Youth Education

Parents and Guardians Handbook

EARTH KIDS

Holiday and Homeschool Programs

Thank you for your interest in the Northey Street City Farm (NSCF) Earth Kids Program. This handbook provides key information to help you prepare for the program and understand what to expect. If you have any further questions, please contact the Youth Education Coordinator at youthedn@nscf.org.au, or call NSCF's office on 3857 8775.

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1. About Northey Street City Farm

Northey Street City Farm (NSCF) is a not-for-profit community organisation located on the banks of Brisbane's Breakfast Creek in Windsor. Since its establishment in April 1994, more than 1,500 exotic and native fruit trees, shrubs and ground covers have been planted across the 2.5-hectare site.

The Farm includes kitchen gardens, orchards, a bush foods area, a woodlot, and a revegetation zone along the creek. It is also home to chickens, European honeybees, worm farms and composting areas, and is regularly visited by many local birds and other animals who rely on the Farm for food, water, shelter and breeding spaces.

Nurtured by staff and volunteers, the Farm is a green oasis in the city where people of all ages can enjoy, learn, and practise the permaculture ethics of People Care, Earth Care and Fair Share through observation and hands-on experience.

As part of the Earth Kids program, children have the opportunity to explore and engage with many aspects of life on the Farm in a safe, supported and enriching environment.

2. About the Earth Kids Program

The Earth Kids program aims to empower children to become *nature smart* by building the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to actively care for the natural world and nurture the ecosystems we belong to.

Through observation, guided questioning and hands-on activities, children learn about the Farm's local plants and animals, learn about Indigenous perspectives, experiment with Eco Arts, develop bushcraft skills, and apply permaculture principles in meaningful, age-appropriate ways.

Each Earth Kids program varies according to the season and may include activities such as:

- **Gardening** – planting, harvesting and composting, as well as learning about bush foods and seasonal changes.
- **Bushcraft** – building shelters, navigation, knife skills, string-making, and fire-making.
- **Eco Arts** – creating art using natural, recycled, and repurposed materials.
- **Indigenous understanding** – storytelling and cultural sharing that support respect for Country and culture.
- **Earth connection** – activities such as 'magic spots', mapping and wandering, designed to build awareness, agency and understanding of ecosystems and relationships within nature.

The Earth Kids teaching approach is grounded in the belief that nature is our best teacher. It is inspired by the *Coyote Mentoring* approach, as documented by Jon Young, Ellen Haas and Evan McGowan in *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature*.

As part of the program, children are given "nature names" (usually local plants or animals that live at the Farm) and introduced to core routines of nature connection, which include sit spots (referred to in Earth Kids as 'magic spots'), story of the day, bird language, expanding senses, exploring field guides and mapping.

3. Our Earth Kids team

Our Earth Kids team includes educators with experience working with children, who have also received training in nature awareness, permaculture, and bushcraft. We also welcome guest experts to provide additional learning experiences in areas such as Indigenous culture, nature journaling, knowledge of local plants and animals, and practical bushcraft skills.

For groups of up to 14 children, there are two NSCF staff members working on the program, and for larger groups (max. 24 participants), there are three staff. All NSCF educators hold current Blue Cards (Working with Children Check) and approved first aid qualifications, including emergency anaphylaxis and asthma management training. Any Earth Kids volunteers who are legally required to hold a Blue Card must also have a current card before participating.

4. Child Safe Standards

4.1. NSCF Code of Conduct

The NSCF Code of Conduct outlines the standards of behaviour expected of our staff and all visitors and learners at the Farm. A copy of this document is available to you upon request.

A children's version of the Code, based on the three permaculture ethics - **Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Share** - is introduced to Earth Kids participants on the first day of the program in an age-appropriate way. The *Code of Conduct for Children and Young People* includes:

Earth Care

- Only take what you need from plants.
- Respect animals' space and habitats.
- Do not dig soil, except in designated garden beds.
- Do not hit trees, they are living beings.
- Do not waste water.

People Care (including self-care)

- Show respect and listen to adults and peers.
- Sticks are tools, not weapons.
- Drink water and take shade when needed.
- Respect other people's differences and choices.
- Follow instructions and take time out when necessary.
- Listen to your body's needs.
- Check if others are okay or need help.
- Ask an educator for help if you feel upset or if something doesn't seem right.

Fair Share

- Take only what you need.
- Take turns when playing, talking, or using tools.
- Share your knowledge and skills with others.

These and other ideas are shared with children and young people before activities begin. During these discussions, children are encouraged to share their own understanding and ideas about how to apply the three ethics throughout the program.

4.2. Ethics and Behaviour support

At NSCF, we believe that supporting people to apply the three permaculture ethics - **People Care (self and others), Earth Care, and Fair Share** - helps foster warm, respectful, and supportive relationships with each other and with the environment.

For Earth Kids, this Handbook, together with the Consent Form, is designed to inform parents and guardians of our expectations and approach, ensuring they play a key role in supporting their child to apply the ethics and have a positive experience in the program. On the first day, children are introduced to the Earth Kids area alongside the three ethics. Participation in this introductory activity is required and includes an orientation to the site as well as a discussion of the ethics.

During the program, children are encouraged to participate in all activities. For those who prefer not to join a particular activity, alternative options such as drawing, reading, exploring, or independent play within the group area may be offered. For safety reasons, children are required to remain with the group and follow staff instructions. If staff are unable to engage a child despite guidance and support, parents or guardians may be contacted to help determine the best way for the child to participate safely.

When children's behaviour or interactions are unsafe or inconsistent with the ethics, staff will support children to reflect on their choices, explore alternative ways to meet their needs, and re-engage positively with the group. If behaviour continues to cause concern, parents or guardians will be contacted to pick up their child.

4.3. Safety at the NSCF site and Approach to Risk

NSCF endeavours to create a safe and secure environment where children feel welcome and at ease. Some important safety considerations relating to the site include:

- **There is no fencing around the Farm, with a couple of quiet roads and a creek bordering the main Earth Kids area.** Children must be able to follow instructions to stay off the roads and out of the water.
- **There are European honeybee hives on site**. If a child is allergic to bee stings, it is essential to notify us on the Enrolment Form and provide an appropriate anaphylaxis management plan.
- **Wildlife, including snakes, lives 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. Children who are confident climbers may climb to a height of 2 metres.** Please let us know by email or on the Enrolment Form if you do not want your child to climb trees.

At Earth Kids, we recognise the importance of children taking acceptable risks to explore limits, experience new challenges, and develop their capacities within a safe and controlled learning environment. For us, this may include minor injuries such as bruises, grazes, or sprains. However, it is of paramount importance that children are not exposed to significant or life-threatening risks. The NSCF Youth Program Risk Management Plan guides us to minimise hazards. A copy of this document is available to you upon request.

To ensure safety, children are expected to follow NSCF educators' instructions and respect boundaries. Challenging behaviours will be addressed as mentioned in items 4.1 and 4.2.

In the unlikely event that a child or young person discloses information during a program or activity that we suspect may indicate abuse, neglect, or risk of harm, NSCF staff will follow instructions by the Queensland Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety.

4.4. Runaway children

Children must stay within NSCF grounds and designated areas. If a child leaves the grounds or designated areas without permission, staff will assess the situation to ensure the safety of both the child and the rest of the group. Parents or guardians will be contacted immediately, and in rare circumstances where further assistance is needed, the Youth Education Coordinator may call the police.

4.5. Illness and injury

Whilst NSCF actively strives to provide a safe environment and the avoidance of harm, there may be occasions when incidents 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, NSCF staff will advise the responsible adult of the incident and ask them to sign to acknowledge that they have been advised. Where a more serious incident occurs, the child's parent, guardian, or emergency contact will be contacted immediately.

Qualified NSCF 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 or 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 NSCF staff in case required.**

4.6. Infectious diseases

To remove immediate and/or serious risks to the health of children and staff from possible cross-infections, all people including children, staff and parents or 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 education and care services published in 2024[1] to determine exclusion periods. **It is the responsibility of parents or 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 or guardians of other children as appropriate but having regard for the privacy of individuals concerned.

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

4.7. Handling Personal Information

To provide its services, NSCF collects and manages personal and sensitive information relating to families, children, and others. NSCF respects the privacy of all individuals, collects only the information necessary, and handles it confidentially. Information provided in the Earth Kids Enrolment Form, which is essential for the care of children during the program, may be shared with other NSCF staff members who are also responsible for the children's care.

Personal information is retained for one calendar year and securely destroyed when no longer required, unless families have opted to receive promotional materials, in which case it may be retained longer. Participants have the right to request deletion of their information from NSCF's database at any time by contacting the Youth Education Coordinator at youthedn@nscf.org.au.

[1] https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-guidelines#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1

5. Enroling in the program

Enrolment in the Earth Kids program consists of the following steps:

1. **Reading this Handbook,**
2. **Purchasing a ticket via Humanitix,**
3. **Completing the Enrolment Form (Homeschool program or Holiday program), and**
4. **Completing and signing the online Consent Form.**

The personal information requested is essential to provide all children attending the program, as well as our staff, with the best possible experience and to ensure their health and safety. If you don't feel comfortable providing any of the information we request, please contact the Youth Education Coordinator at youthedn@nscf.org.au.

After receiving all completed forms, the Youth Education Coordinator reviews them and contacts parents or guardians if additional information or clarification is required.

5.1. Inclusion

We strive to include young people and families from all walks of life, celebrating different abilities, cultures, and interests. To support this, we ask families to provide relevant information in the Enrolment Form.

If your child has additional support needs - whether due to a medical condition, disability, culturally and linguistically diverse background, or any other reason - **it is essential that you share information and strategies that will help us best support your child during the program**. If needed, we may organise a phone call or in-person meeting with the Youth Education Coordinator to discuss how the program can be adapted to meet your child's needs.

In some circumstances, we may advise parents or guardians to arrange extra support for their child. Please note that the main Earth Kids area is not wheelchair accessible at this stage.

5.2. Booking, cancellation, and no-show

Bookings for the Earth Kids program are made via Humanitix, using the links available on the NSCF website or shared through our social media channels. NSCF offers a sliding-fee system to make the program accessible to as many people as possible. Partial scholarships are available for First Nations families and for children whose parents volunteer in the program.

Cancellations and no-show*:* We understand that circumstances can change, and participants may sometimes be unable to attend. **Program fees are non-refundable for no-shows or cancellations made less than one week before the program starts**. Exceptions may be considered in cases of illness or emergencies, provided notice is given before the program begins. Please email the Youth Education Coordinator at youthedn@nscf.org.au to discuss your situation.

5.3. Parent volunteering

Volunteers are a valued and integral part of NSCF. On Earth Kids, **we offer a limited number of partial scholarships for children whose parents or guardians are interested in volunteering.**

All volunteers are required to follow the NSCF Code of Conduct and complete an induction before the program. Please note that **it is not possible for volunteers to supervise younger children who are not enrolled in the program or pets while volunteering**.

In addition to supporting children's participation, volunteers have the opportunity to learn about the program content, including approaches to nature connection, permaculture, Eco Arts, and Indigenous culture.

6. Getting ready for the sessions

6.1. Managing the Anxiety pre-program

Feeling anxious when having new experiences, being in unfamiliar environments, or meeting new people is completely natural. For some children (and adults), however, anxiety can be harder to manage and may turn what is meant to be a positive experience into a stressful or daunting one.

The following tips may help support families and children who experience anxiety before the program begins:

1. **Visit the farm beforehand.**
   Families are welcome to visit Northey Street City Farm and explore the Earth Kids area prior to the program. As the Farm has no fences, there is no need to book this visit. If you feel your child would benefit from a gentle walk-through and introduction to the program with the Youth Education Coordinator, please book ahead by emailing youthedn@nscf.org.au.
2. **Read through the program together.**
   Program information is sent to families during the week before the program starts. Reading it with your child can help them understand what to expect. Talk through the activities, help your child visualise the experience, identify possible triggers, and discuss coping strategies they could use if anxiety arises. Remind your child that NSCF educators are there to support them.
3. **Bring comfort items if helpful.**
   For some children, having a familiar object or wearing favourite clothing can provide reassurance and comfort (see also item 6.2).

If children feel anxious or overwhelmed during the program, NSCF educators will support them. Quiet areas are available around the Earth Kids basecamp, where children can sit, lie down, or take a gentle walk -either independently or with an educator - until they feel calmer.

6.2. What to wear and pack

All belongings must be clearly labelled and collected after each session.

- **Comfortable, sun-safe clothing suitable for outdoor activities**. Long pants although not compulsory are recommended for protection.
- **Fully enclosed and comfortable footwear** (e.g. sneakers). Children are not allowed to remove their shoes unless they are on mats or an activity requires this and asked to do so by an Earth Kids staff member.
- **A hat.** Broad brims or legionnaire-style hats are recommended and should be worn whenever children are not undercover.
- **Towel, spare clothes and shoes** if you allow your children to play in water (e.g., rain or sprinkler during hot days).
- **Reusable water bottle or a mug/cup**.
- **All food that your children may need for the session, including snacks.** We have a morning tea break during the homeschool program, and morning tea and lunch breaks during the holiday program. Note that there are no microwaves or fridge on site.
- **Personal sunscreen and insect repellent**. Mozzies and midges are particularly bad during warmer and/or wet months.
- **Umbrella and raincoats with hoods if wet weather,** as we go ahead with activities in the event of light rain.

- A small notebook or journal. Although not compulsory, we recommend bringing one for registering nature observations.
- A picnic kit (mug, plate and cutlery) when cooking-related activities are in the program (e.g., campfire cooking).
- **Whittling tool <u>ONLY</u> if the program requires. If your child usually carries a whitling tool or pocketknife with them, they will need to check in and out during registration and hand them to NSCF educators when asked to do so.**

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. **<u>Personal belongings</u> -** On our Earth Kids program, we are committed to providing time with nature and away from screens. We discourage children from bringing electronic devices and toys and cannot guarantee the safety of personal belongings. **NSCF and its staff are not responsible for any items of monetary or personal value that are lost, damaged, or left behind. 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.**

2. **<u>Food allergens</u>** - In line with recommendations from the *National Allergy Council*[2]*,* NSCF does not implement food bans on items that can cause anaphylaxis. As control measures, we ask children not to share lunches, ensure that they wash their hands before and after eating, and, in cases of known anaphylaxis, suggest that parents avoid sending foods that pose a known risk. **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 a NSCF staff member.

6.3. Medication

In the interests of the health and wellbeing of the children, **NSCF 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.

7. Supporting your children's experience

Even though Earth Kids is a program for children, their families and wider support network are invited to be part of their experience and learning. One way to participate is by discussing the meaning and practice of the permaculture ethics within your family and community.

Another is by asking children about their *nature name* and helping them explore it further. At the start of the program, each child is given a nature name – animals or plants likely to be found at NSCF. In our experience, exploring nature names is a powerful way to learn and strengthen connections with

[2] Allergy Aware. (November, 2023). Best Practice Guidelines for anaphylaxis prevention and management in children's education and care services (including outside school hours care).
https://allergyaware.org.au/images/2023areas/Best_practice_guidelines_childrens_education_and_care_v2.1.pdf

nature. We feel privileged to witness children's excitement when they encounter their nature name at the Farm, and we encourage families to join their children on this journey of growth.

Encouraging observation through journaling and practising the core routines of nature connection at home or neighbourhoods are also excellent ways to nurture empathy and life-changing skills.

8. Arrivals and departures

8.1. Location

Northey Street City Farm is located at 16 Victoria Street, Windsor. The Earth Kids basecamp is near the netball courts and Windsor Dog Park, south of Edgar Street. This will be the drop-off and pick-up point unless otherwise communicated by the Youth Education Coordinator.

Getting here:

- By bus: 10-min walk from Royal Brisbane Hospital bus station. Walk downhill and past the BP station, Northey Street is the first street on the left.
- By train: 10-min walk from Windsor station and a 20-minute walk from Bowen Hills and Fortitude Valley stations.
- By bike: Routes connect to the city and to the northern and eastern suburbs.
- By car: On-street parking nearby (the carpark to the north of Northey Street is best; parking outside the nursery is possible) – but it can get busy, so **allow extra time.**

8.2. Timing

Drop-off is available 15 minutes before the start of the session, and children must be picked up within 15 minutes of the session ending.

- **Homeschool program:** Sessions are **from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.**
- **Holiday program:** Sessions are **from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm each day.**

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. On day 1, it is particularly important that children arrive on time for registration. Parents, guardians, or authorised people nominated on the Enrolment form must sign children in and out each day.
2. **We kindly ask parents to respect our drop-off and pick-up times. If you arrive early, you may be asked to stay on site with your children until designated time. If you are late for pick up, 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.**
3. If at closing time children have not been collected, parents or guardians will be contacted by phone and if necessary, the emergency numbers provided. If no contact is made via emergency numbers, advice will be sought from Police and/or the Department of Child Safety. **For parents or guardians picking up children late, a fee of $15 per block of 1-15 minutes will be charged.**

8.3. Pick-up authorisation

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

All children are to be signed in and out on the Attendance Register by the parent, guardian, or another person whom the parent or 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 program 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 responsible adult. **NSCF will not take responsibility for children whose parents or guardians allow them to walk or 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 or 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 or 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.

9. Pets

To make the program comfortable for all children and families who may not like, be afraid of, or have allergies to animals like cats and dogs, **pets are not allowed in the Earth Kids basecamp**. Guide and assistance animals are not considered pets. If this applies to you, please speak with the Youth Education Coordinator prior to the program.

10. 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, parents or 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.

11. Contacting us

From Tuesday to Thursday, during business hours on 3857 8775. You will also be provided with the Youth Education Coordinator's mobile number before the program begins.

12. Frequently Asked Questions

If you have questions, you may find the answers below in our frequently asked questions. Otherwise, please contact the Youth Education Coordinator at youtheedn@nscf.org.au. We are happy to help.

"My children can attend only one day of the holiday program. Is it possible to purchase tickets for only one day?"

We currently don't offer single-day bookings for the holiday program. One of the reasons is that it can be difficult for us to fill the remaining day with another family, so we give preference to children who can attend both days.

"Our family missed the booking—can my child join if we show up on the day?"

Please don't do that. While we love welcoming new families to our Earth Kids community, we're unfortunately unable to accept children who haven't booked in advance. Due to the nature of the program and working with children, our team carefully prepares before each program to ensure a safe, enjoyable, and well-supported experience for all participants - including our educators.

"Do you offer trials for your programs?"

We offer trials only for our Earth Kids Homeschool program. If you have any questions or would like to find out more to see if it's a good fit for your family, please contact our Youth Education Coordinator at youthedn@nscf.org.au. We'll be happy to provide as much information as possible to help you make an informed decision.

"I'm a First Nations person and would like to benefit from the partial scholarship for my child. What do I need to do?"

Please visit the event page on Humanitix and select the First Nations ticket. If you need any assistance, please contact us at youthedn@nscf.org.au.

"I am interested in enrolling my 5-year-old child. Is it possible?"

At this stage, the Earth Kids programs accept children aged 6-12, and occasionally 5-year-olds who come along with an older sibling or close friend and are able to follow instructions easily. If this applies to your child, please reach out to youthedn@nscf.org.au to explore the possibility.

"I'm exploring the possibility of homeschooling from next year. Could I come with my child to observe a session?"

If your child is 5 or older, they may be able to book a single-day trial session. To organise this, please contact our Youth Education Coordinator at youthedn@nscf.org.au.

"Our family missed the beginning of the homeschool term, could I please book my child anyway?"

Unfortunately, you can't. From 2026, we will only accept children at the start of the term as attending the first session helps establish the stepping stones for their learning and relationships throughout the program. To make sure your family doesn't miss out, join our Earth Kids mailing list! We promise no spam - just updates letting you know when bookings open. To express your interest, please email us at youthedn@nscf.org.au.

"Our family holds a Health Care Card. Is there any partial scholarships available for us?"

To make our programs as accessible as possible, we offer early bird prices and low-income fees. Health Care Card holders are welcome to choose the low-income ticket rate available for most of our Earth Kids programs.