



# ROSEBANK BUSH SCHOOL

*Report to Rosebank P&C: August 15<sup>th</sup> 2017*

*This Wednesday (August 16<sup>th</sup>) Bush School finishes for this year. We started Bush School because we knew that there were some children who learned better and felt more at home outdoors, and hoped that time spent in the bush would warm hearts, challenge minds and feed spirits. After listening to Rosebank children and parents about what their hopes and dreams for Bush School were, we took our first steps, drafting our first guiding principles. These were:*

*At Bush School:*

- 🌿 Children will learn about, with and from Nature*
- 🌿 Children will learn things they are unlikely to learn, or will not learn as well, in a regular classroom*
- 🌿 Children will learn skills that are genuinely useful in the Bush*
- 🌿 Children will have opportunities to play and be free*
- 🌿 Children will practise listening, watching, smelling and being to/in the Bush...and be still*
- 🌿 Children will be mentored into different ways of being Learning will be aligned to NSW syllabuses*

*As this year's Bush School draws to a close, I am in awe of what Nicky and Olly have been able to achieve, and how well they have been guided by these principles. For us, Bush School was an investment in students' wellbeing, and we feel that it has reaped great dividends. This report shares information about what we, the children and teachers of Rosebank Public School, have learned from and about our experiences on our Reserve and some of our ideas for the future.*

*Abigail Sawyer  
Proud Principal  
Rosebank Public School*



## *The Bush School Low-Down (Nicky Hughes – Bush School Leader)*

*At Rosebank, we are committed to providing innovative, engaging and high quality educational programs that respond to the personal learning capabilities, needs and interests of all our students. After consultation with students, parents, teachers and community members we initiated a Bush School Program that operates 1 day a week on Wednesdays.*

*K-3 students enjoy a two-hour session weekly that runs from 9 – 11am, 4-6 students enjoy a three-hour session weekly that runs from 11.30-2.30. It was important to all staff that the children felt a real sense of ownership over this program, so right from the very beginning we asked students what they would like to learn about and a set of shared expectations. Our goal was to provide diverse, rich, hands on activities that meet curriculum objectives within a natural setting.*

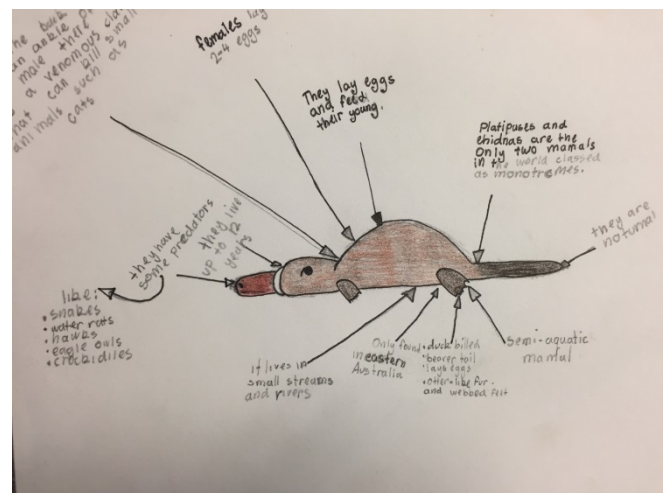
### *Key Learning*

#### *🌿 Cultural*

*Children researched the local Rosebank area and learnt about traditional tools and food. For Harmony Day 2017, students prepared a variety of foods and drinks using 'Bush Tucker' ingredients. Our excursion to the Lismore Botanical Gardens was an excellent opportunity to further extended students' knowledge and understanding of Australian native plants and how they were used by Aboriginal Australians.*

#### *🌿 Relationship with Nature*

*At Bush School, children have been given the space, time and encouragement to observe and explore their natural environment through their senses and creative play that involved building, collecting and fossicking. When they first went down to the Reserve, children just wanted to run and shout. They weren't tuned into the delicate ecosystems, and even damaged some of the mosses growing on paths. Now, they are mindful of their surroundings and their footprints are far gentler.*



*Because of this year's diverse and extreme weather, children have been able to observe and reflect on the effects of floods and strong winds on a natural environment which has a water course running through it.*

*Students' social consciousness has heightened as they were actively involved in caring for the Reserve through cleaning up after storms and floods and participating in general weeding. As a result, our students have developed a greater appreciation and awareness of their natural surroundings and are developing positive environmentally attitudes and values.*

K-3 completed a Science unit on Australian animals and habitats with the platypus that lives at the Reserve a wonderful focus for study. The unit focussed on four key questions:

- What is a habitat?
- What features do different animals have to assist them in their survival?
- How are habitats affected by changes in the weather?
- How can we care for our local habitats?

Having completed this unit, children in K-3 had an in-depth understanding of the platypus and became more thoughtful about their impact on a natural environment.



### Environmental

One focus of the Bush School Program was to facilitate understanding of what environmental sustainability means and how we can contribute to greater sustainability throughout our school community. All students went on an excursion to the Lismore Recycling Facility, where they learnt about waste disposal and the importance of sorting waste for the purpose of reusing and recycling.

Senior students participated in a school wide waste audit and used data gathered to develop a number of initiatives and presentations to educate our school community and improve our current school waste systems. We are now on our way to becoming a 'nude food school' and have decreased the amount of food waste that we generate. Students are also sorting their waste with greater accuracy and as a result we have noticed less contamination in our bins.

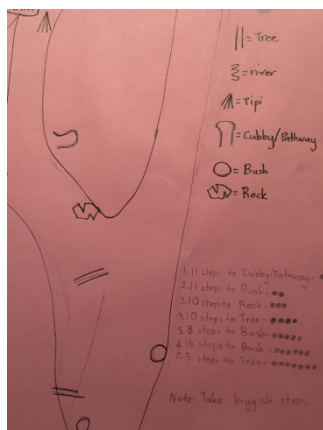
### Bush Safety and Survival Skills

Students from 4-6 participated in a variety of scenarios that were designed to promote group decision making and effective collaboration. Through these scenarios, five major wilderness priorities were identified: water, shelter, warmth, food and signals. These priorities were discussed further and students debated how they might be able to achieve each if lost in the bush. Their conversations were rich and full of debate, the students challenged one another about the probability of their statements. Make shift shelters were constructed and left up for a period of two weeks, their strength and durability being evaluated after this time. Finally, a guest speaker came to the school and spoke to the students about basic first aid in a natural environment.

### Mapping and Orienteering Skills.

K-6 student developed skills in:

- Map interpretation
- Orientating a map
- Thumbing a map
- Taking compass bearings



*And now...A word from our students...*

It's unbelievable how much time kids spend on screens these days. According to the World Health Organisation, up to 52 hours a week! Kids and even adults should be spending more time outside.

**Arusha Launer, Year 6**

Never fear, Bush School is here! For those who don't know what Bush School is, it is a fun activity that allows students to go out of school (with teachers) and learn about the bush while teaching life skills. Also, Bush School decreases obesity because of the physical activity involved.









We need to go outside because it is actually great for you. For example, the sun can give you Vitamin D and it can keep you warm, which is always a good thing. Plus, you get to see great wildlife, like possums, platypuses and birds. And not just wildlife...you can also see great plants, as in bamboo, ferns and gum trees.

**Te Jack, Year 4**






Bush School is a great way to learn about survival and nature. We learnt about mapping, building huts, thumbing and why you should not litter. We learnt that the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. You could use this as a compass.

**Harley Jordan, Year 5**

*Rosebank PS Teachers' Proposal for Bush School 2018:*

-  15 weeks Bush School commencing straight after NAPLAN
-  Same staffing mix: Nicky as Bush School Leader and Olly as Bush School Assistant
-  Continuing with Wednesdays, same times as this year K-3 9.00-11.00am, 4-6 11.30-2.30
-  Same balance of syllabus-oriented study and Nature Pedagogy
-  Continuing with MUFTI
-  Professional Learning for Bush School teachers with established providers of Nature Pedagogy programs, co-funded by P&C
-  Cost of Bush School Assistant co-funded by P&C to ensure program sustainability and longevity
-  Community Consultation to review and formalise Bush School guiding principles

*Why we think this is the way to go...*

-  The children tell us they love Bush School and want it to stay
-  We see massive benefits for Student Wellbeing
-  Bush School is a unique feature of our school program that helps raise our school's profile
-  Nicky, Mim and Abigail all felt that they needed more in-class time at the start of the year to establish class routines, especially for our Kindy kids
-  The children love MUFTI and it sets the scene for a different way of being in the Bush.

**Now it's your turn!**

Have a say on the future of Bush School by following this URL to a Survey Monkey survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JFYM39W>

Share your views on this year's Bush School and your thoughts on the program continuing in 2018.

If Bush School continues, put your hand up to help with the program by contributing your unique skills.