Site 111. Brusco Close, Rowville

A small area of fairly recently subdivided residential lots. Melway ref. 81 J2

Site Significance Level: *Local*

- Despite past selective clearing, grazing and slashing, the vegetation retains vestiges of the endangered Ecological Vegetation Class, Valley Heathy Forest;
- As a result of tree removal and the associated movement of heavy machinery over the site in early 2010, the site lost a substantial part of its habitat value for native birds, insects and bats, hence its deletion from the sites recommended for planning protection.

Boundaries

The site comprises the four lots outlined in red on page 350, being 2, 5, 6 and 7 Brusco Cl. The total area is 0·29 ha (reduced from 0·54 ha in the first edition of this report, due to residential development).

Land use & tenure: Vacant residential lots.

Site description

This area has only recently been subdivided and its native vegetation is being progressively lost as houses are constructed and the land is cleared.

Most of the tree canopy visible on the aerial photograph on page 350 was removed in 2010. The number of shrubs is also unnaturally low due to past grazing and more recent occasional slashing. The ground flora is in fair ecological condition, being predominantly native cover over a large proportion of 5-7 Brusco Cl. The native vegetation on 2 Brusco Cl is confined to a western strip that abuts plantings along the Stud Rd verge and includes single specimens of *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa, Allocasuarina littoralis* and *Exocarpos cupressiformis*.

At the time of the 2002 survey for the first edition of this report, the richest area of native flora was around the cluster of trees on 11 Selwood Ct, where slashing had been less severe. This area has since succumbed to residential development.

The thirty indigenous plant species that were found in the site are highly characteristic of the endangered Valley Heathy Forest.

Relationship to other land

The site is less than 60 m from habitat at Rowville Primary and Secondary Schools (Site 70), which is in turn only 22 m from Delta Ct Reserve (Site 71) and 240 m from native habitat beside Wellington Rd (Site 96). Prior to the clearing of early 2010, these sites formed a cluster that attracted native birds (and probably bats) that radiated from nearby larger areas of habitat such as the Rowville Electricity Terminal Station (Site 72) and the Lysterfield Hills (Site 81).

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain

Habitat types

Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127, **regionally Endangered**). Estimated in 2010 as 900 m², comprising 600 m² in fair ecological condition (rating C) and 300 m² in poor ecological condition (rating D).

Dominant canopy trees: Formerly *Eucalyptus radiata* with considerably fewer *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*, but since the 2010 clearing, reduced to one mature *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa* and a few seedlings.

Dominant lower trees: Formerly dominated by *Acacia mearnsii* and *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, but since the 2010 clearing, there are just single plants of *Exocarpos cupressiformis, Allocasuarina littoralis* and *Acacia melanoxylon*.

Shrubs: Several *Acacia paradoxa*. *Leptospermum continentale* and one *Daviesia latifolia* were present until 2010.

Vines: None.

Ferns: None.

Ground flora: Since the 2010 clearing, the areas of native vegetation retain dense native grasses. The most abundant species are *Microlaena stipoides, Rytidosperma* species, *Lomandra filiformis* subps. *coriacea, Themeda triandra* and *Dichondra repens*. While not observed during a quick inspection in May 2010, it is likely that the site retains its *Arthropodium strictum, Gonocarpus tetragynus, Lepidosperma gunnii* and *Viola hederacea*.

Plant species

The following indigenous plant species were observed by the author between 4th June 2002 and May 2010. Underlining indicates species observed in a superficial inspection in May 2010, following extensive tree removal. 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
V	*Acacia mearnsii*
V	*Acacia melanoxylon*
	Acacia paradoxa
V	*Allocasuarina littoralis*
	Arthropodium strictum
	Austrostipa rudis subsp. *rudis*
	Billardiera mutabilis
E	*Daviesia latifolia*
	Dichondra repens
	Eragrostis brownii
V	*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*
V	*Eucalyptus ovata*
E	*Eucalyptus radiata*
	Eucalyptus hybrid
V	*Exocarpos cupressiformis*
	Gonocarpus tetragynus
V	*Hardenbergia violacea*
V	*Hemarthria uncinata*
E	*Hypericum gramineum*
	Lepidosperma gunnii
	Leptospermum continentale
	Lomandra filiformis subsp. *coriacea*
	Lomandra filiformis subsp. *filiformis*
	Microlaena stipoides
	Oxalis exilis/perennans
	Poa morrisii
	Poranthera microphylla
	Rytidosperma laeve
	Rytidosperma penicillatum
	Rytidosperma racemosum
	Rytidosperma setaceum
	Rytidosperma tenuius
	Themeda triandra
V	*Veronica gracilis*
E	*Viola hederacea*

Flora and fauna of special significance

None detected.

Fauna habitat features

The remnant trees represent basic habitat for native birds, possums, insects and perhaps bats.

Significance rating

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

Locally Threatened Plant Species

Apart from the likelihood of residential development, the surviving locally threatened species listed above would have viable populations in combination with nearby native vegetation, thereby meeting criterion 3.1.5 for a site of **Local** significance.

Threats

- Residential development.

Management issues

The owners of the properties may be able to ameliorate the loss of native vegetation by inviting a group such as the Knox Environment Society to salvage plants prior to house construction, and by planting some indigenous shrubs in their gardens.

Administration matters

- The planning scheme zoning is Residential 1 Zone (R1Z);
- This site is not covered by any existing Vegetation Protection Overlay in the Knox Planning Scheme;
- This site would qualify on biological grounds for protection under the planning scheme but imminent residential development would make this futile. A better option would be to arrange rescue of some of the plants that will inevitably be lost during development, as discussed above.

Information sources used in this assessment

- A botanical survey by Dr Lorimer for 35 minutes on 4th June 2002, following the standard procedures described in Section 2.4 of Volume 1, including:
  - Compilation of two lists of indigenous and introduced plants (one for Brusco Close and one for Selwood Ct);

  - A description of the vegetation's structural and floristic composition in each of these two areas;
  - Incidental fauna observations; and
  - Checks for fauna habitat, ecological threats and management issues;
- A follow-up survey by Dr Lorimer for thirty minutes on 10/3/08 to check what natural assets remained;
- A superficial inspection by Dr Lorimer for ten minutes on 24/5/10 in the wake of extensive clearing;
- The Department of Sustainability & Environment's BioMaps of the area; and
- Aerial photography from February 2001, April 2003, February 2007 and December 2009.