



The importance of Nature Play: A
guide for parents and early
childhood educators.
NSW Early Years Nature
Connections.
9th October 2021 at 2:00pm.

ECO LIVING FESTIVAL 2021
TAKE ACTION. JOIN IN!

Randwick City Council acknowledges the Bidjigal and Gadigal people, who traditionally occupied this area of the Sydney Coast.

The views, thoughts and opinions expressed in this presentation are not necessarily the views, thoughts and opinions of Randwick City Council.





Randwick City Council
a sense of community

WELCOME TO ECO LIVING FESTIVAL 2021

20 SEPT-24 OCT

FOUR WEEKS OF WORKSHOPS,
TALKS, TOURS AND MOVIES
FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

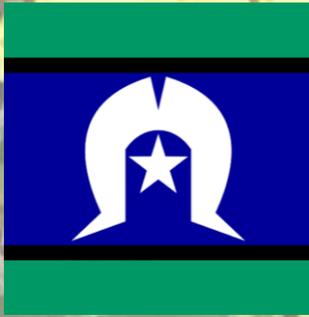




NSW Early
Years Nature
Connections

“ Importance of
Nature Play
- a guide for parents
and early childhood
educators”

**Randwick City Council
Eco Living Festival 2021**



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

Educators in the NSW Early Years Nature Connections Network would like to show respect and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Traditional Custodians of the land, waterways and skies.

We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging. On our nature walks and teachings with children, we acknowledge the land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Randwick is an area of the Sydney Coast, traditionally occupied by the Bidjigal and Gadigal Clans.



NSW Early
Years Nature
Connections

OUR VISION

A community of learners who are invested in a generous exchange of knowledge, experience, resources and time.

PURPOSE

Our purpose is to promote young children spending more time outdoors in nature.

What is Nature Play?

MARGARET

What are the benefits of Nature Play?

KATIE

Different types of Nature Play? Out the gate – in the centre

MEL

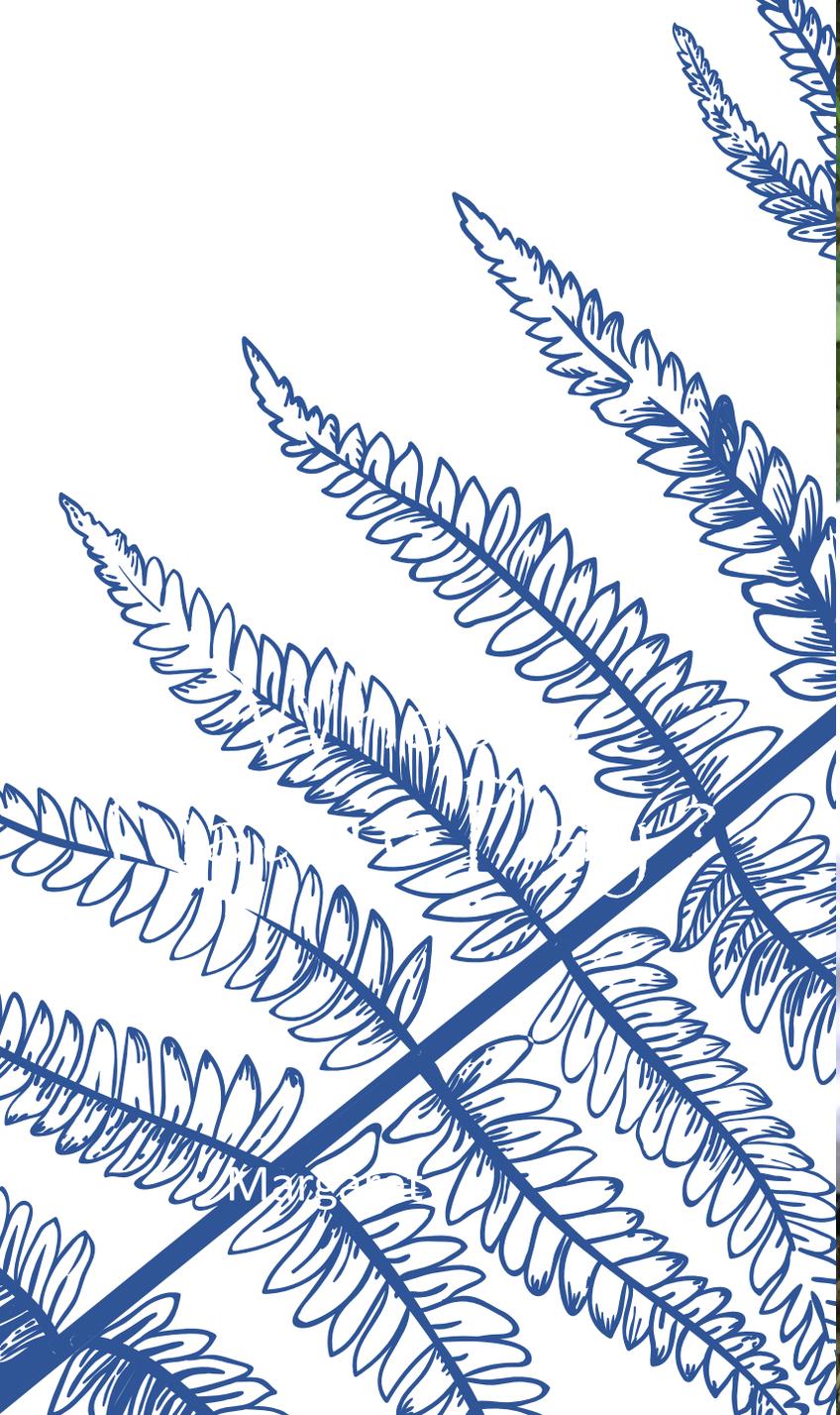
Where, When How

LISA

Slowing down to stop, wonder, being in nature.

Dr FRAN HUGHES







We breathe, we eat, we drink
and in turn feed the earth
with our waste
and eventually our bodies.
We are always connected as
we ARE nature.
We just live and behave as if
we are not. ‘

A Call from The Wild, Ian Cleary



What is Nature Play ?

Nature play is any activity that gets children active or thinking actively outdoors

This can be in any setting, so long as it's outdoors.

It supports children being left to their own devices while caregivers supervise from a distance.

Adults can also actively participate in nature play, however, through child-led play activities.



*Green Hearts
Institute for
Nature in
Childhood*

1. The right kind of Place

Land that is not too protected and is wild—at least in children’s eyes.

- ✓ a quiet corner in a local park,
- ✓ a small neighborhood creek or marsh,
- ✓ a vacant city lot,
- ✓ their own backyard.

“rough ground”

rocks, dirt, trees, bugs, flowers, mud,
and water.

freedom to dig, collect, climb, build,
and hide there.

2. The right kind of play

“child-centered” play:

Play that children themselves initiate, guide, change, or abandon.

It's about playing with nature, not just in nature!

3.The right Kind of Re-Play

Frequency of exploration –
opportunities day after day

the hardest aspect

since, for children, frequency
requires proximity

The right kinds of place, play, and
re-play = great nature play.

♥ If there isn't a creek or vacant lot near your house, use a corner of your backyard as your kids' own rough ground.

♥ If the local park won't allow digging holes or catching frogs, you can still let your children decide where to explore in the park and what to do next.

♥ If your kids can't get outside to play every day, then once or twice a week will still be great!

Don't worry about perfection.

Open the door and get your kids started!

Nature Play: Why? Katie Vander Donk

“Studies show links between access to nature and the ability to sustain concentration, delay gratification and cope with stressors. Natural play stimulates imagination and fosters a deep sense of connectedness to the larger universe of living things.”

(Chawla, 2012)



Benefits of nature play

- Nature play supports human health and wellbeing
- Provide a catalyst for environmental learning and sustainable thinking in young children



Benefits of nature play

- Positive impacts on children's cognitive development, mental and physical health
- Supports human health and wellbeing
- Ability to sustain concentration and delay gratification
- Cope with stress and anxiety
- Regulate emotions
- Stimulate imagination
- Improve motor fitness, balance and coordination
- Improve executive function
- Support interpersonal skills
- Improve resilience
- Foster a deep sense of connectedness to the larger universe of living things

Connecting with place

- Development of empathy for the environment - from which an understanding of, care and compassion for, the environment can arise.
- The benefits are multifaceted, children build belonging in and with the environment, natural spaces within urban areas are prioritised and the building blocks of a positive human-nature relationship are scaffolded.



Custodianship

“If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it”
(Sobel, 2019)



What does Nature Play look like in Early Childhood Education and Care?

Inside the service and
'beyond the gate'.

Melanie Elderton





The Outdoor Classroom





Caring for animals





Loose Parts



Art



Nature Play and STEM



Out the Gate; Connecting
with place



Weather, seasons and your place



Being with
nature



The beauty of Nature Play is that there is no right or wrong way to do it. It can happen anywhere and anytime.

Lisa Milham

20XX





Bush, Beach, Park, Nature Playgrounds

Randwick Council and surrounding LGA's have lots of outdoor, green spaces to enjoy.

- Malabar Headland National Park,
- Kamay Botany Bay National Park,
- Centennial Park,
- many beaches and
- lots of parks, playgrounds and ovals.



Families and Nature Play

Families can engage in nature play anywhere, anytime, whatever suits your lifestyle.

Good way to find new places to explore, opportunities are everywhere and endless. Nature Play is all about engaging in unstructured play outdoors where natural elements feature such as logs, rocks, water.

Start where you feel comfortable and confident, this may be at the park or playground and then gradually start exploring the surrounding green space, go to a park without play equipment, climb the trees, play in the dirt, explore the rock platform at the beach.

Early Childhood Services and Nature Play

- Search your local area for a nature space or patch of green that you can explore. Visiting a spot regularly creates a sense of Place and belonging.
- Important to think about alternating spots for sustainability purpose and to reduce your impact on the environment.
- Go on a regular schedule or go anytime. Go in a big group or in smaller groups, whatever works for your setting.
- Excursion and regular outing regulations apply- you will need a risk assessment, permission form, emergency contact information and mobile, first aid kit.



Things to take with you:

Families:

- Sun protection
- Water
- Snacks
- Mini first aid kit
- Weather appropriate clothing and footwear

Early Childhood Services:

- Fully stocked first aid kit
- Epipens and required medications
- List of attendees
- Emergency contact information
- Mobile phone in case of emergencies
- Sun protection
- Weather appropriate clothing and footwear



Slowing down in nature.

Dr Fran Hughes



Slowing down in nature

- Slowing down in the busy lives of children and ourselves
- Focusing on what is truly important in our lives. Spending more time nurturing our relationships and connecting *with* nature.



Slowing down in nature

- Natural settings both invite and provoke immediate responsiveness, slowing down being in, and “taking the moment”.
- In my doctorate study, the educators agreed that slowing down and playing in nature were very important and how the bush settings influenced their pedagogies, and subsequently the children were slowing down too.



'Slow pedagogy'

- They were able to adopt a 'slow pedagogy', being able to recognise more in nature, be present and teach intentionally.
- *"We give them time that is uninterrupted. I feel that for me as well. We are all sitting and engaging a lot longer than we do in the service".*



Stopping and wondering

- Slowing down to stop and wonder
- Slowing down to observe the small things in nature, to appreciate everything *in* and be *with* nature.
- Slowing down to just 'be' in nature.



Information about NSW Early Years Nature Connections

- Membership with NSW EYNC is \$50 per year
- We hold Gatherings approximately 4 times per year
- We will be delivering an immersive nature play training course in 2022.



- [\(20+\) NSW Early Years Nature Connections | Facebook](#)

- [NSW EYNC \(@nsweync\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)

- [Home | NSW Early Years Nature Connections \(nsweync.org\)](#)

Why you should become a member of NSW EYNC:

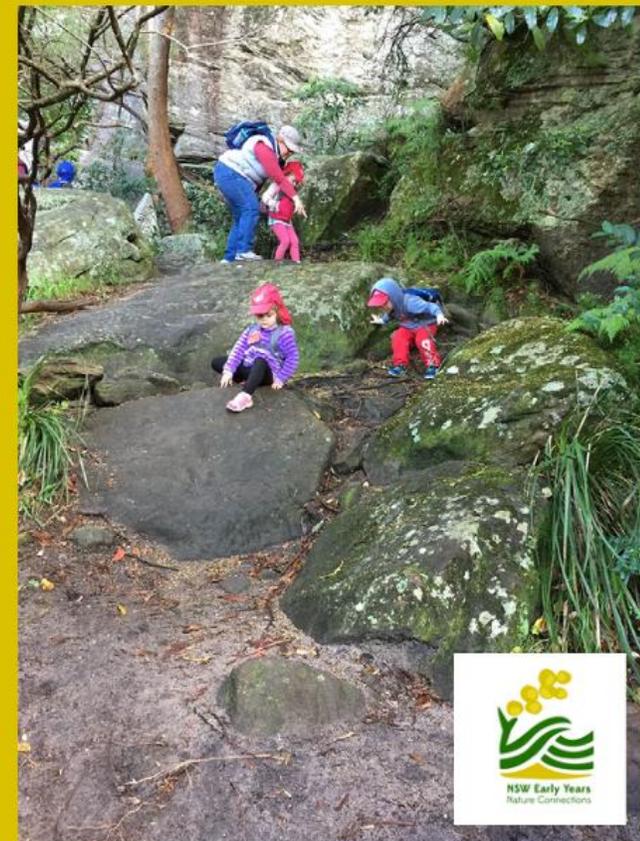
- The chance to connect with likeminded nature lovers
- Networking opportunities - Share experience, knowledge, stories of success and caution
 - Mentoring – Access to a wide range of experienced educators, access materials & resources for example chapters from relevant books
 - Opportunities to visit various centres and experience their nature programs
- Membership of a private FB group for networking
 - Discounts on conference registration
- Support the organisation with shared values and educational aspirations

NSW EYNC

Nature Play-Not a Passing Fad

**'Nature Play - Not a Passing
Fad'
NSW Early Years
Nature Connections
Conference
5th March 2022
Randwick Sustainability Hub**

**A conference for Early Childhood
educators interested in supporting
children's connections with nature
for the future of our planet.**





THANK YOU! FEELING INSPIRED?

TAKE ACTION. JOIN IN!

- > FOGO LIKE A PRO
- > PLANT WITH US*
- > JOIN PERMABEES & BUSHCARE*
- > APPLY FOR SUSTAINABILITY REBATES

*NSW COVID-19 health orders permitting

More information randwick.nsw.gov.au/getinvolved





**WHAT DID
YOU THINK?**

**PLEASE
COMPLETE
THIS SHORT
SURVEY**

