours including travel time to and from the venue (Children will board bus at Millville approx. 9:50am and arrive back at Millville at approx. 1:20pm)

3yo Bush Kinder – Hugh Murray Reserve

Term 2 – Mondays (from 22/4/2024-24/6/2024)

Term 3- Fridays (From 26/7/2024-20/9/2024).

Sessions will run for 1 hr plus travel time to and from the venue (Children will board bus at Millville approx. 9:45am and arrive back at Millville at approx. 11:15am)

Consent Form

To participate in Bush Kinder parents/guardians must complete a “Bush Kinder Regular Outing Form” and ensure that all children’s medical details and emergency contacts are up to date.

Cost

Please note there will be a small cost each term for each child who attends bush kinder to cover the cost of the bus transportation to and from Bush Kinder.

Drop Off and Pick up Procedure

3 year old Bush Kinder: Children will travel by bus to the location so we ask that children arrive at Millville by 9:15 to ensure they are signed in, have morning tea and are suited up and ready to go by the departure time. Drop off and collection of your child at the location can be arranged prior to arrange a ‘meeting point’.

4 year old Bush Kinder: Children will travel to Birnam Station via bus with the bus leaving Millville at 9.50am, children will need to get into there Bush Kinder suits prior to departure so we ask children to be at Millville by 9.30am. Children will return to Millville by 1.30pm. Drop off and collection of your child at the location can be arranged prior to arrange a ‘meeting point’.

Session Overview

Prior to the commencement of the session, teachers will scan the bush space for any safety hazards and areas of potential interest. Each Bush Kinder session will begin with all children assembling at

the meeting point for an Acknowledgment of Country and a discussion about any safety precautions. Session will run with a similar routine to that of the sessions at Millville with group time.

Communication

While a Bush Kinder Session is in progress, parents/guardians must always have a mobile phone turned on and with them so that they are more easily contactable. Parents/guardians are also required to have downloaded the Educa Application, which will be used to notify parents of updates, cancellations, reminders and all other Kinder communications. Parents will also be given a mobile phone number they can use to communicate with staff directly in case of an emergency.

Attendance

We ask that families exercise their own judgment in assessing whether it is appropriate for their child to attend Bush Kinder. Children should not attend Bush Kinder if they are unwell, excessively tired, or if the family is concerned about their well-being due to fore-cast weather conditions. If your child will not be attending, we ask that you notify the centre via phone or email.

Millville reserves the right to refuse attendance at Bush Kinder for any child if they believe their attendance could be a health and/or safety risk to the child or others. Families will be notified if their child does not attend the Bush Kinder session.

Medical Conditions and Medications

Parents/guardians of children with allergies or other medical conditions must discuss their emergency plans with staff prior to commencing the first session. Staff will take individual children's medication and action plans with them to each bush kinder session. Teachers are also required to carry a full medical/first aid pack which will contain emergency medications and equipment including epi-pen and Ventolin puffer.

Clothing

Families are required to determine appropriate clothing based on weather forecast and appropriate for bush kinder time. **Full wet weather gear will be supplied however we request that children wear clothing that;**

- Allows them to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing and running
- Keeps them warm in winter, we suggest light layers of clothing
- Protects them from bites, scratches or stings
- Footwear is enclosed, flexible, well-fitting and safe to climb/run in. Gumboots are advised as children are often walking through wet area's.

Children participating in Bush Kinder will also be required to bring a full change of clothes in their backpack. Spare Clothing should include:

- Spare top and bottoms
- Spare underpants
- 1 pair socks
- A spare pair of shoes

Other things to Pack:

- Named water bottle with fresh water
- *Lunch box with morning tea and lunch and afternoon tea (4yo group only)*

Cancellations

Bush Kinder sessions may be cancelled ahead of time at short notice or during a session due to extreme weather, staff illness or for any other reason at the discretion of the teachers. In the instance that Bush Kinder is cancelled, a normal kinder session will be held at Millville.

Monitoring of weather conditions will be undertaken by the teachers using the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website. Parents will be notified of a cancellation via Educa by 8 :30am on the day of Bush Kinder. Bush Kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of the below determinants are met.

WEATHER CONDITION	EXTREME WEATHER DETERMINANT CAUSING CANCELLATION
Forecast Temperature	Greater than 34 degrees Celsius. Note: there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (refer to Protective Clothing Policy)
Forecast wind speed	>40km per hour
Forecast electrical storm activity	Thunder storm / electrical storm forecast
Grounds flooded near or at Bush Kinder site	On inspection of the Bush Kinder site by educators, or alert from Parks Victoria ranger
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall	On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

Other reasons for a Bush Kinder session to be relocated or cancelled include, but are not limited to:

- Fire
- Missing child
- Aggressive dog off lead
- Uninvited person causing nuisance or unease for staff and/or children
- Medical emergency or accident
- In the event that a group has to be evacuated, relocated or cancelled mid session for any reason, staff will send both a email and notification via Educa specifying the nature of the emergency.

Safety & Awareness

Millville Children’s Centre recognises that several potential safety hazards exist for our Bush Kinder program. Whilst it is highly unlikely that any of the identified risks or events will occur it is our responsibility to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place in the event that something should occur.

For a full analysis of risk vs benefit, please refer to our extensive risk evaluation available in the Kindergarten foyer, or ask our teachers and they will gladly provide a copy.

Prior to bush kinder sessions, specific Bush Kinder training will be run during normal kinder sessions in order to prepare the children for Bush Kinder. The children will take part in discussions including dog awareness, snake and other wildlife awareness, stranger awareness and more.

Educators with 1st Aid and CPR training will be in attendance at all times with a stocked first aid kit. There will also be a staff member in attendance with a vehicle in case of emergency.

We will evaluate and reflect on our bush kinder sessions and ask families to provide feedback, raise concerns or highlight any areas of improvement at any time either via discussions with teachers or using email.