Flora film

A new 60-minute film, 'A Curious and Diverse Flora', portrays the colour, diversity, and biological peculiarities of Australia's native plants.

Produced jointly by CSIRO and the Australian Academy of Science, the film was first shown at the XIIIth International Botanical Congress in Sydney last August, and is particularly suitable for introducing the continent's vegetation both to visitors from overseas and to students unfamiliar with the wide range of ecosystems and adaptations found in this country.

Dr Peter Valder of the University of Sydney, who wrote and narrated the commentary, appears throughout the film, describing, explaining, and demonstrating.

The film has five distinct sections. The first, 'Botany Bay' (11 minutes), depicts some of the species — including grasstrees, casuarinas, wattles, eucalypts, and banksias — that first caught the attention of two botanists, Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, when they disembarked from James Cook's *Endeavour* in April 1770.

In the second section, 'an isolated but related flora' (9 minutes), Dr Valder guides the audience to some of the most interesting plants of the south-western corner of Western Australia.

Effectively isolated for perhaps 40 million years by oceans and deserts from regions with related plants, the south-west has evolved a most distinctive flora.

The vegetation in much of Australia's 'bush' has to cope with intense sunlight, a poor supply of nutrients, especially phosphorus, and fire. 'A hard-leaved vegetation' (10½ minutes) describes how such plants as eucalypts and members of the family Proteaceae survive.

In the arid interior, plants face an additional challenge: low, erratic rainfall. Yet relict palms and cycads remind us that Central Australia has not always been desert. 'Change and survival' (16 minutes) discusses some of the major trends in the evolution of both rainforest and arid vegetation.

The final part, 'distant connections' (13½ minutes) explores the similarities between Tasmania's flora and those of New Zealand, South America, and, through fossils, Antarctica. The theory of continental drift turned these similarities into affinities.

Prints of the film (16 mm) and U-matic video-cassette copies may be hired for $25, and video-cassettes in three formats (U-matic, Beta, and VHS) are available for sale to educational institutions at the special price of $160. A set of 60 colour transparencies (35 mm) is also on sale for $28.

All orders should be addressed to: CSIRO Film and Video Centre, 314 Albert Street, East Melbourne, Vic. 3002.