

4. Nama-Karoo Biome

4.1 LOWER KAROO BIOREGION:

4.1.1 NKI 4 Albany Broken Veld

Low & Rebelo (1996) described this vegetation type as a complex mix of grass- and shrub-dominated vegetation types, which are subject to dynamic changes in species composition depending on seasonal rainfall events. According to Mucina & Rutherford (2006) only small percentage of this vegetation unit is statutorily conserved in the AENP, but considerable share (12%) protected in private reserves. Vlok & Euston-Brown (2002) classify this vegetation as Saltaire Karroid Thicket.

STEP (Vlok & Euston-Brown 2002): Saltaire Karroid Thicket.

The karroid shrubland present in the Saltaire Karroid Thicket is primarily restricted to the Lake Mentz formation, which consists of shale, quartzite and sandstone. *Acacia karoo* occurs sporadically in the karroid shrubland, in which *Bechium burchellianum*, *Gnidia cuneata*, *Eriocephalus africanus* and *Pentzia incana* are abundant. In moist sites, such as south facing slopes, *Renosterbos* (*Elytropappus rhinocerotis*) may also be present, but it is never dominant. Succulents and geophytes are often present in the karroid vegetation, when pristine and especially after good rain, the grass component may be prominent, but this condition is now rare. In certain areas the Thicket bush clumps contain very large specimens of *Cussonia spicata* and/or *Sideroxylon inerme*. These bush clumps seem to be indicators of sites where the once solid Thicket was fragmented by bush clearing for grazing purposes. The now present and often dominant karroid shrubs are probably secondary invaders, where the grass component (which replaced the Thicket at cleared sites) has been overgrazed.