

Australia

Introduction

Background: Australia became a commonwealth of the British Empire in 1901. It was able to take advantage of its natural resources to rapidly develop its agricultural and manufacturing industries and to make a major contribution to the British effort in World Wars I and II. Long-term concerns include pollution, particularly depletion of the ozone layer, and management and conservation of coastal areas, especially the Great Barrier Reef. A referendum to change Australia's status, from a commonwealth headed by the British monarch to an independent republic, was defeated in 1999.

Geography

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

Land boundaries: 0 km

Coastline: 25,760 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 24 nm

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

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

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, silver, uranium, nickel, tungsten, mineral sands, lead, zinc, diamonds, natural gas, petroleum

Land use:

arable land: 6%

permanent crops: 0%

permanent pastures: 54%

forests and woodland: 19%

other: 21% (1993 est.)

Irrigated land: 21,070 sq km (1993 est.)

Natural hazards: cyclones along the coast; severe droughts

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 Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Marine Life Conservation, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, Whaling
signed, but not ratified: Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification

Geography - note: world's smallest continent but sixth-largest country; population concentrated along the eastern and southeastern coasts; regular, tropical, invigorating, sea breeze known as "the Doctor" occurs along the west coast in the summer

People

Population: 19,169,083 (July 2000 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 21% (male 2,052,095; female 1,954,543)

15-64 years: 67% (male 6,458,083; female 6,322,475)

65 years and over: 12% (male 1,040,950; female 1,340,937) (2000 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.02% (2000 est.)

Birth rate: 13.08 births/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Death rate: 7.12 deaths/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Net migration rate: 4.26 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.06 male(s)/female

under 15 years: 1.05 male(s)/female

15-64 years: 1.02 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.78 male(s)/female

total population: 0.99 male(s)/female (2000 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 5.04 deaths/1,000 live births (2000 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 79.75 years

male: 76.9 years

female: 82.74 years (2000 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.79 children born/woman (2000 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Australian(s)

adjective: Australian

Ethnic groups: Caucasian 92%, Asian 7%, aboriginal and other 1%

Religions: Anglican 26.1%, Roman Catholic 26%, other Christian 24.3%, non-Christian 11%

Languages: English, native languages

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 100%

male: 100%

female: 100% (1980 est.)

Government

Country name:

conventional long form: Commonwealth of Australia

conventional short form: Australia

Data code: AS

Government type: democratic, federal-state system recognizing the British monarch as sovereign

Capital: Canberra

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

Independence: 1 January 1901 (federation of UK colonies)

National holiday: Australia Day, 26 January (1788)

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 ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952), represented by Governor General Sir William DEANE (since 16 February 1996)

head of government: Prime Minister John Winston HOWARD (since 11 March 1996); Deputy Prime Minister John ANDERSON (since NA)

cabinet: Cabinet selected from among the members of Federal Parliament by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister

elections: none; the monarch is hereditary; governor general appointed by the monarch; following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or leader of a majority coalition is usually appointed prime minister by the governor general for a three-year term

note: government coalition - Liberal Party and National Party

Legislative branch: bicameral Federal Parliament consists of the Senate (76 seats - 12 from each of the six states and two from each of the two territories;

one-half of the members elected every three years by popular vote to serve six-year terms) and the House of Representatives (148 seats; members elected by popular vote on the basis of proportional representation to serve three-year terms; no state can have fewer than five representatives)

elections: Senate - last held 3 October 1998 (next to be held by October 2001);

House of Representatives - last held 3 October 1998 (next to be held by October 2001)

election results: Senate - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - Liberal Party-National Party coalition 35, Australian Labor Party 29, Australian

Democratic Party 9, Green Party 1, One Nation Party 1, independent 1; House of Representatives - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - Liberal

Party-National Party coalition 80, Australian Labor Party 67, independent 1

Judicial branch: the High Court, the Chief Justice and six other justices are appointed by the governor general

Economy

Economy - overview: Australia has a prosperous Western-style capitalist economy, with a per capita GDP at the level of the four dominant West

European economies. Rich in natural resources, Australia is a major exporter of agricultural products, minerals, metals, and fossil fuels. Commodities account for 57% of the value of total exports, so that a downturn in world commodity prices can have a big impact on the economy. The government is pushing for increased exports of manufactured goods, but competition in international markets continues to be severe. While Australia has suffered from the low growth and high unemployment characterizing the OECD countries in the early 1990s and during the recent financial problems in East Asia, the economy has expanded at a solid 4% annual growth pace in the last five years. Canberra's emphasis on reforms is a key factor behind the economy's resilience to the regional crisis and its stronger than expected growth rate. Growth in 2000 will depend on key international commodity prices, the extent of recovery in nearby Asian economies, and the strength of US and European markets.

GDP: purchasing power parity - \$416.2 billion (1999 est.)

GDP - real growth rate: 4.3% (1999 est.)

GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - \$22,200 (1999 est.)

GDP - composition by sector:

agriculture: 3%

industry: 26%

services: 71% (1998 est.)

Population below poverty line: NA%

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: 2.5%

highest 10%: 24.8% (1989)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 1.8% (1999 est.)

Labor force: 8.9 million (December 1999)

Labor force - by occupation: services 73%, industry 22%, agriculture 5% (1997 est.)

Unemployment rate: 7.5% (1999)

Budget:

revenues: \$90.73 billion

expenditures: \$89.04 billion, including capital expenditures of \$NA (FY98/99 est.)

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

Industrial production growth rate: 1.5% (1999 est.)

Electricity - production: 186.387 billion kWh (1998)

Electricity - production by source:

fossil fuel: 89.85%

hydro: 8.35%

nuclear: 0%

other: 1.8% (1998)

Electricity - consumption: 173.34 billion kWh (1998)

Electricity - exports: 0 kWh (1998)

Electricity - imports: 0 kWh (1998)

Agriculture - products: wheat, barley, sugarcane, fruits; cattle, sheep, poultry

Exports: \$58 billion (f.o.b., 1999 est.)

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

Exports - partners: Japan 20%, EU 14%, ASEAN 11%, US 10%, South Korea, NZ, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China (1998)

Imports: \$67 billion (f.o.b., 1999 est.)

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

Imports - partners: EU 24%, US 22%, Japan 14%, ASEAN 12% (1998)

Debt - external: \$222 billion (1999)

Economic aid - donor: ODA, \$1.43 billion (FY97/98)

Currency: 1 Australian dollar (\$) = 100 cents

Exchange rates: Australian dollars (\$) per US\$1 - 1.52068 (January 2000), 1.5497 (1999), 1.5888 (1998), 1.3439 (1997), 1.2773 (1996), 1.3486 (1995)

Fiscal year: 1 July - 30 June

Communications

Telephones - main lines in use: 92 million (1995)

Telephones - mobile cellular: 5.29 million (1998)

Telephone system: excellent domestic and international service

domestic: domestic satellite system

international: submarine cables to New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Indonesia; satellite earth stations - 10 Intelsat (4 Indian Ocean and 6 Pacific Ocean), 2 Inmarsat (Indian and Pacific Ocean regions)

Radio broadcast stations: AM 262, FM 345, shortwave 1 (1998)

Radios: 25.5 million (1997)

Television broadcast stations: 104 (1997)

Televisions: 10.15 million (1997)

Internet Service Providers (ISPs): 709 (1999)

Transportation

Railways:

total: 33,819 km (2,540 km electrified)

broad gauge: 3,719 km 1.600-m gauge

standard gauge: 15,422 km 1.435-m gauge

narrow gauge: 14,506 km 1.067-m gauge

dual gauge: 172 km NA gauges (1999)

Highways:

total: 913,000 km

paved: 353,331 km (including 13,630 km of expressways)

unpaved: 559,669 km (1996 est.)

Waterways: 8,368 km; mainly by small, shallow-draft craft

Pipelines: crude oil 2,500 km; petroleum products 500 km; natural gas 5,600 km

Ports and harbors: Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Darwin, Devonport (Tasmania), Fremantle, Geelong, Hobart (Tasmania), Launceston (Tasmania), Mackay, Melbourne, Sydney, Townsville

Merchant marine:

total: 57 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 1,657,194 GRT/2,206,574 DWT

ships by type: bulk 28, cargo 4, chemical tanker 4, container 1, liquefied gas 4, passenger 2, petroleum tanker 8, roll-on/roll-off 6 (1999 est.)

Airports: 408 (1999 est.)

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 265

over 3,047 m: 11
2,438 to 3,047 m: 11
1,524 to 2,437 m: 115
914 to 1,523 m: 120
under 914 m: 8 (1999 est.)
Airports - with unpaved runways:
total: 143
1,524 to 2,437 m: 18
914 to 1,523 m: 113
under 914 m: 12 (1999 est.)

Notes to Visitors and Users:

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