

# MITTAGUNDI

## OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

### Directors Report

by Hamish & Stacey

What a year it is shaping up to be, certainly not the year any of us were expecting. Like many of you we have been severely impacted by COVID-19 and the restrictions that have been put in place to try and contain it's spread. We are sure it will come as no surprise that we have had to cancel a significant number of this years courses. While it was the only real option, it was nonetheless a sad one to make and given our isolation, it probably surprised our



poor staff the most. In spite of a lack of young people, we are exceptionally grateful to the staff who have decided to stay on and continue looking after Mittagundi. We have some big plans for the farm over the next few months which includes: redoing the floor in the Dining Room (thanks termites), renovating the Gear Shed, much fencing, preserving, and continuing the vege garden's dream run! We all feel very lucky to be able to be here during this time.

We did manage to squeeze some things in between the fires in January and the pandemic in March. We welcomed in our new staff team for 2020, and said goodbye to the legends of 2019. If that wasn't enough we did it in style in lovely Yackandandah where we held the Mittagundi Festival. Much fun, great food, bush dancing and general wahooing was had. We can't thank everyone enough for making it such a great gathering. It was also a tense time, not just for us but many in our community as a bushfire over the hill near McNamara's Hut (which was saved early on, thankfully) burnt around 40,000 hectares. Our friends in Shannonvale were on high alert for many days before receiving some much needed rain.

The new staff have settled in like they've been here for years, which makes our jobs all the easier! Staff training was jam packed due to somethings being re jiggged because of fires. This meant not much relaxing time on the farm but plenty of learning and new experiences to set the staff up for the year ahead!

And finally what we are all here for - the first program of 2020! It was a blast, a full program to kick things off. With young people from far and wide, who all gave it their best, made some new friends, and built us a new post and rail fence! It was great for us all to experience the energy and excitement that young people bring. In the last couple of weeks we have reflected on just how lucky we were to sneak it in.

We are thinking of our big Mittagundi family, enduring all sorts of challenges and hope that we get to see your faces and hear your stories soon!

## Staff Profiles:

### Josh

Josh's arrival completed our Mittagundi family for 2020. He's a gentle, wild soul. You'll often hear him hooting and howling with excitement as he completes menial tasks, such as washing the dishes or wacking in star pickets. It's not hard to get Josh excited and he is always bouncing around full of energy. Give him a guitar, banjo, didge or a drum and he will make it sound awesome! Josh is our gardener this year and he's already gotten stuck in, building on from where Tom left off when he left. Josh's crazy herbal teas that he picks from the garden every morning is becoming stuff of legend. We love Josh and know you all will too!

- Zac



### Jaxon

That's right, it's spelt with an 'X' but that's not the only cool thing about him. He is like a living encyclopaedia full of tricks. Ask him anything about chemistry, botany, metallurgy, firefighting or edible mushroom foraging and he'll probably have the answer! We sometimes catch him head-banging as he jams mild guitar riffs and he is almost certainly wearing a band t-shirt at any given moment. Unfortunately though, due to the craziness of this year he has had to bid us farewell for now to be with family. We are all going to miss him dearly, thanks for making us smile and laugh everyday. We'll miss you.

- Josh and Mitta crew



### Zac

Zac is the youngest member of our family. This king of the mountain is an upbeat ray of positivity with the sickest tunes. He is looking forward to being a mentor and gaining lots of experience working with young people. It's impossible to not have an absolute ball with him around. We are all looking forward to a year full of his humour and phat drum beats!

-Jaxon



## Rowdy

Rowdy loves haikus  
Rides her bike around the farm  
Real good for a chat

Might steal ya scrunchie  
Uses spoons instead of forks  
Her hair grows everyday

Starts day with coffee  
Has dreams of fighting a whale  
Loves to makes new friends

Been walking for years  
You'll rarely see her running  
Whispers to cows

Pink crocs, Birkenstocks  
A woman of mystery  
You'll have to meet her  
- Sarah



## Sarah

Sarah raised a sheep that she found on her way to yoga one day. The joy she experienced watching Marshmallow (said sheep) grow inspired her to pursue farming at Mittagundi.

Her love of hummus means there is always fresh dip in the fridge, next to all the zucchini relish she's pickled.

Her passions include cutting her nails and drinking water. The closest she's come to meeting a world record was peeling 96 boiled eggs in one day at the Festival.

Her smile is as common as her colour coordinated outfits and always makes everyone around her feel good.

- Rowdy



## Mittagundi Open Day / Festival 2020 Yackandandah

It happened in true Mittagundi chaotic style. Bushfires in (the whole country but also more locally in) the Omeo region, meant that we relocated to the Yackandandah Sports Park for our one day Mittagundi extravaganza. It was pulled together with and because of the presence of the Mittagundi community; supporters, young people, demonstrators, staff and even a few who'd never heard of Mittagundi before they wandered down the street in Yack that day. Many reconnected with old friends and learnt skills of the past from our amazing demonstrators.

All while the Yackandandah cricket team played on the oval next to us (although the cricketers may say that they played cricket while a bunch of Mittagundi folk hung out on the fringes next to the creek). In the evening we bush-danced and farewelled the 2019 staff team. Everything came together so smoothly, and we would like to thank all the people who came and supported Mittagundi in so many ways on the day, as always we couldn't be Mittagundi without you.

- Sarah



## Farm News

### Chickens

Over the past few weeks four chickens have been sitting on eggs given to Mittagundi by Ferg (2018 staff) and the Dale's (thanks so much). Unfortunately, one of the four sitters passed away, however, on the 7th of March as I walked into the chicken coop after lunch I heard a little tweet. After lifting muma chicken up I discovered a fluffy little yellow chick looking up at me. After a fun day of watching chicks hatch we now have 16 little chicks running around with 3 mumas watching very carefully and keeping them toasty and warm every night. I am loving caring for these chickens and they make me smile everyday. They are yet to be named but we are in the process.

- Zac



## Cows

The Mittagundi cows; Monica (our milker), Rod, Gilly, Mossy, Noor (the teenagers), Jacob (Monica's calf) and Ruby (Buca's steer). Sometimes, they get sick of the Will's paddock and turn into what's maybe the cow version of elite athletes -hurlers or maybe magicians, I've never actually witnessed the event- and end up in all the paddocks except the one we want them in.

Bloggs really proved his sensitive New Age veterinary techniques; Mossy got dehorned, but patched up with a cute little bandage around her head, just to make her feel better.

And Monica's really proved herself as the chilliest milker ever (not the chilliest driveway walker though) and the last little while we've been milking in the paddock as the sun rises. Big bonus is not cleaning up afterwards.

-Sarah



## Horses

At the beginning of March we said a sad goodbye to our old, ever so friendly and reliable Clydesdale, Sampson. After many years of work, he's off on a well deserved retirement. Hopefully with many years of relaxing and eating ahead of him.

We are all going to miss the chilled old man. On the same float out we sent our young brumby Packer off to school to brush up on some training and take the reins as our main pack horse. We can't wait to see him graduate and come back to us ready to hike.

-Jaxon



## Garden

Zucchini's are oozing out of our ears!!

Preserving has become well practised indeed. And we've had loads of tomatoes coming through as well. Our chutneys and relishes are now thoroughly stocked. Cheers Tom for all the planting. As usual the battle with Couch grass is eternal. The new nursery is cracking, and the beds and poly tunnels are filling up with winter crops.



Loads of brassicas, leafy greens and root crops are on their way, Woohoo! Thanks Dawn and Phil for another epic seedling donation, massively appreciated.  
- Josh



## Gear shed and Dining room

With suddenly so much time on our hands, we have been getting stuck into some building, specifically making the dining room floor and gear shed safer and nicer places to be. The dining room floor has been taken up and the joists were found to have been eaten by termites. Thanks to Gordie we have freshly milled joists and are about to start laying new floorboards, which the Johnstone Family Trust helped us purchase. The Gear Shed has been emptied and is getting ready to be renovated and made stronger. We may not have any programs but we are all still raring to work and give everything to this place to make it even better in the future.

- Zac



## Program 478 Mixed

The first and potentially only program for 2020 was full of laughs as we transitioned into a 'really outdoor' centre. The dining room is currently in the carport, and the iconic dishwashing station has been moved to the lawn, making the kitchen wood passing window just as useful to pass dishes through! As long as it's not raining, this could be the quickest that dishes have ever dried at Mittagundi.



Big thanks to ex-staff, Steph and Gillie, who stopped by and helped cook up a storm of treats to welcome the young people in with after their hike.

Morning milking was the place to be! With the dairy at it's capacity with milkers, young people would line up just to watch. We even tried milking Monicow one afternoon, which proved to be much more successful in providing laughs than milk.

A new post and rail fence seemed to pop up overnight due to the self-motivated and enthusiastic young people, however, one young person was so invested in sharpening axe heads, that they tried to take it into their cabin each night.

A few young people discovered while weeding in the garden that a dirt eating competition is not actually about the amount of dirt you can eat, but how much dirt you can get other people to eat. Josh sure ate a lot of dirt.



One afternoon, when dirt wasn't on the menu, some young people organised all you can eat pizza out on the grass, and while a stampede had to be stopped when the first round came out, pizzas were still cooking long after people's tummies stopped rumbling.

Wooden rings have become the latest fashion accessory and sitting around the campfire at night the soothing sounds of sandpaper filled the air. Along track 107, the slightly less soothing sounds of '100 bottles of milk on the wall' could be heard, interrupted only by the odd snake on the track.

The weather was almost perfect throughout the whole program, the rain came almost solely during one lunchtime and while the hand-wiches were soggy, nothing could dampen the spirit of the young people.

Young people travelled to Mittagundi from all over, Torquay to Newcastle, King Valley to Castlemaine including everywhere in between. While not many of them knew each other before coming, they quickly bonded through the 'respect club' they formed and "I respect you" was a common sentence to hear around the place. While the troopy diesel was freezing on the high plains (resulting in a gear de issue next to the road at watched creek) the young people were huddling next to their last campfire.

In the next few months, the farm will definitely feel much quieter, but the antics from program 478 will keep the staff laughing until programs start up again.

- Rowdy

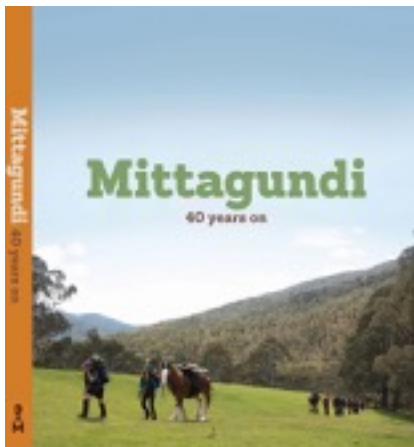
## Gordie's Birthday

The valley recently had an influx of visitors for a surprise party for our neighbour and honorary lifetime Mittagundi staff member Gordy. Food and stories were shared and enjoyed. The large turnout and the amount of gratitude people expressed is reflective of the type of support he provides this and many other communities. A massive thank you to Stacey and everyone who organised the event, thanks Tess for making the greatest Gordy themed cake. Thanks to Arby and many others for deceiving Gordy and keeping it a surprise. Thanks to the band ( Josh, Jaxon and Zac) for playing music and a huge thank you to everyone who made the big trip out.

-Tim







## Mittagundi 40 Years On

The new Mittagundi book has arrived and it is gorgeous! The book captures the essence and spirit of Mittagundi. See the amazing contribution Mittagundi has made to thousands of young people and the community in over 150 pages of history, stories, photos, recipes and memories. Put together by a professional team that has donated their time to keep costs low and ensure that all profits go directly to support the great work of Mittagundi.

If you have already ordered, thank you. If you haven't ordered yours yet you can order and pay online at <http://www.mittagundi.org.au/mittagundi-book>

## Thumbs up / Thumbs down



One of our favourite things to do once a week during breakfast is read the thumbs up/down in the local newspaper so we thought we would make our own for your enjoyment.

- Thumbs up** to the new chicks for being oh-so-cute and making us smile everyday
- Thumbs down** to the termites who ate our dining room joists
- Thumbs up** to the rain for relief from the fire and for watering the garden while Rowdy was watering the garden
- Thumbs down** to the birds that ate all our apples from our apple trees even while they were netted
- Thumbs up** to Gilly and Steph for bringing loads of treats and useful things like a new milk thermometer
- Thumbs up** to Arby for delivering Gordy to his surprise party in style (in a yellow Porsche with the roof down)
- Thumbs up** to Tom for planting loads of great things in the garden. We have been loving the influx of garden food to meals.

**Thank you...** Without the generous contributions we receive from the Mittagundi community, we would be unable to run the programs that so many young people deem 'life changing'. Mittagundi is a collaborative effort, a place created over many years, with the help of many people; whether they are young people contributing to the farm, volunteers giving their time and skills, or much-needed donations of money and goods. This only goes a small way to acknowledge you...

## BIG THANK YOU'S!

### Thank you for helping with the Festival!!

Jack Gilbert  
 Marilla Cooper  
 Lance Tucker  
 Brian Beasley  
 Steve Carol  
 Les Noack  
 David MacKillop  
 Triesha & Wally Hueneke  
 Anneke Topp  
 Amy Naivasha  
 Meryn Shaw  
 Carol Mudford  
 Ruby Huzzey  
 Hannah Stuart  
 Sarah Green  
 Ya Reeves  
 The Wollangarra Staff  
 Chloe Bradsworth  
 Daire Kelly  
 Brooke Hudson  
 Laura Bainger  
 Ferg Dale  
 Eadie Pfahlert  
 Sal Kimber  
 The Indigo Shire Council  
 Kevin Poyner  
 Denis Ginnivan  
 Yackandandah Sports Park  
 Kissin' Cousins  
 Asha Bright  
 Jack Skermer

### Mittagundi Auction Donations

Al & Lucy  
 Rosa  
 Tony Borham  
 Ian Stapleton  
 Lewis Dowie  
 Gordy  
 Jack Gilbert  
 Marilla Cooper  
 Lance Tucker  
 Brian Beasley

### Thanks for having us stay during the fires!

Jackson Green  
 Podge and Gonzo Lorenz

### Thank you for your donations to keep the place running!

**Johnstone Family Trust** - floorboards for the dining room  
**Coffee Basics** in Castlemaine  
**Bree Quinn** - chook food and staff care package  
**Steve Carol** - Fowlers Kit  
**Gordy** - Timber for the dining room and general help  
**Paul and Alli** - Having the staff stay during training  
**Sam and Alena** - Having the staff stay during training  
**Dave Osborne** - Hiking boots

### Financial contributions

The Benambra Historic Machinery Society  
 Graeme Sloman A.O  
 Ernie and Merrilyn Cole  
 The Happy Larry's  
 Ross Cuban  
 Shane Andrewartha  
 Laurie and Kathy Haslem  
 Neil King  
 Shirley Symons  
 Sue-Jane Leckie  
 Jamie Serle  
 Michelle Ray  
 Lion Capital Management  
 Johnstone Family Trust

## If you would like to help Mittagundi here is how you can

Check out our list of essential resource needs below. Any financial help you can provide this year to purchase these items would be immensely appreciated!

Or maybe you know someone who can help? Give us a call on 03 5159 7238

## RESOURCES WE NEED

Due to the bushfires and COVID-19 we really just need money to help cover our operating costs at the moment. This includes:

- Food for the staff
- Fuel
- servicing of vehicles
- Hardware for gear shed reno
- plumbing fittings

*Mittagundi is a non-profit organisation that receives no funding from the Government. Our programs are heavily subsidised and we are reliant on a fantastic community of supporters for about 30% of our operational costs.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

CHEQUE ATTACHED FOR \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I have made an electronic deposit to your Westpac Account of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

on \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ ACCOUNT DETAILS: Westpac Bairnsdale

BSB 033653 A/C 630000

Please debit my: Visa/Mastercard Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CCV Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

DONATIONS CAN ALSO BE MADE VIA THE WEBSITE: <http://www.mittagundi.org.au/donate/>

### What is Mittagundi?

An independent, not-for-profit organisation with outdoor programs available to all young people aged 14-17. It was established over 40 years ago with a commitment to provide opportunities for young people from all walks of life to live and enjoy the challenge of a remote and simple lifestyle. The atmosphere at Mittagundi is simple, honest and happy. There are no watches, no timetables and no money. Instead there is an opportunity for young people to live and work together in an environment where people matter more than anything else. Mittagundi is run by a professional and passionate team of volunteers and a whole community of support.

To book into a program or be involved with Mittagundi please visit our website [www.mittagundi.org.au](http://www.mittagundi.org.au) or contact us on 0467 678 818

