

# Northey Street City Farm Earth Kids Program

## Parents handbook

We are delighted that you have chosen to enrol your child / children into the Northey Street City Farm (NSCF) Earth Kids Program. In this handbook you can find all the information you will need to know about the program. For any further queries, please contact the Youth Education Coordinator at [education@nscf.org.au](mailto:education@nscf.org.au), or call the office on 3857 8775.

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### About Northey Street City Farm

Northey Street City Farm (NSCF) is a non-profit community organisation situated on the banks of Brisbane’s Breakfast Creek in Windsor. The farm has been developed for people to enjoy and participate in using the principles of permaculture. It is also intended to be a demonstration site where people of all ages can learn through practical, hands-on experience.

Our vision is “All living sustainably” and our purpose is to be an inspirational working model of a community-based urban permaculture farm which promotes and educates for sustainability.

### The NSCF Site

More than 1500 exotic and native fruit trees, shrubs and ground covers have been planted on our two-and-a-half hectare site since its inception in April 1994. The farm includes kitchen gardens, market gardens, orchards, bush tucker area, wood lot and a revegetation zone along the creek. We also have chickens, European and native bees, worm farms and composting areas. On the Earth Kids program the children have the opportunity to discover all these parts of the farm.

## About the Earth Kids Program

The overarching goal of the Earth Kids program is about supporting children to become 'nature smart' – to have the knowledge, understandings and skills to engage in creating a more sustainable world – in a fun and interactive way. It is an experiential program of outdoor discovery in which kids will learn about the animals and plants at the Farm through observation and supported questioning, explore Indigenous knowledge, experiment with Earth Arts and bushcraft skills, and put permaculture into practice.

Each Earth Kids program differs according to the seasons and to include a diversity of activities. Some of the activities will be:

Gardening – planting, harvesting, composting, bush tucker and learning about seasonal changes;

Bushcraft – building shelters, making string, making fires, knife skills;

Earth Arts – creativity using natural materials;

Indigenous understanding – storytelling and cultural sharing;

Earth connection – daily 'magic spots', mapping, wandering and other activities to support understanding of the web of life and the elements that all life is made of.

Several afternoon sessions will have a few different activity options for the children to choose from. A program will be sent to you a fortnight before the program begins.

The teaching approach that we use is based in the premise that nature is our best teacher and is inspired by the 'coyote mentoring' approach as documented by Jon Young, Ellen Haas and Evan McGowan in the book 'Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature'<sup>1</sup>. See <http://coyotesguide.com/>.

Through the Earth Kids program, we will be introducing some of the core routines of nature connection as described in the Coyote's Guide. Some of these core routines include sit spots (or 'magic spots' as we call them), story of the day, bird language, expanding our senses, exploring field guides and mapping.

## Our Earth Kids Team

Our Earth Kids team consists of a group of people who are experienced in working with children here at the farm and have undertaken training in nature awareness, permaculture and/or bushcraft. We will also have some special guests visit to offer different experiences, such as Indigenous culture and specialist bushcraft activities. Staff members have experience in working with children visiting the farm for school excursions, and running activities like composting, worm farming, planting, propagation and Earth Arts with these groups.

## Supporting your children's learning

One of the ways that you can support your child's learning at Earth Kids is to ask them about their 'nature name', and help them to do some research about it. At the start of each Earth Kids program, each child chooses a nature name from a group of wooden badges that have the names written on the undersides. The nature names are different native animals and/or plants that are found at NSCF and are likely to be encountered and learned about by direct experience. We tell the children that the name they choose may have something special to teach them, because it just for them. In our experience, the children often develop a strong connection with their nature names, and the excitement felt when one of the nature name animals is spotted is often palpable.

We may also make some suggestions via email for other ways to extend the children's learnings, depending on the theme of the program.

## Bookings and cancellations

Bookings for the Earth Kids program are made via Eventbrite, and there are links for this on the NSCF website <http://www.nscf.org.au/earth-kids-holiday-program/>. We have a sliding scale payment system to make the program accessible to all.

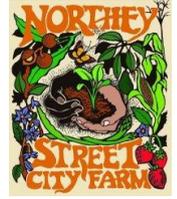
*Cancellations:* We understand that sometimes circumstances change and participants may not be able to attend a course or workshop that has been paid for. If a booking is cancelled less than one week prior to course commencement, program fees are non-refundable. Exceptions may be made in cases of serious illness or emergencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Young, J., Haas, E., & McGowan, E. (2010). *Coyote's guide to connecting with nature, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Shelton, Wash: OWLLink Media.

## Personal effects

We supply all the requirements for a range of appropriate activities for children, limiting the need for personal belongings to be brought from home. Our Earth Kids program is committed to providing time away from screens. We discourage children from bringing any electronic toys, such as iPads and iPods. We cannot guarantee the safety of these expensive items.



## Code of conduct and behaviour management

Children are expected to participate in the activities, though there is usually an option for them to take time out in the quiet area to read, write, draw, look at the nature table objects or lie down. On the first day all children are required to participate in introductory activities which include an orientation to the site, expectations and the children's code of conduct. When the code of conduct is introduced at each program, we also invite the group to add points they agree are important.

### **Code of conduct for children and young people**

As a young person who is part of Northey Street City Farm, I agree that:

- I will care for the animals and plants at the farm and treat them with respect
- I use resources (eg. water) with care.
- I will use the correct bins for my waste (and ask if I am not sure).
- I will show respect for other children, young people and adults by listening to them, talking kindly, following instructions and participating in problem solving.
- I will respect other people's space, ask permission before touching another person, and expect all others to do the same.
- I will cooperate, play by the rules and be the best that I can be.
- I will be open and honest.
- I will listen to and follow instructions of staff members and adults on the program.
- I will take some time away from others in the Earth Kids area if I am upset and need to calm down (and let an adult know).
- I will look out for other Earth Kids and ask for help if it is needed.
- I will accept difference and make an effort to include others.
- I will speak up if I am worried or concerned about something.
- I will check with an adult before tasting food from the garden.

Due to the nature of Earth Kids being an outdoors program and having a need for children to stay with the group and follow instructions, if a child is repeatedly not participating or complying with the code of conduct or with reasonable requests from Earth Kids staff, after giving the child a warning and the behaviour continuing, their parent will be called and asked to pick them up.

## Clothing and sun safety

We ask that children wear comfortable clothing which will enable them to participate in activities. Clothing should be sun safe (e.g. no strappy tops). We recommend the wearing of legionnaire or broad brimmed style hats and these should be worn at all times the children are not undercover. Covered footwear must be worn - sneakers are the best option. Children should bring good wet weather gear each day as we will be outside when it is not raining too heavily. All belongings must be clearly named.

NSCF supplies SPF 30 broad-spectrum sunscreen for all children attending the Earth Kids program. Children will be reminded to apply sunscreen appropriately and regularly.

## Food

Using the permaculture principle of 'produce no waste', we ask that parents provide low/ no waste lunches for their children. We compost our food waste, and in doing so, children learn about the nutrient cycle and the role of compost in improving soil and growing plants.

No microwaves are on site, so children need to have cold lunches.

Water is available to children at all times.

In line with recommendations from the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy,<sup>2</sup> we do not implement food bans on items that can cause anaphylaxis. As control measures we ask children not to share lunches with other children, ensure that children wash their hands before and after eating, and in cases of known anaphylaxis we suggest that parents avoid sending easily avoidable foods for lunches. Be aware that there are nut trees (macadamias, sabs and bunyas) on site. We ask children not to taste anything from the garden without checking with an adult.

### **Enrolment and orientation**

Parents/Guardians are required to complete an online enrolment form before any child is able to attend the NSCF Earth Kids program. A meeting with staff is available to you upon the enrolment of your child. The children are given an orientation to the site on the first day, including the emergency procedures.

### **Inclusion**

At NSCF we recognise that each child and family are unique in their own right and we strive to include young people and families from all walks of life, celebrating different abilities, cultures and interests. Each family are required to provide relevant information about their child/ren by filling out the Earth Kids enrolment form in full. If your child has additional support needs, whether it is due to a medical need, disability, culturally and linguistically diverse background, or any other reason, you are required to organise a meeting with the Youth Education Coordinator to discuss how the program may be adapted to your child's needs. Please note that the main Earth Kids area is not wheelchair accessible.

### **Parent Volunteering**

Volunteers are a valued and integral part of NSCF. We have several volunteer places on the Earth Kids program, and parents and guardians are welcome to apply. Volunteers need to abide by the NSCF Code of Conduct and will be inducted into safety procedures. Parent volunteers who volunteer for the week can enrol two children at a discounted price. Unfortunately it is not possible for volunteers to be looking after younger children not in the Earth Kids program while volunteering. Volunteers have an opportunity to learn about the content in the program, including approaches to nature connection, permaculture, Earth Arts and Indigenous culture. If you are interested in this, please email [education@nscf.org.au](mailto:education@nscf.org.au).

### **Child Protection**

NSCF regards its role in the protection of children in our care as of the utmost importance. NSCF has a range of policies and procedures to keep children and young people safe. Details of these policies are available on request, along with how you can report child safety concerns.

All staff have been made aware of and trained in the NSCF Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy and our Youth Program Risk Management Plan.

There will be at least 2 staff members working on each Earth Kids program, regardless of the number of children attending. For groups of more than 20, 3 staff members work on the program. All staff working with the children have current blue cards (working with children check). At least one staff member who holds a current approved first aid qualification, including emergency anaphylaxis and asthma management training, is always present.

We have a quiet area for any children who are feeling overwhelmed and / or needing time out to themselves.

### **Site safety issues & our approach to risk**

NSCF endeavours to create a safe, secure environment where children feel welcome and at ease.

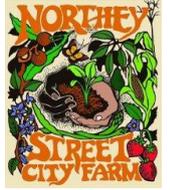
Some important safety issues relating to the site include:

- \* There is no fencing at farm, - there are a couple of quiet roads and a creek bounding the farm. Children must be able to obey instructions not to cross the road on their own and to stay out of the water.
- \* There are European honeybee hives on site. If any child is known to be allergic to bee stings, it is essential that you notify us of this in the enrolment form.
- \* There are plenty of trees on site and we allow children who are confident climbing trees to do so. Please let us know by email or on the enrolment form if you do not want your child climbing trees.

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<sup>2</sup> Vale, A., Smith, J., Said, M. Mullins, R.J. and Loh, R. (2015) ASCIA guidelines for prevention of anaphylaxis in schools, pre-schools and childcare: 2015 update. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, 51, pp949-954. doi:10.1111/jpc.12962. Available at: [https://www.allergy.org.au/images/stories/pospapers/Vale\\_et\\_al-2015-Journal\\_of\\_Paediatrics\\_and\\_Child\\_Health.pdf](https://www.allergy.org.au/images/stories/pospapers/Vale_et_al-2015-Journal_of_Paediatrics_and_Child_Health.pdf)

We recognise that “all children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities<sup>3</sup>”. At Earth Kids we aim to offer children the chance to take acceptable risks as part of a challenging and controlled learning environment. For us it is acceptable that children may be exposed to the risk of minor and easily-healed injuries such as bruises, grazes or sprains. However, it is of paramount importance for us that our program should not expose children to significant likelihood of permanent disability or life-threatening injuries. The NSCF Youth Program Risk Management plan guides us to minimise any risks.



### Arrivals and Departures

NSCF has strict procedures regarding the arrival and departure of children and particularly the persons who may collect children from the site.

**No child will be admitted prior to the sign in time on the program.** All children are to be signed in and out on the Attendance Register by the parent/guardian/staff member or other person whom the parent/guardian has nominated on the Enrolment Form.

If a child is sick or unable to attend for some reason, please be sure to notify us of this on the morning of that day by calling the Youth Education Coordinator mobile number, which will be provided to you before course commencement, or emailing [education@nscf.org.au](mailto:education@nscf.org.au).

Once an authorised person has signed in the child, NSCF takes responsibility for the child until the child is signed out by an authorised person. Children must be accompanied to the signing in area (to the southside of Edgar Street) and signed in by their parent/guardian. NSCF will not take responsibility for children whose parents/guardians allow them to walk/ride unsupervised to the farm.

If a child booked in to NSCF has not arrived within 15 minutes of expected arrival, and we have not been notified of their absence, staff will contact the relevant emergency numbers on the child's enrolment form. If no contact is made via emergency numbers, advice will be sought from Police and/or Department of Child Safety.

If a person is to collect a child who has not previously been nominated on the Enrolment Form i.e. in the case of an emergency, the parent or guardian may give permission by email (as the first preference) or by telephone for an alternative person to collect the child. If the request is made via telephone, two staff members will hear the request and the request will be entered onto a File Note with two staff signatures. The parent/guardian must provide the name and description of any such person concerned and proof of their identity will be required on arrival.

Whilst every care will be taken to prevent a child being taken by an unauthorised person, there may be instances in which we cannot prevent this from happening. Our staff cannot expose themselves or the other children to an unacceptable risk of personal harm. If a child is taken the Police will be called immediately.

### Late collection and fees payable

Please contact the Youth Education Coordinator as soon as you are aware that there may be a problem with the on-time collection of your child. If at closing time children have not been collected, parents/guardians will be contacted on the most recent numbers and if necessary, the emergency numbers provided. If no contact is made via emergency numbers, advice will be sought from Police and/or Department of Child Safety. **For parents/guardians picking up children late, a fee of \$15 per block of 1-15minutes will be charged.**

### Illness and Injury

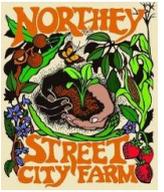
Whilst NSCF actively strives to provide a safe environment and the avoidance of harm, there may be occasions when accidents or injuries occur. In the case of a minor illness or injury, a staff member will attend to the incident and an Incident Report will be completed. When picking up the child, staff will advise the parent of the injury and ask the parent to sign to acknowledge that they have been advised. Where a more serious incident occurs, the child's parent/guardian will be contacted immediately.

Qualified staff will administer basic first aid only. When necessary to seek medical attention immediately, an ambulance will be called and contact will be made with the parent/guardian. Where possible a staff member will travel with the child in the ambulance.

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<sup>3</sup> National Children's Bureau (2008) 'Managing risk in play provision: A position statement'. Available at <http://www.playengland.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/managing-risk-play-safety-forum.pdf>

Parents/Guardians, in consultation with the Youth Education Coordinator, are to ensure that each child with a diagnosed medical condition i.e. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, etc. has all the information required to address the condition. If your child requires an EpiPen or Ventolin they should bring one to be kept safely by staff in case required.



**Infectious diseases:** NSCF strives to remove immediate and/or serious risks to the health of children from possible cross-infections, by adopting appropriate procedures for dealing with infectious diseases\*. Accordingly, all people including children, staff and parents/guardians with infectious diseases will be excluded from the program. NSCF refers to the National Health and Medical Research Councils 'Recommended minimum exclusion periods for infectious conditions for schools, pre-schools and childcare centres (December 2005)' to determine exclusion periods. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to inform the Youth Education Coordinator of any infectious disease that their child or other immediate family members may be suffering. NSCF is responsible to report this to parents/guardians of other children in this service as appropriate but having regard to the privacy of individuals concerned.

If a child becomes sick, we will require you to pick them up.

In the event of head lice, the parent/guardian will be called and encouraged to collect the child immediately. The child can only return to the service once the head lice have been treated.

\* When infectious disease is referred to in this document, it means communicable diseases and notifiable diseases (see Australian Government Department of Health at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au) and National Health and Medical Research Council at [www.nhmrc.gov.au](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au)).

### **Medication**

In the interests of health and wellbeing of the children, staff will be permitted to administer medication to a child only if it is: a) prescribed medication; b) in its original package with a pharmacist's label which clearly states the child's name, dosage, frequency of administration, date of dispensing and expiry date; and c) accompanied by permission given in the online enrolment form.

All medication is to be given to the NSCF staff and no medication is to be stored in a child's bag. An exception is if the child's parent is volunteering on the program.

### **Runaway children**

Children must stay in the NSCF grounds. If a child chooses to leave the NSCF grounds and designated areas, staff will assess the situation in relation to duty of care to the individual child and the remaining group of children. Runaway children's parents/guardians will be contacted immediately, as will police if deemed appropriate by the Youth Education Coordinator.

### **Information handling**

To protect children and better provide its services, NSCF seeks and deals with personal and sensitive information relating to families, children and others. NSCF respects the privacy of all individuals and seeks only information which it needs for these purposes and handles that information with confidentiality and sensitivity and in keeping with legal requirements including the Privacy Act.

### **Suggestions, concerns and complaints**

We welcome ideas and suggestions for future programs. Please get in touch with the Youth Education Coordinator regarding this. NSCF seeks to resolve all genuine and reasonable complaints in the most appropriate way possible in consultation with the complainant. Discussions with the complainant are not to be conducted in the presence of the children, other staff or parents/guardians and heated discussions are to be avoided as far as possible. If it is not appropriate for the complaint to be made to the Youth Education Coordinator, the complainant may contact the Education and Support manager by emailing [educationandsupport.mgr@nscf.org.au](mailto:educationandsupport.mgr@nscf.org.au) or calling the office on 3857 8775.

### **Contacting us**

We have a landline or mobile phone on which parents/guardians can contact us at any time.

Tuesday to Thursday it is best to call the office on 3857 8775. You will also be given the Youth Education Coordinator's mobile number before course commencement.

***We are really looking forward to meeting your child/children  
and inspiring them to connect with and care for the Earth!***