

Site 114. Clarence Rd Treed Paddock, Wantirna

A treed paddock at the western end of Clarence Rd, grazed by horses and reserved for possible future use in an interchange between the EastLink road and the Healesville Fwy. Melway ref. 63 F3.

Site Significance Level: *Regional*

- A good stand of large remnant eucalypts, providing habitat for native birds, possums, insects and probably bats.

Aerial photograph and plan: See page 262.

Boundaries

The site is outlined and numbered in red on the aerial photograph on page 262. It measures 0.626 ha.

Land use & tenure: Publicly owned land, leased for grazing.

Site description

A little more than half of this paddock has a canopy of large, naturally occurring Mealy Stringybarks (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*), with trunk diameters up to one metre (typically 60 cm). This species is good for wildlife habitat, being a high producer of carbohydrates and often with hollows (as in this case). The density of the tree canopy is at natural levels over a substantial part of the site. The original native understorey has been almost entirely replaced by weeds due to the effects of many years of grazing.

Relationship to other land

The site represents a small augmentation of fauna habitat in the neighbouring Bateman Street Bush (Site 49).

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain

Habitat type

The original EVC of the site has been almost entirely reduced to scattered trees. It is:

Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127, **regionally Endangered**), dominated by a pure stand of *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*, with sparse cover of native grasses and very localised occurrence of the characteristic species, *Bursaria spinosa*.

Plant species

The following plant species were observed by the author on 20th May 2002. Additional species might be detectable in other seasons. The column headed 'Risk' indicates the indigenous species' risk of extinction in Knox with 'C'=Critically Endangered and 'V'=Vulnerable.

Risk	Indigenous Species	Risk	Indigenous Species
	<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	V	<i>Eucalyptus cephalocarpa</i>
C	<i>Amyema pendula</i>		<i>Gahnia radula</i>
	<i>Austrostipa rudis</i> subsp. <i>rudis</i>		<i>Juncus amabilis</i>
	<i>Bursaria spinosa</i>		<i>Lomandra filiformis</i> subsp. <i>coriacea</i>
V	<i>Epilobium billardierianum</i> subsp. <i>cinereum</i>		<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>
	<i>Epilobium hirtigerum</i>		

Flora and 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 inspections of the site (a total of less than one hour).

Fauna habitat features

The large Mealy Stringybarks are good habitat trees for native birds, possums, insects and probably bats.

Significance rating

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 represents a small ecological link for local-scale movements of native fauna. Criterion 1.2.6 assigns **Local** significance to habitat links like this that can be described as 'Important at local Scale – Link between individual remnant habitat blocks or within subcatchment'.

Regionally Threatened Vegetation Types

The site's original EVC is endangered. The density of the tree canopy is at 'benchmark' level (30%) over approximately 3,000 m², which meets the Department of Sustainability & Environment's criteria for a remnant patch. It follows that the site is of State significance, according to a literal interpretation of criterion 3.2.3 of Amos (2004). However, Amos (2004) did not expect that vegetation with so little native understorey would be regarded as a 'remnant patch' for these purposes, because the '*Operational Guidelines*' to which he referred specified a minimum of 10% native understorey cover. Consequently, the author has reduced the significance level to **Regional**.

Locally Threatened Plant Species

Eucalyptus cephalocarpa is locally threatened and the site has a viable population of this species, thereby meeting criterion 3.1.5 for a site of **Local** significance.

Threats

- Invasion by environmental weeds, of which Blackberry (*Rubus discolor*) is rated Very Serious and the following are rated Serious: Brown-top Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Panic Veldt-grass (*Ehrharta erecta*);
- Grazing;
- Potentially, eucalypt dieback disease as an indirect consequence of weed invasion and grazing;
- Road construction, in the event that a decision is taken to build the Healesville Fwy.

Management issues

- The declared noxious weeds on the site should be controlled, and the land manager should be informed of this.

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'; and
 - It is a site of Local biological significance because of the likely importance of the trees in providing an ecological stepping-stone along the Dandenong Creek corridor.
- The planning scheme zoning is Road Zone Category 1 (RDZ1);
- This site closely corresponds to an area covered by the existing Schedule 1 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay of the Knox Planning Scheme.

Information sources used in this assessment

- Botanical surveys of the area by Dr Lorimer on 14/6/02 and by Mr Rik Brown on 20/5/02, using the standard procedures described in Section 2.4 of Volume 1. This included:
 - Compilation of lists of indigenous and introduced plants;
 - 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;
- Aerial photography from February 2001, April 2003 and February 2007; and
- The Department of Sustainability & Environment's BioMaps of the area.

Sites Not Recommended for Overlays

Sites 115 to 118 are areas whose native vegetation needs no overlay to protect its biological significance, being automatically and adequately protected by the statewide 'native vegetation retention' provisions of Clause 52.17 of the Victoria Planning Provisions.

It should be kept in mind that this report only deals with the biological significance of vegetation. Areas not recommended here for inclusion under an overlay may nevertheless be worthy of inclusion under a Vegetation Protection Overlay schedule for reasons other than biological significance, such as beauty, interest or history.