

513141

ROCKY CAPE

A prominent feature and well known land mark of the north coast is the steep, gaunt ridges of Precambrian quartzite which constitute this land system. The characteristically rugged land form is undisguised by the low and sparse vegetation found on the crests and steep slopes. It juts into Bass Strait at Rocky Cape and extends southward to the Bass Highway, where it gives way to similar country described as Shakespeare Hills and Detention Range land systems. A few outliers occur east of the main body.

Sandy soils have formed on the quartzite parent material and on the peaks and steep slopes these are shallow with frequent rock outcrops. Profiles are somewhat deeper and the sands darker in colour on the gentle upper slopes and swales. On poorly drained sites these become very peaty. The more prominent drainage lines, particularly on the lower slopes, have deep sand soils.

The open heath found on the shallower sands and scrub and woodland vegetation existing in the drainage lines have many species in common. Peppermint eucalypts dominate the scrub communities and very stunted and sometimes mallee

forms are a prominent feature of the heath vegetation. Other important plants include *Melaleuca* spp., tea-trees, *Banksia* spp., heath, sunshine wattle and blackboy. *Lepidosperma concavum* is a common member of the ground flora in the heath communities.

Slate and mudstone parent materials tend to occur round the footslopes. In places the soils that have formed are deep and strong brown in colour and support a forest dominated by stringybark and black peppermint. In other places the soils are quite shallow and support an open heath vegetation.

The rugged topography and generally shallow, infertile soils have prevented large scale exploitation of this land system and it serves mainly as a zone of nature conservation. However, some of the lower slopes are used for grazing, and gravel quarrying has been carried on in the past. A large part of the system is now included in the Rocky Cape State Reserve, where recreation is a major land use.

There is a high erosion hazard on soils formed from quartzite and disturbance caused by gravel stripping operations has resulted in severe rill and gully erosion.

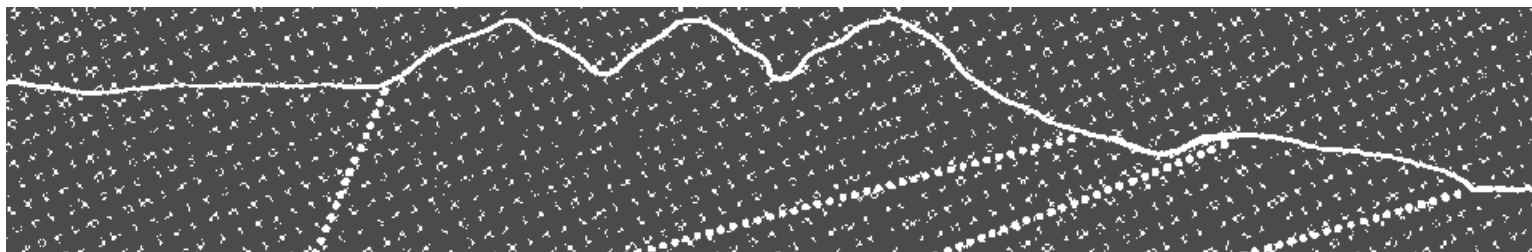


The rugged land form is undisguised by the low and sparse vegetation on the crests and steep slopes.

LAND SYSTEM

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Rocky Cape



| COMPONENT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| PROPORTION % | 25 | 45 | 10 | 15 | 5 |
| CLIMATE | Average Annual Rainfall 1 000-1 250 mm | | | | |
| GEOLOGY | Precambrian quartzite | | | Precambrian slate, mudstone | |
| TOPOGRAPHY Land form Position Average Sideslope ° | Gentle upper slopes, swales 6 | Peaks, steep sideslopes 20 | Steep ridges Drainage lines 12 | Areas of forest 10 | Rocky footslopes 3 |
| NATIVE VEGETATION Structure | Open heath | | Closed scrub | Open forest | Open heath |
| Association | Black peppermint x Smithton peppermint, manuka, <i>Melaleuca squarrosa</i> , heath, blackboy, sunshine wattle, <i>Banksia serrata</i> , honeysuckle, <i>Lepidosperma concavum</i> | | | Stringybark, black peppermint, <i>Casuarina monilifera</i> , sunshine wattle, heath, saggas | <i>Melaleuca squamea</i> , <i>Leptospermum scoparium</i> var <i>eximia</i> , <i>Acacia myrtifolia</i> , black peppermint |
| SOIL | Dark grey (5 YR 4/1) sand soil, uniform texture | Grey (10 YR 5/1) sand soil, rock outcrop common | Gravelly, grey (10 YR 6/1) sand soil | Gravelly, strong brown (7.5 YR 5/6) gradational soil | Dark greyish brown (10 YR 4/2) gradational soil, rock outcrop scattered |
| Surface Texture | Peat | Loamy sand | | Loam | |
| Permeability | High | | Moderate | | |
| Average Depth m | 0.4 | 0.2 | 1.8 | >2.0 | 0.3 |
| PRESENT LAND USE | Nature conservation | | | | |
| HAZARDS | High sheet, rill erosion | | High gully erosion | Moderate sheet erosion | |