

KU Castlecrag Preschool Yana Nura Bush Kinder Program Information Handbook For Families



What is Yana Nura Bush Kinder?

Yana Nura is an innovative program, which we started in 2013. Yana Nura is based on the Scandinavian approach to early childhood education known as Forest School. The Forest School approach has had a large impact on early childhood education right across the world including the UK, North America, New Zealand and, more recently, Australia.

The key aspect of the Forest School approach is that children spend long periods of time outside all year round. The children are involved in unstructured play within the local natural environment.

Why do we offer Yana Nura Bush Kinder?

According to recent research, "one in ten Aussie kids play outside once a week or less. "We have become a nation of indoors, not outdoors" (Climbing Trees: Getting Aussie Kids Back Outside, Planet Ark, 2013). "If we really want children to thrive we need to let their connection to nature nurture them." (Nurture Through Nature, Clare Warden, 2007)

As an education team, when we reflected on our experiences with play outdoors as children, the discussion turned to talk of climbing trees, playing with the neighbourhood kids on the street, play at the local rugged park or creek and staying out until the street lights came on.

An Australian survey showed a substantial decline in just one generation, with 73% of parents saying they played outside more than inside compared to their children, with only 13% saying their children played outside more than inside.

We believe providing spaces and places for children to connect with nature in their community builds the early foundations for a healthy, happy and nurtured child. We the educators and families strongly believe that childhood is about being in the moment and having the freedom we did as children to climb trees, dig in the dirt, build cubbies and play amongst nature.

The children relish their time in the bush, busying themselves with self-initiated experiences. Some play make-believe games – a fallen log becomes a boat on which to sit and fish from, while others play chasing games, engage in bug hunts and nature enquiries and some inspect the vegetables growing in the garden beds and look for insects to observe.

It also allows children to take considered risks and be adventurous. As part of the bush kinder program, children have the opportunity to climb trees, navigate uneven ground, play in nature, explore the local creek and just enjoy being part of the natural bush environment.



When children are faced with varying situations, environments and conditions, they adapt. Play in natural environments, like our bush setting, encourages children to play – and occasionally fall – on varied surfaces including rocks, dirt, sand and grass. This goes a long way towards helping children build their coordination and balance, but also supports their physical learning in allowing children to learn to fall correctly and minimise injury.

Other skills children can learn more effectively include throwing, catching, jumping, leaping, swinging and running. They learn more about problem solving, communication, social skills, their community and the local area, and also gain a more meaningful awareness and appreciation of the impact of human activity on the environment and the interdependence of living things; observing, noticing and responding to change.

Where is Yana Nura Bush Kinder?

The Yana Nura Bush Kinder Program takes place in the bushland behind our preschool, which begins at The Griffin Federation Track on The Rampart Castlecrag and flows down through the bush to Warners Park at The Outpost.



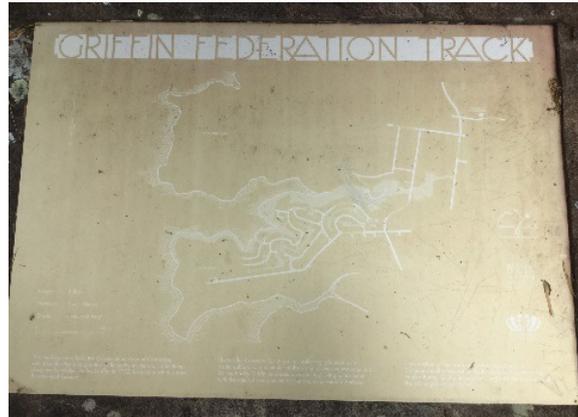
Bush Kinder takes place between 9:30am and 12:30pm on various days of the week. It alternates weekly between groups to ensure all children have the opportunity to attend.

We spend much of our time climbing trees, connecting with nature and exploring the local bush environment. We also like to spend time at the creek and pottering around on the open grass area or in the Dairy Community Garden. The program is led by, and dependent on, the children's interests on the day.

The entrance to The Griffin Bush Track is an easy walk from the centre along The Rampart for the children and educators. The track then becomes more challenging, with steeper descents and inclines up and down several sets of sandstones steps which we take slowly and carefully in single file. We are guided by the pace of the children.

The path

1. Walk up our driveway and turn right once at the top. Walk past seven houses to the Sandstone Rock Map at the top of the Griffin Federation Track.



2. Descend down the sandstone steps to the small bridge near The Outpost.



3. Meander along the leafy bush track towards the Sailors Bay Creek and Warners Park Community Centre.



4. Cross Sailors Bay Creek on the sandstone stepping stones and enter the beautifully provided Bush Playground.



5. Visit the Dairy Community Garden, Frog Pond and open spaces.



6. On occasion, we visit Warners Park Playground.



Safety

The Yana Nura Program is held in a public space with general public access. The bush environment is dynamic and always changing, so at times we may encounter situations that are beyond our control.

Our key safety messages to the children are:

- ▶ Always play where you can see an educator.
- ▶ Always wear your high vis vest and KU hat so that you can be easily identified by an educator.
- ▶ Don't speak to people you don't know unless you are with an educator.
- ▶ Ask an educator if you need to go to the toilet.
- ▶ Always look where you put your feet when you are walking, playing and climbing trees.
- ▶ We cannot paddle in the creek water; we don't know what's in the water.
- ▶ Educators will offer verbal support and encouragement when climbing trees and rocks, but will not lift children up or down from trees or rocks as children need to be able to get up and down on their own. This also ensures the safety and wellbeing of the educators.
- ▶ When playing or building with sticks, keep sticks low and be aware of people around you.
- ▶ When moving sticks, drag them along the ground at all times.
- ▶ If you encounter an off leash dog, place your hands down beside you, stand still, be as quiet as a mouse and look at the ground.
- ▶ If you see a snake, stop and stand still, raise your hand and slowly and quietly walk backwards to educators.
- ▶ If you see a spider, alert educators to identify it against the spider chart.



Policies and Procedures

Clothing

"There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing."

During bush kinder, children need to be dressed appropriately for the weather conditions and to protect themselves from the elements and injuries.

Dresses and skirts are not permitted as they make it difficult to tree climb. During wet weather, children will dress in our Scandinavian Protective Rain Wear.

Children will wear a high vis vests at all times with our centre name and phone number on them to be easily identifiable and seen in the bush should they become separated from the group.

Children are requested to wear their KU hats so they can be easily identified and clearly visible while on the bush walk.

To reduce the risk of ticks it is recommended that children and educators wear light coloured clothing that includes long cotton pants and long sleeve shirts.



Footwear

Children must wear enclosed footwear. We recommend sneakers/runners, as they offer protection for feet and are good for climbing trees and rocks and walking on uneven ground. Please no sandals, thongs or gumboots, as they restrict foot movement and are a trip hazard on the bush track.



Bush walking equipment – educators

When visiting the bush setting, educators carry with them an emergency backpack. The emergency backpack contains:

- ▶ First aid kit including ice packs and any asthma puffers or EpiPens needed
- ▶ Paperwork – children’s emergency contact details
- ▶ Centre mobile
- ▶ Whistle for emergencies
- ▶ Tissues, wipes, hand sanitiser, spare clothing
- ▶ Insect repellent

Bush walking equipment – children

When visiting the bush setting, children carry with them a small backpack. This backpack contains:

- ▶ Child’s own water bottle, filled with water
- ▶ Morning tea in a manageable small container
- ▶ Small A5 clipboard and pencil

Extreme weather conditions

Bush Kinder will be cancelled under extreme weather conditions. These conditions include:

- ▶ Temperatures above 37°C or below 13°C
- ▶ High winds
- ▶ Storm activity such as thunder, lightning, hail or excessive rain

Risk assessment

“Outdoor play provides open-ended, dynamic, varied opportunities which are unpredictable and at times risky. However, the risks and challenges of being outdoors provide rich opportunities for learning, problem solving and developing social competence” (Greenfield, 2004). Children need the freedom to take risks in play because it allows them to continually test the limits of their physical, intellectual and emotional development (Tranter, 2005).

An extensive benefit/risk assessment of the Yana Nura Program has been carried out by educators. This includes:

- ▶ Walking to the bush space
- ▶ Bush walking
- ▶ Climbing trees and rocks
- ▶ Exploring the creek
- ▶ Stick play and construction
- ▶ Separation or getting lost

A copy of the benefit/risk assessment is attached. As well as the overall risk assessment, a daily site assessment is carried out upon arrival at the bush environment. This has been approved by KU Central Office.

Toileting at the Bush Kinder

Children are encouraged to go to the toilet before leaving preschool and upon arrival to Warners Park Community Centre and again prior to leaving to return to preschool, but if the need arises while at Bush Kinder, children will be guided to go to the toilet at the back left hand side of the Community Centre and accompanied by an educator.

Emergency contact

The educators carry the preschool mobile phone on Bush Kinder in case of emergency. If you need to get in touch with us while we are on Bush Kinder, you can either call the preschool mobile or contact the centre and they will call us.

- ▶ Centre mobile number: 0439 565 039
- ▶ Centre telephone number: 02 9958 5393

Permission to attend Yana Nura Bush Kinder

Each year, parents will have the opportunity to complete a Regular Outing Permission Form and this will be valid for the whole year.

We will however give you at least one week's notice of our intention to go on Bush Kinder and you have the opportunity to speak to staff if you do not wish for your child to attend. We ask that this is organised one week ahead so that we can invite another child and ensure we meet our legal compliance ratio of 1 staff to 10 children at both the service and on Bush Kinder.

First aid

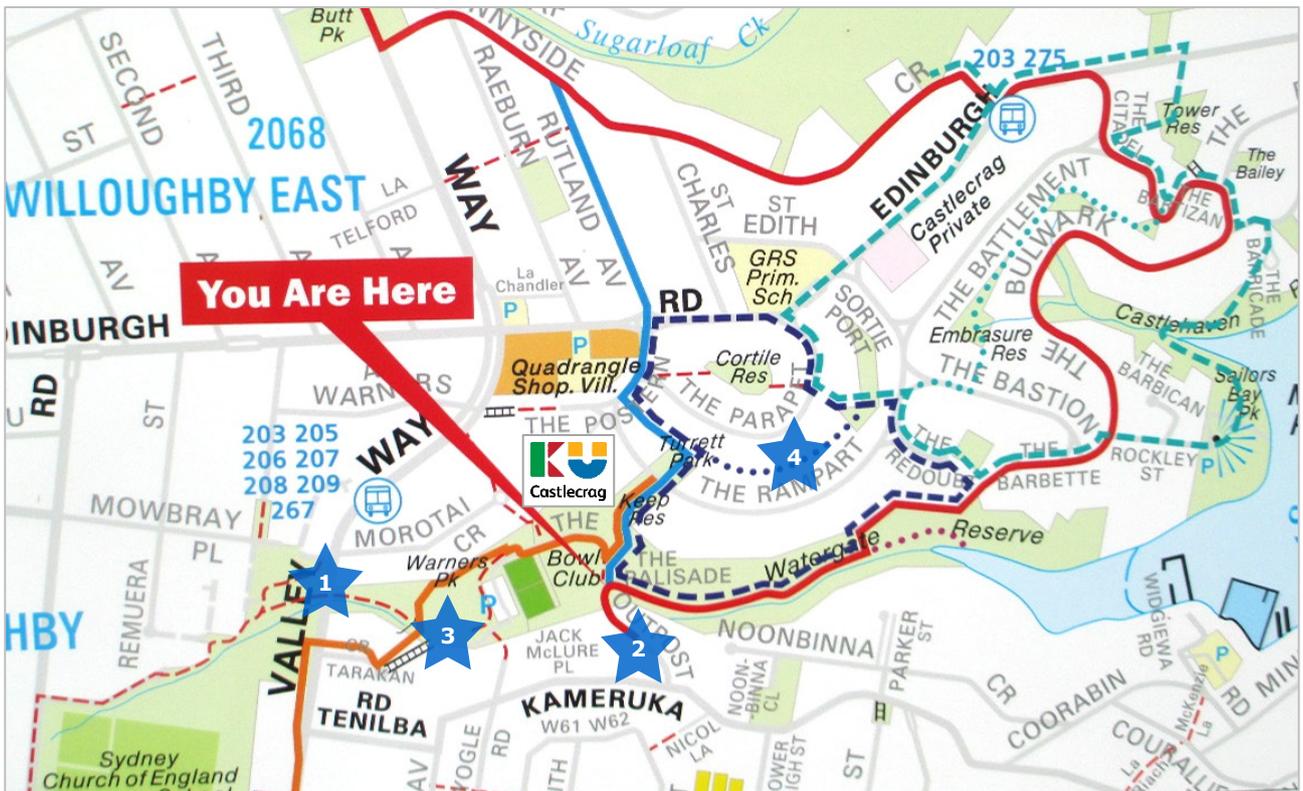
Accidents are part of childhood and will be a part of Bush Kinder. Our educators are all fully qualified first aiders and also hold current asthma and anaphylaxis training. In the case of an accident the following will occur:

- ▶ Educators will treat minor incidents on site.
- ▶ An accident form will be completed, outlining the injury and treatment.
- ▶ Parents will be called if the incident or injury requires medical attention and asked to collect from a designated meeting point.
- ▶ Emergency services (000) will be contacted if an ambulance is necessary. KU Children's Services holds current Ambulance Cover.
- ▶ Educators will notify your emergency contacts in the case that they cannot get a hold of a parent.



Emergency evacuation

If there is an emergency on Yana Nura, educators and children will gather together and move towards the closest exit and wait for help.



★ = Possible exits from the bush reserve in an emergency

Exit 1: Follow the Willoughby Incinerator track back up onto Eastern Valley Way to walk back to preschool via the path that adjoins The Postern.

Exit 2: Walk out via The Outpost onto Kameruka Road and back to Tenilba Road along Eastern Valley Way to the path that adjoins The Postern.

Exit 3: Walk up the stairs that leave the Warners Park Community Centre back up to Tarakan Crescent then along Eastern Valley Way to the path that adjoins The Postern.

Exit 4: Walk back up the Griffin Bush Track to The Rampart and along to preschool.

In case of emergency, educators will:

- ▶ Use the whistle to notify the children
- ▶ Perform a head count and check that all children are present
- ▶ Calmly leave the area
- ▶ Ring emergency services (000) if necessary
- ▶ Contact the centre to notify of the situation and plan further evacuation
- ▶ Practise with the children so they know what to do in an emergency

KU Castlecrag Preschool

10 The Postern, Castlecrag NSW 2068

T 02 9958 5393

M 0439 565 039

E ku.castlecrag@ku.com.au

www.facebook.com/kuchildrensservices

www.ku.com.au