

Australia in brief





Australia: brief facts

Capital	Canberra
Surface area	7,692,024 sq. kms (2,969,907 sq. miles)
Population	22.5 million (2011)
Main language	English
Currency	Australian dollar (AUD)
GDP per capita	A\$40,790
Workforce	11.5 million (2012)
Unemployment rate	5.1 per cent (2012)
Inflation rate	1.6 per cent (2012)
Value of exports of goods and services	A\$313,255,000,000 (2011)
Australia's main import sources	China, United States, Japan, Singapore, Germany (2011)
Australia's main export destinations	China, Japan, Republic of Korea, India, United States (2011)
National day	Australia Day: 26 January
Time	Eastern: GMT+10hrs, Central: GMT+9.5hrs, Western: GMT+8hrs
Households with internet access	79 per cent (2010–11)
Overseas visitors	5,875,000 (2011)
International students	426,748 (2011)
Highest point above sea level	Mount Kosciuszko: 2,228 metres (7,309 feet)
Lowest point below sea level	Lake Eyre: 15 metres below (49 feet)





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Overview

Australia is a stable, culturally diverse and democratic society with one of the strongest performing economies in the world. With an estimated population of more than 22.5 million, Australia is the only nation to govern an entire continent. It is the earth's biggest island and sixth-largest country in the world in land area, about the size of mainland United States and one and a half times the size of Europe.

Australia is home to one of the world's oldest living cultures. Aboriginal peoples arrived at least 50,000 years, and Torres Strait Islander people 10,000 years, before European settlement. Today, Australia is one of the world's most multicultural countries, a nation rich in Indigenous and immigrant cultures. Over a quarter of Australia's population was born overseas. Australia is a friendly country, and our reputation as a successful and prosperous society has seen us ranked second in the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2011*.



Western pygmy possum feeding on large fruited Mallee. Photo: DSEWPac

Did you know? Australia is often referred to as 'the lucky country'. The title of Donald Horne's 1964 book *The Lucky Country* was intended to be ironic, but it has since often been used without irony to describe the nation's good fortune, including the weather and our lifestyle. It is often invoked to describe the nation's economic successes, our political stability and the building of one of the most multicultural societies in the world.

Australia has 10 per cent of the world's biodiversity, and a great number of its native plants, animals and birds exist nowhere else in the world. From tropical rainforests in the north, to the deserts of the Red Centre, to the snowfields in its south-east, to the Australian Antarctic Territory, Australia is a vast and varied country. It has many internationally recognised World Heritage sites, including the Great Barrier Reef, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and the Sydney Opera House.

Australia's economy is consistently among the strongest of advanced economies in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). As at 2011, it is the world's 13th-largest economy, with a strong commitment to ongoing economic reform and global engagement that emphasises free trade and investment.

With low unemployment, low inflation and low government debt, a highly skilled workforce produced by a world-class education system, and strong links with the fastest growing



Netball is the most popular women's team participation sport in Australia.

region in the world, the Asia-Pacific, Australia's economy is set to prosper into the future.

Australia's foreign and trade policy is focused on promoting our security and long-term prosperity. It seeks to protect and advance Australia's national interests in a rapidly changing environment, while supporting a stable global order. A commitment to multilateralism, in particular the United Nations, is a central tenet of Australian foreign policy. Australia has been integrally involved



Sydney Opera House

in global efforts to build peace and security for decades, just as it has in promoting global trade and investment liberalisation.

Our alliance with the United States remains an enduring priority, as does comprehensive engagement with key countries in the Asia-Pacific such as China, India, Indonesia and Japan. Australia's aid program has tripled in size since 2000 and is expected to almost double again over the next five years, which could see Australia ranked as high as the sixth-largest donor globally.

Did you know? Melbourne was ranked first on *The Economist* 'world's most liveable cities' list in 2011, followed by Sydney in sixth place, Perth in eighth, and Adelaide in ninth.

Australia's spectacular natural environment, diversity and high quality of life make it a popular international tourist destination, with nearly six million people visiting Australia in 2011.

National symbols

The Australian flag

The stars of the Southern Cross represent Australia's geographic position in the Southern Hemisphere. The large Commonwealth star symbolises the federation of the states and territories, and the Union Jack reflects Australia's early ties to Great Britain.



Our national colours

Australia's national colours are green and gold, the colours of our national floral emblem, the Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha Benth*).

National day

Australia Day is celebrated every year on 26 January. The date commemorates the anniversary of the unfurling of the British flag at Sydney Cove in 1788.

National anthem

Advance Australia Fair has been Australia's official national anthem since 19 April 1984.

*Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are young and free;
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature's gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*

*Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
We'll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who've come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*

The coat of arms

The Australian coat of arms was granted by King George V in 1912. It consists of a shield containing the badges of the six Australian states, symbolising federation, and the national symbols of the golden wattle, the kangaroo and the emu. By popular tradition, the kangaroo is accepted as the national animal emblem. The golden wattle, *Acacia pycnantha Benth*, was proclaimed the national floral emblem in August 1988.



National holidays

Australia observes about 12 public holidays a year, including New Year's Day, Australia Day and Anzac Day.

Anzac Day, 25 April, is a national day of commemoration for those who fought for Australia and those who lost their lives in war. It is the day the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) landed at Gallipoli in Turkey in 1915 during World War I. To mark the day, Australians and New Zealanders attend ceremonies at home and around the world, including in Gallipoli.

Quick links

www.australia.gov.au

www.australia.com

ABIS Jayson Turfrey



A Navy bugler salutes during the Australian national anthem at the Anzac Day dawn service at Monument Hill, Fremantle, Western Australia. Photo: Navy Imagery Unit West

The land and its people

Brief history

Australia's Aboriginal people, the original inhabitants of the Australian continent, arrived from Asia at least 50,000 years ago. Parts of the continent were mapped by Dutch navigators in the seventeenth century and by French and British navigators the following century, but it was not until 1770 that Captain James Cook charted the east coast and claimed it for Britain.

From 1788, Britain established penal colonies in New South Wales and Tasmania and later in Western Australia. Free settlers followed in increasing numbers, gradually outnumbering convicts. A colony made up entirely of free settlers was established in South Australia in the 1830s.

On 26 August 1975, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam handed a leasehold title to land at Daguragu (Wattle Creek) to Vincent Lingiari, representative of the Gurindji people. It was a turning point for Aboriginal land rights in Australia.



European claims to ownership of the land were reinforced in 1835 with the enunciation of the doctrine of *terra nullius*, the notion that no-one owned the land before the British Crown took possession of it. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, displaced by European colonisation, suffered great hardship, but maintained proud and strong Indigenous cultures and languages throughout and to the present day. Native title to land and waters was recognised by the High Court in 1992, and by the Commonwealth Parliament a year later.

Queensland and Victoria separated from New South Wales in the 1850s, by which time gold had been discovered in New South Wales and Victoria. The gold rush brought immigrants to Australia from all over the world.

In 1901, the six colonies united to form the federal Commonwealth of Australia. The new federation adopted a restrictive immigration policy, protectionist tariffs

and a centralised system of industrial conciliation and arbitration. These policies were dismantled in the 1970s and 1980s with major reforms leading to the opening of the Australian economy.

From 1914–18, more than 400,000 Australians volunteered in World War I. Although Australia's first major campaign in Gallipoli in 1915 was a failure, with almost 9,000 Australian soldiers losing their lives, its commemoration came to be an important element in the emergence of an Australian national identity.

The signing of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles by the Prime Minister was the first time that Australia had signed an international treaty. In World War II (1939–45), Australian troops were deployed against the Axis powers in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East and allied with the United States in the Pacific War against Japan. On 1 November 1945, Australia became a founding member of the United Nations. In 1951, Australia

entered into the ANZUS Treaty with the United States and New Zealand, and in 1957 signed an agreement on commerce with Japan which underpinned Australia's increasing engagement with Asia.

Over the last fifty years, Australia has become a destination for migrants from all across the world, and it is now among the world's most multicultural nations. The nation has developed a highly diversified economy with considerable strengths, particularly in the mining and agricultural sectors as well as manufacturing and services, and it has become increasingly economically integrated with the countries of East Asia.

Quick links

www.nma.gov.au

www.naa.gov.au

www.nla.gov.au

www.awm.gov.au/atwar

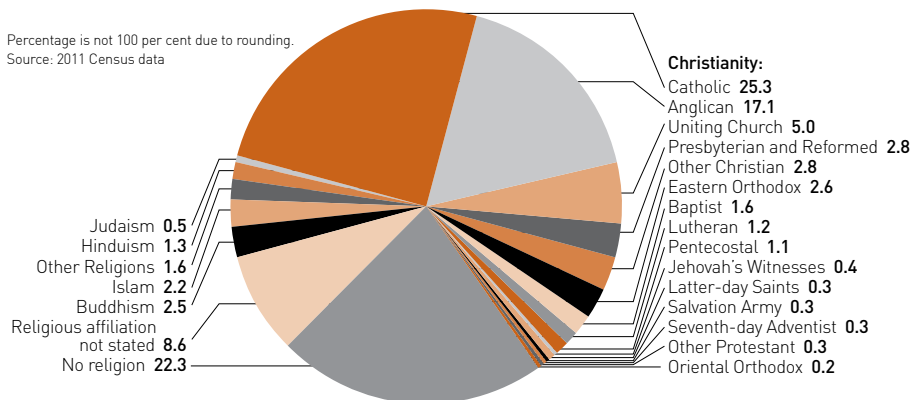
A diverse people

Australian society is a melting pot of cultures. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the traditional inhabitants of the land, immigrants from more than 200 countries also call Australia home. Since World War II, more than seven million migrants have come to Australia. From 1788 to the 1970s, the majority came from Europe. These days, Australia receives many more migrants from Asia, and since 1996 the number of migrants from Africa and the Middle East has almost doubled. Australia's immigration policy welcomes people from all over the world and does not discriminate on racial, cultural or religious grounds. As a nation, we embrace the spectrum of religious beliefs: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and other places of worship are found in almost every major city.

Did you know? Hinduism is the fastest-growing religion in Australia.

Breakdown of religious affiliation in Australia

Percentage is not 100 per cent due to rounding.
Source: 2011 Census data



Did you know? More than a quarter of Australians were born overseas. The top 10 source countries for immigrants in 2010–11 were:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. New Zealand | 6. South Africa |
| 2. China | 7. Sri Lanka |
| 3. United Kingdom | 8. Vietnam |
| 4. India | 9. Iraq |
| 5. Philippines | 10. Malaysia |

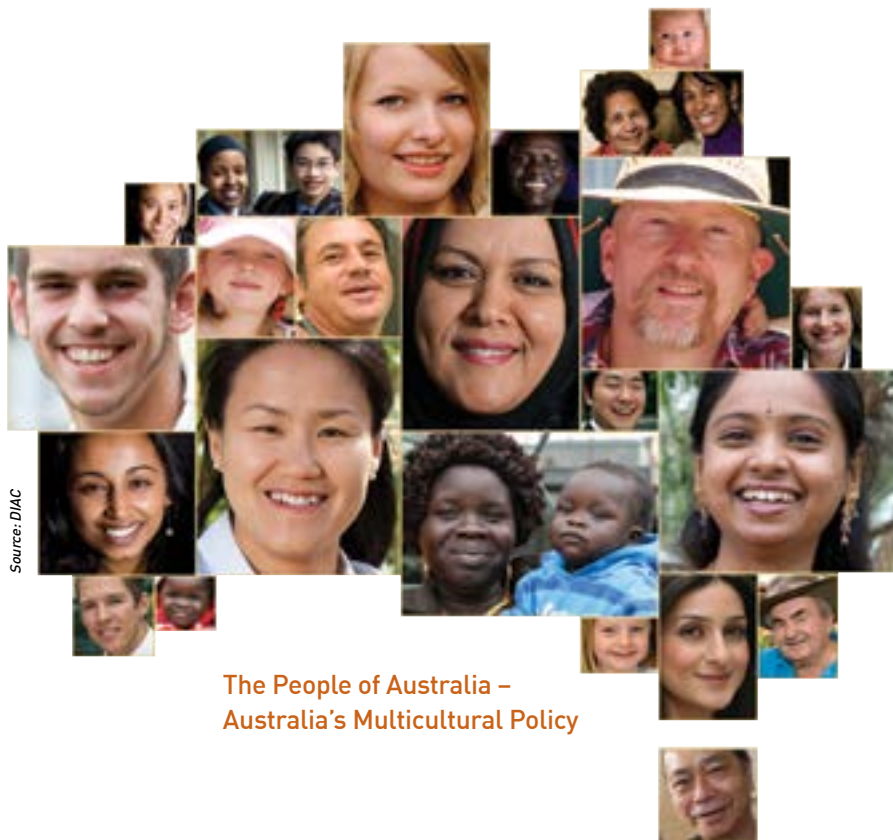


The Mpaso family from Malawi, pictured here wrapped in the flag of their new country, all received Australian citizenship at the 2010 Australian Citizenship Day in Canberra on 17 September, 2010.

Human rights for all

Australia is committed to promoting and protecting human rights universally. Australia has an enduring commitment to human rights internationally and is a party to major human rights treaties. We believe the protection and promotion of human rights is every nation's responsibility. We take this responsibility seriously, including through our national human rights institution, the Australian Human Rights Commission and our Human Rights Framework. We have a strong democratic tradition, a transparent and independent judicial system and a free media. Our society is characterised by a sense of egalitarianism.

Source: DIAC



The People of Australia –
Australia's Multicultural Policy

Quick links

www.immi.gov.au

www.citizenship.gov.au

www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au

www.harmony.gov.au

Democracy

Australians were pioneers in establishing democracy in the modern world. In the mid-nineteenth century, Australian colonies set

Did you know? Australia's six colonies joined together to form a federation of states under a single constitution on 1 January 1901. Canberra was named as the capital of the new nation in 1913, and Australia's parliament opened in the city in 1927.

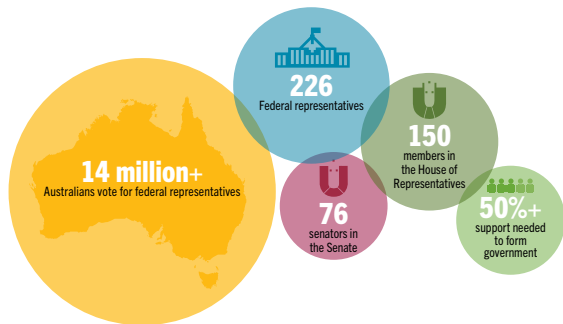
about writing constitutions which produced democratically elected parliaments. From the 1850s to the 1890s, when few other countries in the world were democratic, the Australian colonies progressively established universal male suffrage, and were also among the first to give women the vote.

The Australian form of government follows the British (Westminster) tradition. The Governor-General, representing the Crown, exercises the supreme executive power of the Commonwealth. In practice, the

Governor-General acts on the advice of the head of the government, the Prime Minister, and other ministers.

The Prime Minister leads a Cabinet of ministers, each of whom has responsibility for a different portfolio of government duties. Commonwealth ministers, including the Prime Minister, are appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the leader of a political party or coalition which represents a majority of the House of Representatives in the federal parliament.

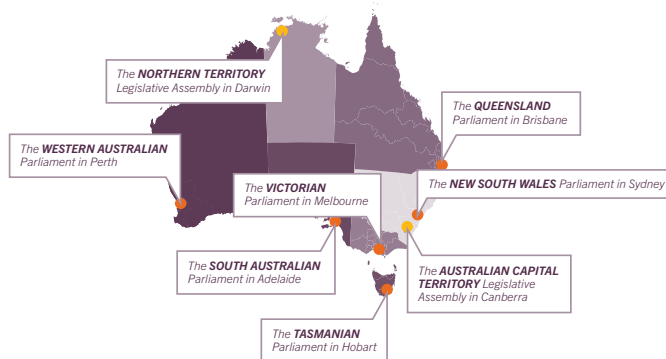
PARLIAMENT and GOVERNMENT



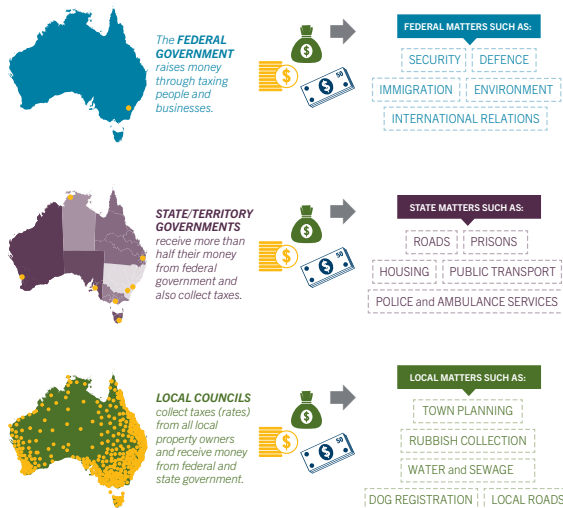
You will find larger versions of these diagrams online at the Parliamentary Education Office: www.peo.gov.au/multimedia/library

STATE and TERRITORY PARLIAMENTS

Who makes the laws?



HOW GOVERNMENTS RAISE and SPEND MONEY



A similar system operates in the states. The Governor-General takes the Prime Minister's advice on the exercise of executive power, including such matters as the timing of elections and the reshuffling of ministerial portfolios.

The 1901 Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia sets out the powers of the

Commonwealth and states. Each state has its own written constitution. The High Court of Australia and the Federal Court of Australia have the authority to interpret constitutional provisions. Under the Constitution, the legislative power of the Commonwealth is vested in the Federal Parliament. The Parliament makes laws, authorises the Government to spend public



The Museum of Australian Democracy at Canberra's Old Parliament House encourages visitors to celebrate, debate and experience the journey of Australia's democracy. Its school education program reaches some 70,000 school children a year.

money, scrutinises government activities, and is a forum for debate on national issues.

Quick links

www.moadoph.gov.au
www.peo.gov.au
www.aph.gov.au
www.aec.gov.au

Indigenous Australia

Australia's Aboriginal people arrived from Asia at least 50,000 years ago. They formed many different tribes and were largely nomadic hunters and gatherers.

Torres Strait Islander peoples first settled on islands north of the mainland, between the tip of Queensland and Papua New Guinea, about 10,000 years ago.

Cameras from Imparja Television, Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Imparja Television is a private, fully commercial company under the control of Indigenous shareholders.



Penny Tweedie

Did you know? Some prominent Australian landmarks are known by their traditional Aboriginal names. For example, since 1993, Ayers Rock in the Northern Territory has been officially known as Uluru.

Today most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live in cities and towns, but many still live in rural and remote areas and follow traditional lifestyles.

Indigenous culture is diverse and strong, and makes a vital contribution to Australia's national identity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples contribute significantly across many fields including the arts, media, academia, politics, sport and business.

When Europeans arrived in Australia, there were a large number of different Aboriginal languages and dialects spoken. While Indigenous languages remain strong in some communities, it is estimated that over 50 languages have been lost since European

settlement. Approximately 145 languages are still spoken with around 110 of these severely or critically endangered. Efforts are underway to keep language strong in Indigenous communities, and revive vulnerable languages.

A federal referendum on 27 May 1967 removed references from the Australian Constitution which discriminated against

Did you know? It is sometimes said that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples did not own land because many communities were nomadic over large regions. This assumption has come about because Europeans defined land boundaries differently to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Often these boundaries were defined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by using natural features such as rivers, lakes and mountains. The Elders passed down the knowledge about these boundaries by talking with the younger people and children, and through the practice of ceremonies.



Indigenous people. It saw the highest 'yes' vote ever recorded in a federal referendum, with 90.77 per cent voting for the change. The referendum was an important milestone in Australian history.

On 3 June 1992, the High Court of Australia, through the landmark *Mabo* decision, recognised native title and Indigenous peoples' entitlements to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of lands for the first time in Australian history. Many regard the decision as a turning point for reconciliation in Australia.

Did you know? For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the Dreamtime is a sacred time, fundamental to their understanding of creation. Dreamtime stories can be found in many forms including rock art, traditional crafts, bark painting and ceremonial dances.

Dancers performing at Corroboree 2000, a national reconciliation event held at Sydney in May 2000. Photo: Karen Mork, www.karenmork.com.au

On 13 February 2008, the then Australian Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, moved in the Australian Parliament a motion of Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples, in particular the Stolen Generations, for past mistreatment and injustices.

The Apology was deeply felt by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and helped to build a bridge of respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The Australian Government is working towards recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their culture and languages in Australia's Constitution, as a significant step towards building a nation based on strong relationships and mutual respect, which recognises the unique and special place of our Indigenous peoples.

Australian governments at all levels are working to close the gap in the education, health, housing and employment sectors where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes are well below the Australian average.



Fabric printer Rosie Ware from Thursday Island takes inspiration from the strength of Torres Strait culture, her island surroundings and the sea, and promotes Torres Strait art and crafts to visitors to her island home. Rosie sells her own work from her studio: rosiewaredesigns.com

Quick links

www.indigenous.gov.au

www.aiatsis.gov.au

www.nma.gov.au

www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map

Text of the apology to Australia's Indigenous people as delivered by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 13 February 2008

I move:

That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

Australia's unique environment

Australia is a land like no other, with over half a million different native species. More than 80 per cent of our mammals, reptiles, frogs and flowering plants are unique to Australia, along with many of our freshwater fish, and almost half our birds. Australia has more than 140 species of marsupials, animals that carry their young in a pouch, such as kangaroos, koalas, wombats and the Tasmanian devil. We are also home to two monotremes, egg-laying mammals sometimes referred to as 'living fossils': the platypus and echidna.

Environmental challenges

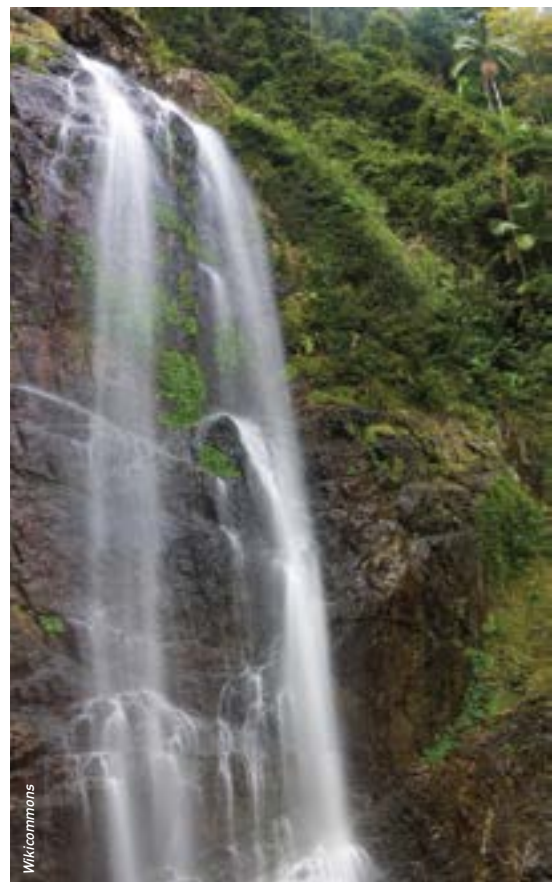
Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth, making it particularly vulnerable to the challenges of climate change. Australia faces major challenges in ensuring sustainable water supply in the face of climate change, climate variability and reduced water availability. Introduced animals have established feral populations in Australia, with cats and foxes responsible for the decline and contributing to the extinction of many

native animals. Plants introduced since European settlement have become weeds and cause substantial damage to native vegetation and habitats.

Australia's national parks and protected areas

Australia's national reserve system covers more than 9,700 protected areas covering nearly 13.5 per cent of the country – over 103 million hectares (254 million acres) – and includes a range of habitats from lush rainforests to savannahs and deserts. By the end of 2012, the number of Australia's marine reserves is expected to grow from the current 27 to 60, increasing their combined size from 765,000 square kilometres to 3.1 million square kilometres (295,368 square miles to 1.2 million square miles), covering more than a third of Australian waters, which will make it the largest network of marine protected areas in the world.

*Cedar Falls along the Never Never circuit in
Dorrigo National Park, New South Wales*



Wikicommons



Tourism Queensland

Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

Did you know? Nineteen Australian sites are listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, including:

- Great Barrier Reef, Queensland
- Tasmanian Wilderness
- Wet Tropics of Queensland
- Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park, Northern Territory
- Sydney Opera House, New South Wales
- Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, Victoria
- Shark Bay, Western Australia
- Fossil Mammal Sites in Naracoorte (South Australia) and Riversleigh (Queensland).



DSEWPfC

Mosaic leatherjacket fish, photographed at the wreck of the Norma, which sank off the South Australian coast in 1907. Photo: Dennis Hutson, Marine Life Society of South Australia

Lake Mungo, New South Wales. On the eastern shore of the lake are the 'Walls of China', 30 metres high and formed over thousands of years.



Climate change

Climate change poses a particular threat to Australia's alpine regions, the Great Barrier Reef, tropical rainforests, and coastal regions. Australia is committed to meeting the challenge of climate change. Some key initiatives in this area include:

- introducing a carbon price
- promoting innovation and investment in renewable energy
- encouraging energy efficiency
- creating opportunities in the land sector to cut greenhouse gas emissions.



Sheep in drought country, Western Australia
Photo: DSEWPac

Did you know? Australia has around 10 per cent of the world's biodiversity and is one of the 17 megadiverse countries that together account for almost 70 per cent of the world's species.



Flood waters, Gem Road, Queensland



Bushfires are a common phenomenon in the Australian environment. Photo: DSEWPac



Kookaburra

Quick links

www.environment.gov.au

www.climatechange.gov.au

Australia and the world

Engaging with the world

Australia is strongly engaged with the rest of the world, not only because so many of its people originate from so many parts of the world but also from longstanding recognition that its prosperity and security are integrally linked to global engagement.

Australia was a founding member of the United Nations and is the 12th-largest contributor to the UN regular and peacekeeping budgets. It is strongly committed to the building of a rules-based international order which advances and

Did you know? In 2012, Australia and China celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations. Forty years ago, in 1971–72, bilateral merchandise trade between Australia and China was around \$79 million. By 2011, it had reached \$121 billion.

protects the interests of all nations and peoples. Australia plays an active role in a wide array of global and regional institutions, including the:

- United Nations (UN)
- G20 (Group of 20 major economies)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- East Asia Summit (EAS)
- Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
- Commonwealth
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation
- Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)
- Forum for East Asia – Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC)
- Asia–Europe Meeting

Australia has a strong network of alliances and partnerships to advance its international interests, including a longstanding alliance with the United States. Both countries have worked closely together over the past century in the promotion of global peace and prosperity.

Did you know? Hundreds of thousands of Australians and New Zealanders cross the Tasman Sea each year as tourists, for business purposes, to visit family members or to relocate. Freedom of travel is facilitated through the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangements of 1973, which allow Australians and New Zealanders to visit, live and work in either country without restrictions.



Defence Media/Mr. Kristopher Radder

A strong foreign and trade policy focus for Australia is strengthening its already significant engagement with countries in the dynamic Asia-Pacific region. As a founding member of APEC and active participant in the EAS, Australia is also helping to build regional institutions that foster stability, security and prosperity across the region.

Some key international policy objectives for Australia include:

- promoting global and regional security, including reducing the threat from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, reducing the threat of terrorism and combating transnational crime
- peacekeeping, as evidenced by the fact

Nursing Officer Flight Lieutenant Susan Wither weighs a Micronesian boy at Pohnpei Hospital, during a Medical Civic Action Project for Pacific Partnerships 2011.

that Australia has contributed 65,000 personnel to more than 50 UN and other multilateral peace and security operations worldwide, including in Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (Papua New Guinea), Lebanon, Sudan, Cyprus and the Republic of Korea

- pursuing sustainable and balanced global economic growth and regional economic integration, and developing market access opportunities for Australian trade and investment
- contributing to effective international responses to shared challenges such as reducing poverty, addressing climate change and ensuring the sustainable management of our oceans
- protecting Australians overseas, including in response to major crises.

Australia has significant, longstanding and close bilateral ties with Indonesia, as well as strong ties with other member nations of ASEAN in South-East Asia. Australia also has strong relations with the major states of North Asia: China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, countries which are also our major markets.

Stability, security and prosperity in the Pacific are central to Australia's national interest. Australia has strong bilateral ties to the region, including an important relationship with Papua New Guinea, and a commitment to regional cooperation and economic development.

Beyond our region, Australia enjoys strong economic, security, political, social and cultural ties with the United States and Canada.

Quick links

www.dfat.gov.au

www.unnny.mission.gov.au

Australia continues to build on our strong and longstanding political, cultural, trade, investment, and people-to-people links with Europe to advance mutual interests. We are committed to a broad-based, creative partnership with the European Union, addressing the contemporary challenges of economic management and international trade, climate change, development, security, and strengthening international governance.

Australia has significant people-to-people links and growing trade and investment interests in the strategically important Middle East. In Africa, Australia has longstanding bilateral ties, especially with fellow Commonwealth nations, and growing trade and investment interests, particularly in the resources sector.

Australia's connections with Latin American countries are expanding in a range of international forums, including in the WTO. Australia has warm relations with Caribbean countries built on strong historical and cultural foundations.

Did you know? Australia is a member of the East Asia Summit (EAS) which brings together key countries of the Asia-Pacific region to address common economic, security and political challenges. With its comprehensive membership and broad mandate, the EAS is developing into an important regional mechanism to build dialogue and cooperation that are so vital to the promotion of regional stability, security and prosperity. Australia will continue to play its role.

A leading Antarctic nation

Australia is a leading Antarctic nation, driving international efforts to preserve Antarctica as a natural reserve devoted to peace and science. As host of the 35th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Hobart in June 2012, Australia worked with representatives of the 50 Antarctic Treaty Parties on practical measures to enhance the protection and management of Antarctica, including strengthening support for the Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty, which permanently bans mining. Australia's world-class Antarctic research program contributes to understanding environmental systems in Antarctica and the effects of global climate change. It involves cooperation with hundreds of institutions in more than 25 countries.



Todor Iolovski/Australian Antarctic Division

Australia and Asia

Asia's growth presents significant opportunities for Australia's continued strong engagement in this dynamic region.

Australia has developed people-to-people links throughout the countries of Asia, reinforced by its significant population of people of Asian origin and widely recognised academic, business and other expertise in Asian culture, history and geography. These people-to-people links include the fact that:

- Australia is home to around two million people born in Asia
- between two and three million Australians visit Asia every year
- in 2011, about three-quarters of international students in Australian higher education were born in Asia.

Asia's strong economic growth will continue to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. It is predicted that Asia's middle class will one day be bigger than that of the rest of the world combined. Australia is well placed to contribute to, and benefit from, this remarkable transformation. Australian

natural resources, high-quality food production, world-class services, such as in education and the financial sector, and new technologies will continue to aid this transformation.

Australia is already one of the most Asian-oriented economies. Today, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, India and our ASEAN neighbours purchase around three quarters of our merchandise exports. Our diplomacy has had Asia at its centre for six decades. Australia has been at the forefront

of creating regional institutions from APEC to the ASEAN Regional Forum and, more recently, expansion of the EAS.

Australia's strong network of close relationships with countries throughout Asia and its active participation in the major institutions of Asia such as APEC, EAS and the Asian Development Bank also make it an important player in addressing the challenges that arise from the changes occurring in the region.



Did you know? Australia's longstanding engagement with Asia gathered pace in the post-war period.

- Australia supported Indonesia's independence in the late 1940s
- In 1951, Australia helped initiate the Colombo Plan, which by the 1980s had sponsored 20,000 students from Asia.
- A 1957 commerce agreement with Japan underwrote growth in bilateral trade and economic integration.
- Australia recognised the People's Republic of China in 1972.
- In 1974, Australia became the first dialogue partner of ASEAN.
- Australia accepted Indochinese refugees in the 1970s.
- Australia played a major role in the Cambodian Peace Process.
- Australia played a significant role in establishing APEC and expanding the EAS in 2011 to include the United States and Russia.
- Australia led international efforts to restore peace and stability in East Timor in 1999.



Australia is working closely with Asian countries to ensure continued strong economic growth and regional economic integration aimed at lifting the living standards for all peoples in the region. Australia is also working with the countries of Asia to address shared security challenges and common threats such as climate change, the crime of people smuggling and terrorism.

Some of the 24 children from the Japanese town of Minami Sanriku, devastated by the 11 March 2011 tsunami, who visited the Gold Coast on a visit funded by the Australia-Japan Foundation and the Australian Embassy Tokyo.

Quick links:

www.dfat.gov.au

www.asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au

www.dpmc.gov.au

Trading with the world

Trade is fundamentally important to the Australian economy. We are one of the world's largest exporters of minerals, energy and agricultural commodities. Australia has developed a competitive edge in a range of goods and services, including high-technology goods such as medical and scientific equipment, as well as wine and processed food. Major services exports

Did you know? In the early 1950s, the wool industry accounted for a large part of Australia's agricultural exports, to the extent that the country was said to be 'riding on the sheep's back'. While wool is still an important export, our agriculture and agrifood industries also export a wide range of other products such as wheat, beef, cotton, sugar, wine, sheepmeat, barley and dairy. Australia's farmers have been active participants in the nation's trade liberalisation reforms, significantly boosting the international competitiveness of our agricultural exports.

include education and tourism, as well as professional and financial services. Sales of services by Australian companies operating overseas provide a major contribution to our economy. Australia's largest trading partners are China, Japan, the United States, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and India. Australia's trading success reflects its stable institutions, strong education system, flexible and skilled workforce, and rich natural resource base.

Trade liberalisation and economic reform have been at the heart of Australian Government policy for decades. Today, Australia is a very open market with minimal restrictions on imports of goods and services. The process of opening up has increased productivity, stimulated growth and made the economy more flexible and dynamic. We are pushing ahead with trade liberalisation – unilaterally, bilaterally and multilaterally. Australia is also working hard to strengthen international economic collaboration to reduce the risks facing the global economy and to bolster growth. We play an active role in the World Trade Organization, APEC, the G20 and other trade forums. Australia has also negotiated

bilateral and regional agreements with a wide range of countries to strengthen trade and investment flows.

Australia has bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) with Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and the United States. We have a regional FTA with ASEAN and New Zealand. Australia is negotiating agreements with China, India, Indonesia, Japan and the Republic of Korea, as well as with our Pacific neighbours and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. We are also working on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement with Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam.



Australia Unlimited was developed as part of the Australian Government's Building Brand Australia Program with the aim of more effectively communicating the skills and contributions of contemporary Australia to a global audience.

A strong and stable economy

The Australian economy continues to outperform other advanced economies. Australia has solid growth, low unemployment, contained inflation, very low public debt and a strong and stable financial system. By 2012, Australia had experienced more than 20 years of continued economic growth, averaging 3.5 per cent a year. Australia's positive outlook is underpinned by a record pipeline of resources investments, solid growth in commodity exports and a strong fiscal position.

The services sector is the largest part of the Australian economy, accounting for around three quarters of gross domestic product and four out of five jobs. Australia is an important and growing financial centre, with a sophisticated financial services sector and strong regulation.

A continuing process of reform to further open the economy and strengthen its competitiveness has been a key ingredient of Australia's success. Australia weathered the 2008 global financial crisis better than most advanced economies, reflecting

sound policies and the strength of our institutional and regulatory settings.

Foreign investment

Australia welcomes foreign investment and recognises the key role it plays in bolstering our economic growth, employment and competitiveness. Foreign investment also strengthens our links into regional and global supply chains. A robust economy, strategic location and track record of innovation make Australia an attractive location for foreign investors. The stock of foreign investment in Australia was \$2.0 trillion at the end of 2011. A large number of foreign companies are registered in Australia. Many have developed close links with local firms, which has generated cooperation on research and development and resulted in Australian companies becoming drawn into global and regional supply chains.

Did you know? Australia is ranked by the World Bank as the second fastest place in the world in which to start a new business – it can take just two days.

Facilitating exports

The Australian Government helps Australian businesses to access export markets, through bodies such as the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) and Export Finance and Insurance Corporation (EFIC). Austrade is the Australian Government's trade, investment and education promotion agency. It has an extensive global network covering 102 locations in 55 countries. EFIC is the Australian Government's export credit agency. It provides finance and insurance solutions to help Australian companies overcome financial barriers when they seek to export.

Quick links

www.dfat.gov.au/trade
www.austrade.gov.au
www.efic.gov.au

Mining and resources

With abundant resources, skilled professionals and cutting-edge technology, Australia is a leader in the global mining industry. Australia is among the largest producers of bauxite, iron and zinc ore, nickel and gold. Australia is also a major supplier of energy, including coal, natural gas and uranium.

The mining sector accounted for approximately eight per cent of the Australian economy in 2011. In the same year, minerals and energy accounted for 50 per cent of Australia's exports. The sector is expanding, driven by huge demand for raw materials from the rapidly growing economies of Asia.

The scale of our resource industry has helped Australia become a world leader in the development and manufacture of mining equipment, technology and services. Australian firms are competitive across the supply chain, including in exploration, engineering, processing, environmental management, mine safety, training, and research and development.

Mining for development

Australia is helping resource-rich developing countries use their natural resources to reduce poverty and expand their economies through the Mining for Development Initiative. The Initiative draws on Australian expertise to help countries address mining-related governance, capacity and technological challenges and to promote socially and environmentally sustainable development.

As part of this collaboration, Australia is building geosciences research and training capacity in four West African universities. The International Mining for Development Centre offers courses to participants from throughout Africa.

Did you know? Australia has the world's largest reserves of lead, nickel and zinc.

Quick links

www.ret.gov.au

www.daff.gov.au

www.im4dc.org

www.usaid.gov.au

Opposite: Mining professionals from Sierra Leone, Zambia and Burkina Faso took part in a mining governance study tour to the Bullant gold mine near Kalgoorlie, a major gold mining town in Western Australia.



Defence and security

Australia works closely with other countries to promote security and stability in our immediate region and globally.

Our response to security challenges such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, cyber threats, maritime security and weak and failing states is multi-dimensional.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Defence, the Australian Federal Police, the Attorney-General's Department, the Customs and Border Protection Service, state law enforcement agencies, and intelligence agencies all play a role.

Did you know? The Australian Defence Force – the Royal Australian Navy, Australian Army, Royal Australian Air Force, and other attached agencies – numbers around 83,000 uniformed personnel, of whom approximately 57,000 are full-time and more than 26,000 are reservists.

Did you know? Australia is the 12th-largest financial contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget.

A versatile and modern defence force, strong bilateral links and an ongoing commitment to a rules-based global order and the United Nations are all key elements of Australia's approach.

Bilaterally, the alliance with the United States remains vital. Long-term links with New Zealand, and growing ties with Indonesia, Japan and the Republic of Korea are increasingly valued in pursuing common strategic interests.

Australia also has longstanding and valuable defence ties with Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea. We have growing and productive relationships with India, China and Vietnam.

We provide assistance to Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and other Pacific island countries to enable them to maintain stability

and protect their security. Australia is also working with Pakistan, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen and Indonesia on law enforcement and counter-terrorism capacity building.

Regionally and multilaterally, Australia continues to work with others to address traditional and non-traditional security issues. Australia is the largest non-NATO contributor to the International Stability Assistance Force in Afghanistan. We are leaders in global efforts for non-proliferation and disarmament, and counter-terrorism.

Quick links:

www.defence.gov.au

www.dfat.gov.au

www.nationalsecurity.gov.au



CPL Guy Young/Defence Images

Peace and humanitarian missions

Since 1947, around 65,000 Australians have served in more than 50 peace and security operations around the world. In our own neighbourhood, Australia has helped to build the peace in regional missions in Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (Papua New Guinea).

As the nature of peace operations has evolved, so too has Australia's contribution, with an increasing focus on policing and civilian components and on helping nations to build their capacities and national institutions. Australia's geography gives us a distinctive and deep understanding of the vital importance of development to security and stability.

Trooper Oliver Ellis stops for a chat with a schoolteacher at Mbalisuna, Solomon Islands. At the request of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Australians soldiers have been deployed as part of the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). RAMSI's assistance is known in Solomon Islands as operation HELPEM FREN (Pijin for 'help a friend'), and its mission is to assist the Solomon Islands Government in restoring law and order and economic governance, and improving the machinery of government.

International aid

Australians are generous people. Last year, two million Australian households donated to non-government organisations – one of the highest private donor rates in the world. On current projections, by 2015–16 the Australian Government will be the sixth-largest OECD official aid donor, despite being just the 13th-largest economy.

Our aid program is strongly focused on the Asia-Pacific region – home to two-thirds of the world's poor and where 22 of our 24 nearest neighbours are developing countries. We also work in south and west Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean.

We live in one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world where cyclones, floods and earthquakes often hamper development gains. We help communities prepare for, and respond to, damage inflicted by natural disasters.

Australia's aid program has five clear goals.

1. Saving lives – for example by improving water and sanitation and access to health services.

2. Promoting opportunities for all – for example through education, women's empowerment and services for people with disabilities.
3. Sustainable economic development – for example improving food security, environments and incomes.
4. Effective governance – for example improving justice and human rights.
5. Humanitarian and disaster response – for example by improving disaster preparedness.

Australian aid has achieved much over the years and has set clear targets for its growing aid program to 2015–16.

- We have helped the Solomon Islands reduce malaria by 75 per cent and Vanuatu by more than half since 2003.
- We helped 330,000 poor children in Indonesia attend school by building more than 2000 schools.
- We provided more than 825,000 Zimbabweans with seeds, fertiliser and agricultural training.
- We were one of the first donors to respond to the Horn of Africa food crisis, helping 9.7 million with life-saving food assistance.
- We have helped immunise more than 1.6 million children against measles and other diseases.
- By 2013, we will have provided \$180 million to the World Food Programme to support emergency and recovery operations as well as school feeding programs.
- Between 2012 and 2016, we will have helped 4 million more girls and boys enrol in school with 24,000 classrooms built or upgraded and 1.2 million students provided with financial or nutritional support.
- We will have awarded tertiary study scholarships to 17,000 women and men in developing countries between now and 2016. We will have helped at least 40,000 women survivors of violence access services including counselling between now and 2016.
- Between 2012 and 2016 we will vaccinate more than 10 million children, reducing child deaths and illness.



Quick links

www.ausaid.gov.au

www.aa-partnerships.org

www.aciar.gov.au

The Australian High Commissioner to South Africa, Ann Harrap, with local children at an Australian Rules football clinic.

Society and culture

Innovative Australia

Australian Government policies aim to encourage innovation across the economy and to promote research and development and international cooperation. Australia's workforce is highly skilled, multilingual, and has a strong entrepreneurial spirit.

Our research institutions are among the world's best and offer unsurpassed opportunities for industry collaboration. Australian scientists collaborate internationally



Did you know?

Australian inventions include:

- the black box flight recorder
- the bionic ear
- high speed WiFi
- the Gardasil cervical cancer vaccine
- the flu treatment drug Relenza
- Aspro
- the pacemaker
- the plastic disposable syringe
- the dual-flush toilet
- anti-counterfeiting technology for banknotes
- spray-on skin for burns victims

Recent Australian Nobel laureates

- Brian P Schmidt, Physics, 2011
- Elizabeth H Blackburn, Physiology or Medicine 2009
- Barry J Marshall, Physiology or Medicine 2005
- J Robin Warren, Physiology or Medicine 2005

Nobel laureate Brian Schmidt

in a range of fields from coral reef management to medicine. In 2012, Australia won the right to co-host, with South Africa, the world's largest radio telescope, the Square Kilometre Array, which will give astronomers new insights into our universe. Australia's research and development expenditure has grown at almost twice the OECD average: 9.9 per cent between 2000 and 2008.

The Australian Government has a 10-year plan for innovation in Australia. It aims to increase the number of Australians undertaking higher degrees by research and the level of innovation among Australian businesses, and to facilitate collaboration between industry and Australian researchers, and their international colleagues.

Quick links

www.csiro.au

www.crc.gov.au

www.innovation.gov.au



The Square Kilometre Array is a next-generation radio telescope being planned by institutions from over 20 countries. It will be sited in remote Australia and South Africa.

Creative Australia

Australia has one of the oldest continuous cultures in the world – that of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – and at the same time possesses one of the most diverse cultures, being home to people from all corners of the globe. This unique make-up permeates our culture and how we express our identity, including in the creative arts.

Australian artists have played an important role in shaping and reflecting Australia's image and promoting the country's creativity.

The Australian Government regards investment in a healthy arts and culture sector as a national priority. Australia has many publicly run galleries, museums and performance spaces, from the World Heritage listed Opera House in Sydney, to national galleries and museums in Canberra, and history museums and galleries in country towns assisted by local government. The Australia Council provides government funding to artists and arts organisations and Screen Australia supports Australia's film industry.

Private sector arts philanthropy is growing in Australia. Tasmania's innovative Museum



Tiwi artist Jock Puautjimi and Dutch-born, Australian resident artist Luna Ryan toured their Mamana Mamanta [gradual friendship] exhibition nationally in 2009–10, with funding from the Australian Government's Visions of Australia program and assistance from the ACT Government. Several of these glass Pukumani poles are now in the National Gallery of Australia collection.



of Old and New Art is privately funded, and generous private support helped to create the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.

Our creative industries have built a global reputation for innovation, talent and energy and play an important role in the Australian economy. Ninety per cent of the population engages with the arts, and at least as many Australians will visit a museum in any given year as will go to a sporting event. The creative sector also links us to our region and the world.

Contemporary visual arts in Australia encompass photography, multi-media, sculpture, installations, drawings, paintings and performance art. Reflecting issues in Australia, some works and artists also resonate internationally. Since the 1970s, the works of Indigenous artists have attracted international attention. Australian Indigenous

Opposite: Morgan David Jones (A Young Collector) and Cate Blanchett (Blanche) in Sydney Theatre Company's A Streetcar Named Desire. © Lisa Tomasetti.



art features, for example, in the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris. The *Tu Di-Shen Ti, Our Land-Our Body* Western Australian Aboriginal exhibition toured China in 2011 and a major Emily Kame Kngwarreye exhibition received acclaim in Japan in 2008.

Our performing arts groups, musicians, dance troupes and theatre performers display the energy and diversity of Australia's arts and many are involved in international exchanges. Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet regularly undertake world tours. Smaller companies such as dance troupe Chunky Moves have toured the Middle East and the Bangarra Dance Theatre, Circus Oz and others are recognised internationally for the quality of their productions.

Australian music is another big export and covers an extraordinary range from classical, to contemporary and children's entertainment. The Australian Chamber Orchestra regularly tours Europe and Japan. Guitarist Slava Grigoryan is one of a number of prominent classical musicians and composers who regularly tour and work overseas. An eclectic group of Australian contemporary artists have achieved international success,

including AC/DC, Gotye, Nick Cave, INXS, Kylie Minogue, Midnight Oil, Savage Garden, Keith Urban, Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu and the Warrumpi Band. Bananas in Pyjamas, a successful Australian children's television show, captivates approximately 100 million viewers from about 70 countries around the world. The Wiggles children's music group is well known internationally.

Fashion Week in Sydney and Melbourne showcases to the world the best of Australian designers and fashion brands: Collette Dinnigan, Akira Isogawa, Lisa Ho, Carla Zampatti, Sass & Bide, Alex Perry and Wayne Cooper.

Australian arts expertise is an important segment of Australia's export economy, with Australians regularly contributing creative ideas and technologies to world festival events.

The Australian film industry brings together production expertise, locations, technical know-how and actors who have performed in local theatre as well as film. Screen Australia has supported this industry resulting in film successes like *Bran Nue Dae*, *Croccodile Dundee*, *Happy Feet*, *Muriel's Wedding*,



Axel Poignant (1906–1986): Portrait of Patrick White in front of Sidney Nolan's Galaxy, 1963.

Did you know? Australian novelist and playwright Patrick White won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1973.

Priscilla: Queen of the Desert, *Red Dog*, *Samson and Delilah*, *Shine*, *Strictly Ballroom*, *Wolf Creek* and *The Sapphires*. Internationally acclaimed Australian actors from these and other films include Eric Bana, Cate Blanchett, Abby Cornish, Geoffrey Rush, Russell Crowe, Judy Davis, Mel Gibson, Paul Hogan, Hugh Jackman, Nicole Kidman, Guy Pearce and Naomi Watts.

Community engagement with the arts forms an important part of Australia's fabric and economy. Australian states and territories are working with the Australian Government on an Arts and Disability Strategy to ensure that all Australians have access to the arts and can participate in this sector, including as practitioners. Arts education is also linked to academic achievement and aids school retention. Australia's new national education curriculum will include the creative arts.

Technology and innovation are growing new audiences for the arts, and advances in broadband technology are both building capacity in regional Australia and helping bring performance and ideas to international audiences.

Quick links

www.australiacouncil.gov.au
www.arts.gov.au
www.screenaustralia.gov.au
www.collectionsaustralia.net
www.nga.gov.au
www.portrait.gov.au
www.nma.gov.au

The Melbourne Recital Centre is an acclaimed performance venue, recognised for its architecture and state-of-the-art acoustics.



Excellence in education

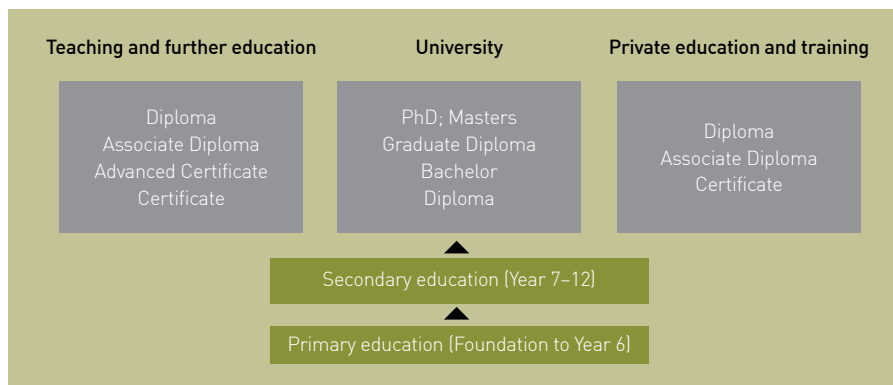
In Australia, education starts in the years before formal schooling, with many child care services and preschools receiving government funding.



The Australian Government funds children from across Australia to visit Parliament House and other key institutions in Canberra to learn about citizenship and democracy.



Indigenous schoolchildren from Ngukurr School in the Northern Territory droving community cattle.



Primary school students in the Australian Capital Territory

Australia's education system

Australian students participate in school education from the age of five or six to around 18, with many going on to tertiary education. The public and private education sectors are working together to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and improve outcomes in Indigenous education, with programs such as 'Learn, Earn, Legend!' that encourage and support young Indigenous Australians to stay at school.

Australia has a vocational education and training system that provides students with the skills required in a modern labour market, and delivers competency-based training that is practical and career-oriented. The Australian higher education system comprises both public and private universities, Australian branches of overseas universities and other higher education providers. Some universities have campuses in other countries.

School of the Air

Australia is a huge continent and is home to some of the most geographically isolated and remote communities in the world. School of the Air is one of the means by which children in remote communities and on isolated properties can access schools. The School of the Air uses various communication technologies to have daily contact among students, home tutors (often parents) and teachers.



Study in Australia

Australia is a sought-after destination for international students: more than 425,000 international students chose to study in Australia in 2011. International students are attracted to Australia by its high standard of teaching, its internationally accepted qualifications, and its welcoming and diverse society. Seven Australian universities were named among the world's top 200 higher education institutions in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2011. Australia's two largest cities, Melbourne and Sydney, have been ranked among the top 10 best student cities in the world according to the QS world university rankings. Australia has more than a thousand universities, training colleges, English language institutes and schools, offering international students some 25,000 courses. The quality of Australia's vocational education and training sector is recognised around the world.

English language training

Australia's English language schools offer a variety of services. They range from short courses for students visiting Australia as part of a holiday, to formal courses in preparation for accredited levels of English, recognised by education and immigration authorities around the world. In 2011, students from nearly 150 countries came to Australia to study English.

Scholarships

Education has the power to transform lives. The Australian Government's Australia Awards are a prestigious scholarship program aimed at promoting knowledge and creating education links and enduring ties between our country, our regional neighbours and the world community. Applicants from around the world compete for the awards, and those who are successful undertake study, research and professional development in Australia's premier universities and research institutes. Awards are also available for Australians to enjoy similar opportunities overseas.

Did you know? Australian education is world class. Its reputation and alumni have made Australia the preferred study destination for many students. According to a 2010 British Council report, Australia topped the international rankings of how countries performed in supporting international students.

Quick links

www.studyinaustralia.gov.au

www.australiaawards.gov.au

www.auseid.gov.au

www.deewr.gov.au



Universal health care

The Australian health system is world class in both effectiveness and efficiency: Australia consistently ranks in the best performing group of countries for healthy life expectancy and health expenditure per person (World Health Organization, 2010). Medicare is Australia's universal public health system, providing free public hospital care and subsidies for primary care. Medicare ensures that all Australians have access to a broad range of quality health services. The Australian Government provides significant financing for the health system, working closely with state and territory governments with responsibility for on-the-ground delivery of hospital services. A private health sector complements the public system.

The Australian population has a generally good health status, with an average life expectancy at birth of 81.8 years (79.5 for men and 84 for women), one of the highest in the world. There are some groups with poor health status, and closing the gap on life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander peoples is a national priority. Generally the pattern of disease in Australia is similar to that of other developed countries.

Quick links

www.yourhealth.gov.au

www.aihw.gov.au

www.health.gov.au

The Royal Flying Doctor Service

Since 1928, the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) has been vital to Australia's health care system, flying sick people from rural and remote areas to where they can obtain treatment, and providing them with primary health care. Today the RFDS has a fleet of more than 50 aircraft and operates from 21 bases across Australia.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service provides health care across Australia through more than 275,000 patient contacts a year – that's one person every two minutes!



Sport

Australians love sport. Australia is the only nation besides Greece to have competed at every modern summer Olympic Games. Almost 70 per cent of Australians take part in some sort of physical activity at least once a week. Australia has over 120 national sporting organisations and thousands of local, regional and state sports bodies.

Community-based sport across the nation underpins Australia's remarkable sporting achievements at the elite level where we have

Did you know? The Australian Institute of Sport is a world best practice model for high-performance athlete development. It bases its activities on outstanding athlete results combined with skilled coaches, world-class facilities and cutting-edge sports science and sports medicine services.

Australian netball star Eloise Southby-Halbish gives a clinic for the Modewarre Juniors in country Victoria.



Geelong Advertiser



produced many international champions across a diverse spectrum of sport. The nation unites when Australians succeed on the international stage. Sport is a powerful force in creating social harmony in a nation made up of people from so many different countries.

Opposite:

1. *Australian Rules football originated in Victoria but is popular throughout Australia, particularly in remote Indigenous communities, which are providing new talent to the game. Photo courtesy of the Australian Football League*
2. *The Matildas, Australia's national women's football (soccer) team, celebrate a win against New Zealand at the Wollongong Stadium, New South Wales. Photo: Orlando Chiodo/Illawarra Mercury*
3. *Australian tennis champion Samantha Stosur at the Australian Open 2012. Photo: Ben Solomon, Tennis Australia*
4. *Wallabies fullback Adam Ashley-Cooper makes a break for Australia's national rugby union team. Photo: Getty Images*
5. *NRL Rugby League, North Queensland Cowboys v Melbourne Storm, Dairy Farmers Stadium, Townsville, April 2012. Photo: Colin Whelan.*
6. *Australian captain Michael Clarke training in Barbados during the 2012 West Indies tour. Photo: Cricket Australia*

Successive governments have committed to supporting sport in Australia from grassroots to elite; increasing participation in physical and recreational activities to promote physical and mental health; staging world-class major sporting events; and using sport as a vehicle to address disadvantage and social inclusion challenges.

Almost every sport is played somewhere in Australia, with men and women well represented in sporting activities throughout the nation. Football (soccer) and netball are the biggest team sports in Australia. Three other football codes are also popular throughout the country: rugby league, rugby union and Australia's own unique brand of Australian Rules Football. Cricket, tennis, golf, swimming, field hockey and cycling, among others, are also popular.

The Australian Sports Commission promotes and funds grassroots participation in sport as well as investing in high-performance sport, including through scholarships for athletes in facilities such as the Australian Institute of Sport, based in Canberra.

Sport for international development

Australia is regarded as a world leader in using sport to assist developing countries to achieve positive societal outcomes. The Australian Sports Outreach Program, principally funded by AusAID and managed by the Australian Sports Commission, manages grassroots sports development programs in the Pacific, southern Africa, Caribbean regions and in India.

Sporting events

Australia has a reputation for staging successful major sporting events. It has hosted the summer Olympics twice (Melbourne 1956 and Sydney 2000) and the Commonwealth Games four times (Sydney 1938, Perth 1962, Brisbane 1982 and Melbourne 2006). Queensland's Gold Coast will host the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Australia will also host the 2015 Cricket World Cup, and the 2015 Asian Football Confederation Asian Cup. Other international events are staged annually around Australia such as the gruelling Sydney to Hobart yacht race, the Formula One Grand Prix in Melbourne, the internationally accredited Tour Down Under cycling event in



Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games

Above, left to right: Commonwealth Games Australian representative triathlete Ashleigh Gentle, Games Bid Junior Ambassador Eve Lutze, Olympian and Commonwealth Games medallist cyclist Sara Carrigan OAM, Olympic and Commonwealth Games swimmer Brenton Rickard and Olympic swimmer Cameron McEvoy.

South Australia, and a round of the Moto GP on Phillip Island in Victoria. The world tennis circuit is kicked off each year by the Australian Open in Melbourne.

Quick links

www.ausport.gov.au
www.regional.gov.au/sport

Media and communications

Australia has many media outlets. There are two national radio, television and online broadcasters that receive public funding, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), which broadcasts programs in both English and a range of languages other than English, including news from all over the world. Australia also has three commercial free-to-air television networks, hundreds of pay television channels, and many print, radio, digital and online media outlets.

Australia Network is Australia's international television service, beaming Australian information, educational programs (including English language learning programs) and entertainment with a uniquely Australian perspective on a digital and television service 24 hours a day to 46 markets across Asia, the Pacific and the Indian subcontinent.

Did you know? For where to watch and how to tune in to Australia Network go to www.australiannetwork.com and click on 'Ways to watch' and then 'Satellite'.

ABC Radio Australia broadcasts to the region and allows listeners to learn English. Radio Australia programs are broadcast in Vietnamese, Chinese, Tok Pisin, French, Burmese, Khmer and Bahasa Indonesia across the Asia-Pacific.



Quick links

www.australiannetwork.com

www.radioaustralia.net.au/international

www.abc.net.au

www.sbs.com.au



Still from Bananas In Pyjamas, ABC TV's iconic preschool series. ©ABC2012. As screened on ABC4Kids on ABC2

Visiting Australia



Destination NSW

Tourism

The beauty of Australia's natural landscapes, from pristine coastal areas to lush rainforests and red deserts, makes Australia a desirable travel destination. About six million visitors come to Australia each year attracted by beautiful beaches, unique fauna, friendly people and a relaxed atmosphere.

Tourism is an important industry, contributing more than \$34 billion a year to the Australian economy. The tourism industry directly employs more than 500,000 people and, with 46 cents in every tourism dollar spent in regional areas, tourism is also of considerable importance to Australia's regional communities.

Abseiling in the Snowy Mountains, New South Wales. Photo: Jon Armstrong

Australia has some 9,700 protected nature areas such as national parks, and can offer visitors a vast and diverse array of nature-based tourism opportunities. Indigenous culture is also a unique and growing attraction for the Australian tourism industry.

Food and wine tourism is expanding, in line with Australia's growing international reputation as a producer of high-quality wines and a supplier of fresh, regionally based food products.

Travelling in Australia

Australia is a big country. Sometimes international visitors underestimate distances and travel times between cities and to rural centres in Australia. Australia stretches about 4,000 kilometres (2,485 miles) across – about the same distance as New York to Los Angeles, London to Tehran, Bangkok to Tokyo, Singapore to New Delhi or Hong Kong to Mumbai.



Hye Seoung Kwon (Mimi) and Kanen Breen (Rodolfo) 'hitch a ride' on the Stuart Highway in the Northern Territory during a regional tour of Oz Opera's La Bohème.

*Crowds enjoying an outdoor concert in
Adelaide's Elder Park, a focal point for the
Adelaide Festival of Arts since 1960*



Visa and immigration requirements

Australia welcomes millions of overseas visitors each year. Anyone who is not an Australian citizen needs a valid visa to enter and spend time in Australia. There are different visas for family and skilled migrants, tourists, business people, sports people, students and others. Many visas can be applied for online, and the Electronic Travel Authority can be applied for through travel agents and airlines. New Zealanders are granted an electronic visa on arrival in Australia.

Did you know? The greatest numbers of overseas tourists to Australia come from New Zealand, the United Kingdom, China, the United States, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong and Germany.

Whisky makers participating in a 'Meet the makers of Burnie' event in north-west Tasmania. Photo: Rick Eaves



Discover Tasmania

Quarantine

Food, plant material and animal products from overseas, including many common souvenirs, could introduce some of the world's most serious pests and diseases into Australia. To avoid devastating our valuable agriculture and tourism industries, and our unique environment, such imports may need to be confiscated and destroyed.

Did you know? Australia has a surface area of more than 7.6 million square kilometres (2.9 million square miles), and most of the nation's 22.5 million people live in widely separated cities along its 34,000 kilometres (21,000 miles) of coastline.

Quick links

www.daff.gov.au/aqis

www.australia.com

www.immi.gov.au

www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html



Visitors with Tasmanian devils at Cradle Mountain, Tasmania. Photo: Michael Walters

This is the 49th edition of *Australia in brief*, revised and updated in July 2012.

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Cover image: *Visitors to the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, which opened to the public on 4 December 2008 with a continuing series of vibrant exhibitions, lectures, education programs and events. Its purpose is to increase the understanding and appreciation of the Australian people – their identity, history, culture, creativity and diversity – through portraiture. The painting being viewed on the front cover is a portrait of champion cyclist Cadel Evans by Matthys Gerber, 2008. Photo: Mark Mohell. Artwork: Brett Wiencke.*

Australia: brief facts: *Gondwana rainforest, Queensland (Tourism Queensland)*

Table of contents image: *Cape Peron in Shark Bay, a World Heritage Site in Western Australia, discovered and named by British explorer William Dampier in 1699. Photo: Christian Fletcher Photography*

Sales of the Red Dog DVD have been raising money for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in a deal with Roadshow Entertainment, Coles and Woss Group Film Productions. The film's producers continue to donate significant funds on behalf of the film's star, Koko. Photo: David Darcy



The Australian continent is a unique land, full of contrasts. It is the earth's biggest island and the sixth-biggest country in the world in land area. Australia is the only nation to govern an entire continent.

Today, Australia is a stable, democratic, culturally diverse nation with a skilled workforce and a strong, competitive economy.

Australia in brief provides an authoritative overview of Australia's history, the land, its people and their way of life. It also looks at Australia's economic, scientific and cultural achievements and its foreign, trade and defence policies.



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