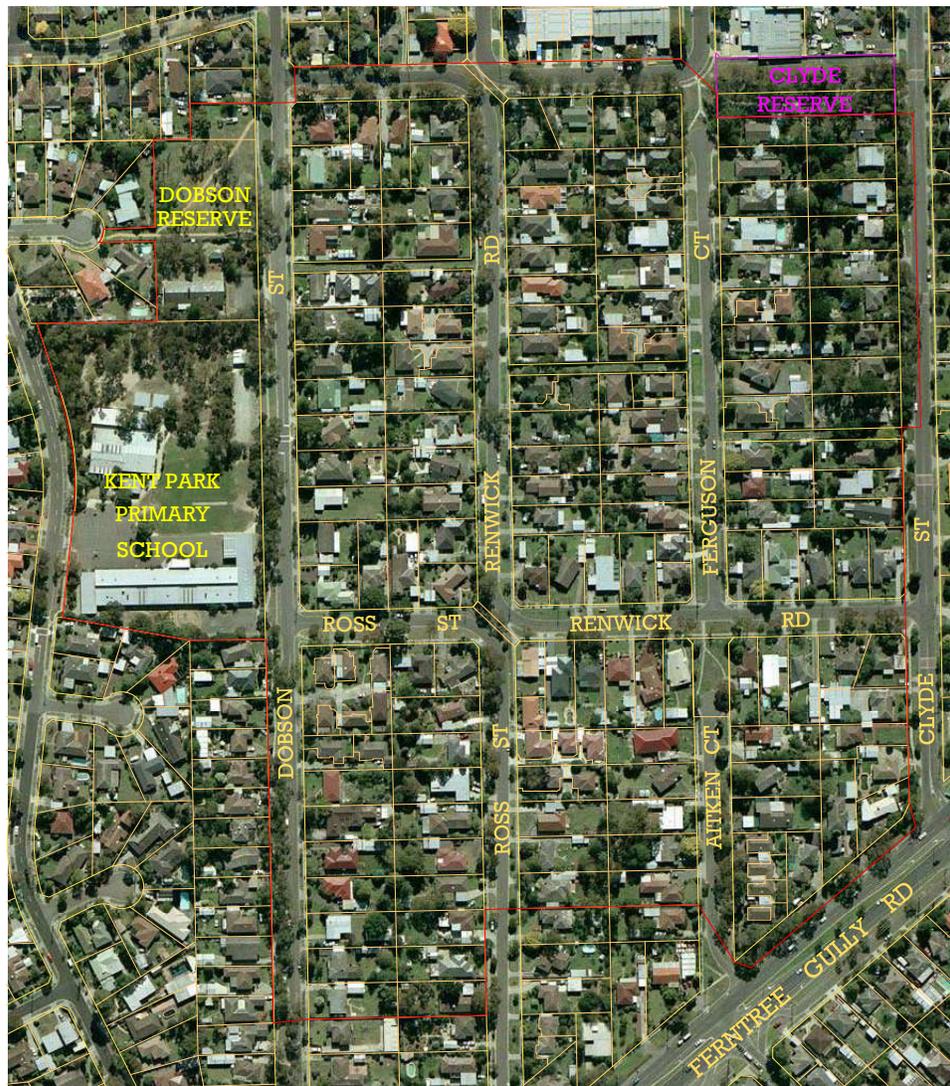


Site 105. Dobson Street Treed Precinct, Ferntree Gully

A treed residential area, centred on Melway ref. 73 F3.

Site Significance Level: *Local*

- There are substantial numbers of mature trees, including remnant eucalypts, that provide rudimentary habitat for native birds, bats, possums, frogs and insects;
- Parrots are particularly abundant (at least seasonally), including the regionally uncommon Musk Lorikeet.



Aerial photograph taken April 2003.

Boundaries

A suggested boundary for this site is shown in red on the aerial photograph. The edges follow property boundaries, except for road crossings and a segment that runs down the middle of Clyde St. The precise location of the southern boundary between Dobson St and Aitken Ct is rather arbitrary. The outlined area measures 20.6 ha.

Land use & tenure: Freehold residential land, primary school, kindergarten, Council park and associated streets.

Site description

This treed neighbourhood retains a substantial number of remnant trees on nature strips, in Dobson Reserve, in the grounds of Kent Park Primary School and in a small number of private gardens. The indigenous species detected are listed below,

the column headed 'Risk' indicating the indigenous species' risk of extinction in Knox with 'E'=Endangered and 'V'=Vulnerable.

| Risk | Species name | Risk | Species name |
|------|--------------------------------|------|---|
| V | <i>Acacia melanoxylon</i> | V | <i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i> |
| | <i>Bursaria spinosa</i> | V | <i>Eucalyptus ovata</i> |
| V | <i>Coprosma quadrifida</i> | E | <i>Eucalyptus radiata</i> |
| | <i>Dianella admixta</i> | | <i>Gahnia radula</i> |
| V | <i>Eucalyptus cephalocarpa</i> | | <i>Lomandra filiformis</i> subsp. <i>filiformis</i> |
| | <i>Eucalyptus goniocalyx</i> | E | <i>Melaleuca ericifolia</i> |

The site once supported two Ecological Vegetation Classes that have become regionally endangered: Swampy Woodland (characterised by the Swamp Gums and Swamp Paperbarks) and Valley Heathy Forest. Both are now reduced to vestiges with almost no native understorey.

The remnant trees, combined with mature planted trees (particularly species from other parts of Australia), provide basic habitat needs for native forest birds, bats, possums, frogs and insects. During fieldwork, large numbers of parrots were observed in the trees, including the regionally uncommon species, Musk Lorikeet.

The Kent Park Primary School community has improved the area's habitat by planting many Australian native trees and shrubs in the northern school grounds, as well as smaller numbers of trees in the southern school grounds.

Many private properties within the site are of no biological significance. They would be unaffected by the schedule for the Vegetation Protection Overlay that is proposed for this site (Section 5.5 in Volume 1).

Relationship to other land

On its own, the site could not fulfil all of the habitat needs of the number of parrots that were observed there. The parrots appear to roam daily between this area, Kent Park (Site 39) and habitat west of Scoresby Rd (e.g. Lakewood Nature Reserve (Site 43) or the Knoxfield treed precinct (Site 107)). They are also likely to travel further afield seasonally to take advantage of seasonal food sources, but this was not investigated in this study.

Native insects are likely to exhibit similar behaviour, but were not investigated.

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain

Habitat types

The original EVCs of the site have been reduced to scattered trees and a very small number of understorey plants. These EVCs are:

Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127, **Endangered**) dominated by *Eucalyptus obliqua*, *E. radiata*, *E. goniocalyx* and *E. cephalocarpa*;

Swampy Woodland (EVC 937, **regionally Endangered**) dominated by *Eucalyptus ovata*.

A total of 12 indigenous plant species were recorded by Mr Rik Brown on 8th May 2002. This total included no indigenous grasses (because of mowing and seasonal factors), but there would undoubtedly be at least two indigenous grass species.

Plants of special significance

The remnant Mealy (or Silver-leafed) Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*) at the front of 68 Dobson Street is an extremely large specimen of the species for the Melbourne region. It has a trunk diameter of one metre.

Fauna of special significance

Uncommon in the Melbourne region

Musk Lorikeet. Observed in abundance, feeding on eucalypt flowers.

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

The use of the site by native forest birds, particularly Musk Lorikeets, makes the site an ecological 'stepping stone' of **Local** significance. Criterion 1.2.6 attributes Local significance to sites that it describes as 'Important at local scale - Link between individual remnant habitat blocks or within subcatchment'.

Locally Threatened Flora

At least some of the locally threatened eucalypts and wattle listed above have viable populations (in combination with neighbouring native vegetation), thereby meeting criterion 3.1.5 for a site of **Local** significance.

Locally Rare Fauna

Musk Lorikeets were listed by the Land Conservation Council (1991) as ‘uncommon’ in the Melbourne region. They are not rare within the whole of the Gippsland Plain bioregion. Their abundance within the site represents **Local** significance under criterion 3.1.5.

Threats

- Potential damage to remnant vegetation during maintenance of roads or utility services;
- Eucalypt dieback disease due to altered drainage and low incidence of insect-eating birds;
- Lack of recruitment of indigenous vegetation because of mowing and physical disturbances;
- Critically small population sizes of some indigenous plant species.

Management issues

The habitat value of the site and the health of the trees could be enhanced by planting additional indigenous trees and understorey species that suit insect-eating birds. Hedge Wattle (*Acacia paradoxa*) and Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) are examples of suitable shrubs.

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’;
 - It is a site of Local biological significance;
 - Most of the properties involved are too small to be affected by Clause 52.17 of the Knox Planning Scheme, which might otherwise provide some of the trees with some protection; and
 - Some of the habitat trees are not native to Victoria and are therefore not protected by Clause 52.17;
- Parts of the site are covered by the existing Schedule 1 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay of the Knox Planning Scheme. This resulted from the study by Water Ecoscience (1998), in which the overlay areas were Sites 289-292 and 294. The site shown on the aerial photograph above is proposed as a better alternative. It includes less nature strip and more private properties, but most of the private properties do not have trees large enough to be affected by the proposed VPO schedule. Note that the part of Kent Park Primary School covered by the existing overlay is not the part of the school grounds that has significant vegetation, presumably due to a mapping error.

Information sources used in this assessment

- Surveys of Clyde St, Dobson St, Dobson Reserve and Kent Park Primary School by Mr Rik Brown on 8th May 2002, following the standard procedures described in Section 2.4 of Volume 1, including (for each of these four areas):
 - Compilation of a list of indigenous and introduced plants;
 - A description of the vegetation’s structural and floristic composition;
 - Incidental fauna observations; and
 - Checks for fauna habitat, ecological threats and management issues;
- An inspection of the area by Dr Lorimer in 2003 for the specific purpose of determining the distribution of trees that represent reasonable habitat for native fauna; and
- Aerial photography from February 2001 and April 2003.