

MITTAGUNDI

OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

WINTER 2023



CONTENTS

Directors Report.....	
Staff Highlights.....	
Winter Programs.....	
On the Farm.....	
Winter Christmas Ball.....	
Melbourne City Hop.....	
Council Chair Report.....	
2025 Directorship Expressions of Interest.....	
Festival 2024, Save the Date!	
Upcoming Program Dates.....	
Communications at Mittagundi	
Thankyous.....	
Resources We'd Love.....	
How to Get Involved.....	

DIRECTORS REPORT

I can't believe it! We're post winter and the team is already in shorts and t-shirts soaking up as much sun and warmth as possible as we enjoy the warmer and longer days.

Thankfully winter was very manageable this year. As a team, we spent a lot of time preparing ourselves, each other, and the farm for winter. We listened to as many winter stories as possible with the intention of being as prepared as we could for the hardships that winter brings. To deal with the cold, we lit fires almost every day that we were in our rooms. Creating warm rooms to be in meant we could delay and allow our feet and skin to breathe! We'd light each other's fires if someone wasn't able to light their own and we always made sure the shower was lit. We'd also try and shower during daylight which was more pleasant. Matthew strung fairy lights in the shower to make showering late at night feel luxurious because let's be honest, daytime showers aren't the normal. We layered up well and were blessed with a winter of good weather.



We only had a handful of trips that were wet, but the snow coverage/ snow season is another story. We made the most of the snow situation and were grateful to have experienced both MacNamara's hut for the first few programs and then Fitzgerald's hut for the remainder of the winter season. So many great antics were had. A few highlights of ours were:

- having friends and family visit
- having volunteers who wanted to join in and be a part of Mittagundi/ return to Mittagundi
- the mid-winter ball with the locals
- finding the sunniest spots to be in
- driving the convoy back and forth and up and down
- camping in the snow
- cross country skiing with a range of young people and skills (creating bellyful laughter and causing one to fall over from laughing so much)
- the dress ups and post course winter swims (everyone except Dani)
- skiing under skies full of stars with great leaders!

Winter 2023 was fun, tame, mostly sustainable and one for the memory books.



P.S. For any young people reading this for an update on the final winter swim and the execution of Dani's highly secret plan, this is what happened:

Dani gave in and committed to ONE swim for the whole of winter which would be the final swim. Her plan was to be wearing dress up's as per normal, like everyone in the team but underneath the dress ups, she wore thermals and a wetsuit. She managed to get to the point where she was about to jump into the river before anyone noticed her in a wetsuit. Her plan was a success, she followed through on her commitment to swim but she didn't freeze in the process. Needless to say, the leaders were not impressed.

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



All 5 Leaders and both Directors on the Winter Follow Up ski trip.



Bluebird ski days together.



Final night silly dress ups.



Whole team midnight swim on the last night of winter.



Singing and playing guitar together.



Quality time with Vinnie.



Ski days and beautiful weather at Fitzy's Hut.



Farm days, especially fencing and plumbing.

WINTER PROGRAMS

Winter Follow Up

Winter Follow Up was a perfect start to the season! We were excited to see familiar faces from our 10 Day programs in autumn, as well as Young People from previous years. Everyone brought such enthusiasm and love for Mittagundi with them, which made it a thoroughly enjoyable program. Our highlights were the igloo that some Young People worked on until dark, playing on the slopes at Buckety Plain, and our massive snowball fight. The Young People built a fort for themselves, and a fort for the leaders and challenged us to a duel...safe to say we did not win. Though we did have a lot of fun. A big thank you to all the incredible Young People on this program, who are the bright future of Mittagundi.



Winter Open

The Young People on this program got straight into the Mittagundi spirit on day one. They really understood its purpose and atmosphere, playing music and games and having fun being productive around the farm. We finished the depot paddock fences, with lots of people learning to tie and strain wire. We also made more beehives of wood, and despite the rainy weather our spirits were high. We were lucky to have a fabulous volunteer, James, all the way from New Zealand, who brought many lame jokes and deep inquisitive thoughts. Highlights of this course were playing charades at Macs Hut and building a fortress at Buckety Plain.

Oberon College

We had a fantastic time with the students from Oberon College, who had all specifically applied within the school to come to Mittagundi. Their main goal for the program was to develop their leadership skills, and we could really see this happening as everyone took initiative to do tasks and help the group. The morale on the snow was excellent, as we made the most of every inch of snow on the track, and they created a designated 'pick up crew' of confident skiers who would help anyone who fell over. On the farm we did lots of muddy fencing and spent a lot of time with the animals.



St Philips College

Our St Phillips program this year was fantastic. We took both groups to Fitzzy's Hut, the first time Fitzzy's has been used in winter for a long time. One group returned early due to weather conditions but were in very high spirits. On the farm the Young People spent a lot of time in the joinery working with Dan (ex-staff) on a new hay feeding stand and repairing tools, kettles etc. There was also a lot of pruning of the orchard, and starting the massive task of clearing the Wills fence line. We are very thankful to the incredible St Phillips staff, some new to Mittagundi and others on their third or fourth program, for their enthusiasm and support, and their understanding of the Mittagundi culture.



Hamilton Alexandra College

Hamilton boys brought an incredible amount of energy to the farm, from singing during washup to playing footy, hide and seek and other games during their spare time. We loved seeing them feel at home here and making the most of our open grassy spaces. On the farm we did a lot more pruning in the orchard and worked on the Wills fence again. The group also loved kitchen sessions. Both groups had a great time at Fitzzy's Hut and a highlight was the snowball fight on the walk down. A big thank you to Adam (ex-staff) for volunteering and cooking some delicious creations in the kitchen.

The Hamilton Girls program was a testament to the purpose of Mittagundi. Many Young People were feeling homesick at the beginning, even asking to go home, but with help from the Leaders they were able to change their mindset as a group. By the time we got to the snow they were all so happy to be there, skiing for two full days around Fitzzy's Hut and over to Kelly's Hut and nearby hills. At the hut, there was always singing or a game of mafia, and our pre-dinner Thankyous showed how proud they were that they had stayed and made the most of the opportunity.



Swifts Creek & Homeschool

This program was made up of 13 homeschool Young People, and 4 students and a staff member from Swifts Creek. It was wonderful to have such local Young People engaged with Mittagundi, and also to have an open-style winter program in which most of the Young People did not already know each other. They quickly formed bonds and had a great time on the farm, fencing, forging and playing music and games in their spare time. We loved hearing the guitar and the violin duets, bringing Mittagundi to life. The group also went to Fitzzy's Hut to make the most of the end of the season, managing to set their tents up on snow, and play on the nearby hills.



ON THE FARM

Cows

We have been very excited to have a new milking cow, Dory, who is on loan to us from Fox Dairies. We get 10 litres of milk from her every day and have been making our own yoghurt and ricotta for our breakfasts and pizzas. She is a gorgeous black Friesian and is very well mannered to milk. We have established a relationship with Fox Dairies who will continue to loan us milking cows on a six-month rotation!

The other seven cows are happily enjoying winter, looking happy and fluffy with their winter coats.



Chooks

Our chickens have felt the early spring coming and have been laying very well. Despite a brief run-in with a dog, we still have our three roasters, Joey, Barney, and Bondey (guess who their TV namesakes are...). We have had some broody chickens and are encouraging them to stay on their eggs in the hope of having some spring chicks!

Pigs

Our current pigs are Bae and three of her piglets, Patty, Raphy and Lil Tull. The other four piglets were given away to supporters in July. Of the remaining three, one will be a gift to the neighbours and two will be put on the spit at our January Festival! Bae is being taken to the abattoir this week to provide us with meat for our spring and summer programs.



Plumbing

Jack has taken on the task of Mittagundi plumbing for the year and has already proven himself fit for the job. The main plumbing project so far has been to put a water trough into our new depot paddock. This has been a great farm job as it involves digging to find the existing pipe and then digging to lay the new pipe. The Young People have absolutely loved 'trenching' all throughout winter. The good news is...we found the pipe!

Horses

We took Arby and Winnie on our spring hike training last week, both fully saddled and carrying gear! As the ground dries out, we have been able to start round yarding again, and are working on training out old bad habits, and re-establishing our relationship with them. Aside from that, the horses have been living a rather peaceful life this winter, hanging out in the Wills paddock. We have been feeding Arby hay to maintain his condition ready for summer hikes and have kept Winnie on a Wills diet in order to trim him down.



Garden

The garden has been receiving a lot of care recently, involving hours of weeding, composting, and shovelling of cow poo. All the beds are fed, turned, and resting, ready for our upcoming Garden Party program! We have also got a lot of winter seedlings coming through and we have loved having kale chips with our lunches. We are so excited to plant and harvest and to see the garden flourish as we head into spring!



Fences

In July, we completed the depot paddock, involving a new gate and section of fencing around the carport. This means that we have another paddock for our horses to be in, which will help with livestock rotation.

We have also undertaken the major project of rebuilding the downhill fence of the Wills Paddock, involving Young People clearing scrub, digging post holes, and learning to attach wire to star pickets.

Another fencing task was to fix a hole in the fence at Harry's house, which has successfully stopped the cows from getting in.

CHRISTMAS BALL!

In July we hosted a Christmas in July Midwinter Ball! We invited all the locals of the Glen Valley, Glen Wills and Shannonvale, and it was fantastic to meet people who we had only heard the names of, and to see new and old connections between locals. We had a full formal roast dinner of Mittagundi chicken and pork, followed by dessert made by Carrie. We decorated the dining room with tinsel and lights, a Christmas tree, and a formal dinner table. The dress code was black tie and all staff wore ball gowns or full suits. We were very proud to welcome friends and neighbours into our home for a lovely social evening. A big thank you to Carrie for all the help, decorations, food and enthusiasm.



CITY HOP!

The annual City Hop was held at the Coburg Town Hall in Melbourne. We would like to thank everyone who came along for supporting the organisations and for being part of a great night. A delicious dinner selection was catered for by the Brady family, and the Wollangarra Mittagundi Pop Up Bush Band led us all in some bush dances! Thank you to all the volunteers who helped to run the merchandise stall, the door, and the bar, as well as everyone who helped pack up at the end of the evening. It was lovely to see so many current and ex Young People getting together to share memories and say hi to their Leaders, many of whom had brought their friends and parents along.



COUNCIL CHAIR REPORT

Hello all, I hope you have had an enjoyable warm winter. Now spring is here and where I am we have had floods and fires. It makes me really wonder what we are in for this summer.

Despite the lack of snow this winter, the Mittagundi team have run a full season of successful winter courses, giving the opportunity for approximately 170 Young People to experience Mittagundi. Regardless of the snow conditions, the ongoing incredible efforts of the staff continuously remind me of the importance and value of Mittagundi for Young People.

The council have also been working hard behind the scenes to ensure the continued success of Mittagundi. I am very excited to let you know that we have a number of new council members who are already passionately contributing to several ongoing projects the council is working on. I would like to welcome to the council Aly Nichol, David Jones, Anthony Breach, Anna Winneke and Abi Adams. Your enthusiasm and passion is appreciated and I want to say thanks for your willingness to become a Mittagundi council member. We are still seeking someone with current Outdoor Ed experience and a Human Resources specialist, and just yesterday I spoke with two interested people that hopefully will be willing to fill these roles.

I truly appreciate the ongoing commitment, effort and dedication made by all the Mittagundi council. Thank you so much for your hard work, you are amazing, and your efforts often go unrecognised.

You will see elsewhere in this newsletter an expression of interest for the 2025 Director(s) position. In conjunction with Michael and Dani, the council are now seeking Directors to commence in 2025. If you or anyone you now is interested please contact Dani, Michael or myself any time to chat about this incredibly rewarding opportunity.

Finally, I would like to personally thank, and on behalf of the council, Dani, Michael, Lil, Tully, Jack, Raph, Matthew, and the many volunteers for all your hard work to make winter such a success.

As always, I'm up for a chat if ever you want to talk about Mittagundi. Hope you have a great spring.

Mike Heff
Mittagundi Council Chair



2025 DIRECTORSHIP

Mittagundi is looking for expressions of interest for the next directorship which will start in 2025.

Michael and Dani (our current Directors) are happily committing to their two years here at Mittagundi and one of their visions is setting the groundwork for the next Directors. This leads us to putting out this expression of interest so we can work on securing the next directorship to hand over to in 2025.

Please contact Mike Heff via chair@mittagundi.org.au with your expression of interest.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Listed below are the remaining programs for 2023 and January 2024, please refer to the website for more information. **Spaces may become available on programs currently listed as 'Sold Out', please keep checking the website to stay informed.**

- Enterprise (Follow Up) – 6-10th November 2023
- Girls 10-Day Program – 21st-30th November 2023
- Boys 10-Day Program – 8-17th December 2023
- Woodchop (Follow Up) – 18th-22nd December 2023
- Mixed 10-Day Program – 3rd-12th January 2024
- Mixed 10-Day Program – 16-25th January 2024

How to Book

- 1) Check the website to stay informed when spaces become available, and when further 2024 program dates are released.
- 2) Book and pay online.
- 3) Or email info@mittagundi.org.au if no spaces available.
- 4) You will receive a phone call 1-2 weeks prior to your program to answer any questions.

To contact us regarding an upcoming program, please call the Mittagundi Office on 03 5159 7223 and leave a voicemail with your name and number. This landline is monitored part-time and often not in business hours. Please leave a voicemail so we can get back to you ASAP. Or better yet email info@mittagundi.org.au.



Communications @ Mittagundi

Hello Mittagundi family, friends, and supporters. Thank you so much for your ongoing support and the dedication, hard work and love you give to Mittagundi.

Mittagundi often goes through rocky patches where there seems to be a misunderstanding between Mittagundi and the modern world of technology and communication. For those of you who know Mittagundi well, thank you for your patience and understanding when it comes to our communications.

For those who are relatively new or new to Mittagundi, we'd love to take a moment to share our experiences with you regarding communications. A typical team on the ground here at Mittagundi is made up of volunteers; typically, seven full time plus numerous shorter term. Leaders change each year whilst Directors may typically be involved for anywhere from 2-4 years.

Mittagundi is a unique outdoor education centre in many ways, but we'd just like to make sure it is known that our team is a very small team of volunteers. We are the ones who will be leading your young person on their program. We have a bookings and communications manager who lives offsite and volunteers part time (days vary from week to week). We also have an accounts manager who lives offsite and volunteers part time (days vary from week to week). The team on the ground is supported by the Mittagundi Council who are long term volunteers from various backgrounds. Our team strives to provide excellent programs for young people, and this is our priority. The value of Mittagundi's small team is that it is very hands on and personal. You may be speaking/ interacting with one of us on the ground who will be with your young person directly. With this comes the fact that there is no big admin team or technology team behind Mittagundi and its running. Delays in communication are most likely because we are currently on a 10-Day program with young people.

We do try our best to respond to calls and emails as soon as we can. This can be harder than normal due to the known black spot that Mittagundi is in, giving it it's true off grid experience. If you ring the landline number, one of the team does their best to run to the phone in time to answer. Legend tells of a leader who managed this from the dairy (200+ metres away) during a milking. They try their best to help in the moment but please be mindful that they have likely just run from the task they were currently doing e.g., shifting cows, working with the horses, cooking for a program or fixing a messy plumbing problem. They may refer you to an email address as they don't have access to any internet at that time. Please if no one is answering leave voicemails as we don't have caller ID.



Our thanks once again for your patience and understanding of our uniqueness as an outdoor education centre that has been operating more or less in this off-grid style for the past 40+ years. Moving forward you may start to see a few changes as we work to improve communication as much as we can here at Mittagundi. Advertising of the direct farm line will be removed, so please save it in your phones if you need to and haven't already. The more accessible landline number will be the **Mittagundi 'Office' number (03 5159 7223)** but please leave voicemails as it won't always be attended because the team will be out on programs or on the farm. Emails will remain the most efficient way to communicate with the Mittagundi team. This email address is **info@mittgaundi.org.au** We will continue our social media presence. But please note, our social media is run by an offsite volunteer.

While we are off-grid, rest assured that safety is a non-negotiable at Mittagundi and we are well resourced for communication in the event of emergencies e.g., sat phones, DUPLEX UHF radio, PLBs and days of training in their use.

FESTIVAL 2024 – SAVE THE DATE!

January 26-28th 2024

Save the date for the annual Mittagundi Festival and Open Weekend! The weekend involves a bush dance on the Friday night, an open day on Saturday with pioneer skill demonstrations, live music, food, auction and Mittagundi Olympics. Bring your camping set up and your friends and family, don't miss out on a great weekend!



THANK YOUs!

There are many characters that make Mittagundi what it is, many of these people working quietly in the background. So, as we continue to collaborate with one another and build upon this wonderful community, here's a special thank you to those who have contributed in one or more ways in the past few months:

Thank you to...

- Everyone who contributed donations for our fleet of brand new One Planet Goretex jackets, and Helen for organising donations.
- Lucy for volunteering in May and helping us stock the pantry for winter.
- Alby and Henry (ex-Young People) for looking after the farm and fencing during Follow Up.
- Lucy (2012 staff) for looking after the farm during Follow Up.
- Mark the Wool Spinner for the donations.
- James for volunteering during Winter Open and for the laughter and conversations.
- Carrie (local) for helping us host the Winter Ball and for clothes donations.
- Tali for volunteering on Winter programs.
- Anna for bringing Dory cow to the farm.
- Dan O'Brien for volunteering for St Philips, joinery projects and the donations of tools, chainsaw etc.
- Adam (2017 staff) for volunteering on Hamilton Boys.
- All the City Hop volunteers, especially Tex, Fiadh, Adam, Eadie, Aly.
- Mossie for her contribution to organising the Hop.
- All the Wollies (ex-staff, Young People, volunteers) who helped out at the hop.
- The Brady family and Dan Brown for providing the catering for the Hop.
- Our September caretakers, Gary and Judith, for their incredible efforts on the farm.
- Pam Jones for making and donating fleece sleeping bag liners.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Follow us on social media, we're on Facebook and Instagram, @mittagundi.

Volunteer at Mittagundi in 2023 and 2024!

Mittagundi is passionate about providing opportunities for all to experience the outdoors and fall in love with the mountains. If this is something that interests you, then volunteering at Mittagundi may just be your cup of tea. It's a great way to be involved in a quality Outdoor Education program focusing on community, lifestyle, and personal values. A great place to stay in the Mountains and a unique experience helping young people to learn and grow.

10-Day Programs and Follow Ups

We are always looking for enthusiastic and energetic volunteers to help throughout the year. Our 10-day programs run from September to May with shorter Follow Up programs interspersed. Spring and Autumn are particularly beautiful times to be up at Mittagundi and they are very productive times on the property too. There is always plenty to be done in the garden, with the animals and ensuring our programs run smoothly from behind the scenes. We would love your help and would welcome you warmly into the Mittagundi community.

Winter Volunteers for 2024

Our Winter courses are 5 and 9 days long and involve 3–4-day trips in the snow as well as time on the farm at Mittagundi. We require 2 volunteers per Winter program. There are many ways that people can help at Mittagundi during winter. Some volunteer helpers will go out on ski trips, some may be helping out at the base around Mittagundi milking cows, baking bread, chopping firewood and so on.

To enquire, apply or learn more, please visit our website: www.mittagundi.org.au or contact us on 03 5159 7223. As this is a landline, please leave a voicemail with your name and number so we know you've called and so we can get back to you ASAP.

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 7223. As this is a landline, please leave a voicemail with your name and number so we know you've called and so we can get back to you ASAP.

- RESOURCES WE'D LOVE -

- Gaiters x20 pairs!
- Small can openers (metal)
- Sunglasses
- Coloured paint
- Scrap steel for the forge
- Stock whip
- Sports equipment eg balls, frisbees, wickets
- Gortex pants
- Hiking boots (large sizes)
- Cross Country skis and boots (bar bindings)
- Wetsuits (full length)
- Barrels (for rafts)
- Large dry bags
- Saddle pack bags x 2 (good condition)
- Thermals (especially large+ sizes)
- Large gazebo
- Snow sleeping bags
- Fitted bed sheets (single and double)

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?

Mittagundi is 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 via emailing info@mittagundi.org.au