

## Site 110. Knox Gardens Primary School, Wantirna South

Part of the schoolgrounds adjacent to Fewster Drive, with remnant tree cover.

Summary of significant features:

- **Locally significant:** a substantial population of the locally-threatened species, Mealy Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*) and smaller numbers of two other locally-threatened species – Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) and Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*).



Legend  
 Site 110   
 Properties



1:1,000  
0 10 20 30 40 50 m

### Boundaries

The site is the part of the schoolgrounds that is outlined with blue dashes above – unchanged from the previous (2010) edition of this report. The edge follows property boundaries except for the northern edge, which is an extension of a property boundary. The area is 1.02 ha.

**Land use & tenure:** Primary school grounds.

### Site description

This site contains a substantial number of mature remnant trees in the bushland sanctuary (labelled above) and to its immediate west. The trees around the site's periphery have been planted and include species from other parts of Australia.

A 1946 aerial photograph shows that the area occupied by the site's current-day remnant trees was then the corner of a patch of young forest regrowth. A sequence of photographs at intervals over the intervening decades indicates that there have been remnant eucalypts on that land ever since. The rest of the site appeared to have no tree or shrub cover in any aerial photographs until the 1980s.

The remnant trees all belong to locally-threatened species:

- Mealy Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*), the dominant species;
- Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*), co-dominant in the southeast of the sanctuary; and
- Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*), represented by several trees in the sanctuary.

One or two Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) trees were also present when the site was inspected for the first edition of this report. The current-day Blackwoods are all small, so presumed to be among the many indigenous plants that have been planted in the sanctuary.

Some of the current-day trees are large and over fifty years old. The Thatch Saw-sedge (*Gahnia radula*) that still grows at the southeast corner of the sanctuary almost certainly predates British colonisation, as that species has never been known to produce seeds in the Melbourne region.

The only other remnant plants seen in this study's 2025 inspection are many Clustered Wallaby-grass (*Rytidosperma racemosum*) in the lawn and a single Veined Spear-grass (*Austrostipa rudis* subsp. *rudis*) in the sanctuary's southeast corner.

The indigenous and Australian native plants that have been planted within the site complement the remnant vegetation. For example, the planted Hedge Wattle (*Acacia paradoxa*) and Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) provide prickly protection and food for invertebrates and small understorey birds such as Brown Thornbills, which would not otherwise visit the site.

## Relationship to other land

The habitat value of the site is supplemented by mature Australian native trees in other parts of the schoolgrounds and on the neighbourhood's nature strips. The school is quite ecologically isolated from other native vegetation.

**Bioregion:** Gippsland Plain

## Habitat types

The remnant eucalypts and the site's physical properties (soil, drainage etc.) indicate that the original EVC of the site was Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127), which is regionally endangered.

## Fauna of special significance

None detected.

## Fauna habitat features

The remnant trees, combined with mature planted trees, represent basic habitat for native birds, possums and invertebrates.

## Significance rating

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

### *Threatened Ecological Vegetation Class*

The original Ecological Vegetation Class of the site is now regionally endangered. However, it has been reduced to such skeletal form in the schoolgrounds that the vestiges do not qualify as a 'remnant patch' of the EVC under the standard criteria (specifically, criterion 3.2.3). Consequently, the regionally-endangered status of the EVC is not recognised as significant under the standard criteria.

### *Locally-threatened plant species*

The site contains a substantial stand of Mealy Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*), which falls into the Endangered category of risk of dying out in Knox. Such an occurrence meets criterion 3.1.5 for a site of **Local** significance.

### **Threats**

- 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 due to the effects of climate change;
- Potential future need for more school buildings, which might involve removal of native vegetation;
- Lack of natural replacement of indigenous species as they die, due to mowing and trampling.

### **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. There has been a net improvement over the intervening 15 years, particularly because the trees from that time have grown larger and there has been additional planting of indigenous understorey. Despite those changes, VPO4 remains appropriate for this site and no amendment is recommended.

### **Information sources used in this assessment**

- A botanical survey by Rik Brown on 20th March 2002 for the first edition of this report, including:
  - 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;
- A follow-up botanical survey by Dr Lorimer on 19th January 2025 for this edition;
- A search in vain for records of flora and fauna observations stored in Knox City Council's biodiversity database or in the Atlas of Living Australia;
- Aerial and satellite imagery from 1946, 1976, 1979, 1992, 2001, 2003, 2007, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2024;
- The Victorian Government's 'NatureKit' website;
- Maps of geology, topography and strategic planning information produced by agencies of the Victorian Government.