



Australia



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This page was last updated on 15 July 2008



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Introduction

Australia

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Background:



Aboriginal settlers arrived on the continent from Southeast Asia about 40,000 years before the first Europeans began exploration in the 17th century. No formal territorial claims were made until 1770, when Capt. James COOK took possession in the name of Great Britain. Six colonies were created in the late 18th and 19th centuries; they federated and became the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. The new country took advantage of its natural resources to rapidly develop agricultural and manufacturing industries and to make a major contribution to the British effort in World Wars I and II. In recent decades, Australia has transformed itself into an internationally competitive, advanced

market economy. It boasted one of the OECD's fastest growing economies during the 1990s, a performance due in large part to economic reforms adopted in the 1980s. Long-term concerns include climate-change issues such as the depletion of the ozone layer and more frequent droughts, and management and conservation of coastal areas, especially the Great Barrier Reef.

Geography

Australia

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Location:  

Oceania, continent between the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean

Geographic coordinates:  

27 00 S, 133 00 E

Map references:  

[Oceania](#)

Area:   

total: 7,686,850 sq km

land: 7,617,930 sq km

water: 68,920 sq km

note: includes Lord Howe Island and Macquarie Island

Area - comparative:  

slightly smaller than the US contiguous 48 states

Land boundaries:  

0 km

Coastline:  

25,760 km

Maritime claims:  

territorial sea: 12 nm

contiguous zone: 24 nm

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm or to the edge of the continental margin

Climate:  

generally arid to semiarid; temperate in south and east; tropical in north

Terrain:  

mostly low plateau with deserts; fertile plain in southeast

Elevation extremes:  

lowest point: Lake Eyre -15 m

highest point: Mount Kosciuszko 2,229 m

Natural resources:  

bauxite, coal, iron ore, copper, tin, gold, silver, uranium, nickel, tungsten, mineral sands, lead, zinc, diamonds, natural gas, petroleum

Land use:  

arable land: 6.15% (includes about 27 million hectares of cultivated grassland)

permanent crops: 0.04%

other: 93.81% (2005)

Irrigated land:  

25,450 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources:  

398 cu km (1995)

**Freshwater withdrawal
(domestic/industrial/agricultural):**  

total: 24.06 cu km/yr (15%/10%/75%)

per capita: 1,193 cu m/yr (2000)

Natural hazards:  


cyclones along the coast; severe droughts; forest fires

Environment - current issues:  

soil erosion from overgrazing, industrial development, urbanization, and poor farming practices; soil salinity rising due to the use of poor quality water; desertification; clearing for agricultural purposes threatens the natural habitat of many unique animal and plant species; the Great Barrier Reef off the northeast coast, the largest coral reef in the world, is threatened by increased shipping and its popularity as a tourist site; limited natural fresh water resources

Environment - international agreements:  

party to: Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic-Marine Living Resources, Antarctic Seals, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, Whaling
signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements

Geography - note:  

world's smallest continent but sixth-largest country; population concentrated along the eastern and southeastern coasts; the invigorating sea breeze known as the "Fremantle Doctor" affects the city of Perth on the west coast, and is one of the most consistent winds in the world

People

Australia

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Population:  

20,600,856 (July 2008 est.)

Age structure:  

0-14 years: 19.1% (male 2,014,230/female 1,920,604)

15-64 years: 67.5% (male 7,005,588/female 6,895,817)

65 years and over: 13.4% (male 1,226,432/female 1,538,185) (2008 est.)

Median age:  

total: 37.4 years

male: 36.6 years

female: 38.3 years (2008 est.)

Population growth rate:  

0.801% (2008 est.)

Birth rate:   

11.9 births/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Death rate:   

7.62 deaths/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Net migration rate:   

3.72 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Sex ratio:  

at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female
under 15 years: 1.05 male(s)/female
15-64 years: 1.02 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.8 male(s)/female
total population: 0.99 male(s)/female (2008 est.)

Infant mortality rate:   




total: 4.51 deaths/1,000 live births
male: 4.89 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 4.11 deaths/1,000 live births (2008 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:   




total population: 80.73 years
male: 77.86 years
female: 83.75 years (2008 est.)

Total fertility rate:   

1.76 children born/woman (2008 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:   

0.1% (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:   

14,000 (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS - deaths:   

fewer than 200 (2003 est.)

Nationality:  

noun: Australian(s)
adjective: Australian

Ethnic groups:  

white 92%, Asian 7%, aboriginal and other 1%

Religions:  

Catholic 26.4%, Anglican 20.5%, other Christian 20.5%, Buddhist 1.9%, Muslim 1.5%, other 1.2%, unspecified 12.7%, none 15.3% (2001 Census)

Languages:  

English 79.1%, Chinese 2.1%, Italian 1.9%, other 11.1%, unspecified 5.8% (2001 Census)

Literacy:  

definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 99%
male: 99%
female: 99% (2003 est.)

Government **Australia**

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Country name:  

conventional long form: Commonwealth of Australia

conventional short form: Australia

Government type:  

federal parliamentary democracy

Capital:  

name: Canberra

geographic coordinates: 35 17 S, 149 13 E

time difference: UTC+10 (15 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

daylight saving time: +1hr, begins last Sunday in October; ends last Sunday in March

note: Australia is divided into three time zones

Administrative divisions:  

6 states and 2 territories*; Australian Capital Territory*, New South Wales, Northern Territory*, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia

Dependent areas:  

Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Coral Sea Islands, Heard Island and McDonald Islands, Norfolk Island, Macquarie Island

Independence:  

1 January 1901 (federation of UK colonies)

National holiday:  

Australia Day, 26 January (1788); ANZAC Day (commemorated as the anniversary of the landing of troops of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps during World War I at Gallipoli, Turkey), 25 April (1915)

Constitution:  

9 July 1900, effective 1 January 1901

Legal system:  

based on English common law; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, with reservations

Suffrage:  

18 years of age; universal and compulsory

Executive branch:  

chief of state: Queen of Australia ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952); represented by Governor General Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Michael JEFFERY (since 11 August 2003)

head of government: Prime Minister Kevin RUDD (since 3 December 2007); Deputy Prime Minister Julia GILLARD (since 3 December 2007)

cabinet: prime minister nominates, from among members of Parliament, candidates who are subsequently sworn in by the governor general to serve as government ministers

elections: the monarch is hereditary; governor general appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the prime minister; following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or leader of a majority coalition is sworn in as prime minister by the governor general

Legislative branch:  

bicameral Federal Parliament consists of the Senate (76 seats; 12 members from each of the six states and 2 from each of the two mainland territories; one-half of state members are elected every three years by popular vote to serve six-year terms while all territory members are elected every three years) and the House of

Representatives (150 seats; members elected by popular preferential vote to serve terms of up to three-years; no state can have fewer than 5 representatives)
elections: Senate - last held 24 November 2007 (next to be held no later than 2010); House of Representatives - last held 24 November 2007 (next to be called no later than 2010)
election results: Senate - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - Liberal Party-National Party coalition 37, Australian Labor Party 32, Australian Greens 5, Family First Party 1, other 1; House of Representatives - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - Australian Labor Party 83, Liberal Party 55, National Party 10, independents 2

Judicial branch:  



High Court (the chief justice and six other justices are appointed by the governor general)

Political parties and leaders:  

Australian Democrats [Lyn ALLISON]; Australian Greens [Bob BROWN]; Australian Labor Party [Kevin RUDD]; Country Liberal Party [Jodeen CARNEY]; Family First Party [Steve FIELDING]; Liberal Party [Brendan NELSON]; The Nationals [Warren TRUSS]

Political pressure groups and leaders:  

other: business groups; environmental groups; social groups; trade unions

International organization participation:  

ADB, ANZUS, APEC, ARF, ASEAN (dialogue partner), Australia Group, BIS, C, CP, EAS, EBRD, FAO, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICt, ICRM, IEA, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, MIGA, NAM (guest), NEA, NSG, OECD, OPCW, Paris Club, PCA, PIF, Sparteca, SPC, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNFICYP, UNHCR, UNMIS, UNMIT, UNRWA, UNTSO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, ZC

Diplomatic representation in the US:  

chief of mission: Ambassador Dennis J. RICHARDSON
chancery: 1601 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036
telephone: [1] (202) 797-3000
FAX: [1] (202) 797-3168
consulate(s) general: Atlanta, Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco

Diplomatic representation from the US:  




chief of mission: Ambassador Robert D. McCALLUM, Jr.
embassy: Moonah Place, Yarralumla, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600
mailing address: APO AP 96549
telephone: [61] (02) 6214-5600
FAX: [61] (02) 6214-5970
consulate(s) general: Melbourne, Perth, Sydney



Flag description:  




blue with the flag of the UK in the upper hoist-side quadrant and a large seven-pointed star in the lower hoist-side quadrant known as the Commonwealth or Federation Star, representing the federation of the colonies of Australia in 1901; the star depicts one point for each of the six original states and one representing all of Australia's internal and external territories; on the fly half is a representation of the Southern Cross constellation in white with one small five-pointed star and four larger, seven-pointed stars




Economy - overview:  

Australia has an enviable, strong economy with a per capita GDP on par with the four dominant West European economies. Robust business and consumer confidence and high export prices for raw materials and agricultural products are fueling the economy, particularly in mining states. Australia's emphasis on reforms, low inflation, a housing market boom, and growing ties with China have been key factors behind the economy's 16 solid years of expansion. Drought, robust import demand, and a strong currency have pushed the trade deficit up in recent years, while infrastructure bottlenecks and a tight labor market are constraining growth in export volumes and stoking inflation. Australia's budget has been in surplus since 2002 due to strong revenue growth.




GDP (purchasing power parity):   
\$760.8 billion (2007 est.)



GDP (official exchange rate):  
\$908.8 billion (2007 est.)




GDP - real growth rate:   
3.9% (2007 est.)



GDP - per capita (PPP):   
\$36,300 (2007 est.)



GDP - composition by sector:  
agriculture: 3%
industry: 26.4%
services: 70.6% (2007 est.)



Labor force:   
10.95 million (2007 est.)

Labor force - by occupation:  
agriculture: 3.6%
industry: 21.2%
services: 75.2% (2004 est.)

Unemployment rate:   
4.4% (2007 est.)



Population below poverty line:  
NA%

Household income or consumption by percentage share:  
lowest 10%: 2%
highest 10%: 25.4% (1994)

Distribution of family income - Gini index:  
30.5 (2006)

Inflation rate (consumer prices):   
2.3% (2007 est.)

Investment (gross fixed):   
27.3% of GDP (2007 est.)

Budget:  
revenues: \$321.3 billion
expenditures: \$309.1 billion (2007 est.)

Public debt:



15.4% of GDP

note: The Commonwealth government eliminated its net debt in 2006, but continues a gross debt issue to support the market for risk-free securities. (2007 est.)

Agriculture - products:

wheat, barley, sugarcane, fruits, cattle, sheep, poultry

Industries:

mining, industrial and transportation equipment, food processing, chemicals, steel

Industrial production growth rate:

3.8% (2007 est.)

Electricity - production:

236.7 billion kWh (2005)

Electricity - consumption:

219.8 billion kWh (2005)

Electricity - exports:

0 kWh (2005)

Electricity - imports:

0 kWh (2005)

Oil - production:

572,400 bbl/day (2005 est.)

Oil - consumption:

903,200 bbl/day (2005 est.)

Oil - exports:

333,200 bbl/day (2004)

Oil - imports:

611,400 bbl/day (2004)

Oil - proved reserves:

1.437 billion bbl (1 January 2006 est.)

Natural gas - production:

38.62 billion cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - consumption:

25.72 billion cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - exports:

12.9 billion cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - imports:

0 cu m (2005)

Natural gas - proved reserves:

750.6 billion cu m (1 January 2006 est.)

Current account balance:

-\$56.2 billion (2007 est.)

