

EASTWOOD LANDCARE GROUP INC.

No. A0059452W

Strategic Plan- January 2021 – December 2025



OVERVIEW

Bairnsdale is the commercial and retail hub of the East Gippsland region, and is East Gippsland's largest town with a population of around 16,000. Situated on the Mitchell River, Bairnsdale is an easy three-hour drive from Melbourne on the Princes Highway. As a regional service centre, the city has excellent educational institutions, quality recreational facilities and provides extensive health services to the wider population. Bairnsdale is surrounded by the vast mountain ranges of the Great Dividing Range and Hinterland to the north, the Red Gum Plains to the west, the coastline of the Ninety Mile Beach to the east and has the largest lake system in the southern hemisphere- the Ramsar listed Gippsland Lakes on its southern edge. The area has a rich and diverse background supporting industry forged from timber logging, manufacturing, food production, a commercial fishing fleet, dryland & dairy farming, recreational pursuits and tourism.

Eastwood is located over the Mitchell River on elevated land between Wy Yung and Lucknow. The site was the home of explorer Alfred Howitt who in the mid 1800's farmed hops on the Mitchell River flats. Howitt became a published pioneering authority on the culture and society of indigenous Australians, with a focus on the local tribes and was granted kinship status by an aboriginal leader named Tulaba who lived on the property and was the foreman of the indigenous hop-pickers. In 1863 Howitt married Maria (nicknamed Liney) Boothby and they had five children. Howitt died in Bairnsdale in 1908.

Eastwood was developed by Eastwood Corporation from farmland to the current estate comprising over 1000 homes. The estate also houses Bupa Eastwood – a residential aged care facility, the Eastwood Village Shopping Centre, which has a fabulous IGA Supermarket, a country style butcher, a bakery & café outlet, a chemist, liquor store and several food outlets. In addition, there is a Medical Centre, a Dentist & NDIS provider based in the shopping precinct. Eastwood Retirement village is now fully established, it has 160 homes and approximately 260 residents and is adjacent to the Shopping Centre. Two childcare & kindergarten facilities, a veterinary clinic and a government primary school with an enrolment in excess of 500 students also form part of the Eastwood estate. Eastwood has over 40 hectares of developed open space and 12 kilometers of walking/cycling tracks for recreational purposes that add great value to the location.

Eastwood Landcare Group Inc. was formed in May 2013. It is an incorporated body, No. A0059452W, under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. The group as at January 2021 has 20 financial members. Work is undertaken solely on public land contributing to the development and maintenance of the Eastwood area reserves. Since forming, the group has applied for and been granted funding of \$48,660.00 through the Victorian Landcare Grant's & Regional Riparian Action Grant programs provided by the Victorian Government. Additional grant applications been successful for the purchase of plant & equipment through the East Gippsland Shire Council & the Federal Government's Volunteer Grants scheme. Valuable partnerships have been established including those with the East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC), the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, (DEWLP), Department of Justice, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA), Bairnsdale Field & Game Association, Eastwood Corporation, our contractors, neighbouring Landcare groups and the wider community.

This plan developed in January 2021 & endorsed by the Committee in May 2021, sets out the aims and actions that will guide the direction of Eastwood Landcare Group Incorporated for the next five years.

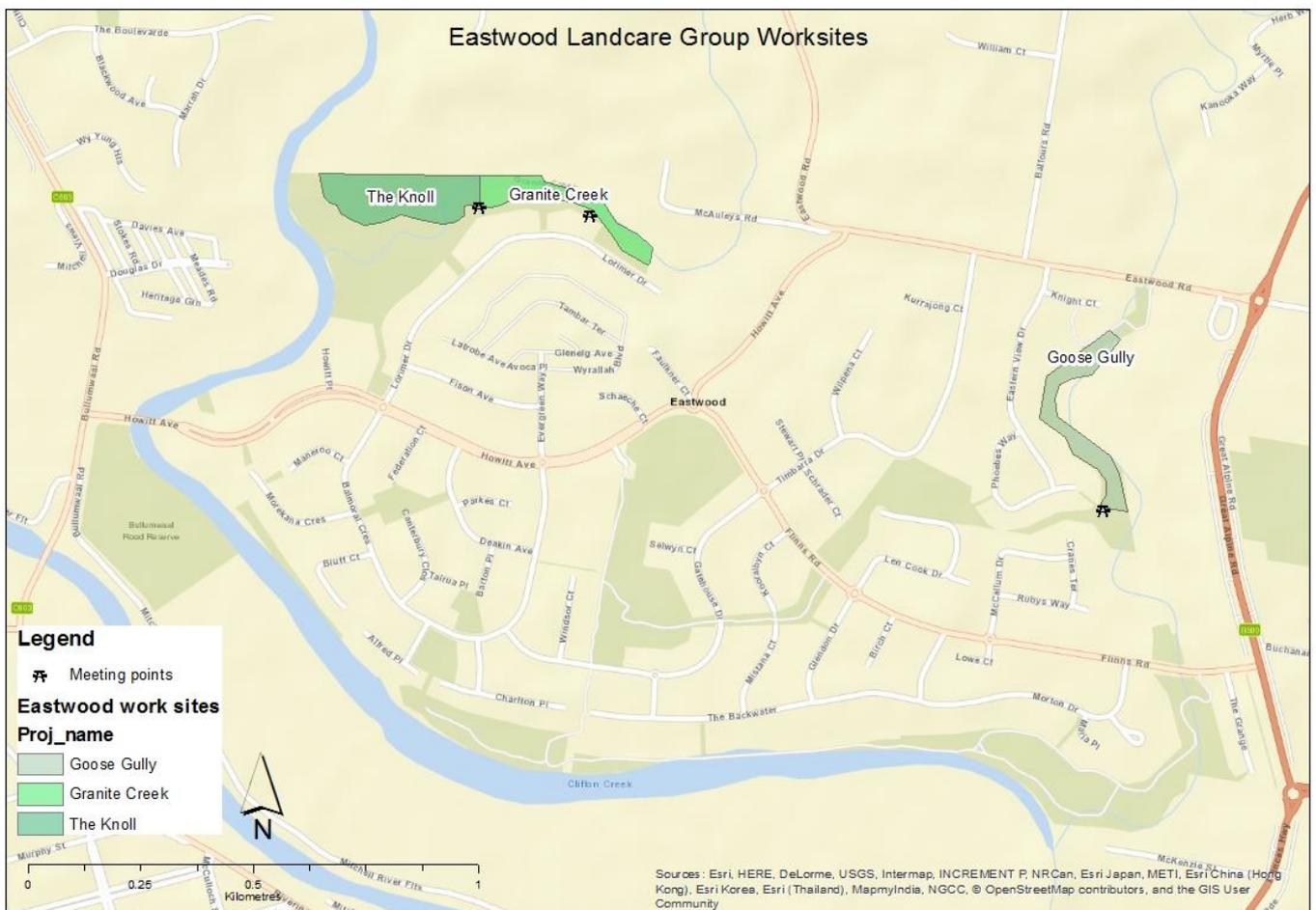
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- To contribute to the development and maintenance of the Eastwood area reserves bounded by the Great Alpine Road to the east, Eastwood Road to the north and the Backwater (Clifton Creek) to the west and south in an environmentally responsible manner.
- To provide education and information to Landcare members and the general public to create environmental and historical awareness of the Eastwood area environs.
- To increase community participation in the Landcare group.
- To consult with and promote relationships with the Eastwood area residents and the land managers of the region

OUR VISION FOR EASTWOOD'S RESERVES

Our vision for the next 10 -15 years is to work with the land manager, the traditional owners and the wider community to support the enhancement, protection and development of Eastwood's reserves in an environmentally sustainable manner. In realising this vision, we will promote bio-diversity of plant life, fauna and flora with a view overall to reducing nutrients and sediment from entering the Gippsland Lakes.

LOCATION OF EASTWOOD LANDCARE GROUP SITES



GROUP HISTORY

Since it formed in mid-2013, Eastwood Landcare Group has focused on raising social and environmental awareness amongst members and the wider community, by working on public land collaboratively with public land managers, to care for and improve the environment in which we live.

Eastwood Landcare Group is currently working on three reserves known as Granite Creek, The Knoll and Goose Gully – all are highlighted on the map on the previous page.

Granite Creek

Our Granite Creek site can be found along Tulaba's Track which runs off the main thoroughfare, Howitt Avenue. Work began many years ago at this site under the direction of the developer, Eastwood Corporation, in particular Ray & Maureen Hack whose vision was to re-establish a *'Howitt Jungle'*- a warm temperate rainforest that would have existed in the area before the land was cleared for farming. The group inherited a site that initially had the benefit of the Hack's foresight and local horticulturist and nurseryman Richard Vuat's contract works. After several years of drought, our vision has somewhat been redefined as climatic conditions have dictated that establishing a warm temperate rainforest may not be possible. This may change again should sufficient & ongoing rainfall be received – it's all in the hands of mother nature.

The site features a creek which flows when the catchment receives sufficient rainfall (it has been dry 4 out of the last 5 years), and is serviced by well-established connecting pathways used frequently by community members from all walks of life. Several waterholes which are filled via storm water from the streets of Eastwood provide habitat for water birds, turtles & other wildlife. The run-off from the waterholes tracks along the creek bed in the middle section of the vegetation- as luck would have it, with a more regular water source, this section is now developing into the warm-temperate rainforest that we set out to establish.

The group has continued to revegetate the site in five stages using indigenous species and we have provided ongoing maintenance and weed control in partnership with the land managers & our contractors. Although the revegetation phase is completed, ongoing maintenance and the control of pest plants will be required on this extensive site for the life of this strategy.



Granite Ck – Fern Gully June 2013



Granite Ck – Fern Gully April 2021



The Knoll

The group began work on this project to rehabilitate a 3-hectare site, in partnership with the land manager East Gippsland Shire Council, in the 2016/17 year. Being a site of indigenous significance, a cultural heritage permit was required, and issued subject to conditions, to the East Gippsland Shire Council on 1st May 2017.

The aim of the project, with lead involvement by GLaWAC's On Country team, was to:

- reduce the spread any further on this site of Chilean Needle Grass – a weed of National Significance
- to revegetate the site to provide a filter resulting in a reduction in nutrient & sediment run-off from adjoining farmland, improving water quality entering the wetlands, Clifton Creek, the Mitchell River and ultimately the Gippsland Lakes.
- to replicate natural landscapes and characteristics whilst building community awareness of biodiversity values
- promote habitat for native flora, fauna and birdlife whilst extending the wildlife corridor
- enhance recreational opportunities for walkers, cyclists, bird watchers and nature enthusiasts and,
- develop skills, participation and knowledge sharing including creating opportunity for shared learning and understanding of Country by working with the Gunaikurnai "On Country" team to deliver the on-ground works in partnership with our group.

The project has been very successful in achieving these and many more outcomes. Despite the 4 years of drought, we've encountered since the project began, the trees, shrubs and grasses have all flourished. Aided albeit, by the group's acquisition of a water trailer with funding provided by the Federal Government and with help on several occasions from EGSC workers, the Drought Employment crew and our wonderful volunteers. Weeds have been continuously controlled by the group & our contractors.

Ongoing maintenance & pest plant & animal control will be required on The Knoll for much of the life of this strategy.



The Knoll – June 2018



The Knoll – March 2021

Goose Gully

Our Goose Gully site is situated below Eastwood Road with a walking track linking through to Flinns Rd and other residential areas within the Eastwood subdivision.

A project commenced in the 2013/14 financial year when the East Gippsland Shire Council was granted funding through the Gippsland Lakes Environment Fund to improve water quality by reducing sediment and nutrients entering the Gippsland Lakes via the Goose Gully tributary. Eastwood Landcare Group partnered with the Shire to assist with the planting of several thousand grasses in the initial stage of the project and then contributed to ongoing site maintenance to ensure plant survival. The project carried into the 2014/15 year with remaining GLEF funding seeing a further area of grasses planted and the establishment of several plots of mixed species of trees and shrubs along the creek line, its banks and the walking track.

The group has continued on with another two phases of this project to date, with the last section completed in 2018/19, increasing plant biodiversity, minimising the threat of erosion, promoting habitat for fauna and birdlife and providing for public amenity.

Goose Gully lends itself to further projects for Eastwood Landcare, but will be dependent on our ability to attract more volunteers to assist us. Maintenance on this site will be ongoing for another couple of years until the revegetation is fully established.



Stage 4– Goose Gully December 2017



Stage 4 - Goose Gully April 2021

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE EASTWOOD LANDCARE GROUP

January 2021 – December 2025

OBJECTIVE 1:

Key Objective

To contribute to the development and maintenance of the Eastwood area reserves bounded by the Great Alpine Road to the east, Eastwood Road to the north and the Backwater (Clifton Creek) to the west and south in an environmentally responsible manner.

Key Strategies

We will achieve this objective by:

- 1.1 Maintaining the good working relationship we have with the East Gippsland Shire Council to continue to enhance our understanding of the management plan for the Eastwood reserves.
- 1.2 Continuing with a maintenance program at our existing sites to ensure that pest plants are managed.
- 1.3 Maintaining our sites to keep them aesthetically pleasing and safe for public access.
- 1.4 Promoting habitat for fauna and birdlife.
- 1.5 Managing and controlling invasive plant species.
- 1.6 Contributing to the development of native vegetation restoration in Goose Gully.
- 1.7 Continue on-ground works to contribute to the reduction of sediment and nutrients entering the Gippsland Lakes.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Key Objective

To provide education and information to Landcare members and the general public to create environmental and historical awareness of the Eastwood area environs.

Key Strategies

We will achieve this objective by:

- 2.1 Displaying posters on a pedestal stand of native flora and fauna at each end of Tulaba's Track.
- 2.2 Maintaining a website for Eastwood Landcare Group.
- 2.3 Periodically producing a newsletter promoting the activities of the group.
- 2.4 Using local and social media to promote the group's activities and raise awareness about our local environment.
- 2.5 Holding community information sessions on local environmental topics, for example: indigenous plants, frogs, birdlife, waterway protection & litter prevention.
- 2.6 Inviting the East Gippsland Shire Councillors to inspect the sites maintained by volunteers.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Key Objective

To increase community participation in the Landcare group.

Key Strategies

We will achieve this objective by:

- 3.1 Holding sessions on our sites to highlight the group's activities and engender community participation.
- 3.2 Involving local schools to promote citizen science and awareness of environmental outcomes.
- 3.3 Exploring opportunities for Junior Landcare projects.
- 3.4 Annually holding a display demonstrating the group's activities at Eastwood Shopping Village.
- 3.5 Promoting the group and its activities through its flyer, via social media and our website.
- 3.6 Seeking corporate/business sponsorship via workplace team building programs, to promote environmental awareness with a view to increasing participation in group activities.
- 3.7 Applying for and attracting funding for key projects.
- 3.8 Considering rebranding our 'Landcare' badge to reflect the fact that we live in a diverse urban environment that must be protected for future generations and could be substantially enhanced by community volunteers; i.e., the protection and enhancement of bio-diversity in Eastwood, "Community working for Community".

OBJECTIVE 4:

Key Objective

To consult with and promote relationships with the Eastwood area residents and the land managers of the region

Key Strategies

We will achieve this objective by:

- 4.1 Maintaining a good working relationship with East Gippsland Shire Council.
- 4.2 Conducting meaningful partnerships and engagement with the Traditional Owners, the Gunaikurnai, to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and to respectfully learn more about the significance of the Eastwood area to the Aboriginal community.
- 4.3 Working with partner agencies including the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Cooperative, the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, the Catchment Management Authority, and the East Gippsland Shire Council to realise our vision.