

## Foreword

### NSW Vegetation Classification and Assessment Project

This issue of *Cunninghamia* contains the first two papers of a project involving the classification and assessment of the native vegetation of New South Wales, Australia (NSWVCA). Besides developing a comprehensive typology of the vegetation, the project aims to assess the protected area and threat status of the State's vegetation. It collates information on vegetation composition, geographic distribution of plant communities, physiographic features, threats, aspects of condition, planning and management and representation in protected areas into a single database system. A photographic library is also being collated for use with the database and use in publications and education programs.

Due to the scope of the project, it is to progress across four sections of New South Wales: Western Plains, Western Slopes, Tablelands and Coast and Escarpment. These sections are based on the IBRA Version 6 Bioregional boundaries. On completion, a uniform, fine resolution, vegetation classification would exist on a single database system.

The introductory paper describes the aims and methods of the project including classifying the NSW vegetation and description of the NSWVCA database. A number of database reports can list plant communities by planning regions such as bioregions or catchment management authority (CMA) areas. It also describes threat criteria for grading plant communities into five threat categories and also methods of determining the protected area status of each community.

Part 1 of NSWVCA describes 213 plant communities classified for the NSW Western Plains that cover 57% of NSW. This section of the State mainly comprises arid and semi-arid alluvial plains, sand plains and some stony ranges of low relief. Part 1 also contains an analysis of the protected area and threat status of the plant communities in the NSW Western Plains. This provides a detailed audit of the protected area system in that region.

This vegetation classification and database system has been constructed to fulfil local, regional, state and national vegetation classification, planning, assessment and reporting requirements. While the classification should improve with better information, this initial effort should contribute to the conservation and management of native vegetation, native species and the ecological processes that underpin them.

J.S. Benson, March 30, 2006.