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Northy Street City Farm Earth Kids Program Parents and Guardians Handbook

We are delighted that you have chosen to enrol your child in the Northey Street City Farm (NSCF) Earth Kids Program. In this handbook, you can find the information you will need about the program.

For further queries, please contact the Youth Education Coordinator at youthedn@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 not-for-profit community organisation situated on the banks of Brisbane's Breakfast Creek in Windsor. The Farm has been developed for people of all ages to enjoy, learn, and use the principles of permaculture through practical, hands-on experience.

The NSCF site

More than 1500 exotic and native fruit trees, shrubs, and ground covers have been planted on the two-and-a-half-hectare site since its inception in April 1994. The Farm includes kitchen gardens, market gardens, orchards, a bush foods area, a 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 explore all aspects of the Farm life.

About the Earth Kids Program

The Earth Kids program aims to empower children to become 'nature smart,' equipping them with the knowledge, understanding, and skills to actively participate in building a regenerative and more sustainable world. Through observation, guided questioning, and hands-on activities, children learn about the Farm's animals and plants, explore Indigenous knowledge, experiment with Eco Arts, develop bushcraft skills, and apply permaculture principles.

Each Earth Kids program differs according to the season and includes activities such as:

Gardening – planting, harvesting, composting, and learning about bush foods and seasonal changes.

Bushcraft – building shelters, navigation and knife skills, making string and fire.

Eco Arts – using natural, recycled, and repurposed materials in art projects.

Indigenous understanding – storytelling and cultural sharing.

Earth connection – 'magic spots', mapping, wandering, and other activities to support awareness, agency, and understanding of ecosystems and their relationship.

The NSCF Earth Kids teaching approach is based on 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'¹. See <http://coyotesguide.com/>.

Through the Earth Kids program, children are introduced to 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 senses, exploring field guides and mapping.

Our Earth Kids team

Our Earth Kids team consists of educators who are experienced in working with children at the Farm and have undertaken training in nature awareness, permaculture and/or bushcraft. We also invite guests and experts to offer learning opportunities and experiences in a variety of areas, such as Indigenous culture, nature journaling, and bushcraft skills.

Supporting your children's learning

One of the ways that families can support their 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 the program, each child chooses a nature name. They may be animals and plants which are likely to be found at NSCF. 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 learning, depending on the theme of the program.

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

Booking, cancellation, and no-show

Bookings for the Earth Kids program are made via Eventbrite through the links that can be found on the NSCF website. NSCF offers a sliding-scale payment system to make the program accessible to as many people as possible.

Cancellations and no-show: We understand that sometimes circumstances change, and participants may not be able to attend. Program fees are non-refundable in case of no-show or booking cancellation less than one week before commencement. Exceptions may be made in cases of illness or emergencies, providing notice is given prior to program commencement. Please email the Youth Education Coordinator at youthedn@nscf.org.au to discuss your circumstances.

Personal belongings

We supply all the requirements for a range of appropriate activities for children, limiting the need for personal belongings to be brought from home. On our Earth Kids program, we are committed to providing time with nature and away from screens. We discourage children from bringing any electronic devices and toys and cannot guarantee the safety of personal belongings.

All personal items must be labelled and collected by children and their responsible adult at the end of each day of the program. Items left behind, if not identified, will be donated to charities.

Earth Kids' ethics and behaviour management

On the first day, all children are required to participate in introductory activities which include an orientation to the site and a discussion about the three ethics of Earth Kids – *care for self, care for others, and care for place.*

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.

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

Clothing and sun safety

Please ensure children **wear comfortable, sun-safe clothing suitable for outdoor activities** (e.g., no strappy tops). **Hats with broad brims or legionnaire style** are recommended and **should be worn whenever children are not undercover. Covered footwear**, preferably sneakers, is required. If the weather requires, children should bring suitable wet weather gear as we will be outside when it is not raining too heavily. **All belongings must be clearly labelled.**

As a courtesy, NSCF provides SPF 30 broad-spectrum sunscreen and insect repellent for Earth Kids program participants. Children will be reminded to apply sunscreen and insect repellent regularly. Those with allergies or special requirements must bring their own products for protection.

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.

We discourage food in plastic packaging and/or cling film.

Water is always available to children. **Please ensure your child brings a reusable water bottle.**

In line with recommendations from the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy² 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 on site, such as macadamias, sabas, bunyas, candlenuts, and pecans.** 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. This is essential to provide children with the best learning experience and ensure their health and safety. If needed, a meeting with staff is available to you upon request after 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, and we strive to include young people and families from all walks of life, celebrating different abilities, cultures, and interests. Each family is required to provide relevant information about their child 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 phone or in-person 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 at this stage.

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. Parents who volunteer for programs can enrol their child at a discounted price. Unfortunately, **it is not possible for volunteers to be looking after younger children not in the Earth Kids program or pets while volunteering.** Volunteers have an opportunity to learn about the content in the program, including approaches to nature connection, permaculture, Eco Arts, and Indigenous culture. If you are interested in this, please email youthedn@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.

For groups of up to 20 children, there are 2 staff working on the program, and for up to 30 children, there are 3 staff. All staff working with the children have current blue cards (working with children check) and at least one staff member holds a current approved first aid qualification, including emergency anaphylaxis and asthma management training.

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

² 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

Site safety issues and 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 may include:

- * **There is no fencing at the Farm** with a couple of quiet roads and a creek bounding the main Earth Kids area. 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 and provide the appropriate anaphylaxis management plan.
- * **Wildlife, such as snakes, live at the Farm.** Children are expected to follow staff instructions and respect the boundaries explained to them on the first day of each program.
- * There are plenty of trees on site and we allow children who are confident climbing trees to climb trees to a height of 2 metres. Please **let us know by email or on the Enrolment Form if you do not want your child climbing trees.**

We recognise that “all children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities³”. 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. To ensure their safety, children are expected to follow staff instructions and respect the boundaries explained to them on the first day of each program.

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 another 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 youthedn@nscf.org.au. Alternatively, you may call the office (07) 3857 8775.

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 Earth Kids base camp area (located at the south side of Edgar Street, unless informed otherwise of a different drop off area) 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 person who has not previously been nominated on the Enrolment Form is to collect a child, the parent/guardian may notify the Youth Education Coordinator by email (as the first preference) or if on the day, by calling the office on 3857 8775. The parent/guardian must provide the name of the person and proof of their identity will be required on arrival.

Whilst every care will be taken to prevent a child from 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 by phone and if necessary, the emergency numbers provided. If no contact is made via emergency numbers, advice

³ National Children’s Bureau (2008) ‘Managing risk in play provision: A position statement’. Available at <https://playsafetyforum.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/managing-risk-in-play-provision-position-statement.pdf>

will be sought from Police and/or the Department of Child Safety. **For parents/guardians picking up children late, a fee of \$15 per block of 1-15 minutes 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.

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 diseases⁴. 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 Council "Recommended minimum exclusion periods" for infectious conditions for schools, pre-schools and childcare centres published in June, 2013⁵ 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 for 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.

Medication

In the interests of the 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 Youth Education Coordinator or other designated NSCF staff and no medication is to be stored in a child's bag. An exception is if the child's parent is volunteering at the program.

Runaway children

Children must stay on 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.

⁴ Communicable and notifiable diseases according to the Australian Government Department of Health at www.health.gov.au and National Health and Medical Research Council at www.nhmrc.gov.au.

⁵ <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/ch55-staying-healthy.pdf>

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 Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld).

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 Farming Manager by emailing edufarm.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
and inspiring them to connect with and care for the Earth!*