The variety of vegetation types

The following section provides descriptions of each of the vegetation types shown on the two 1:5 million scale maps—'Natural Vegetation' and 'Present Vegetation'—accompanying this volume. The structural forms of the vegetation classification are grouped according to growth form, with the nomenclature of Specht (1970) indicated in the headings. The subforms, defined by the type of understorey, are arranged under subheadings, while the vegetation types are distinguished floristically (mostly by genus or family). The littoral, horticultural and urban vegetation complexes are covered separately.

Each vegetation type is described in the context of historical changes in its distribution, with some comment on environmental relationships. Maps in the other volumes of this atlas enable comparison of vegetation distribution with other physical and cultural aspects of the Australian environment such as climate, soils and land use.

In general, botanical names are used because common plant names are often a source of confusion. However, recommended common names for plants referred to in the text are listed in the 'Index of Common Names' on page 62.

Small summary maps at 1:30 million scale show how the distribution of each vegetation form has changed over the past 200 years. They show the areas where vegetation is structurally unchanged and where it is now different from the natural vegetation. These maps were derived from the analysis of digital versions of the two 1:5 million scale maps using a computerised geographic information system. The spatial data on vegetation structure were resampled into 4 x 4 km grid cells and overlayed to quantify and map the changes. The resultant area estimates are subject to the limitations of this technique and for vegetation classes which cover small areas the figures are only approximate.

Most of the small maps which show the extent of well known vegetation types or species were compiled directly from the Natural Vegetation map, as floristic types commonly cross the boundaries of several structural forms.