

Paired catchment experiments and forestry politics in Australia

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Abstract Paired catchment experimentation started in the 1950s in Australia. The network of such experiments expanded slowly and consistently through the 1960–1990 period. Many projects have continued through to the present time, although not without difficulties. The data provided has been of considerable utility in improving overall understanding of hydrological processes and providing inputs into forestry land use debates. The latter has included the role and water use of regrowth forests in major catchments, water use of plantations and related aspects such as taxing, and characterisation of Australian forest hydrology. Recent Australian debates have highlighted the need for additional work quantifying the water use of eucalypt plantations and native forest as a function of age. Key omissions of this work have been collation of the results across Australia, relating the physical characteristics of the forest vegetation to the water use, and determining the hydrology of less productive mixed species eucalypt forests that dominate Australian forest cover.

Key words paired catchments; plantations; water use; logging; native forests; eucalypts