

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

Part of the school grounds adjacent to Fewster Drive, with remnant tree cover. Melway ref. 72 H3.

### Site Significance Level: *Below the Rating Threshold*

- Contains remnant eucalypts and Blackwoods that represent basic habitat for native birds, possums and insects.



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

Aerial photograph taken April 2003.

### Boundaries

The site is the part of the school grounds that is outlined in red above. The edge follows property boundaries except for a small segment at the western end of the northern edge, which is a continuation of a property boundary. The area is 1.02 ha.

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

### Site description

The part of the school grounds within this site contains a substantial number of mature remnant trees, as can be seen on the aerial photograph. The trees are of three species, all of them locally vulnerable:

- Mealy Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*), the dominant species;
- Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*), several trees; and
- Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), very scarce.

The ages of the eucalypts are estimated to be between fifty and eighty years.

There is no native understorey (except perhaps mown native grass, which could not be detected during the site inspection for this study).

## Relationship to other land

The habitat value of the site is augmented by mature Australian native trees planted in other parts of the school grounds. 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 and endangered. However, the absence of understorey and the sparse tree canopy mean that the vegetation is not deemed a 'remnant patch' in the terms intended by the Department of Sustainability & Environment's standard criteria.

## Flora and fauna of special significance

None detected.

## Fauna habitat features

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

## Significance rating

### *Threatened Ecological Vegetation Class*

The original Ecological Vegetation Class of the site is now endangered. However, it has been reduced to such skeletal form in the school grounds that the vestiges do not qualify as a 'remnant patch' of the EVC under the Department of Sustainability & Environment's significance criterion 3.2.3 (Amos 2004).

### *Locally Threatened Plant Species*

The locally vulnerable *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa* appears to have a viable population in combination with nearby native vegetation, thereby meeting criterion 3.1.5 of Amos (2004) for a site of **Local** significance.

## Threats

- Lack of recruitment of indigenous vegetation because of mowing and trampling, although the vegetation appears to be in a stable state under the current use of the school grounds;
- Potential future need for more school buildings, which might involve removal of native vegetation.

## Management issues

Planting indigenous shrubs could enhance the site's habitat value and provide some protection against tree dieback disease.

## Administration matters

- The property is large enough for the native vegetation to receive some protection by Clause 52.17 of the Knox Planning Scheme. However, that clause exempts vegetation removal for construction of buildings, which appears to be the most serious threat to the native vegetation in the school grounds. For this reason, effective protection of the vegetation requires use of an overlay to the planning scheme, and the proposed schedule to the Vegetation Protection Overlay (Volume 1, Section 5.5) would be appropriate;
- Most of the trees in this site are covered by the existing Schedule 1 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay of the Knox Planning Scheme. This resulted from the description of the area by Water Ecoscience (1998) as their Site 24. It is recommended that the existing Schedule 1 be removed and that this site be covered instead by the schedule proposed in Volume 1 of this report.

## Information sources used in this assessment

- A botanical survey by Mr Rik Brown on 20th March 2002, following the standard procedures described in Section 2.4 of Volume 1, 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;
- Aerial photography from February 2001, April 2003 and February 2007.