



Family Handbook

2025

Information for families
about Meeniyan Preschool

We are proud to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, learn and play on, we recognise the continuing connection to lands, water and communities and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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Welcome to Meeniyan Preschool

This is an exciting time for you and your child. We hope it will be an enjoyable experience for all the families who are involved in Meeniyan Preschool.

This handbook as a guide for the families of children attending the kindergarten. Please take the time to read it so that you can understand the management and operation of the kindergarten.

If you have any questions or comments about this handbook, please contact us via email to meeniyan@kindergarten.vic.gov.au

Free Kinder for 2025

The Victorian State Government provides funding for children to access two years of free kindergarten before they start school. The funding is a contribution towards meeting the cost of the kindergarten program.

Our Kindergarten is a participating service and your child will be counted as an eligible child when we submit data to the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Your child is only eligible for one year of funded 3-year-old kindergarten, then one year of 4-year-old kindergarten.

Children attending our funded 4-year-old program in 2025 will be transitioning to school in 2026.

Second Year funding

A second year of funded Four-Year-Old Kindergarten may be considered when a child shows delays in learning and development outcome areas aligned with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, and when:

- the kindergarten program is deemed to be the most appropriate learning program
- the child will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten than if they go to school.

A second-year assessment process must be carried out for a child by an early childhood teacher when a second year is being considered. If approved, a second year of funded kindergarten may be offered. Please consider your options carefully and discuss them with your child's early childhood teacher.

Kindergarten dates and times.

Kindergarten is open in accordance to the Victorian school term dates. The 2025 dates are below:

Term 1: 28 January to 4 April

Term 2: 22 April to 4 July

Term 3: 21 July to 19 September

Term 4: 6 October to 19 December

***We are closed all public holiday**

- **Echidna group (3-year-old kinder) session are every second Wednesday and every Thursday and Friday**
- **Platypus group (4-year-old kinder) session are every Monday, Tuesday and every second Wednesday.**

Individual group calendar is available. If you have not received one please notify the office.

Kinder Session times are 9am to 3pm.

It is really important for families to be mindful of these set times and not drop children off any earlier or pick up later. Teaching team have planning obligations before and after kinder. If there is an off chance you will be late a courtesy call is recommended.

Family Interviews

Every year our ECT's (Early childhood teachers) conduct family interviews. It gives children and families an opportunity to meet the teachers and discuss your child, speak of their strengths, their interests, discuss any concerns you may have and gain a deeper understanding of what kindergarten will look like for you and your child.

Teachers also offer parent interviews at the end of term 2 to discuss progress at kindergarten and goals for the remainder of the year.

Interview times will be organised and emailed to families.

Meeniyan Preschool Team

Director/ Educational Leader:	Courtney Murray (Tuesday, Thursday and Friday)	director.meeniyan@kindergarten.vic.gov.au
Administration	Alison Beaumont	admin.meeniyan@kindergarten.vic.gov.au
Early Childhood Teachers	Deb Gannon	deb.gannon.meeniyan@kindergarten.vic.gov.au
	Janine Harrison-Hewitt	janine.harrison- hewitt.meeniyan@kindergarten.vic.gov.au
Educators	Michelle Tumino	michelle.tumino.meeniyan@kindergarten.vic.gov.au
	Lyn Cummins	lyn.cummins.meeniyan@kindergarten.vic.gov.au
	Rebecca (Bec) Parkes	rebecca.parke.meeniyan@kindergarten.vic.gov.au
Committee of Management	President: Melissa McRae	president.meeniyan@kindergaten.vic.gov.au
<p>*In Early Childhood Education we work to a child/adult ratio which is: 1 adult: 11 children for children aged 3-5yrs</p>		

Our Philosophy

Firstly, we are proud to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, learn and play on, we recognise the continuing connection to lands, water and communities and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

At Meeniyan Preschool we understand the importance of nurturing a foundation for lifelong learning. We believe children should feel safe, secure, respected, cared for, valued, encouraged and reassured.

We strive to provide a happy, welcoming atmosphere, where each individual child can develop to their fullest potential.

Children- We believe:

All children are successful, capable, and resourceful learners who are active contributors to their own learning.

All children need to be valued as individuals, who bring with them their own heritage, interests, and early life experiences.

All children can develop risk taking skills and positive self-esteem through a supportive, safe, and inclusive environment.

Families- We believe:

Trust, respect, and collaboration form the basis of strong partnerships between families and staff.

In working closely with parents in a reciprocal relationship.

Learning Programmes- We believe:

Children learn through collaboration and communication with other children and adults and through interacting with the environment.

Children need opportunities to practice and consolidate their skills in key learning areas whilst being creative and expressing their ideas.

A programme will be rich in language and allow students to discuss, enquire, collaborate, investigate and reflect.

Employees- We believe:

In employing members of staff, who are committed to working for the best interests of children and families.

Each staff member brings fundamental, personal qualities to the preschool environment such as empathy, respect, warmth and a passion for learning.

In the importance of creating an environment of collegiality where personal and professional contributions are valued, communication is open and confidentiality is maintained.

Child Safety Statement

Meeniyan Preschool is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our education and decision making.

Meeniyan Preschool has a zero tolerance for child abuse.

Meeniyan Preschool is committed to providing a child safe environment where children are safe and feel safe, their voices are heard and are included in decisions that affect their them and their lives. This includes respecting and embracing the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with neurodiversity and disability.

Every person involved in Meeniyan Preschool has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children is at the forefront of planning, decision making and operations.

As per our Child Safe Environment Policy all parent volunteers working with our children are required to hold a current WWCC. All our educators participate in yearly mandatory reporting training.

Meeniyan Preschool will

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
10. Value the input of and communicate regularly with families and carers

Essential information

Learning curriculums

Meeniyān Preschool provides a play-based curriculum based on the Victorian Early Years Learning Framework (VEYLF) and in addition to the national Early Year Learning Framework (EYFL).

We value emerging curriculums where all children are seen as competent, resourceful individuals who are capable of directing their own learning and making their own decisions.

Our environment is seen as the third teacher where all children are encouraged to have access to all materials and equipment so they can explore and develop their own ideas, individually or with peers. We value messy play each and every day.

Nature play is very much embedded into Meeniyān Preschool and is highlighted each day as children learn to take care of country. We show respect to the country we learn and play on and enjoy engaging in our wider community through regular outings and busk kinder. We appreciate and value all cultures including indigenous perspectives.

Every child is individual and bring something special to the group. We value diversity and celebrate every child for who they are. We value their thinking, their questions, their decisions, their challenges and choices. We value their creations and support them to extend on their ideas which maybe through new knowledge or resources.

There are long stretches of open time for children's play and exploration during the day, believing that children engage deeply with each other, learning vital long-life skills.

The learning curriculum supports the development of each child physically, socially, intellectually and emotionally.

Bush Kinder

During 2024 our passionate Platypus team successfully introduced Bush kinder into the learning curriculum. Bush kinder occurs in Term 2 and Term 3. Currently the 4-year-old platypus group attend bush kinder one session per week during these terms and is weather and staffing depended. We will continue to grow bush kinder in 2025 and look into how the 3-year-old Echidna group will take part.

Prior to bush kinder starting families will receive more information including a hand book to understand why bush kinder has become a part of Meeniyān Preschool and gives families a better understand to how it all works.

Management of Meeniyán Preschool

The kindergarten operations are managed by a voluntary committee of management consisting of parents whose children are enrolled at Meeniyán Preschool. Interested and suitably skilled parents are invited to nominate for a position on the committee.

Positions

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary/Public Officer
- Treasurer
- Fundraising Co-Ordinator
- General Committee Members

Committee meetings occur twice per term on a day to be determined by Committee members, and parents are most welcome to attend these meetings as observers.

Parents can also participate in sub-committees, which meet more informally and less regularly. Sub-committees report to the committee and most importantly allow the workload to be spread more evenly.

Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held in November each year specifically for reviewing the years achievements, activities and to elect office bearers for our Committee of Management. All parents are invited to attend.

Policies

The service has a range of policies to comply with our regulations. Each policy is regularly reviewed, including consultation with our kindergarten community. For policy detail please refer to Meeniyán Preschool website or ask a staff member for assistance. There is a policy folder located in the office and available on request.

Compliments and Complaints

If you are happy with an activity, a program, or have any suggestions or ideas for improving the running of the service, we would love to hear from you. Contact a committee member or attend the monthly committee meetings.

If you have complaints or concerns about any aspects of your child's attendance at the service, please discuss with the Early Childhood Teacher. This may be done informally at the end of the session or by making an appointment. Concerns will be dealt with promptly as it is our aim to provide you and your child with a happy and supportive environment.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your concern or complaint, please contact the director at director.meeniyán@kindergarten.vic.gov.au. If you are still not satisfied, please

contact the president of the committee at president.meeniyam@kindergarten.vic.gov.au. The final step to resolve your concern if the steps above did not resolve your issues you can contact the Regional Department of Education and Training office on 1300 338 738.

Health Issues

Immunisation

In Victoria Early Childhood Education and Care Services cannot confirm enrolment of a child unless the parent/guardian has provided documentation that shows the child: is fully vaccinated for their age, is on a recognised catch-up schedule or has a medical reason not to be vaccinated. The preferred documentation is the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register Immunisation History Statement.

Accident / Injury / Illness and Trauma

To comply with regulations an accident, illness & trauma record must be kept for recording:

- Accident, injuries or trauma received by a child or illness which becomes apparent while attending the center;
- All action undertaken by staff in relation to the accident, illness or trauma; and
- The signature of the parent/guardian after they have been notified of the accident, injury, illness or trauma
- This report will be sent through to families via OWNA to sign off. If you receive one without prior communication from the teachers, this essentially means the accident is minor (scrape, bruise etc.) and the child is fine to continue on with their day.

In the event of a serious accident or illness, an ambulance or medical practitioner will be called immediately and the parents will be notified. If the parent cannot be contacted, the nominated emergency contact person will be contacted. The child's details (from the enrolment form) will be made available to the ambulance officers and/or medical practitioners. Any costs associated with ambulance transfer or medical attention required for the child will be the responsibility of the parents.

All Meeniyam Preschool educators are trained in First Aid, Anaphylaxis Management and Emergency Asthma Management and are able to respond to medical emergencies.

Illness

Children should not attend kindergarten when suffering from a cough, cold, diarrhea, recent vomiting or any infectious disease. Coming to kinder only delays recovery and spreads the germs/virus around. Please notify the service as soon as possible if your child has an infectious disease.

We follow public health and wellbeing regulations and have exclusion periods in place.

Headlice

Head lice can occur at our service. Children with head lice must be excluded from the service until the day after effective and appropriate treatment has commenced. Staff will issue users with information on treatment if head lice is occurring at the service.

Parents/Guardians will be contacted to collect their child from the service if head lice has been found in your child's hair.

MEDICATIONS

Staff will only administer medication to a child if the medicine has been prescribed for that child by a medical practitioner (or with written instructions from a medical practitioner).

If a child requires medication, a person authorised of legal authority (usually parents) must fill in the kindergarten's medication form. A friend or relative dropping the child to kinder is not likely to have legal authority.

It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that medication is given to a staff member, who will place it out of reach of children. All medication must be in its original container as prescribed for the child in question. Medicines that are out of date or prescribed for another family member will not be administered. A more detailed Administration of Medications Policy is available for viewing on request.

Diagnosed Medical Conditions

Parents/guardians of a child at Meeniyān Preschool with a diagnosed medical condition must provide a medical management plan which has been completed and authorised by a licensed health care professional. This plan authorises staff to administer medication.

It is a parent's responsibility to provide an adequate supply of appropriate medication and equipment (e.g., Epi pen/reliever/spacer) for their child at all times.

It is also the parent's responsibility to notify staff of any changes to the plan. Medication can be administered as required and in accordance with the medical management plan.

In addition, for each child with a diagnosed medical condition, the preschool will develop a risk minimisation plan and communication plan in consultation with the child's parents/guardians. The Risk Minimisation Plan and Communication plan intends to identify and communicate current information and issues or potential situations that could lead to a medical incident or emergency, and strategies to reduce these risks.

Emergency Procedures

The service has an evacuation plan on display and an Emergency Management Plan for reference. Please acquaint yourself with them and note the evacuation points.

Throughout the year kinder groups will engage in practice emergency evacuations to become more familiar of how this will look and experience what do to if we do have an emergency.

- Assist anybody in immediate danger and isolate the hazard if possible.
- Raise alarm immediately by blowing the whistle.
- Call 000 for all emergency services.
- If phone unusable, use nearest adjacent phone.
- Evacuate children immediately. Walk to nearest safe exit to assembly area
- Ensure the foyer iPad is taken and the roll called once all persons have assembled.
- Notify parents.

National Quality Standard/ QIP

All early childhood services have a set of benchmarks for the quality of education and care services. There are seven quality areas:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staff arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Governance and leadership

Services go through rating and assessment visit every few years and are provided a rating based on all seven quality areas.

General information

Attendance Sign IN and OUT

Regulations require that every child is to be signed in and out every kinder session they attend. Every family will do this electronically through the required platform using their personal mobile devices or using the service iPad allocated in the entrance foyer. Team members will

always be around for support and questions. The exact time of arrival and departure will be recorded along with a signature.

On this platforms families have the option to confirm if your child is absent for the day.

Collection of a child

Collection of a child must be by a person who is an authorised nominee or parent/guardians. If anyone other than the parent/guardian or authorised nominee is collecting your child, please notify the teaching team and written authorisation must be provided via OWNA. You can update a person's details via your child enrolment form under the section *authorisation for picking up and dropping off child* in OWNA.

Late pick up

If for any reason you are unable to collect your child by the end of the session at 3pm please contact the kindergarten and inform the teaching team which person from the list of authorised people who will be collecting your child. If this does not happen and your child has not been collected within 10 minutes of the session ending, we will contact you via phone. If unsuccessful the emergency contact person listed on your child's enrolment form will be contacted and asked to collect your child.

SunSmart

We value outdoor play each and every session rail or shine. We are a SunSmart kindergarten and check UV rays to guide our day. If the UV is above 3 sun protection is required which includes:

- Wearing a broad-brimmed hat
- Slipping on SunSmart clothing
- Slop on SPF50 broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen
- Seeking shade

Families are asked to apply sunscreen before each session and educators will re-apply sunscreen during the day. We supply sunscreen however if your child needs their own sunscreen, please name it and give to staff.

Broad brimmed hats are supplied by us and will be kept at the kindergarten. Best sun smart clothing includes tops/dresses that cover the chest, back, neck and shoulder. Clothes that have sleeves that are a least elbow-length and shorts that are knee length is recommended.

What to pack for kindergarten.

Each session please bring your child's bag with:

- a spare change of clothes including socks, undies (all labelled please),

- a wet bag for dirty clothing.
- a water bottle.
- a piece of fruit for shared fruit.
- lunch box.

Please make sure all of your child's items are clearly labelled with their name.

In winter we highly recommend raincoats, gumboots and beanie. There's a wonderful Norwegian saying – "There is no bad weather, only bad clothes!". Outdoor play is offered rain, wind or sunshine!

Please avoid children bring in or wearing dress up during kindergarten sessions. Kinder has an abundance of dress up that children can access during sessions to support their interest and play.

Healthy eating

Your child should bring a clearly labelled lunch box with sufficient food for the duration of the session and a labelled bottle of water that can be refilled.

We promote and encourage healthy eating so when packing lunches, we ask you not to include food such as lollies, chips, chocolate. Sandwiches, fruits, vegetables, grains, yoghurt, cheese and nuts are all appropriate foods. You may consider an ice pack to keep lunches cool and we can heat food up for children.

Please keep in mind when packing lunches, we aim to promote as much independence as possible so making sure children are able to open lunchboxes and food items support this. Teachers are always there to support children and encourage them to develop these self-help skills.

Morning tea, we have shared milk and fruit. Children are asked to bring a piece of fruit to share.

Clothing

Children need to be dressed comfortably in suitable clothes which they can manage themselves, especially when using the toilet. Please ensure your child always has a change of clothes as children clothes get dirty, wet and stained as a part of normal play.

It is important to dress children in clothes that you don't mind getting spoilt by messy activities, and which allow safe climbing and physical activity.

No thongs or slip-on footwear as these can be dangerous when running or climbing. Gumboots are a great idea in cooler/wet weather.

Celebrating birthdays

We enjoy celebrating children's birthday. In 2025 Meeniyana Preschool will have a special birthday celebration ring that the birthday person can design and decorate to reflect their personality. This is shared within their group along with a song and a moment of reflection about the birthday person and what special attributes they bring to kinder. We want to develop a culture where we celebrate the person and provide them with positivity and how important they are in the kinder community.

Communication

Information about the children's experiences, engagement in the curriculum will be shared with families via OWNA. The curriculum information is also shared in the main foyer on the noticeboards. It is the responsibilities of parents to regularly check OWNA app and noticeboards for updates.

Communication between the committee and parents is primarily email and messenger groups. Committee members will reach out to you to ask whether you'd like to be part of this group. It is important that you provide your email and mobile number.

Committee contact details are available on the notice board and online.

Communication with teaching teams is through email. Each teacher has an email address that families can use to send messages.

Safety/Door Code

There is a coded safety gate to enter kinder. Families will receive the code prior to starting. We ask families to keep this code private and discourage children from using the code and opening the gate for safety reasons.

The main door is locked during session hours. It is unlocked during drop off and arrival times again for safety reasons. If you are picking up earlier or arriving late you will need to use the doorbell located at the front gate to notify teachers you are arriving.

Children need to wait inside the kinder room until you come to collect them. Beyond this, the safety of your child when arriving and departing is your responsibility. Please note the following points:

- The gate and entrance door should be kept shut at all times;
- Children are not allowed to climb over the fence;
- Ensure that other children do not leave when you are leaving;
- Encourage children to hold your hand while walking to and from the car;
- Chat to other parents where you are able to supervise children
- Consider how many children you can safely supervise before agreeing to deliver other children to or from preschool; and

Keep a check on your other children while at the centre as staff cannot be responsible for them.

Toileting needs

We understand each child has individual needs with their toileting depending on if they are learning to toilet or still in nappies. We approach this individually and with a positive approach and let the families inform us on the best way to support your child the best. We will work in partnership using a sensitive approach to ensure each child's comfort and to foster the child's developing sense of competence. We will promote independence and role model children's rights for privacy during these times. The children's bathroom will be a safe space and respectful of all children.

Toileting and nappy changing will be carried out at frequent intervals throughout the day and based on individual children's needs. If there is further information you would like to share please talk directly to your child's ECT.

Procedure for each session

Follow these simple steps below to start each session:

1. Enter kinder using gate code
2. Sign in child electronically
3. Support child to put bag in locker
4. Unpack lunch and drink bottle for easy access
5. Place fruit in shared fruit basket (for morning tea)
6. Put sunscreen on child during SunSmart months
7. The main door to kinder will open at 9am, children can enter and go wash hands in bathroom before starting to play
8. Begin your cuddle and goodbye routine and if you need support from the teaching team please let them know when you are ready to leave

Please feel free to call if your drop off was unsettled and you would like to know how your child has settled into the morning.

Parent involvement

We love it when parents/families get involved with the kindergarten, and so will your child. There are many ways to become part of the kindergarten community. If you, or a family member, have a hobby, interest or trade in any field, you are welcome to share it with the children. Parents, grandparents and friends are welcome to come and read a story or two to a small group of children. Just spending time and playing at the kinder is great. This can be

organised by checking with the staff. Other participation includes morning tea duty, committee of management positions and sub-committee roles.

Previous years we have current parents and families, former families and community members come and share experiences such as crafts, weaving, bringing in baby animals, science experiments, and cooking experiences just to name a few. Please speak directly with ECT's if you have an idea and what to organise a time.

Come and Play morning (support milk and fruit)

Each family is invited to come into kinder to play and support the program. We encourage this at least once per term. A roster is available for you to nominate a suitable day to attend which is allocated near the sign in/out station.

Teachers will notify families when come and play morning will start in their groups. Start times will look different for both groups as the Echidna group tend to begin later allowing children opportunities to settle in. As mentioned groups will be notified by ECT's when come and play session are open.

If unable to attend please let the teaching team know or another member of your family is welcome to attend.

Children enjoy having parents/family members at preschool and it is an opportunity for you to see your child experience kinder.

As part of our Regulatory requirements volunteers to our preschool are required to hold a Working with Children Check.

For information, please follow this link: <https://service.vic.gov.au/services/working-with-children> or inquire at our office.

Recycle, Reuse, Repurpose

We always welcome any products that you no longer require for the children's activities. For example

- yoghurt, margarine, cream or ice-cream containers,
- material/fabric scraps,
- cardboard boxes- big and small
- Any type of paper like computer paper, shredded paper or wrapping paper. Especially for drawing.
- For health reasons, no toilet rolls, soap boxes or washing powder boxes, please.
- Wool, ribbons and string
- Buttons
- Small pieces of wood
- Things collected from nature suited to craft work

We only ask items to be cleaned and don't smell of odours like smoke.

Fundraising

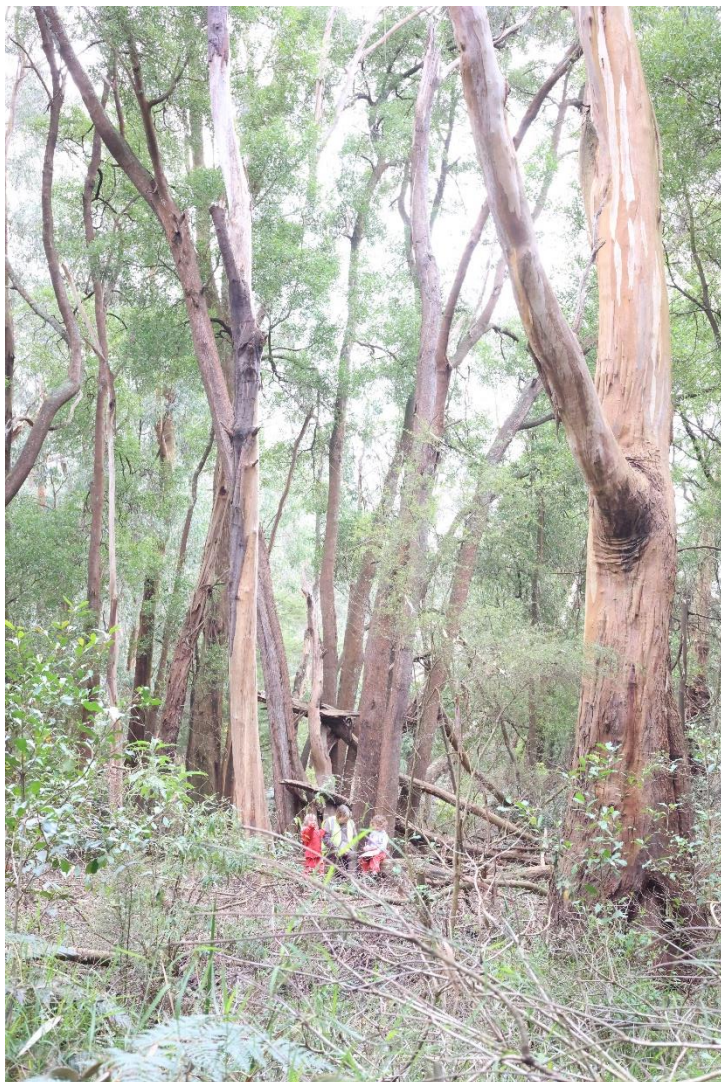
Our fundraising committee works hard to raise money while trying not to impose financial pressure on families.

Fundraising is important for our preschool as we are a not-for-profit organisation. Government funding alone does not always cover the costs so fundraising makes up many shortfalls. Money raised is always used to enrich the children's program and experiences at kindergarten

Your support, when a fundraising event is held, will be greatly appreciated, and will help spread the load evenly amongst all parents.

Our fundraising committee will communicate with families about up-and-coming fundraisers.

It would be appreciated if all fundraising could be paid via EFT.



Our account is:

- Bendigo Bank
- BSB: 633 000
- Account number: 150045623

**Please include your child's name and event details as a reference with the deposit.*

If you have any further question about this handbook, please contact us via email either at meeniyam@kindergarten.vic.gov.au or director@kindergarten.vic.gov.au.

If you would like to speak to us directly this can be done during session hours with your child's teaching team or the director.