

MITTAGUNDI

OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

Howdy folks! Just like that a year out of the box is coming to an end! I'm sure a lot of you are breathing a sigh of relief and looking forward to heading bush and catching up with family and friends that we've all missed this year. We here at Mittagundi are no different, with the Christmas break well earned!

It seems like an age ago that we ran our one and only program for the year, and in the meantime we've been busy adapting to new ways of living and working here. Without young people Mittagundi does not function as well as it should, and that's why our programs are so meaningful as it's the young people that really makes the place thrive!

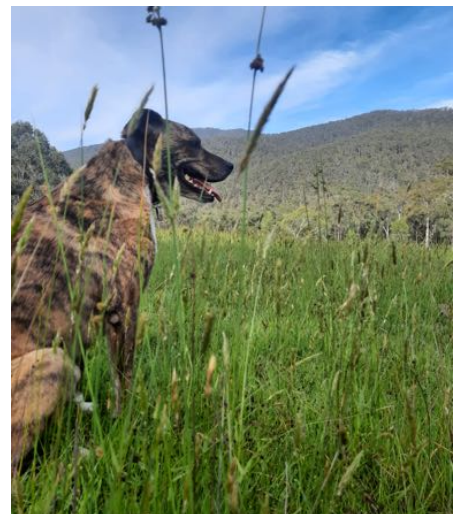
2020 at Mittagundi it really has all been about the staff, the place and our community. For me quite a different focus, ensuring there is a constant plan for what project we will tackle next! The place has received some much needed TLC. There's been solid progress on our gear shed renovation, tank cleaning, garden and orchard bonanzas, building repairs, plumbing and stove maintenance just to name a few! The staff have just blown me away with their consistent effort and dedication to what we set out to achieve each month, week and day. I am truly impressed with how they have all handled the shift of focus up here this year, not just adapting to but thriving in days full of digging, making and fixing things! Yes they are hard workers but what impresses me the most is how our little family has tracked throughout the year. As most of you could really empathise with this year, spending days, weeks and months in the house with the same group of people can be challenging! For our team this has been no different and everyone has leant into the challenges, the generosity and caring nature of the team has been amazing to be a part of. Sarah, Jaxon, Rowdy, Zac and Josh it has been a pleasure spending 2020 with you, through some hard times and some darn great times, I wouldn't have it any other way!

And now we must look to the future! We will be running programs for young people at Mittagundi in 2021! We are following the advice of the VIC government and things look really positive to a return to some COVID normalcy, getting young people back in the mountains is what I am excited about! If you know of someone please point them in our direction!

To finish my report here I thought of a couple of questions that I am assuming you are thinking. 1. How do we run these programs you speak of Hamish? Well with new leaders and that process has just wrapped up, I can't wait to introduce them to you! 2. When will you introduce them to us? At the Mittagundi Open Day of course - save the date folks as we are planning on having our little gathering in the valley on the 16/17th January 2021. It would be great to see your faces up here to thank our outgoing staff and welcome in the new! Please stay connected for updates and more details about this event!

Well that's enough rambling from me for a while, turn the page for all the other happenings from this wonderful place Mittagundi!

- Hamish & Ludog



Farm updates

The Round Yard

As you drive yourself past the depot and up the slope on your way to Mittagundi's Central Business District (aka the carpark) you'll be drawn to gaze fixatedly across the gully t'ward the stable paddock, where a strange cylindrical monument now stands towering triumphantly in the winter mist. Constructed from freshly milled timber onsite, of a mountain gum some 154 years old, and assembled by yours truly, the staff of 2020. With the hugely appreciated and consistent guidance and assistance of our lovely neighbours in a solid and celebrated week of work. In fact, it's hardly deserving of the title 'yard'. More fitting would be 'castle' or 'palace'. Either way, Packer and Arby and many others will be setting their hoof prints round & round & round & round into this soil for years to come. -Josh



Garden (Gardo)

A few months ago Josh and Rowdy got stuck in the garden net for the last time.

They transformed the garden shed into a boardroom, donned their business attire and proposed a solution; *The Garden Structure Thing*, a permanent netted structure for our outside garden patch.

Digging holes for nine 2.5 meter posts coinciding with lots of rain, which became a very muddy experience. Luckily we had ex staff Ruby and Brooke to help us out.

Hand sawing notches in the posts coinciding with snowfall, and therefore it became a pretty magical experience.

With the net strung and the doors swung, the paths were sawdusted and beds prepped, so we began planting.

We created a playground with a variety of different trellises and filled with tomatoes, cucumbers and snow peas, potatoes in tyres as well as cauliflowers, and mint in buckets to ward off slugs.

We named her Annette.- Josh and Rowdy



Working with Gordy

Gordy knows a lot about a lot of things. More than that, he's shared so much of his knowledge, time and skills with us this year. Timber, and milling it. Plumbing (both water and gas). Tractors. Glazing. Woodwork. How to lathe an egg cup (and then like 60 more since it's been a rainy year). Fencing. Making things work, and working things out. Growing vegetables. Deer, and what to do about them.



Cuppa teas. Stories. And so so much more.

Thanks to Gordy for sharing so much of this with us. For a steady pace. For contentment and your motivation. For sharing laughter. For stories. For rainy days in the workshop. Thanks for the Tim Tam slams, sharing bush time and work time and all the rest of it.

-Sarah



Gear shed update

Our little gear shed project is well under way now! We have just completed re-stumping the whole building and putting in the new stumps for the group packing and verandah space! We have been bracing the old building to make it a bit strong and have just completed putting the walls back on. Next up we will be putting in the bush poles that will hold the flooring structure and the roof structure. The bush poles have come off the Mittagundi property and the staff have been busy with Gordy milling up lots of beams and joists! It's full steam ahead so we can put all our gear back inside! Thanks to all our generous donors who are enabling this project to be a success!

-Hamish



Animals

Geordie (Cow)

The staff came back from winter break to find a new pregnant cow in the paddock.

I got very excited on the morning of our Christmas in July dinner party, and even though I don't know much about the birthing of cows (and it was a month early) something convinced me that 'today must be the day'. A Christmas miracle perhaps.

It wasn't, but the anticipation had been built so we started 'calf tipping' to try to guess the birthday of our new calf.

We were still far too eager and it wasn't until the second round when Zac won, and Tessie gave birth to a healthy baby girl named Geordie.

-Rowdy



Hike with Arby horse

Spring had sprung, and Arby (the horse) was getting excited for his first trip on highway 107. It was a full staff event, along with equine experts Stu and Meri. We packed his horsey backpacks and set off for a full day hike up and back track 107.

Upon return we hosed, sponged and fed the sweaty boy, and did the same to ourselves not soon after.

Mr Arby, though sometimes clumsy footed, is proving himself to be a well behaved young man. He takes well to a pack and a hard hike it seems and is showing promise in his training to become the new Mittagundi Pack Horse.

-Josh



Chickens

I looove chickens and I have loved learning so so much about them this year through observing rhythms and patterns of their lives. I have watched a few life cycles end and start, in death and birth and has made me reflect and think. My chicken journey really does sum up my year, I've loved dearly, laughed loads, felt useless, been frustrated, gained confidence and conviction and just had an absolute ball. Our Brood or Flock is currently 16 very unique personalities that I am privileged to say 'goodmornin' to. Thanks Chickens I've learnt a lot from your crazy selves.

- Zac



Josh farewell

There are many things I discovered this year ... sitting cows make great bean bags. The combination of vegemite and peanut butter is revolutionary (thanks Skermers). Young people are not to be trusted in dirt eating competitions (they'll bluff you and leave you the fool). Wattle birds and kookaburras are the best alarm clocks. Fencing is a very mindful activity. Forging is potentially an even more mindful activity. Lighting the fire of your shower makes it more fulfilling. Young people are inspiring and full of surprises. Kayaking down the Mitta is insanely fun, especially with so many awesome friends to rescue you when you flip. Fun is fun, but the fun of programs is next level fun.

Not a day goes by here without some kind of test to the comfort zone, surprise mission or epic curve ball. As a result I've grown in ways I couldn't have expected. I came here with dreadlocks, and am leaving with a mullet.

Which really says it all. The lessons I've learnt here will stay with me forever, just like the sound of that phone ringing in my mind.

I'm thankful for the folks of of the valley, particularly Gordie, Tess and Gray and Stuart and Meri for all the time we've enjoyed together. And to the Skermers, the time we had here was dynamic, hilarious and rich with lessons, and for that I'm grateful!

To David Arnold, thanks for sending me here!! And to Hamish, Stacey, Rowdy, Zac, Sarah, Jaxon and Tim, cheers to all the hard times we pushed through and all the hilarious times we made and to everything you all taught me. -Josh



Rowdy farewell

Upon reflection, a lot of different elements in my life were gently moving me in the direction of coming to live at Mittagundi, I pretty much ignored all of them until finally, in January, my car broke down on a road trip, so I tagged along with a friend to the festival while waiting to have it fixed. I got my car back from the shop and ended the road trip at my new home in the Glen Valley.

I'm so grateful for the clear nights I spent looking up at shooting stars, and the few magical occasions I spent with fat, white snowflakes floating around me.

I feel pretty lucky that in summer the biggest question of the day was whether to swim in the river or the dam, and that as the year progressed, the toast forecast looked better and better.

I have a new appreciation for cows and not much can compare to the feeling of calling "c'mon" and watching them all follow me across the paddock, other than maybe seeing the baby calf for the first time.

Walking through the high plains with young people singing '100 bottles of milk on the wall' from start to finish (a few times) and their enthusiasm for re-building a post and rail fence and inspirational "terminator" quotes are three of the many reasons why our first program of the year was by far the best.

I've learnt a lot of things about myself this year living in a situation so different from any I've been in before. While I hope to keep growing and reflecting, I'm already a slightly different person than when my car broke down.

Where ever I end up, I'll remember the people I fondly called neighbours, while living more than 5kms away, the milk exchanged for cheese making lessons, nothing beats a good pair of work boots and that it's good luck to spill a wheel barrow of concrete.

-Rowdy



Jaxon farewell

And so comes the end of such a big year, one of the most memorable of my life so far. The things I've learnt and the friends I've made will stay with me my whole life. I can't think of a better place to have spent this year. Through all this hardship with lockdowns and leaving to be at home twice through the worst of it, I've kept the farm in my thoughts until I was able to be back.

It's been quiet by Mittagundi standards this year with no young people, but we've fallen into a rhythm of hard work

<http://www.mittagundi.org.au/>



and good times, improving and maintaining this unique and amazing place while still leaving time to stoke the forge and practice my metal work and go on adventures on the high plains every few weekends.

This time last year I had no idea this place existed and now I can't imagine not being part of the wonderful community that supports us. I love this valley, it feels like home now and I'm sure to return as often as I can for many years to come.

Thanks you to all of the staff, the neighbours, the council and the rest of the community for making this place so special and beautiful.

Get into the Mountains! - Jaxon

Zac farewell

It's been a pretty crazy year for humans everywhere and I can't imagine what people are feeling and the challenges people are facing at the moment. This is my goodbye to Mittagundi, a place I am so grateful to have spent all of 12 months living, learning and growing at. This feels more like a message to the community. Which I want to be about something I've learnt, because I think learning and growing is just about the reason we're here, us humans. Though I don't know this wider community very well, I do know the vastness however; young people current and former, supporters, ex staff and my friends and family. These are some things I'm leaving with and I share this for you; live honestly. Share. Share food, grow food. Be aware of the space and place around you not just humans. Laugh and be silly, and take things seriously sometimes, but not too seriously. Action and conviction goes along way but ask for help when you can't do it alone or don't know how. Appreciate. Share gratitude for people. Tell them that. Make things.

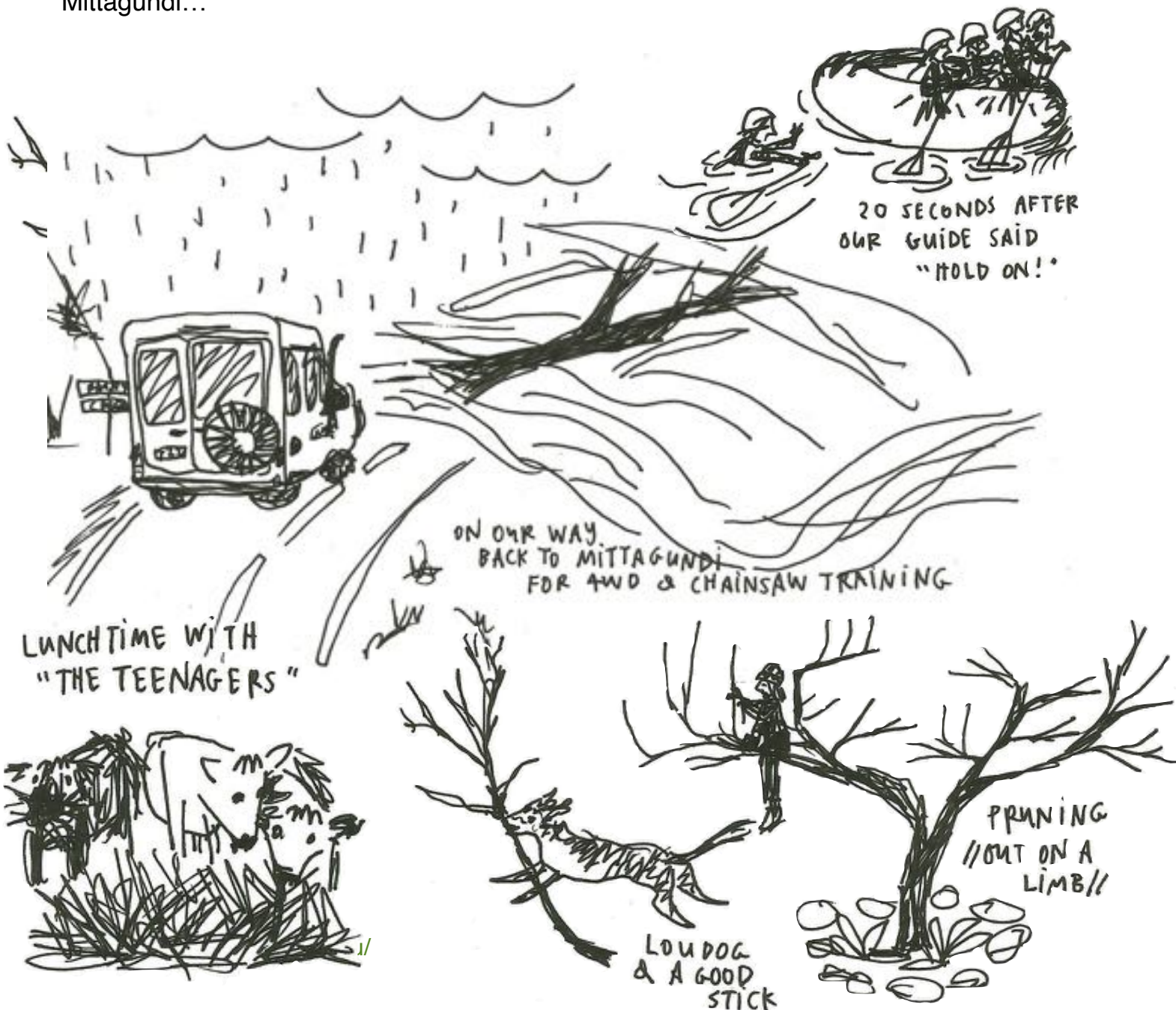
Also I want to acknowledge the land I have lived on this year which I believe is Jaitmatang country. I love this Valley and am so grateful to have lived here.

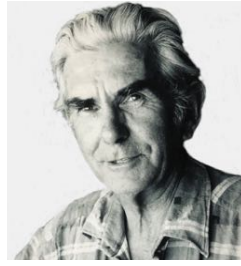
Thank you Sarah, Josh, Rowdy, Jaxon and Hamo bloody legends. Also Tim, Stacey, the Skermers and Gordy. These are the humans I have spent most of my year surrounded by and am so grateful for the laughs and tears and the growth that they helped catalyse. Big Love Zac.



Sarah farewell

You get a lot of advice when you start working at Mittagundi. (Tuck your thermals in like this! Sleep with a Nalgene full of hot water in winter! Swim in the river every month! The plumbing makes sense if you just think about where the water would be going! I don't know how to fix the fridge so if you can't start it just call Gordy!) etc. (Look there's potential I might always do the alternating tuck thermal method), but here's some things I've held close and will hopefully carry onwards have been: to soak it all in, be fully there, be a sponge for all that hard stuff and good stuff and dive into it; and, to pay attention and be comforted by the seasons, the changes, the redness in the trees, the different birds, the movement of the stars. Normally I'd write to process things but this year it's been drawing, so I thought it's only fitting to share some drawings in reflection of a year of my outdoor education at Mittagundi...





VALE LAURIE RICHARDS

Mittagundi lost one of its earliest local mates a few weeks back when Laurie Richards from Swift's Creek quietly passed away in the Omeo Hospital at the age of 94.

Back in the early 1980's, Mittagundi was a fairly unlikely looking project, to put it mildly. A motley collection of dead Tramways Buses in a small clearing amongst a sea of blackberries, on a remote block of land that we were still a hell of a long way from paying off. Lots of big plans but virtually no money in the bank, and a determination to get along without any government grants. It must have looked to many to be an organisation with very little hope of survival at all. Certainly not the sort of place you'd want owing you money.

But Laurie didn't look at things that way. He was a typical bush toiler who knew exactly what it was like to be up against it. An independent soul with a real flair for creative bush mechanics, he had the knack for turning all sorts of secondhand junk into practical, reliable machinery. He'd built several rock-crushing plants out of all sorts of bits & pieces, and by 1982, he'd become the district's unofficial expert at building just about anything out of concrete, especially in difficult, isolated locations. It was looking like a very long, hot summer coming on, and our little creek was quickly drying up. We were going to need our concrete water tanks sooner than we'd planned, and well before we'd saved up enough money to pay for them.

Cec suggested Laurie was just the man for the job, and it was soon organised for him to come out to have a look. He surveyed the scene and announced that he thought he could get it done by Christmas.

"Any chance of us paying by instalments Laurie?" I asked nervously.

"No worries at all," he replied. "You all look honest enough, and you can't live without water!"

And so the race was on to get the tanks in before the creek dried up completely.

I have to admit though, Laurie's arrival the next week did have me a bit worried about what I'd taken on. We could hear his flotilla of ancient vehicles grinding away long before they'd even reached the bottom gate. Laurie seemed to own as many ancient Austin trucks as we did ancient buses. And only about as many number-plates too! Everything was loaded to the hilt, and there were old motors, tools, scales and elevators strapped on everywhere, along with a huge collection of heavy bits of formwork. There was even an exhausted dog who Laurie told the kids had run all the way from Omeo!

But I needn't have worried at all. Every single part of the operation worked perfectly, the formwork all went together with military precision, and a vast amount of concrete was mixed and poured without one single problem. The formwork came off a week or so later, and we busied ourselves making the tops out of secondhand sheet iron whilst we waited anxiously for the day the rapidly dwindling creek could be diverted into the new tanks. That turned out to be December 24th, and Laurie rang on Christmas Day to say he'd be out to fit the gate valves after lunch. I was agonising over how much extra this was all going to cost on Christmas Day, but I should have known Laurie better by then.

"There'll be no extra charge for that," he told me. "And the gate valves are a Christmas present from us. We support what you're doing out here with the kids, and I like to see people having a go."

The tanks were filled by the time the creek dried up, and 40 years later, they're still up there quietly servicing Mittagundi. A fitting tribute to a remarkable bush improviser, and one of our very first local friends, who took us on when we were nothing and really needed help. Thank you Laurie, from us all.

PS: Laurie's son, Steve, recently told me that the dog had actually only run from the bottom gate!

Ian Stapleton.

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...

Thank you to everyone who participated in, and donated to, the recent Mittagundi Move-athon. We raised enough money to sponsor 4 young people to experience Mittagundi in 2021!

- Many Happy Larries
- Marjory Watts for financial donation
- Allen Quirk for gravel cartage donation
- Michael Crane and Cranes Quarries for gravel donation
- Brian Beasley for financial donation
- Andrew Bett for injections for our Horse Arby
- St Philips College Adventure Captain Patsy for organising a Move-athon collection
- Ross Johnston
- Ruth Gibson
- S Campbell
- Albert Sattler
- Sarah Taconelli
- Janet Morley
- Dane Asplet
- Mark Hortle
- Andrew Lang
- Annie Chapman
- Charles Henry
- Dubsky Lang Foundation
- Foundation for Outdoor Education in Victoria
- Freemasons Foundation Victoria Ltd
- Greg Marks
- Jamie Serle
- Johan Top
- LION Capital
- Lou Bull
- Rod Whyte
- Roger Moore
- Sue-Jane Leckie
- The Johnstone Family Foundation
- The Wetherall Family Foundation
- The Yulgilbar Foundation



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

- Splitter handles
- Work gloves
- Kitchen Whisks
- Woodwork Mallets
- Quick grip Clamps
- Laser light roofing sheets for gear shed extension

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 Sainsbury
 620 803653 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