Outdoor Play allows children to develop an active lifestyle, and encourages them to take smaller, measured risks.’ Claire Warden

As a staff team we have been inspired by a lot of the work of Claire Warden (Talking & Thinking Floor Books, Forest Schools) and of Janet Robinson (Creating positive learning environments for children), who challenged us at an Early Childhood Conference a while ago to ‘embrace nature’ and our Hills climate and get outside as much as possible. Over the years since then some parents will have noticed the focus we place on the outdoors as an important learning environment for our children and the natural resources we use to support this.

Recently you will be aware that the whole staff team attended a Nature Play Conference where Claire Warden was a keynote speaker. Claire Warden believes that “children thrive through strong connections with their environment. Young children use their whole bodies to gather information and that includes movement in the senses. Changes in temperature, colour, pattern, texture and light stimulate the brain and assist development”

You will notice that we focus on making those connections to the environment visible in activities both inside and out- and also at home through our Nature Challenges.

Here in the Hills we have wonderful changes in temperature, colour and pattern throughout the year and at Woodside we have a beautiful outdoor area for children to experience these changes in.

Claire also feels that ‘Natural spaces provide the opportunity to have a sense of freedom to get dirty, to run and to leap and to have long blocks of time to explore nature in all its wonder”

Our centre Philosophy Statement supports this-

We believe :

♦ We can support children to expand their thinking and enhance their desire to learn through play and exploration, spontaneity and risk taking.
♦ Children have a natural sense of wonder and curiosity and have the right to a vibrant and flexible learning environment which provides powerful resources and builds connections with the natural world.

(Woodside Preschool Philosophy Statement)

This term we have begun to support the children in completing the risk benefit assessments that we are constantly conducting as part of our daily routines. We have developed a visual outdoor safety check which is completed each morning by the children when we go outside. We are hoping that this will continue to evolve to support children develop a positive risk taking mindset when tackling new activities.

We have also been preparing for the first of our 3 Nature Kindy days which is next week. We have focused on the meaning of Nature, on observation skills and also on some of the ‘risk assessment’ required for such a day (e.g. snake education, expectations for behaviour, safe bus travel etc.) to ensure that we all have a fabulous and fun filled day.

The staff team here at Woodside are determined not to let the onset of winter next term interrupt this incredible learning and development and are all well prepared with gloves, coats, hats and boots to brave the weather conditions. We will continue to spend time outside and we will continue to get dirty throughout the colder months. In fact we can’t wait because the end of the fire season means we can then have campfire kindy days!

Please make sure your child is equally well prepared with coats, boots and warm hats. We will have a collection area for these things on the verandah and if your child has old ones that you would like to stay at Kindy for the duration of winter- that is fine. As always, please make sure that everything sent to Kindy is well named.
It’s hard to believe that Term 1 is almost over! What a busy, productive term it has been, with so much learning, discovery and exploration. It’s not just the children who have been learning new skills and extending their understandings..... Preschool staff has been busy learning too!

We recently attended an inspirational Nature Play Conference which has provided us with a renewed passion and commitment to incorporate Nature Play into all aspects of our Preschool curriculum. Four year olds are naturally curious. They are explorers, detectives and scientists. They work hard to make sense of their world and to understand their place in the world. We believe that children’s learning is more meaningful when they have the freedom to follow their own ideas and interests.

At Woodside Preschool, we will be including many Nature Play strategies into our curriculum. The following practices will enable children’s voices to guide the learning programme.

- **Tree of Knowledge** – Children’s questions and wonderings are recorded and displayed on our “Tree”. Activities are then planned to help children discover answers to these questions.
- **Talking and Thinking Floorbooks** – Group discussions and children’s ideas, understandings and interests are recorded in this book. Staff then plan activities and experiences to extend learning in these areas.
- **Discovery Table** – The children take charge of displaying examples of their learning and their work on this table at the end of each day.
- **Dispositions Noticeboard** – Photos of children developing positive learning dispositions through play are displayed for parents each day. These dispositions include “Being Curious”, “Being Purposeful and Persistent”, “Being Resourceful”, “Being Communicators” and “Being Confident”.
- **Nature Challenges** – Every couple of weeks, children will be given a new nature challenge to complete at home. This is a great way for each family to be involved in nature education in the home environment.

The children have been involved in all of these experiences over the past few weeks, and they have sparked many questions, wonderings and discussions about a range of topics eg. feathers, eggs, boats, batteries, recycling, trains ....

Please take the time to look at our displays, our Discovery Table, our Floorbooks and our Tree of Knowledge so that you can gain an insight into your child’s thoughts, ideas and wonderings.

We are counting down the days till we have our very first Nature Kindy Day! This will be the ultimate Nature Play experience. Through unstructured play in the natural environment we will have the opportunity to wonder, notice change, explore, create, take risks, work together and have lots of FUN! We can’t wait!!

Jodie, Kathy and Jane 😊
In Occasional Care I have been observing our learning dispositions in the children who participate in our program! Children are displaying confidence, cooperation, persistence, resourcefulness and communication. In this newsletter, I have highlighted how the children are curious! A learning disposition that leads to lots of discoveries.

IN OCCASIONAL CARE WE ARE CURIOUS!

We had a Governing Council Meeting last night where the Quality Improvement Plan was reviewed. There will be another opportunity to discuss the QIP at our next meeting on 17/5. If you would like a copy of the QIP there will be hard copies available (condensed version) by the sign in sheet on the veranda.

Kindy Clothes- as you will have found out, getting messy is an important part of the joy of discovery and learning- and our kindy is a very messy place!

Paint is one of these joys of preschool and unfortunately often gets on clothes (even if the children are wearing smocks!) so here are some tips for getting it out. DON'T spray with a prewash stain remover! This will actually set the paint so it is best if you soak (with nappy san or something similar) and wash as normal. Wonder soap can help- but you will probably find that yellow and blue are the worst colours to remove.

We would suggest the best option is to buy a couple of t-shirts (they can go over long sleeves in winter) and make them the kindy tops—they don’t have to be the official kindy ones but these are particularly hard wearing. It is good practice for wearing a uniform to school and much easier for parents to not have a battle in the morning about what to wear or worrying about clothes getting ruined.
**Nature Kindy** - don’t forget NEXT WEDNESDAY is our first Nature Kindy DAY. If your child’s consent form and payment hasn’t been returned we need it by Tuesday at the latest. A number of people have returned the consent form without payment - **please remember there is a cost of $5 for this excursion and we need payment before the day.** Thanks

**Fees** - on the subject of money - thank you to all of those families who have paid their fees for this term. Don’t forget they are now overdue - if you are having difficulty paying them please speak to Tash or Robyn to arrange a payment plan.

**Facebook Page** - We know not everyone is a social media user but can we encourage you to join our group if you are on Facebook? This is a great way of keeping in touch with our day to day adventures and we also try and post informative parenting articles and kindy reminders. We try and post photos most days so you can see what we have been up to.

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**DIARY DATES**

**APRIL 1** - Child Youth Health screenings for those who have an appointment.

**APRIL 6** - Bush Kindy. Please be at kindy promptly. Pick up at normal Time. Children need lunch and fruit snacks in their backpack as well as their drink bottle. They also need to wear long pants and closed shoes. We will take hats.

**APRIL 13** - Last day of term.

**MAY 3** - First day of term 2 - the term starts with a 3 day week.

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‘Everybody Belongs!’ - celebrating Harmony Day (and Easter) last week.