

URBAN GEOLOGY OF THE PINJARRA SHEET

The aim of this Urban Geology Series is to provide information to all those concerned with aspects of raw material and water supply, rural, urban, industrial or transport development. The intention is to point out geological factors which may affect planning on a broad rather than a specific basis. Detailed investigations will still be required, but it is hoped that this information will provide a useful framework for such further work.

The area covered by the Pinjarras Sheet is mainly rural stock grazing and dairy farming as the dominant activities. The only major industrial complex in the area is the Alcoa alumina refinery south-west of the town of Pinjarras and Perth. They consist of dolerite and granite intrusions and laterite, particle size ranging from coarse pebbles which are used as aggregate to fine sand and silt.

The geology of the Pinjarras Sheet area west of the Darling Scarp was mapped in 1976 by R.H. Archer and E.R. Kigg. The Geological Survey of Western Australia. Extensive field traverses were carried out on a base-map scale of 1:25 000, 1977 aerial photography was used for minor extrapolation. The geology of the Darling Scarp and Pinjarras is based, with minor modification, on mapping carried out in 1974-5 by S.A. Wicks and K.-J.B. Brackley, also of the Survey. Additional data were supplied by the relevant sections of the Geological Survey.

STRATIGRAPHY AND PHYSIOGRAPHY
Holocene, Pleistocene, and Tertiary unconsolidated and sedimentary rocks crop out on the Pinjarras Sheet west of the Darling Scarp and Tertiary, Jurassic and Cretaceous sediments have been intersected in deep boreholes within the area. Crystalline rocks of Archaean age, unconformably capped by laterite, crop out east and west of the Darling Scarp.

Archaean
A variety of granitic, gneissic and migmatitic Archaean rocks, commonly intruded by dolerite dykes and quartz veins, form the Darling Plateau and its modest western slope, the Darling Scarp. The plateau is an uplifted, dissected peneplain having an elevation of about 500m.

Six types of granitic rocks have been identified on the Pinjarras Sheet. The even-grained granitic rocks are monzonitic, fine to coarse-grained, and range in composition from granodiorite to granite, alkaline being the commonest variety. On a regional basis the rocks are moderately homogeneous in composition, but locally show variations in microcline, quartz and biotite with locally developed hornblende.

The porphyritic granite contains megacrysts of microcline micropheic (average length 20 microns) in a groundmass of microcline, quartz and biotite with local hornblende. The megacrysts are commonly aligned.

Fine to medium-grained granitic rocks containing scattered megacrysts of potash feldspar occur in areas of even-grained and porphyritic granitic rocks, and have features transitional between the two rock types. They are monzonitic, with a composition from andesitic to granitic and are texturally similar to the even-grained granite apart from the presence of scattered, ragged megacrysts of microcline with numerous inclusions of plagioclase.

An 11 kilometre zone of porphyritic granite extends from near the Pinjarras alumina refinery east to east of Coolup. The rock is a coarse-grained quartz-monzonitic granitic gneiss with abundant megacrysts of microcline. It is similar in appearance to porphyritic granite but is invariably strongly foliated and contains narrow zones of more deformed gneiss. The granite gneiss resulted from tectonic deformation of porphyritic granite from which it is separated by a mylonitized shear zone.

To the north and south of the porphyritic granite gneiss, patches of mixed granitic rocks crop out. These rocks are predominantly well-bedded granites of granitic composition, but include other types, notably amphibolites.

Migmatite consists of well-bedded, or more homogeneous, biotite-bearing gneisses containing different areas of granite. The foliation trend is similar to that in the adjacent gneiss.

Limestone shown on the map indicates predominant foliation trends.
Unconsolidated
Quartz dolerite dykes of Archaean, or possibly Proterozoic, age, intrude Archaean rocks which crop out in the sheet area. The dykes vary in thickness, averaging 10 m. They are microcline-bearing, with fresh, fine, angular, hornblende, plagioclase and minor quartz, although most dykes are extremely altered and/or mineralized.

Numerous quartz veins crop out on the Pinjarras Sheet, but there have only been shown on the map where they are abundant and have a consistent trend. The veins often mark the junction between rock types and some are mylonitized.

Minor granitic dykes, pegmatite and aplite veins commonly intrude the Archaean rock.

Quaternary
The most extensive unit is laterite which forms a widespread covering of the granitic and igneous rocks of the Darling Plateau and on some Quaternary sediments along the foot of the Darling Scarp. The surface is flat to gently undulating and is moderately dissected on the plateau. The laterite is chiefly massive and concretionary, and other phlopic or vesicular. It averages 0.5 to 1 m in thickness.

Small deposits of unsorted conglomerate occur near the foot of the Darling Scarp. They consist of pebbles to rounded clasts up to large boulder size in a matrix ranging from clay to coarse sand. The boulders are predominantly granitic rocks and gneisses. The only outcrop of the conglomerate shown on the map is located north of Fairbairn Farm School where it has been bedded. Unconsolidated conglomerate is seen in the bed of the North Dandalup River at North Dandalup.

Pleistocene
The oldest Quaternary unit cropping out in the sheet area is the Yoganup Formation. The formation is composed of yellow quartz sand which has a variable heavy mineral content. The sand grains are medium to coarse and are well rounded. The Yoganup Formation is a beach deposit and, on the Pinjarras Sheet, occurs in the Pedestal Zone at the foot of the Darling Scarp, at elevations of 45 to 70 m above sea level. The unit is commonly lateritized.

The Guildford Formation comprises alluvial and marine sediments and has been dated as probably Pleistocene on marine fossil evidence from a shallow borehole near Coolup. Within the sheet area, this formation forms a thin, low-lying plain (the Pinjarras Plain) which has been artificially drained and is used extensively for agriculture. The predominant lithology is sandy silt, mottled brown, yellow, grey, and, less commonly, green. The quartz sand component ranges from very fine grains to a small percentage of coarse grains. Some zones or lenses of quartziferous clay are known to occur in adjacent areas and probably occur on the Pinjarras Sheet. Where surface weathering has occurred, the clay content is greatly reduced, producing a slightly clayey sand. Nodules and thin seams of calcareous material are present, notably in the west (near Cuckoo Dam) and around North Pinjarras, where a limestone horizon of limited extent was quarried early this century. The limestone, which is assumed to be equivalent to the Marcella Limestone, is not known to crop out. Partial lateritization of the sandy silt of the Guildford Formation is common in the east of the sheet area.

Bauxite
The floor of the lakes and swamps of the western part of the sheet area are known to contain peat but no individual deposit has been examined in detail and the potential is not known.

Petroleum
One petroleum well (Pinjarras 1) was drilled in the area, but was abandoned as a dry hole with no significant hydrocarbon showings. The hole was drilled in 1955 and bottomed at Upper Triassic sediments at a depth of 472 m. The prospects for future petroleum discoveries in this area are probably not large.

Sand
Sand suitable for fill and construction purposes is worked from the Bauxite Sand north of Pinjarras, and from midland deposits overlying the Tamala Limestone in the northwest of the sheet area. Reserves of both materials are large.

The Bauxite Sand has yielded large quantities of construction and glass sand near Perth, and commercial quantities of these materials may occur in this area unworked.

Water
The average annual rainfall in the sheet area is about 870 mm, most of which falls between April and September. During these months, the soils of the Pinjarras Plain are waterlogged and swampy.

The associated sands are leached weathering products of the limestone, and are composed of moderately sorted fine to coarse quartz grains, some patches of calcareous sand, rounded boulders, cobbles and pebbles of limestone and layers of terrigenous silt. Sand grains are sorted, subangular to subrounded, evenly rounded and very fine to medium, but it is hoped that this information will provide a useful framework for such further work.

Logan and extensive deposits are mapped on the shores of Peel Inlet, where they form low-lying areas with sedge beds and silt and clay, on sandy beaches. The deposits include several lithologies. Older beaches contain white, subangular and grey subrounded quartz sand composed of coarse, medium to coarse grains. Younger beaches contain white and black, rounded and angular, silt and clayey sand, often with a silty crust. Close to the present waterline are silty sand and brown, fine-grained silt and clay. The latter is a sandstone. A sub-vent composed entirely of reworked Bauxite Sand pushed up into low parallel ridges has been identified around and north of Yoganup.

Swamp deposits occur the floors and margins of present or recent shallow lakes and in many cases are still forming. All the sediments contain a moderate to high percentage of silt. Grey, clayey, black to black to the matrix which is fine-grained sand or silt. Grey, clayey, discontinuous earth containing appreciable organic matter, occurs in some swamp deposits.

Unconsolidated (water table) aquifers
The unconsolidated aquifers occur in the superficial formations which rest unconformably on the Warburton Group and directly on the only Archaean and Precambrian rocks in the east. In the northwest corner of the Pinjarras Sheet the superficial formations rest unconformably on Tertiary Cockleshell Gully, which in turn rests unconformably on the Warburton Group.

The Quaternary sediments contain groundwater of varying salinity (below 2000 mg/l) and usually in small quantities.

A deep sub-surface channel extends from the north into the extreme southwest of the sheet area and has been filled with moderately sorted, coarse-grained, sub-angular quartzite (Rockingham Sand) that extends to a depth of about 60 m below sea level. The unconsolidated groundwater occurring within this channel is brackish to saline and is not suitable for domestic or industrial purposes. It is probably a remnant of a significant water source for the south supply of industrial use.

Depth to the water table varies considerably depending on elevation and location. In some low-lying areas the water table is seasonally exposed at the surface, forming lakes and swamps.

Most of the recharge to the superficial aquifers is by direct infiltration of rain but this may be attributed to upward leakage from the deeper, confined aquifers.

In this area the Quaternary superficial aquifers are not confined to only minor watering of the soil, probably as a result of compaction. They are horizontal or only dip at angles to the west.

The only structural features of note in the Pleistocene and Holocene sediments are the locations (predominantly north-westward trending) which are marked by chains of swamps and depressions in the Bauxite Sand. It is possible that the faults on known to exist in the Precambrian basement, and to affect the overlying Palaeozoic and Mesozoic rocks. It is possible that the faults on the surface expression of some of these faults, although there is no direct evidence of such a relationship.

To the east of the Darling Fault, the Archaean crystalline rocks are structurally much more complex as a result of extensive regional metamorphism. Foliation trends in the granitic rocks are generally northerly to easterly, whereas those in the gneissic rocks are generally north-south to north-northerly. The foliation trends in the gneissic rocks are generally north-south to north-northerly. The foliation trends in the gneissic rocks are generally north-south to north-northerly.

Recharge to the aquifers is mostly by downward percolation of rain, but may also be from surface water, especially in the case of channel containing Rockingham Sand cuts the green clay barrier shown on the accompanying diagrammatic section.

Below the green clay horizon, the middle and lower parts of the Leederville Formation consist of a thickly bedded sequence of sandstone, limestone and shale, and are often glauconitic. Pebble beds may occur at the top. The limestone is predominantly massive, but contains some limestones and non-massive interstratifications.

The middle part of the Leederville Formation consists predominantly of this bed of sand, calcareous sand and silt, and the topmost part is dominantly sandy, suitable for brickmaking and, possibly, TDS. Salinity increases with depth so that in the lower part of the Leederville Formation, a sequence of thin bedded silt and sand, contains groundwater of salinity greater than 1 000 mg/l TDS. The salinity also increases to the west.

The South Perth Shale and Cockleshell Gully Formation aquifers both contain pressure water confined by the overlying Leederville Formation and have potentiometric heads which decline to the west.

The brackish area is east of Pinjarras, where the potentiometric surface in the Cockleshell Gully aquifer is 27 m above sea level and 4 to 13 m lower in the Leederville Formation. At the surface, the salinity of the groundwater is about 200 mg/l TDS, but it increases rapidly with increasing distance from the recharge area, so that just west of Pinjarras it has salinity greater than 1 000 mg/l TDS. Large supplies of domestic-quality water (under 500 mg/l TDS) have been known in the recharge area.

West of Pinjarras, the groundwater from these aquifers is brackish to saline, containing more than 2 000 mg/l TDS, and is generally increased with depth and towards the east. Large quantities of industrial quality water can be obtained from the thick coarse-grained sandy beds of these aquifers.

The sediments of the eastern fault block are probably a very stony part of the Cockleshell Gully Formation in which no aquifers of apparent value have been found. The western boundary of the fault block acts as a hydraulic barrier. Water movement within the block is probably very slow and only small amounts of water from the limited aquifers. The salinity of the groundwater is in excess of 2 400 mg/l TDS.

Development
Development of the local shallow groundwater resources to supply domestic requirements cannot be recommended because of the marginal quality and small supply.

The most important aquifer is the middle part of the Leederville Formation, immediately below the green clay horizon. Yields of between 1 500 l/d and 2 000 l/d can be expected.

The Cockleshell Gully Formation, immediately west of the eastern fault block, also includes important aquifers. Large quantities of pressure water are available with salinity less than 500 mg/l TDS. However, salinity increases to more than 1 000 mg/l TDS west of Pinjarras.

It is stressed that this section is generalized and that the specific investigation is required. Consequently, no attempt is made to quantify such terms as 'moderate' or 'fair'.

ENGINEERING PROPERTIES
Although there is considerable lithological variation in the Archaean granitic rocks of the Darling Scarp and Plateau, their rock mass properties are broadly similar. When fresh or slightly weathered they are dense and strong, but commonly intersected by fractures and joints. The formation conditions in the granitic rocks are generally good. They have high bearing capacity and high unconfined strength - generally higher than 200 MPa (compressive) - although this decreases with increasing grain size. Close to the Darling Scarp, where the granitic gneisses have been subjected to tectonic deformation and where the potentiometric head is high, particular care will be required in this area.

When weathered, the granitic rocks are softer and less dense, but provide adequate foundation conditions when only minor streams are anticipated and when the normal foundation preparation procedures for clayey soils are followed. Recharge conditions which would be unsuitable on steep slopes, and seepage is common, particularly in winter. Both these hazards may be increased by excavation into winter.

Unweathered dolerite can be a good foundation with a very high unconfined compressive strength (250 MPa) and low absorption value. However, it is often strongly fractured and readily decomposes into a green plastic clay which has good cohesion and low permeability. The clay shales and silt with alternate drying and wetting, more so than the dolerite weathered granite, will become highly plastic and very sensitive foundation conditions in areas straddling dolerite granite contacts. Soils developed in dolerite weathered granite under foundation conditions when the potentiometric head is kept constant, moist, and are sensitive to remoulding.

Further information may be obtained from the Geological Survey of Western Australia, Mineral House, Perth.

Quartz veins are commonly intensely fractured, providing channels for percolating water and seriously affecting the stability of engineering structures and foundation conditions. Such veins are common in the eastern part of the sheet and are particularly abundant in the north-east corner.

At its highest, laterite is a dense, solid rock up to 3 m thick, which can be excavated only by blasting. This type of laterite is a calcareous foundation rock for buildings, but subsurface drainage disposal is a problem. Lying beneath the surface laterite is a ferruginous gravel and a bed of sand which is fine when dry, but which when wet it has moderately high density, low cohesion and shrinkage, a moderate to high water table and is sufficiently permeable to allow water seepage to water development at shallow depth. When compacted, it can stand heavy loading, but needs protection against both water erosion and fluctuations in moisture content. In general, it is a satisfactory foundation for roads and buildings, but very steep slopes are unstable.

Underlying this gravel is a layer of gibberitic clay, up to 2 m thick, which has a moderate density, low cohesion and shrinkage, and which tends to loosen and crack when dry. To form a good foundation, it needs to be compacted to a high density, and is sufficiently permeable to allow water seepage to water development at shallow depth. When compacted, it can stand heavy loading, but needs protection against both water erosion and fluctuations in moisture content. In general, it is a satisfactory foundation for roads and buildings, but very steep slopes are unstable.

The sands of the Yoganup Formation have a moderate to high water table, a good bulk density, a moderate to high permeability, and are loose to slightly consolidated. Settlement could occur under load. Low, steep faces can stand unsupported for short periods, and non-oxide case-hardening develops during the summer. The sands require protection against erosion when exposed.

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Engineering properties of the Guildford Formation vary considerably according to the clay content of the sediment. Natural density is moderate to high, and permeability low except in thin clayey parts of the formation. Cohesion and shrinkage vary. Alternate wetting and drying will cause the clay fraction to swell and shrink, adversely affecting rock-mass behaviour, although this problem can be reduced if the moisture content is kept constant. Low steep cuts are generally stable, although they may require stabilization if the water table and wind-eroding during the summer. The sands require protection against erosion when exposed.

Generally moderately to well graded and well consolidated except where it contains minor clay silt, the Bauxite Sand has a moderate to high natural density, is very permeable and will drain, and is not subject to shrink. It may be moderately well consolidated because of its surface cover which can be eroded when dry and compacted and of vegetation. It is a reasonable foundation material, but is subject to settlement under load. The majority of the limestone has moderate to high density, low permeability and is moderately strong. The thickness and degree of consolidation of the sand, and the depth to wind-eroding during the summer. The sands require protection against erosion when exposed.

The section of the sheet shown as Bauxite Sand overlying Guildford Formation will generally have the engineering properties of the latter.

Where predominantly composed of calcareous, the Tamala Limestone is generally strong and rigid, and is highly porous and permeable, of medium natural density, and high to medium compressive strength. Solution cavities occur irregularly and are filled with unconsolidated sand. Some zones of root cuts are observed and these have very high porosity and are usually found in areas of very severe settlement under load. The majority of the limestone has moderate to high density, low permeability and is moderately strong. The thickness and degree of consolidation of the sand, and the depth to wind-eroding during the summer. The sands require protection against erosion when exposed.

The soil composed predominantly of sand is partly consolidated, has a high natural density, high permeability, and no cohesion or shrinkage. Some settlement can be expected beneath foundations. Subsurface pipelines and thin sheets of dense, hard limestone are common and, where present, will cause excavation costs. Drainage disposal characteristics are good.

The colluvium is a heterogeneous assemblage of different soils and rock fragments, its engineering properties are extremely variable and individual site investigation is essential. Disturbed slopes are likely to be unstable and to require protection against erosion. Seepage and erosion are drainage disposal characteristics are good.

The lignonal and extensive deposits are highly variable, low-lying and generally situated. They are subject to poor engineering properties and, because rapid changes in bedded sites and conditions will require detailed site investigation. The sub-surface, composed entirely of reworked Bauxite Sand pushed up into low parallel ridges has been identified around and north of Yoganup.

Although the varied lithology present in alluvium give rise to a wide range of engineering characteristics, they are generally likely to provide poor foundation conditions. Irregular settlement under load and the near-surface water table would adversely affect building stability and drainage.

ENGINEERING PROPERTIES
The mapped areas in the 'C' earthquake risk zone. This is a weak seismic zone.

ENVIRONMENTAL GEOLOGY
WASTE DISPOSAL
Dry wastes: Provided areas are distant from areas of groundwater extraction, disposal is probably safe in much of the north-west corner of the sheet area where a thick cover of Tamala Limestone sands will act as a filter on downward percolating water. However, suitable sites for leachate disposal are restricted to those areas where the Bauxite Sand is relatively thick and well drained, and those areas where the Darling Scarp where several sandy horizons occur.

Non-toxic liquid or soluble waste: Similar comments to those on dry waste disposal apply. Sites in the Guildford Formation would be unsuitable as it is subject to seasonal inundation and there is a consequent risk of contamination to rivers, lakes and soils.

Toxic waste: No suitable sites are available for toxic-waste disposal.

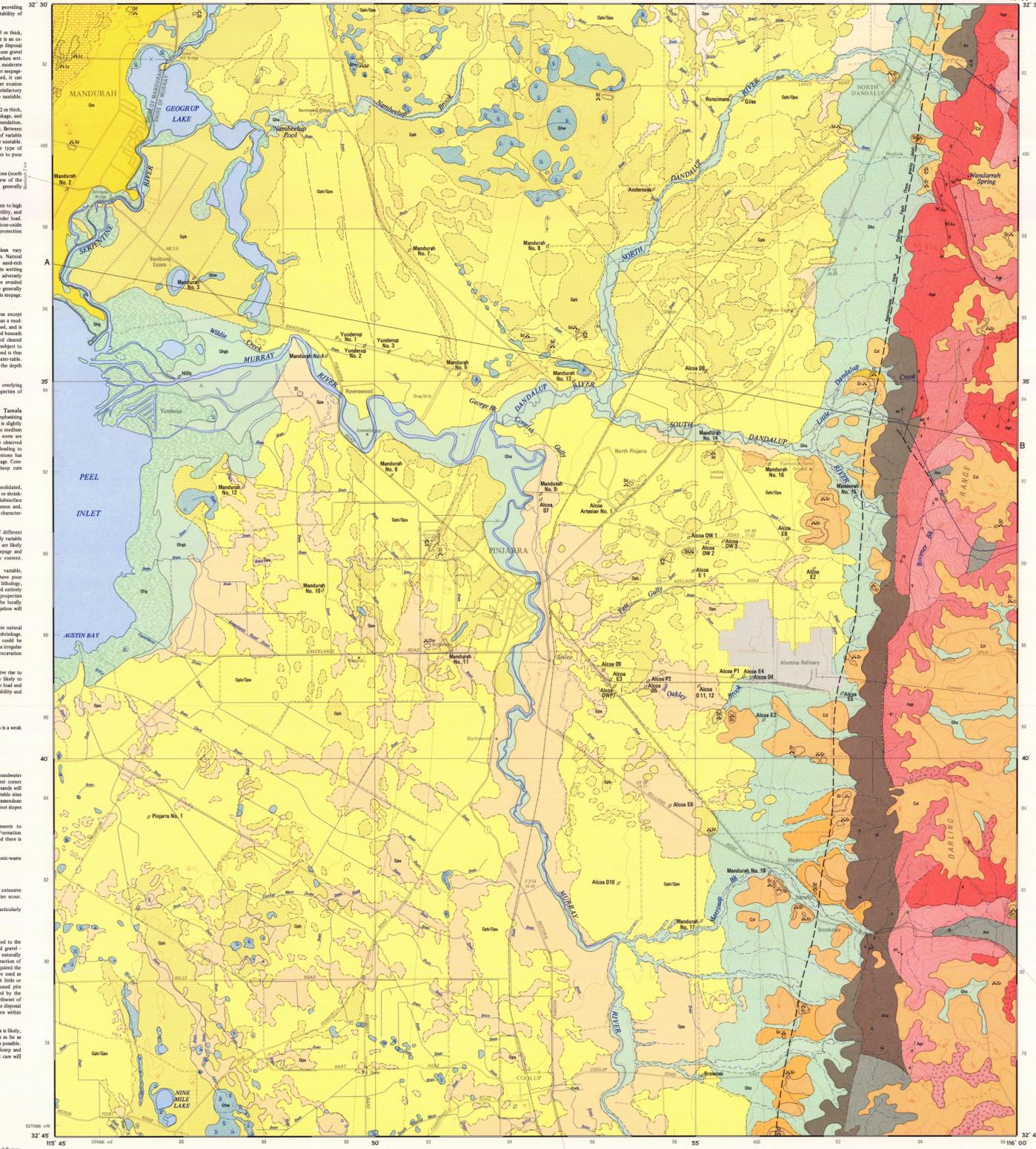
SOIL EROSION
As parts of the Coastal Plain are covered by sandy soils, extensive removal of vegetation could lead to wind erosion or ravinous erosion.

Gullying is a potential hazard on the Darling Scarp, particularly on unconsolidated gneiss.

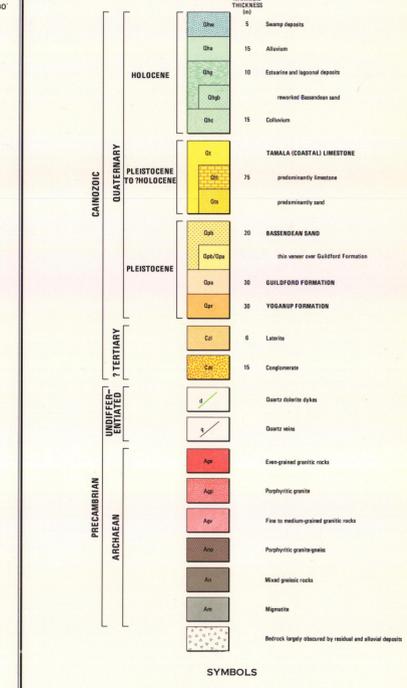
MINERAL EXTRACTION
Mineral extraction in the Pinjarras Sheet area is restricted to the mining of construction material - limestone, sand, clay and gravel - largely for local use. For the most part, pits are too small or naturally well concealed to cause major visual impacts, although the extraction of gravel from lateritized colluvium in the Pedestal Zone has required the clearing of relatively large areas of land. Some cleared pits are used as rubbish dumps, but the remainder have been abandoned with little or no attempt at rehabilitation. Natural vegetation of abandoned pits (usually grass pits) is slow, and would be greatly accelerated by the spreading of a thin coat of soil. Limestone quarries in the northwest of the sheet area are well controlled and may provide suitable waste disposal sites in the future, provided no groundwater extraction occurs within the dispersion area.

Further extraction of sand, gravel and clay from the area is likely, and pits should be sited so as to conceal the operations as far as possible and be worked in such a way that re-vegetation is possible. In the quarrying of granitic rocks from the Darling Scarp and Plateau, it is proposed, where extraction is possible, and great care will be required in the location and screening of quarry sites.

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PHYSIOGRAPHIC DIAGRAM
This diagram shows the relationship between the geological formations and the topographic features of the area. It includes a cross-section of the terrain and a key for the different geological units.

QUATERNARY SEDIMENT RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM
This diagram shows the relationship between the Quaternary sediment formations and the topographic features of the area. It includes a cross-section of the terrain and a key for the different sediment units.

INDEX TO ADJOINING SHEETS
This index shows the relationship between the Pinjarras Sheet and the surrounding geological sheets. It includes a map of the region and a key for the different sheets.

DECLINATION DIAGRAM
This diagram shows the relationship between the geological formations and the magnetic declination in the area. It includes a map of the region and a key for the different formations.

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GROUNDWATER SALINITIES AND POTENTIOMETRIC SURFACES
This diagram shows the relationship between the groundwater salinities and the potentiometric surfaces in the Perth area. It includes a map of the region and a key for the different salinity levels.

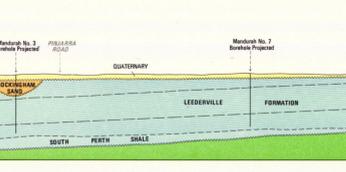
DIAGRAMMATIC SECTION A-B
This diagrammatic section shows the geological formations and their relationships in the Perth area. It includes a cross-section of the terrain and a key for the different formations.



FOIA A. HENDRICKS, M.L.A. MINISTER FOR MINES J. H. LORD, DIRECTOR, GEOLOGICAL SURVEY SCALE 1:50 000

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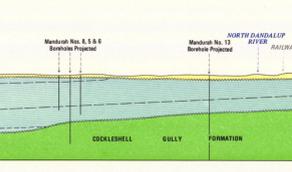
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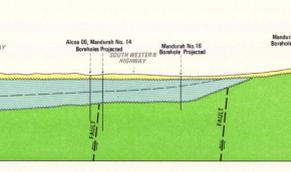
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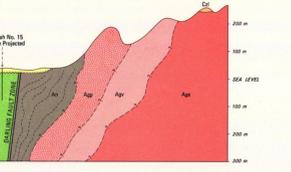
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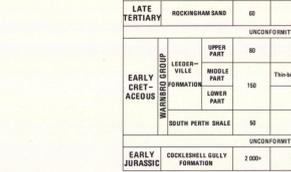
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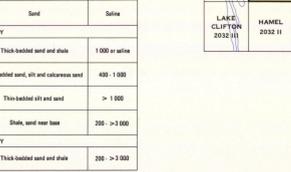
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