



DATE:	Wednesday 24 January 2024
TITLE:	Nature Play in the Park program report October – December 2023
DIRECTORATE:	Community and Business Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Nature Play in the Park program outcome, a new initiative facilitated by Nature Play WA and sponsored by the City.

DETAILS:

The program was held between October – December 2023 at Hyde Park.

Nature Play WA received funding for the value of \$11,600 + GST through the City's Collaborative Grants to facilitate an 8-week nature play program. Sixty families attended the weekly sessions that were held every Wednesday (9am, 10am and 11am).

The City assisted with advertising the program and administrating the expression of interest registrations, with preference given to Vincent residents. Each timeslot achieved the 20-family capacity, with an additional 40 families being placed on the waitlist.

The funding supported Nature Play educators in conducting outdoor group sessions that emphasised children's healthy lifestyle, connection to nature, and development of social and language skills. Additionally, the funding enabled the creation of online resources for parents to further support their child's cognitive and emotional skills.

The outdoor group sessions featured sustainable, structured experiences, including:

Date	Topic	Outdoor group experiences
Week 1	Every child can thrive by five	Welcome and establish community Nature boats Adventure walk
Week 2	Importance of children being active for overall health and wellbeing	Bubble blowing Balls and running games Sensory walk
Week 3	Importance of healthy eating and building immunity and good gut health by playing outside	Mud play Water and nature play Rainbow fruit kebabs
Week 4	Developing a growth mindset and other positive dispositions for learning	Wand-wrapping/DIY costumes Scavenger hunt Cubbies building
Week 5	Healthy eating and developing an adventurous attitude towards play and movement	Playground adventure play Movement challenges Salad pita pockets
Week 6	Outdoor environments as settings for imaginative play and managing self	Potion making Going on a Bear Hunt dramatisation Teddybear picnic singalong
Week 7	Play as a vehicle for children to develop their own strengths, interests and social skills	Sand play Savoury pinwheels and milo/milk drink
Week 8	The benefits of outdoor play for strengthening health and wellbeing. What sort of childhood do you want for your child?	Group signing and dancing Playground exploration Herb salt dough nests

OUTCOMES:

Following the 8-week program conclusion, parents participated in a survey, and the results were compiled into Nature Play's evaluation report. Our evaluation observations below aim to inform Council of the program's accomplishments:

City of Vincent residents	92% program participants were City of Vincent residents
Program attendance	An average of 70% program attendance was recorded, with the 9am timeslot being the most consistent. Illness or pre-planned commitments were noted for the absences.
Revisiting Hyde Park	83% of the families reported that they have returned to play at Hyde Park after the program
Health and wellbeing	87% of respondents reported that they and their child felt an increase in overall health and wellbeing
Skill building	92% of respondents indicated they have repeated an activity in their own time
Child's development	Improvement in the children's positive habits and impact on skill development were rated average 3.85 out of 5 as a result of participating in the program.

Should the opportunity arise to support Nature Play in the Park within Vincent again, we recommend:

- Specifying our required outcomes prior to formalising the grant agreement
- A breakdown of participants in terms of gender be included in the survey
- City of Vincent branded banners to be placed on site during the program.

The Nature in the Park initiative proved successful, and positivity contributing to the City's Strategic Plan priorities of a 'Connected & Healthy Community' and 'Thriving Places'. Participants expressed a high likelihood of recommending the program to others and intending to spend more time outdoors with their children in the future.