

PREFACE

The world's tropical and sub-tropical land mass includes some of its wettest and driest habitats. Both situations provide important challenges to biological scientists. The potential productivity of the more humid areas has not yet been fully tapped, nor have management strategies been derived which maximise animal productivity in the arid zones, without leading to long term depletion of soil and plant resources.

In Australia most research into pastoral problems has been concentrated in the higher rainfall areas, but lately there has also been an intensification of such studies in the arid and semi-arid regions. Recently a series of symposia on specialist topics have been organised by various research groups within the arid zone in an endeavour to improve communication amongst the isolated research workers. The first of these symposia considered the biology of Atriplex and the second, animal production in the arid zone. Both were held at the CSIRO Riverina Laboratory, Deniliquin, N.S.W.

The third symposium in this series was concerned with the biology of mulga and mulga lands and was held at the Charleville Pastoral Laboratory from 22nd-24th August, 1972. The proceedings of this symposium and a summary of the final session form the basis of this issue of Tropical Grasslands. The discussion of individual papers was not recorded.

Mulga (Acacia aneura) communities are traditionally associated with the Australian inland, and are well represented in four states and the Northern Territory, occupying altogether some 150 million hectares. Not surprisingly workers studying mulga ecosystems are widely dispersed and opportunities for mutual discussion of their research with fellow scientists are limited.

The symposium had three main objectives.

- (i) To summarise recent biological research related to the productivity and maintenance of mulga ecosystems.*
- (ii) To provide delegates with a bibliography of published work directly relevant to the biology of mulga lands.*
- (iii) To provide a forum for discussion of mutual research problems and to give individual researchers a better perspective of mulga and mulga lands.*

The symposium was convened by Mr. W. H. Burrows, Officer in Charge, Charleville Pastoral Laboratory and organised by research staff at that centre. However, it could not have taken place without appreciable financial assistance from the Wool Research Trust Fund together with the support of the Director General, Queensland Department of Primary Industries and the Leader, CSIRO Rangelands Research Unit.