

# MITTAGUNDI

## OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

The end of 2021 has seen us back running ten day programs. It has been a busy few months with fantastic groups of young people up at Mittagundi. We've been building post and rail fences, re-mudding the directors cabins, and of course heaps of work in the vege garden. The hikes have been pretty awesome too, except for a lot of wet weather, it seems it'll be sunny all week on the farm and then pour with rain for the hike out each week! The creeks are flowing and track 107 is wet indeed.

The staff of 2021, what a bunch of legends. We have experienced so much together. There has been departures and tears and successful programs and joy. Laura, Dane, Billie and Ollie have stuck it out throughout 2021, in challenging circumstances. With 2021 containing much uncertainty due to COVID, they remained focused on being here for Mittagundi, keeping the place ready for the next group of young people and putting in so much effort to ensure the place continues to thrive into the future.

The end of my time as Director is fast approaching and to be honest I am both excited for the future and sad to be leaving such a wonderful place. When I first visited Mittagundi when I was at uni, I knew I wanted to come and spend my time living and working here. I came for the holistic nature of the job, the variety in each day never gets old. From bush building, rafting the Mitta Mitta with young people and ending the day on the phone with a new school client. I have loved the challenge of switching between responsibilities. Most of all I have loved being able to share the experience with such great people. The staff of Mittagundi are the life blood of the organisation, they are the ones doing the heavy lifting day in day out. They bring enthusiasm and maintain the long-standing culture of the place. This coupled with all the young people who have the opportunity to experience Mittagundi is what makes this place so special, the interaction between all the people who value purposeful physical work, meaningful connections with others and spending time on the farm and in the bush.

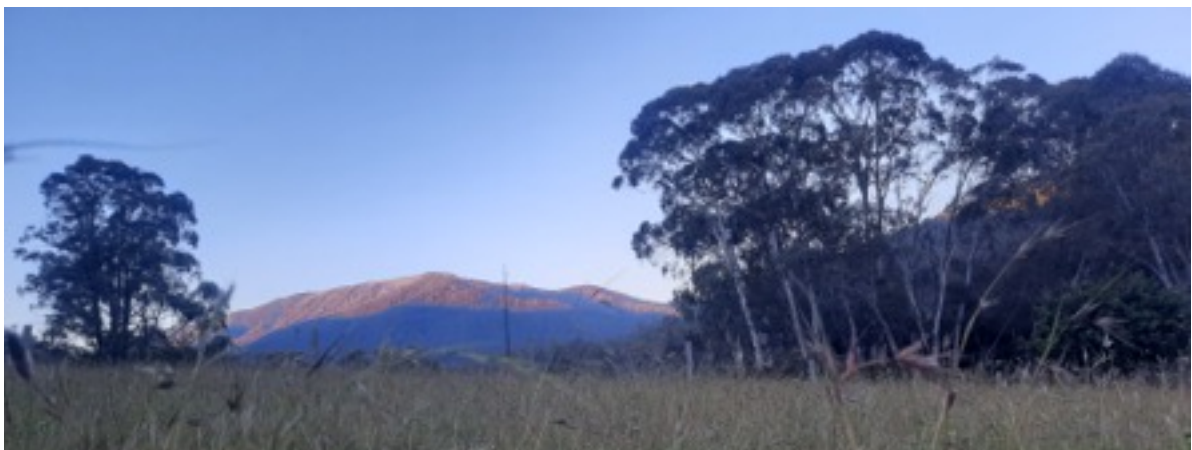
Personally I'd like to thank a few folk for their support throughout my time here. At times this job can be incredibly challenging, and just when you think you are on top of things, new challenges arise. Lewis Dowie, Kate Gilson and my family have always been there on the end of the phone to work through things with, listening when I needed a rant, and always believing in me through the hard times. So thank you - I really couldn't be where I am today without you. Alongside all of the staff that I have worked with here I'd like to make a special mention of Shae Gillmartin and Belinda Black. Shae has been Mittagundi's staff support for the past 4+ years and I couldn't have done my job without Shae. Shae's work involves supporting the staff in any way they need with their life at Mittagundi, we would work together to support staff in their needs and for me to have Shae's wisdom, skills and calm nature enabled me to always feel like I was not alone in supporting our staff

in the good times and the hard. Belinda is Mittagundi's Bookings/Bookkeeper & Communication manager. We work closely to facilitate young people booking onto programs and ending up in the troopies. Belinda is the communication queen and throughout the past 2 years with COVID it has been a blessing that I can call her up to brainstorm ways we can get programs happening or this or that! We have agonized over program cancellations and celebrated when programs actually went ahead. It's always been super easy to work through problems together and I really couldn't have done my job without Belinda's attention to detail and hard work.

The future at Mittagundi is bright with lots of young people super keen to get onto programs, new schools booking in for winter programs, and continued support from generous philanthropic organisations. But we are facing challenging times, currently there are no Directors to take over from me and we are still looking for more program leaders. So please spread the word, reach out to your networks so that we can keep the Mittagundi magic alive.

I hope to see you awesome people at future Mittagundi events.

### **Hamish & Ludog**



# Spring/Summer Program Update

As November found its way to the farm so did the return of our programs! The long COVID induced lockdown had met its end and we were more than ready to have young people and the Mittagundi community grace us with their presence again. Mixed 486 were the first of the bunch, a crew of fun, hard working and friendly people who put a heap of energy into our beloved garden and orchard and cooked up a storm in the kitchen. This program saw the best pirating one has seen on the mighty Mitta Mitta- no poor sod was left dry on this day.

Following this wholesome program was mixed crew 487, who began putting the new post and rail fence into the ground, packed down Mac's hut after winter and contributed to our poo-composting system (literally and energetically). This bunch held some people with amazing musical talent and saw dinner performances that told an unfolding story over multiple nights. Crossing Wildhorse Creek was quite the debacle after some heavy rains though we all made it into camp safe and sound.

Mixed 488 was another great program with eager young people that got stuck into projects like re-mudding the director's cabin, finishing the post and rail fence, and participating in the never-ending weeding of the garden. This crew pushed through their challenges and showed each other encouragement and support as they grew together as a new group of friends.

It's been great having programs back, getting to be a part of the lives of young people who can learn, reflect, be present in their environment and push the ideas of what they can achieve here. I'm currently writing this during our follow up program- Woodchop! We're a few days in and the woodshed is almost full again thanks to our return young people/ old children/ emerging adults/ cocooned butterflies who have been stacking, splitting, and making Dane's woodshed dreams a reality. It's a pleasure spending time putting energy into the future of Mittagundi with people who really care about the place and the people. Every day has been a Dave Ferrett and the river swims have been a much needed escape from the heat.

What a productive and busy couple of months it has been! Thanks young people who have contributed to Mittagundi and thanks also to all the volunteers who have helped us run programs, we couldn't have done it without you. **Laura**



# Farewells



It's been a year of many things. Dam swims, river dips, celebrating vegetables, getting the sillies, being consumed by the delirious, giving abundantly. I've had the privilege of being a part of the lives of lots of young people, who have probably taught me as much as I've taught them! So many varied and wonderful people have moved through my life this year. Thinking about Mittagundi- It's the people that make it what it is. I have lots of thanks to give to those who I've spent pieces or all of this year with. Thanks for caring, for aiming to understand, for all the laughs and for being supportive. Thanks also for the lessons and the challenges that have helped me grow.

I feel ready to go, but there are a lot of things I will miss. I've loved waking up every morning nestled in the valley among the mountains, hearing the birds, the rustling of the trees, being woken up by the sun and the kookaburras, rain pattering on the tin roofs. I've loved seeing the spring flowers emerge on the high plains, watching the snow fall and the river rise, sharing meals around a fire, and talking to the animals that greet me with various noises. What a great thing it is to be around people who are present in their surroundings. Tending to the garden has been a joy- despite never being able to keep up with what it needs. These mountains have become a home, a home for sharing and a home to pass on to others. What a special place to be a part of.

This year has not gone without it's fair share of hardships. I don't think anyone can really know what their time at Mittagundi is going to look like until they experience it. I'm glad that in looking back, appreciation is sitting at the top for me. I'll miss my Mitta family.

For now it's goodbye, but I know I'll be back for more Captain Falafel moments in the future. Thanks for having me Mittagundi.

With love, broccoli, and dirt. - **Laura**



It's hard to comprehend what this year has meant to me, but perhaps that it is fitting for running our programs with half the usual leaders. I have nothing but gratitude for the remaining few that have made this last run of programs so rewarding.

I look back to the start of the year in communication training and the type 3's made the motto 'get shit done' and I think we've done that this year finishing the gear shed, making the Harry's paddock and a million other Mittagundi things. I feel proud of all the things we've done this year as a team and personally.

I've learnt a thousand things this year from young people, Co-workers, neighbours and the mitta community and a lot of it I don't think I'll realise until long after Mittagundi. It would be remiss of me not to thank everyone that I've crossed paths with this year for making this year what it has been.

As I'm writing this young people are crying because it's their last program here, and I think that's just a little example of the power that Mittagundi has, to be a positive influence on every person that comes through. Im incredibly lucky to be able to spend my year here and be part of it.

Live, Laugh, Learn, Love - **Oliver**



Writing this article is becoming a nice way to reflect upon the year that's been. Mittagundi, like so many before me would understand, is a place that allows you to strip back your lifestyle and savour fleeting moments. The ability for a place to benefit all that step foot over the boundary (both young and old) and from any background, over a long period of time shows how special and worthy of energy it is.

Not only has my year at Mittagundi given me confidence, it has also allowed me to appreciate the place and giving time to something I don't directly benefit from. However in hindsight I have achieved so much personally without seeking it. So I'd like to thank all before me. Also those ahead of me for continuing to sustain the magic of Mittagundi and putting in the effort required to grow and adapt the farm. I'd like to thank everyone throughout the year who gave their time with chats, lessons, cups of tea, laughs, and energy. I hope to return the favour in the future.

All the best, - **Dane**



I was unsure what I wanted to say to encapsulate the year that was 2021 at Mittagundi for me, so I've put off this piece in hope that if I 'sleep on it' enough, I can write something that paints a picture of the Mittagundi that I grew up with. However, in truth, I've found that right now I can only write about the Mittagundi that has grown me in the past year. It's no secret that a year at Mittagundi has been for many in the past, and was for me, one of the most challenging years filled with change, beauty, and exploration of oneself. I have been pushed to my absolute limits this year, and am currently writing this reflection from my bedroom in Melbourne, where I've been taking time off for my health and wellbeing.

I have loved Mittagundi for many reasons since I was 14. The remoteness, simplicity, fresh mornings, sunlit sessions in the kitchen, its grubbiness, etc. These are all things I was ready to embrace for 2021, and the things I was not ready for have been my biggest lessons. This year has been so beautifully raw and tumbling in its movements, and unearthed many ways to love Mittagundi that I was neither expecting, nor truly prepared for. I am grateful to have been in this position to learn so much about this place and its complexities of existence and being, and those of myself. **Billie**

# Animals

## Cows

The year is wrapping up with no less excitement as the start of the year in a cows world. The grass in the knocker paddock is knee high and Rowdy calf (who is now looking like a tiger) is quickly lost while sleeping in the glorious sun. Monica cow is eating her fair share of pellets as we enjoy her deliciously creamy milk. She's even at the stage of getting to a jog when hearing my call. I'd like to think it's because of her hearing my voice but I have a sneaky suspicion that it's because she knows there's pellets waiting.

We also welcomed back Tessie and Jacob to the herd, hopefully with calf. I'd like to thank The Battys for letting us send our cows to his bulls and also putting in the hard work to move them in the yard and help push them back to Mittagundi. It was such a nice moment watching Tessie and Jacob recognise the Mitta driveway and quickly dash up and be reunited with Mon, Rowdy and Geordie. Our wood chop crew were crucial in getting them all back together and I'd like to thank them for being patient with Jacob wanting to eat at any chance she got and getting them back safely to the farm.

With the year coming to an end I will miss the meditative state of milking in all types of weather and times. It has encouraged me to pursue the opportunity to gain my own milking cow and build a new bond with an awesomely intelligent creature. **Dane**

## Chooks



It's time to say farewell to the most charismatic, weird and stupid animals at Mittagundi.

The chickens have ended this year boldly ranging where no chook has ranged before. Sightings of these chooks at the directors hut and beyond are becoming common when let out. These free range chooks are doing a great job turning our compost for the garden as well as producing bulk eggs, at one stage we had over 100 eggs in the pantry!

It's been great hanging out with these feathered friends, good luck to the 2022 crew keeping them out of the kitchen. **Oliver**



# Horses



With the year coming to an end, and thus so is my time with the horses. This year has been marked with great progress on the horse front. Arby has transformed this year into a capable and prolific pack horse. He no longer has any fear of Wild Horse Creek or Steep Inclines and has really come into his own.

Winnie started slow this year, but is quickly coming up to speed to be ready for programs. With a slightly adjusted pack saddle set up to compensate for his hatred of the cropper, Winnie is truly on his way to carrying packs for Mittagundi.

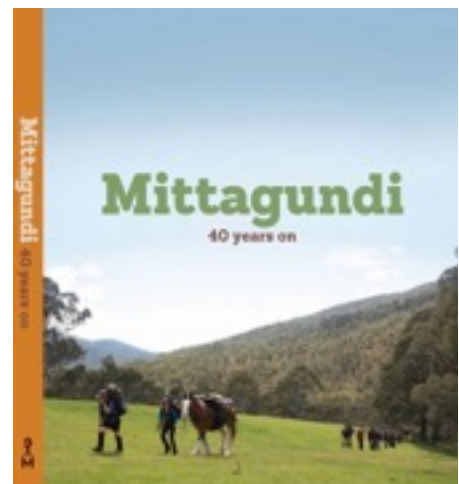
With so much progress being made I would like to thank Stewart and Meredith for countless day training both the horses, and the staff and giving so much time to us. I would also like to thank Indi for co-parenting the horses and giving so much time to the Big Dogs. Finally I would like to thank Gary for donating Winnie. **Oliver**

# Mittagundi Book

Mittagundi: 40 Years On celebrates the first 40 years of Mittagundi: what it stands for, how it was built by and for young people and their shared experiences that are unique to this beautiful part of the Glen Valley.

This book captures the essence and spirit of Mittagundi. It will bring back wonderful memories, lots of laughs, a few 'Mittagundi' moments and, above all, a sense of pride and belonging.

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.



Purchase your copy today: [www.mittagundi.org.au/mittagundi-book](http://www.mittagundi.org.au/mittagundi-book)

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

# 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:

The Happy Larry's  
One Planet  
Ross Gibson

Eirene Lucas Foundation  
Johnstone Family Foundation

# Come and work at Mittagundi!

We are looking for a Director/s for 2022, and more program leaders to complete our awesome staff team.



## Mittagundi Director/s

The Director's role is immensely challenging and rewarding. As the Director(s) you will be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day management of Mittagundi and executing the strategic plan set down by the Mittagundi Council. Your primary focus will be to run successful and rewarding programs for young people.

To do this you will be required to draw on a large range of skills including outdoor education, knowledge of the bush, educating others about environmental sustainability, practical farming skills and fund raising to support our small successful non-profit organisation.

## Program Leaders 2022

We are looking for applicants that have a passion for working with young people in an outdoor education and working farm environment. The position requires the leader to lead young people in outdoor adventure activities (cross country skiing, snow camping, hiking, white water rafting and abseiling), logistics activities in support of these activities, and farm-based projects (such as feeding animals and gardening).



See our website for more details on both roles [www.mittagundi.org.au/jobs](http://www.mittagundi.org.au/jobs)

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

## 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
- quality kitchen whisks
- fencing supplies
- safety glasses
- drill bit set
- garden tap fittings & timers

### 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

*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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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