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Bureau of Rural Sciences

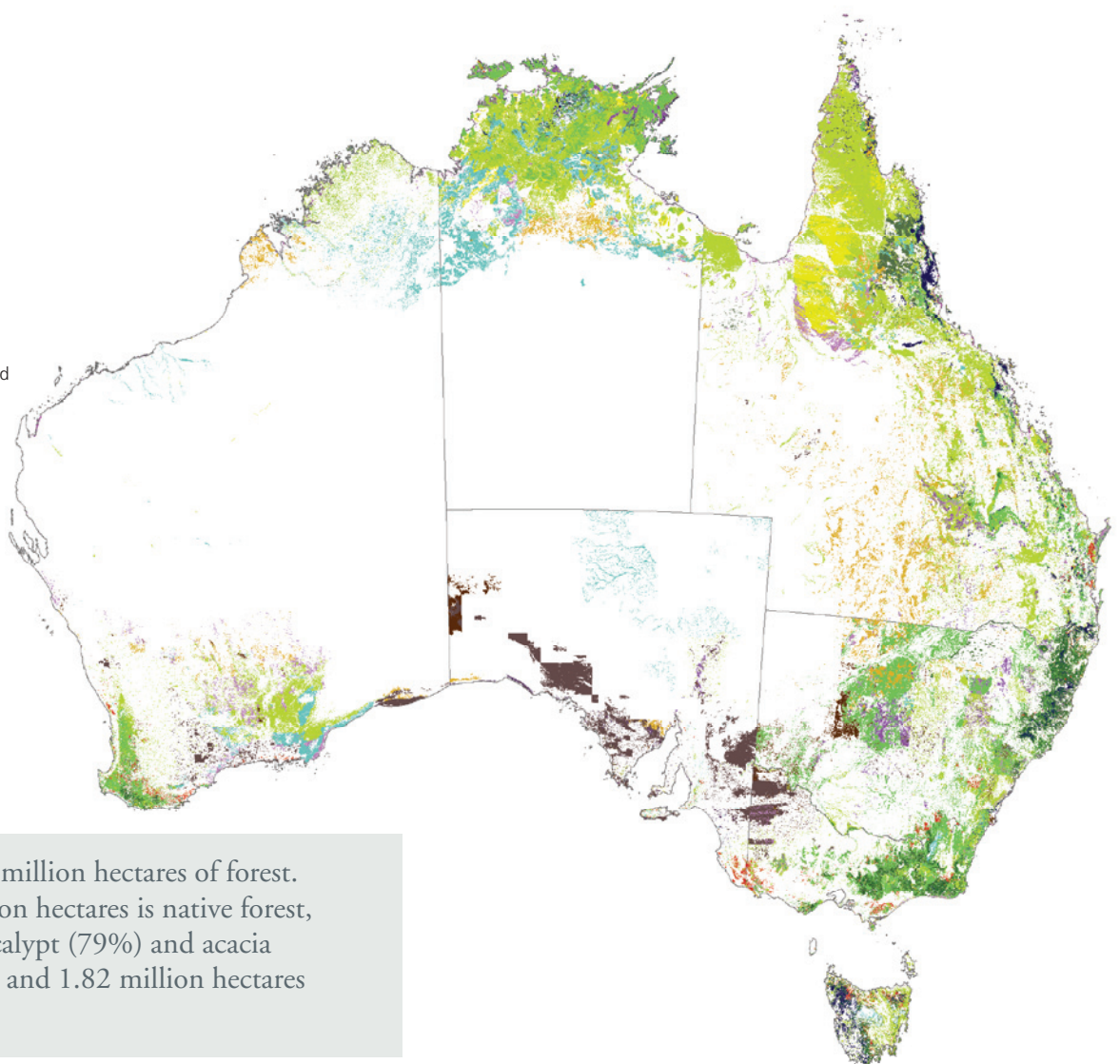
State of Australia's forests Type and extent



Forest types (left to right): Acacia, Eucalypt mallee woodland, Casuarina, Plantation.

Legend

- Acacia
- Callitris
- Casuarina
- Eucalypt low closed
- Eucalypt low open
- Eucalypt low woodland
- Eucalypt mallee open
- Eucalypt mallee woodland
- Eucalypt medium closed
- Eucalypt medium open
- Eucalypt medium woodland
- Eucalypt tall closed
- Eucalypt tall open
- Eucalypt tall woodland
- Plantation
- Mangroves
- Melaleuca
- Rainforest
- Other
- Non-forest / no data



Australia has 149 million hectares of forest. Of this, 147 million hectares is native forest, dominated by eucalypt (79%) and acacia (7%) forest types, and 1.82 million hectares is plantations.

The increasing availability of high-resolution, remote sensing data and better methods for determining forest continue to improve estimates of Australia's forest cover. This largely explains the change in estimated total forest area from 164 million hectares in 2003 to 149 million hectares reported here; little of the change is due to real forest loss.

Seventy percent of the total forest estate is privately managed, including on private freehold, leasehold and Indigenous-managed lands. The area of Australia's native forest in formal nature conservation reserves increased from 13% to 16% over the reporting period, to 23 million hectares. The area of multiple-use public native forests (in which wood production is an objective) declined from 11.4 to 9.4 million hectares.



Forest types (left to right): Melaleuca, Plantation, Eucalypt closed, Rainforest.

With an estimated 4% of the world's forests, Australia has the world's sixth-largest forest estate and the fourth-largest area of forest in nature conservation reserves.

The vast majority of Australia's native forest is evergreen broadleaf. With the notable exception of mallee, forest distribution is confined mainly to regions with an average rainfall exceeding 500 millimetres per year. Most forests occur in the northern, eastern and southwestern coastal zones, although woodland forests extend inland (see figure on page 1).

For national reporting purposes, forests are grouped into eight native forest types defined by dominant species (Table 1) and structure. The first seven are: acacia, callitris, casuarina, eucalypt (divided into 11 subtypes), mangrove, melaleuca and rainforest. The eighth group, 'other', comprises forest types with relatively small total areas. Queensland has the largest area of forest (35% of the total), about half of which is classified as eucalypt medium woodland. The Northern Territory has about 20% of the forest estate, mostly low and medium eucalypt woodland and medium open eucalypt forest. Queensland and the Northern Territory also contain almost all (98%) of the melaleuca forest. New South Wales has about 18% of the total forest area, including about 16 million hectares of tall and medium open forest. The area of forest as a percentage of the total land area ranges from 55% in the Australian Capital Territory to 7% in Western Australia (Table 2).

Table 1: Australia's forest area, by forest type

Forest type	Total ('000 ha)	% of total
Native forest		
Acacia	10,365	7
Callitris	2,597	2
Casuarina	2,229	1
Eucalypt	116,449	78
Eucalypt low closed	44	0.03
Eucalypt low open	2,648	2
Eucalypt low woodland	13,423	9
Eucalypt mallee open	376	0.3
Eucalypt mallee woodland	8,871	6
Eucalypt medium closed	254	0.2
Eucalypt medium open	28,145	19
Eucalypt medium woodland	56,187	38
Eucalypt tall closed	123	0.1
Eucalypt tall open	5,881	4
Eucalypt tall woodland	497	0.3
Mangrove	980	1
Melaleuca	7,556	5
Rainforest	3,280	2
Other	3,942	3
Native forest total	147,397	99
Plantation ^a	1,818	1
Australian forest total	149,215	100

a Comprises both hardwood and softwood plantations.

Note: Totals might not tally due to rounding.

Source: National Forest Inventory, National Plantation Inventory.

Table 2: Forest as a percentage of land area, by jurisdiction

	Native forest area ^a ('000 ha)	Plantation area ^b ('000 ha)	Total land area ^c ('000 ha)	Forest as % of jurisdiction	% of Australia's forest
ACT	123	10	243	55	<1
NSW	26,208	345	80,064	33	18
NT	31,010	26	134,913	23	21
Qld	52,582	233	173,065	31	35
SA	8,855	172	98,348	9	6
Tas.	3,116	248	6,840	49	2
Vic.	7,838	396	22,742	36	5
WA	17,664	389	252,988	7	12
Total	147,397	1,818	769,202	19	100

Sources: a) NFI, b) Parsons and Gavran (2007), c) ABS (2006a)

Note: Totals might not tally due to rounding.

Further reading

Davidson J, Davey S, Singh S, Parsons M, Stokes B and Gerrand A (2008). *The Changing Face of Australia's Forests*, Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra.

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