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EXTREME WEATHER POLICY (BUSH KINDER SPECIFIC)

Best practice – Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by North Ringwood Pre-School to cancel Bush Kinder session/s in response to forecast weather conditions and ensure that parents/guardians understand this framework
- Ensure the health and safety of all children and staff when the weather conditions become extreme during a Bush Kinder session
- Provide an appropriate mechanism for communication of sessions cancellations in extreme weather conditions
- Impress upon parents/guardians that they may collect their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason)

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

North Ringwood Pre-School Inc. is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children and staff participating in the Bush Kinder program
- Facilitating a bush kinder experience in a variety of (safe) weather conditions, including rain, to allow children to experience nature across as broad a spectrum as possible and without compromising the safety of the participants
- Accessing appropriate resources to enable well-informed determinations to be made regarding weather conditions
- Facilitating effective and timely communications parents and guardians regarding weather conditions, cancellations or relocation of children in the event of extreme weather
- Respecting the right of parents/guardians to remove their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason)

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of North Ringwood Pre-School.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION



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Background

North Ringwood Pre-School's Bush Kinder Program is intended to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing children to experience nature and its elements across the 4 seasons. Whatever the weather, children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring and learning in a bush or natural environment. However, extreme weather conditions may arise periodically that can put the wellbeing and safety of the children and staff at risk. This policy provided the parameters within which the pre-school can make determinations to cancel Bush Kinder sessions in response to forecast extreme weather conditions and ensure appropriate communication channels are in place to inform participants. It also provides a framework for staff in the event that extreme weather conditions arise during a session and details procedures for effective evacuation of a safe location.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Sections 167, 169
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 87, 89, 136, 137(1)(e), 168(2)(a), 245
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety; and Quality Area 3: Physical Environment
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Bureau of Meteorology (BOM): Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Various smart phone apps use BOM data in their weather forecasts and warnings.

Extreme Weather: weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of rain, lightning, wind or heat. The risk to individuals' wellbeing is guided by the BOM's forecast conditions.

When the following conditions are forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology for the bush kinder site, at the designated time of the bush kinder activity, the session will be held at the kinder premises:

- Electrical storm activity/lightening
- Extreme temperature of 36 degrees Celsius or greater
- Bush fires risk, total fire ban or code red day



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- Flooding advice
- Wind speed of damaging winds/severe weather warning
- Extreme storm conditions and/or excessive rainfall

In addition to the above, the North Ringwood Pre-School committee has the discretion to cancel a session if it views the weather to be unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes, even if the extreme weather determinants as listed above have not been met. Weather warnings from the BOM for the area would also necessitate cancellation.

Further, the Maroondah City Council has the authority to override the Pre-School's committee determination on safety and request cancellation of a session should they deem the Bush Kinder site to be at risk.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Service Policies

- *Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy*
- *Excursions, Incursions and Special Events Policy*
- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*

PROCEDURES

GENERAL

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Implementing an Extreme Weather Policy that gives clear guidelines to staff and parents/guardians about extreme conditions that will necessitate the cancellation of a Bush Kinder session and provides guidance and procedures for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session
- Ensuring all parents/guardians are aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy upon request
- Bringing any relevant issues to attention of the Committee and/or Maroondah City Council in a timely manner
- Ensuring that the weather forecast is monitored via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior to the Bush Kinder session
- Having their mobile phones turned on to receive any notifications from staff about the status of the weather and Bush Kinder session
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents/guardians in the event of a cancellation of a Bush Kinder session or if the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions. Staff will notify parents/guardians of session



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closures, where possible, the evening prior to the session, or where conditions change, the morning of the session

Certified Supervisors and other educators are responsible for:

- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or mobile phone app) the day prior to the Bush Kinder session
- Making a determination to conduct or cancel the Bush Kinder sessions the next day based on the weather forecast unless otherwise advised by Maroondah City Council
- Providing an SMS text to parents/guardians/staff detailing the cancellation status of the Bush Kinder session – alerts will be sent where possible, by 5pm the day before the session, or by 7:30am on the day of the session
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents/guardians in the event of cancellation of a Bush Kinder session or if the group has been relocated/evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions
- Reminding parents/guardians of the policy content as required
- Keeping their mobile phone on them at all times on the day of the session to receive updates in relation to extreme weather forecasts which may necessitate cancellation
- Making a determination to conduct or cancel the Bush Kinder sessions the next day based on the weather forecast
- Providing an SMS to parents/guardians of the status of the Bush Kinder session
- In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy and Incident and Emergency and Evacuation Policy must be followed
- Contacting parent/guardian in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy, including contacting parents, calling an ambulance, etc.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading and familiarising themselves with this policy
- Ensuring they are comfortable at all times with the forecast weather conditions, while their child is attending a Bush Kinder session. If for whatever reason, a parent/guardian feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session and collect their child from a session in the event that extreme weather arises during a session
- Making certain they carry a mobile phone with them and be contactable at all times whilst their child's Bush Kinder session is in progress
- Ensuring protective clothing is worn by their child to suit the weather conditions and ensure a change of clothes is provided (including shoes) (Refer to Bush Kinder Handbook)
- Bringing any relevant issues to the attention of Kinder staff and/or the Committee
- Being mindful of the impending weather forecast for upcoming Bush Kinder sessions and understanding that a cancellation may occur if weather conditions may be extreme or dangerous



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- Keeping their mobile phones with them at all times on the day before and day of a Bush Kinder session to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation
- Collecting their child at any time during a session if they are not comfortable with the weather conditions

IN THE EVENT OF FORECAST OR EXTREME BAD WEATHER

In cases of forecast extreme weather, North Ringwood Pre-School will make the decision to cancel the Bush Kinder program for the sessions affected.

In addition to the extreme weather determinants detailed in the table under 'Definitions', the North Ringwood Pre-School Committee has the discretion to cancel the session if it views the weather to be unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes and the Maroondah City Council also has the authority to cancel a session due to extreme weather conditions at BJ Hubbard Reserve.

If a Bush Kinder session is cancelled due to extreme weather prior to the start of the session, parents/guardians will be notified via SMS and as such, the session will be offered from the kinder premises for that day.

IN THE EVENT OF WEATHER BECOMING EXTREME DURING A SESSION

Certified Supervisors and other educators are responsible for:

Undertaking the following actions in each of the weather conditions listed in the table below:

Weather Condition	Staff Action
Electrical storm activity/lightening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • move children away from trees • seek shelter indoors (onsite at 9th Ringwood Scout Hall) • stay tuned to weather reports and power outages using staff mobile phone
Extreme temperature of 36 degrees Celsius or greater	Risk include: sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor children for heat exhaustion / heat stroke • offer water for hydration at regular intervals • establish activities in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade, avoiding vigorous physical activity in hot weather • ensure application of sunscreen every 2 hours • ensure appropriate protection clothing is worn (eg. sunhat, light-coloured loose fitting clothing)
High winds	Risks include: falling trees or branches, blown particles (dust, dirt) into eyes, bush kinder structures blowing down or away, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure structures and dangerous items are secure • any equipment/structure must be moved by at least 2 staff / parents / volunteers to minimise risk of injury • seek shelter if necessary (onsite at 9th Ringwood Scout Hall)



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Weather Condition (cont.)	Staff Action (cont.)
Storm conditions and/or excessive rainfall	Risks include: rain, hail, cold temperatures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary • ensure appropriate protection clothing is worn (eg. raincoat, beanie) • seek shelter in storm conditions, heavy rain or hail (onsite at 9th Ringwood Scout Hall)

In all cases, staff will seek medical attention where necessary, as well as:

- staff to follow first aid procedure using up to date Level 2 training
- staff to follow procedure set out in *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy* including contacting calling ambulance, parents/guardian, logging incidents, etc.

PROCEDURES FOR RELOCATING/EVACUATING

If the Bush Kinder group is required to relocate to a safe position (ie. seeking shelter at the scout hall or evacuating to kinder premises) in response to weather conditions, the following procedures are to be followed by staff:

- Blow whistle
- Keep children calm
- Ensure sign-in sheet is in the teacher’s bag along with other necessary items such as medication
- Count all children and check them off against the sign-in sheet to ensure all children are accounted for
- With the exception of the teacher’s bag, leave all other Bush Kinder gear at the site – it can be collected at a later stage
- En-route to the new location, calmly walk children in pairs, keep groups close together and ensure no child deviates from the group
- Teachers/volunteers are to be positioned at the front and back of the group and flanking the group where possible
- Notify emergency services if required
- On arrival at the safe assembly point, conduct a full count/roll call to ensure all children are accounted for

Relocation to the 9th Ringwood Scout Hall:

Wait for the extreme weather to pass and when it does, resume normal activities if safe to do so, following same relocation procedures to return to the Bush Kinder site.

Evacuation to North Ringwood Pre-School:

If during a Bush Kinder session there is an onset of extreme weather and the staff decide to evacuate, the children will be evacuated using prescribed procedure. Parents/guardians will be notified that the children have moved to the kinder premises and if they need to collect their child to meet at the Pre-School address in this instance.



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Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from parents/guardians, children, educators, management and all affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness. This can be facilitated through discussions, surveys and the Pre-School newsletter
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service’s policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (this is a requirement under Regulation 172 of the National Regulations for policies mandated by law and would be considered best practice for all policies and procedures).

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of North Ringwood Pre-School on 16th October 2018.

REVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 2020

This policy will be reviewed every second year and is next due for formal Committee review in **2020**, unless deemed necessary earlier in response to legislative and/or other changes.

This policy was adopted on	16/10/2018	V1
This policy was reviewed on		