

Areas Recommended for VPO

Sites 52 and 100-114 below are proposed to be covered by the suggested Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO) Schedule discussed in Section 5.5 of Volume 1. Parcels of land measuring at least 0.4 ha are also subject to Clause 52.17, which provides basic protection for the full range of native vegetation other than Bracken.

It should be kept in mind that this report only deals with the biological significance of vegetation. Areas not recommended here for inclusion under the VPO schedule proposed in Volume 1 may nevertheless be worthy of including under a VPO schedule for other reasons, such as beauty, interest or history.

Site 52. Winton Farm, Boronia Rd, Wantirna

Remnant Mealy Stringybarks (some large) on the former Winton Farm property. Melway ref. 63 E4.

Site Significance Level: *Local*

- Vestiges of a regionally endangered plant community;
- Provides an ecological stepping-stone for daily and seasonal east-west movements of birds and insects.

Boundaries

The site comprises the area outlined in red and labelled 'Site 52' north of Boronia Rd on the aerial photograph on page 266. The boundary has been drawn to circumscribe the main area of remnant trees.

Land use & tenure: Disused grazing land now forming part of the verge of the EastLink road.

Site description

In 2004 when the first edition of this report was prepared, a 7.89 ha site was included within Winton Farm to circumscribe a seasonal wetland and an arc of remnant trees surrounded by pasture. Construction of the EastLink road has decimated the site, leaving only a fraction of the previous number of trees and a handful of individual indigenous wetland plants. The site described here is therefore much smaller (0.87 ha) and its significance has fallen from State to Local.

The soil is shallow, poorly draining, light grey loam over clay subsoil. The bedrock is Middle Silurian siltstone of the Anderson Creek formation.

The only native understorey found in 2008 comprised some Blackwoods and three Sweet Bursarias.

Relationship to other land

Neighbouring areas of native vegetation are shown on the aerial photograph on page 266. The site is probably used by some birds as a corridor between Dandenong Creek (500m away) and the Bateman St Bush (Site 49). Until the construction of EastLink, the site was part of the Dandenong Creek flora and fauna corridor, and facilitated fairly liberal movement of frogs and birds, but it is not clear what the result of the new EastLink road will be. Without this patch of trees, there would be a substantially larger gap in the Dandenong Creek corridor, at a location where it can be ill afforded.

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain

Habitat type

Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127, **regionally Endangered**): 0.85 ha, present only as scattered trees with foliage density slightly lower than the Department of Sustainability & Environment's benchmark.

Dominant canopy trees: *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa* and one *E. ovata*, with crowns overlapping slightly in the most dense areas.

Dominant lower trees: A few *Acacia melanoxylon*.

Shrubs: Three *Bursaria spinosa*.

Vines: None.

Ferns: None.

Ground flora: Pasture weeds.

Plant species

The following plant species were observed by the author on 7th March 2008. Additional species would no doubt be detectable in other seasons.

Acacia mearnsii

Acacia melanoxylon

Bursaria spinosa

Eucalyptus cephalocarpa

Eucalyptus ovata

Fauna habitat features

Some of the large eucalypts probably have hollows suitable for habitation by the same fauna.

Significance ratings

Ecological Integrity and Viability

Criterion 1.3 of Amos (2004) assigns **Local** significance to a 'Site (or one of a group of such sites) to form a strategic corridor of local importance and scale', which is believed to apply in this case. If this becomes an important matter, the continued role of the site for faunal movements along the Dandenong Creek corridor should be checked by a specialist ecologist following commissioning of the EastLink road.

Locally Threatened Plant Species

Eucalyptus cephalocarpa is locally vulnerable and the dominant species in this site. Because there is a viable population, criterion 3.1.5 is met for a site of **Local** significance.

Threats

- Some trees are suffering dieback that threatens to kill them.

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.

Information sources used in this assessment

- A site survey undertaken during this study by Rik Brown on 15th May 2002, following this study's standard procedures discussed in Section 2.4 of Volume 1. This included vegetation mapping, descriptions of the composition and condition of the vegetation types, compilation of two lists of indigenous and introduced plant species (one for the wetland and one for the treed area), incidental fauna observations, and checks for fauna habitat, ecological threats, management issues and populations of scarce or threatened plant species;
- An inspection by Dr Lorimer on 7/3/08 to determine what conservation values remain following construction of the EastLink road (which was almost complete in this vicinity);
- A report, '*Assessment of Native Vegetation on the Mitcham to Frankston Freeway Alignment in Knox*', by Dr Lorimer in July 2003 for Knox City Council;
- The 1998 '*Scoresby Transport Corridor Environment Effects Statement*', particularly Supplement Volume H: Flora and Fauna by Williams L.M., Yugovic J.V., McGuckin J., Humphrey P. and Larwill S. (1998);
- Aerial photography from February 2001 and April 2003;
- Satellite imagery of the district;
- The Department of Sustainability & Environment's BioMaps of the area;
- Maps of geology and topography produced by agencies of the Victorian government.