

MVG 16—ACACIA SHRUBLANDS

- Overstorey is dominated by multi-stemmed acacia shrubs. The most common are *Acacia aneura* (mulga) shrublands.
- Other dominant species include *A. cambadgei* (gidgee), *A. victoriae*, *A. brachystachya* (turpentine mulga), *A. resinomarginea*, *A. georginae* (Georgina gidgee), *A. ramulose* (bowgada), *A. eriopoda* (pindan), *A. tetragonophylla*, *A. loderi*, *A. harpophylla* (brigalow), *A. catenulata* (bendee), *A. torulosa*, *A. orthocarpa*, *A. victoriae*, *A. ligulata*, *A. sclerosperma*, *A. tumida*, *A. eriopoda* and *A. eremaea* (snakewood).
- Associated species include *Grevillea* spp., *Eremophila* spp. (emu bush) and a wide range of chenopod shrubs (*Atriplex*, *Maireana*, *Sclerolaena*) and *Senna* spp.
- Density of the overstorey affects the type of understorey that occurs within these communities. Understorey composition is also affected markedly by rainfall that can include both winter and summer events.



Photo: M. Fagg

Acacia carneorum (needle wattle, purple-wood wattle), Wanaaring, NSW

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Facts and figures

Major Vegetation Group	MVG 16 —Acacia Shrublands
Major Vegetation Subgroups (number of NVIS descriptions)	Mulga (<i>Acacia aneura</i>) woodlands with tussock grass (44) Other Acacia tall open shrublands and shrublands (321) Arid and semi-arid acacia low open woodlands and shrublands with chenopods (91) Arid and semi-arid acacia low open woodlands and shrublands with hummock grass (66) Arid and semi-arid acacia low open woodlands and shrublands with tussock grass (60) Mallee with a dense shrubby understorey Other Shrublands (2) Mulga (<i>Acacia aneura</i>) woodlands and shrublands with hummock grass (3)
Typical NVIS structural formations	Shrubland (tall, mid, low) Open shrubland (tall, mid, low) Sparse shrubland (tall, mid, low)
Number of IBRA regions	53
Most extensive in IBRA region	Est. pre-1750 and present : Great Victoria Desert (WA and SA)
Estimated pre-1750 extent (km²)	865 845
Present extent (km²)	851 274
Area protected (km²)	85 444

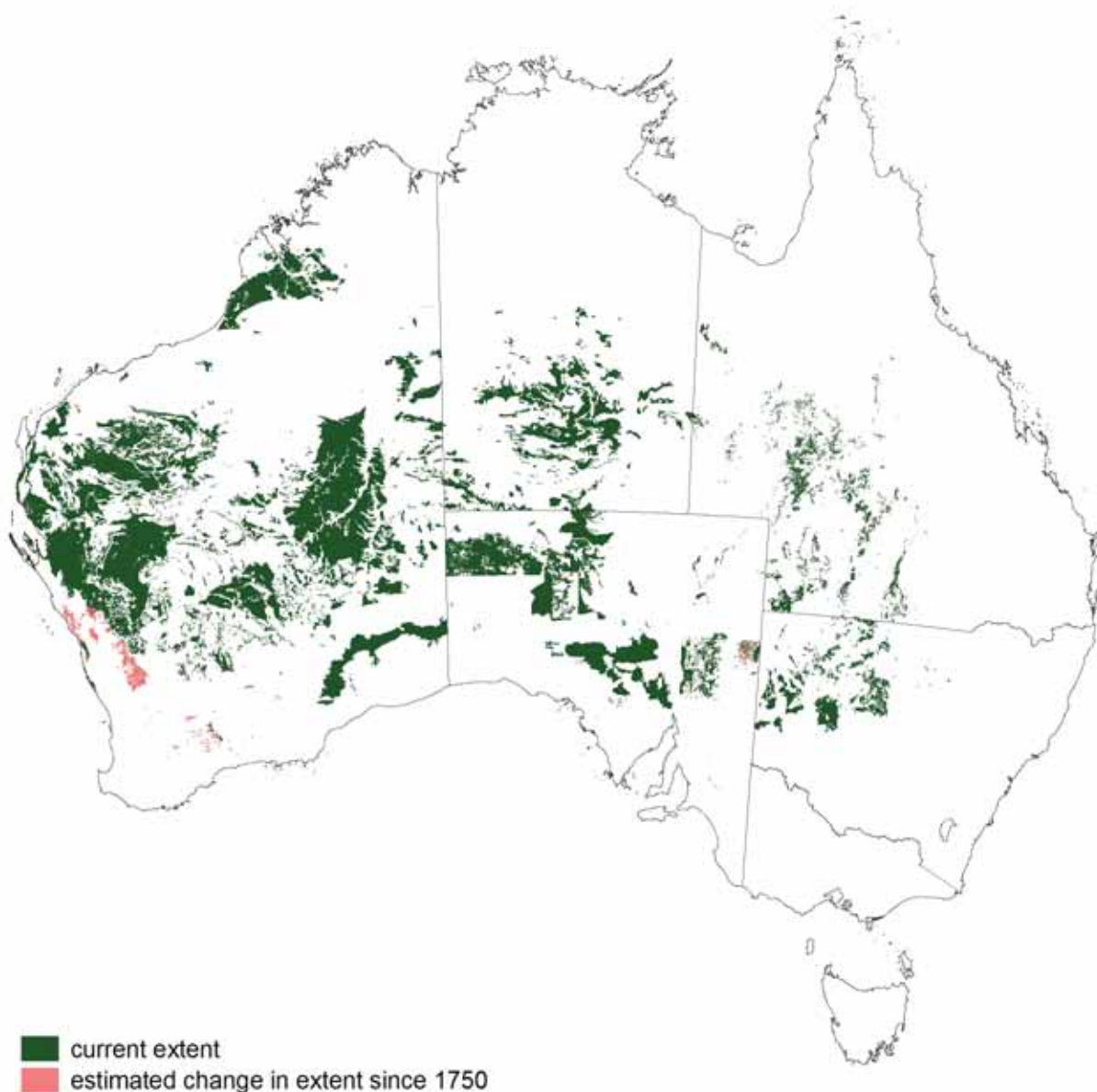


Acacia ligulata (sandhill wattle), SA

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Geography

- Dominates large areas of Australia particularly Western Australia, the Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.
- Largest area occurs in Western Australia (537 139 km²).
- Occurs mainly in semi-arid and arid regions (less than 300 mm of rainfall each year), although they also extend into the arid tropical regions of north-west Queensland and eastern Northern Territory.
- Climatic conditions are generally dry, hot summers, with cool to warm winters. Rainfall is variable although maximum falls occur in either summer (for northern Australia) or winter (for southern Australia).
- Occur largely on extensive undulating plains and downs, low hills and valleys in the rangelands.



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Change

- Approximately 1.7% of the estimated pre-1750 extent cleared accounting for 1.4% of total clearing in Australia as a result of pastoral activities.
- Approximately 14 500 km² cleared since European settlement.
- Some have been protected in conservation areas.
- Threats include regular or too intense fires, combined grazing pressure from domestic, feral and native animals causing loss of understorey and some clearing.

Tenure

Acacia Shrublands occur largely on leasehold land.

New South Wales:	leasehold land, protected areas
Northern Territory:	leasehold land, freehold land, little in protected areas
Queensland:	leasehold land, some protected areas
South Australia:	leasehold land, protected areas, freehold land
Tasmania:	freehold land
Victoria:	small areas in protected areas and on freehold land
Western Australia:	leasehold land, protected areas, other crown land, reserved crown land, small scattered areas on freehold land

Key values

- Biodiversity including species rich plant communities, particularly evident after seasonal or cyclonic rains, restricted ecological communities and endangered species.
- Remnant populations of a wide range of vertebrate and invertebrate species.
- Eco-tourism.

The key values are mainly associated with the biodiversity and eco-tourism values, the restricted ecological communities and the protection of endangered species. Acacia Shrublands have posed a challenge to the people who have tried to rehabilitate or maintain these areas for pastoral activities during extreme seasonal conditions.

Management considerations

- Feral animal control and overall management of grazing pressure.
- Avoidance of further fragmentation of the remnant areas.
- Ensuring fire regimes are appropriate.
- Weed control including the issues of pasture grasses (e.g. buffel grass versus native perennial grasses).

As with other rangeland areas there are the public policy issues of stewardship and land capability to support use, especially on leasehold lands. Ongoing investment in development of rangelands monitoring systems remains a priority will provide increased opportunities for efficiencies in pastoral management and nature conservation investments within the Acacia Shrublands.

References

- Australian Surveying and Land Information Group (1990) *Atlas of Australian Resources. Volume 6 Vegetation*. AUSMAP, Department of Administrative Services, Canberra, 64pp. & 2 maps.
- Beadle N.C.W. (1981) *The Vegetation of Australia*. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, 690pp.
- Johnson R.W. and Burrows W.H. (1994) Acacia open forests, woodlands and shrublands. In: *Australian Vegetation* (ed. R.H. Groves) pp. 257–290. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge.
- National Land & Water Resources Audit (2001) *Australian Native Vegetation Assessment 2001*. National Land & Water Resources Audit, Canberra, 332pp.

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Data sources

Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA), Version 6.1.

Land Tenure in Australia's Rangelands (1955 to 2000), National Land and Water Resources Audit.

National Vegetation Information System, Version 3.0.

1996/97 Land Use of Australia, Version 2.

Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database—CAPAD 2004—Terrestrial.

Notes

- Much larger areas identified in Western Australia, arising from improved data supplied to NVIS. Also increases in Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory.
- See the [Introduction to the MVG fact sheets](#) for further background on this series.

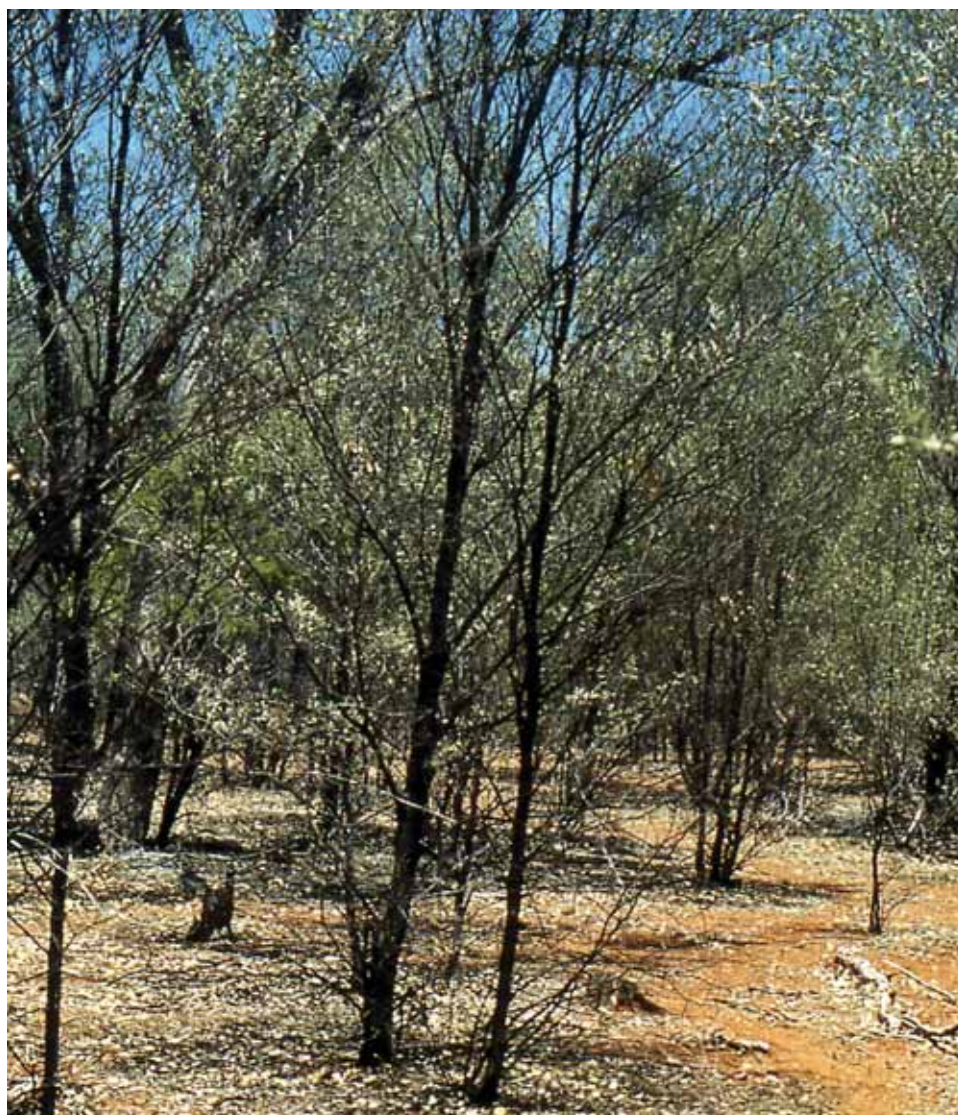


Photo: M Bolton

Mulga, near Charleville, Qld