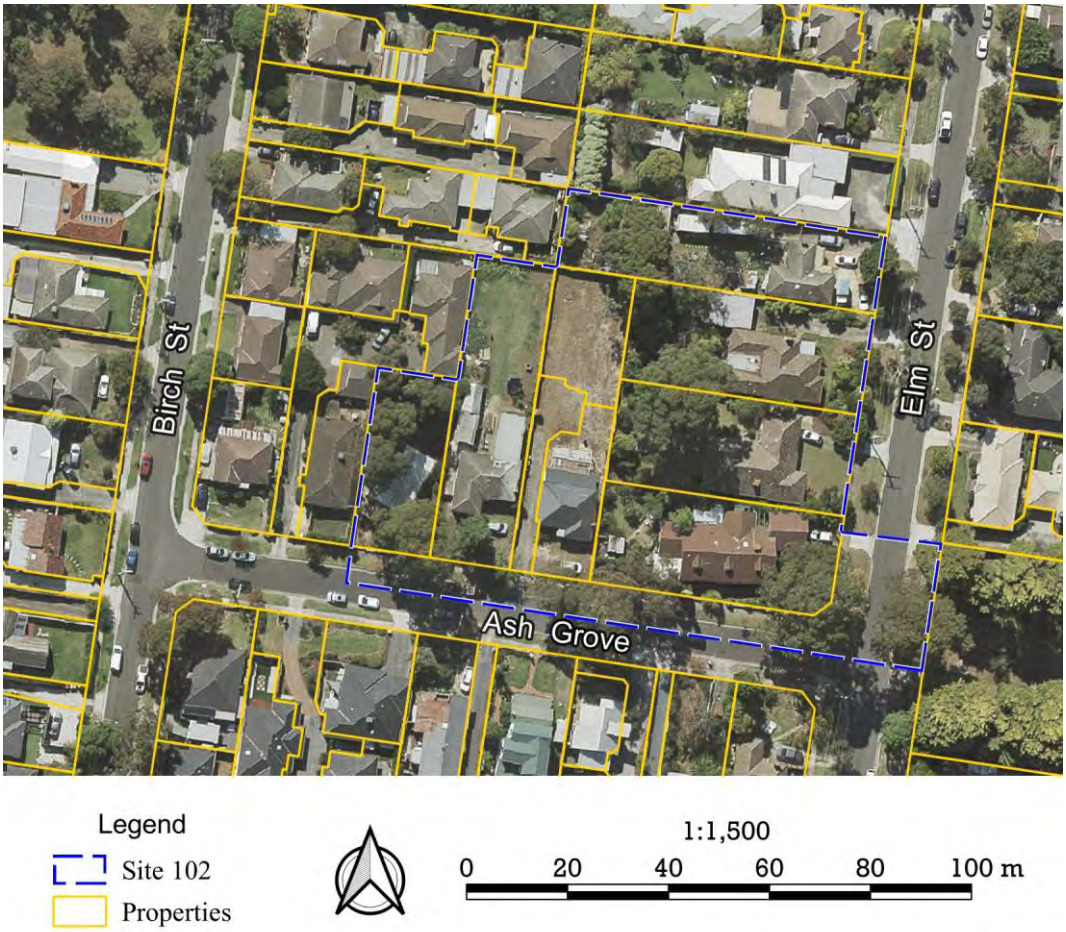
Site 102. Ash Grove Precinct, Bayswater

A small residential neighbourhood with remnant eucalypts and mistletoes.

Summary of significant features:

- Locally significant: a stand of several locally-threatened eucalypt species, including the dominant species, Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*);
- Locally significant: one of the eucalypts supports a Creeping Mistletoe, which is very rare in Knox;
- Locally significant: an ecological stepping-stone for daily and seasonal movements of birds and flying insects.



Boundaries

This 0.77-hectare site is outlined with blue dashes on the aerial photograph above. The boundaries align with property boundaries except within road reservations. The extension across Elm St is to enclose a Yellow Box tree on the eastern nature strip.

The site has been greatly reduced in extent since the previous (2010) edition of this report due to loss of tree cover associated with subdivision.

Land use & tenure: Freehold residential land and residential street.

Site description

This site retains approximately a dozen excellent specimens of Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) and one of Bundy (*Eucalyptus goniocalyx*). These trees are remnants of the pre-colonial vegetation, which is now classed as the endangered type, Valley Heathy Forest. Yellow Box trees are prolific producers of nectar and these trees are likely to be a good seasonal food source for native birds and flying insects.

One of the Yellow Box trees, at the front of 12 Ash Grove (the site's westernmost property), supports a Creeping Mistletoe (*Muellerina eucalyptoides*) on its trunk – one of only ten individuals known to remain in Knox. The tree shows no sign of debilitation. That tree also supported five of the locally-threatened Drooping Mistletoe (*Amyema pendula*) when the author inspected it in 2003 but they are no longer present. Mistletoe fruits are staple food for the native Mistletoebird and the leaves are the only food eaten by caterpillars of certain local butterfly species, particularly the Imperial Jezebel. As mistletoes have become rare in Melbourne's outer east, so have the Mistletoebird and Imperial Jezebel.

The habitat value of the remnant eucalypts is slightly enhanced by the presence of other large trees within the site. The Vegetation Protection Overlay that applies to this site protects large trees whether they are indigenous or not.

Relationship to other land

As native birds and flying insects move about the local landscape, they tend to stop off at stands of native trees such as in this site. Such sites are described as ecological stepping-stones.

There is a stand of remnant Mealy Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*) trees in the grounds of Bayswater Primary School, partly visible in the top-left corner of the aerial photograph above. These trees supplement the habitat within the site described here. They are not recommended for inclusion within the site because they already receive adequate protection under Clause 52.17 of the Knox Planning Scheme.

Some native trees on the opposite side of Elm St are reaching a size that they can significantly supplement the habitat of the trees within the site.

There are other native trees scattered through the neighbourhood, each one of which makes a small contribution to the habitat of the area's flying wildlife.

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain

Habitat type

Scattered trees, a mistletoe and some native grass are all that is left of the original EVC of the site:

Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127, **Endangered**) dominated by *Eucalyptus melliodora.*

Plant species

The following wild, indigenous plant species were observed from footpaths by the author on 18th January 2025 except for the *Amyema,* which was only seen in his previous surveys. Additional species might be detectable from private land. The column headed 'Risk' indicates the indigenous species' risk of local extinction as follows: 'C'=Critically endangered' and 'E'=Endangered.

Risk	Species
C	*Amyema pendula,* Drooping Mistletoe
E	*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa,* Mealy Stringybark
E	*Eucalyptus melliodora,* Yellow Box
C	*Muellerina eucalyptoides,* Creeping Mistletoe

Risk	Species
	Rytidosperma penicillatum, Slender Wallaby-grass
	Rytidosperma racemosum, Clustered Wallaby-grass

Fauna of special significance

None detected but an endangered burrowing crayfish (*Engaeus victoriensis*) was found in a similar nearby street (Orange Grove) in 2024 and may be present in this site.

Fauna habitat features

- Yellow Box trees are renowned nectar producers and the ones in this site would provide seasonal food for native birds and insects;
- The fact that mistletoes exist in the site is evidence of past visitation by Mistletoebirds, which are the principal or sole means by which mistletoe seeds are spread.

Significance ratings

The following is an assessment of the site's biological significance against the Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action's standard criteria (Amos 2004).

Ecological Integrity and Viability

The habitat value of trees in the site for use by native birds and insects – including Mistletoebirds and Imperial Jezebel butterflies – makes the site an ecological 'stepping stone'. Criterion 1.2.6 of the standard criteria attributes **Local** significance to stepping-stones like this which can be described as 'Important at local scale - Link between individual remnant habitat blocks or within subcatchment'.

Locally Threatened Plants

The locally-threatened eucalypt species listed above appear to have viable populations (in combination with nearby members of their species), thereby meeting criterion 3.1.5 for **Local** significance.

The solitary Creeping Mistletoe is one of only ten known to survive in Knox. Although this might be deemed not to represent a viable population, that does not prevent the plant meeting criterion 3.1.5 for **Local** significance.

Threats

- Residential development;
- Human-induced climate change, which is predicted to cause more severe droughts, heatwaves and storms, as well as substantially lower rainfall (particularly in winter);
- Debilitation and deaths of eucalypts and the mistletoe, partly due to the abovementioned droughts and storms;
- Lack of natural replacement of indigenous species as they die;
- Loss or decline of the indigenous plant species as a result of most of their populations being so small that they are vulnerable to inbreeding, poor reproductive success or localised chance events.

Strategic planning

Schedule 4 of the Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO4) applies to this site as a result of a recommendation in the previous (2010) edition of this report. The stated reasons for applying VPO4 were that:

- The site contains (in the words of the VPP Practice Note on Biodiversity) 'scattered living food trees with an exotic understorey';
- The site is a site of Local biological significance; and
- The properties involved are too small to be affected by Clause 52.17 of the Knox Planning Scheme, which might otherwise provide the indigenous trees with some protection.

These features remain and therefore there is no need to alter the application of VPO4 to the site delineated here. However, the site has shrunk substantially compared with the previous edition of this report and the same should happen to the VPO4 boundary. The area removed from VPO4 should instead come under VPO3, which presently covers all the land surrounding the current VPO4.

Information sources used in this assessment

- Inspections of the site and its neighbourhood by Dr Lorimer on 1st January 2003, 20th August 2008, 10th February 2011, August 2014 and 18th January 2025, including mapping and documenting the remnant vegetation;
- Dr Lorimer's reassessment of the site's biological significance for the Knox Housing Strategy, as discussed in his report to Knox City Council titled 'Implications of Sites of Biological Significance on the Draft Knox Housing Strategy' and dated 14th August 2014;
- A search for records of flora and fauna observations stored in either Knox City Council's biodiversity database or the Atlas of Living Australia. The only record found was of a Red Fox in 2021;
- Aerial and satellite imagery from between 1946 and 2025;
- The Victorian Government's 'NatureKit' website;
- Maps of geology, topography and strategic planning information produced by agencies of the Victorian Government.