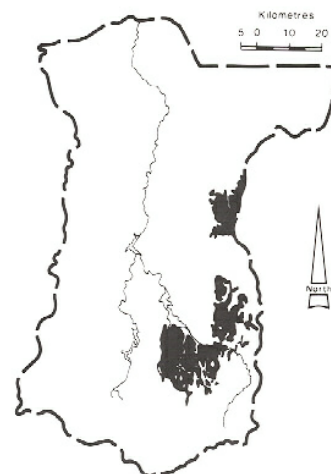


2.35 Ru/rS LOW HILLS – undulating to rolling, SEDIMENTARY

This unit, which occurs in several areas to the west and south-west of Castlemaine and one area to the west of Bendigo, is characterised by a complex or rocky low hills and gentler, rock-free slopes and depressions. Parallel rock layers, due to bands or resistant sandstones, outcrop on some of the steeper slopes. Yellow duplex soils predominate on the gentler slopes, and are replaced by yellowish, and frequently stony, gradational soils on the steeper slopes. Most of the unit had been cleared, and is used for grazing. The area was subject to gold-mining in the late nineteenth century and scars of those days – including pits, mullock heaps and erosion gullies – remain.



Geology Olc, Oly, Olb, Om – Interbedded Ordovician sandstone and shale

Rainfall 500-800 mm per annum

Slope Average 5%; range 2-20%

Dominant landform element (75%) Gentle crest, mid to lower slope – generally rock-free

Minor landform elements (25%) Steeper slope, rocky crest, drainage depression

Soils Dominant: Dy3.21, Dy3.22, Dy3.32, Dy3.41. Yellow duplex soils with red brown mottled, especially on the gentler slopes and in depressions; the brown and loamy topsoils, with A₂ horizons that may be pale, sporadically bleached or bleached, may contain some buckshot or stone fragments; the subsoils are usually acidic or neutral and overlie weathering Ordovician parent material, varying in depth from 0.5 to 1.5 m

Minor: Gn3.85, Gn3.75, Gn4.55, Gn4.51, Gn3.14, Gn3.11, Dr2.21, Um1. The gradational soils are usually yellow brown to greyish brown but may also be red, and fragments of stone are common throughout the profiles; the topsoils are typically loamy, and A₂ horizons when present may contain stony lag material; subsoils are usually acidic to neutral: shallow uniform stony loams occur to a minor extent on rocky crests, and red duplex soils on the mid slopes and gentle crests

Native vegetation Mostly cleared; however, where the native vegetation has been retained *E. goniocalyx*, *E. microcarpa*, *E. melliodora* and, in the north, *E. sideroxylon* are dominant tree species, usually in a woodland II to open forest II formation the original understorey was probably heathy, with common shrubs including *Exocarpus cupressiformis*, *Acacia pycnantha* and *Cassinia arcuata*, *E. polyanthemos* and *E. camaldulensis* in major drainage depressions

Stone-rock outcrop 0-10%

Pans nil or not observed

Land use Primarily grazing on both native and introduced pastures; a significant area, retained as native forest, provides limited supplies of timber products such as firewood, fenceposts and sleepers; limited cropping, usually of cereals, also occurs, and gold-prospecting is common recreational activity

Observed land deterioration Sheet erosion is common, especially in cleared, steeper parts of the unit, most notably in areas that have been cultivated or otherwise left without a protective vegetative cover; gully erosion frequently affects drainage depressions and minor salting also occurs

Susceptibility to land deterioration

Sheet erosion (moderate)

Gully erosion (moderate)

Salting (low to moderate – lower slopes)

Compaction (moderate)



Gully erosion is a common form of land deterioration.



The gentler slopes have been largely cleared to obtain valuable grazing and cropping land, although the presence of gully erosion indicates the inherent instability of the land.



An interesting pattern has resulted from the exclusion of rocky areas and drainage depressions from cultivation.