**Bush Kinder Extreme Weather Policy**

NQS: Quality Area 2

**Purpose**

This policy aims to:

● Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by

Numurkah Kindergarten to cancel Bush Kinder session/s in response to forecast

weather conditions and ensure that parents understand this framework.

● Ensure the health and safety of all children and staff when the weather conditions

become extreme during a session.

● Provide guidelines for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder

session

● Provide an appropriate mechanism for communication of session cancellations in

extreme weather conditions

● Impress upon parents 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**

Numurkah Kindergarten is committed to:

● Providing a safe and healthy environment for children 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 communication to parents regarding weather

conditions, cancellations, or relocation of children in the event of extreme weather

● Respecting the right of parents 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 children, parents, staff, committee members, authorised persons,

volunteers and students on placement working at Numurkah Kindergarten.

**3. Background and legislation**

Numurkah Kindergarten’s Bush Kinder program is intended to operate across a broad

spectrum of weather conditions, allowing the children to experience nature and its elements

across the 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 which can put the wellbeing and safety of the

children and staff at risk. This policy provides the parameters within which the kindergarten

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 provides procedures for effective evacuation to a safe

location.

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

● Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

● Education and Care Services National Law 2010

● National Quality Standards, including 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**

Bureau of Meteorology: Australia's national weather, climate and water agency.

Website Various iphone/ipad apps use BOM data (e.g., Pocket Weather)

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

Bureau of Meteorology's forecast conditions. An extreme weather table is shown below.

Bush kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of these determinants are met:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Weather Condition** | Extreme weather determinant causing cancellation. |
| Forecast temperature | 36 degrees Celsius or greater AND kinder teacher decides that it would be appropriate to cancel bush kinder  Note there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (Refer Protective Clothing Policy) |
| Forecast wind speed | In excess of 45km per hour AND kinder teacher decides that it would be appropriate to cancel bush kinder, based on a final assessment at the site |
| Forecast of electrical storm  activity | Thunderstorm/electrical storm forecast |
| Station Street Wetlands flooded at or  near the Bush Kinder site | On flooding advice warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology and Kinder Teacher deeming the site unsafe |
| BOM weather warnings of  extreme storm conditions and  excessive rainfall | On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology |

In addition to the above, Numurkah Kindergarten has the discretion to cancel a session/s if it views

the weather to be poor for Bush Kinder purposes, even if the extreme weather determinants in the

above table are not reached. Weather warnings from the Bureau of Meteorolgy for the area may also

necessitate cancellation.

Protective Clothing: Refer to Protective Clothing Policy

**5. Sources and related centre policies**

Centre policies

● Bush Kinder Delivery & Collection of Children Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)

● Bush Kinder Protective Clothing Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)

● Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)

● Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)

● Bush Kinder Snake Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)

● Bush Kinder Dog Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)

● 2.5 Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy (including First Aid)

● 2.10 Supervision of Children Policy

● 2.12 Excursion & Regular Outing Policy

● 2.15 Clothing Policy

● 2.16 Sun Protection Policy

● 2.17 Water Safety Policy

● 7.5 Occupational Health & Safety Policy

**Procedures**

**General**

The Committee is responsible for:

● An Extreme Weather Policy which gives clear guidelines to staff and parents about

extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a bush kinder session/s and

provides guidance and procedures for staff in the event of extreme weather during a

Bush Kinder session

● All parents being aware of this policy and provided access to the policy upon request

● Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents in

the event of cancellation of a Bush Kinder session or if the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions.

Parents are responsible for:

● 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 feels

concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session or collecting their child from a session in the event that extreme weather arises during a session.

● 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 Protective

Clothing Policy)

● Ensuring they carry a mobile phone with them and be contactable at all times while

their child’s Bush Kinder session is in progress.

● Reading and being familiar with the policy

● Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee

**In the event of forecast extreme or bad weather**

In cases of forecast extreme weather (see definition above), Numurkah Kindergarten will

make the decision to cancel the bush kinder program for the session(s) affected.

In addition to the extreme weather determinants detailed in the table under ‘Definitions’, the

Numurkah Kindergarten has the discretion to cancel the session if it views the weather to be

unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes.

Staff are responsible for:

● Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile

phone app) the day prior and on the day of the Bush Kinder session

● Making a determination to cancel or conduct the bush kinder sessions at any time

based on the weather forecast

● Providing a notice to parents and staff of the status of the Bush Kinder session/s as

follows:

● By SMS to the Bush Kinder group as soon as possible after the determination is made

● Note that a bush kinder session may be cancelled at short notice or at any

other time by broadcast SMS based on updated weather information.

● Ensuring that on high wind days (forecast wind speed > 45km/h) that at least two

volunteers be tasked with managing gear and tents on that day

● Keeping their mobile phone with them on the day of the session to receive notice of

cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation

Parents are responsible for:

● Keeping their mobile phone with them on the day of the session to receive notice of

cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation

● Checking email for any notifications of session cancellation

**In the event of weather becoming extreme during a session**

Staff are responsible for:

● Undertaking the following actions in the each of the weather conditions listed in the

table below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Weather condition** | **Staff Actions** |
| **Heat Risks**  include sunburn, heat stress, heatstroke, dehydration, | * Monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat   stroke (see Attachment 1 for symptoms and  treatments)   * Offer water for hydration at regular intervals * Establish activities in shaded areas and   encourage children to play in the shade   * Ensure application of sunscreen every two hours * Ensure appropriate protective clothing is worn including hats. [Refer Protective Clothing Policy for more information] |
| **Rain/Hail/Cold**  Risks include child getting wet (and onset of  hypothermia), injury from hailstones | ● Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary (with assistance of volunteers)  ● Ensure appropriate clothing is worn (e.g.,  waterproof clothing, gloves)  ● Encourage wearing of appropriate clothing,  including coats, gloves, scarves etc.  ● Seek shelter in heavy rain or in hail [See  Relocation Procedures below] |
| **Electrical storm activity / Lightning**  Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs  falling as a result of lightning strike | ● Move children away from trees  ● Seek indoor shelter [See Relocation  Procedures below]  ● See Attachment 2 for Lightning Safety Fact  Sheet |
| **High winds**  Risks include falling trees/tree limbs, blowing  particles (sand, dirt) into eyes, Bush Kinder  structures blowing down/away etc | ● Ensure structures and dangerous items are  secure  ● Move children away from trees  ● Seek shelter if necessary [See Relocation  Procedures below]  ● Any equipment/structures must be moved by at least two staff/volunteer to minimise risk of  injury  ● If the children are being moved, follow the  ‘Relocating to a safe position’ instructions  below |

● In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the

Illness Policy and Incident and Medical Emergency Management Policy must be

followed.

● Contacting parent/carer in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the

Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy.

**Parents are responsible for:**

● Collecting their child at any time during the session if they are not comfortable with the weather conditions

● Collecting their child as soon as possible where staff have determined and communicated to parents the extreme weather event and action taken

**Procedures for Relocating to a Safe Position**

Relocation Safe Zones

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hail, torrential rain | Seek shelter beside the wetlands at the Numurkah Fishing club |
| Electrical storm/lightning,  extreme winds | Seek shelter beside the Numurkah station street wetlands at the Numurkah Fishing Club |

If conditions necessitate evacuation from the Station Street Wetlands, Numurkah, follow procedures in the Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder specific)

**Procedures for relocating:**

If the Bush Kinder group is required to relocate to a safe position in response to the weather

conditions, the following procedures are to be followed by staff (with the assistance of

volunteers):

● Keep children calm

● Ensure sign-in sheet is in the teacher’s backpack along with other necessary items such

as medication

● Count / check off against the sign in sheet to ensure all children are accounted for

● With the exception of the teacher’s backpack, leave Bush Kinder gear at the site – it can

be collected later

● En route to new location (see below for appropriate locations), calmly walk children in

pairs, keep group close together and ensure no child deviates from the group

● Teachers/adult volunteers 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 safe assembly point, conduct a full count/roll call to ensure all children are

accounted for

● Wait for the extreme weather to pass and when it does, resume normal activities,

following same relocation procedures to return to the Bush Kinder site

● If the weather does not look like it will pass soon, a broadcast SMS should be sent to all

parents, advising of the new safe location for pickup purposes.

**Evaluation**

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the committee

will:

● Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents of children

participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions.

● Review the centre’s actions in response to extreme weather conditions

● Ask staff to share their experiences in cases of extreme weather (in cases were

sessions were cancelled, and in cases where extreme weather arose during a

session)

● Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with

any new legislation, research, or best practice procedures.

**Attachments**

Attachment 1 Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments

Attachment 2: Lightning Action Guide and First Aid Guidelines

Attachment 3: Bush Kinder site map showing safe relocation zones in the event of extreme weather.

Authorisation

Endorsed by the Numurkah Kindergarten Committee of Management on 17th October 2023.

**Review Date**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and is next due for formal Committee review in

2025, unless deemed necessary earlier.



**ATTACHMENT 1**

**Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments**

Victoria Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/heat)

Heat exhaustion is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke.

Warning signs may include:

• Pale and sweating

• Rapid heart rate

• Muscle cramps, weakness

• Dizziness, headache

• Nausea, vomiting

• Fainting

Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency. It occurs when the body is unable to prevent

the temperature rising rapidly.

The symptoms may be the same as for heat exhaustion, but the skin may be dry with no

sweating, and the person’s mental condition worsens. They may stagger, appear confused,

have a fit, or collapse and become unconscious.

**What to do for heat exhaustion**

• Get the person to a cool area and lie them down

• Fan if possible

• Drink cool water if not vomiting

• Remove outer clothing

• Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths

• Seek medical advice

**What to do for heat stroke**

• Call an ambulance

• Get the person to a cool area and lie them down

• Remove clothing and wet skin with water, fanning continuously

• Position an unconscious person on their side and clear the airway

**ATTACHMENT 2**

**LIGHTNING SAFETY FACT SHEET**

Source: Victorian State Government – Education and training (www.education.vic.gov.au)

If thunder happens within 30 seconds of lightning, then the storm is within 10 kilometres of your

location. Lightning safety experts consider this the strike danger zone and advise people to follow

the 30/30 rule.

**The 30/30 rule**

Follow the precautions outlined below when thunder is heard within 30 seconds of a lightning flash

and wait for 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard to resume your activity. If you’re unable to take shelter inside, find the safest accessible location and stay there until the storm has passed.

**General precautions**:

● Stay away from metal poles, fences, clothes lines etc.

● Never ride horses, bicycles or drive in open vehicles.

● If driving, slow down or park away from trees, power lines or other objects that may be damaged

by storm activity.

● Stay inside metal-bodied (hard top) vehicles or caravans but do not touch any metal sections.

● If undertaking water activities, leave the water immediately.

● If boating go ashore to shelter as soon as possible. (A bridge or high jetty may offer immediate

protection.)

● Discard all metal objects.

**If shelter is near-by:**

● Seek shelter in a hard top vehicle or solid building. Avoid small structures or fabric tents.

● Keep clear of windows.

**If shelter is not available**:

● Crouch (alone, feet together), preferably in a hollow. Make yourself a small target.

● Remove metal objects from head/body.

● Do not lie down (the more of you that is in contact with the ground, the more ‘attractive’ you are to lightning) but avoid being highest object.

● If your hair stands on end or you hear buzzing on nearby rocks, fences etc, move immediately. At

night, a blue glow may show if an object is about to be struck.

● Stay away from high and low points (hilltops, ridges & gullies), rock overhangs and shallow caves.

● Keep out of, and well away from, water bodies or watercourses.

● Make sure the group is aware of the Lightning Safe Position.

This involves:

○ Squatting or crouching with knees drawn up and feet together, preferably on dry

insulating material (e.g., foam mat).

○ Keeping hands off the ground.

○ Spread group members out – about ten metres apart, but within calling distance.

● Never shelter under tree/s.

**First aid**

● Apply immediate CPR to lightning victims until medical help arrives. (You won’t receive a shock

from the victim.)

For further information contact the State Emergency Service office.www.ses.vic.gov.au

**ATTACHMENT 3**

**BUSH KINDER SITE MAP SHOWING SAFE RELOCATION ZONES IN**

**THE EVENT OF EXTREME WEATHER**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Weather event** | Safe Relocation Zone |
| Hail, torrential rain | Seek shelter at the Numurkah Fishing Club rooms |
| Electrical storm/lightning,  extreme wind | Seek shelter at the Numurkah Fishing Club rooms |

If conditions necessitate evacuation from the Station Street Wetlands, follow procedures in the Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder specific)