Site 107. Knoxfield Treed Precinct

A treed residential area.

Summary of significant features:

- Locally significant: many trees that facilitate movements of birds, bats, tree frogs and flying insects around the local landscape in pursuit of their daily and seasonal needs;
- Locally significant: populations of locally-threatened indigenous tree species.

Boundaries

The site is outlined with blue dashes on the aerial photograph on the next page. The boundary follows property boundaries except within road reserves. The site had different boundaries in previous editions of this report, which relied on the author's vegetation surveys in 2003–2008. In the intervening 17–22 years:

- A substantial number of trees have been removed from private land, much of which has been associated with residential subdivision;
- Most of the surviving trees have grown substantially larger and form superior habitat, meaning that some peripheral areas have become worthy of adding to the site (e.g. Rickards Avenue).

The site measures 55.9ha, compared with 53.5 ha in the version that appeared in previous editions of this report.

Land use & tenure: Suburban residential neighbourhood, local shops, a kindergarten and a childcare centre.

Site description

This site contains a substantial number of mature remnant eucalypts, most of them belonging to the excellent habitat species, Mealy Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*). They occur mostly in residential gardens and are distributed very patchily through the site.

The site's mix of species of remnant eucalypts indicates that the whole area once supported vegetation of the Ecological Vegetation Class, Valley Heathy Forest, which is now endangered. However, there is almost no native understorey left within the site. Indications of the original understorey composition can be obtained from the adjoining sites of biological significance and from botanical surveys of 52 Kathryn Rd before its recent redevelopment. (The aerial photograph was taken in 2020, before the property was redeveloped.)

The habitat provided by the site's remnant eucalypts is well supplemented by planted trees native to other parts of Australia, particularly eucalypts and melaleucas. Most of these trees were planted decades ago and have become large. The majority are on nature strips and in the closed sections of streets. The relative importance of those street trees to the site's significance is increasing as more private properties are subdivided and cleared.

The tree canopy, despite its fragmentation, provides basic habitat needs for native birds, bats, possums, invertebrates and perhaps tree frogs. This habitat supplements the higher quality habitat in the adjacent sites of biological significance. Consequently, the area has substantially more native forest birds, such as Crimson Rosellas and Eastern Rosellas, than most of Knox. There are also birds that are uncommon in suburbia, such as Laughing Kookaburras and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

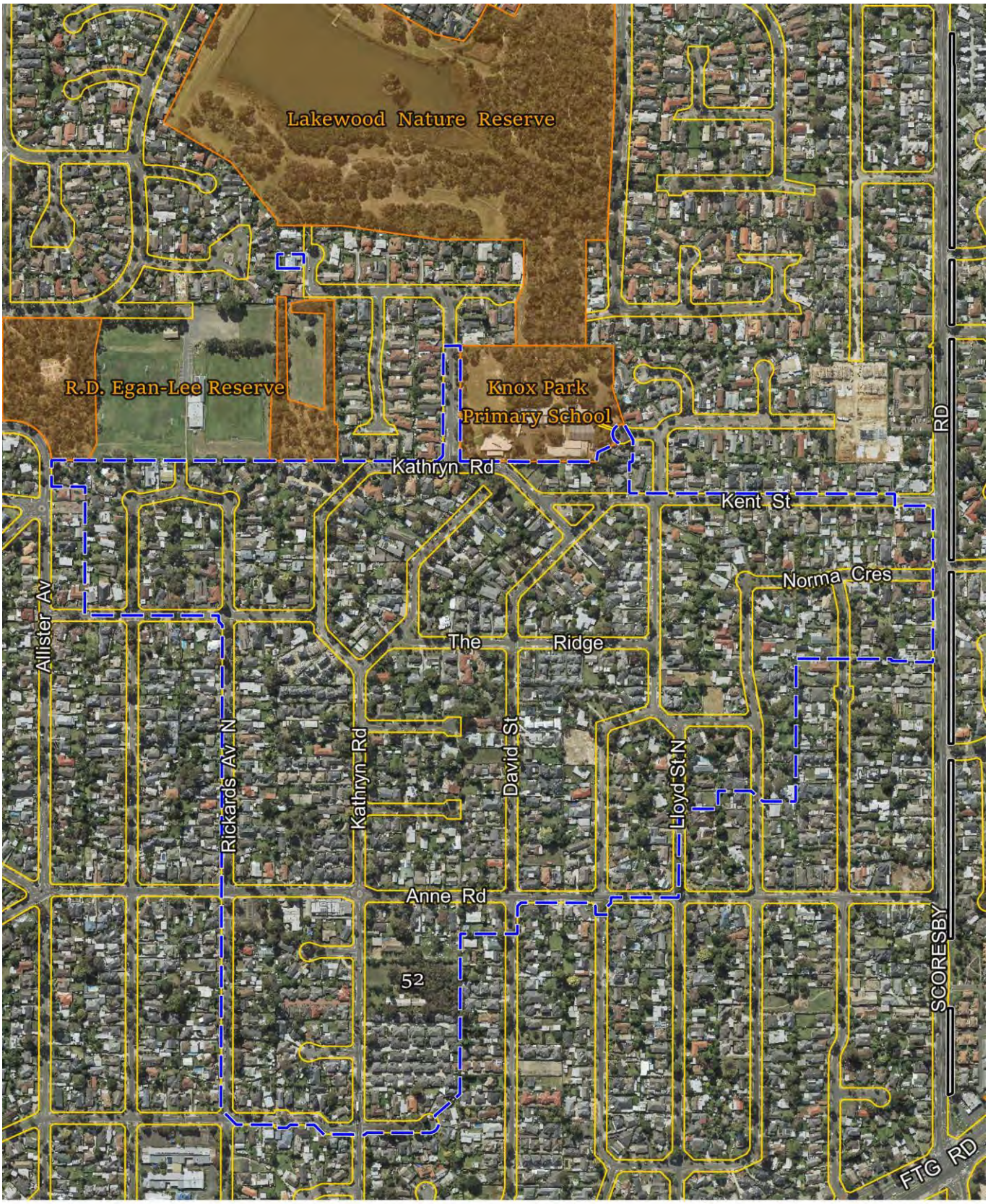
Many private properties in the site are of no biological significance and therefore unaffected by the Vegetation Protection Overlay associated with the site.

Relationship to other land

It seems that very few species of indigenous, warm-blooded fauna other than possums could fulfil all their daily and seasonal habitat needs within any one of the various sites within the local landscape. It follows that those species must move regularly between suitable sites. Site 107's parrots, kookaburras and most of its other birds (and probably flying insects) are part of that nomadic fauna.

Consequently, the trees in this site effectively represent ecological stepping-stones within the local, fragmented matrix of habitat. Habitat in the local area would be more fragmented without them.

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain


Lakewood Nature Reserve
R.D. Egan-Lee Reserve
Knox Park Primary School
Kathryn Rd
Kent St
RD
Norma Cres
Allister Av
The Ridge
Rickards Av N
Kathryn Rd
David St
Lloyd St N
Anne Rd
52
SCORESBY
FTG RD
Legend
Site 106
Site 107
Other sites
Roads
1:7,000
0 100 200 300 400 500 m

Habitat type

Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127, Endangered), represented by a patchy cover of *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa* and localised patches of native grasses, mainly *Rytidosperma penicillatum*, *R. racemosum* and *Themeda triandra.*

Fauna of special significance

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos are uncommon in metro Melbourne. A flock was seen in the site during this study's 2025 site survey but it is unknown how much use the species makes of the site's habitat. There are also five other records of the species in the site since 2020, close to R.D. Egan-Lee Reserve (Site 42, p. 281).

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

For the reasons discussed above, the trees in the site function as ecological stepping-stones for local-scale nomadic movements of warm-blooded fauna and probably flying insects. Criterion 1.2.6 of Amos (2004) attributes **Local** significance to sites that it describes as 'Important at Local Scale - Link between individual remnant habitat blocks or within subcatchment'.

Locally-threatened plant species

The site contains a substantial population of Mealy Stringybark, which falls into the Endangered category of risk of dying out in Knox. This meets criterion 3.1.5 for **Local** significance.

Threats

- Residential subdivision and 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 trees, partly due to the abovementioned droughts and storms;
- Lack of natural replacement of remnant eucalypts as they die.

Strategic planning

As a result of the previous (2010) edition of this report, Schedule 4 of the Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO4) applies to the slightly different version of the site that was delineated at that time. The stated reasons for applying VPO4 were that:

- 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;
- 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.

These features are equally valid for the current version of the site except for the new inclusion of 52 Kathryn Rd, which contains native understorey and is of higher biological significance. There is no need to alter the text of VPO4 but it is recommended here to amend the VPO4 boundary to match the one here except for the patch of native vegetation at the rear of 52 Kathryn Rd, which should retain its existing cover of Schedule 2 of the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO2 – see the description of former Site 41 on p. 5).

Information sources used in this assessment

- Inspections of the area by Dr Lorimer in April and May 2004 for the specific purpose of finding sites of biological significance and determining the distribution of trees that represent reasonable habitat for native fauna;
- General visual inspection of the area's vegetation by the author while surveying the neighbouring R.D. Egan-lee Reserve (Site 42) and Knox Park Primary School (Site 108), up to March 2008;
- A vegetation survey of the site for this edition on 19th January 2025, on foot and by car, including redetermination of the site's boundary;

- A search in vain for records of flora and fauna observations stored in Knox City Council's biodiversity database;
- Records of fauna observations stored in the Atlas of Living Australia (there being no flora records);
- Aerial and satellite imagery from between 1976 and 2025;
- The Victorian Government's 'NatureKit' website;
- Maps of geology, topography and strategic planning information produced by agencies of the Victorian Government.