

Australia ([/pˈstreɪliə, ə-/](#)  [listen](#)),^{[10][11]} officially the **Commonwealth of Australia**,^[12] is a sovereign country comprising the mainland of the [Australian continent](#), the island of [Tasmania](#) and numerous [smaller islands](#). It is the largest country in [Oceania](#) and the world's [sixth-largest country by total area](#). The neighbouring countries are [Papua New Guinea](#), [Indonesia](#) and [East Timor](#) to the north; the [Solomon Islands](#) and [Vanuatu](#) to the north-east; and [New Zealand](#) to the south-east. Australia's capital is [Canberra](#), and its largest city is [Sydney](#).

For about 60,000 years before the first [British settlement](#) in the late 18th century, Australia was inhabited by [indigenous Australians](#), who in documented times have spoken languages classifiable into roughly [250 groups](#). After the European discovery of the continent by [Dutch](#) explorers in 1606, Australia's eastern half was claimed by [Great Britain](#) in 1770 and initially settled through [penal transportation](#) to the colony of [New South Wales](#) from 26 January 1788. The population grew steadily in subsequent decades, and by the 1850s most of the continent had been explored and an additional five self-governing [crown colonies](#) established. On 1 January 1901, the six colonies [federated](#), forming the Commonwealth of Australia. Australia has since maintained a stable [liberal democratic](#) political system that functions as a [federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy](#) comprising [six states and several territories](#).

Australia has the world's [13th-largest economy](#) and [tenth-highest per capita income](#) (IMF).^[13] With the second-highest [human development index](#) globally, the country [ranks highly](#) in quality of life, health, education, [economic freedom](#), and [civil liberties](#) and political rights.^[14] Australia is a member of the [ASEAN Plus mechanism](#), [United Nations](#), [G20](#), [Commonwealth of Nations](#), [ANZUS](#), [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#), [World Trade Organization](#), [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation](#), and the [Pacific Islands Forum](#). The population of 25 million^[5] is highly [urbanised](#) and heavily concentrated on the eastern seaboard.^[15] Australia has the world's [9th largest immigrant population](#), with immigrants accounting for 26% of the population.^{[16][17]}