

## Site 117. Schools

This section refers to native vegetation in schools that are not recognised as sites, or parts of sites, described earlier in this report.

Site Significance Level: *Local*

Many schoolgrounds in Knox have remnant trees, which provide shade and can add to the attractiveness of what might otherwise be a rather stark landscape. Sometimes there are also patches of native understorey or areas of hardy native grasses such as Weeping Grass or Clustered Wallaby-grass.

The more biologically important vegetation in schoolgrounds is covered earlier in this report. Other native vegetation in schools seen during this study is too isolated or too sparse to warrant the application of an overlay in the Knox Planning Scheme. The school properties are larger than 0.4ha and so they are subject to the state-wide baseline 'native vegetation retention' provisions of Clause 52.17 of the Victoria Planning Provisions. While small-scale vegetation removal at schools is generally done with planning approval, this does not always apply because planning schemes are not binding on land development carried out on behalf of the Minister for Education, due to an Order-in-Council under Section 16 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Victorian Govt Gazette, 10th February 1988, p. 266).

The most important example of a school with native vegetation is Mountain Gate Primary School. At the southwestern end of the schoolgrounds, an area of approximately 0.25 ha has a substantial cover of remnant eucalypts, with native understorey restricted to a few Sweet Bursaria shrubs and very hardy grasses. This area seems to have low vulnerability to construction of new school buildings because it is remote from the existing school buildings.

A major feature of conservation significance in these schools is their eucalypts and large wattles. All indigenous eucalypt species in Knox, as well as *Acacia mearnsii* and *Acacia melanoxylon*, meet the international criteria for locally-threatened species (Volume 1) and any viable population is of 'Local' conservation significance according to the criteria of the Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action (Amos 2004). These species are common in schoolgrounds.