



Dear Families,

This year, we are exploring the benefits of nature play. Spending time in nature is part of a "balanced diet" of childhood experiences that promote children's healthy development, well-being, and positive environmental attitudes and values.

### WHY NATURE PLAY?

- Time in nature is linked to positive outcomes for children's physical and mental wellbeing.
- Regular playtime in nature helps children feel happier and healthier. It boosts their memory, attention, and learning skills. Nature play also helps children build self-confidence, make friends, and manage stress better.
- Learning in natural environments can boost creativity, critical thinking and problem solving.
- Children who play in nature are more engaged in learning and feel more in control of how they learn.
- Playing outside, especially in natural areas, helps kids stay active and can reduce the chances of childhood obesity.
- When children feel connected to nature, they are more likely to take steps to protect the environment.

*“In relation to children and play, mud should not be viewed as mess - but a key ingredient to childhood.” - Jason Tyndall, Nature Play SA*

### FURTHER READING

Learning Outdoors: Benefits/Risks. Nature Play SA. *Freely available to read and download via web.*

Outdoor Learning, Outdoor Play and the School Environment Literature Review. Nature Play WA. *Freely available to read via web.*

Talking about practice: Adventurous play— Developing a culture of risky play. National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program. *Freely available to read via web.*

### REFERENCES

Do Experiences with Nature Promote Learning? Converging Evidence of a Cause-And-Effect Relationship. Ming Kuo, Michael Barnes, Cathy Jordan, 2019.

The Decline of Play and the Rise of Psychopathology in Children and Adolescents. P. Gray, 2011.

Individual differences in children's risk perception and appraisals in outdoor play environments. H. Little, S. Wyver, 2010.

Does Access to Green Space Impact the Mental Well-being of Children: A Systematic Review Author: Rachel McCormick, 2017.

Adventurous Play as a Mechanism for Reducing Risk for Childhood Anxiety: A Conceptual Model. Helen F. Dodd, Kathryn J. Lester, 2020.





*‘The outdoor play and learning environment needs to be an environment where inspiration and creativity can take root, where curiosity and spontaneity can be realised, and where risk and failures can be experienced.’*

### **WHY CHILDREN NEED A CONNECTION TO NATURE MORE THAN EVER:**

Children’s lives today are vastly different from those of just one or two generations ago. In general, children have fewer opportunities for outdoor free play and regular contact with nature. Their physical boundaries have significantly shrunk, and they have less freedom and autonomy compared to previous generations.

Schools and early learning centres have a vital role to play in providing opportunities for children to experience time in nature, healthy risk taking, rich sensory play, and unstructured free-play.



### **10 THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU TURN 12**

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Climb a tree                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Explore a jetty and the beach        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Cook damper on a campfire           | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Stargaze: connect with the night sky |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Race bark or sticks in a creek      | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Create a habitat for insects         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Yell “cooeee!” in a gorge or valley | <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Plant native seedlings               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Visit a national park               | <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Birdwatch                           |