

MVG 21 – OTHER GRASSLANDS, HERBLANDS, SEDGELANDS AND RUSHLANDS

- Dominated by non-woody or herbaceous species such as grasses, sedges, rushes, ferns or a mixture of these. The sedgeland and rushland are often referred to as wetland communities and support a large range of species, partly as a result of their geographical range and of variation in soils and site conditions.
- Occur on a range of sites from shallow soils to seasonally inundated areas to saline and freshwater (e.g. sedgeland is located on seasonally or periodically inundated water-logged



Photo: M. Fragg

Namadgi National Park, ACT

and wet areas). Ferns tend to dominate specific humid areas where the environment is less variable between seasons.

- Provide local distinctive structural variations in the landscape and a variety of habitats for faunal species.
- Often associated with an overstorey of scattered and isolated trees (e.g. distribution of sedgeland in Western Australia is associated with *Eucalyptus*, *Acacia* and *Melaleuca* species). Other associated species can vary from the large range of short lived ephemeral plants that proliferate after seasonal or cyclonic rains to longer-term perennials that rely on underground organs such as rhizomes. Although the range of species varies in their time of flowering, each tends to flower en masse which provides a colourful feature in the landscape.
- Although these communities are widespread and tend to be related to specific environmental and site conditions, they are generally localised in their extent. As such, many are not mapped individually on broadscale maps. Nevertheless they provide a variety of environments that are critical for many rare and endangered species.
- Some of the communities are relatively restricted in location (e.g. *Gahnia* sedgeland in South Australia and Victoria). Others may occur more widely (e.g. *Gymnoschoenus* (button grass) plains in Tasmania).
- Fire regimes may affect growth and in some instances rapid shifts in floristic and structural components may occur in relation to these events.

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Facts and figures

Major Vegetation Group	MVG 21 – Other Grasslands, Herblands, Sedgeland and Rushlands
Major Vegetation Subgroups (number of NVIS descriptions)	Boulders/rock with algae, lichen or scattered plants, or alpine fjaeldmarks (9) Wet tussock grassland with herbs, sedges or rushes, herblands or ferns (227) Saline or brackish sedgeland or grasslands (39) Sedgeland, rushes or reeds (130) Other grasslands (33)
Typical NVIS structural formations	Sedgeland Tussock grassland Rushland Forbland Bryophyteland Fernland Heathland (The above formations can have a wide range of covers and heights)
Number of IBRA regions	63
Most extensive in IBRA region	Est. pre-1750 and present: Channel Country (Qld, SA, NT and NSW)
Estimated pre-1750 extent (km²)	67 977
Present extent (km²)	64 810
Area protected (km²)	11 112



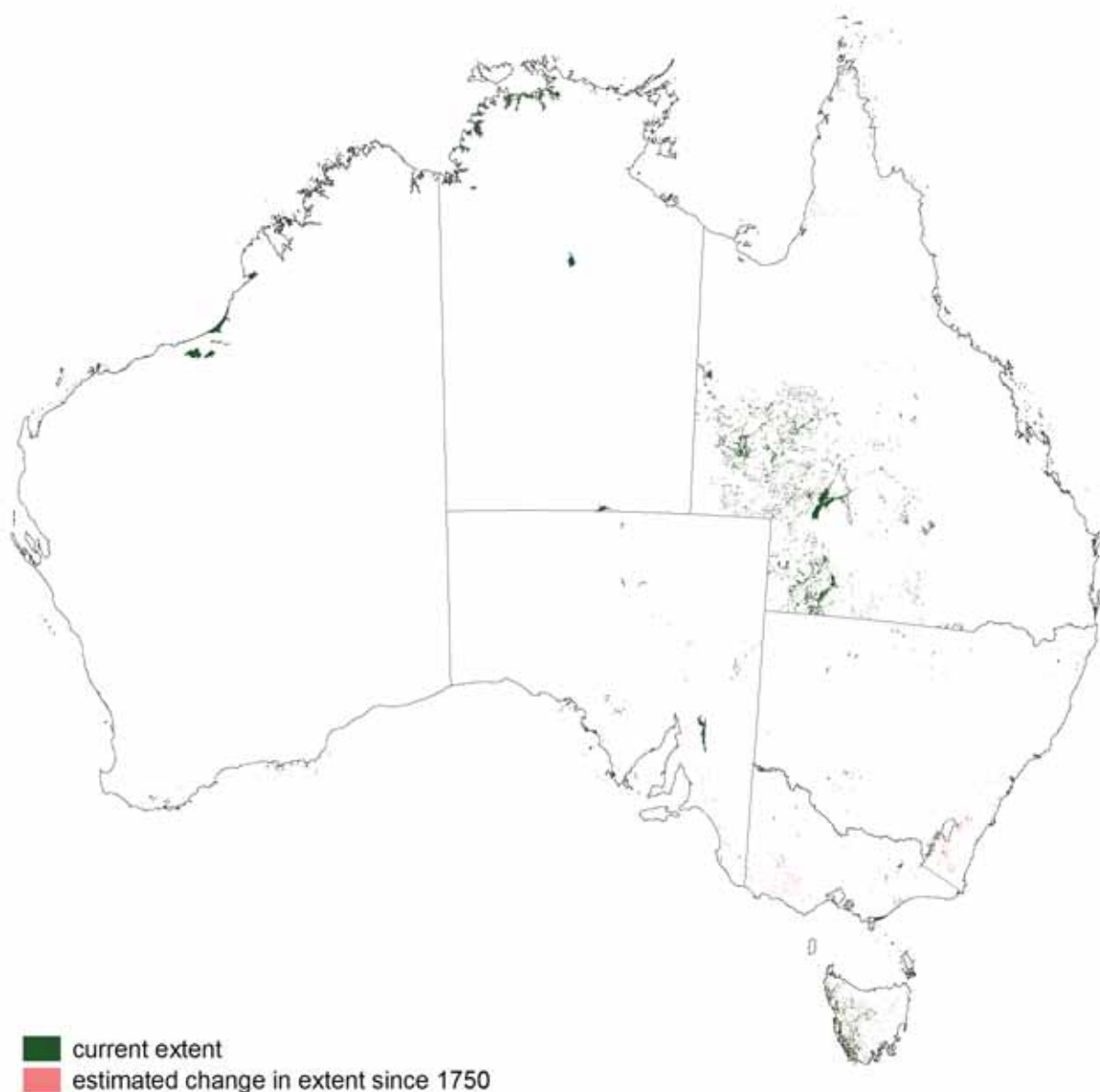
Photo: M. Fagg

Humpty Doo, NT

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Geography

- Occur across Australia with the largest areas in western Queensland and Tasmania where they occur as natural grasslands.
- Variable position ranging from low-lying sites and floodplains to montane and exposed highlands in semi-arid to temperate areas of Australia. Extent of communities is generally very restricted in area as a result of the controlling site factors.
- It is likely that many areas are unmapped and that the restricted and biodiverse nature of the wetland communities requires a finer scale of mapping.



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Change

- Approximately 5% of the estimated pre-1750 extent cleared, accounting for 0.3% of total clearing in Australia.
- Approximately 3 000 km² cleared since European settlement.
- Generally, many of these communities have persisted with time as they tend to occur on extreme sites.
- The changes that have occurred tend to be related the effects of:
 - altered hydrological conditions;
 - changes in fire regimes;
 - impacts from invasive species (feral animals and weeds);
 - impacts of tourism on the flora and fauna species;
 - increasing salinity; and
 - eutrophication (nutrient enrichment of water bodies through natural and human induced activities).

Tenure

Other Grasslands, Herblands, Sedgeland and Rushlands occur largely on leasehold and freehold land.

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

Key values

- Landscape function as natural water filters.
- Biodiversity including species richness, community diversity and critical habitat for rare and endangered species.
- Ecotourism, including bushwalking and landscape features.

These communities appear to attract tourists from a scenic landscape perspective and from the variety of flora and fauna species present. The growth in recent eco-tourism has led to a greater awareness of the need to manage these systems to allow on the one hand the opportunity to readily access these areas, whilst on the other hand protecting the very values that attract the tourists.

Management considerations

- Upstream landscape management.
- Maintenance of natural hydrological regime.
- Pressure from coastal development.
- Tourist/visitor management (e.g. raised walkways and scenic landscapes).
- Maintenance of appropriate 'natural' fire regimes.
- Weed control.
- Feral animals eradication and/or control to reduce pressure on native flora and fauna.

References

Australian Surveying and Land Information Group (1990) *Atlas of Australian Resources. Volume 6 Vegetation*. AUSMAP, Department of Administrative Services, Canberra, 64pp. & 2 maps.

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Environment Australia (2001) *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia*. Third Edition. Environment Australia, Canberra, <<http://www.environment.gov.au/water/wetlands/>>.

National Land & Water Resources Audit (2001) *Australian Native Vegetation Assessment 2001*. National Land & Water Resources Audit, Canberra, 332pp.

Data sources

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

National Vegetation Information System, Version 3.0. 1996/97 Land Use of Australia, Version 2.

Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database—CAPAD 2004—Terrestrial.

Species Profile and Threats (SPRAT) database Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources, <<http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/sprat.pl>>.

Notes

- Many areas assigned to this group in NVIS 1 have been re-interpreted as “cleared” (MVG 25) in NVIS 3.0, based on new data supplied to NVIS and satellite imagery.
- Further areas of this group have been identified in western Queensland from new state data supplied to NVIS.
- See the [Introduction to the MVG Fact Sheets](#) for further background on this series.



Photo: M. Fragg

Turtle Lagoon, Blue Lake National Park, North Stradbroke Island, Qld