PLANTATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR

AUSTRALIAN BLUEGUM PLANTATIONS
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Introduction

Australian Bluegum Plantations (ABP) is a forestry business created in 2009 by Global Forest Partners (GFP) to acquire, manage, and harvest Eucalyptus globulus (Tasmanian blue gum) plantations in Victoria (Vic), South Australia (SA) and Western Australia (WA). Plantations are grown on short rotation cycles (10-15 years) predominantly for the woodchip market to be exported and manufactured into high quality pulp and paper and rayon. The ABP forest estate consists of ABP plantations on ABP owned land, ABP plantations on leased land, and external plantations managed by ABP under a management agreement. It is divided into two operating regions: The Green Triangle (Vic and SA) and Albany (WA). The total plantation area as of November 2015 is 92,230 hectares and the area of native vegetation totals 10,985 hectares.

This plantation management plan details the management objectives for the economic, social and environmental values associated with the forest estate; it describes the history and features of ABP’s Forest Management Unit (FMU); the silvicultural and harvesting systems used; and the risk management procedures. The management plan is supported by various operating procedures as referenced throughout this document. It is reviewed and updated periodically as required.

Management objectives

ABP’s objective is to establish and grow trees applying best practice silvicultural management to produce maximum economic return whilst contributing positively to local communities and the environment in the regions where ABP operates. This will be achieved through:

- Maintaining an ongoing research and development strategy to continually improve silvicultural and harvesting practices.
- Providing and maintaining a safe working environment for staff, contractors and visitors.
- Maintaining, protecting, and enhancing (where feasible to do so) areas of natural forest and/or High Conservation Value (HCV).
- Maintaining natural values, particularly in High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) areas, using management tools such as stock exclusion, fencing, prescribed burning, pest control programs, soil rehabilitation and/or revegetation. Management should be undertaken in consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure the best environmental and social outcomes.
- Conserving other biodiversity values such as soil and water quality, wetlands and riparian zones.
- Identifying and protecting Aboriginal sites and places of significance in consultation with local communities.
- Developing and managing good relationships with stakeholders and the community.
ABP Estate

Forest estate

The ABP estate is summarised below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Area (ha) *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Eucalyptus globulus</em> plantations</td>
<td>92,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remnant vegetation</td>
<td>10,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands &amp; wet areas</td>
<td>1,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inherited Landcare plantings</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total area:</strong></td>
<td><strong>104,365</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Area figure as at November 2015.

The estate areas are maintained in the ‘Estate Area Data’ register located in SinglePort/Forestry/Land and Estate/Estate Information and via the link below. The register breaks the areas down into freehold, leased, management agreements, and recently harvested.

http://singleport/forestry/Shared%20Documents/Forms/Land%20Estate.aspx

The ABP estate is made up of plantations which meet core criteria for growing commercial plantations. This estate also includes other important environmental, social, cultural heritage and nationally significant biodiversity values.

The regions

The regions included within the ABP estate are:

1. The South West of Victoria and South East of South Australia which make up the Green Triangle (GT) region and;

2. The South West and Great Southern region of Western Australia which make up the Albany region.

The following table lists the distance from port, the nearest port and rainfall for each region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Management Unit</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Distance from Port (within)</th>
<th>Nearest Port</th>
<th>Rainfall (annual above)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Green Triangle</td>
<td>South West</td>
<td>200 kms</td>
<td>Portland or Geelong</td>
<td>650mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Green Triangle</td>
<td>South East</td>
<td>200 kms</td>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>600mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Albany</td>
<td>South West &amp; Great Southern</td>
<td>180 kms</td>
<td>Albany or Bunbury</td>
<td>650mm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plantations are established on previously cleared agricultural sites. The majority of these sites are surrounded by agricultural land, however there are plantation blocks that are neighboured by areas of native vegetation and reserves. Areas of remnant vegetation within plantation blocks are excluded from any works, to ensure that their existing condition is maintained.

**Land-use history**

*European*

In the Green Triangle region, the majority of the agricultural land was cleared after World War 1. The region has been predominantly used for grazing and cropping for the past 80 years.

The Albany region did not officially have any European settlement until 1826, when the southern port of Albany (formerly Frederickstown) was settled as a military outpost. Three years later in 1829 the Swan River Colony, later to become Perth, was established. Settlement was dictated by the search for arable land but there were several extravagant schemes that failed largely due to new arrival ignorance associated with the nature of the land they sought to farm and seasonal variability. In 1830 Augusta was made the third settlement after Albany and Perth but more for its strategic location at the extreme southwest tip of Australia than for farming purposes (Southwest Australia Ecoregion Initiative, 2006).

*Aboriginal*

There were three main Aboriginal tribes that inhabited the Green Triangle area prior to European settlement. These are the Tjapwurong, Gunditjmara, and the Bunganditj tribes. Aboriginal inhabitants lived peacefully in the area until European settlement in 1840. By 1865, the population had declined significantly due to disease, displacement, and conflict.

The south west of Western Australia has a unique and important cultural heritage, consisting of many significant sites. Regional landscapes have been populated for at least 50,000 years and the Aboriginal culture and relationships between groups and families are rich and complex. The region provides the home for the Noongar, Yamadji and Wongai people. Aboriginal life relates to the connection of individual people to Aboriginal culture and country, and Aboriginal people have a close, traditional association with many components of the region's natural diversity (Southwest Australia Ecoregion Initiative, 2006).

At acquisition and prior to harvesting, relevant cultural heritage databases are consulted for each property. Further consultation may be required if a site is identified during this process. Cultural heritage sites are recorded in the Natural Values Management and Monitoring Registers.

**Native vegetation and ecosystems**

A high level evaluation of the different vegetation types within ABP’s estate was undertaken using the National Vegetation Information System (NVIS) data. The NVIS is an ongoing collaborative initiative between the Australian and state and territory governments to manage national vegetation data to help improve vegetation planning and management within Australia. It aims to provide consistent and comparable data across all jurisdictions and is the only nationally available source of data for native vegetation. Each state and territory has developed an NVIS-compatible database which is populated with its native vegetation data. It now contains over 9000 distinct vegetation types which have been grouped into 26 Major Vegetation Groups (MVGs) and 67 Major Vegetation Sub-groups. In broad terms, the MVGs are based on typical aggregations of the structure (especially height and cover), growth form and floristic composition (vascular plant species) in the dominant stratum of each vegetation type in the NVIS database (Department of Environment and Water 2007). The allocation of NVIS vegetation types to MVGs and MVSs has been validated by NVIS partners in each state and territory.
The ABP estate has been overlayed with the data for the MVGs, which can be viewed in Appendix 1 and 2. The Appendices include the MVGs with the greatest coverage in the regions and a link to the related fact sheets which includes information on representative species by state, distribution and major threats.

**Hydrological flows and regional catchment goals**

Since 2004 there have been several studies into the effects of plantations on water flows and usage (see Parsons *et al.* (2007) for a review). Below is a summary of what is currently known about plantations and water:

- Timber plantations, like all forms of agricultural crops, intercept and use water.
- Trees have a longer growing season, more foliage and deeper roots than pasture or crops.
- Timber plantations improve water quality, and assist in reversing salinity and erosion.
- The effect on stream flow of converting agricultural land to timber plantation is related to the catchment area affected.
- In smaller catchments, it is difficult to detect an impact when less than 20% of the catchment is planted.
- In major plantation regions, plantations occupy between 1% and 6% of large catchments.

Parsons *et al.* (2007) identify some key management actions that could help minimise reforestation water use, including:

- Establishing plantations further away from streams (ABP implements setbacks);
- Establishing plantations in strips across the contour (ABP uses this management strategy);
- Targeting new plantation establishment in lower rainfall areas (<800 mm/year) where reductions in water yields are smaller;
- Dispersing plantations across the landscape and keeping them to less than 20% of a catchment area (local government planning);
- Phasing planting to give a spread of age classes; and
- Thinning plantations to maintain them at a lower stocking density.

Whilst information and predictive modelling is improving, there are still many topics that warrant further research. ABP is committed to keeping abreast of scientific information relating to plantations and water use and any recommended management tools to mitigate potential negative impacts on stream flows and groundwater.

ABP’s estate is located across several catchments in each of the regions. Refer to Appendix 3 and 4 for an overlay of catchments and the ABP estate. Regional catchment strategies were reviewed and any applicable regional catchment goals, along with ABP’s compliance, are recorded in the relevant Natural Values Management and Monitoring Registers.

The development of plantations in catchments has the ability to improve water quality and degradation.

In Western Australia the Denmark River has had significant improvement in water quality since 1987, which has been attributed to the establishment of commercial tree plantations and revegetation works in
the catchment. “The Denmark River will soon be fresh enough for drinking water supply, making it the first river in Australia to be recovered from salinity.” (Ward, B., Sparks, T., and Blake, G., 2011)

Natural values

Properties acquired by ABP may contain natural values of unique importance for example High Conservation Values (HCV); threatened plants, animals and communities, Aboriginal and cultural heritage and wetlands. In accordance with the company’s environmental objectives, legal and other requirements and certification, ABP have developed a Natural Values Management Plan (MP-2058) which describes how to identify, assess, manage and monitor these special values. In summary, values are identified and assessed prior to establishment using a variety of sources in particular national and state databases and consultation with stakeholders. Where available, Recovery Plans, Approved Conservation Advices and similar material are collected and the information from these considered when determining management and monitoring prescriptions.

Following identification and assessment, management and monitoring programs are determined through consultation with key stakeholders and operations staff. Subsequently these are documented in the relevant Natural Values Management and Monitoring Register. Key measures used to manage HCV include establishment of exclusion zones and setbacks; fencing and stock exclusion; weed and pest control programs and extensive training and awareness programs with staff and contractors.

Environment and hazard maps and historical plantation maps show location of HCV areas and other sites of significance.

Opportunities sometimes arise to participate in agency and non-government biodiversity rehabilitation programs that aim to enhance, restore and protect remnant vegetation and natural ecosystems. If considered practicable and a budget exists for the work, landscape restoration is carried out using endemic seed and seedlings. Prescribed burning may be undertaken in cases where it has been recommended as part of a HCVF assessment or a stakeholder such as Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) or Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) have approached ABP.

In most instances remnant vegetation and selected paddock trees are retained on ABP properties and an appropriate buffer applied. Where remnants are hazardous they will be assessed and removed under standard regulatory processes.

Off-site impacts are managed through careful consideration of other values and mitigating actions captured in standard operating procedures.

Estate maps

There are various maps used to manage the ABP estate which include regional, plantation, environment and hazard; and HCVF. These are housed in the GIS server.

Non-Timber Forest Products

Non-timber forest products are defined as ‘All forest products except timber, including other materials obtained from trees such as resins and leaves, as well as any other plant and animal products’.

The plantation estate has a range of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) which can benefit ABP and stakeholders. These are:

Agistment of plantations. Neighbours and other community members approach ABP to seek approval for agistment. Approval is granted if there is a need for reducing fuel loads and the property does not contain HCVs that are threatened by grazing. Once approval is granted, an Access Agreement is provided and signed by the agistee and ABP. The Access Agreement contains important information on
financial, legal, health and safety, and environmental considerations. The agreement is entered into the Master List on SinglePort. The number of hectares and head of livestock is inventoried. Monitoring occurs during routine plantation health surveillance.

**Hay cutting.** Permitting the harvesting of hay reduces fuel loads and makes use of a non-plantable areas. Hay harvesters must provide their own safe plant and equipment. Hay cutting is also managed through the signing of an Access Agreement and entered into the Master List. The areas of hay cut is inventoried and entered into the Master List.

**Seed Orchard.** The seed orchard is located in Albany WA and is 8.56 hectares in size. The seed orchard consists of *Eucalyptus globulus* trees. ABP maintains a Seed Database which includes information on (among others) seedlot, weight of seed harvested, number of seed, and value. The Seed Database is maintained by the R&D Manager. The seed orchard is also monitored annually for genetic gain, flower count, pollination etc. and the results kept in the ‘Millbrook Seed Orchard Design’ Spreadsheet on the Albany L drive.

**Forest management prescriptions**

In establishing and managing plantations, a number of key tasks need to be undertaken to ensure a successful and viable outcome. The key tasks in establishing and managing plantations are listed below with reference to the appropriate operating procedures. The referenced procedures are all available on the SinglePort Intranet in ‘Controlled documents’.

**Evaluation and mapping (OP-7006)**

This procedure describes the criteria for selecting land to establish plantations including soil types and depth, rainfall, and special values. It describes the mapping process for capturing features and applying setbacks.

**Clean-up (OP-7009)**

The procedure describes the various operations involved in clean-up such as infrastructural removal, hazardous tree management, burning, and stump management whilst considering important values such as wetland, cultural heritage, prevention of pest animals and protecting underground assets.

**Cultivation (OP-7013)**

The procedure describes the operational and contractor considerations for cultivating the soil and forming mounds ready for planting.

**Seedling Quality Assurance Manual (OP-7051)**

A procedure which covers all aspects of seed propagation, soil medium, seedling trays, seedling quality and specifications.

**Planting (OP-7015)**

An operational procedure describing the considerations for planting including seedling delivery, selection of dump sites, seedling care and protection, and planting out.

**Weed and Pest Control (OP-7018)**

A procedure which covers all aspects of applying an integrated approach to pest and weed management including research into non-chemical alternative methods of control.
Weed and Pest Control Reference Guide

A chart detailing different chemical prescriptions for the different spray operations used in a typical pulpwood rotation.

Nutrition (OP-7021)

A procedure which describes the considerations required before undertaking a fertiliser program, the typical applications, and the operational and contractor considerations.

Plantation Surveillance (OP-7030)

A procedure which details the various forms of monitoring programs undertaken such as foliar sampling, survival counts, routine health monitoring, wilding spread monitoring.

Inventory (OP-7024)

This procedure describes how and when the plantation resource is measured to provide estimates of yield.

Green Triangle Fire Management Plan (OP-2006)

A management plan to detail the fire protection and fire readiness for each fire season in the Green Triangle region.

Western Australian Fire Management Plan (OP-2003)

A management plan to detail the fire protection and fire readiness for each fire season in the Albany region.

Management of Contractors and Suppliers (MP-3000) and individual work instructions (WI-3000-3006)

A management procedure to describe the contractor management system including pre-contract assessments, contractor induction, monitoring and review. Special work instructions are provided to contractors and detail the operational prescriptions and environmental safeguards that must be complied with.

Emergency Planning and Response (MP-2009)

This procedure details the emergency planning process and the emergency response details for the potential emergency situations that ABP personnel and contractors may encounter.

Natural Values Management Plan (MP-7020)

A mentioned earlier, the management procedure describes the systematic process for identifying, assessing, managing and monitoring natural values inherent on the properties ABP manages.

Koala Plan (OP-7423)

This management plan details ABP’s koala program, in particular koala spotting, operational control processes, injury management, koala welfare monitoring, training and review requirements. All relevant staff and contractors must be trained in this plan or equivalent standard operating procedure.
Harvesting

All ABP properties will be mechanically harvested. The method of harvesting may vary depending on the destination of the product. Trees will either be harvested, debarked, cut to length and transported in log form or will be harvested, debarked, chipped onsite and transported to a receive facility. The annual harvest is determined by resource availability and market access. Long term sustainable wood supply volume predictions are determined through annual Woodstock modelling.

For further information refer to:

- Harvest Operations (OP-7403)
- Harvest Planning (OP-7400)
- Chain of Custody (OP-7433)
- Controlled Wood (OP-7434)

Risk management

Risk management is carried out on all operations to identify and evaluate risks and to develop effective and efficient control measures for significant risks (Risk Assessment & Management Procedure (MP-2000)).

Risk management ensures that operations are conducted in a way that ensures protection of the environment; safety of staff, contractors and the community; and sustainable economic returns for investors. It also ensures regulatory requirements are met. Contractors have their own operating and safety systems which are assessed at the initiation of their contract and audited regularly.

Security management

Plantations are a worksite and access to them needs to be controlled. Plantation Supervisors are responsible for managing security/access issues on their plantations. Plantation fences shall be maintained and gates shall be chained and padlocked. In certain circumstances gates may be unlocked. Any thefts, damage, trespass, presence of stock or other illegal activity shall be reported to the relevant authority.

Research and development

ABP maintains a Research and Development Strategy that aims to:

- Improve the financial return to ABP’s fund investors, by providing economically viable, sustainable solutions delivering best practice forest management and continued growth of forest value.
- Improve the management capability of ABP staff by delivering timely and accurate data to incorporate into operational practices and procedures.
- Enhance market competitiveness by generating operating efficiencies and providing innovative management solutions.
- Continual development of management expertise and industry knowledge ensuring ABP’s investor returns expectations are delivered.
• Support the development of new markets and opportunities that provide certainty of cash-flow

Refer to the ABP Research and Development Strategy at Forestry/Research and Development/R&D Administration for more information.

Socio-economic impacts

Results from recent studies demonstrate that development of plantations can contribute to stable economic growth in regional areas (Plantations in Australia 2010, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences 2015). In the Albany region over 263,400 ha of *E. globulus* occur in the region (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences 2015), along with softwood plantations and a smaller area of sandalwood and oil mallee plantations. Bluegum plantations were established in the GT region as a new industry, with plantation area growing from 675 ha in 1991 to 148,900 ha in 2006 (Plantation in Australia 2010), with 170,700ha of *E. globulus* in 2014 (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences 2015). By 2006, approximately 240 people were employed directly in the GT forest industry (Schirmer et. al., 2009). Plantations have been established on agricultural land leased or purchased from landholders (Schirmer, 2009).

Rapid establishment of large areas of plantation in a region can influence rural land prices by creating higher demand for rural land. During the transition and mature phases of a plantation estate, employment in the plantation sector increases rapidly. A large proportion of this employment is generated in the harvesting, transport and processing of wood products. The presence of processing facilities in regional areas can help to reduce or prevent population decline by providing an alternative source of employment (Plantations in Australia, 2010).

Long-term socio-economic studies show the following trends:

• Employment and local economies (WA): 0.45 jobs/100 ha in hardwood industry, compared to 1.45 in softwood, almost entirely related to processing industry

• Compared to other land uses: before the farm gate (ie before you cut trees down), blue gums 0.20 jobs/100 ha compared to beef (0.22), cropping (0.23) and sheep (0.33), so forestry slightly below other rural industries but not significantly different. However past the farm gate, forestry adds another 0.30 – 0.45 jobs in harvesting and haulage, compared to the other farming pursuits with 0.01 – 0.03 jobs/100 ha because agricultural raw product leaves the state before it is value-added.

• Type of jobs: more FTE jobs in forestry than the entire labour force and almost identical to agriculture at 75% (albeit silvicultural contractors – planting, nurseries – have 60-70% casual workers).

• Location of jobs: as land use changes to plantations, the jobs move to regional centres from rural land or small towns with < 1000 people.

• Net population change:  depends on land tenure and tree ownership.
  
  o Establish own plantations: no change to population – they continue to live on their land
  
  o Lease land to company: net change over time, negative 3%
  
  o Sell land to company: net change over time, negative 7 – 19%
• **Does plantation expansion affect rural population numbers at a LGA scale?** Data says that other factors have a stronger affect, such as proximity to coast and cities, farm amalgamation and sea-changers. Inland areas are in decline because they aren’t near cities or the beach.

• **Types of people in the community:** Where property leased, 10% turnover; where property sold, 75% turnover. Residents have mixed views on this ambivalent views towards this from, “My best friend has moved and I’m devastated,” to, “Thank goodness that mongrel’s gone.”

• **Affect on rural service provision and community groups:** Generally says that there is a drop off but less than 30% in most instances and this likely to happen anyway, with other influences.
  
  - Schools: enrolments drop off before plantations arrive as older residents are more likely to sell/lease and move off
  
  - Rural fire brigades: 40% no change, 30% change location, 30% stop membership
  
  - Service groups: 68% no change, 32% cease membership
  
  - Sporting groups: 45% no change, 33% change location, 22% stop membership

• **Rural land price:** plantation land price increases are in line with increases in other areas. Rainfall and distance-to-coast are better indicators of increasing land value than presence/absence of plantations

• **Effect on traditional rural industries:** Whilst there was a strong trend of people getting out of sheep farming to sell/lease land for plantations during the plantation expansion phase / the MIS years of late 1990’s to 2008. The trend has ceased with rationalisation, plantation estate’s reaching economies of scale and recovery of Agricultural markets.

Research on the socio-economic impacts of plantations is ongoing. This research has been conducted by the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Forestry ‘Communities Project’, which has been investing in research into the social dimensions of Australia’s forest industries to ensure our forest and plantation management is socially as well as environmentally sustainable. Community engagement and commitment to corporate social responsibility by Australian Forest Companies is project work that ABP has been involved in together with the University of Tasmania. ABP will keep abreast of research and review its policies and procedures in light of new information, as and where required.

The Stakeholder Communication and Consultation Policy and Procedure (OP-2803) outlines ABP’s approach to stakeholder engagement. The policy is available on the ABP website.

**Monitoring**

Monitoring the economic, safety, social and environmental components of ABP’s activities is conducted in accordance with the Monitoring Schedule located at SinglePort/Forestry/HSEC/Registers.

ABP will report publically on the ABP website the results of a key selection of economic, social and environmental indicators on an annual basis:

**Training and review**

Initial training in the management plan occurs as part of inductions. Then following any reviews/updates of the plan staff will receive refresher training from the Health, Safety, Environment and Communication (HSEC) Officers and a copy of the Plan provided to staff.
This management plan will be reviewed as required as part of the Management Review process (refer to the HSEC Management System Guide). Any results from forest surveillance, operational and/or environmental monitoring will be taken into account as part of this review. The review table below shows date of review, the reviewers, a summary of changes/additions made as a result of the review, current version number and approval history.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reviewed by</th>
<th>Summary of changes/additions</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Approved</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15/05/2014</td>
<td>E Silberberg; LTomlinson</td>
<td>Security management, p.10; Natural values, p. 7, para 5,</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>C. Richardson; MDiedrichs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Estate areas updated, soil objective added, NTFP added.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17/06/2014</td>
<td>E Silberberg; LTomlinson</td>
<td>NTFP amended, Prescribed burning added.</td>
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<td>C. Richardson, MDiedrichs</td>
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<td>30/11/2015</td>
<td>R. Sharp</td>
<td>Minor amendments- areas updated, monitoring indicators reviewed, link to monitoring schedule.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>C. Richardson, MDiedrichs</td>
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**References**


Plantations in Australia (2010), Social: Plantations and Communities


APPENDIX 1. Major Vegetation Groups of the Green Triangle Region

In decreasing area of coverage within the Green Triangle FMU, the MVGs within or adjacent to the estate include:

**Eucalyptus Woodlands**  

**Eucalypt Low Open Forest**  
APPENDIX 2. Major Vegetation Groups of the Albany Region

In decreasing area of coverage within the Albany FMU, the MVGs within or adjacent to the estate include:

**Eucalypt Open Forests**

**Eucalypt Low Open Forest**
APPENDIX 3. Water Catchments of the Green Triangle Region
APPENDIX 4. Water Catchments of the Albany Region