

For immediate release

### **3 IS THE MAGIC NUMBER**

#### **New Zealand children need to spend three hours outside every day for their mental and physical health**

Christchurch, New Zealand, March 2020: Little Kiwis Nature Play founder Celia Hogan is campaigning for outdoors, nature-based early childhood education in New Zealand, to help improve the mental health and overall well-being of our tamariki. She firmly believes every child in New Zealand should be spending at least three hours outside. That is, every day.

To help educate and gain awareness on this movement, Hogan started running a Nature Play conference and other nature-based workshops, to build confidence and provide support in getting children outdoors. The 2020 Nature Play Conference is on 3rd and 4th April in Christchurch, and will feature a variety of expert speakers and facilitators from around the country. The conference brings together educators from all over New Zealand, who leave inspired and motivated to make nature a priority in their lives and the lives of the children they are involved with.

Hogan says, *“Our children are spending more time inside on screens than ever before, and it’s having a huge impact on their mental health.”* And the statistics tend to agree. According to the Ministry of Health:

- 65 per cent of teens watch more than one hour of television every day
- 28 per cent of teens watch more than three hours of television a day
- Up to 32 per cent of teens can be found gaming for more than three hours a day

More worryingly, nearly 12 per cent of teens to young adults have been identified as struggling with their mental health, and this statistic is only on the rise, with the estimated number of young people suffering psychological concerns increasing from 58,000 to 79,000 over one short year. New Zealand children are increasingly suffering from anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders.

And only 10 percent of high school pupils meet the daily recommendation of one hour’s exercise per day. It is, therefore, no coincidence that in 2017, 21 per cent of children were classified overweight, with a further 12 per cent reaching obese levels.

There are so many benefits that nature play can offer New Zealand’s tamariki, including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Lessening obesity problems
- Enhancing mental health and learning abilities
- Supporting creativity and problem solving
- Increasing physical activity, and sensory and motor development
- Improving decision-making, negotiating skills, and communication

Hogan is passionate about getting children outdoors, but to achieve her dream she needs to persuade parents and teachers first. *“In the past, outdoor play naturally happened but now it is less common. As parents and teachers, we can make it a priority in our children’s day, either at home or from the classroom,”* she said.

The nature play movement has gained momentum over the last few years, and has seen many ECE centres and schools making outside play and nature a priority in their curriculum. Outside play

should not just be during breaks, but importantly during class time. Nature is a wonderful teacher; it's real-world learning and hands-on, which makes learning easier and more engaging for many.

To find out more about this worthy cause and for more details on the 2020 Nature Play Conference, contact founder and organiser Celia Hogan on 022 158 2113, head to the website page:

[www.littlekiwisnatureplay.com/nature-play-conference/](http://www.littlekiwisnatureplay.com/nature-play-conference/) or follow us on our Facebook page:

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**For further press information and high res images, please contact:**

Celia Hogan, Little Kiwis Nature Play

Ph: 0221582113

Email: [celia@littlekiwisnatureplay.com](mailto:celia@littlekiwisnatureplay.com)

**About Little Kiwis Nature Play:**

Little Kiwis Nature Play aims to help build confidence to take children outdoors and into nature, through workshops, conferences, and resources. It advocates nature play, risky play, child-led play, and building resilience through nature. It's inspired by the Scandinavian Forest Kindergarten and Forest School movement and has a holistic approach to the early years, believing that children are capable and competent learners. Learn more at [www.littlekiwisnatureplay.com](http://www.littlekiwisnatureplay.com)