





# Every Kid in a Park

Spending time in nature as a child has the power to build resilience, improve mental health, improve risk assessment skills and build confidence. Nature Play WA is working with families and industry professionals in the disability community with their *Every Kid in a Park* program to support families of children of varying abilities to access and enjoy spending time in parks in Western Australia.

by Nicole McNamara





**W**estern Australia's unique natural areas are some of the State's greatest assets, and Nature Play WA is on a mission to connect WA kids with the amazing outdoors. The collaborative not-for-profit organisation works with partner groups to encourage the WA community to value nature play and for families to prioritise it.

*Every Kid in a Park* is a project that came about after months of collaboration with industry professionals and families living with disabilities. The studies have led to the conclusion that WA families of varying abilities would experience significant mental and physical health benefits from increased time spent in nature.

The studies also showed that WA families living with disability face increased barriers to participating in nature activities and there is strong support from the disability services and disability advocacy community for a program with the aim of supporting families living with disability to enjoy increased access to nature.

Following on from this, WA families living with disability identified three primary elements that would improve their engagement with nature—increased accessibility infrastructure, increased information about accessible opportunities to engage with nature and the delivery of inclusive events in nature.

As a result, the *Every Kid in a Park* project was born.

## EVERY KID IN A PARK

Nature Play WA partnered with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to connect WA kids with the outdoors and support families of children of varying abilities in accessing and enjoying nature.

Each month, information, photos and resources are shared via the website, Facebook and Instagram (@natureplaywa), and the *Every Kid in a Park* app to assist families in learning about, getting to and exploring parks in WA.

The fun and interactive nature play resources are designed in an accessible format and can be used by families in local parks, nature reserves, beaches and national parks.

Resources are developed in collaboration with industry experts, local communities and Aboriginal Elders and include an accessible nature guide, social stories, stories of Country and park review videos.

The free app is available through the App Store and Google Play Store and includes each 'park of the month' location, links to resources and access to a unique discount code for *Every Kid in a Park* participants.

All content within the app is designed in an accessible format using voiceover and image descriptions. The app platform incorporates key elements of accessibility through an inclusive mobile tour and audio

### Previous page

**Main** A family taking a walk along a trail in Mundy Regional Park. *Photo – DBCA*

**Inset, clockwise from top left** Kids walking along Ammo Jetty in Woodman Point Regional Park. *Photo – Nature Play WA*; Enjoying the views at Ngirribungunha (Dales Gorge), Karijini National Park. *Photo – DBCA*; Wheelchair users were able to access Cabaret Cave for the *Every Kid in a Park* event at Yanchep National Park; Participants learnt about Aboriginal Culture with Derek Nannup at Yanchep National Park; Participants enjoyed Derek playing the didgeridoo in Cabaret Cave, Yanchep National Park.

**Above left** Families making their way to the beach through John Graham Reserve, Woodman Point Regional Park. *Photos – Nature Play WA*

**Above right** Enjoying the views at Jijingunha (Joffre Gorge), Karijini National Park. *Photo – DBCA*

guide, with an interactive map showing users GPS locations and nearby points of interest.

Users of the app are also able to access an interpretive trail in each activated park. These trails use GPS coordinates to highlight five to ten stops along a walk trail. Each stop provides park-specific content including photographs and historical or cultural information where possible.

# Every Kid in a Park resources



## ACCESSIBLE NATURE GUIDE

Featuring information about recreation activities, location of key amenities and a communication board to assist families where communication support is useful. A sensory guide provides details on sensory elements of key experiences at the park.



## SOCIAL STORIES

Social stories are developed to help explain social situations to children and adults with autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, developmental delays and learning challenges. This resource helps people of all abilities to plan and prepare for their visit to the national park by explaining what they can expect on the day of their visit.



## STORIES OF COUNTRY

Each activated park has a focus on the important and ongoing connections between Aboriginal cultures and the natural world (Country). Nature Play WA is working with local Aboriginal Elders and representatives around the State to learn more about their connection to Country through stories and illustrations, known as Stories of Country.

We hope to play a small part in helping WA families recognise and appreciate the diversity, richness and beauty of Aboriginal cultures and their deep connection to our natural world.



## PARK REVIEW VIDEO

Nature Play WA staff understand the importance of working with kids to understand their needs when visiting the outdoors. By connecting with local families, we share a filmed interview with a local kid on what they like about the park. This video is shared on our social media website.

Main Woodman Point Jetty. Photo – Nature Play WA

Top left McNess House Visitor Centre, Yanchep National Park. Photos – DBCA

Top right Pages from the John Forrest National Park Social Story.

Above left Cultural events held at Yanchep National Park in June 2022. Photo – Nature Play WA

Above right A filmed review by Felix at Canning River Regional Park.



### Every Kid in a Park events

"We loved attending the *Every Kid in a Park* event at Yanchep. It is difficult to find places that both our sons can enjoy together, given one of them needs help with accessibility. We find getting out to national parks a bit hard given there are steps/sand/dirt involved, and appropriate changing rooms are hard to come by. At the same time, activities we take the boys to need to be age-appropriate. The didgeridoo was a huge hit with both the boys, and the darkened cave was perfect for our son with low vision. Walt loved the sensation of having his face painted, and Gus thought the visit by the koala was brilliant. There was something for all the kids, regardless of ability. We will definitely be keen to attend the next project."

– *Every Kid in a Park participant*



## PARK OF THE MONTH

Each month Nature Play WA shares a 'park of the month' location around Western Australia with *Every Kid in a Park* audiences. Information is promoted through the Nature Play WA website and social media and *Every Kid in a Park* app, and features photographs, resources, and key overview and biodiversity information on the selected park.

Family-friendly resources are developed in collaboration with Parks and Wildlife Service staff, exploring things to do and connecting with WA's rich cultural values through storytelling and illustrations.

Four activated parks each year are highlighted further with additional resources providing relevant information on accessibility, with the hopes of providing families with tools and support when planning their visit.

## INCLUSIVE EVENTS

Accessible and inclusive events are a part of the project and held at each

activated park. In collaboration with Parks and Wildlife Service and local groups, Nature Play WA delivered a series of events in June 2022, exploring the unique biodiversity and cultural importance of Yanchep National Park. Each of these events was wheelchair friendly with all ages welcome.

The first event, Nature's Wonderland, opened with a Welcome to Country by Derek Nannup, which officially launched the fun at Yanchep National Park. Nature's Wonderland was a unique opportunity for families to explore Cabaret Cave, with a special entry open for wheelchair users.

Families explored the cave formations while enjoying several activities including Aboriginal face painting, fairy crown making, boomerang and tapping stick making and an opportunity to hear Derek Nannup play the didgeridoo.

Events and activations will be happening throughout the year, so if you have any questions or to get involved in *Every Kid in a Park*, visit the Nature Play WA website [natureplaywa.org.au](http://natureplaywa.org.au).

**Top left** Face painting at the event in Cabaret Cave, Yanchep National Park.

**Top right** Derek Nannup shared his knowledge, passion and humour with *Every Kid in a Park* participants in Yanchep National Park.

**Above** Participants were given the opportunity to get up close and personal with some interesting creatures found in Yanchep National Park.

**Below** Cabaret Cave was a great place to launch the events at Yanchep National Park. Photos – Nature Play WA



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