

Site 102. Ash Grove Precinct, Bayswater

A small residential neighbourhood with remnant eucalypts. Melway ref. 64 E5.

Site Significance Level: *Local*

- Contains remnant Yellow Box trees and mistletoes that provide habitat for native birds and insects.



Scale 1:2,000
10 0 20 40 60 80 100m

Aerial photograph taken
February 2007.

Boundaries

This 1.53 ha site is outlined in red on the aerial photograph above. The boundaries align with title boundaries except for road crossings, which are extensions of title boundaries. The extension across Elm St is to enclose a Yellow Box tree on the eastern nature strip.

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

Site description

This residential neighbourhood retains some excellent specimens of Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) that are remnants of the original native vegetation, which was 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 insects and birds (including the regionally uncommon Musk Lorikeet).

One of the Yellow Box trees, at the front of 12 Ash Grove, supports no fewer than six indigenous mistletoes – one *Amyema pendulum* and five *Muellerina eucalyptoides* – with no obvious signs of debilitation. Mistletoes are substantially depleted in numbers in Knox. Their fruits are staple food for the native Mistletoebird (now uncommon around Bayswater), and the

leaves are the only food source that can be used by caterpillars of certain butterfly species, particularly the Imperial White that occurs around Bayswater.

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

Relationship to other land

A stand of remnant Mealy Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*) trees in the grounds of Bayswater Primary School can be seen on the aerial photograph. These trees augment 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.

Other properties in the neighbourhood provide no significant habitat and are not of biological significance. This includes properties presently covered under Schedule 3 of the Vegetation Protection Overlay in the Knox Planning Scheme.

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain

Habitat type

Scattered trees, mistletoes 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 plant species were observed by Mr Rik Brown in 2002 and/or Dr Graeme Lorimer in 2003. Additional species might be detectable in other seasons. The column headed 'Risk' indicates the indigenous species' risk of local extinction as follows: 'C'=Critically endangered'; 'E'=Endangered; and 'V'=Vulnerable.

Risk	Indigenous Species	Risk	Indigenous Species
V	<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>	V	<i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i>
C	<i>Amyema pendula</i>		<i>Gahnia radula</i>
V	<i>Eucalyptus cephalocarpa</i>		<i>Lomandra filiformis</i> subsp. <i>coriacea</i>
V	<i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i>	C	<i>Muellerina eucalyptoides</i>
E	<i>Eucalyptus radiata</i>		

Fauna of special significance

None detected, but the author visited the site for less than one hour.

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 mistletoes on the Yellow Box at 12 Ash Grove provide essential habitat for Mistletoebirds and Imperial White butterflies, in a suburb where such habitat is very rare. The fact that the mistletoes exist is evidence of past visitation by Mistletoebirds, which are the principal means by which mistletoes are spread.

Significance ratings

Ecological Integrity and Viability

The habitat value of trees in the site for use by native birds and insects, including Mistletoebirds, Musk Lorikeets and Imperial White butterflies, makes the site an ecological 'stepping stone'. Criterion 1.2.6 (Amos 2004) 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 Flora

The locally threatened eucalypt species listed above appear to have viable populations in the school grounds, thereby meeting criterion 3.1.5 for a site of **Local** significance.

The remnant Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) at 12 Ash Grove is a good specimen of its species and supports no fewer than six indigenous mistletoes – one *Amyema pendulum* and five *Muellerina eucalyptoides* – with no obvious signs of debilitation. However, this does not qualify for recognition under the criteria of Amos (2004).

Threats

- Residential development, as has recently occurred at 16 Ash Grove (on the northern corner of Birch St).

Management issues

The habitat value of the site could be enhanced by planting additional indigenous trees and understorey species (e.g. Sweet Bursaria, *Bursaria spinosa*) that suit insect-eating birds.

Administration matters

- This site is worthy of inclusion within the proposed Vegetation Protection Overlay Schedule (Volume 1, Section 5.5) because:
 - 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; 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;
- The site and surrounding neighbourhood are covered by the existing Schedule 3 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay of the Knox Planning Scheme, and parts of three properties are also covered by Schedule 1 (namely, 11 & 12 Ash Grove and 42 Elm St). It is recommended to remove these overlays and replace them with the new Schedule proposed in Section 5.5 of Volume 1;
- The Planning Scheme zoning is Residential 1 Zone (R1Z).

Information sources used in this assessment

- Inspections of the neighbourhood by Dr Lorimer in 2003 and on 20/8/08, including mapping the remnant trees and mistletoes; and
- Aerial photography from February 2001, April 2003 and February 2007.