

## *'OOSH in the Bush'*

### *Evaluating the impact of Wild Play upon children.*

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Remember this?

# OOSH in the Bush, a nature play pilot program with the Out of Hours School (OOSH) Care Sector

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## What is nature ‘wild’ play?

- Unstructured, experiential, child centered play in the outdoors (all weather)
- Usually in a natural setting such as the Bush, Beach, playground or park or similar open space
- Supported by adult mentors to ensure maximum benefit, including managed risk taking and instilling a sense of awe and wonder for the natural world
- Provides opportunities for children to develop an emotional connection through play to the natural world
- Provides embodied, creative and imaginative experiences
- Can be easily linked to the Children’s Services (ages 5 -12 years) OOSH Learning Framework, My Time, Our Place



## Why nature play programs?



## OOSH in the Bush in a nutshell

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- Funded by the NSW Environmental Trust
- 267 children each engaged in 10 hours each of nature play either afterschool or in school holidays
- 90 OOSH Educators involved in training, either face to face or via webinars
- 2 key partnerships, Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust and Network of Community activities
- Additional partnerships enacted with 10 individual OOSH Centres
- Diversity of children participating with diverse needs, including SEN, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, Refugee and Asylum Seekers, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, CALD communities
- 2 outdoor learning sites, Centennial Park, Eastern Suburbs Sydney, Australian Botanic Garden, Western Sydney.
- Approximately 40% of all NSW primary age children attend a OOSH service each year.
- OOSH specific nature based outdoor education programs are rare if almost non-existent



## What did the children do?



## Supporting OOSH staff

- Face to face training on site at the Centennial Park and Australian Botanic Garden (40 staff)
- Series of webinars organised through Network including Safety off site, Introduction to Nature Play and linking my Time, Our Place (OOSH Learning framework) to Nature pedagogies
- Two additional workshops on themed nature play activities including climbing and playing with sticks
- Creation of Children in Nature NSW providing ongoing support through a new alliance and website, launched at the Network conference to over 300 delegates



[www.childreninnaturensw.com](http://www.childreninnaturensw.com)



## After the grant, what we know

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- OOSH services have been integrating more nature into their planning and programming
- OOSH professional development continues and is needed
- OOSH services now book regular excursion visits to Centennial Parklands and the Australian Botanic Garden
- RBGCP has developed a seasonal OOSH excursion program that incorporates elemental play (earth fire, air and water) and it is well attended
- OOSH services are great partners, bring high ratios of staff to children, are fun, flexible and in need of support from the Environmental Education community.
- The OOSH learning framework is extremely complimentary to nature play



## The report.....

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- 4 experienced researchers
- Mixed methods
- Unique research project, OOSH and nature play examined together
- Report is now being used to gain additional funding and a widening of the project across NSW
- Executive summary on the Children in Nature NSW website

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# **Wild Nature Play**

## **Researching *OOSH in the Bush***





# **Yin and Yang** of the research design

Overcome Strengths &  
Weaknesses of  
**Qualitative and**  
**Quantitative**  
1) Children and  
2) Educators

## Gender participation

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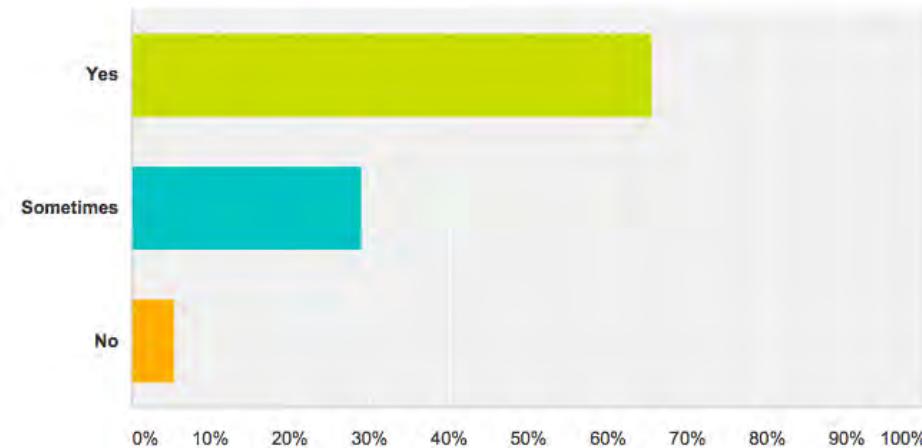
| Answer Choices | Responses |
|----------------|-----------|
| Boy            | 54.55%    |
| Girl           | 45.45%    |
| Total          | 55        |

## Response to nature

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### Q5 I like to hear different sounds in nature

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0



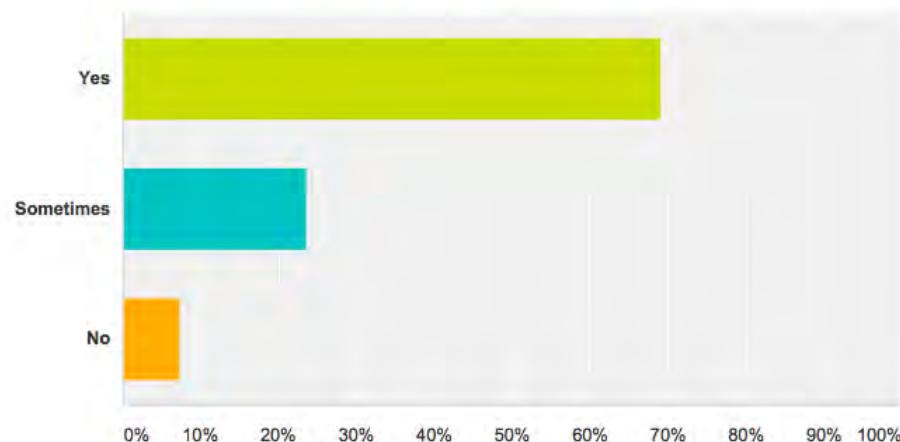
| Answer Choices | Responses |    |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Yes            | 65.45%    | 36 |
| Sometimes      | 29.09%    | 16 |
| No             | 5.45%     | 3  |
| Total          |           | 55 |

## Feelings in nature

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### Q8 Being in a natural environment makes me feel peaceful

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0



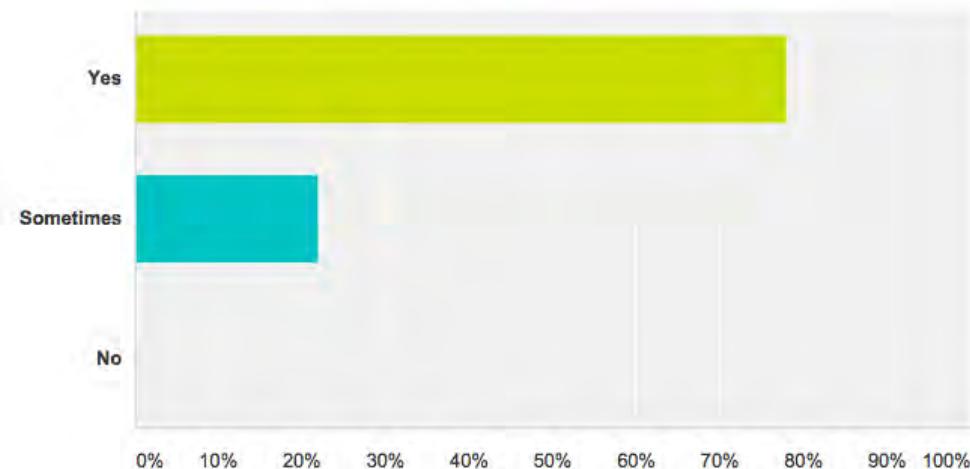
| Answer Choices | Responses |    |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Yes            | 69.09%    | 38 |
| Sometimes      | 23.64%    | 13 |
| No             | 7.27%     | 4  |
| Total          |           | 55 |

## Being outdoors

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### Q11 Being outdoors makes me happy

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0



| Answer Choices | Responses |    |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Yes            | 78.18%    | 43 |
| Sometimes      | 21.82%    | 12 |
| No             | 0.00%     | 0  |
| Total          |           | 55 |

## Engagement & Creativity: Imaginative Play

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It was valuable for the researchers to investigate whether access to natural 'wild play' space had an important impact on the children's engagement in free creative and imaginative play.



*'It is not half so important to know as how to feel'* R. Carson.

*'Barriers to nature can be overcome through creativity'* S.R. Kellert

Question: What are you doing today?

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*I am making a 'nature house'*

*So you have spent all day today making a 'Nature House' and who is going to live in it?*



## Enjoyment: Is OOSH in the Bush better than going home?

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*'Yes, because I'd just do my homework, and I'd just have to sit in my bedroom and play on my iPad and play on my iPod but the best part about OOSH in the Bush is I get to play with my friends, I get to make stuff, and I make new friends, I get to make shelters, I get to see live animals'.*



## Over 10 hours the notable changes included:

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- Playing in more varied groups
- Spending more time on one activity
- Sitting still for longer periods
- Improvement in gross and fine motor skills  
(less likely to fall over, take on bigger challenges!)
- Became more comfortable and immersed in the space



## Cooperative play

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*'By now, (back at school) I would have been the mediator for a million different things: like kids fighting, falling over and hurting themselves, not sharing their equipment ... but here, it all runs so smoothly. There hasn't been any fights or squabbles,... and ....they never say they are bored, ... they're relaxed and happy. It is great'.*

*'One of the amazing things about last week (at Wild Play) was we had no issues. Generally everyday there is something, like an argument, or someone annoys someone. And we always have to intervene in these relationships. But then last week, there was none of that. Everyone was just so "in" to what they were doing that they had no time to be mean to one another. So this is new for me,... the kids are really enjoying this'.*



# OOSH in the Bush CNI Adult/ Educator Survey

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|   |                              |                                    |                             |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|   | Yes<br><input type="radio"/> | Sometimes<br><input type="radio"/> | No<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>Sense of oneness</b>   |                              |                                    |                             |
| <b>17. Humans are part of the natural world</b>                           | Yes<br><input type="radio"/> | Sometimes<br><input type="radio"/> | No<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>18. People cannot live without plants and animals</b>                  | Yes<br><input type="radio"/> | Sometimes<br><input type="radio"/> | No<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>19. Being outdoors makes me happy</b>                                  | Yes<br><input type="radio"/> | Sometimes<br><input type="radio"/> | No<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>Sense of responsibility</b>  |                              |                                    |                             |
| <b>20. Picking up rubbish on the ground can help the environment</b>      | Yes<br><input type="radio"/> | Sometimes<br><input type="radio"/> | No<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>21. People do not have the right to change the natural environment</b> | Yes<br><input type="radio"/> | Sometimes<br><input type="radio"/> | No<br><input type="radio"/> |

# OOSH in the Bush CNI Adult/ Educator Survey

| OOSHbushCNI - Adult/educator survey  |                                   |                                  |                                |   |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>22. Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs</b>         |                                   |                                  |                                |   |
| Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/>   | Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> | Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> | Agree<br><input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>23. Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist</b>                            |                                   |                                  |                                |   |
| Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/>   | Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> | Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> | Agree<br><input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>24. Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature</b>                                   |                                   |                                  |                                |   |
| Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/>   | Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> | Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> | Agree<br><input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>25. Human ingenuity will insure that we do NOT make the earth unliveable</b>                |                                   |                                  |                                |   |
| Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/>   | Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> | Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> | Agree<br><input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>26. Despite our special abilities humans are still subject to the laws of nature</b>        |                                   |                                  |                                |   |
| Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/>   | Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> | Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> | Agree<br><input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>27. Humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it</b> |                                   |                                  |                                |   |
| Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/>   | Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> | Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> | Agree<br><input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree<br><input type="radio"/> |
| <b>28. When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences</b>         |                                   |                                  |                                |   |
| Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/>   | Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> | Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> | Agree<br><input type="radio"/> | Strongly Agree<br><input type="radio"/> |

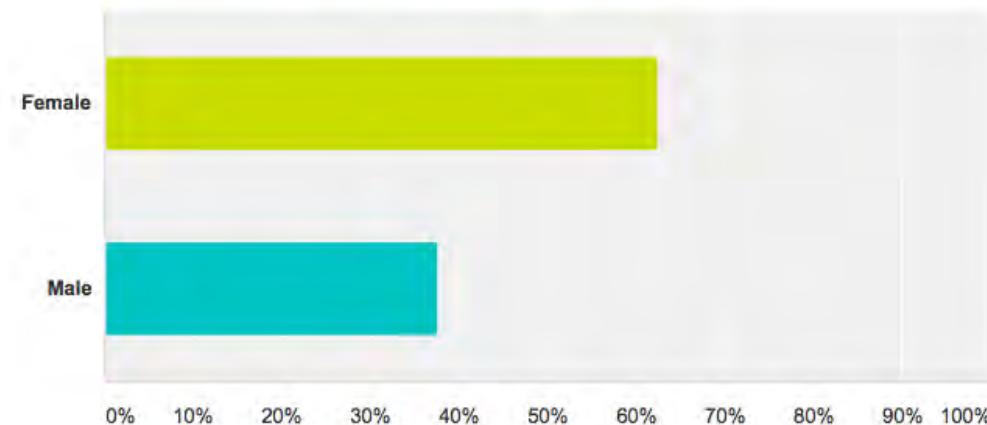
# OOSH in the Bush CNI Adult/ Educator Survey

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## OOSHbushCNI - Adult/educator survey

### Q2 What is your gender?

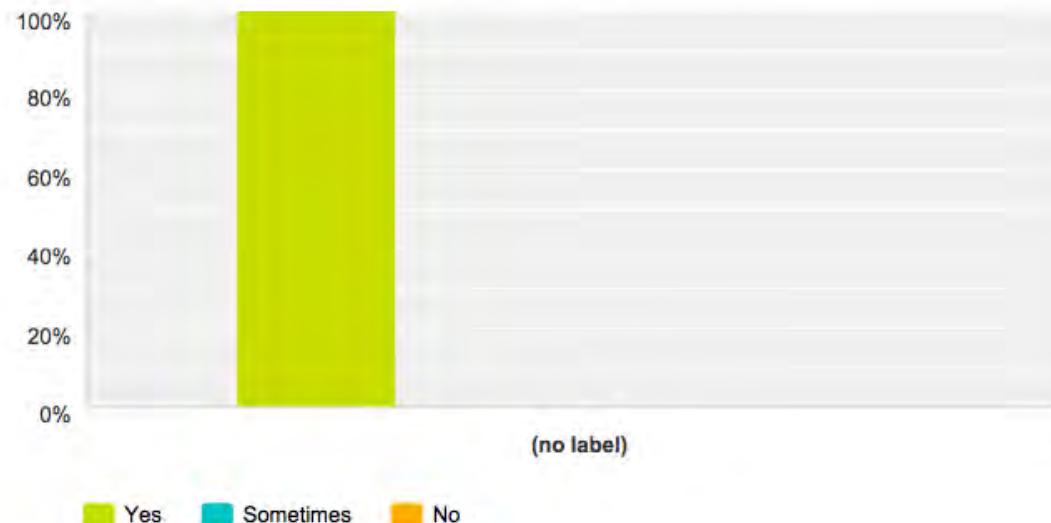
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



| Answer Choices | Responses |           |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Female         | 62.50%    | 10        |
| Male           | 37.50%    | 6         |
| <b>Total</b>   |           | <b>16</b> |

## Q12 Being outdoors makes me happy

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0

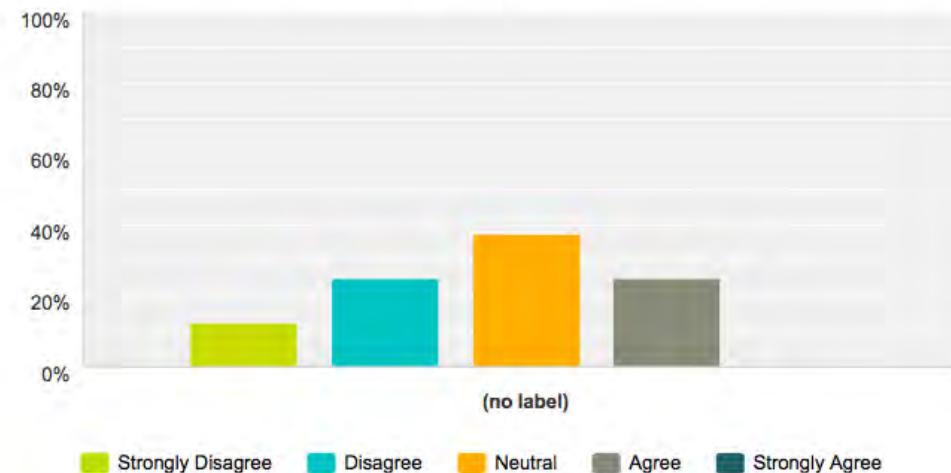


|            | Yes           | Sometimes  | No         | Total | Weighted Average |
|------------|---------------|------------|------------|-------|------------------|
| (no label) | 100.00%<br>16 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 16    | 1.00             |

## OOSH in the Bush CNI Adult/ Educator Survey

### Q22 Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs

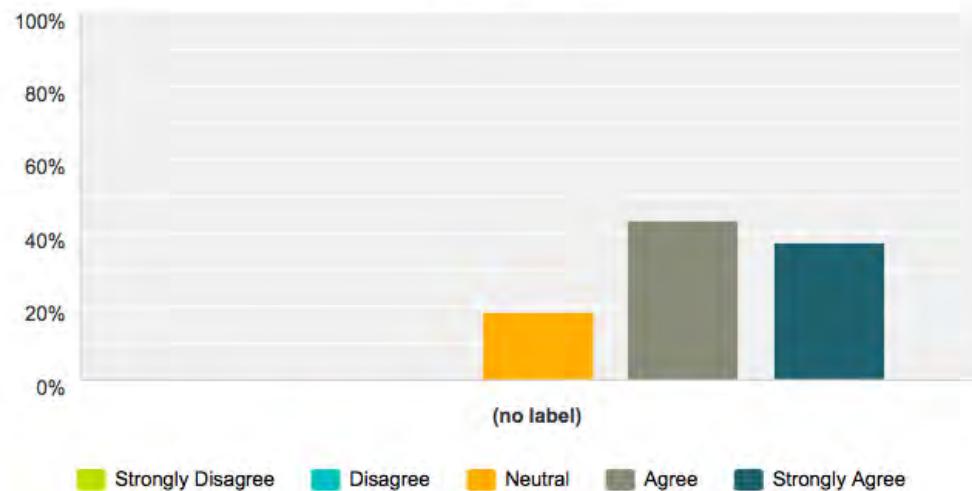
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



|            | Strongly Disagree | Disagree    | Neutral     | Agree       | Strongly Agree | Total | Weighted Average |
|------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------|------------------|
| (no label) | 12.50%<br>2       | 25.00%<br>4 | 37.50%<br>6 | 25.00%<br>4 | 0.00%<br>0     | 16    | 2.75             |

## Q28 When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



|            | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree  | Strongly Agree | Total | Weighted Average |
|------------|-------------------|----------|---------|--------|----------------|-------|------------------|
| (no label) | 0.00%             | 0.00%    | 18.75%  | 43.75% | 37.50%         | 16    | 4.19             |

## Hummingbirds, not helicopters: When to intervene or when to let nature be the Teacher

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*If it is the same kid asking the same question time and time again, I think it is OK to say the answer, ... but if it is a different activity and they are asking for help without even trying then I will be nudging them more towards giving it a go on their own first rather than me showing them how to do something.*



## Safety and risk vs learning it on your own

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*...So you saw a situation where I intervened ... so if there are safety considerations, if someone is stuck up a tree, or if someone is climbing on a log ... and you are thinking 'oh it would be so much easier if they climbed in such and such a way'.... but my inclination is to let them keep going and let them work these things out on their own .. even if they would do things faster or easier if you show them... (pause) because if it took many weeks to learn the same skill, there is something that is more engrained by learning it on your own. The repeated action to learn a skill is more important – it is the clarity of knowledge "*



## Final OOSH in the Bush thoughts

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- ‘Wild’ nature play creates possibilities rather than predefined outcomes
- When we plan tightly led activities are we creating a situation where children are passively consuming adult thinking?
- Children have the right to participate in challenge with no end point in mind
- Educators have the opportunity to create alongside children



# Thank you and questions

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