



OOSH in the Bush Executive Summary 2015

In 2014 the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust (CPMPT) was awarded a grant from the NSW Environmental Trust to deliver a pilot program titled “OOSH in the Bush”. The pilot was instigated to investigate how the practice of nature play could be integrated into the Out of Hours School Care (OOSH) sector. Nature play is freely chosen child-centered play in a natural or semi natural environment. Researchers argue that play in nature is a fundamental part of child development and is associated with adult pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours.

OOSH in the Bush was delivered in two phases. Phase 1 was designed to investigate whether through play based nature experiences would children develop confidence, curiosity, interest in and stewardship for natural environments. The second phase was to support OOSH services to implement nature play experiences in their own services by linking nature play activities to the OOSH quality learning framework ‘My Time, Our Place’. This was addressed via face to face training, webinars and a via new nature play resources website ‘Children in Nature NSW’.

To achieve these outcomes ten OOSH services visited Centennial Parklands or the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan, for ten hours of nature play programming delivered by the Parkland’s Education team. 267 children attended from diverse OOSH services that included Special Education Needs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and Children from Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD).

The pilot was evaluated by the Centre for Education Research from Western Sydney University. Through this process they summarised the following key outcomes from the OOSH in the Bush pilot:

- The wild play area at Centennial Parklands provided a unique space for children to experience new things. Researchers saw evidence of children exhibiting confidence and curiosity to engage with and explore plants and animals. Many of these aspects could be modified and replicated in school grounds or in local park land to provide meaningful connection to nature through play.
- Growth towards environmental stewardship can be obtained through regular encounters with responsive affordances in a rich natural environment. Children during their 10 hours of nature play showed signs of moving towards a growing competence and knowledge of their environment. This competence has the potential to lead to feelings of environmental stewardship.
- As a phenomena, nature deprivation is a complex set of ideas around children's relationship to nature and is not one that can be easily measured, therefore research over a length of time would need to be conducted to prove what impact this program had on changing children’s nature lives.
- There is a need for continued support to OOSH services to be able to deliver nature play activities on an ongoing basis. This includes support to manage the operational procedures to allow measured risk taking (a feature of nature play) and to develop the nature connection and confidence of the OOSH Educators themselves.
- Nature play activities and their learning outcomes are easily linked to the OOSH learning framework “My time, Our place”.



Summary of program outputs:

- Grant awarded \$76,400 from the NSW Environmental Trust Environmental Education program
- 267 children participated in 1045 hours of nature play programming
- 76 OOSH educators participated in 228 hours of either face to face or online training in nature play practice delivered by Centennial Parklands Educators
- Children in Nature NSW website launched at the Network biannual conference which contains activity ideas, 3 films and information about nature play that emerged from the pilot to provide an ongoing resource for OOSH services to deliver nature play on their own sites. The site has been visited over 2000 times since its launch. www.childreninnaturensw.com.au
- 1 newspaper article, 2 Network member news articles have been published about the pilot with a media reach of 124,000
- 5 National and 1 International conference papers presented on the outcomes of the pilot
- Annual OOSH excursion program has been developed and is being delivered from Centennial Parklands and the Australian Botanic Garden as a result of this pilot
- Research report compiled titled 'Wild Nature Play, Researching OOSH in the Bush' from the University of Western Sydney, Centre for Educational Research



For more information about the OOSH in the Bush pilot please contact the
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