

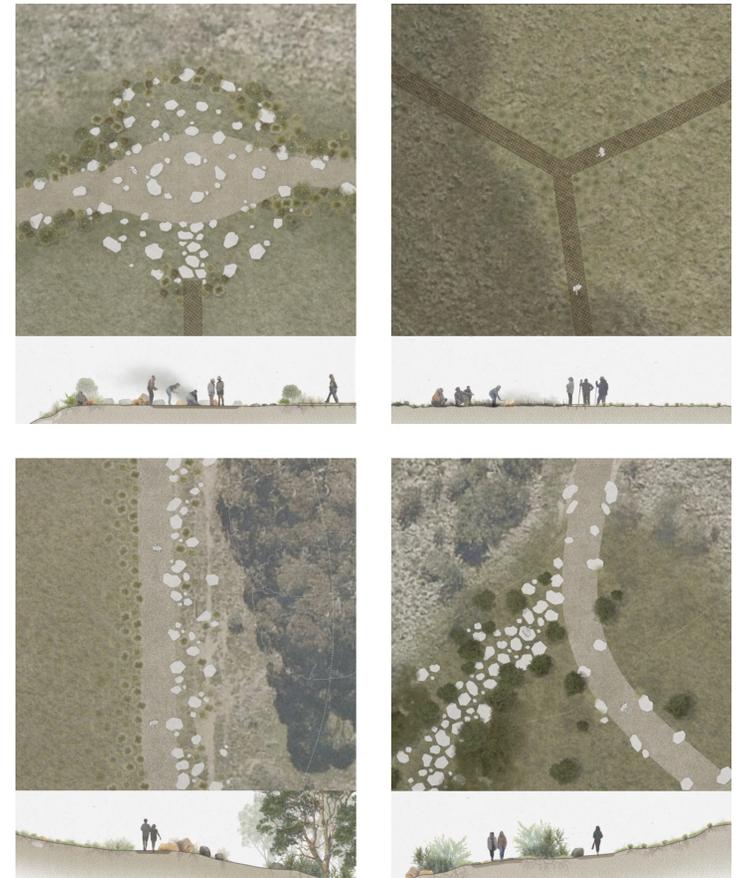
Embers of Renewal

I acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which this site is situated and which I live and work on. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded. This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land. The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung language used in this project is referenced from Merri-bek City Council place-naming initiatives, where consultation with Elders informed the terms used. Wa-dam-buk is the Wurundjeri word for "renew."

The landscape of Holden Flora and Fauna Reserve is one of layered histories and shifting ecologies, where traces of remnant vegetation meet plans for the sprawling urban edge. In a future where this site becomes people's backyard and weekend nature escape, designing here requires a balanced attentiveness to both ecological processes and human experience as one integrated priority.

This design project examines the potential for the site to become a living narrative of regeneration, where ecological and cultural histories are acknowledged and nurtured, balancing the restoration of native flora and fauna with opportunities for discovery and engagement. Scars of the landscape are healed iteratively and in stages over time, revealing an intersect of cultural practice and ecological process. Disturbance through cultural burning becomes a catalyst for healing. These scars hold memory whilst guiding a more sensitive attachment and understanding of the land, embodying the reciprocity between care for Country and care for community.

Temporality is embraced. Scars of the past fade but don't disappear, plants grow, and visitors are encouraged to witness and participate in the landscape's rebirth. Through careful consideration of care and maintenance, the site becomes both sanctuary and classroom. This adaptive approach encourages visitors to bear witness to the ongoing processes and possibilities of regeneration, fostering a sense of stewardship, engagement and a deeper understanding of our place within Country as a living entity.



January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
Biderap		Luk	Waring			Guling	Poorneet		Buath Garru		Gunyang	
During the hot, dry summer, grasses grow long and dry, increasing fuel loads across the site.		Eel season. Hot winds have ended and temperature starts to get cooler. Native grass seeds are sown in the previous burn patches to assist regeneration.		The cool, wet conditions of Waring (wombat season) mark the optimal time for cultural burning. Common heath (<i>Epacris impressa</i>) begins blooming pink flowers, signaling the appropriate burn window. Black Wattle (<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>) starts to flower later in the season, indicating the end of the safe burn period. Burns reduce vegetative fuel loads and invasive species while stimulating regeneration of native grasses.			Post-burn regrowth becomes evident, native seeds are sown in the fresh burn patches. Wattles bloom along the ignition path.		Rising temperatures and continued rainfall keep grasses green and actively growing. Green sprouts of regrowth can be seen in contrast with the charred burn sites. Wattles finish blooming, signalling warmer days ahead.		Grass Flowering Season sees kangaroo grasses begin to flower, while wallaby grasses produce their distinctive cream-colored flower heads.	

The landscape of Holden Flora and Fauna Reserve is one of layered histories and shifting ecologies, where traces of remnant vegetation meet plans for the sprawling urban edge. In a future where this site becomes people's backyard and weekend nature escape, designing here requires attentiveness to both ecological processes and human experience, integrated into one priority. My project explores fire as a continuous, layered design intervention that inspires both cultural and ecological renewal, and how cycles of burning, growth, and regeneration might shape new rhythms of care across generations.

At first, I approached cultural burning as a tool for fire and weed mitigation. Through research and engagement with the biik wurrdha Cultural Values Study, this understanding deepened. Cultural burning came to represent not only management, but relationship as an ongoing dialogue between people and Country. It is a decolonising act of care and maintenance that recognises fire as knowledge and healing, not threat, and supports the continuation of Wurundjeri land practices that have long sustained this landscape.

A key part of the project looks at the interplay between rocks, vegetation, and people, and how these elements might guide both movement and fire across the site. Pathways prioritise an east-west axis, connecting the Organ Pipes to Sunbury and speculating on a future where the site becomes part of a wider trail network linking community to ecology.

The design embraces mosaic or patchwork burning as both an ecological process and a cultural ritual. A primary ignition pathway runs along the western edge, shaped by prevailing north-westerly winds and softened by gravel paths and planting that blur the boundary between grassland and walkway. In contrast, paths along the eastern edge act as firebreaks, defining safe zones and transition areas where burning is paused, reinforcing care through restraint and observation.

The main ignition pathway is defined by intentional planting. Indicator species such as common heath, kangaroo grass, and black wattle act as ecological cues for care, each signalling a different moment in the cycle of burning and regeneration. Common heath, Victoria's floral emblem, blooms in winter, marking a safe burning period. Kangaroo grass thrives with regular burning, suppressing invasive species and maintaining a green-grey tone. When wattles begin to bloom, they signal the end of the burning season.

At the edge of the basalt escarpment where creek, grasslands, and sky meet, a ceremonial learning space brings people together for reflection and learning. This point becomes a threshold between human and more-than-human worlds, symbolising unity and ongoing connection to Country.

Across the grasslands, a network of uncoated steel mesh paths references the tessellation of basalt formations beneath. These paths weather over time, accommodate fire, and allow grasses to grow through, merging subtle infrastructure with ecology.

Rather than seeing fire as destructive, this project positions it as a method of healing. Restoration is not a single event, but an ongoing relationship guided by observation, reflection, and respect. Healthy Country means healthy people.

What if this landscape was never finished, but always in the act of becoming?