

## Proposed Four-Year-Old Bush Kinder Program

August 11, 2016

Dear Parents,

The Educators at MECS Kindergarten have been exploring the idea of *implementing* Bush Kinder with our four-year-old children. Research and the success of many other Kindergartens has encouraged the Educators to trial this kind of learning opportunity. MECS Kindergarten is excited to announce a pilot program of Bush Kinder.

Initially, Bush Kinder will involve holding *one session per fortnight* in bush land located in the school grounds behind the science lab. The length of the session will vary as they children become familiar with the area and their capabilities for exploration develop.

**Bush Kinder will begin:**  
Koalas Friday 19 August  
Possums Friday 26 August

All staff have been through a detailed risk assessment which is available to you upon request. Please provide appropriate clothing for the days' weather conditions. The session will run in wet weather (but not pouring) so please make sure your child has some wet weather protection. We recommend children have gumboots with them on these days, and at the very least, closed toe sturdy shoes. It can tend to get wet underfoot after it's been raining, which is a perfect time to explore the bush. We want children to feel free to get dirty and manage themselves well in this beautiful and natural setting. Of course, we also need you to continue to provide a spare set of clothing, every day. We will *require extra parental assistance* for *each session*, to ensure we have adequate supervision. This means that on every second Friday we need two parents on duty. Can you add your name into a space on the current roster, to ensure we have a minimum of two parents with us while we do Bush Kinder? The days for your group have been highlighted on the roster.

Engaging in a program such as Bush Kinder strongly supports the MECS Kindergarten beliefs, values and philosophy. At MECS we strongly believe that children are naturally curious and full of wonder. God has provided all we need in nature, and what better way for children to learn about and appreciate creation, our maker and our role as stewards. We believe that early literacy, numeracy, and all the areas of development can be strengthened in this environment through careful planning and interactions with children as they explore. We advocate that rather than teach children 'stuff', we allow for spaces and places where children learn to learn, especially through nominating time for wondering in and about Creation.

The Bush Kinder session is unique as it allows the children to engage in many different experiences as well as giving them many opportunities to gain a variety of skills, grow and develop. The Educators and children utilize the natural environment to create many authentic teachable moments for the children to explore.

The children develop great respect and connectedness for the natural environment. The children will also continue to develop strong relationships amongst their peers and adults within the group. Current research shows that by forming strong positive relationships at a young age, children have a greater image of themselves, develop greater confidence and self-esteem, which is our primary objective for the children.

Currently our society is busy, rushed and at times over scheduled. Research has indicated this in turn can have a negative impact on young children. The implementation of the Bush Kinder would help counteract some of these statistics and achieve research recommendations.

Please take a look at the following *information and articles* for further information and see the Educators to discuss any queries.

Kids Gone Wild - Dateline

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jkij9dJfcw>

The Life Long Learner

<https://thelifelonglearner.wordpress.com/2013/09/23/outdoor-kindergarten-programs-melbourne-australia/>

Dirt is Good

[http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-07/sharman-free-range-kids-could-become-healthier,-happier-adults/7306740?WT.mc\\_id=newsmail](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-07/sharman-free-range-kids-could-become-healthier,-happier-adults/7306740?WT.mc_id=newsmail)

Blessings,

***Cherie, Wendy, Andrea and Karen***