



# Atlas of Australian Resources

## Third Series

### Volume 6

# VEGETATION



**AUSLIG**

Australian Surveying and Land Information Group  
Department of Administrative Services  
'Service is our Business'

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# Preface

This atlas volume summarises current geographical knowledge about Australia's vegetation and complements the other environmental and resource topics in the Atlas of Australian Resources. It comes at the beginning of the Decade of Land Care, a time when there is a growing need for a complete picture of Australia's diverse and changing vegetation cover, to foster a fuller understanding and better management of our finite natural resources.

The view of Earth from space and the current concern about environmental change reinforce the importance of regional and even global perspectives on major resource use decisions. That realisation has come to this continent only two centuries after its colonisation by Europeans. But in that time the impact of present land use has significantly changed the original vegetation over a third of Australia.

The first section of the volume summarises the classification which was adopted to describe differences

in plant cover and the technique used to map those differences over the entire continent. The main commentary gives a systematic description of the different vegetation types, both natural and modified, accompanied by numerous small maps that show the historical changes and also highlight some familiar floristic types. The volume concludes by considering vegetation change over the last two centuries, the major impacts on the original vegetation and some important environmental consequences.

The two major maps, Natural Vegetation and Present Vegetation, show the broad character of the vegetation, defined in terms of its growth form, foliage cover and predominant genus, for both the 1780s and the 1980s. They are based on satellite imagery and bring together a wide range of other information on vegetation. The mapping was carried out after extensive discussions on methods and source materials between the consultant, Dr John Carnahan (Botany Dept, Australian National

University), and many people throughout Australia.

Natural Vegetation is a reconstruction of pre-European vegetation, making use of historical records and remnant vegetation in modified areas. Although the term 'natural' is applied to this vegetation, it was in fact influenced by thousands of years of Aboriginal land management. Present Vegetation is the first map to show the actual vegetative cover of the entire continent and it may serve as a benchmark for future studies of environmental change. These two maps also allow a quantitative assessment of the changes that have taken place over the last 200 years.

Preparation of the two 1:5 million scale maps proved to be a major undertaking and involved the work of many staff geographers, under the direction of John Carnahan and Frank Bullen. The commentary was written by John Carnahan and Ted Deveson. The design and cartographic supervision for this volume were by Ian King.

## Volumes in this atlas

1. Soils and Land Use
2. Population
3. Agriculture
4. Climate
5. Geology and Minerals
6. Vegetation

## Abbreviations

Standard abbreviations for Australian states and territories are used throughout this volume

<b>NSW</b>	New South Wales
<b>NT</b>	Northern Territory
<b>Qld</b>	Queensland
<b>SA</b>	South Australia
<b>Tas.</b>	Tasmania
<b>Vic.</b>	Victoria
<b>WA</b>	Western Australia

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**Folded 1:5 million scale maps inside back cover**  
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    Present vegetation