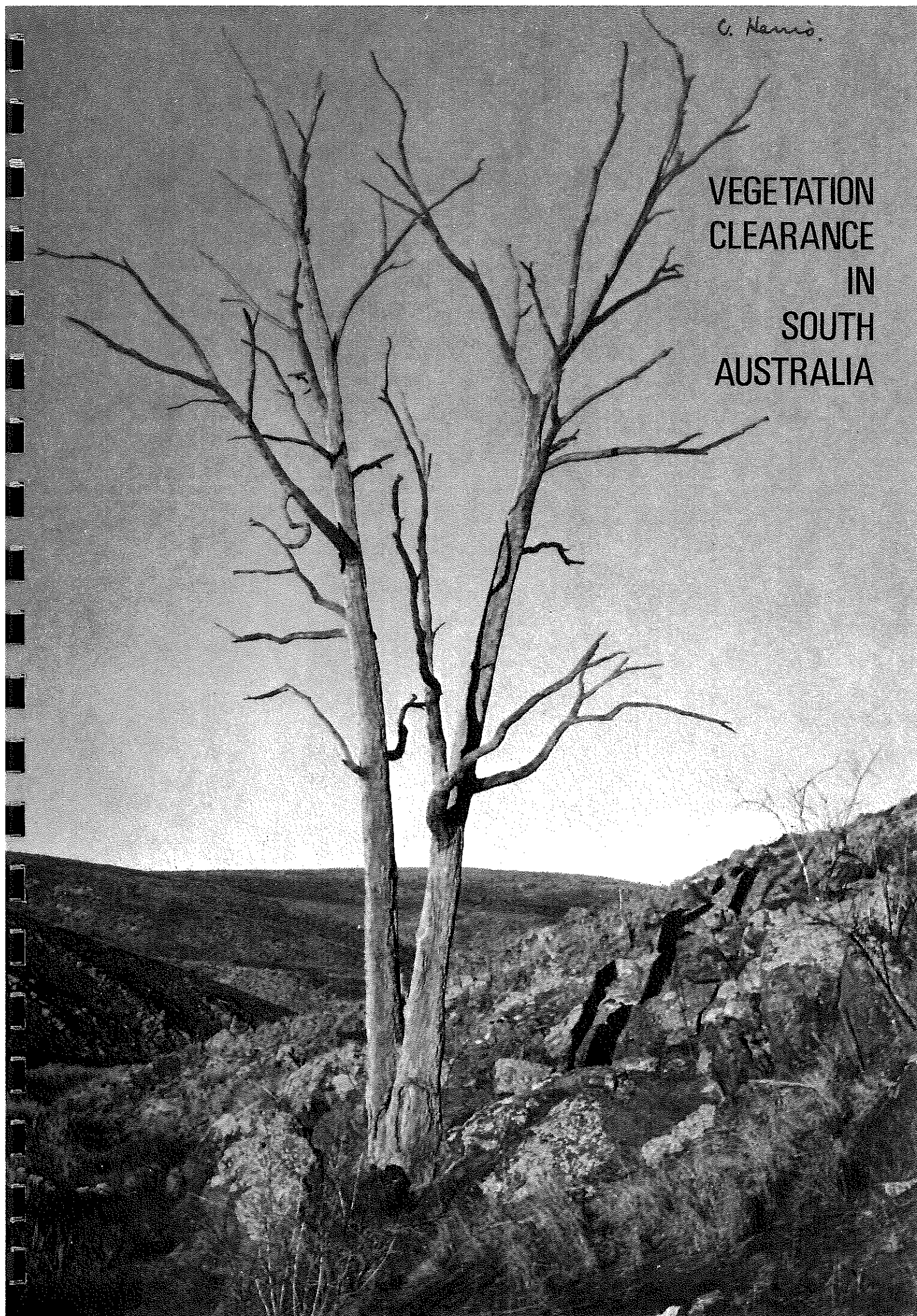


C. Harris.

VEGETATION
CLEARANCE
IN
SOUTH
AUSTRALIA



THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VEGETATION
CLEARANCE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Chairman

Mr Colin R.Harris, M.A., Dip.Ed., Dip.T., Environmental Officer,
Environment Division, Department for the Environment.

Members

Mr J.A.Beare, B.Ag.Sc., Chief Soils Officer, Soil Conservation Branch,
Department of Agriculture.

Mr N.B.Lewis, B.Sc., Dip.For.(Canb.) Dip.For.(Oxon.), F.I.F.A., Chief,
Forest Management Division, Woods and Forest Department (replacing as from
29 January 1975 Mr V.M.Healy, B.Sc., Dip.For.(Canb.), Assistant
Conservator, Woods and Forests Department). While absent overseas in 1976
Mr Lewis was represented by Mr D.R.Douglas, B.Sc., Dip.For.(Canb.),
Dip.For.(Oxon.), F.I.F.A., Assistant Chief, Forest Management Division,
Woods and Forests Department.

Mr G.P.Roe, B.Ag.Sc., R.D.A., A.C.I.V., Assistant Director of
Lands, Department of Lands.

Secretary

Mr C.K.Toohey (until 29 January 1975).

Mr T.D.Frewin (until 28 May 1975).

Mr A.T.H.Dendy, B.App.Sc. (Ecol.), N.C.A., (from 28 May 1975)

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

On 15 July 1974, Cabinet approved the formation of an Inter-departmental Committee on Vegetation Clearance with terms of reference as follows:

The Committee on Vegetation Clearance will inquire into and report on the following aspects of vegetation clearance in South Australia:

- 1. The extent of vegetation clearance, with particular emphasis on post World War II developments and likely future trends.*
- 2. The factors influencing vegetation clearance; economic conditions, Government rural policy and incentives, technological developments in resource extraction and/or utilization, existing legislative and administrative controls of vegetation clearance, and any other factors considered relevant by the Committee.*
- 3. The principles of sound land use management as they relate to the clearance of native vegetation.*
- 4. The controls necessary to ensure that any future vegetation clearance is in accordance with principles of sound land use management.*
- 5. The means whereby retention of appropriate areas of natural vegetation may be encouraged.*
- 6. Any other aspects of vegetation clearance considered by the Committee to be relevant to their inquiry.*

SUMMARY

1. (2.25, 2.4)
(2.10, 2.13) A record of the present state of the clearance of natural vegetation in South Australia has been compiled (Figure 2.1). It is noteworthy that the older settled regions of the State have been almost totally cleared of natural vegetation. Elsewhere very large areas have been cleared under post World War II land development schemes.
2. (3.32) The upsurge of vegetation clearance since World War II resulted from a complex interaction between the physical environment and a variety of economic factors, Government policies, and technological developments in land utilization and management.
3. (2.29, 3.24-
3.29, 3.35) There has been a reduction in the rate of land clearance in recent years, but the Committee believes that a future demand for increased rural production may result in moves to clear and develop land presently uncleared in the existing agricultural regions.
4. (3.34) Those areas of land still uncleared in the existing agricultural regions are already subject to a variety of competing land-use claims and therefore are a resource of increasing importance.
5. (4.11) Because of the increasing importance of the declining areas of uncleared land, the Committee considers it most important that vegetation clearance in the future should require more justification than now is required by statute.
6. (4.10, 4.12) In assessing the justification for further land clearance, the Committee believes that the uncleared land itself, adjacent cleared lands, and the uses to which both are to be put, must all be considered.

7.
(5.24) The effective long term control of vegetation clearance should thus comprise part of overall land use plans. To implement such plans would require the constitution of a carefully balanced and competent 'land use authority'. While the Committee believes that such an authority should be formed as a long term answer to the problem, it considers it vital that a means to limit further clearing should be initiated in the immediate short term. Measures are proposed to achieve this aim.
8.
(4.10)
(6.18) Conservation of vegetation on private lands is seen as an essential complement to the parks and reserves administered by Government. Financial and non-financial incentives are seen as possible ways of contributing to such conservation.
9.
(6.19,6.20) The Committee has examined a number of incentive schemes aimed at easing the pressures to clear vegetation, and has also reviewed a legal agreement which may prove suitable to ensure that a chosen form of incentive is not subjected to abuse for personal financial gain.
- The costs of alternative forms of incentive have not been evaluated because of time limitations and complexity. The Committee believes, however, that an investigation of these is important and necessary.
10.
(7.1-7.9) Vegetation clearance for other than agricultural purposes, while sometimes of specific interest and sometimes of considerable environmental impact, has not been subjected to detailed examination by the Committee, but comments are made with respect to afforestation with exotic pines, mining and quarrying, and clearance for public works.
- (7.10-7.13) The importance of the protection of roadside vegetation is acknowledged by the Committee and suggestions are made regarding the future of the Roadside Vegetation Committee.

11.

(7.14-7.19)

The Committee, finally, points to the importance of ensuring that areas of native vegetation reserved or retained on private lands for conservation purposes are ensured longevity by implementing appropriate measures for the regeneration of species. It is recommended that a proposed Advisory Committee on Vegetation Clearance advise on the implementation of extension assistance for the management of uncleared areas of native vegetation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends:

1. That the map (Figure 2.1 herein) showing the present
(2.30.1) extent of vegetation clearance throughout the southern
 agricultural regions of the State be made available to
 the public.
2. That all land carrying native vegetation which is proposed
(4.18.1) for clearance should be assessed for its significance and
 relevance to a variety of possible uses or needs.
3. That, following assessment, lands recommended to remain
(4.18.2) uncleared should be proposed for those single or multiple
 uses for which they are most suited, and which are
 appropriate to community needs.
4. That uncleared lands which have been assessed and approved
(4.18.3) for clearance should be developed in accordance with
 recognised and proven land management techniques.
5. That to ensure future vegetation clearance is in accordance
(5.26) with principles of sound land use and land management,
 land use planning through a land use authority should be
 implemented.
6. That as there is an urgent need to restrain the rate of land
(5.27) clearance, and as the establishment of a land use authority
 would necessarily take some considerable time, an interim
 or short term measure operable within existing statutes and
 existing administrative frameworks be established immediately,
 with the aim of achieving a reasonable degree of the restraint
 sought.
7. That establishment and administration of the interim measure
(5.28) be entrusted to the Director, Department for the
 Environment, and that he be assisted by an Advisory Committee
 on Vegetation Clearance.
8. That in establishing and administering the interim measure,
(5.29) attention be given to:

- (5.29.1) 8.1 The need to establish a close local liaison with rural interests.
- (5.29.2) 8.2 The need to establish an efficient administrative system.
- 9. That the interim measure be monitored for its effectiveness and, if circumstances warrant, it be reviewed three years after the date of implementation.
(5.30)
- 10. That immediate attention be given to determining reasonable and fair incentives to encourage landholders to retain appropriate areas of native vegetation in an uncleared state, with initial attention being directed towards those variations of State and Local Government rates and taxes which appear most appropriate.
(6.20.1)
- 11. That all possible incentive schemes be costed and evaluated against their likely effectiveness.
(6.20.2)
- 12. That the Crown Solicitor, using the proposed Heritage Agreement as a guide, be asked to draft a model agreement which would both permit the retention of natural vegetation on private lands in perpetuity and also ensure that a chosen form of incentive is not subject to abuse.
(6.20.3)
- 13. That where a landholder has approved plans to retain and conserve appropriate areas of native vegetation, extension assistance should be made available to the landholder to advise on the protection, regeneration and other management aspects relevant to the area.
(7.20.1)
- 14. That the proposed Advisory Committee on Vegetation Clearance advise the Director, Department for the Environment, on implementation of extension assistance for the management of uncleared areas of native vegetation.
(7.20.2)