



# BUSHPLAY PRIMARY PROGRAM PLANNING GUIDE

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## What is BushPlay?



BushPlay is the term we have chosen to describe a planned formal learning experience that can be offered to any age human being.

BushPlay involves nature investigation, balance and movement; and prickles and wet feet. It can involve *directed learning* of flora and fauna identification and *informal play* of building a house in the bush as a *team* – unstructured and non-directed by teachers.

BushPlay is asking the question “What lives here?” and answering it there and then. No google, no tablets, just hands and eyes. “Where do frogs live? Let’s check under these rocks.”

BushPlay is holding your friends hands while walking on a wet log, it’s choosing to sit on the dry rock to get a fruit snack rather than the wet grass (or not choosing too).

BushPlay is about repetitive visits to local natural environments. It’s about having lunch on the same rock each session and adding sticks to the same bush shelter. It’s about remembering that you saw a skink (small lizard) once on this rock and checking every visit after for it. It could even be about naming the skink ‘Janice’.

BushPlay is about planning for and allowing for free play in a safe and supervised environment by competent teachers and adult helpers.

BushPlay is about kids making *connections* with nature and feeling comfortable *in* nature. They know to take their food scraps home with them because they care about their BushPlay location. They know too that snakes are an important part of nature.

BushPlay is about *brave teachers* allowing time for free play in the bush. No structure, just natural boundaries, and following where the students take the play.

BushPlay is about building lifelong memories of fun in nature and healthy living outcomes. “Being in nature makes me calm and happy”.

As one teacher in the pilot program noted “BushPlay can be like Friday afternoon sport. It’s something we do every week and its normal.”

And that is the goal of this mentoring program. Make BushPlay ‘*normal*’.

# BushPlay Primary Pedagogy

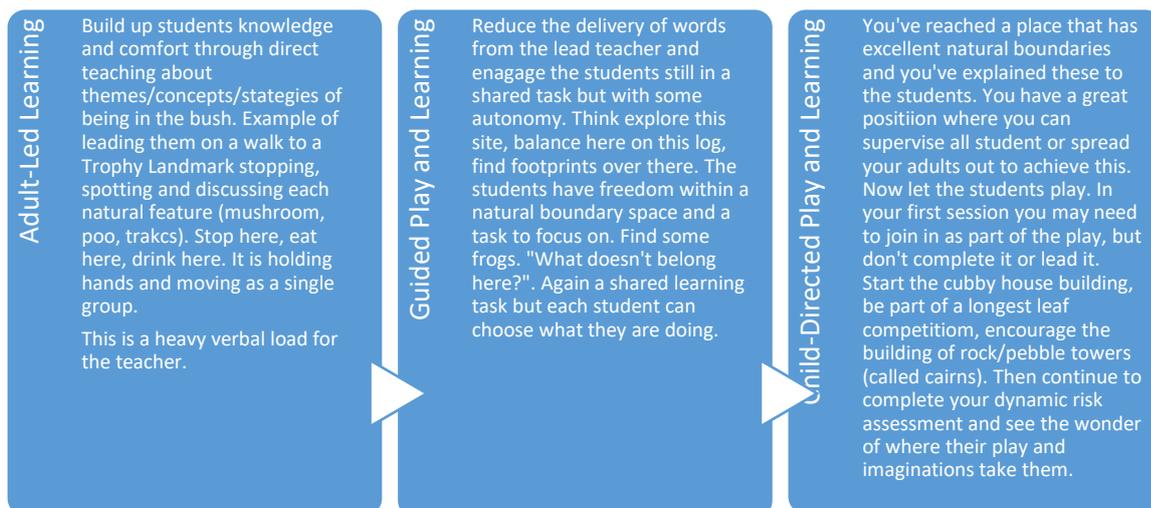


It is important to recognise that teaching in the bush and about the bush is calling upon varied techniques and strategies to promote safety and learning than you would utilise in the home school environment. And that's why we 'go bush'!

In a dynamic learning environment we need to adapt our teaching to nurture and encourage students to increase their comfort and understanding while being outdoors while having our head on a swivel keeping students safe while not taking away their perception of freedom and play opportunity. With this here is a pedagogical flow that has been found to suit learning in the bush.

## The rule of thirds

This is a great way to approach BushPlay with young students. It is important to note the direction of travel for the teacher is from left to right, but once you reach the right end, you can jump back and forward. We recommend always starting with Direct Instruction at the beginning of each session – the students will always be most energetic and excited here and often benefit from tighter focus.



# BushPlay Primary Program



## Planning Checklist

The following checklist is an abridged version from what's required on longer or more remote bushwalking in Victoria and includes and adds to information from the DET School Policy and Advisory Guide. It should be followed and 'ticked' and information below should be referred to for further clarification.

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
<b>Planning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Approvals</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Excursion Planning Requirements</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pedagogy Philosophy</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Activity plan</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ratios</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Group size</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> First Aid</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Risk management</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Emergency strategy</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Transportation requirements</li></ul>	
<b>In the bush</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Supervision</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Leader</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assistant leader</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other leader roles</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Toileting and rubbish</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Welcome Talk (inc. Acknowledgement of country)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Learning themes</li></ul>	Read this section afresh before each session to assist preparation.
<b>Equipment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Participant's equipment</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Leader's equipment</li></ul>	

# Planning



In any adventurous activity, planning is essential in order to achieve objectives, have fun and to minimise the inherent risks to participants. This section is intended to provide a framework for planning activities to minimise the risks to participants.

## Approvals and Support

- Principal – this is an excursion and requires approval.
- School council – is this required in your school as a recurrent excursion?
- Parent/Guardian permissions.
- Is there Parent/ guardian support for this program. Will it yield volunteers?
- Is there any budget \$\$ to allocate to transport/equipment/staffing. Or does this need to be budgeted for next year?

## Excursion Planning Requirements

While the degree of planning involved will depend on the risks involved, the conduct of any excursion or activity should take into account the following:

- Educational purpose of the excursion and its contribution to the curriculum (see appendix 7 – Curriculum)
- Department approval requirements for excursions and staff travel
- Maintenance of full records, including documentation of the planning process
- Suitability of the environment and/or venue for the excursion
- Informed consent from parents or carers
- Adequate student and staff medical information
- Student preparation and behaviour
- Requirements for any adventure activities (these involve greater than normal risk - there are additional considerations associated with these activities)
- Note home to parents before the session. This is not the permissions – this is the note send home with what to wear and bring and timing of the session (could be included with the permissions form too). See Appendix 9 for an example of a 'Note sent home'.

## Pedagogy

Choose a Philosophy – at least a starting point – Do you want a BushPlay Program with no influence from man-made objects or materials? Or do you want to integrate and weave in deliberate man-made influences like story books and art and craft (natural and man-made materials combined). Do you want to include making Bush movies and utilising ICT to connect the bush experience to back in the class? The BushPlay Program does not endorse one aspect over the other but has some encouragements as appendix 1.

## Activity plan



An activity plan should be prepared for all activities.

This plan needs to be documented, and can use **appendix 2, "BushPlay Activity Plan"**. The following is a list of factors that should be addressed as part of this appendix prior to any activity:

### People

- Objectives of the activity (desired outcomes) and participant expectations
- Location and route (with estimated times)
- Duration of activity
- Age, experience, fitness, skill level, disposition, and known medical conditions of participants
- Size of group
- Leader to participant ratio.

### Objectives

Why are you doing BushPlay today? What is the curriculum this session is linked to? See separate document for curriculum links, titled "BushPlay Curriculum" (**Appendix 8**).

### Location

- support/evacuation resources (vehicle, local bus company, etc.) and availability and access of emergency medical assistance (e.g. air ambulance flight times, SES, etc.). Physical Environment
- Area and route selection and intended route
- land managers requirements (access restrictions, group sizes, permit requirements, booking requirements)

**See appendix 3 for location selection checklist, and it's further unpacking.**

### Group size

Group size is an essential component of group management. Maximum and minimum group size must be carefully decided based upon the following:

- the safety of the group and individuals
- the objectives of the activity
- experience of the leader and participants
- the potential impact of other users

### Ratios

The ratio of participants to leaders is determined by a number of factors. In some circumstances the leader may judge that a smaller number of participants per leader/assistant leader is necessary. The leader should consider the supervision ratio based upon the:

- experience of the leader
- expected capabilities of participants (experience, competence, fitness, etc.)
- conditions (environment, remoteness, weather)
- planned duration of the activity

For groups where the participants are primarily minors (under the age of 18) a ratio of 1:10 should not be exceeded, and there should always be two adults.

2 adults to 10 students = 2:10

Or 3:20. Groups should not exceed 20 students where possible.



## First aid

To lead any activity a leader of a group (or a delegated other) must have a level of first aid training that is relevant to the situation. The factors that determine the level of first aid training and support include:

- the size of the group
- the age of the group
- the remoteness of the activity
- the ease with which the emergency services can be contacted; this may depend on the remoteness of the activity and the type of communication equipment available
- the likely time for emergency services to reach the injured person
- the nature and severity of likely injuries. A common approach is given below. The time limits are guidelines only and the leader needs to make a judgement, based on the circumstances of each activity, about the level of first aid training required.

*We consider BushPlay, to be an Urban setting:*

This applies in parks and urban areas supported by a professional (not volunteer) ambulance service. Distance from road heads should be at no time more than 15 minutes. A Level 2 First Aid qualification equivalent to HLTF201A (Provide Basic Emergency Life Support) is required by one adult with the group.

## Risk management

Risk is inherent in all outdoor and planning to minimise these is vital. However it is not possible to eliminate all risk and the leader and organisation need to accept that some risk remains and they should ensure that it is managed according to recognised methods. Risk management is a series of 'well-defined steps which, taken in sequence, support better decision making by contributing a greater insight into risks and their impacts' (Australian Standard AS/NZS 4360 Risk Management).

The five step approach is

Step 1: Identify all hazards

Step 2: Assess and prioritise the risks these hazards create, deal with highest priority risk first

Step 3: Decide on measures to control the risks (e.g. eliminate the risk, substitute a venue, use personal protective equipment)

Step 4: Implement appropriate control measures

Step 5: Monitor the control measures and review the process.

See appendix 4 for BushPlay Project's, Bush Playgroup/Kinder Risk Register.

See appendix 5 for Snake Spotting 101



## Emergency strategy

An emergency strategy must be devised from the risk assessment to manage foreseeable incidents and minimise their escalation. This strategy should be documented (see appendix 6 for Proforma). Activity leader(s) and a non-participating contact must be aware of the emergency strategy and have a copy of it.

The emergency strategy for an activity must be specific to each activity and will contain:

- Emergency access and emergency escape routes (where possible)
- Emergency contact details for key organisations (land manager and police) and how they are best contacted (mobile phone, satellite phone, radio)
- planned start and finish time of the activity
- Specific communication being carried by group
- a strategy for maintaining supervision ratios should any changes to the planned activity eventuate (adverse conditions, injured leader, participant(s) pull out of activity). The activity leader must communicate with the relevant non-participating contact at designated time(s).
- a plan for responding to seasonal factors (snow, fire, availability of drinking water, tides, river levels, track conditions, other users)
- expected weather conditions and implications (hypothermia, hyperthermia).
- Arrangements are in place if the excursion needs to be cancelled, recalled, or altered (for example: severe weather conditions, or students returning early due to illness/serious misbehavior)

Factors that may cause an activity to be cancelled, modified or postponed include, but are not limited to, forecasted or current adverse weather conditions, insufficient equipment, restrictions dictated by the land manager and environmental factors (flood, drought, fire).

### *Weather – Should we go or should we cancel?*

Planning outdoor classes will always end up clashing with ideal weather. It's not always going to be blue sky sunshine and 23 degrees with low UV. Sometimes it will be cold and wet, sometimes hot and dusty. Having a weather plan for cancellation needs to provide for experience in this weather outdoors occurring, but not at increased risk. As advice, Outdoor School suggests

- Cancellation of any activity where the forecast is expected to be a high of 10 degC and rain forecast (not showers) or high of above 35 degC and dry.

# In the bush



## Stay together:

Supervision of all participants must be less than 5 seconds at all times while on BushPlay. While moving a leader remains at the front of the group and the back of the group at all times.

## Leader

The leader of the activity will

- have the skills and experience to carry out the activity plan
- be responsible for delegating tasks to assistant leader(s)
- be responsible for conducting the activity on-the-ground without external supervision
- have activity skills as well as group management skills.
- leader should be suitably familiar with the area being visited

In addition to actual leading the group, the leader has a range of responsibilities for the duration of the activity including:

- take reasonable steps to ensure that the level of knowledge, ability, skill and equipment of each participant is adequate for the level of difficulty and complexity of the activity
- ensure that a process has been undertaken to research and plan for likely hazards, and that the leader is familiar with the measures required
- introduce themselves as leader and introduce any other key people
- ensure that minimal environmental impact message is conveyed and adhered to
- manage and minimise the impact to the environment that may be caused by the activity
- where considered necessary nominate an assistant leader (or assistant leaders) who has/have known skills and experience relevant to the activity and are willing to perform defined duties
- ensure a briefing is conducted and understood by all participants
- undertake headcount before, during and immediately following the activity
- maintain awareness of the physical and psychological condition of the group
- control the pace of the group
- delegate responsibility to other group members as necessary (whip, navigation, first aid, etc.)
- ensure that any incidents are managed, reported and recorded
- manage the group to avoid or minimise the effects of hazards
- check first aid kit equipment prior to activity
- check communication equipment prior to activity
- frequently check weather forecasts prior to the activity and, if possible and relevant, during the activity
- ensure all documentation has been completed and collated

## Assistant leader

The assistant leader of the activity will generally not be required to have the same skill level as the leader but will:

- have skills specific to the conduct of the activity
- be able to undertake activity-specific tasks delegated by the leader
- be able to manage the safety of the group, including in an emergency, if the leader is incapacitated.

An assistant leader would normally be included in the leader ratio. A teacher without these skills may be responsible for the welfare and supervision of students but would not be considered an assistant leader nor included in the ratio. A teacher with these skills may be an assistant leader and be included in the leader ratio. There may be a number of assistant leaders with responsibility to the leader.



## Toileting (and waste)

Nature calls and nature calls often in the bush. Be sure to complete briefing pre-activity for the students to understand how they can toilet while in the 'bush'. Also consider teaching participants to make the most of a 'tactical wee' pre activity – before leaving home or school for BushPlay.

- When available, use established toilet facilities.
- In other situations, carry a trowel and deposit solid human waste in shallow holes dug in topsoil – usually 10-15 centimetres deep and at least 100 metres from water, camp and tracks. If toilet paper use is necessary, use it sparingly and bury it deeply or preferably, carry it out. Cover and disguise the hole when finished. (In water catchment areas, human waste should be carried out.)
- Urinate on bare ground away from vegetation, routes and tracks.
- Hand sanitisers are a good alternative for personal hygiene.
- Pack and carry out all packaging rubbish and leftover food including organics in sturdy bags. (Leave no Trace).

## Welcome talk

This talk should

- Outline expectations of student behaviour
- Describe the plan for the BushPlay session including estimates of times/distances to stops/food!
- Leave no trace (remove all food scraps and rubbish)
- Ensure equipment is being carried that is necessary.
- Highlight any nature observations specific to the group.
- Include an acknowledgement of country at the beginning of each session.

Consider the importance of demonstrating your groups respect for traditional owners by sharing an "Acknowledgement of Country", following either of the below scripts (depending on your knowledge of which Traditional owner group identifies with this country)\*.

The purpose of this acknowledgement is to show your respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander that may be attending your group, to demonstrate respectful values to your group, and to be part of an Australia that respects our long history. For more information on delivering an acknowledgement, for investigating traditional owner groups of your area, or to find out about the state governments 10 year Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan, please get in touch with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (<http://www.vaeai.org.au/>)

### Acknowledgement of Country Script 1

(generic where you don't know or are unsure of the local Traditional owner groups).

““ I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are gathered today, and to pay my respects to their Elders both past and present.”

### Acknowledgement of Country Script 2

(specifically noting the Traditional Owners of the land at your location).

“ I would like to acknowledge the \_\_\_\_\_ People, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are gathered today, and to pay my respects to their Elders both past and present.”

\*It is appropriate and respectful for any person who is not a traditional owner of the land you operate on to deliver this acknowledgement. It is NOT appropriate or respectful to offer a "Welcome to Country" unless you are a traditional owner of this location. It is like inviting someone into someone else's house, inappropriate.



## Learning Themes

Outdoor learning in a constantly changing classroom where dynamic risk assessment and curious learners have a million and on questions is rich in learning opportunities. While a field naturalist will have endless answers to the endless “What’s this?” question and equally endless observations of nature to share with the students, it is not expected that all classroom teachers have this field of expertise.

While doing some research and learning about the natural area you are visiting will assist greatly, taking with you a quiver of learning themes and questions to set the students off is a great start.

**See appendix 8 for Learning Themes and Starter Lessons.**

# Equipment



Equipment requirements for bushwalking are subjective and will vary with the objectives of the activity, experience of the participants (and leader), and the expected environmental conditions likely to be encountered. This means equipment and clothing selection must be based on a wide range of eventualities. Leaders must be satisfied that all participants set out with suitable equipment, food and clothing for the planned activity. It is recommended that this be achieved by reference to a tailored checklist, which should be provided to participants in advance.

The leader should ensure that communication and safety equipment are carried by key staff, and that these staff are identified to the group. This should include:

- ☑ group equipment including first aid (snake bite bandages and asthma medication, consider epipen junior), communication equipment, toileting supplies (trowel, toilet paper, wet ones)
- ☑ personal equipment including clothing, food and dietary requirements, and personal medication, plus spare water.

## Participant Equipment Checklist:

- Backpack
- Snacks/lunch
- Water bottle (full)
- Appropriate outer clothing (in terms 1,2 and 4 long pants for Snake Risk).
- Waterproof jacket
- Sunscreen
- Spare clothes (full set, plus sox and shoes on return to school to change into after water/mud play)

# Appendix 1



## ***BushPlay Pedagogy***

1. Children learn best when their “hierarchy of needs” are met first (shelter, warmth, food, water, toilet, security from an elder)
2. BushPlay Educators are Bush detectives and have curious nature minds (also have great technology and pre-learning to assist this.) They are the *experts*. When an educator has “excellent knowledge of content” of their area of learning, they are confident in letting the learning journey of the children bounce around and planning to go off the plan can take place.
3. Each BushPlay Learning plan involves a formal “Ramble” with a planned route, “Trophy landmarks” and a theme for at least 30-45 minutes of child speed walking. This ramble can, however take the whole 3-5hour session. The essence being that the facilitated route contains mini-activity spots and themes that aid to the stop-start travel and this further leads to curious minds and curious questions. We call these “Teachable Moments”, and can be planned, but are often best reacted to unplanned. The remainder is all important “free-play” in a chosen location (eg. Autumn leaves in a forest with multiple nature engagements available.)
4. Children love to learn and relate their learning to things they already know. We refer to this as their “intertextuality”, where we might use a reference to something they relate to (a current cartoon) and go on our own adventure to save the bush creatures.
5. It’s about “observation not destination”. BushPlay is about small distances and slow movement. Not because of the size of the legs on the journey, but because of the amount of mushrooms to count (numeracy), rocks to turn over, hollows to climb into, and where appropriate, things to climb.
6. All BushPlay sessions aim to have a “take-home”. We need children to connect their experiences to their home worlds. So we finish with verbal storytelling (which can be video recorded and sent to parents/guardians), art work to take home (nature art, or traditional paint and paper).
7. Each BushPlay session should link direct back to learning in the classroom. This aids the connection and the building of knowledge and storytelling making the experience relationship last longer.
8. By the conclusion of a BushPlay Program, we aim to express “gratitude” to nature for allowing us to play in its home. We can do this through tree planting, weed removal, nesting box creation, Preservation of land

# Appendix 2



## BushPlay Activity Plan

Objective: \*\*This field guide is intended as assistance for planning and leading a primary school BushPlay program.

### [Misty River] location name

Why this location? What can you expect to see and do here? Trophy landmark?

### Plan (logistics)

- Route
- Distance,
- Expected timing,
- Trophy landmarks,
- Snack spot
- Freeplay location

### Place Specific Hazards

Example – *At this location killer whales have been observed eating whole dinosaurs between point b and C. In this section of the walk parents will hold their children’s hands for safety.*

### Nature Focus

Example – This location is rich in varied Fungus. When the children spot a mushroom they are encouraged to call out MUSHROOM and we will stop and observe it and consider what mushrooms do for nature. Remember no touching!

### Parking

Example-

### Leaders

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4..

### Map



# Appendix 3



## Location planning tool

Tool	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Location requirements –(circle your most important aspects) ( ) Distance from base organization (for walk-ins) ( ) Access – car parking, drop off pick up ( ) Natural Boundaries ( ) Low number of hazards to manage ( ) Fresh Water for drinking ( ) Toileting – circle one (running water/ composting/ portable) ( ) Shelter (wind/rain/sun) ( ) Formal nature activity/walk availability – eg. A 30 minute loop walk. ( ) Free Play Space Availability. ( ) Australian Bush setting ( ) Trophy Landmarks – destination focused walking.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Duration of sessions – how long can you go out for?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequency – how often will you or can you participate?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seasonality - Winter Plan?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Costs –budget for possible additional costs? (rain wear, transport?,

### Location Planning Requirements Unpacked:

*Distance from base organization (for walk-ins)*

Consider the time and route you can take to walk to and from your BushPlay location – if quality learning regarding school crossings, traffic awareness, or even visit to shops for a class project can be added this is capitalising on the out of school learning.

Ideally it is great to have multiple return routes from your location, to allow for a quicker return (for tired or hot/cold students).



### ***Access – car parking, drop off pick up***

Cars and buses are dangerous creatures and we need to avoid students remaining in these areas for longer than necessary. Always ‘muster’ (gather your group) away from the car park, ideally behind a fence or natural barrier. If your program can include a drop-off at the location of BushPlay so your students can walk back to school at the conclusion that allows more time in the bush!

### ***Natural Boundaries***

In the bush we operate with natural fences or boundaries to help corral the students in their free play. The use of a 4wd track as a boundary, or a small creek (supervised) as a boundary, as well as minor tracks as boundaries can be an excellent tool to assist you to supervise. Also the use of small patches or forests for freeplay where the students remain contained inside it works marvellously also.

### ***Low number of hazards to manage***

In BushPlay we control hazards that are plain dangerous. We keep fall hazards and other risks of similar serious nature to zero. For a young student to experience risk they do not need to be high or ‘on-edge’, rather they need to have a perception of these things existing. For example balancing along a slipper log, scuttling down a muddy slope, balancing on hand and foot from rock to rock across ankle deep water. These are the ‘hazards’ we plan to include, and avoid locations where we cannot control others.

### ***Fresh Water for drinking***

Even in winter students are thirsty, have no drink bottle or run out of water. Having access to clean drinking water is important through either taps, or a strategically placed water barrel you bring with you and store out of sight on location.

### ***Toileting – circle one (running water/ composting/ portable)***

Having flushing toilets is great for younger ones that use the toilet once per hour but limits the locations you can access. Being prepared to go bush with toileting is a great way to increase your scope of locations and children’s resilience. Being able to toilet at the start and end of a half day session is great and ‘digging’ a toilet can be in the middle – ensuring you dig a 20cm hole, at least 100m from running water, and off the trail. School age children requiring toilets for ‘number two’s’ is very rare in a bush experience.

### ***Shelter (wind/rain/sun)***

We encourage BushPlay to occur all year in all parts of the world. Planning to be out in tempests and hot temperatures is another way of becoming connected with outdoor learning and living. Having natural shade is vital, likewise having the ability to shelter from a squall of rain is important. Being outside in the rain and sheltered is teaching resilience toward natural weather and encouraging year round participation.

Is there a

- Picnic shelter or trail head shelter
- Can you borrow or buy a tarpaulin with rope attached to rig a bush shelter.
- Is a bus remaining on site



### ***Formal nature activity/walk availability – eg. A 30 minute loop walk.***

Choosing a location which already has a great ‘gazetted’ loop established by landowners is excellent. It provides students with an understanding of a start-middle-end walk and they can pace their efforts (maybe!). If your location doesn’t have one create a way of exploring that includes exploring different aspects of the bush you are using. Having managed trails to access takes the need away for freshly checking your location before every visit for changes trail quality and hazards. High use public areas can be great for this, and encourages students to revisit with their families as access is straighter forward.

### ***Free Play Space Availability.***

This aspect speaks to the ability to have a natural boundary area that kids can have free play which involves little to zero guiding by adults and encourages student’s imaginations. Clear boundaries help the students with their freedom and staff with supervision. You need to be able to see them at all times.

### ***Australian Bush setting***

We encourage as much as possible for BushPlay to be in a natural Australian bush setting, as opposed to a manicured European garden. We are after bark and sticks and holes and rotting logs and all these wondrous aspects of a living forest. However don’t be dismayed. If you can only access a manicured park BushPlay can still happen – just get permission from landowners to enter some garden beds to add the hide and seek play aspect.

### ***Trophy Landmarks – destination focused walking.***

A Trophy Landmark is a term created by Jarrod Paine and describes the natural feature of the location that you are exploring to visit. It is often the name of the walk and when groups reach the landmark it is a feeling of success and celebration. Planning for your trophy landmark to me at the halfway point or 2/3 the way through your walk also helps with motivation to keep your group moving. For example the ‘Waterfall Walk’, has a waterfall as its trophy landmark, Big Tree Explore has a big tree, and muddy puddles forest has muddy puddles to get to.

### ***Duration of sessions – how long can you go out for?***

This aspect of your planning relies very much on your own experience, confidence and knowledge of how your students (the particular ones on this given day, at this time of year, in this weather) can go out for.

One of the best tips you can get is plan to be out for less rather than more to begin with. Having a successful shorter session to begin builds interest and motivation and has the students pining to return to BushPlay. Having them out too long and returning exhausted or unhappy can have the opposite. A general rule is to begin with 3 hours and grow to a long half day (including lunch).



### **Frequency – how often will you or can you participate?**

There is no magic number for frequency of how many sessions per week, month, term or year of BushPlay you have. It comes down to resourcing, locations, age groups and environment. We recommend you consider that a BushPlay Primary Program is not like a once a year visit to the museum, but that it is about getting out multiple times to the limit that you can sustainably achieve. Aiming for once a month is a great start. Think big. Think multiple year levels and whole school approach. Outdoor Learning is for everyone.

### **Seasonality – Winter Plan?**

BushPlay Programs in some shape or form run in all parts of the world all year. Being brave and resilient toward the weather at early ages encourages lifelong participation in the outdoors. The only cold person in the outdoors is the one who didn't pack enough warm clothes. With the correct clothing (number of layers) and planning your group can access BushPlay all year.

### **Costs –budget for possible additional costs? (rain wear, transport?,**

Can you access funding or raise money to support students who don't own their own rain-wear or gumboots. Growing a cache of equipment like this (op shops can be a great place to look) can keep your group out in more weather in more comfort. Likewise raising money for a portable shelter, water barrels for drinking water and even a bus trip once a term to a new location can be some great ways to add more value to your program through the input of some \$\$\$\$.

## Appendix 4



### **What hazards exist and need active management by a leader?**

*Here is the start of a list. A leader has the charge of managing the location, and the groups movement at a location. Plans can be made to reduce the risk at a location or to change locations due to weather. Leaders make large decisions that participants may not be aware of and massively reduce risk.*

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Control</b>
Lost child	Injury	No student should walk in front of leader. Educator supervision of student 100% of time (less than 5 seconds).
Lost group	Delayed departure Poor Experience Danger in emergency	A leader should always have prior knowledge and extensive experience of any location. A dry run should be completed on any new locations to the leader. Getting lost is not accepted.
Flooding river	Drowning	Change location, or keep all participants 5m from river edge.
Minimal safe car parking	Child vs. car	Change location, or change parking site to a place where safe parking can be achieved and then walk to location. Identify a suitable muster point for "sign-in" of students.
Bites and Stings	Localized Pain Allergy/Anaphylaxis	Carry stingose Avoid ant nests Have phone coverage
Snake Bite	Severe risk of injury and more	Leader is out front spotting for snakes. Many feet make lots of vibration and encourage snakes to move on. Snake Bite First Aid is understood and bandages carried, as well as mobile coverage.
Cold /Raining Weather	Poor attendance Poor experience	Choose a sheltered woodland location. Avoid open spaces. Pick somewhere with puddles.
Extreme Weather (wind, heat)	Tree fall Bushfire	Cancel
Fall from heights	Moderate to severe injury to legs, arms, body or head.	Tree's / boulders to be climbed only with direct contact/ spotting by child's own parent/guardian and recommended to a height not higher than an adults reach to the waist of a child.
<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Control</b>
Children out of sight of leader/parents	Drowning Fall from heights Snake Bite.	Leader walks at the front. Safety talk specific to site at the beginning of each session (eg. How we are going to manage the cliff or snakes).
Eg. Slippery log (on ground)	Moderate injury to legs, arms, upper body or head.	Students to hold hand of stable adult for balance. Adults to not walk on log.

## Appendix 5



### ***BushPlay Project Snake recommendations.***

In every Welcome Talk from about September to April you should include a Snake Spotting brief for participants. This is important for safety and for education. Snakes are a natural and important part of every Australian ecosystem and Wild Things walks provide a great opportunity to keep children and adults going in the bush in the summer months, wondering about snakes, rather than being fearful of them.

We know that

- Walking in the morning, on open tracks in these months, gives everyone (including the snake time to see and feel vibrations) to avoid encounters. So be deliberate in your site selection and use your local knowledge to inform your choice.
- Wearing sturdy footwear and considering adding long pants all provide further improvements in our safety and piece of mind.
- Having the leader walk at the front of the group on snake spotting duty is important to keep participants safe.
- The leader should check hollows logs and crevices beside the trail while moving along to check for any sheltering reptiles. The kids can help with this from a distance behind the leader.
- If you're approaching a log or rock, step onto it rather than over it. You never know what could be lying on the other side.
- snakes can be defensive when startled and they get scared when we come across them as much as we get scared from seeing them.
- A snake calms down very quick after being scared and most often slithers off for shelter in nearby bush off the track.
- Snakes are in charge of keeping our small mammal, frog and reptile population in balance. Depending on the specie of snake, they play an important role in making sure species numbers don't skyrocket.
- Quality first aid is vitally important in the case of snakebite. Removing the patient from danger and applying a compression bandage to the bite site, then down the limb and back up again within the first 2 minutes is proven to be very successful, followed by getting the person to ambulance or hospital promptly. No identification of the snake is required.

### Snake Spotting 101

- a) If a child or adult spots a snake they are to tell an adult or leader and all other members they've seen one. Snakes are deaf so yelling won't change their behavior.
- b) Immediately stop moving toward it and move instead away from it back behind the adults.
- c) Leader to assess whether safe passage around the snake is possible – if the snake moves on that's great, but keep eyes on it to ensure safe passage away.
- d) Once a safe distance of 8-10 metres away have everyone stand still. The snake will most likely calm down and slither away. Take this opportunity for any interested children to get a view and appreciate this amazing animal.

# Appendix 6



## EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN PROFORMA

Copies of this document should be provided to all staff and to the school's designated emergency contact person. The information supports the initial response to an incident and should form part of a more detailed emergency management plan.

### Features of the region

- Describe the location and its geographic features

### Communication with emergency support

- How will the group communicate with emergency support?

### How will emergency services access the group at each location?

- How long will it take for support to arrive?
- Provide descriptions of multiple access routes if possible
- Detail approximate travel time to medical help from the location
- List sources of emergency support
- Consider whether helicopter access is possible

### Information required when reporting a serious accident

- Number of students injured, names of students injured
- Suspected injuries
- When it happened...Where it happened...What happened
- Current location of injured student(s)
- Student's present condition
- Condition of other group members and the name of the person who is with them
- What is currently happening
- Estimated time of next communication and method of communication

## Phone Contacts

Emergency Services: 000

Local Emergency Services (*The location of emergency services should be marked on maps where possible.*) Ambulance

☎ Police

☎ Hospital / Medical Centre

☎ CFA

☎ SES

☎ Other

Suggested School Contacts

☎ Principal

☎ Assistant Principal

☎ Reception

☎ 24 hour phone contact (including name(s))

Program Contacts:

Indicate the type of phone being used (eg. Satellite phone, digital mobile, UHF) and possible limitations of service.

☎ Teacher in Charge:

☎ Staff name:

☎ Local area contact(s)

Note: This proforma is one suggested way of documenting emergency response plans and may be adapted for local use.

# Appendix 7



Curriculum that is well supported in delivery through BushPlay (taken from Victorian Curriculum)

Learning Area / Capability	Strand	Sub Strand	Content Description	Implementation
<p><b>Health and Physical Education</b></p>	<p>Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Contributing to healthy and active communities</p>	<p><b>P</b> Participate in play that promotes engagement with outdoor settings including aquatic and the natural environment <a href="#">(VCHPEP063)</a></p> <p><b>1-2</b> Identify and explore natural and built environments in the local community where physical activity can take place <a href="#">(VCHPEP079)</a></p>	<p><b>Develop Confidence &amp; Competence in Nature</b></p> <p>Students will be introduced to skills and experiences that will increase their competence and feelings of comfort in nature.</p> <p>Elaborations:</p> <p><b>p</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exploring a range of ways to play and be active in outdoor, aquatic or natural settings (HBPA, RE, AP)</li> <li>understanding how to be safe in the outdoors through play in natural environments (S, AP, FMS, HBPA)</li> </ol> <p><b>1-2</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognising that physical activities can take place in a range of different environments, including natural, built and aquatic settings (HBPA, AP)</li> <li>participating in physical activities within the built structures in the school and local community where physical activity takes place (AP, HBPA)</li> </ol>



<p><b>Geography</b></p>	<p>Geographical Knowledge</p>	<p>Places and our connections to them</p>	<p>Reasons why some places are special and some places are important to people and how they can be looked after</p> <p><a href="#">(VCGGK069)</a></p>	<p><b>Foster Sustainable Relationships</b></p> <p>Students will be encouraged to foster personal relationships with the natural environment, which will have a positive impact on the way students live and relate to nature.</p> <p>Elaborations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. identifying and describing places they consider to be 'special'. For example, their room, a play area, holiday location or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander place of family significance, and explaining why the place is special to them</li> <li>2. discussing different ways people care for their 'special places'</li> <li>3. discussing how places provide people with their basic needs, for example, water, food and shelter</li> <li>4. proposing possible actions that could be taken by the student to improve an important place such as the school grounds or local park</li> <li>5. discussing with their teacher, other students and members of their family what they know and have learned about different places, why they need to be looked after, and how this could be achieved</li> </ol>
<p><b>Geography</b></p>	<p>Geographical Concepts and Skill</p>	<p>Place, space and interconnection</p>	<p>Identify how people are connected to different places</p> <p><a href="#">(VCGGC059)</a></p>	<p><b>Exploring Interconnections</b></p> <p>Students will be exposed to and explore more deeply the many ways in which humans interact with the natural environment, both in a historical and contemporary context.</p> <p>Elaborations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. examining the ways people are connected to other places through, for example, relatives, friends, things people buy or obtain, holidays, sport, family origin, beliefs, and places of particular significance</li> <li>2. suggesting what the pattern of visits to places might have been two generations ago and comparing this to their current pattern</li> <li>3. discussing how some people are connected to one Country, for example, because it is 'mother's' Country or 'father's' Country</li> </ol>

# Appendix 8



## Starter Learning Themes.

You've got the students off the bus, they have their back packs with all the correct equipment inside, as do you. It's time to complete the Welcome Talk and move into the learning themes of the day...

To start you off enlist the students as your bush detectives.

Explore beginner observational themes of

- **Hot and cold**
- **Rough and smooth**

Join in the hunt for these bush observations and celebrate the finds.

Next more to our core BushPlay question: What lives here?

- **Use scat (poo)** to find what animals live here. Have the students exclaim at the top of their lungs when they spot 'poo' on the ground. Become detectives and without touching it guess the animal. Maybe photograph for research back at school if you don't know it.
- **Fungus (mushrooms)** grows in nearly all Australian environments year round and can be easily spotted. Once again, have your detectives spot it, and yell it!

Now to our movement and balance outcomes.

- Look for low **logs to balance on** (holding hands with a partner).
- Stumps to climb on and jump off (under 50cm high)
- Stumps/boulders/fallen trees to measure height against. Young wattle trees are also great for this and grown between visits.

### Establish Ground Rules in this first session:

- Consider a solid 'recall' technique to call the students back in from each free play, Make it different to what you do back at home school. Consider an animal name.
- Set up the expectations of no students walking in front of the adult at the front. Engage them in the importance of this being so the lead adult can spot changes or dangers in the trail ahead (eg. Snake) and stop or change the groups approach.
- Your head is on a swivel as are the other adults. It is a dynamic risk assessment environment and locations change from visit to visit.
- Drinking water has to be encouraged (or enforced). Students will forget to drink and dehydration will affect their comfort and enjoyment (and listening).
- Students should be spotting rubbish, but not touching. Either carry gloves and a container to collect this in (and link it their learning and care for the environment) or store for collection on a later visit.
- Long pants are not optional, they are a vital piece of safety equipment for all participants and our last line of protection against prickles, grazes and bites and stings. Yes it can be hot, but hot is better than participant of an individual or whole group due to an avoidable injury. Stress the importance of close to footwear and pants in all materials sent home prior to BushPlay beginning.
- Go with your gut. Your gut (which is really your brain in this instance) will note when it is time to move on from different areas within your session. Kids start to wander further, get off task, turn into nature vandals, or are demanding to climb higher and higher on this rock or tree. Move the session on and spice up the learning theme to keep them engaged. Go with your gut on this one, and recognise that your gut will get better at this one. Use the thoughts and skills of other adults helping in your sessions too.

## Appendix 9



### (insert name) BUSHPLAY PRIMARY

MONDAY (weather permitting) is P/1 (insert name) first day of Bush Play Primary, led by teacher (insert name).

#### Please remember to bring:

- a packed lunch (NO lunch orders).
- drink bottle
- fruit snack
- back pack to carry their lunch etc.



#### Clothing:

- sensible walking shoes
- sensible clothes for bushwalking (long pants are a must)
- a spare pair of shoes and socks, for when we return to school, as they may be wet.
- a raincoat

#### Itinerary

9:00am – We will attend assembly as usual. Have a toilet break and ensure that we have everything we need.

9.20am - We will be taking the bus, from school to (insert location). During this time we will walk the trail, listening to instructions and education regarding the bush. We will be eating our snack and lunch on the walk.

1pm – We will return to school around this time.

There is no toilet at (insert location) so students will be required to use the bush, if needed.

Kind regards,  
(insert teacher name)

For further information and further reading jump online:

Latest compilation of research surrounding outdoor learning

<https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/6489/the-natural-world-as-a-resource-for-learning-and-development-from-schoolyards-to-wilderness>

*School policy*

## *Excursions and Activities*



<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/excursions.aspx>

*School policy*

## *Adventure Activities*

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/adventure.aspx>

This planning guide was produced in collaboration with Outdoor School and refers gratefully to DET documents for department of education schools in Victoria.

