

Jacaranda Preschool  
Inc

Bush Kinder Program

2026

**Parent Handbook.**



## When I'm playing outside I'm learning

Absorption      Arranging      Adapting      Action  
Animals      Autonomy      Balance      Belonging  
Calculating      Caring      Change      Cause and Effect  
Chemical Reaction      Community      Classification  
Creative thinking      Construction      Co-operation  
Density      Communication      Creatures      Culture  
Connections      Confidence      Depth      Conservation  
Distance      Evaporation      Exploring      Force  
Experimenting      Environment      Friction      Feelings  
Friendship      Gravity      Height      Identification  
Inertia      Insects      Investigation      Initiative  
Independence      Invention      Light      Listening  
Language      Manipulating      Movement      Matching  
Measurement      Mass      Myself      Negotiation      Nature  
Nurturing      Number      Observing      Ordering  
Patterning      Physics      Planning      Problem Solving  
Propulsion      Plants      Questioning      Reaction  
Risk      Responsibility      Self Control      Size      Shape  
Speed      Spatial      Representation      Suspension  
Scent      Seasons      Scientific Method      Touch  
Temperature      Team Work      Texture      Vibration  
Volume      Weight      Weather and so much more!

## Playing outside makes me

## happier, healthier, smarter

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## PARTICIPATION

To participate in this program parents/carers must complete and return to kinder prior to the first session a **Routine Excursion Form**.

Parents/carers should also provide any changes to their excursion and enrolment forms **including updating the list of authorised people to collect your child**.

Children participating in our Bush Kinder Program at Westgarthtown will be dropped off at the Bush Kinder site by their parents/ guardians/ authorized persons.

## COMMUNICATION

We ask parents to **always have their mobile phone with them and turned on** throughout the duration of their bush kinder session to be easily contactable when necessary and aware of any updates throughout the session.

**Please enter relevant numbers to your phone:**

### Contacts for Bush Kinder in session – Nebel Street

Nominated Supervisors:	<a href="#">Emma Reimers and Kate Digney</a>	9464 4723
Staff for Orange/Red group	Kate Digney (Orange/Red Group) Angie Tolefsky (Orange/Red Group) Wafa Mansour (Inclusion Support)	<a href="#">0422 336 881</a>

### Contacts for Jacaranda Pre-School

Jacaranda Preschool – Nebel Street Kindergarten:	<a href="mailto:jacaranda.nebel.kin@kindergarten.vic.gov.au">jacaranda.nebel.kin@kindergarten.vic.gov.au</a> 9464 4723
President:	Lisa Sirp <a href="mailto:jacaranda.lalor.president@kindergarten.vic.gov.au">jacaranda.lalor.president@kindergarten.vic.gov.au</a>

### Important information:

Website address:	www.jacarandakinder.com.au
Kinder Mobile	<a href="#">0422 336 881</a> Orange and Red Group (Nebel St)

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

At Jacaranda Pre-School we believe an essential part of early childhood learning is being outside in nature.

We know children need more time outside in nature and this knowledge is supported by research.

Children are natural learners. Bush Kinder will provide your child with the time and ideal environment to learn in 3 hours of uninterrupted play in the bush, using what nature has provided as learning materials.

Bush Kinder will be a special part of your child's kinder experience.

They will have the opportunity to play in the rain, roll down grassy mounds, balance along fallen logs, get involved in dramatic play, find insects, draw with sticks in the ground, make mud pies. Each child's developmental progression, advancing skill levels and particular interests will be noted by their teachers. The teachers will use this knowledge to support the children's learning just as they do at kindergarten.

Teachers will support children as they take the risks and face challenges essential to learning.

Stories will be told, knowledge will be shared, songs will be sung.

Through play, your child will connect with and respect this space. They will connect with their land in a way that cannot be done under a roof or within walls.

## **SESSION OVERVIEW**

Prior to the commencement of each session, teachers will scan the bush space for safety and new areas of potential interest.

The children will then be free to engage in play within the boundaries of the Bush Kinder site.

Antibacterial cleaning material will be available for hand cleaning and personal care hygiene needs.

When the program involves moving from familiar bush kinder site, its boundaries and environment, the ratio of adult to children will be 1:6, children will wear high vis and tags with kinder details.

## **STAFF**

At a minimum, two staff will attend all times. Staff ratios have been set at 1:8.



### **When shouldn't my child attend?**

We ask that parents/carers are diligent and exercise their own judgement in assessing whether it is appropriate for their children to attend Bush Kinder.

Children should not attend Bush Kinder if they are ill, excessively tired or if parents are concerned about their wellbeing due to forecast weather conditions.

### **Others in attendance at Westgarthtown Bush Kinder Program**

To ensure our kindergarten children are given freedom to play and engage with nature we ask that adults are always respectful of their space.

During drop off times if you have siblings present please ensure that they always stay with you.



## SESSIONS

### Session times

**Bush Kinder sessions will be running on Tuesdays from Term Two for Orange and Red Group (Nebel Street) 8:15 am – 12:00 pm at Westgathtown Reserve**

### **Bush Kinder Session cancellation – Westgarthtown Bush Kinder Program**

Bush Kinder sessions may be cancelled ahead of time due to extreme weather or other circumstances. In this instance, a NORMAL KINDER SESSION will be held at kindergarten and parents will be notified via SMS text message.

However, if during a Bush Kinder session, there is a need for us to evacuate or there is an emergency, parents will be notified to collect their child and take them home or collect their child and if possible return their child to Nebel St preschool site to complete their kinder session.

## WEATHER

Parents will be notified if a Westgarthtown Bush Kinder session is cancelled in advance due to weather. Parents will be notified through text message to the primary contact nominated on your enrolment form. Please ensure text messages are currently going to the parent/guardian able to respond on a Tuesday morning. If this changes on any day, please let us know.

This information will be obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology website: <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/melbourne.shtml>  
<http://www.bom.gov.au/forecasts/graphical/sectors/VIC.php>



## CLOTHING

Parents are required to determine appropriate clothing based on the weather forecast appropriate to their session time.

Children will not be allowed to attend a Bush Kinder session if they arrive with inappropriate clothing and without suitable clothing to change into.

It is important that Bush Kinder participants wear appropriate and protective clothing and footwear which:

- allows children to move freely and undertake activities such as climbing, balancing, running
- keeps children warm and dry in cold/wet weather
- protects children from the damaging effects of the sun, UV rays in warm weather and high UV conditions.
- prevents sunburn, bites, scratches and stings. (Even in warm weather, long sleeve tops and long pants are recommended - this clothing should be loose fitting and light).
- Where possible is made from natural fabrics which allow the body to breathe and is comfortable against the skin
- In the case of footwear, it needs to keep feet and toes covered and have a flexible sole to allow children to climb and balance on uneven surfaces. We recommend children wear gumboots when the weather is wet and the ground is muddy. We recommend packing a pair of runners or suitable shoes for the children to walk back to kindergarten in. We will transport the children's gumboots back to kindergarten. You can keep them in our bush kinder equipment for the entirety of the program.

The following table provides examples of recommended clothing, clothing which is not recommended and unacceptable clothing:

	Warm Weather	Cold Weather / Rain
Recommended clothing and footwear	Light loose fitting long sleeve tops and long pants, broad brimmed hat, closed toe shoes	Long pants, long sleeved top, beanie, waterproof gloves, thermals in very cold weather. Gumboots or waterproof hiking boots.
Not recommended	short sleeved tops, shorts, skirts or dresses.	Skirts, dresses (incompatible with Rain sets)
Unacceptable clothing and footwear	Open toe shoes, sandals, thongs, crocs, singlet tops	

**\*Rain sets:** Light rainproof suit worn over clothing, which includes a jacket with a hood, and pants, which zip up over clothing. The centre will provide a rain set for each child to use.

**Change of clothes:** All children participating in Bush Kinder are required to bring a change of clothes and footwear as these may become wet and muddy. It is recommended that the spare clothing includes:

- Spare top and bottoms of appropriate thickness/weight for the weather on the day
- Spare underpants
- 2 pairs of socks
- 1 pair of gumboots
- The Bush Kinder 'on-site kit' will contain some spare clothing, Rain sets.

On high UV days, please ensure that you apply sunscreen prior to the session commencing. Sunscreen will be available for re-application during sessions.

### **Clothing provided by Kindergarten**

Rain sets will be provided by Jacaranda Pre-School.

## **WHAT ELSE TO BRING**

### **Water**

Parents/carers are required to provide a water bottle of fresh water at all sessions. There will be access to drinking water to supplement this when required on site. All participants who are onsite at bush kinder are required to have a water bottle.

### **Food**

Parents/carers are required to provide a snack in a sealed container for each session for their child to eat. We ask you to consider the environment by not including any packaging. We also ask that you continue to follow the centre's Healthy Eating Policy.

### **Footprints**

Please always take away with you what you brought in. Parents and children are asked not to bring toys along to Bush Kinder to better enable children to engage in the natural surrounds.

### **Medications**

Staff will bring children's medication and action plans which have been provided by children's parents.

### **Training and Awareness sessions**

Sessions will be run as part of orientation for staff and children for dog safety training.

A minimum of two staff must have a Level 2 First Aid Certificate.

### **Risk Benefit Assessment**

A Risk assessment has been prepared and is available for parents to view.

## **Further Policy and Regulations**

Bush Kinder is conducted as part of the Jacaranda Pre-School program and therefore is governed by the regulations and procedures of the Kindergarten. Due to location and environmental factors, variations to policy have been identified and different procedures created which are specific to Bush Kinder to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children, staff and volunteers involved in the program.

We ask parents to view the policies regarding Bush Kinder which are available in the centre's foyer, to gain a full understanding of the responsibilities of the Jacaranda Pre-School Committee, staff, volunteers and parents alike.

## **Bush Kinder Policy**

**Delivery and Collection**

**Dogs**

**Emergency Evacuation**

**Extreme Weather**

**Identification and Visibility**

**Play Benefit and Risk**

**Protective Clothing**

**Snake Awareness and first aid**

## **Bush Kinder Site- Westgarthtown**

### **LOCATION**

The Bush Kinder site is in The Westgarthtown Lutheran Reserve, between Rosedale Drive (Which is the continuation of German Lane) and Mount View Road, Thomastown. The Reserve is 1.1 kms from Jacaranda Pre-School.

The area has Historical sites which date back to 1851 when the Ziebell farmhouse was built. Ziebell Farmhouse and outbuildings are all included on Victoria's Heritage register.



**Ziebell's original farmhouse, barn and other buildings have been lovingly restored by the City of Whittlesea. They represent the heart of Ziebell's original 102 acre farm, named The Pines, the largest at Westgarthtown. Built between 1851 and 1856, with 61 cm thick stone walls, the house is a typical German farmhouse design.**



**The drystone walls on the Lutheran reserve have been restored in recent years, with the involvement of the City of Whittlesea, Parks Victoria, the Friends of Westgarthtown and Reservoir Corrections.**



**The Thomastown Lutheran Church occupies a commanding position at the centre of the original Westgarthtown settlement'640 acres. The Thomastown Lutheran church is the oldest operating church in Australia.**

This site has been chosen as it gives a comfortable area for children to explore and get to know through the seasons. It provides clear lines of sites with natural boundaries easily identified by staff, children and volunteers. It also offers opportunity to expand into different environments when the group wishes to explore just the bit further and always providing a known place to call Home. On occasion, following appropriate risk assessment, the program may involve walking along Edgars Creek Park trail towards Thomastown Reserve

When the program involves moving from familiar bush kinder site, its boundaries and environment, the ratio of adults to children will be 1:6, children will wear high vis and tags with kinder details.



## Parking Area

Parking is available on Gardenia Rd and Ainwick Crescent. Please take care.



## DROP-OFF

The drop off point is Ziebell's farmhouse as designated in the orientation session and on the above map. Bush Kinder signage will be displayed around the perimeter of the site.

### Drop-off

Parents and carers need to ensure they:

- Bring their child's bag/backpack with change of clothes (including a pair of shoes to walk back to Nebel St) and a sunhat
- Bring their child's water bottle filled with clean drinking water and snacks
- Sign the child in using the attendance book/arrival iPad and record the time of arrival

***Please refer to main Delivery and Collection of Children Policy for full procedures relating dropping off children and collecting in an emergency.***

## Toilets

To maintain required staff ratios set by regulations at all times, the public toilets at Westgarthtown Lutheran Reserve in the Ziebell Farmhouse will only be utilised by children when the whole group is at the Farmhouse.

While at the Bush Kinder site, a camping toilet will be provided for children and staff to use when necessary. It is housed in an appropriate tent. Staff will attend to any children requiring assistance. Parents are requested to encourage children to use the toilets prior to

their session.

## EMERGENCY EVACUATION

There are times that have been identified that require the Bush Kinder participants to evacuate to a safer location to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the group. In this event, Bush Kinder staff will notify parents via a Broadcast SMS. Parents are asked to familiarise themselves with the designated safe areas and assembly points as detailed in the emergency evacuation maps.

The reasons for relocating include, but are not limited to: Fire or Bushfire, missing child, aggressive dogs off leads, other animal intruders, uninvited person/stranger (threatening, causing a nuisance or unease for staff and participants), natural events, such as extreme weather, floods, severe winds or thunderstorm, medical emergency or accident.

## Westgarthtown Bush Kinder Program.

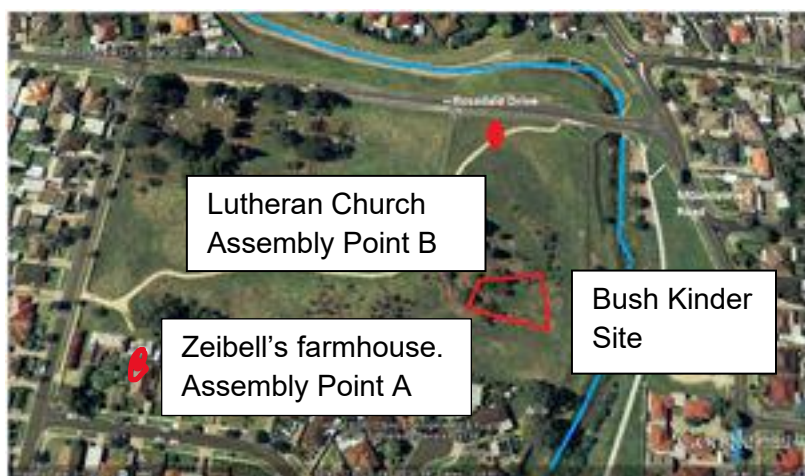
### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN.

The person in day to day charge will manage all children and staff/volunteer's movements and will be responsible for communication between all staff/volunteers and children.

The person in day to day charge will nominate the staff member responsible to communicate with emergency services as necessary and the person to communicate with families when appropriate.

In the case of emergency, we will evacuate the children to Assembly Point A – Ziebell's Farmhouse Veranda

Figure 1 - Assembly Point A Zeibell's Farmhouse Verandah.



Assembly point A: Ziebell Farmhouse Veranda

Group to wait here until dangerous situation has passed and it is safe to resume normal activities.

If families are required to collect their child from Assembly Point A they are to enter via Gardenia Rd.

If the person in day to day charge deems it unsafe to evacuate to the Ziebell's Farmhouse, we will evacuate to the Lutheran Church – Assembly Point B

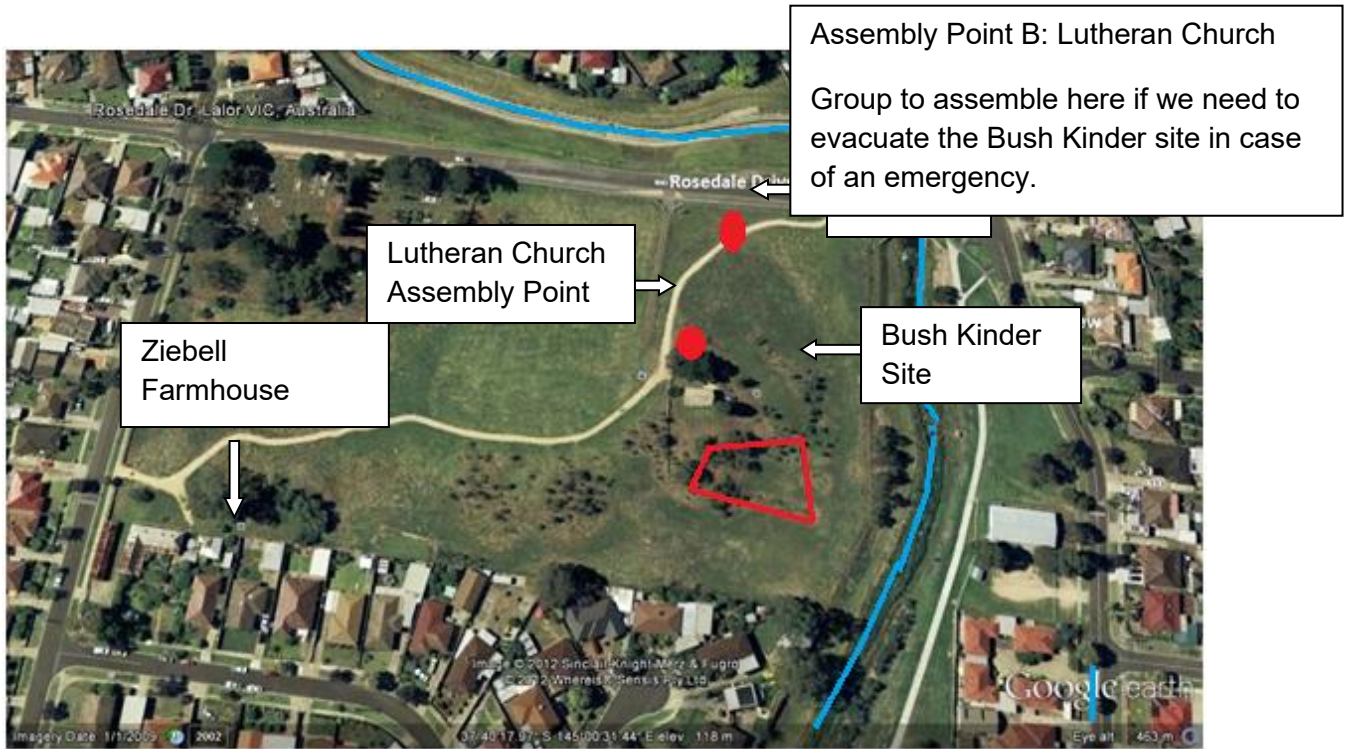


Figure 1 - Assembly Point B Lutheran Church

If the person in day to day charge identifies the need to evacuate the site fully, we will walk back to Nebel st kinder following our usual route. The person in day-to-day charge with the group will decide on which route to take based on safety needs. The route will be communicated with all educators and adults assisting with the safe passage of the group.

