

# What happens in our Kindergartens?

## Play Based Learning

Our kindergartens offer programs that promote learning through active engagement and play. Active play allows children to test and develop a wide range of skills. It promotes significant health and wellbeing benefits. In our high quality Early Childhood services, your child will experience active indoor and outdoor play, music, movement and creative expression, positive adult-child interactions and use their whole body and mind to be absorbed in learning.

One of the greatest benefits of play is to assist with the development of social competence. Children can build relationships, learn to resolve conflicts, negotiate and regulate their behaviours. In play, children usually have increased feelings of success and optimism as they act as their own agents and make their own choices. Playing is a known stress release; it is often linked to child wellbeing. The dispositions for learning, such as curiosity, openness, optimism, resilience, concentration, and creativity are developed in play. Playing is linked to the development of resilience and the beginnings of empathy as children begin to understand other points of view.



## Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program

All of our kindergartens participate in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program. This program aims to help children form positive food habits for life. The program provides the inspiration, information, professional learning and support for our kindergarten educators to deliver pleasurable food education, in conjunction with parents and the wider community.

Research shows that fun has a powerful and positive impact on learning. When children are relaxed, happy and engaged, their senses are on full alert and their brains are perfectly primed to absorb the learning opportunities that surround them.

Through active engagement, your child will learn how to grow, harvest, prepare and share fresh, seasonal, delicious food throughout their time at kindergarten. Pleasurable food education is about children experiencing the joy of digging in the garden, picking fresh veggies, smelling and tasting the food they prepare, and sharing the experience with their friends, educators and family.

## Healthy Achievement Program

The aim of this program is to improve the health and wellbeing of staff, children and families by embedding experiences that support and encourage lifelong healthy habits. This is done through the service policies and procedures, professional development and support for staff, information for families and actively engaging children, families and staff in experiences that establish healthy habits for a lifetime of good health.

The program addresses 6 areas of health priority;

- **Healthy Eating and Oral Health** – a healthy diet and good oral health are integral to children's growth and development.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing** – supporting children's mental health and helping them to develop resilience is vital to their overall wellbeing.
- **Physical Activity** – Engaging children in active play provides a range of physical, emotional and social benefits as well as being a natural way children learn.
- **Safe Environments** – an inclusive, empowering and healthy environment helps children develop to their full potential.
- **Sun Protection** – a balanced approach to UV exposure helps boost vitamin D levels, while minimising skin and eye damage and the risk of skin cancer.
- **Tobacco Control** – a smoke free environment protects children, staff and families from the harms of tobacco smoke.

## Be You Program

Be You is a mental health and wellbeing initiative for children. It works with early childhood education and care services to support the mental health and wellbeing of young children, their families and early childhood educators using a promotion, prevention and early intervention framework. Our Kindergartens are registered in this program to provide our educators with information and support to understand mental health and wellbeing issues in young children and their families and to help them embed experiences that develop resilience and wellbeing into their programs.

## Indigenous Language Program

In 2016 WCC implemented the Indigenous Language Program into our Kindergartens. The staff and children have been learning the local aboriginal languages.

The program focuses on the language Peek Whurrong and related dialects. The children have an opportunity to learn the languages through active engagement in aboriginal art, music and stories. This program enhances the children's understanding of the local aboriginal culture and inclusive practices. It nurtures and respects children's cultural identity. It also builds on their literacy skills and contributes to the development of cognitive, communication and problem solving skills.

Each Kindergarten group has an aboriginal animal name;

**Allansford** – Ngayook (n-ga-wook) – Cockatoo

**Beamish** – Weengkeel (we-eng-keel) – Koala

**Central** – Kiri (ki-ri) – Magpie & Koorramook (ko-or-ra-mook) – Possum

**City** – Koorramook (ko-or-ra-mook) – Possum

**Dennington** – Kuyang (koo-yang) – Eel

**East** – Weelangkeel (wee-lang-keel) – Echidna &

Koorrayn (ko-or-ra-yun) – Kangaroo & Kiri (ki-ri) – Magpie

**Florence Collins** – Weengkeel (we-eng-keel) – Koala

**Lions Hopkins** – Kuyang (koo-yang) – Eel

**Mahogany** – Koorramook (ko-or-ra-mook) – Possum

**Matron Swinton** – Koorramook (ko-or-ra-mook) – Possum

**Sherwood Park** – Karrun (Karr-un) – Platypus

**South** – Kart Pirap (kart-pi-rap) – Pelican



## Nature Kindergarten

What is Nature Kindergarten? It is an environment that provides young children with large amounts of time in natural outdoor settings (no toys or manmade play equipment), in all types of weather, and where they can play, explore and experience natural systems (such as life cycles and weather) and materials found there.

Research shows that there are many benefits for children who spend long periods of time in the natural environment. "Outdoor spaces with plants, trees, rocks, mud and water invite open ended interactions, spontaneity, risk taking and a connection with nature (National Quality Standards, 2010, Element 3 Physical environment)".

We provide opportunities for kindergartens to venture out past the kindergarten fence and into a natural setting, to experience nature and learn through hands on experience. Our aim is to support all of our kindergarten programs to experience the outdoor environment for extended lengths of time and encourage children to take the lead in playing, exploring and learning in a natural environment.

