

Site 113. Major Crescent Precinct, Rowville

A residential area where larger lots with native vegetation are being progressively subdivided and developed. Melway ref. 82 H2.

Site Significance Level: *Below the Rating Threshold*

- There are modest numbers of mature trees, particularly remnant eucalypts, that provide rudimentary habitat for native birds, insects and probably bats;
- The site provides rudimentary habitat linkage between sites with higher quality vegetation.

Aerial photograph and map: See page 476, on which the site is labelled '113'.

Boundaries

The site is outlined and numbered in green on the aerial photograph on page 476. The boundary edges follow property boundaries except where they cross streets or the pipe track. The total area is 19.88 ha.

Land use & tenure: Freehold residential land, Council parks, pipe track and streets.

Site description

This site is at the foot of the Lysterfield hills. It was formerly grazing land and has been rapidly urbanised, particularly since about 1999.

The establishment of grazing in the area led to the removal of most of the original eucalypts. Residential development is leading to loss of more trees. However, the aerial photograph on page 476 shows the characteristic olive-green colour of surviving eucalypts, scattered patchily across this site. Some of these trees have mistletoes, which represent habitat for Mistletoebirds and Imperial White butterflies. There are also small numbers of remnant sub-canopy trees (Blackwood *Acacia melanoxylon*, Black Sheoak *Allocasuarina littoralis* and Cherry Ballart *Exocarpos cupressiformis*).

Grazing destroyed nearly all the native shrubs, other than the very hardy species, Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*). It was somewhat less severe on the native ground flora, of which small patches are found scattered on roadsides and on private properties. These patches are being progressively replaced by gardens and mown nature strips as the residential density increases.

The pipe track has extremely scarce native understorey, belonging to only two particularly hardy species of grass that can be found in suburban lawns. The pipe track retains some mature trees, but not enough to represent a corridor.

Despite the patchy and declining condition of the site's native vegetation, its tree canopy provides basic habitat needs for native birds, insects and probably bats.

Many of the properties in the site are of no biological significance. They would be unaffected by the schedule for the Vegetation Protection Overlay that is proposed for this site (Section 5.5 in Volume 1).

Relationship to other land

As seen on the aerial photograph on page 476, the native vegetation in this site provides a rather fragmented link between the abutting sites of the Lysterfield Hills (Site 81) and Napoleon Rd (Site 94). No observational evidence was sought to determine whether native fauna commute along this link.

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain

Habitat types

The original EVCs of the site have been almost entirely reduced to scattered trees. These EVCs are:

Valley Grassy Forest (EVC 47, **regionally Vulnerable**) on the steeper slope near Wellington Rd, dominated by *Eucalyptus radiata*, *Eucalyptus melliodora* and *Eucalyptus goniocalyx*.

Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127, **regionally Endangered**) on most of the site, dominated by *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa* and *Eucalyptus radiata*, with patchy cover of native grasses and very localised occurrence of the characteristic species, *Dianella admixta* and *Xanthorrhoea minor*.

Swampy Woodland (EVC 937, **regionally Endangered**), recognisable only by the dominance of *Eucalyptus ovata*, the minor presence of *Melaleuca ericifolia* and the poorly drained location (along the pipe track).

Plant species

The following indigenous plant species were observed by the author on 18th June 2002. Additional species would no doubt be detectable in other seasons. The column headed 'Risk' indicates the indigenous species' risk of extinction in Knox as follows: 'C'=Critically Endangered; 'E'=Endangered; and 'V'=Vulnerable.

Risk	Indigenous Species	Risk	Indigenous Species
V	<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>		<i>Gahnia radula</i>
V	<i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i>		<i>Kunzea ericoides</i> spp. agg.
C	<i>Amyema pendula</i>	V	<i>Lepidosperma laterale</i>
	<i>Dianella admixta</i>		<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>
	<i>Dichondra repens</i>	C	<i>Muellerina eucalyptoides</i>
V	<i>Eucalyptus cephalocarpa</i>		<i>Oxalis exilis/perennans</i>
	<i>Eucalyptus goniocalyx</i>		<i>Poa morrisii</i>
V	<i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i>		<i>Rytidosperma geniculatum</i>
V	<i>Eucalyptus ovata</i>		<i>Rytidosperma racemosum</i>
E	<i>Eucalyptus radiata</i>		<i>Themeda triandra</i>
V	<i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i>	V	<i>Xanthorrhoea minor</i>

Fauna of special significance

None detected, but if there are any significant fauna species, they would probably have escaped detection due to the brevity of the author's time within the site.

Fauna habitat features

The remnant tree cover, combined with mature planted trees, represent basic habitat for native birds, insects and possibly bats. Some of the large trees have hollows that are likely to be inhabited by birds or bats.

Significance ratings

The following is an assessment of the site's significance against the Department of Sustainability & Environment's standard criteria (Amos 2004).

Ecological Integrity and Viability

The site's tree canopy is quite possibly too fragmented to provide an ecological link for local-scale movements of native fauna, and so no significance rating is assigned here to the site as a corridor.

Regionally Threatened Vegetation Types

The site's original EVCs are all regionally threatened, but they have been reduced to such skeletal form within the site that the vestiges do not qualify as 'remnant patches' of those EVCs for the purposes of applying the Department of Sustainability & Environment's significance criterion 3.2.3 (Amos 2004).

Rare or Threatened Flora

The locally threatened species of eucalypt listed above have viable populations in combination with neighbouring native vegetation, thereby meeting criterion 3.1.5 for a site of **Local** significance.

Threats

- Residential development;
- Planting of species such as cypresses that make conditions inhospitable for remnant plants;
- Severance of tree roots by new driveways.

Management issues

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

Administration matters

- The site is inside the Urban Growth Boundary and the planning scheme zoning is Residential 1 Zone (R1Z);
- Clause 52.17 of the planning scheme provides some protection to native vegetation (including understorey) on lots of 0.4 ha or more, but it does not protect against building construction (which is exempted);
- This site is appropriate for inclusion under the proposed schedule to the Vegetation Protection Overlay (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', and its habitat value is being lost due to land development;

- This site overlaps with, but differs substantially from, an area covered by the existing Schedule 1 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay of the Knox Planning Scheme.

Information sources used in this assessment

- A botanical survey of the area, conducted by Dr Lorimer from publicly accessible land on 5th and 19th June 2002, using the standard procedures described in Section 2.4 of Volume 1. This included:
 - Compilation of lists of indigenous and introduced plants in each of nine parts of the site;
 - A description of the vegetation's structural and floristic composition and ecological condition;
 - Incidental fauna observations; and
 - Checks for fauna habitat, ecological threats and management issues; and
- Aerial photography from February 2001 and April 2003.