

BUSH KINDER - SNAKE AWARENESS & FIRST AID POLICY

Farm Road Pre-school

National Quality Framework – Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy aims to clearly define:

- The risk of snakes in the Bush Kinder space
- Procedures for preventing snake bite
- The appropriate medical response to snake bites
- A framework for the appropriate education and training of children, teachers, co-educators, volunteers, parents and guardians on minimising the risk of snake bite.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Farm Road Pre-school is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children, teachers, co-educators, staff and volunteers participating in the Bush Kinder program
- Being respectful of wildlife in and around the Bush Kinder space, including an awareness of the presence of snakes in the area in the warmer months
- Facilitating appropriate communication and education to staff, parents and guardians and children to minimise the risk of injury of a snake bite during Bush Kinder sessions

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to children, parents and guardians, teachers, co-educators, staff, Committee members, volunteers and students working or affiliated with Farm Road Pre-school.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background:

Farm Road Pre-school's Bush Kinder program is conducted in parkland, where there have been reported sightings of snakes. Snakes are most prevalent in the warmer months (October-April), however they may be encountered at other times and are usually found within close proximity to water.

Unprovoked, snakes rarely attack humans and are generally shy, timid reptiles who will avoid conflict if afforded the opportunity. It is recommended that particular care be taken in warm weather, near long grass or hollow logs, near water or when near to rocks in sunny positions.

Snakes are protected under the Wildlife Act 1975, and should not be harmed or killed. Bites can occur if people try to interfere with or kill snakes.

Legislation and standards

Relevant Legislation may include but is not limited to:

- Children's Services Act 1996 (CSA);
- Education & Care National Regulations 2011 (CSR);
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2017
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
- Occupational Health and Safety Compliance Codes, First Aid in the Workplace 2017
- Wildlife Act 1975.

4. DEFINITIONS

- **Bush Kinder Space** – Kingston Heath Reserve, Farm Road, Cheltenham.
- **Pressure Immobilisation Bandage** – also known as Compression Bandage. Bandage used for the purpose of applying pressure to the site of the wound, such as a snake bite, and to the affected limb. Refer to the definition below: "Pressure Immobilisation Bandaging".
- **Pressure Immobilisation Bandaging** - the principle of pressure immobilisation bandaging as a first aid measure, is to prevent the spread of toxins through the body. This is done by applying enough pressure to compress the lymph vessels, and by preventing movement of the affected limb. Correct application of the technique can afford valuable time to get the patient to medical assistance. (Please refer to Attachment 2 for the correct application of the pressure immobilisation technique).
- **Victorian Poisons Centre (VPC):** Located at the Austin Hospital, the role of the VPC is to provide the people of Victoria with a timely and safe information service with respect to poisonings and suspected poisonings. For members of the public, this includes telephone assessment, advice on first aid, with or without admissions to hospital. Information is given to health professionals about formulations of products and management of poisoned patients.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Bites & Stings web resource, Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health.
(<http://www.austin.org.au/page?ID=534#1>)
- Australian Venom Research Institute (University of Melbourne) (www.avru.org)
- Bushwalking Victoria Snakebite Web Resource.
(<http://www.bushwalkingvictoria.org.au>)

Service policies

- Emergency & Evacuation Policy;

- Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder specific);
- Delivery & Collection of Children Policy (Bush Kinder specific);
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy;
- Administration of First Aid Policy;
- Hygiene Policy;
- Excursions & Incursions Policy;
- Occupational Health & Safety Policy;
- Supervision of Children;
- Bush Kinder policies generally.

PROCEDURES

The Committee of Management is responsible for:

- The supply of a First Aid Kit on site at the Bush Kinder space to administer first aid in response to snake bites, or for any other purpose which includes pressure immobilisation bandages (also known as compression bandages) for medical treatment of snake bites
- Ensuring all educational staff are appropriately trained on procedures to prevent snake bite and to deliver first aid in response to a snake bite (see below)
- Following all procedures as set out in the Emergency Management Plan (including notice of serious incidents, appropriate record keeping in the event of an incident, to maintain the first aid kit etc.)
- Encouraging parents and guardians, through this policy, to teach children snake bite prevention behaviours outside of Bush Kinder (for example, during family walks in bush areas)

The Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day-to-Day Charge, and other educators and staff are responsible for:

- Checking long grass and areas around water, making loud noise to otherwise deter snakes;
- Continually practising and educating children on snake bite prevention behaviours whilst at Bush Kinder, without fostering an unnatural fear or paranoia of snakes;
- Practising and highlighting to children the following snake prevention behaviours:
 - (a) Leave snakes alone;
 - (b) Wear adequate clothing and stout shoes (no sandals or thongs) in the Bush Kinder space;
 - (c) Never put hands in hollow logs or thick/long grass without prior inspection
 - (d) When stepping over logs, carefully inspect the ground on the other side

- Ensuring children are reminded on a regular basis that if they encounter a snake, to move away quietly and immediately report the sighting to a teacher;
- In the event that a snake is encountered at Bush Kinder, calmly moving children away from the snake. Staff must not attempt to touch or harm the snake;
- Administering first aid in the event of a snake bite (**Refer to Attachment 1**);
- Immediately calling an ambulance for the patient of a snake bite;
- Keep the patient calm and reassure them;
- Send someone for help;
- Reporting the snake bite to all relevant persons/organisations including the parents/guardians/family of the patient, the Local Law Officer at the City of Kingston **1300 653 356** and the Department of Education (DE);
- Following all procedures as set out in the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy and/or the Emergency & Evacuation Policy, including but not limited to - notice of serious incident, appropriate record keeping in the event of an incident, maintenance and familiarisation of first aid kit etc.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Teaching children, on an ongoing basis about snake safety/snakebite prevention behaviours outside of Bush Kinder (for example during family walks in bush areas);
- Reading and being familiar with this Policy;
- Bringing relevant issues or concerns to the attention of both staff and the Committee of Management.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes, the Farm Road Pre-school Committee of Management will:

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents and guardians of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This will be facilitated through discussions, the annual Parent Survey and the review procedures;
- Ask staff to share their experience and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this Policy;
- Regularly review the policy and the Pre-school practices to ensure they are compliant with any new or amended legislation, research or best practices procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – First Aid for Snake Bites;

Attachment 2 – Pressure Immobilisation Technique.

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Farm Road Preschool Committee of Management on the 27th of February 2026.

REVIEW DATE: 27-February-2028

ATTACHMENT 1

FIRST AID FOR SNAKE BITES – Austin Hospital Victorian Poisons Information Centre

Dangerous snakes found in Victoria include:

- Tiger snake (the most common cause of snake envenoming in Victoria)
- Common or Eastern brown snake
- Copperhead snake
- Red-bellied black snake.

There are other venomous snakes found in other parts of Australia.

All snake bites should be regarded as being dangerous. Identification of a snake is difficult and there are serious consequences of wrongly identifying a snake as non-venomous.

Bites from venomous snakes do not always cause illness; sometimes a snake will not be able to achieve an effective bite and may only scratch the victim.

Preventing snakebite

Most cases of snakebite can be avoided by following these simple rules:

- Leave snakes alone
- Wear adequate clothing and stout shoes (not sandals/thongs) in 'snake country'
- Never put hands in hollow logs or thick grass without prior inspection
- When stepping over logs, carefully inspect the ground on the other side
- Keep barns and sheds free of mice and rats, as they will attract snakes • Keep grass well cut

First aid for snakebite

- Stay calm and call for help.
- **Note: Do not wash the bite site. Traces of venom that are left on the skin can be tested to identify the snake group, and therefore the type of antivenom that may be indicated.**
- Venom is injected deeply so there is no benefit in cutting or sucking the bite. A tourniquet is not an effective way to restrict venom movement.
- The most effective first aid for snakebite is the pressure bandage with immobilisation (PBI) technique. The principle is to minimise the movement of the venom around the body until the victim is in a hospital by applying a firm bandage (or suitable alternative) to the bitten area and limb, and to immobilise the victim. When applied properly, this method can trap the venom in the bitten area for many hours. The victim might not suffer any effects of the venom until the pressure bandage is released, which is done in hospital where antivenom can be administered if required.

After the pressure bandage and splint are in place:

- Bring transport to the victim
- Keep the victim still
- Leave bandages in place until the victim has reached a medical facility.



First aid fact sheet

Snake bite



All known or suspected snake bites must be treated as potentially life-threatening, and medical aid should be sought urgently.

Signs and symptoms

Signs of a snake bite are not always visible. In some cases, the patient may not have felt anything. Symptoms may not appear for an hour or more after the person has been bitten. Depending on the type of snake, signs and symptoms can include some or all of the following:

- immediate or delayed pain at the bite site
- swelling, bruising or local bleeding
- bite marks (usually on a limb) that can vary from obvious puncture wounds to scratches that can be almost invisible
- swollen and tender glands in the groin or armpit of the bitten limb
- faintness, dizziness
- nausea and vomiting
- headache
- abdominal pain
- oozing of blood from the bite site or gums
- double or blurred vision
- drooping eyelids
- difficulty in speaking or swallowing
- limb weakness or paralysis
- difficulty in breathing
- occasionally, initial collapse or confusion followed by partial or complete recovery.

What to do

Pressure bandage & immobilise

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance.
- 3 Lie the patient down and ask them to keep still. Reassure the patient.
- 4 If on a limb, apply an elasticised roller bandage (10–15 cm wide) over the bite site as soon as possible.
- 5 Apply a further elasticised roller bandage (10–15 cm wide), starting just above the fingers or toes and moving upwards on the bitten limb as far as can be reached.
 - Apply the bandage as firmly as possible to the limb. You should be unable to easily slide a finger between the bandage and the skin.
- 6 Immobilise the bandaged limb using splints.
- 7 Write down the time of the bite and when the bandage was applied. If possible, mark the location of the bite site (if known) on the skin with a pen, or photograph the site. Do not wash venom off the skin or clothes because it can assist identification.
- 8 Stay with the patient until medical aid arrives.



In a medical emergency call Triple Zero (000)

DRSABCD Danger ► Response ► Send for help ► Airway ► Breathing ► CPR ► Defibrillation

You could save a life with first aid training • www.stjohn.org.au • 1300 360 455

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