

2.0 THE AUSTRALIAN MARKET

It is interesting and useful to study conditions in the Australian forestry sector generally and to examine present and future trends and conditions.

A resource map of the Australian continent shows that this country is not overly endowed with forest cover. In fact, of the 3 million square miles of land only 120,000 square miles, or 4 percent, contains viable commercial forests. This compares with Canada which, with 3.86 million square miles of land, has 1.3 million square miles of forests. On the other hand, Australia contains more forests than most European countries.

Australia's forested areas are mainly located down the eastern Great Dividing Range which takes in a large part of Victoria but peters out near the South Australian border. The island state of Tasmania is nearly 50 percent forested while good stands of native and plantation timbers can be found south of Perth in Western Australia.

On a State-by-State basis, the following estimates of forest areas in Australia show native forests and softwood plantations as at 1987 :-

	('000 hectares)	
	Native Forests	Plantation
New South Wales	14962	227
Victoria	5261	197
Queensland	7720	183
Western Australia	2674	77
South Australia	1	90
Tasmania	2865	65
Northern Territory	816	4
A.C.T.	51	14
TOTALS	34350	857

The above statistics were extracted from a report prepared in 1989 for the Australian Forestry Council. This report showed that of the 34.3 million hectares of native forest, the greater part was eucalypt with the remainder being cypress pine, and tropical, sub-tropical and temperate rain forests. Public native forests comprise 73 percent and this is classified into 3 categories: multiple use State forest (48 percent); unoccupied or leased crown land where wood harvesting is carried out under government control (34 percent); and National and State Parks where wood production is excluded (18 percent). By the time special restriction areas are excluded, only 7 million hectares are available for wood production, or around 27 percent of the total.

It is of interest to note that there are only about 50,000 hectares of hardwood plantations in Australia. However, for the past four years a joint research project called the Young Eucalypt Program has been underway in Tasmania and Victoria. When the report from this project is released it is expected to highlight the value of intensive management of young eucalypts in producing wood fibre and sawlog resource and will also detail those plantation management and harvesting practices found to be efficient.