

Australia



Home to the indigenous Aborigine people, Australia was claimed in the 18th century by the British. The British developed Australia by means of penal colonies, sending convicts there to open up and exploit the vast territory of the continent. The six smaller colonies on the Australian continent federated in 1901 to form the Commonwealth of Australia. The Commonwealth of Australia fought alongside Great Britain and other nations of the British Empire in both World War I and World War II. In 1942, Australia severed most of its constitutional ties with the United Kingdom, with the final links being cut in 1986 through the passage of the Australia Act.

Thanks to economic reforms in the 1980s and an abundance of natural resources, Australia's economy has experienced great expansion in recent decades. In terms of foreign policy, Australia's primary interests lie in further developing relations with Pacific Rim countries, other members of the Commonwealth of Nations, and the United States. Australia is the driest inhabited continent on the earth, but the climate varies from tropical in the north to desert in the central part of the country. For this reason, Australia is home to unique and diverse flora and fauna. The megadiverse nature of Australia makes it highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Geography

Official Name: [Commonwealth of Australia](#)

Conventional Short Form: [Australia](#)

Region: Oceania

Area: 7.692,024 square kilometers

Bordering Countries: None

Climate: Tropical to semi-arid and arid.

Physical Features/Terrain: Australia has mostly low plateaus with deserts. Fertile land exists in the southeast portion of the country.

Natural Hazards: Cyclones along the coast; severe droughts; forest fires and volcanic activity on Heard and McDonald Islands

People and Society

Population: 22,992,654 (July 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 56

Ethnic Groups: White 92%, Asian 7%, aboriginal and other 1%

Official Language: English

Other Languages Spoken: Chinese, Italian, Greek, Arabic, Vietnamese, other

Religions: Protestant 27.4%, Catholic 25.8%, Eastern Orthodox 2.7%, Other Christian 7.9%

Buddhist 2.1%, Muslim 1.7%, other 2.4%, unspecified 11.3%, none 18.7%

Capital City: Canberra (399,000)

Other Major Cities: Sydney (4.429 million), Melbourne (3.853 million); Brisbane (1.97 million);

Perth (1.599 million)

Median Age (*half the people are younger than this age and half are older*)

Male: 37.3

Female: 38.8

Literacy Rate (*percentage of the population 15 and older who can read and write*)

Total Population: 99% (2003 est.)

Male: 99% (2003 est.)

Female: 99% (2003 est.)

Life Expectancy at Birth (*average number of years to be lived by those born in the same year*)

Total Population: 81.98

Male: 79.55

Female: 84.54

Average Quality of Life:

Government

Country Founded: Federation of Constitution, 1 January 1901, Statute of Westminster 9

October 1942, Australia Act 3 March 1986

Type of Government: Federal parliamentary democracy and a Commonwealth realm

Country Leaders

Chief of State: Queen of Australia Elizabeth II, represented by Peter Cosgrove

Prime Minister: Malcom Turnbull

Allies: Commonwealth, United States, Great Britain

Enemies: IS, Taliban, Al Qaeda

Economy

Currency: Australian Dollar

GDP: \$1.257 trillion (2016 est.)

GDP Composition: household consumption: 58.5%; government consumption: 18.7%; investment in fixed capital: 24.3%; investment in inventories: 0%; exports of goods and services: 19.4%; imports of goods and services: -20.9% (2016 est.)

Natural Resources: bauxite, coal, iron ore, copper, tin, gold, silver, uranium, nickel, tungsten, rare earth elements, mineral sands, lead, zinc, diamonds, natural gas, petroleum

Unemployment Rate: 5.5%

Population Below Poverty Line:

Major export and imports

Exports: coal, iron ore, gold, meat, wool, alumina, wheat, machinery and transport equipment

Imports: machinery and transport equipment, computers and office machines, telecommunication equipment and parts; crude oil and petroleum products

Biggest trading partners

Exports: China 29.5%, Japan 19.3% South Korea 8%, India 4.9%

Imports: China 18.2%, US 11.6%, Japan 7.8%, Singapore 5.9%, Germany 4.6%, Thailand 4.2%, South Korea 4%

More information can be found at:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html>