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710 Mt Ridley Rd, Mickleham:
Master plan Report

May 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

We are grateful for the privilege to learn and grow from First Nations peoples in our practice as Landscape Architects. We are in awe of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples sharing their knowledge of lands, waterways, oceans, skies, stories, culture, and the hard truths of colonisation.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands in Mickleham where this project takes place. We extend this acknowledgment to all Traditional Custodians across Australia where we practice. We are grateful to use the name 'Merri' with permission from Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, honouring the significance of Merri Creek in our local landscape. We pay respect to Ancestors and Elders, past and present, and affirm this always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

We commit to embedding First Nations knowledge in our work with respect, supporting Indigenous-led design and stewardship, and advancing reconciliation through meaningful partnerships.

This is not passive acknowledgement, but an ongoing responsibility with dedication to tangible action.

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Project Client My College
Project Name 710 Mt Ridley Rd, Mickleham
Project Number 2609
Studio contact Nick Griffin

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A	For Town Planning	30.04.2026	MW
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Introduction & Site Context

About This Project

This report outlines the landscape master plan for the proposed primary and secondary school at 710 Mt Ridley Road, Mickleham, and is to be read alongside the accompanying consultant documentation.

The proposed primary and secondary school responds to projected population growth within Melbourne's northern growth area and will provide essential social infrastructure for emerging communities.

The landscape approach is informed by the sighting of the development and the broader rural context, with a clear intent to retain the openness and character of the Green Wedge while supporting a contemporary, high quality learning environment. The master plan balances educational function with landscape stewardship, positioning the school as a quiet and considered presence within the rural setting.

The site is located within the Hume Green Wedge, immediately west of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), which follows Mickleham Road. To the east, land is transitioning to urban use under the Lindum Vale Precinct Structure Plan and Craigieburn West Precinct Structure Plan.

Country and Cultural Setting

The site is located on Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Country, within a landscape of enduring cultural significance. It forms part of a broader system of open plains and seasonal ecologies that remain legible despite surrounding land use change.

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The site sits within the Victorian Volcanic Plains bioregion, characterised by expansive grasslands, basalt substrates, scattered River Red Gums, and ephemeral water systems. The modelled pre 1750 vegetation is Plains Grassland (EVC 55). An Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO11) applies along Mickleham Road, recognising the importance of River Red Gum and Grassy Woodland values.

The landscape is open and connected, qualities that are both ecological and cultural, and these characteristics underpin the landscape response.

The Hume Green Wedge and Rural Identity

The rural character of the site is a defining element of the project. The Hume Green Wedge plays a critical role in maintaining separation between Melbourne's growth areas and supporting landscape, environmental, and agricultural values.

Key attributes of the Green Wedge include openness, long views, and a strong contrast with adjacent urban density. Views to distant ridge lines, hilltops, the Melbourne CBD, and mountain ranges form an important part of the landscape experience.

The landscape master plan seeks to retain these qualities, reinforcing openness and ensuring built form and planting respond to the scale and character of its context. The outcome is a school landscape that sits lightly within its setting, contributing positively to the Green Wedge rather than diminishing it.

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The Site

The site presents as open, pastoral and sky dominated.

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The site comprises approximately 13.14 hectares, zoned Green Wedge (GWZ), with a 277.75 metre frontage to Mt Ridley Road along the southern boundary. The land form is generally flat and open, with no crests or ridge lines. Gentle falls of approximately 1.5–2.5 per cent occur across the site, predominantly toward the east.

The landscape is expansive and largely unbroken, with long views and minimal vertical elements.

No natural waterways or defined drainage lines are present on site. The nearest named waterways are Malcolm Creek, approximately 1.5 kilometres to the east, and Deep Creek, approximately 2.2 kilometres to the west. Several artificial farm dams are located within the central and southern portions of the site, reflecting its agricultural use.

An existing dwelling and associated outbuildings occupy the south western corner of the site (approximately 1 hectare), forming the primary area of built development.

Vegetation is dominated by exotic pasture grasses, including Cocksfoot, Toowoomba Canary grass, and Chilean Needle grass, with native species estimated to comprise less than 5 per cent of perennial groundcover. Scattered remnant native species persist throughout the pasture, including Wallaby grass, Weeping Grass, Chocolate Lily, and Slender Speedwell, representing residual elements of the historical Plains Grassland community.

Four indigenous River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) are present on site and are retained. Three mature trees occur along the eastern boundary, with a fourth located toward the western portion of the site. These trees are ecologically and visually significant, containing potential hollows that provide habitat for native fauna.

Three non indigenous *Eucalyptus* species—Southern Blue gum, Bald Island Marlock, and Coastal Moort—occur as planted individuals and are retained.

Eucalyptus trees on the neighbouring property to the north (1975 Mickleham Road), beyond the unmade road reservation, form a prominent vegetated backdrop on the northern horizon. Together with the retained trees on site, this backdrop reinforces the prevailing character of open grassland punctuated by scattered trees.

- 1 Existing dams
- 2 Existing dwelling
- 3 Conservation woodland
- 4 Existing River Red Gums

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10 50 100m



Landscape Vision & Principles

Generous, comfortable, and ecologically grounded. A learning campus that feels unmistakably rural, supporting pedagogy, play, and community in equal measure.

1. Local rural character

- The landscape is the setting. Buildings sit within it. Open and expansive, with long sight lines and sky as part of the composition.
- The landscape actively reinforces the green wedge setting, holding rural character at the edge of the growth corridor
 - Indigenous and local provenance planting drawn from the Victorian Volcanic Plains bioregion
 - Naturalistic, functional and productive. The landscape yields something; horticultural learning, food growing, and seasonal change
 - Durable materials drawn from the pastoral setting. Timber, steel, basalt

2. Comfortable

- This is a site on Melbourne’s northern fringe currently exposed to the sun and wind. Generous canopy shade throughout, planted at a scale and density that creates meaningful shade.
- Shelter planting protects the most-used spaces from the northwest and southwest winds
 - Covered outdoor areas extend usability through wet and hot weather
 - Varied seating and gathering spaces, areas of quiet retreat, small group, large assembly, are distributed across the grounds

3. Landscape as curriculum

- Outdoor spaces are a direct extension of the learning environment, catering for the broad spectrum of physiological and psychological needs.
- Large open spaces for sport, running and energetic play
 - Structured outdoor learning settings connected directly to curriculum. Horticultural, scientific, sensory
 - Spaces for risky and adventurous play, varying in challenge and complexity and scaled to age
 - Quiet places for withdrawal, reflection and recovery
 - Informal spaces for conversation, congregation and connection

4. Ecologically productive

- The landscape performs.
- Storm water managed on-site through vegetated swales, rain gardens and infiltration basins
 - Planting structured to establish ecological function over time, not just at installation
 - Groundcovers and grasses support invertebrate communities; canopy trees provide nesting and foraging habitat
 - Species selected for drought tolerance

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Landscape Site Plan

The Landscape plan reinforces existing landscape character while supporting educational and environmental functions.

General Landscape Organisation

The landscape structure has been organised to achieve the following key objectives:

- Retain and reinforce rural character, particularly as experienced from surrounding streets and public interfaces.
- Establish clear and intuitive wayfinding through a hierarchy of paths, open spaces, and landscape cues.
- Establish a diversity of outdoor spaces to support the diverse needs of the school population, educators, support staff and the community.

Rural Character Response

Rural character is a defining principle of the Landscape Master plan and is expressed through both spatial arrangement and land use:

- Open landscapes with scattered groupings of trees are used to frame school buildings, maintaining visual openness consistent with the surrounding countryside.
- A grazing paddock to the east of the school is incorporated. This productive use of land reinforces an unmistakably rural identity.
- A new farm access road is proposed west of the eastern boundary buffer to allow independent access to the grazing paddock and the orchard located to the north, separating land management activities from school circulation.

- Horticultural learning opportunities are embedded within the built form clusters, allowing students to directly engage with productive landscapes as part of daily learning.
- The car park is landscaped with canopy trees, softening the visual impact of vehicles while contributing shade, microclimate moderation, and a park-like arrival experience.

- 1 Car park
- 2 Buffer planting
- 3 Existing house and grounds
- 4 School operations shed
- 5 Agricultural access road
- 6 Grazing paddock with scattered trees
- 7 Waste dispersal field
- 8 Nominal storage pond
- 9 Orchard
- 10 Existing Trees
- 11 Sports precinct with scattered trees
- 12 AFL oval
- 13 Football field



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School Landscapes

The primary and secondary schools each incorporate a diverse range of landscape spaces tailored to the needs of their respective cohorts. In both settings, outdoor areas support learning, play, social connection, and well-being, with a mix of active play spaces, informal gathering areas, and quieter restorative environments.

These landscapes are strategically located to complement teaching spaces, support supervision, and provide staff with accessible outdoor areas for breaks and informal engagement.

- A Primary School entry
- B Secondary School entry
- 1 Public seating
- 2 Welcome Plaza with seating under cover
- 3 Front Lawn
- 4 Study Court / Hall spill out

- 5 Fruit Tree Avenue with picnic tables
- 6 Library Terrace
- 7 Multi-purpose hard court
- 8 Quad Lawn
- 9 Sculpture Garden
- 10 Seating Nooks amongst planting
- 11 Flexible outdoor learning bays
- 12 Social Terrace
- 13 Structured play equipment
- 14 Sensory garden
- 15 Science and ecology investigation area
- 16 Horticultural learning garden
- 17 Kitchen garden with communal table
- 18 Nature play area
- 19 Recreational hard court
- 20 Flexible open space
- 21 Prep / early years play space
- 22 Staff outdoor space

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Open Space Strategy

The landscape is structured to reinforce pedagogy, student health, and connection.

The landscape framework for Mickleham School is conceived as an integrated network of outdoor environments that support contemporary learning, well-being, and social interaction.

Within this framework, school landscapes are categorised and organised by a series of complementary typologies and guiding principles. Four key typologies—Active, Discovery, Gathering, and Recovery—provide a diverse range of outdoor settings that collectively address the pedagogical, physiological, sociological, and psychological needs of students. These typologies are not intended to exist as isolated destinations; instead, they overlap and layer across the site to create a cohesive and flexible environment.

Structuring Principles

1. Quiet spaces paired with outdoor learning.
2. Outdoor gathering directly adjacent to indoor gathering.
3. Flexible open space is located to boundary of the school – helping to frame the built form with open landscape.
4. Ball sports within the internal courtyard – prioritising soft to external spaces.

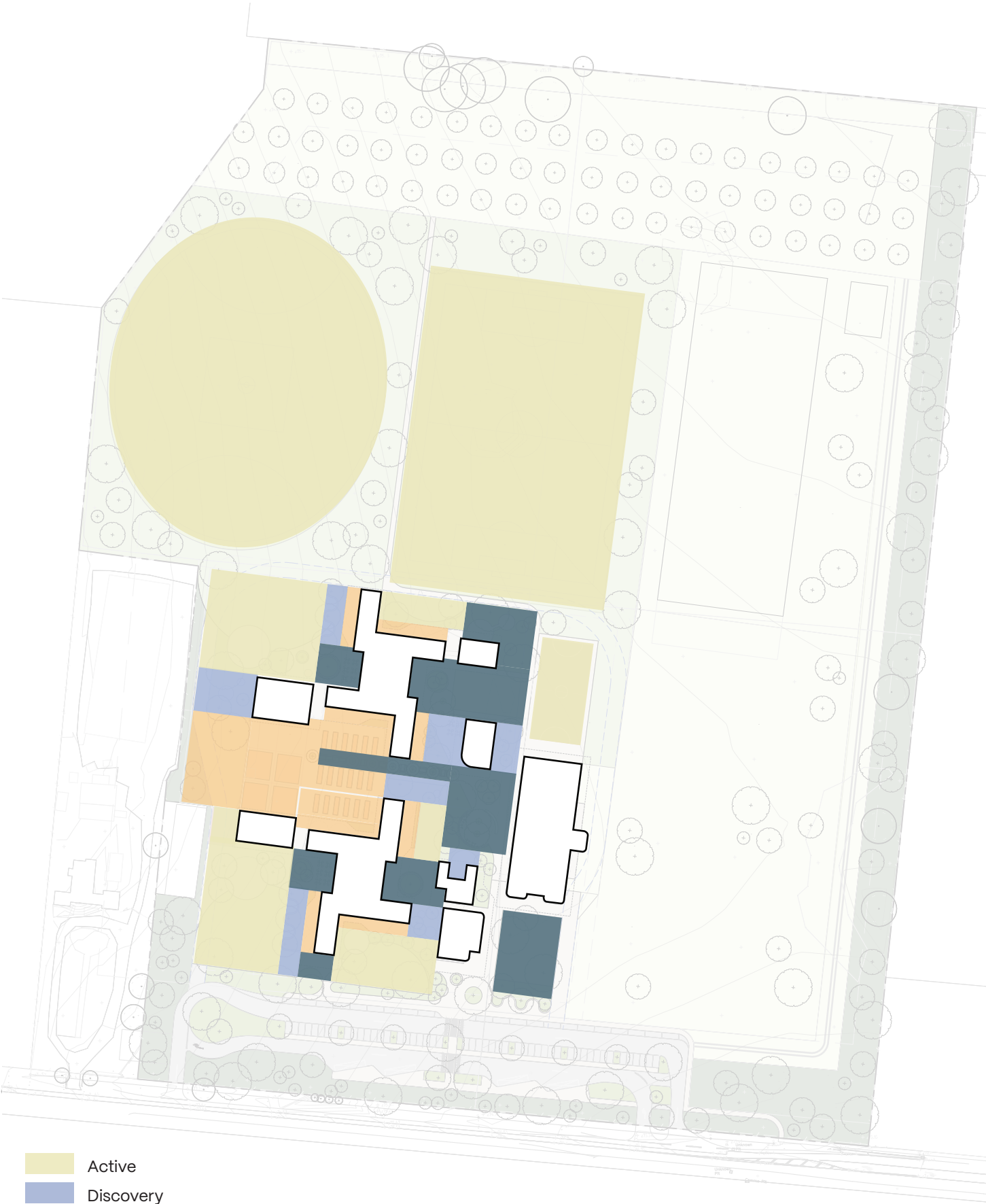
Landscape Typologies:

Active

Physical movement areas for formal games and active play. Including:

- Sports ovals. The primary sports surface for formal, structured sports. Natural turf, north-south orientation where possible, with appropriate run-off and buffer distances.
- Multi-purpose hard courts. Marked for basketball, netball and multi-sport. Designed for school-day structured sport and informal recess play.
- Recreational hard court. A smaller hard court for informal sport and recreational play, with line markings that stimulate imagination. Less formal than the multi-purpose court, more social in character. Accommodates a wide range of activities simultaneously; kicking a ball, shooting hoops, sitting in a group.
- Flexible open space. Expansive lawn areas with large shade trees. Large, open, energetic. Accommodates running, chasing, spontaneous games and high-energy play.
- Structured Play Equipment (Primary School). Formal play equipment for strength, agility, and imagination, for example, monkey bars, slides, rope structures. Shade protected where appropriate. Natural materials favoured to reflect rural environment.
- Structured Play Equipment (Secondary School). Formal play equipment for strength and agility, for example monkey bars, pull up bars, bouldering. Shade protected where appropriate.

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- Active
- Discovery
- Gathering
- Recovery

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Discovery

Supporting exploration, education, and imaginative play. Including:

- Nature play area. A less structured zone where landscape is the play equipment. Land form, logs, rocks, indigenous planting and loose natural materials invite open-ended, self-directed play. Celebrates the rural and ecological character of the site. Suitable for primary age.
- Flexible outdoor learning bays. Direct extensions of classrooms, distributed throughout both school precincts. Furnished with durable outdoor seating, writing surfaces and shade. Outdoor learning spaces encourage a different way of teaching and learning, sitting and doing class work.
- Horticultural learning garden. A dedicated productive landscape for hands-on horticultural education. Raised beds, composting, water collection, tool storage and flexible working surfaces. Seasonally productive: food, cut flowers, herbs. Connected to the canteen and science curriculum. Located with northern sun access and wind protection.
- Kitchen garden / productive landscape. Broader productive planting beyond the formal horticultural learning area; fruit trees, berry hedges, edible groundcovers integrated into the wider landscape.
- Science and ecology investigation area. A naturalistic zone designed to support hands-on science learning: planted with Victorian Volcanic Plains species, with features for invertebrate observation, bird and insect habitat, water, and seasonal change. Can overlap with the storm water management infrastructure.

Gathering

Spaces to facilitate social interaction and community. Including:

- Social Terrace. Accommodates lunchtime congregation and informal play. Sheltered, shaded, with varied edges; seating nooks, covered zones, planting that creates enclosure without closing off sight lines.
- Seating nooks. Intimate, sheltered spots with various scales to accommodate 2–6 students. Oriented for winter sun and summer shade. Used for eating, conversation, quiet reading and de-escalation. Should be separated from high-activity areas but remain within sight lines.
- Communal Table. Long tables for sharing meals and produce, functioning as outdoor food preparation areas. Located adjacent to horticulture and home-economics spaces.

Recovery

Sensory retreat areas for respite and quiet reflection. Including:

- Sensory garden. An intimate space designed to engage all five senses: tactile planting, fragrant species, sound, varied light and texture. Particularly valuable for neurodiverse students and those requiring sensory calm. Can be integrated within the quiet retreat zone.
- Quiet retreat spaces. Small, sheltered, semi-enclosed spaces away from the main play areas. Used for withdrawal, recovery, reading and quiet social time. Planting provides enclosure and a sense of separation without total isolation. Essential for neurodiverse students and those who need a lower-stimulus environment during breaks.
- Staff outdoor space. A dedicated outdoor space for staff, separate from student areas, private and comfortable. Small in scale but important for wellbeing.
- Prep / early years play space. Intimate, enclosed and age-scaled for the youngest students. Separated from the main play area but connected visually to classrooms. Includes sand, loose materials, low climbing, digging and sensory planting. Fully shaded.



Access Strategy

The access strategy establishes a legible and welcoming arrival sequence and clear internal circulation to support the school’s educational and operational needs.

Intuitive Wayfinding

The primary point of entry to the site is from Mt Ridley Road, establishing a clear and legible arrival sequence for all users. The car park addresses Mt Ridley Road as the public face of the school, accommodating supervised drop-off and pick-up, staff and visitor parking and bus access. This area supports safe pedestrian circulation from the public realm into school life.

An arrival forecourt is located adjacent to the administration building, providing a sheltered waiting area for pick-up and drop-off. From this space, users are able to orientate themselves with clear views to administration, school entries, and the multi-purpose hall, reinforcing intuitive navigation upon entry.

Entries to both the primary and secondary schools are designed with direct lines of sight to their respective central gathering spaces, ensuring immediate visual clarity and facilitating passive supervision. Internal circulation networks within each school radiate from these central gathering areas, creating a coherent and easily understood movement structure.

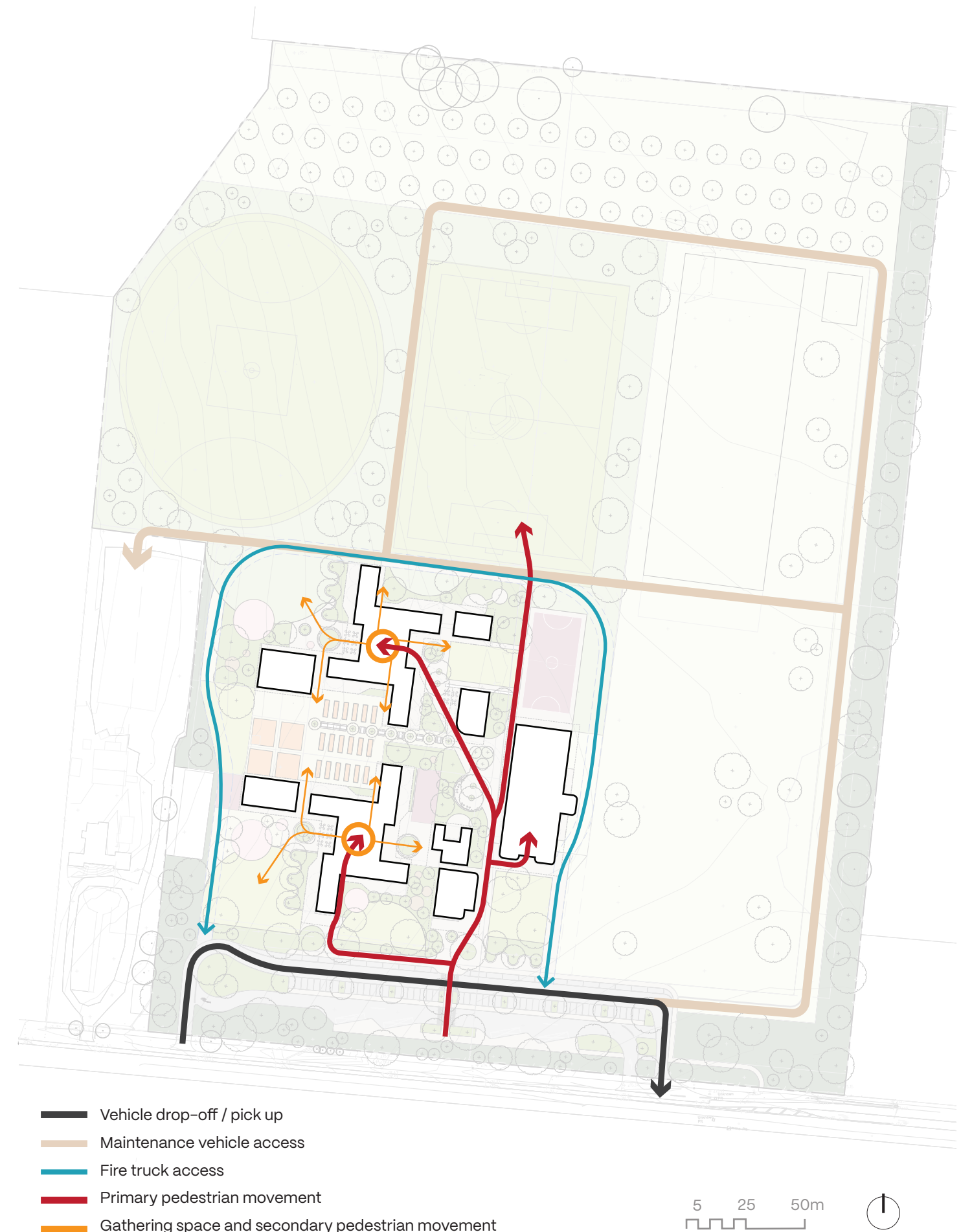
A legible and continuous pedestrian path network connects all elements of the campus. Pathways follow clear desire lines and are shaded with canopy planting wherever possible to improve comfort, readability, and seasonal usability, reinforcing intuitive wayfinding across the site.

Functional Access

A fire access path is provided around the school buildings to meet emergency access requirements. This route also accommodates maintenance vehicles. A supplementary access road is provided for agricultural activities ensuring that land management functions remain efficient while being discreetly separated from primary pedestrian and student movement zones.

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Interface Strategy

The interface strategy seeks to settle the school into its surroundings, reinforcing the existing rural character and reducing visual impact to Mt Ridley Road and adjacent properties.

Planting, fencing and spatial transitions are used to soften edges, manage views and reinforce the Green Wedge setting.

Southern Interface

Mt Ridley Road forms the primary public address to the site. Views from this corridor and clear wayfinding are key considerations.

A densely planted landscape buffer is proposed along the southern boundary to soften views into the site and screen the car park, which is further moderated through internal tree canopy planting. The buffer reflects the established landscape character on the southern side of Mt Ridley Road and maintains the rural roadside experience.

Eastern Interface

The eastern boundary interfaces with an undeveloped lot and rural residential properties that front Mickleham Road.

An Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO11) applies along Mickleham Road, recognising River Red Gum and Grassy Woodland values. In response, a 15 metre vegetation buffer is proposed, incorporating River Red Gums and associated woodland species to reinforce and extend the ecological character protected by the overlay.

Western Interface

The western boundary abuts 730 Mt Ridley Road, a rural residential property with structures setback approximately 50 metres from the shared boundary.

To mitigate views toward the main school buildings and maintain separation, a 5 to 10 metre vegetation buffer is proposed, using layered planting to soften built form and reinforce the rural edge.

Northern Interface

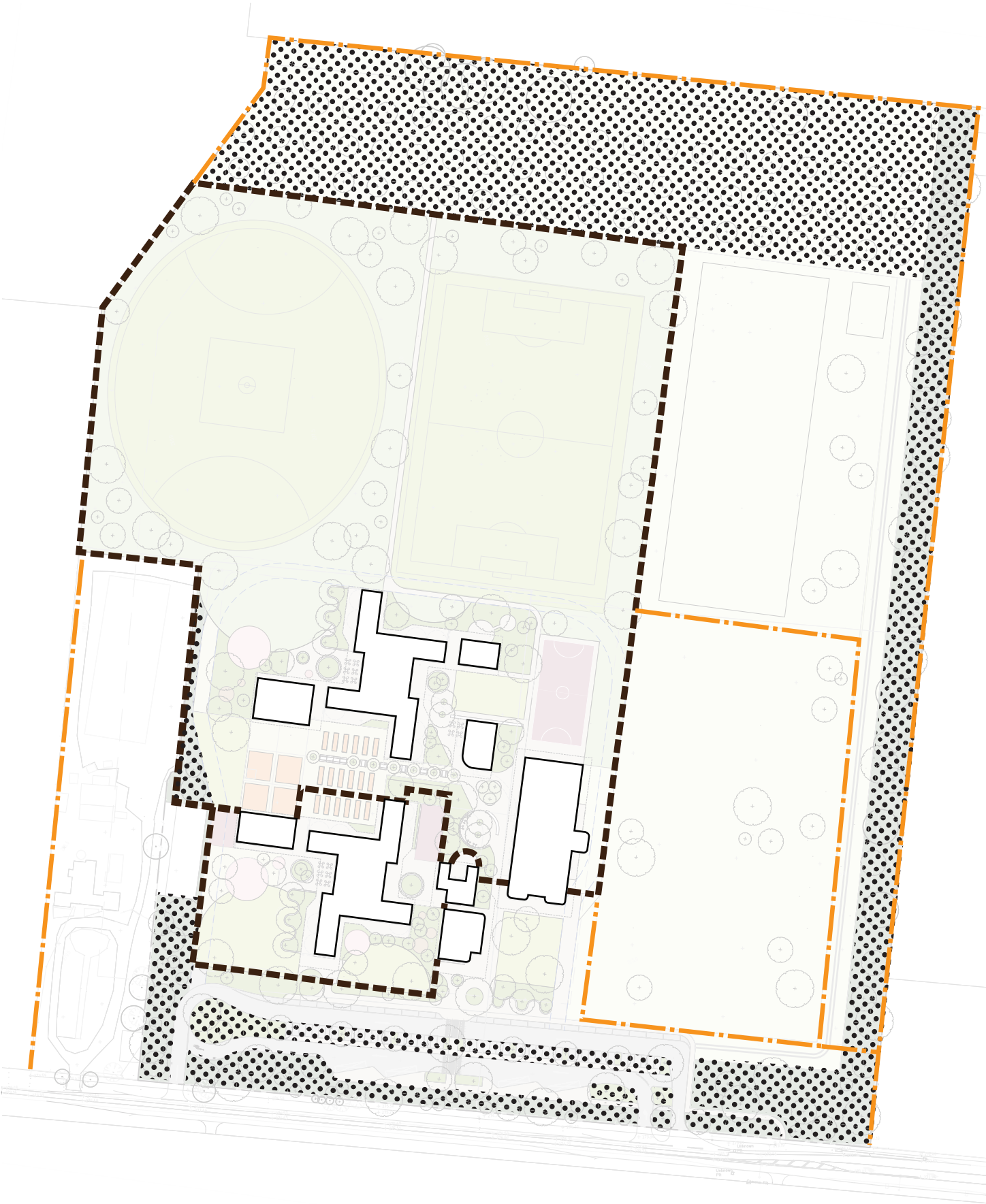
To the north, the site adjoins a conservation area of open woodland, forming a strong green backdrop and defining the northern horizon. Beyond this lies 1975 Mickleham Road, containing an olive grove and dwelling.

Drawing on this context, an educational orchard is proposed within the northern portion of the site, responding to the agricultural character of the landscape while supporting learning

Fencing

Farm-style fencing is proposed along the eastern, western and northern boundaries. No fencing is proposed along the southern boundary. Instead, fencing will be limited to delineating the primary and secondary school precincts, maintaining openness to the public realm while ensuring security during school hours.

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- Planted boundary condition
- Post and wire fencing
- School fencing (TBC by school)

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Planting Strategy

Drought Hardy, Native, and rural

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The planting strategy is informed by the character of the site, its location within the Hume Green Wedge, and the aspiration to deliver a high quality, exemplar learning environment for students, staff and the wider community.

The approach responds directly to site-specific ecological cues, including the modelled pre 1750 vegetation of Plains Grassland (EVC 55) and the presence of suitable habitat for EPBC Act listed species, including Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass Frog and Latham's Snipe. Records of Golden Sun Moth occur within approximately 320 to 570 metres of the site, reinforcing the need for a sensitive and considered planting response.

Key Principles:

- Strengthen valued existing character and soften transitions between built form, open space and surrounding rural land
- Provide a comfortable and inspiring environment through shade, shelter and landscape led support of pedagogy
- Create connected habitat across the site that supports ecological function and movement
- Prioritise plant species indigenous to Hume City Council, with an emphasis on local provenance
- Use landscape to hold, slow and cleanse water across the site through planted systems

The result is a planting framework that is legible, robust and adaptable, reinforcing the rural setting while supporting long term ecological and educational outcomes.

Planting zones:

Key species are found on the following spread.

- 1 The Shelter Belt: Visual screening, wind buffering, fauna movement, minimal grassland impact. Respond to ESO11, given the proximity to Mickleham Road.
- 2 Pedagogical Courtyards: Shade, interaction spaces, safety appropriate species.
- 3 Horticultural Landscapes. Kitchen gardens and Orchard plantings. Species determined by school curriculum
- 4 The Open Landscape: Scattered and clustered trees, open grassland. Framed vistas and open skies.
- 5 Water slowing and cleansing: Swales, bio retention basins, rain gardens & drainage corridors. Utilised in zones 1-4 where appropriate.

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The Shelter Belt

Trees

- Eucalyptus camaldulensis – River Red Gum (in locations where sufficient space and soil moisture exist)
- Eucalyptus microcarpa – Grey Box
- Eucalyptus melliodora – Yellow Box
- Allocasuarina verticillata – Drooping Sheoak
- Allocasuarina littoralis – Black Sheoak

Small trees/large shrubs

- Acacia implexa – Lightwood
- Banksia marginata – Silver Banksia
- Acacia acinacea – Gold dust Wattle

Low–Medium Shrubs (Recommended)

- Acacia paradoxa – Hedge Wattle
- Acacia verticillata – Prickly Moses
- Bursaria spinosa subsp. lasiophylla – Sweet Bursaria
- Melicytus dentatus – Tree Violet

Tussock Grasses (Critical Habitat Layer for Golden Sun Moth)

- Rytidosperma caespitosum – Common Wallaby Grass
- Rytidosperma racemosum – Slender Wallaby Grass
- Themeda triandra – Kangaroo Grass
- Austrostipa bigeniculata – Tall Spear grass
- Austrostipa scabra – Rough Spear grass



Pedagogical Courtyards

Trees

- Eucalyptus leucoxylon ssp. connata – Yellow Gum
- Acacia implexa – Lightwood
- Allocasuarina littoralis – Black Sheoak
- Acacia pycnantha – Golden Wattle
- Acacia acinacea – Gold Dust Wattle
- Banksia marginata – Silver Banksia

Shrubs

- Bursaria spinosa – Sweet Bursaria
- Callistemon SPs
- Correa glabra– Rock Correa
- Dodonea viscosa – Hop Bush
- Rhagodia parabolica – Fragrant Saltbush

Groundcovers & Small Herbaceous Species

- Atriplex semibaccata – Australian Saltbush
- Dichondra repens – Kidney Weed
- Einadia nutans – Nodding Saltbush
- Enchylaena tomentosa ssp. tomentosa – Ruby Saltbush
- Hardenbergia violacea – Purple Coral Pea
- Wahlenbergia stricta – Tall Bluebell
- Chrysocephalum apiculatum – Common Everlasting
- Bulbine bulbosa – Bulbine Lily
- Stackhousia monogyna – Creamy Candles
- Leptorhynchos squamatus – Scaly Buttons

Grasses & Strappy Plants

- Dianella ‘Little Rev’
- Lomandra longifolia Spiny–headed Mat–rush
- Lomandra ‘Tanika’ Tanika
- Poa labillardieri – Tussock grass



The Open Landscape

Trees

- Eucalyptus microcarpa – Grey Box
- Eucalyptus melliodora – Yellow Box
- Allocasuarina verticillata – Drooping Sheoak
- Allocasuarina littoralis – Black Sheoak

Small trees/large shrubs

- Acacia implexa – Lightwood
- Banksia marginata – Silver Banksia
- Acacia acinacea – Gold dust Wattle

Grasses/tussocks

- Rytidosperma caespitosum – Common Wallaby Grass
- Rytidosperma racemosum – Slender Wallaby Grass
- Themeda triandra – Kangaroo Grass
- Austrostipa bigeniculata – Tall Spear grass
- Austrostipa scabra – Rough Spear grass



Water slowing and cleansing

Primary Sedges/grasses

- Anthosachne scabra – Rough Wheat grass
- Centella cordifolia – Centella
- Carex appressa – Tall Sedge
- Carex tereticaulis – Poong'ort
- Dichondra repens – Kidney Weed
- Eleocharis acuta – Common Spike sedge
- Eleocharis gracilis – Slender Spike sedge
- Juncus pallidus – Pale Rush
- Juncus australis – Austral Rush
- Juncus amabilis – Hollow Rush
- Poa labillardierei – Tussock Grass
- Pratia pedunculata – Blue Star Creeper
- Themeda triandra – Kangaroo Grass



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