

MITTAGUNDI

OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

Directors Report

Hello from the farm,

It's a cold and frosty morning with the sun just poking its head over the Knocker! Mittagundi has been plodding along these last few months with life on the farm a little quieter without young people on the property. However, we are blessed with wide open spaces, an amazing local community and meaningful tasks to fill our days.

Our staff have recently taken a well-earned break to reconnect with family and friends. During which we all gained some insight into the different life folks have been living with in the 'outside' world. And it would be rude of me to not mention how grateful we feel to have our home at Mittagundi. We just wish we could share it with all of you!

There have been some big changes up here, my co-director Stacey Gill has moved on from Mittagundi to take up a position with Parks Victoria. Stacey has been an incredible co-director, her calm and wise approach will be missed every day. Stacey brought a passion for putting people at the forefront of everything we do here, from the staff's experience to ensuring each young person was supported to have a meaningful Mittagundi experience. We had many heart-warming and rewarding times, running fantastic programs for young people, managing our staff together, and helping to keep Mittagundi being the place we all love. It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to Stace so soon, but I wish her all the best for the future.

I would like to thank Faith, Jack, and Co for spending many weeks up at Mittagundi during the past few months, helping to look after the place and the staff team.

I feel incredibly lucky to have such a great staff team here in 2020. They are hardworking but most importantly such flexible, caring and compassionate folk. Mittagundi, like every other business in this current climate is working hard to figure out how to adapt so that we will be able to get back to doing what we do. We are so keen to run programs as soon as we can safely, so watch this space for future announcements, but for now read on for a dose of Mitta news!

Hamish & Ludog

Farm News

Kitchen

It's a rainy day at Mittagundi. Perhaps luxuriously, you might find us not on the mountains in Gore-Tex with wet wrinkly feet but in the kitchen. Today we are writing thank-you's and newsletter articles. How nice is that!? It is nice since we've spent many a wet day in here often rapping to each other, elbows deep in sugar soap and old smoke stains from our wood fired stoves (it's okay we still love you Cheffy & Fitzy).

By the time you read this and get to come and visit, our kitchen will have a fresh coat of white paint. It'll be light and fluffy like all the Mittagundi bread we'll be able to make actually light and fluffy since we can see what we're doing.

-Sarah

Stove Cleaning

Oh, what a liberating feeling to scrape years of sooty, grimy buildup from inside and out of Cheffy and Fitzy. Jack guided us to every forgotten corner of these beasts, and after days of chiselling and wire brushing and some soldering up of the leaky copper pipes in Fitzy, our babies were fresh and ready for oiling and firing. Thanks, Jack, for all the tips.

-Josh



Dining Room

After a long few months without a dining room the termites were dealt with and new joists milled by Gordy (thanks Gordy) installed we were ready to get our dining room back. Just before lockdown tightened a new/old friend Lewis Dowie moved in, to see out lockdown with us. With an extra set of hands and an extra brain we started laying boards. My side project with help from Hamo was crafting tops for the hand wash sink with off cuts.

After a long week we had something that we could walk, dance and even sleep on. So that's exactly what we did, in that order. Rowdy made a little video about it on Facebook - check it out.

- Zac



Fencing

The cycle of fence building here at Mittagundi never ends. But there is something peculiar about this particular recent addition down at the fuel depot. You see usually the thick end of the post goes in the ground ... But not this one! What is now referred to as the upside-down fence was a result of yours truly forgetting the age old saying of "measure twice, cut once". But the quirky design adds a certain personality to make it stand out and come out of its shell like the confident fence it knows it can be. I hope it continues being its beautiful upside-down self for many years to come.

- Jaxon



Talking Toilets



I used to believe that everything you take camping is just a bag for food. Tent, sleeping bag, you, belly, food. But then Frances and Hamish Skermer came and taught us all about how the wheelie bin composting toilet system at Mittagundi really works (it's amazing!). We got deep into psychology, philosophy, chemistry, biology, history and a few wheelie bins of humanure. Have you ever heard of hydrogen sulphite? Bio char? Mesophilic reactions?

We spent the morning learning loads and laughing even more and ended it feeling inspired and eating choccy bliss balls. Now I believe that everything you take camping is

relevant to being able to poop. May you have enough time in your day to make smooth and satisfying poops that you don't have to push for.

- Sarah



Silt Trap Saga

The other day one of the cows had an itch and scratched a tap on in the knocker paddock and didn't bother to turn it off, emptying 40,000 litres and creating an airlock in the whole system. Josh and I went to flush it out with the creek but after visiting the silt trap found that the line to the tanks was full of silt. As we are both very novice plumbers, we winged it and tried to blow out silt with pipes. After getting a bit dizzy we realised it was going to take some time and decided to use a petrol pump.

After wheelbarrowing the pump all the way up to the silt trap which was a feat in itself (bit squishy at the moment), we hooked it up and blew the silt out of the line. The creek was able to run to the tanks again and we pushed the airlock out with ease. Jack Skermer gave us a lesson on how the silt trap works and we are sure it won't happen again with proper cleaning. We didn't have any water for only 24 hours but we sure are grateful for it now.

- Zac

Animals

Cows

Hi, I'm Mossy cow. you might remember me from last time as the cow with the cute little headband after my horns got cut off. Anyway, I'm also a gymnast, and consider the fences at Mittagundi as my favourite apparatus. This week, I took my friend Noor for a little leaping adventure overnight. We jumped a fence and toured past the showers, the tanks, Ian's and up the Telstra track towards Shannonvale... maybe Tess and Gray will give us a yummy dinner if we show up at theirs, the staff always seem pretty happy after treats from Tess and Gray... Anyway, unfortunately our adventure was cut short but we made sure to take the leisurely route home all across the farm.

Our herd has had a few adventures lately. We've got a new friend Tessie cow, she's going to be a mumma soon, and we've said goodbye to Ruby and Rod.



Farewell Rod

The Skermer family spent lots of time and energy at Mittagundi over the past few months, so like any good pioneering farm would, we thanked them with a cow. A gift that will also take time and energy.

Rod was one of the 'Teenagers' that were bottle fed last year by Tim and Geordie. We will miss her almost as much as we'll miss the Skermers.

-Rowdy

A story about Ruby Cow

Ruby was a special cow. His head was big and his tail askew. Sometimes when he ate his food, he missed his mouth! So he never really grew. One afternoon, we spent our time waiting for him to poo. It turned out he had haemorrhoids and Bloggs, the vet, said there was nothing we could do. So Jack and I loaded up the stock crate. Ruby boarded patiently, unaware of what it meant when we pushed him off the ramp and finally shut the gate. It was time to go to Bairnsdale.

We left so early in the morning, the stove was barely lit. The planning for our bakery crawl was rudely interrupted by the flashing of the fuel light, though the tank wasn't empty. It had filled with rain. Josh met us in Omeo, with the Troopy and a smile. We carried on with our adventure. We were still going to make it to Bairnsdale that day, but no longer had time for the bakery crawl, much to my dismay. The rest of the drive went smoothly. There was lots of singing and laughter, it made the second half of the day go so much faster. Mike Heff greeted us with lunch and tea while Ruby stretched his legs in a big paddock, once again able to roam free.

A few months have passed since then, and Ruby's in the freezer now. Anyone that's ever met him though, will always remember Ruby as Mittagundi's special cow.

-Rowdy

Chickens

The little chicks are now 5 months old and not so little anymore. Their beautifully coloured feathers are flourishing in the chook shed. On a day like today in the chilly but warm winter sun a good dust bathe is the way to go and that's where you'll find many of these feathery friends.

The young prefer to run around and play fight with each other or scratch the bare orchard for insects and worms. However recently it had become too crowded and the roosters getting less playful and on a sad rainy day a week ago we butchered some. The rest are looking forward to more sunny days and kitchen scraps as well as young people to give them cuddles, as terrifying as it is sometimes, they are missed by all in the coop.

-Zac



Horses



On top of our beautiful Round yard being built we also have our 'mane' man Packer back from Equine University where he received top marks in being a very good boy (yes he is). He is now in the process of taking the reins as our new pack horse. He looks very smashing in his leather outfit and shaggy coat! He enjoys getting dressed up twice a day and going for a lovely stroll around the farm to take in the sights, smells, sounds and especially tastes of everything. We all can't wait for programs and hikes to start so this wonderful boy can live up to his name!

-Jaxon

In the Garden



They say there's a new gardener in town, and that she flips compost like a machine, and nets a crop more swiftly than it could be demolished by any bovine intruders. Some even say that she whispers to the worms. Whatever the case, welcome to the team Rowdy!

With the zucchinis all relished and the tomatoes all chutneyed we replanted the poly tunnels with spiralling broccolis, beetroots, greens, parsnips, turnips, carrots and radishes. The veggies were looking so good that during the winter break the cows found their way into the garden to partake in the harvest. Unfortunately we had yet to partake in that particular harvest ourselves, but judging by the amount of beetroots smashed, we'd say the cows had a good time!

We have a freshly repainted scraps bucket courtesy of Mason (the chicken scraps bucket has Arthur's artwork) and plenty of compost bays on the go, ready for spring. Big ol' shout out to Gregg and Andrea for sharing so many seeds and cuttings with us, straight from their garden in Bendigo. We are excited to grow all these cool varieties. We've already popped in the broad beans, perennial leek and perennial spring onion!

After chatting with Hamish Skermer about the goodness of hu-manure, we have another double compost bay in the orchard with the greatly appreciated assistance of Mr Banjo Skermer! Each bay can hold 7 wheelie bins of turd. Now that's Permaculture!

- Josh and Rowdy



Day on the Mitta Mitta with Ian "Arby" Arbuckle

Ah, the Mitta Mitta River. A place of peace and tranquility, of excitement and laughter. A home for the platypus and trout. Peregrine falcons glide through the air under the snow melt from Bogong.

A few weeks ago the staff ventured past our trusty swimming hole under the guidance of the knowledgeable Ian Arbuckle, our very own river guru.



We spent the day perfecting our technique along the Joker Rapid. Not only did Arby share his expertise on rafting he spent a day pottering on the farm as well, fixing a gate at the dairy and mending sleds. He also donated lots of equipment to ensure the quality of our gear matches our newly improved quality paddling
-Rowdy

Helping the Neighbours

In the valley, you help the neighbours out and they help you out and neither expects anything in return. That's just how it goes and you get some pretty good treats too! In the last few months, since not having programs on, we've had time to duck next door here and there. We've been at Tess and Gray's clearing some scrub and helping lay pipe, enjoying fine wine and a suite of delicate treats crafted by Tess!

We spent a few days helping out the Battys with fencing on their property and enjoying the epic views of Bogong and Martina's epic scones. Thanks so much for having us Mick, Martina and Jack! We've also had plenty of time to hang out with Gordy, Bozo and Wally (Gordy's wombat friend), helping them out to build a new machinery shed, as well as getting spontaneous egg cup lathing lessons.

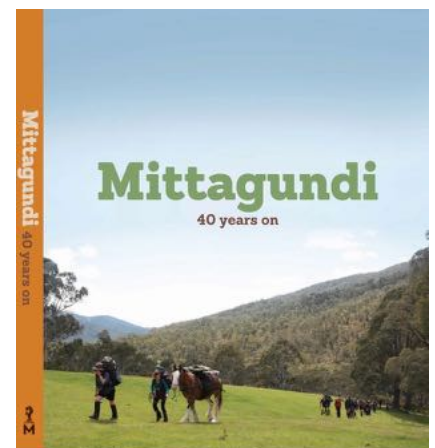
Big thanks to all the neighbours out there in the world who help each other out!
- Josh

Mittagundi 40 Years On

A huge thank you to everyone who has ordered the Mittagundi book. While we can't have young people at the farm, this is a great way to support Mittagundi and lose yourself in the pages of history, stories, photos, recipes and memories.

Profits from the sale 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>



Thank you...

Without the generous contributions we receive from the Mittagundi community, we wouldn't be able 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...

- David Osbourne for donation of boots
- Rubicon for donation of ski boots
- Sarah Guthrie for staff treat package
- Maya for beautiful package
- Mike Heff, Sam Walmsley and Elena for care taking
- Lewis Dowie for help with dining room floor and treats
- Jakob Malmo for donation of new Jersey Milker named Tessie
- Hamish Skermer and Frances for toilet chat
- Peter Byrne for help with hay for our cows and horses
- Walkabout Apiaries for donation of honey
- Coffee Basics for continual support with monthly coffee donations
- Debbie for the hand knitted mittens to keep our mitts warm in the frost
- Faith and Jack Skermer for hanging out with us and putting their heart and soul into Mittagundi
- Mason, Arthur and Banjo for keeping us on our toes, making us laugh and being great friends





Mittagundi is incredibly grateful to Freemasons Foundation Victoria, who have recently supported us with a very generous relief grant. This funding is pivotal for our economic survival at a time when courses have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Freemasons Foundation have been long-term supporters of Mittagundi, providing sponsorships for young people to take part in our 10-day Winter programs, and Omeo Freemasons generously provided us financial support for a new horse.

Mittagundi was built by volunteers, with no Government support and would not exist if it wasn't for the generosity of our team, volunteers and long-term supporters. Almost 20,000 young people have taken part in the Mittagundi experience over the past 40 years.

On behalf of our Council, Directors and staff we sincerely thank the Freemasons Foundation Victoria Board for believing in Mittagundi. This support will ensure Mittagundi's future so we can continue to provide life-changing experiences for young people in years to come.

Mike Heffernan
Chair, Mittagundi Council



Freemasons
Foundation Victoria

Freemasons Foundation Victoria contributes to a stronger and healthier Victoria through thoughtful and purposeful charitable support and community involvement.

Learn more at www.freemasonsfoundation.org

Would you like to help Mittagundi?

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

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

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 or contact us on 0467 678 818

