

Site 100. Forest Lodge, Boronia Rd, Wantirna

A patch of remnant eucalypts (some of them large) with some prospects of native understorey recovering from recent clearing and scarification during construction of the EastLink road. Melway ref. 63 E5.

Site Significance Level: *Local*

- Retains a canopy of trees from the endangered Valley Heathy Forest, but with very little native understorey.

Aerial photograph and plan: See page 266, which covers this site, Site 52 and Site 53.

Boundaries

The site is as outlined in red on the aerial photograph, labelled 'Site 100'. Clearing associated with the EastLink project in 2005-8 forced a major contraction of the site originally described in the first edition of this report, to 0.95 ha.

Land use & tenure: VicRoads land beside the nearly-completed EastLink road.

Site description

This site retains large remnant eucalypts. Only approximately 50 m² of native understorey remains since most of the site was scarified and sowed with exotic grass in 2007. There is some regeneration of indigenous understorey plants among the very sparse ground flora (as at March 2008) and it is possible that more will emerge with the coming of good rains. The original vegetation belonged to the endangered ecological vegetation class, Valley Heathy Forest.

Relationship to other land

This site may still serve as an ecological stepping-stone between Koomba Park and Manson Reserve. Refer to the discussion about the Bateman Street Bush (Site 49, p. 251) for more detail.

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain

Habitat types

Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127, **Endangered**), reduced to remnant eucalypts with only a tiny patch of native understorey.

Dominant canopy trees: *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa* and *E. melliodora*, with smaller numbers of *E. macrorhyncha* and *E. radiata*.

Dominant lower trees: A few sapling *Acacia dealbata* were cleared in 2006-7. A solitary *Acacia mearnsii* remains.

Shrubs: Small numbers of *Acacia paradoxa* and *Solanum laciniatum*.

Vines and Ferns: None found.

Ground flora: A small patch of c. 50 m² contains *Microlaena stipoides*, *Rytidosperma racemosum*, *Rytidosperma setaceum*, *Austrostipa rudis*, *Lomandra filiformis* subsp. *coriacea* and *Themeda triandra*. *Dianella admixta* was recently cleared but may re-sprout.

Plant species

The following plant species were observed by the author on 7th March 2008. Additional species would no doubt be detectable in other seasons. The column headed 'Risk' indicates the indigenous species' risk of extinction in Knox with 'E'=Endangered and 'V'=Vulnerable.

Risk	Indigenous Species	Risk	Indigenous Species
	<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	E	<i>Eucalyptus radiata</i>
	<i>Austrostipa rudis</i> subsp. <i>rudis</i>		<i>Lomandra filiformis</i> subsp. <i>coriacea</i>
	<i>Chenopodium pumilio</i> (a recent immigrant to Knox)		<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>
V	<i>Eucalyptus cephalocarpa</i>		<i>Rytidosperma racemosum</i>
E	<i>Eucalyptus macrorhyncha</i>		<i>Rytidosperma setaceum</i>
V	<i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i>	V	<i>Solanum laciniatum</i>
			<i>Themeda triandra</i>

Fauna of special significance

Uncommon in the Melbourne Region

Weasel Skink. Seen in c.1998, as reported in the Scoresby Transport Corridor Environment Effects Statement, but unlikely to have survived the EastLink construction.

The Environment Effects Statement for the Scoresby Freeway (now EastLink) also reported that Sugar Gliders were seen in the immediate vicinity.

Fauna habitat features

- Some of the mature eucalypts have hollows suitable for nesting or roosting by native birds, bats, possums or insects.

Significance ratings

The following is an assessment of the site's significance against the Department of Sustainability & Environment's standard criteria (Amos 2004).

Ecological Integrity and Viability

Criterion 1.3 assigns **Local** significance to a 'Site (or one of a group of such sites) to form a strategic corridor of local importance and scale', which is believed to apply in this case. If this becomes an important matter, the continued role of the site for faunal movements along the Dandenong Creek corridor should be checked by a specialist ecologist following commissioning of the EastLink road.

Regionally Threatened Ecological Vegetation Class

Valley Heathy Forest is listed by the Department of Sustainability & Environment as regionally Endangered. However, the representation in the Forest Lodge site does not have sufficient canopy cover or understorey to qualify as a 'remnant patch' under criterion 3.2.3, and therefore its status as an example of an endangered EVC is not formally significant.

Locally Threatened Plant Species

The site's eucalypts are locally threatened and have viable populations, thereby meeting criterion 3.1.5 for a site of **Local** significance.

Threats

- Continuation of recent efforts to convert the native understorey to exotic grass;
- Severance of tree roots by the recent scarification of the soil, leading to tree death or debility.

Administration matters

- This site is worthy of inclusion within the proposed Vegetation Protection Overlay Schedule (Volume 1, Section 5.5) because:
 - It contains (in the words of the VPP Practice Note on Biodiversity) 'scattered living food trees with an exotic understorey' (albeit with potential for understorey regeneration); and
 - It is a site of Local biological significance because of the likely importance of the trees in providing an ecological stepping-stone along the Dandenong Creek corridor.
- The site is protected under the existing Schedule 2 of the Vegetation Protection Overlay in the Knox Planning Scheme, due to the presence of planted trees from outside Australia that were recognised as significant by Water Ecoscience (1998, their Site 133). The basis for that overlay schedule has gone due to clearing;
- The land is zoned Road Zone Category 1 (RDZ1).

Information sources used in this assessment

- Site surveys undertaken during this study by Dr Lorimer on 30th August 2002 and Mr Rik Brown on 15th May 2002, using this study's standard procedures discussed in Section 2.4 of Volume 1. This included a description of the vegetation composition, compilation of a list of indigenous and introduced plant species, incidental fauna observations, and checks for fauna habitat, ecological threats and management issues;
- A site inspection, including compilation of a plant list, for approximately 20 minutes by Dr Lorimer on 7/3/08 to reassess the site since EastLink construction;
- A report, '*Assessment of Native Vegetation on the Mitcham to Frankston Freeway Alignment in Knox*', by Dr Lorimer in July 2003 for Knox City Council;
- The 1998 '*Scoresby Transport Corridor Environment Effects Statement*', particularly Supplement Volume H: Flora and Fauna by Williams L.M., Yugovic J.V., McGuckin J., Humphrey P. and Larwill S. (1998);
- Aerial photography from February 2001, April 2003 and February 2007;
- Satellite imagery of the district;

- The Department of Sustainability & Environment's BioMaps of the area;
- Maps of geology and topography produced by agencies of the Victorian government.