

5. Native vegetation

The native vegetation communities are predominantly savannas comprising a tussock grassland understorey and scattered shrub or tree overstorey (Beard 1990). Four main communities have been identified for the study area and are detailed in Appendix 2. Plant names are from Wheeler *et al.* (1992).

Tall tussock grass savanna

This occurs on grey and brown cracking clays of the Knox Creek alluvial plain. It consists of tall tussock grasses to about 1 m, with trees or shrubs absent or very widely scattered.

Common grasses include *Aristida latifolia* (feathertop wiregrass), *Astrebla squarrosa* (bull Mitchell grass), *Chrysopogon fallax* (ribbon grass), *Dicanthium* spp. (blue grasses) and *Iseilema vaginiflorum* (red Flinders grass). Occasional trees or shrubs include *Acacia farnesiana* (mimosa bush), *Atalaya hemiglauca* (whitewood), *Lysiphyllum cunninghamii* (bauhinia), *Terminalia volucris* (rosewood) and *Excoecaria parvifolia* (guttapercha).

Tall tussock grass shrub or tree savanna

This community occurs on grey and brown cracking clays of the Knox Creek alluvial plain. It consists of tall tussock grasses to about 1 m, and a light to sparse tree or shrub overstorey about 4 to 8 m high.

The main tree and shrub species include *Lysiphyllum cunninghamii* (bauhinia), *Eucalyptus microtheca* (flooded box), *Atalaya hemiglauca* (whitewood) and *Terminalia volucris* (rosewood). *Excoecaria parvifolia* (guttapercha) is also common, but tends to occur more frequently in wetter areas, especially shallow drainage lines. Less common trees and shrubs include *Terminalia platyptera* (wing-seed terminalia), *Acacia farnesiana* (mimosa bush) and *Acacia* sp. *H.*

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Open woodland

Open woodland occurs on sandier soils within the plain. This usually occupies the remnant sandy levees of creeks or rivers which once crossed the plain, the major levee banks beside the Keep River or the colluvial slopes below the hills on the edge of the plain.

Common trees of the remnant levees include *Eucalyptus papuana* (ghost gum) and *Eucalyptus microtheca* (flooded box). The main understorey grass is *Themeda triandra* (kangaroo grass). The slopes surrounding the plain support *Eucalyptus microtheca* (flooded box), *Eucalyptus tectifera* (grey box), *Eucalyptus confertiflora* (roughleaf cabbage gum) and many others.

High grass savanna

High grass savanna dominated by *Sorghum* species occurs on the seasonally waterlogged zones between the cracking clay plain and the sandy colluvial slopes of the sandstone hills. The community is not widespread in the study area.