



Campfire Social Story



By Karlie Hindmarsh



Humans have used fire for hundreds of thousands of years.
Fire has helped humans survive.



Fire was used by early humans to cook food, stay warm in cold weather, protect themselves from predators, light up darkness at night and in caves, to gather around for ceremonies, storytelling and singing and even for sending messages over long distances by making smoke signals that rise up into the sky.



Aboriginal Australians have used fire stick farming for thousands of years to burn areas of grassland so new grass can grow.



The new shoots of grass that grow back after fires attract animals they want to hunt, like kangaroos. Many Australian plants, such as eucalyptus trees, or gum trees, actually need the heat of fire to open their seed pods and spread their seeds around.



You probably use fire in your home for cooking in the kitchen or on the BBQ. Your house might have a fireplace or a gas heater that makes flames to keep you warm.



Nearly everyone has used fire to light and blow out birthday candles on a cake.



However, as well as being useful and fun, fire can sometimes be dangerous. Dangerous fires include bushfires and smaller fires that get out of control. These dangerous fires can burn buildings, trees and even people and animals. Fire fighters help keep us safe from these dangerous fires and teach everyone about fire safety in emergencies.



Your local fire station probably has a yearly open day when anyone can visit and learn about how firefighters put dangerous fires out and how we can all stay safe when using fire for cooking and warmth. Visiting a fire station or the Museum of Fire in Penrith is a fun way to learn more about fire safety.



During the colder winter months, we light campfires at Bush School. We use the campfire to keep us warm and to cook yummy lunches.



Everyone helps to prepare the campfire food. We learn how to cook and enjoy healthy, delicious meals together.



At Bush School, we gather around the log circle to light our campfire with cotton balls and a fire striker.

Karlie learnt how to safely light and take care of our Bush School campfire at her Forest School Leader training where other very experienced teachers showed her what to do to keep everyone safe around the campfire.



Our Bush School fire is never left alone without an adult watching it.



There is always a large bucket of water nearby to put the fire out straight away if we ever need to. Karlie is also trained in first aid and knows how to treat burns with running water. If there is an emergency, we call triple zero and ask for the Fire Brigade to come straight away.



We have two main rules to keep us safe around the campfire at Bush School:

- 1) If the fire is too hot, too smoky or too big, we step **OUT** and **AROUND** the log circle to change logs. We **NEVER** walk **THROUGH** the log circle to change logs.
- 2) We **NEVER** walk up close to the fire unless we are with an adult and it is for a reason, like cooking or putting more wood on the fire.





If you don't want to sit on the campfire logs at Bush School, you don't have to. If something makes you feel nervous, it's actually very smart to move further away to protect yourself when you feel worried about it. This is how we keep ourselves safe.



When we feel scared, our body may get a nervous, wobbly feeling inside our tummy, or our hands might shake. You might want to stay close to a parent or grown up when you feel anxious about something. These tingly feelings are how our body and brain tell us that something could be dangerous and that we need to keep safe.





You don't ever have to come close to the campfire if you don't feel safe. You might prefer to sit further away from the fire than the rest of the group. You can stay further away from the fire for as long as you need to. If you ever feel like you are ready to sit closer to the fire around the log circle, you are welcome to do that **WHEN YOU ARE READY**. But **NOBODY** has to sit in the log circle near the fire if they don't want to. Everyone is different and we feel safe in different ways. You might never sit on the logs, but always prefer to stand or sit further away. And that is completely ok.



We love having friends join us at Bush School for campfire and cooking days. We are happy to see everyone enjoying the fire in their own way, whether they are up close or at a distance. Remember, you **ONLY** have to come as close to the fire as what feels safe for you. If staying further away makes you feel safe, then that's right for you. We are all different, and that's what makes each person special. No one is ever going to force you to come close to the campfire, unless you feel ready.



In this way, we can all enjoy campfire cooking at Bush School in our own way, up close or from a distance.