



Philosophy and Practice Booklet

Rated
EXCELLENT
by ACECQA



2014 Australian Family: National Service of the Year

**2016 HESTA Education and Care National Award: Advancing
Pedagogy and Practice for Bundjil's Nest Project**

2017 Narragunnawali Finalists

2019 Victorian early years Award: Collaborative Partnerships

2020 HART (Helping Achieve Reconciliation Together) award

**Schools & Early Years: *Balnarring Pre-school* – Living and
Learning with Country, pedagogy and practice**

Acknowledgement: Balnarring Preschool acknowledge that our children and families play and learn on Boon Wurrung Country. We acknowledge the Boon Wurrung of the Kulin Nation as the First Peoples of this land. We thank them for caring for the land and waterways and value the sharing of their knowledge and stories. We pay our respects to their Elders: past and present.

Date prepared: 10.12.2020

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“As children enter our preschool environment, they remind us of the special journey we are all about to embark on. A journey of shared experiences and special moments, in a world where PLAY and nature are valued.

When the children, families and teachers continue their individual journeys – they take with them their memories of the contributions they made to each other’s lives.”

Karen Anderson, 2013



WOMIN DJEKA / WELCOME TO THE BALNARRING PRESCHOOL

Imagine a program ...

where children and adults indulge in having fun, abandon themselves with joy and in serious intellectual pursuits where there are a variety of materials for children to use and show us what they understand.

It is with great excitement that we welcome you to Balnarring Preschool. We hope the year ahead will be enjoyable for you and your family as we share your child's journey on their first step in education.

There is an enormous amount of information for you to receive, as you become part of the preschool, this booklet outlines general aspects of preschool. It will assist you to become more aware of the learning that takes place in a preschool environment. As of 2010, the preschool program has been informed by the **Victorian Early Years and Learning Development Framework** and the **National Early Years Framework; Being, Belonging and Becoming**. The **National Quality Framework and Standards** was introduced in **2012**. These frameworks guide our curriculum development. Yes, it may look as if they are playing but one important fact to remember is "children learn through play: child led play, guided play and teacher led play."

EDUCATION IS CHILD'S PLAY AT KINDERGARTEN

Our aim is to make the preschool years a valuable and enjoyable experience and for the children to feel at ease and be keen to participate and contribute. We strongly value and foster the development of respectful relationships. Relationships between: children, adults, teaching team, environment, Land, First Peoples cultures. The children will then develop skills, confidence and independence which they will carry with them for life. All the experiences are designed to be enjoyable and relevant to the children's development and interests. The children will play an integral role in determining the direction of the program, integrated with intentional teaching.

An important aspect of the program is the inclusion of hands-on activities and open-ended experiences. Children at this age learn most effectively through doing

**WHEN I HEAR I FORGET
WHEN I SEE I BEGIN TO REMEMBER
WHEN I DO I UNDERSTAND**

We hope that your child and your family find your time at Balnarring Preschool to be everything you imagined it would be.





BALNARRING PRESCHOOL PHILOSOPHY


Learning and Living with Nature

Balnarring Pre-school values strong respectful collaborative relationships between families, children, teaching team, community, First Peoples and the environment. We believe relationships are the first step to creating a successful year for children. We acknowledge and welcome the diverse ways in which we live, what we value and how we view children and childhood. There is recognition that all voices and opinions will be welcomed and valued. We encourage the contribution of families in strengthening the community spirit of our centre and in helping us to learn about their child's uniqueness. And we will partner with children, supporting them as they begin to build meaningful connections to their world and those in it.



I like the bush area because you can explore

Balnarring Pre-school acknowledges that our children and families play and learn on Boon Wurrung Country. We acknowledge the Boon Wurrung of the Kulin Nation as the First Peoples of this land.

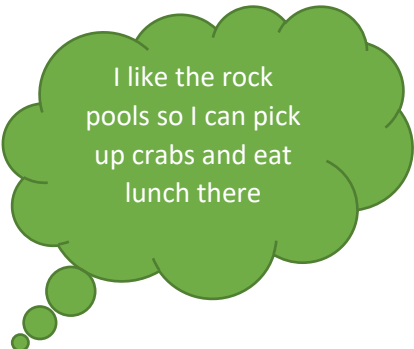


I like the tea trees because I like forests and I love nature

Philosophy priorities are 1/Connecting the children with the land and nature and teaching them the importance of caring for the land through sustainable practices. 2/ Embedding the perspectives of the First Peoples on a daily basis, in order to create a culturally safe environment. First Peoples perspectives are integral in developing an understanding of the past, present and future as detailed in the reconciliation policy and action plan.

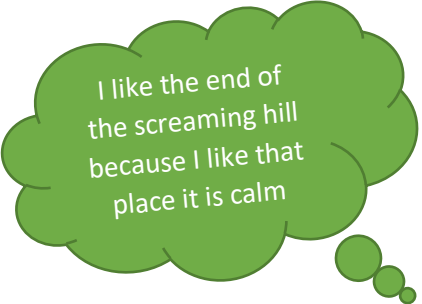
As we strive to provide high standards of learning we recognise that building quality partnerships with families is the key to providing a meaningful and sustainable learning environment. We value effective partnerships where listening, sharing and reflection is encouraged, allowing us to create a meaningful and valued environment for children. We believe that working in partnership with families enriches the service we provide to the community while at the same time creating a greater sense of belonging to the community itself. A safe happy environment for children and families will be created to ensure they feel part of and connected to the pre-school community.

Parental and family participation is highly valued, encouraged and incorporated into the program. We value and encourage partnerships with other professionals and members of the broader community, all of whom provide support and strengthen the service we are able to provide.



I like the rock pools so I can pick up crabs and eat lunch there

We believe that each family is shaped by their cultural background. The curriculum will acknowledge the beliefs and practices of those within our pre-school community. We recognise that diversity contributes to the richness of society and provides opportunities for different ways of knowing. We also believe that our curriculum should reflect and promote a better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being. As a community of learners it is our responsibility to think critically about the opportunities and the challenges that arise from diversity and take action to redress unfairness/antibias, so that we live together in harmony.



I like the end of the screaming hill because I like that place it is calm

We believe that all children are capable of learning and developing in a supportive environment whether at home or at preschool and commit to high expectations for all children. Each child is different and unique, and as such we use a variety of supports and resources to ensure all children are able to reach their potential. As a teaching team we constantly reflect on our practice to support the diversity of learners within our groups, creating environments that

ensure all children are challenged and engaged, and have the opportunity to experience success. I like the bush area because you can explore I like the tea trees because I like forests and I love nature I like the end of the screaming hill because I like that place it is calm I Like the rock pools so I can pick up crabs and eat lunch there.

We believe that trusting children, viewing them as competent and working with high expectations for all children gives them confidence in their abilities, motivating them to learn and grow, which in turn leads to greater feelings of self-worth. We have an increased sense of responsibility regarding children's learning, which ultimately leads to better outcomes for children. The programs will support children becoming resilient, developing their stamina and taking calculated risks.

We recognise and value the importance of children actively exploring, engaging and experiencing natural environments and wild spaces. We understand the importance of providing opportunities to play, explore and learn in the outdoors. Giving the children time to 'be' and connect with natural materials is critical for their personal growth both physical and spiritually. Learning and living with nature fosters an appreciation and respect for the environment, introduces sustainability practices fostering a platform for healthy living and the grounding for creative, independent and resilient children.

'Assessment is designed to discover what children know and understand based on what they make, write, draw, say and do' (Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework) Using the information gathered from the children and family we will identify children's strengths and interests to build into our planning. Assessment and reflection will enable us to identify any additional supports or alterations to programming that may be required as well as to improve upon our own role as educators.

I like the bush,
there is so much
to explore

The value of ongoing learning is recognised by the teaching team in order to maintain and improve high quality teaching practices.

We welcome the opportunity to join with families and their children on this journey; learning from them, sharing with them and guiding them as they become more aware of who they are (Being), learning and respecting how they fit in this world that we share (Belonging) and discovering what they are capable of (Becoming), through the continual process of growth and change.

'To look is one thing, to see what you look at is another. To understand what you see is a third. To learn from what you understand is still something else. But to act on what you learn is all that really matters.'(Talmud)
October 2018



THE VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

How does it work?

Teachers are using this framework in conjunction with the National Early Years Framework: Belonging, Being and Becoming, to ensure that your child receives a high-quality experience. The frameworks focus on progressing your child's learning and teacher's practices. Teachers will work with the families in order to get to know their child well. They will create a learning program that builds on your child's interests and abilities and which keeps you in touch with your child's progress.

There are five outcomes in the framework:

- Children have a strong sense of their identity.
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world.
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.
- Children are confident and involved learners.
- Children are effective communicators.



As part of the framework development all children proceeding onto school the following year will take with them a Learning and Development transition statement. This transition statement provides the schools with information about the child from a parent's perspective, child's perspective and educator's perspective. The information provided will relate to the above learning outcomes. Discussions with parents during the year on children's progress will incorporate elements of the outcomes.

Practice Principles for Children's Learning and Development are also included in the framework. These are the foundations for professional practice for each childhood professionals working with children from birth to 8 years and their families. The practice principles: promote personal and collective acknowledgment of each child's identity, culture and spirit; support professionals to act in the best interests of children; guide early childhood professionals as they respond sensitively and positively to each child (*Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework 2016*).

- Reflective Practice
- Partnerships with families
- High expectation for every child
- Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
- Equity and Diversity
- Assessment for learning and development
- Partnerships with professionals



Link to framework [veylframework.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/veylframework.pdf)

NATURE BASED LEARNING

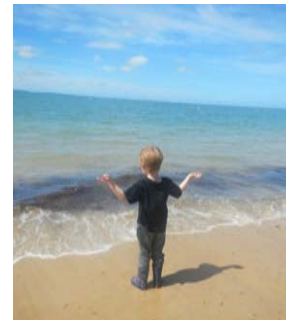


Balnarring Preschool recognises the value and importance of children actively exploring, engaging with and experiencing different types of natural environments or wild spaces. Natural environments offer children the opportunity to move freely and to closely experience nature in its raw state whether this is at the wetlands, on grassy areas, in the kindergarten yard, in bushland or at the beach. Teachers will seek possibilities and create opportunities that provide children with experiences to increase their appreciation for the outdoors and their role in supporting a sustainable future for our environment.

The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia *Belonging, Being and Becoming*, (2009) states '*Play spaces in natural environments include plants, tress, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud, water and other elements from nature. These spaces invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk taking, exploration, discovery and connections with nature. They foster an appreciation of the natural environment, develop environmental awareness and provide a platform for ongoing environmental education.*'

When children are outside they will be provided with time to 'be', in environments that require them to develop play using the materials that come from nature. Children will be treated as capable and trustworthy individuals not only when in these environments but whenever they are participating in the program.' (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Practice Note 5, March 2012).

Risk taking supports children's learning, takes them outside their comfort zones, their confidence and wellbeing develops and they feel competent when they succeed at a new challenge. Sensory stimulation derived from interacting with natural environments allows children to learn with all their senses.



"Children create a deep-rooted connection to the earth when they are able to connect to it in a variety of ways" (Claire Warden, *Nature Kindergartens*).



The preschool program will incorporate the concept of learning and living with nature. This concept will be incorporated into the programs on a regular basis and be presented to families and children in a variety of ways. Whatever the weather, each week children are encouraged to play, explore and learn in the outdoors – be it on the beach, at the wetlands, in bushland or in our kindergarten's yard and garden. During these sessions children are provided with time to "be" and develop play with materials they find outdoors. Refer to Learning and Living with Nature Policy.

Our program nurtures children and their families to connect with nature – now and forever. This fosters an appreciation and respect for the environment, a platform for healing living and the grounding for creative, independent and resilient children.

FIRST PEOPLES CULTURE AND PERSPECTIVES

Learning with nature has a natural connection to the Land and therefore to Country. We value and respect the knowledge and stories the First Peoples of Australia share with us, their way of knowing and being with Land recognises that we live in a country that has the longest living culture in the world. First Peoples today continue to value the connection with Land and Country. The teachers and educators have been involved in several sessions with an Indigenous consultant – Priscilla – increasing their knowledge and understanding of First Peoples culture. For the past five years they worked with the Boon Wurrung Foundation, Boon Wurrung N'Arweet – Carolyn Briggs and Elder – Fay Stewart-Muir.



The preschool has been involved in a collaborative project (Bundjil Nest Project) with the Balnarring Primary School, Balnarring Early Learning Centre, Kindercare Family Day Care and St Joseph's Primary School. We accessed learning days together and built Bundjil's nest on Balnarring Beach. This project will continue throughout 2020.

Learning with First Peoples is an integral part of the program. The children will not only experience a program that includes First Peoples perspectives but they will also receive several visits from First Peoples to further enrich their knowledge and understanding.

Families are included in our learning journeys. At the beginning of 2020 we will be holding a Welcome to Country event for all families involved in the preschool. A Boon Wurrung Elder – will conduct the ceremony. This event will ignite the learning for the year ahead of learning about First Peoples cultures, languages, stories and songs.

The preschool's practices are guided by the Reconciliation Policy and the Reconciliation Action Plan (which are available for you to read in the foyer).



*Balnarring Preschool teaching team and committee at Victorian early Years Award night
Centre: Boon Wurrung Elder: Parbin ata A'rweet Carolyn Briggs*

Imagine a program ...

where children are respected for their feelings and their desire to belong. Where they are supported for their desire to explore, their eagerness to build, to take on new challenges and to dive in and get messy.



NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK (NQF) [What is the NQF? | ACECQA](#)

The National Quality Framework aims to raise the quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services throughout Australia. The NQF includes: A national legislative framework, a National Quality Standard (NQS), a national quality rating and assessment process and a national body called Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

In 2012, Balnarring Preschool began to work its way through the requirements of this framework. The preschool has to assess the service against these standards and then develop a plan for improvement – a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The National Quality Standard was informed by research about best practice and the way high quality education and care contributes to positive outcomes for children. It comprises quality areas, standards and elements. The seven areas are:

1. Educational program and practice.
2. Children's health and safety.
3. Physical environment.
4. Staffing arrangements.
5. Relationships with children.
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities.
7. Leadership and service management.

The 2019 committee and teachers developed the sixth QIP which is now being worked through. Goals and targets have been set with evaluations and reflections occurring most months. The 2020 families will be invited to participate in the ongoing development of this plan and therefore the development and progression of the quality service offered at Balnarring.

In 2014, the preschool was assessed against the National Quality Standards and received an overall rating of EXCEEDING. In 2017 and 2020, the preschool was assessed as a service of excellence.

We took their hand and followed



"Our dishes went unwashed today
We didn't make the bed
We took their hand and followed
Where their eager footsteps led

Oh Yes, we went adventuring
Our little child and I ...
Exploring all the great outdoors
Beneath the changing sky

We waded in a crystal stream
We wandered through the wood
My kitchen wasn't swept today
But life was relaxed and good

We found a cool, sun dappled glade
And now my son/daughter knows
How mother duck hides her nest
And where the salt bush grows

We watched a magpie feed her young
We climbed a sunlit hill
Saw cloud-sheep scamper through the sky
We plucked a daffodil

That our chores were neglected
That we didn't mend the stairs
In twenty years no one on earth
Will know or even care

But, that we've helped our little child
To contented adulthood grow
In twenty years, the whole wide world
May look and see and know"

Author unknown – adapted by Karen
Anderson

Lily



WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT BALNARRING PRESCHOOL?

How will the children be involved?

Children will be involved in

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Building skills | Playing |
| Active play | Relationship development |
| Laughter | Experimenting |
| Natural settings | - |
| Activities | Socialising |
| Reasoning | Creating |
| Risk taking | Happy times |
| Imaginative play | Outdoor play |
| Nature | Observing |
| Gaining confidence | Learning |

Curriculum Approach

The curriculum approach implemented at Balnarring is play-based learning. This will involve child-directed play, educator-led learning and guided play and learning.

Besides just being fun, play is the way that children make the world their own, make sense of all their new experiences and knowledge, and recover from life's upsets.

(Lawrence Cohen: psychologist)

We follow interests the children bring to the program from home or holidays and develop experiences from the things we observe through their play.

We encourage the children to contribute their ideas to areas of interests they or the team have initiated. We ascertain the prior knowledge the children bring to a topic and build from that.

At the same time the teachers and educators include their ideas into the program to ensure the children are progressing, are being challenged and stimulated and having fun.

Through observations, discussion and the development of relationships we gain insight to the children's insights and development and then begin to design the program. A program is written one or two weeks in advance, developed/explored/extended during that period and then reflected upon and evaluated before the next program is written. Content of the program will include activities and experiences, areas to strengthen and consolidate, skills to be developed and refined, objectives for individual children, outcomes to focus on, group time experiences, First Peoples perspectives and any special events. With this in mind there will be differences between each group's program as determined by the individual teachers, educators and children.

Imagine a program ...

*where children can soar, take risks and engage fully with their bodies and their senses.
Learning how people are alike and different. Discovering the magic and wonder of the world and all
the ways we can connect with others, younger and older, real and pretend.*



As the children grow and progress the complexity of the experiences and activities increases. Each child interacts with the program according to their skills, abilities and level of interest. They will become more confident, independent, problem solvers and contributors to a group, socialise with a variety of children and adults, increase their mastery of language – expressive, receptive, and more.

Frequently parents make comments indicating their surprise at the amount of growth they observe in their children over their preschool year. For each child we will have high expectations and view them as competent learners.

What will the teachers do?

Teachers will encourage and provide

Build Relationships
Awareness of every child
Love of and for learning
Nurturing
Assistance and acceptance
Reconciliation – respect
Routines, rhythm
Inventions
Nature
Gain insights

Possibilities and problem solving
Reporting to parents
Education, enjoyment
-
Social justice, support
Challenges, care
Honesty
Observations
Opportunities and openness
Learning, language and laughter

What will my child be doing?

First and foremost, the children will be having fun within a group environment. While they are having fun, they will experience and be encouraged to participate in a wide variety of learning opportunities. They will mostly choose where they want to be involved, but also be encouraged to try new areas, develop a range of competencies and skills and seek out new challenges. The experiences will be designed to build on each child's strengths, challenge their skills and ideas, and present new skills.

The children will be involved in the design of the program, its direction and setting the environment. The level of participation of each child will be determined by their degree of interest and their developmental levels.



As the children explore the ever changing program, they will be forming relationships with each other and the teachers, educators and adults who are involved in the program. These relationships may be ever changing. One friend today, more friends tomorrow, developing and strengthening relationships, learning to belong and have the confidence to express and contribute to the group.

How will parents and families be involved?

Imagine a program ...

where teachers form close partnerships with families and welcome them to contribute to the life of the preschool environment.

Children begin preschool coming directly from their family environment. The family has played an important part in the child's life and will continue to do so: The family is the child's first teachers. With this in mind we encourage parent participation in all aspects of the preschool and program. Parents are able to choose the level of participation and contribution depending on their availability. Whatever the degree of involvement, we assure you that it will be valued and rewarding. We ensure parents and families have fun too!

We ask parents to assist us with the daily program, assisting the children with their activities, reading stories and helping with small group projects. Within the program we try to incorporate skills the parents have or connections they have, which could enhance our program e.g. musical talent, cooking specialities, artist ...



Some aspects of the program require **REGULAR ASSISTANCE BY THE PARENTS**. We require assistance with excursions, special events, outdoor adventures and the Perceptual Motor Program. If all parents help every now and then the workload and enjoyment is shared by all.

We look forward to your input and participation in the program.

HOW WILL I GAIN FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT MY CHILD AND THE PROGRAM?

The noticeboard has daily updates, there is a section specifically for each group, fundraising news and committee news.

There are many ways to keep informed:

Newsletters will be emailed each month. Reports are written by the president, teachers, maintenance officer and fundraising coordinator. Advertising is available in the newsletter for anyone who is interested.

Website: Regular updates and newsletters will be placed on the website.

Committee meetings are held once a month. Minutes of the meetings are displayed in the foyer. At the meetings there are reports from each member. The teachers give an extensive report of what has happened and will be happening. Parents are welcome to attend all or any of the meetings.

Teacher discussions: The teachers are available to discuss any aspects of the program or child's progress at any time. Informal times occur before, during and after the session. Formal progress reports are provided to those parents in the 4 year old programs mid year and at the end of the year. The teachers are frequently observing and recording the progress of the group as a whole and of each child's participation levels and development. The information gained through observations informs the program, is collated into a file and provides the basis for the progress reports.

Displaying children's work: When you enter the room we encourage you to wander around and admire the displays of children's work. The displays may be two or three dimensional, photos or books the children have made.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

4 Year Old Groups

Orientation day: You and your child are invited to attend the preschool in December. This short visit gives you and your child the opportunity to meet the teachers and the children and families in your group.

A small selection of activities will be set up inside with an opportunity to explore outside. We will sing a few songs and have a short story.

We will explain the format of interviews day scheduled for next year, the starting times and hand out any other relevant information.

There will be an opportunity for the parents to ask questions in regard to the preschool year and procedures.

Interview Day: At the orientation day all groups will be provided details about how the year will start. You will be given a date and time in which we invite you to attend the preschool for an interview. This will occur at the commencement of your child's preschool year. The interview will be conducted in small groups. The main purpose of this day is to share information on the daily running of the centre and for you to share information with the teachers about your child.

It is essential that you bring your child with you as there will be things they also need to know.

3 Year Old Groups

Interview days: At the annual meeting you will have been given a letter that provides details of how the year will start. You will be given a date and time in which we invite you to attend the preschool for an interview. This will occur at the commencement of your child's preschool year. The interview will be conducted in small groups. The main purpose of this day is to share information on the daily running of the centre and for you to share information with the teachers about your child.

It is essential that you bring your child with you as there will be things they also need to know.

2021 TERM DATES

| | |
|--------|-------------------------|
| Term 1 | 28 January – , 1 April |
| Term 2 | 19 April – 25 June |
| Term 3 | 12 July – 17 September |
| Term 4 | 4 October – 17 December |



2021 Timetables

Four Year Old groups

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|----------------------|----------------------|---|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Djeembana 8:30-12:00 | Weelam 9:00 -12:00 | Djeembana 8:30-12:00 Weelam 9:00-1:00 (bush/beach camp) | Weelam 9:00-2:00 | Djeembana 9:00-2:00 (beach/bush) |
| Weelam 12:30-3:30 | Djeembana 12:30-3:30 | | | |

Three Year Old groups

| Friday |
|---------------------|
| Manameet 8:30-11:00 |
| Gareeal 12:00-2:30 |