[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-semi](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Use Australian English](/wiki/Template:Use_Australian_English) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Australia** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en), [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en), [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en)),[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[2]](#cite_note-2) officially the **Commonwealth of Australia**,[[3]](#cite_note-3) is a country comprising the mainland of the [Australian continent](/wiki/Australia_(continent)), the island of [Tasmania](/wiki/Tasmania), and numerous [smaller islands](/wiki/List_of_islands_of_Australia). It is the world's [sixth-largest country by total area](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_area). Neighbouring countries include [Papua New Guinea](/wiki/Papua_New_Guinea), [Indonesia](/wiki/Indonesia) and [East Timor](/wiki/East_Timor) to the north; the [Solomon Islands](/wiki/Solomon_Islands) and [Vanuatu](/wiki/Vanuatu) to the north-east; and [New Zealand](/wiki/New_Zealand) to the south-east.

For about 50,000 years[[4]](#cite_note-4) before the first [British settlement](/wiki/History_of_Australia_(1788–1850)) in the late 18th century,[[5]](#cite_note-5)[[6]](#cite_note-6) Australia was inhabited by [indigenous Australians](/wiki/Indigenous_Australians),[[7]](#cite_note-7)who spoke languages grouped into roughly [250 language groups](/wiki/Australian_Aboriginal_languages).[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[9]](#cite_note-9) After the European discovery of the continent by [Dutch](/wiki/Dutch_Republic) explorers in 1606, Australia's eastern half was claimed by [Great Britain](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Great_Britain) in 1770 and initially settled through [penal transportation](/wiki/Penal_transportation) to the colony of [New South Wales](/wiki/New_South_Wales) from 26 January 1788. The population grew steadily in subsequent decades; the continent was explored and an additional five self-governing [crown colonies](/wiki/Crown_colonies) were established. On 1 January 1901, the six colonies [federated](/wiki/Federation_of_Australia), forming the Commonwealth of Australia. Since federation, Australia has maintained a stable [liberal democratic](/wiki/Liberal_democracy) political system that functions as a [federal](/wiki/Federalism) [parliamentary](/wiki/Parliamentary_system) [constitutional monarchy](/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy) comprising [six states and several territories](/wiki/States_and_territories_of_Australia). The population of 24 million[[10]](#cite_note-10) is highly [urbanised](/wiki/Urbanization) and heavily concentrated in the [eastern states](/wiki/Eastern_states_of_Australia) and on the coast.[[11]](#cite_note-11) Australia is a [developed country](/wiki/Developed_country) and one of the wealthiest in the world, with the [world's 12th-largest economy](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)). In 2014 Australia had the world's [fifth-highest per capita income](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capita).[[12]](#cite_note-12) Australia's military expenditure is the [world's 13th-largest](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures). With the [second-highest human development index globally](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index), Australia [ranks highly](/wiki/International_rankings_of_Australia) in many international comparisons of national performance, such as quality of life, health, education, [economic freedom](/wiki/Economic_freedom), and the protection of [civil liberties](/wiki/Civil_liberties) and political rights.[[13]](#cite_note-13) Australia is a member of the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations), [G20](/wiki/G-20_major_economies), [Commonwealth of Nations](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations), [ANZUS](/wiki/ANZUS), [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) (OECD), [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization), [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation](/wiki/Asia-Pacific_Economic_Cooperation), and the [Pacific Islands Forum](/wiki/Pacific_Islands_Forum).

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## Name[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Anchor](/wiki/Template:Anchor) The name *Australia* (pronounced [Template:IPA](/wiki/Template:IPA) in [Australian English](/wiki/Australian_English)[[14]](#cite_note-14)) is derived from the [Latin](/wiki/Latin) [*Terra Australis*](/wiki/Terra_Australis) ("southern land") a name used for putative lands in the southern hemisphere since ancient times.[[15]](#cite_note-15) The earliest recorded use of the word *Australia* in English was in 1625 in "A note of Australia del Espíritu Santo, written by Sir Richard Hakluyt", published by [Samuel Purchas](/wiki/Samuel_Purchas) in *Hakluytus Posthumus*, a corruption of the original Spanish name "Austrialia del Espíritu Santo" (Southern Land of the Holy Spirit)[[16]](#cite_note-16)[[17]](#cite_note-17)[[18]](#cite_note-18) for an island in [Vanuatu](/wiki/Vanuatu).[[19]](#cite_note-19) The Dutch adjectival form *Australische* was used in a Dutch book in [Batavia](/wiki/History_of_Jakarta) ([Jakarta](/wiki/Jakarta)) in 1638, to refer to the newly discovered lands to the south.[[20]](#cite_note-20)The first time that the name Australia appears to have been officially used was in a despatch to Lord Bathurst of 4 April 1817 in which Governor [Lachlan Macquarie](/wiki/Lachlan_Macquarie) acknowledges the receipt of [Matthew Flinders'](/wiki/Matthew_Flinders) charts of Australia.[[21]](#cite_note-21) On 12 December 1817, Macquarie recommended to the Colonial Office that it be formally adopted.[[22]](#cite_note-22) In 1824, the Admiralty agreed that the continent should be known officially as *Australia*.[[23]](#cite_note-23)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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### Prehistory[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[thumb|Aboriginal rock art in the](/wiki/File:Bradshaw_rock_paintings.jpg) [Kimberley](/wiki/Kimberley_(Western_Australia)) region of Western Australia Human habitation of the Australian continent is estimated to have begun between 42,000 and 48,000 years ago,[[24]](#cite_note-24)[[25]](#cite_note-25) possibly with the migration of people by [land bridges](/wiki/Land_bridge) and short sea-crossings from what is now [Southeast Asia](/wiki/Southeast_Asia). These first inhabitants may have been ancestors of modern Indigenous Australians.[[26]](#cite_note-26) At the time of European settlement in the late 18th century, most Indigenous Australians were [hunter-gatherers](/wiki/Hunter-gatherer), with a complex [oral culture](/wiki/Oral_tradition) and spiritual values based on reverence for the land and a belief in the [Dreamtime](/wiki/Dreamtime). The [Torres Strait Islanders](/wiki/Torres_Strait_Islanders), ethnically [Melanesian](/wiki/Melanesia), were originally horticulturists and hunter-gatherers.[[27]](#cite_note-27) The northern coasts and waters of Australia were visited sporadically by fishermen from [Maritime Southeast Asia](/wiki/Maritime_Southeast_Asia).[[28]](#cite_note-28)

### European arrival[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [left|upright|thumb|alt=A painting of Captain James Cook in uniform sitting down in front of a map|Portrait of Captain](/wiki/File:Captainjamescookportrait.jpg) [James Cook](/wiki/James_Cook), the first European to map the eastern coastline of Australia in 1770 The first recorded European sighting of the Australian mainland, and the first recorded European landfall on the Australian continent, are attributed to the Dutch navigator [Willem Janszoon](/wiki/Willem_Janszoon). He sighted the coast of [Cape York Peninsula](/wiki/Cape_York_Peninsula) in early 1606, and made landfall on 26 February at the [Pennefather River](/wiki/Pennefather_River) near the modern town of [Weipa](/wiki/Weipa,_Queensland) on Cape York.<ref name=dhm233>Davison, Hirst and Macintyre, p. 233.</ref> The Dutch charted the whole of the western and northern coastlines and named the island continent "[New Holland](/wiki/New_Holland_(Australia))" during the 17th century, but made no attempt at settlement.<ref name=dhm233/> [William Dampier](/wiki/William_Dampier), an English explorer and privateer, landed on the north-west coast of New Holland in 1688 and again in 1699 on a return trip.[[29]](#cite_note-29) In 1770, [James Cook](/wiki/James_Cook) sailed along and mapped the east coast, which he named New South Wales and claimed for Great Britain.[[30]](#cite_note-30) With the loss of its American colonies in 1783, the British Government sent a fleet of ships, the "[First Fleet](/wiki/First_Fleet)", under the command of Captain [Arthur Phillip](/wiki/Arthur_Phillip), to establish a new [penal colony](/wiki/Penal_colony) in New South Wales. A camp was set up and the flag raised at [Sydney Cove](/wiki/Sydney_Cove), [Port Jackson](/wiki/Port_Jackson), on 26 January 1788,[[6]](#cite_note-6) a date which became Australia's national day, [Australia Day](/wiki/Australia_Day), although the British [Crown Colony](/wiki/British_Overseas_Territories) of New South Wales was not formally promulgated until 7 February 1788. The first settlement led to the foundation of [Sydney](/wiki/Sydney), and the exploration and settlement of other regions.

[thumb|alt=A calm body of water is in the foreground. The shoreline is about 200 metres away. To the left, close to the shore, are three tall](/wiki/File:PortArthurPenitentiary.jpg) [gum trees](/wiki/Eucalyptus); behind them on an incline are ruins, including walls and watchtowers of light-coloured stone and brick, what appear to be the foundations of walls, and grassed areas. To the right lie the outer walls of a large rectangular four-storey building dotted with regularly spaced windows. Forested land rises gently to a peak several kilometres back from the shore.|Tasmania's [Port Arthur](/wiki/Port_Arthur,_Tasmania) penal settlement is one of eleven UNESCO World Heritage-listed [Australian Convict Sites](/wiki/Australian_Convict_Sites). A British settlement was established in [Van Diemen's Land](/wiki/Van_Diemen's_Land), now known as Tasmania, in 1803, and it became a separate colony in 1825.[[31]](#cite_note-31) The United Kingdom formally claimed the western part of [Western Australia](/wiki/Western_Australia) (the [Swan River Colony](/wiki/Swan_River_Colony)) in 1828.[[32]](#cite_note-32) Separate colonies were carved from parts of New South Wales: [South Australia](/wiki/South_Australia) in 1836, [Victoria](/wiki/Victoria_(Australia)) in 1851, and Queensland in 1859.[[33]](#cite_note-33) The [Northern Territory](/wiki/Northern_Territory) was founded in 1911 when it was excised from South Australia.[[34]](#cite_note-34) South Australia was founded as a "free province"—it was never a penal colony.[[35]](#cite_note-35) Victoria and Western Australia were also founded "free", but later accepted [transported convicts](/wiki/Convicts_in_Australia).[[36]](#cite_note-36)[[37]](#cite_note-37) A campaign by the settlers of New South Wales led to the end of convict transportation to that colony; the last convict ship arrived in 1848.[[38]](#cite_note-38) The indigenous population, estimated to have been between 750,000 and 1,000,000 in 1788,<ref name=APR>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> declined for 150 years following settlement, mainly due to infectious disease.[[39]](#cite_note-39) Thousands more died as a result of [frontier conflict](/wiki/Australian_frontier_wars) with settlers.[[40]](#cite_note-40) A government policy of "assimilation" beginning with the [*Aboriginal Protection Act 1869*](/wiki/Aboriginal_Protection_Act_1869) resulted in the removal of many Aboriginal children from their families and communities—often referred to as the [Stolen Generations](/wiki/Stolen_Generations)—a practice which may also have contributed to the decline in the indigenous population.[[41]](#cite_note-41) The Federal government gained the power to make laws with respect to Aborigines following the [1967 referendum](/wiki/Australian_referendum,_1967_(Aboriginals)).[[42]](#cite_note-42) Traditional ownership of land—[aboriginal title](/wiki/Native_title_in_Australia)—was not recognised until 1992, when the [High Court](/wiki/High_Court_of_Australia) case [*Mabo v Queensland (No 2)*](/wiki/Mabo_v_Queensland_(No_2)) overturned the legal doctrine that Australia had been [*terra nullius*](/wiki/Terra_nullius) ("land belonging to no one") before the European occupation.[[43]](#cite_note-43)

### Colonial expansion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

A [gold rush](/wiki/Gold_rush) began in Australia in the early 1850s[[44]](#cite_note-44) and the [Eureka Rebellion](/wiki/Eureka_Rebellion) against mining licence fees in 1854 was an early expression of civil disobedience.[[45]](#cite_note-45) Between 1855 and 1890, the six colonies individually gained [responsible government](/wiki/Responsible_government), managing most of their own affairs while remaining part of the [British Empire](/wiki/British_Empire).[[46]](#cite_note-46) The Colonial Office in London retained control of some matters, notably foreign affairs,[[47]](#cite_note-47) defence,[[48]](#cite_note-48) and international shipping.

### Nationhood[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[thumb|left|alt=Photo of an ANZAC memorial with an elderly man playing a bugle. Rows of people are seated behind the memorial. Many small white crosses with red poppies have been stuck into the lawn in rows on either side of the memorial.|The](/wiki/File:Anzac2.jpg) [Last Post](/wiki/Last_Post) is played at an [Anzac Day](/wiki/Anzac_Day) ceremony in [Port Melbourne](/wiki/Port_Melbourne,_Victoria), Victoria. Similar ceremonies are held in many suburbs and towns. On 1 January 1901, [federation of the colonies](/wiki/Federation_of_Australia) was achieved after a decade of planning, consultation and voting.[[49]](#cite_note-49) This established the Commonwealth of Australia as a [dominion](/wiki/Dominion) of the British Empire.<ref name=dominionstatus>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The Federal Capital Territory (later renamed the Australian Capital Territory) was formed in 1911 as the location for the future federal capital of Canberra. Melbourne was the temporary seat of government from 1901 to 1927 while Canberra was being constructed.[[50]](#cite_note-50) The Northern Territory was transferred from the control of the South Australian government to the federal parliament in 1911.[[51]](#cite_note-51) In 1914, Australia joined Britain in fighting World War I, with support from both the outgoing [Commonwealth Liberal Party](/wiki/Commonwealth_Liberal_Party) and the incoming [Australian Labor Party](/wiki/Australian_Labor_Party).[[52]](#cite_note-52)[[53]](#cite_note-53) Australians took part in many of the major battles fought on the [Western Front](/wiki/Western_Front_(World_War_I)).[[54]](#cite_note-54) Of about 416,000 who served, about 60,000 were killed and another 152,000 were wounded.[[55]](#cite_note-55) Many Australians regard the defeat of the [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps](/wiki/Australian_and_New_Zealand_Army_Corps) (ANZACs) at [Gallipoli](/wiki/Gallipoli_Campaign) as the birth of the nation—its first major military action.[[56]](#cite_note-56)[[57]](#cite_note-57) The [Kokoda Track campaign](/wiki/Kokoda_Track_campaign) is regarded by many as an analogous nation-defining event during World War II.[[58]](#cite_note-58) Britain's [Statute of Westminster 1931](/wiki/Statute_of_Westminster_1931) formally ended most of the constitutional links between Australia and the UK. Australia [adopted it](/wiki/Statute_of_Westminster_Adoption_Act_1942) in 1942,[[59]](#cite_note-59) but it was backdated to 1939 to confirm the validity of legislation passed by the Australian Parliament during World War II.[[60]](#cite_note-60)[[61]](#cite_note-61) The shock of the United Kingdom's defeat in Asia in 1942 and the [threat of Japanese invasion](/wiki/Military_history_of_Australia_during_World_War_II#Defence_of_Australia) caused Australia to turn to the United States as a new ally and protector.[[62]](#cite_note-62) Since 1951, Australia has been a formal military ally of the US, under the [ANZUS](/wiki/ANZUS) treaty.[[63]](#cite_note-63) After World War II Australia encouraged immigration from Europe. Since the 1970s and following the abolition of the [White Australia policy](/wiki/White_Australia_policy), immigration from Asia and elsewhere was also promoted.[[64]](#cite_note-64) As a result, Australia's demography, culture, and self-image were transformed.[[65]](#cite_note-65) The final constitutional ties between Australia and the UK were severed with the passing of the [Australia Act 1986](/wiki/Australia_Act_1986), ending any British role in the government of the Australian States, and closing the option of judicial appeals to the [Privy Council](/wiki/Privy_council) in London.[[66]](#cite_note-66) In a [1999 referendum](/wiki/Australian_republic_referendum,_1999), 55% of voters and a majority in every state rejected a proposal to become a [republic](/wiki/Republic) with a president appointed by a two-thirds vote in both Houses of the Australian Parliament. Since the election of the [Whitlam Government](/wiki/Gough_Whitlam) in 1972,[[67]](#cite_note-67) there has been an increasing focus in foreign policy on ties with other [Pacific Rim](/wiki/Pacific_Rim) nations, while maintaining close ties with Australia's traditional allies and trading partners.[[68]](#cite_note-68)

## Government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|alt=A large white and cream coloured building with grass on its roof. The building is topped with a large flagpole.|](/wiki/File:Parliament_House_Canberra_NS.jpg)[Parliament House](/wiki/Parliament_House,_Canberra), Canberra Australia is a [federal](/wiki/Federalism) [parliamentary](/wiki/Parliamentary_system) [constitutional monarchy](/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy)[[69]](#cite_note-69) with [Elizabeth II](/wiki/Elizabeth_II) at its apex as the [Queen of Australia](/wiki/Queen_of_Australia), a role that is distinct from her position as monarch of the other [Commonwealth realms](/wiki/Commonwealth_realm). The Queen is represented in Australia by the [Governor-General](/wiki/Governor-General_of_Australia) at the federal level and by the [Governors](/wiki/Governors_of_the_Australian_states) at the state level, who by convention act on the advice of her ministers.[[70]](#cite_note-70)[[71]](#cite_note-71) The most notable exercise to date of the Governor-General's [reserve powers](/wiki/Reserve_power) outside the Prime Minister's request was the dismissal of the Whitlam Government in the [constitutional crisis of 1975](/wiki/1975_Australian_constitutional_crisis).[[72]](#cite_note-72) The federal government is [separated](/wiki/Separation_of_powers_in_Australia) into three branches:

* The legislature: the bicameral [Parliament](/wiki/Parliament_of_Australia), defined in section 1 of the constitution as comprising the Queen (represented by the Governor-General), the [Senate](/wiki/Australian_Senate), and the [House of Representatives](/wiki/Australian_House_of_Representatives);
* The executive: the [Federal Executive Council](/wiki/Federal_Executive_Council_(Australia)), which in practice gives legal effect to the decisions of the [Cabinet](/wiki/Cabinet_of_Australia), comprising the [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Australia) and Ministers of State who advise the Governor-General;[[73]](#cite_note-73)\* The judiciary: the [High Court of Australia](/wiki/High_Court_of_Australia) and other [federal courts](/wiki/Australian_court_hierarchy), whose judges are appointed by the Governor-General on advice of the Federal Executive Council.

[Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image) In the Senate (the upper house), there are 76 senators: twelve each from the states and two each from the mainland territories (the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory).<ref name=sen>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The [House of Representatives](/wiki/Australian_House_of_Representatives) (the lower house) has 150 members elected from single-member electoral divisions, commonly known as "electorates" or "seats", allocated to states on the basis of population,[[74]](#cite_note-74) with each original state guaranteed a minimum of five seats.[[75]](#cite_note-75) Elections for both chambers are normally held every three years simultaneously; senators have overlapping six-year terms except for those from the territories, whose terms are not fixed but are tied to the electoral cycle for the lower house; thus only 40 of the 76 places in the Senate are put to each election unless the cycle is interrupted by a [double dissolution](/wiki/Double_dissolution).<ref name=sen/>

Australia's [electoral system](/wiki/Electoral_system_of_Australia) uses [preferential voting](/wiki/Instant-runoff_voting) for all lower house elections with the exception of Tasmania and the ACT which, along with the Senate and most state upper houses, combine it with [proportional representation](/wiki/Proportional_representation) in a system known as the [single transferable vote](/wiki/Single_transferable_vote). [Voting is compulsory](/wiki/Compulsory_voting) for all enrolled citizens 18 years and over in every jurisdiction,[[76]](#cite_note-76) as is enrolment (with the exception of South Australia).[[77]](#cite_note-77) The party with majority support in the House of Representatives forms the government and its leader becomes Prime Minister. In cases where no party has majority support, the Governor-General has the constitutional power to appoint the Prime Minister and, if necessary, dismiss one that has lost the confidence of Parliament.[[78]](#cite_note-78) There are two major political groups that usually form government, federally and in the states: the [Australian Labor Party](/wiki/Australian_Labor_Party) and the [Coalition](/wiki/Coalition_(Australia)) which is a formal grouping of the [Liberal Party](/wiki/Liberal_Party_of_Australia) and its minor partner, the [National Party](/wiki/National_Party_of_Australia).[[79]](#cite_note-79)[[80]](#cite_note-80) Within Australian political culture, the Coalition is considered [centre-right](/wiki/Centre-right) and the Labor Party is considered [centre-left](/wiki/Centre-left).[[81]](#cite_note-81) Independent members and several minor parties have achieved representation in Australian parliaments, mostly in upper houses.

The [most recent federal election](/wiki/Australian_federal_election,_2013) was held on 7 September 2013 and resulted in a [majority government](/wiki/Majority_government) for the [Coalition](/wiki/Coalition_(Australia)). [Liberal Party](/wiki/Liberal_Party_of_Australia) leader [Tony Abbott](/wiki/Tony_Abbott) was sworn into office as Prime Minister by the [Governor-General of Australia](/wiki/Governor-General_of_Australia) on 18 September. In September 2015, [Malcolm Turnbull](/wiki/Malcolm_Turnbull) successfully challenged Abbott for leadership of the Coalition, and was sworn in as the fifth Prime Minister in as many years on the 15th.[[82]](#cite_note-82)

## States and territories[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

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Australia has six [states](/wiki/Federated_state)—[New South Wales](/wiki/New_South_Wales) (NSW), [Queensland](/wiki/Queensland) (QLD), [South Australia](/wiki/South_Australia) (SA), [Tasmania](/wiki/Tasmania) (TAS), [Victoria](/wiki/Victoria_(Australia)) (VIC) and [Western Australia](/wiki/Western_Australia) (WA)—and two major [mainland](/wiki/Mainland) territories—the [Australian Capital Territory](/wiki/Australian_Capital_Territory) (ACT) and the [Northern Territory](/wiki/Northern_Territory) (NT). In most respects these two territories function as states, but the Commonwealth Parliament can override any legislation of their parliaments. By contrast, federal legislation overrides state legislation only in areas that are set out in [Section 51 of the Australian Constitution](/wiki/Section_51_of_the_Australian_Constitution); state parliaments retain all residual legislative powers, including those over schools, state police, the state judiciary, roads, public transport and local government, since these do not fall under the provisions listed in Section 51.[[83]](#cite_note-83) Each state and major mainland territory has its own [parliament](/wiki/Parliaments_of_the_Australian_states_and_territories)—[unicameral](/wiki/Unicameralism) in the Northern Territory, the ACT and Queensland, and bicameral in the other states. The states are sovereign entities, although subject to certain powers of the Commonwealth as defined by the Constitution. The [lower houses](/wiki/Lower_house) are known as the [Legislative Assembly](/wiki/Legislative_Assembly) (the [House of Assembly](/wiki/House_of_Assembly) in South Australia and Tasmania); the [upper houses](/wiki/Upper_house) are known as the [Legislative Council](/wiki/Legislative_council). The [head of the government](/wiki/Head_of_government) in each state is the [Premier](/wiki/Premiers_of_the_Australian_states) and in each territory the [Chief Minister](/wiki/Chief_Minister). The [Queen](/wiki/Monarchy_of_Australia) is represented in each state by a [Governor](/wiki/Governors_of_the_Australian_states); and in the Northern Territory, the [Administrator](/wiki/Administrator_of_the_Northern_Territory).[[84]](#cite_note-84) In the Commonwealth, the Queen's representative is the [Governor-General](/wiki/Governor-General_of_Australia).[[85]](#cite_note-85) The federal parliament directly administers the following territories:[[73]](#cite_note-73)\* [Ashmore and Cartier Islands](/wiki/Ashmore_and_Cartier_Islands)

* [Australian Antarctic Territory](/wiki/Australian_Antarctic_Territory)
* [Christmas Island](/wiki/Christmas_Island)
* [Cocos (Keeling) Islands](/wiki/Cocos_(Keeling)_Islands)
* [Coral Sea Islands](/wiki/Coral_Sea_Islands)
* [Heard Island and McDonald Islands](/wiki/Heard_Island_and_McDonald_Islands)
* [Jervis Bay Territory](/wiki/Jervis_Bay_Territory), a naval base and sea port for the national capital in land that was formerly part of New South Wales

The external territory of [Norfolk Island](/wiki/Norfolk_Island) previously exercised considerable autonomy under the Norfolk Island Act 1979 through its own legislative assembly and an [Administrator](/wiki/List_of_administrative_heads_of_Norfolk_Island) to represent the Queen.[[86]](#cite_note-86) In 2015, the Commonwealth Parliament abolished self-government, integrating Norfolk Island into the Australian tax and welfare systems and replacing its legislative assembly with a council.[[87]](#cite_note-87) [Macquarie Island](/wiki/Macquarie_Island) is administered by Tasmania, and [Lord Howe Island](/wiki/Lord_Howe_Island) by New South Wales.

## Foreign relations and military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|alt=A group of Australian soldiers with rifles moving along a path in a wooded area|](/wiki/File:Australian_soldiers_from_the_2nd_Battalion,_Royal_Australian_Regiment_conducts_a_foot_patrol_during_exercise_Talisman_Sabre_2007.jpg)[Australian Army](/wiki/Australian_Army) soldiers conducting a foot patrol during a joint training exercise with [US forces](/wiki/United_States_Armed_Forces) in [Shoalwater Bay](/wiki/Shoalwater_Bay) (2007). Over recent decades, [Australia's foreign relations](/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Australia) have been driven by a close association with the United States through the [ANZUS pact](/wiki/ANZUS), and by a desire to develop relationships with Asia and the Pacific, particularly through [ASEAN](/wiki/Association_of_Southeast_Asian_Nations) and the [Pacific Islands Forum](/wiki/Pacific_Islands_Forum). In 2005 Australia secured an inaugural seat at the [East Asia Summit](/wiki/East_Asia_Summit) following its accession to the [Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia](/wiki/Treaty_of_Amity_and_Cooperation_in_Southeast_Asia), and in 2011 attended the [Sixth East Asia Summit](/wiki/Sixth_East_Asia_Summit) in Indonesia. Australia is a member of the [Commonwealth of Nations](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations), in which the [Commonwealth Heads of Government](/wiki/Commonwealth_Heads_of_Government) meetings provide the main forum for co-operation.[[88]](#cite_note-88) Australia has pursued the cause of international [trade liberalisation](/wiki/Trade_liberalisation).[[89]](#cite_note-89) It led the formation of the [Cairns Group](/wiki/Cairns_Group) and [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation](/wiki/Asia-Pacific_Economic_Cooperation).[[90]](#cite_note-90)[[91]](#cite_note-91) Australia is a member of the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) and the [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization),[[92]](#cite_note-92)[[93]](#cite_note-93) and has pursued several major bilateral free trade agreements, most recently the [Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement](/wiki/Australia–United_States_Free_Trade_Agreement)[[94]](#cite_note-94) and [Closer Economic Relations](/wiki/Closer_Economic_Relations) with New Zealand,[[95]](#cite_note-95) with another free trade agreement being negotiated with China—the [Australia–China Free Trade Agreement](/wiki/Australia–China_Free_Trade_Agreement)—and Japan,[[96]](#cite_note-96) [South Korea](/wiki/South_Korea) in 2011,[[97]](#cite_note-97)[[98]](#cite_note-98) [Australia–Chile Free Trade Agreement](/wiki/Australia–Chile_Free_Trade_Agreement), and as of November 2015 has put the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](/wiki/Trans-Pacific_Partnership) before parliament for ratification.[[99]](#cite_note-99) Along with New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Singapore, Australia is party to the [Five Power Defence Arrangements](/wiki/Five_Power_Defence_Arrangements), a regional defence agreement. A founding member country of the United Nations, Australia is strongly committed to [multilateralism](/wiki/Multilateralism)[[100]](#cite_note-100) and maintains an international aid program under which some 60 countries receive assistance. The 2005–06 budget provides A$2.5 billion for development assistance.[[101]](#cite_note-101) Australia ranks fifteenth overall in the [Center for Global Development's](/wiki/Center_for_Global_Development) 2012 [Commitment to Development Index](/wiki/Commitment_to_Development_Index).[[102]](#cite_note-102) Australia's armed forces—the [Australian Defence Force](/wiki/Australian_Defence_Force) (ADF)—comprise the [Royal Australian Navy](/wiki/Royal_Australian_Navy) (RAN), the [Australian Army](/wiki/Australian_Army) and the [Royal Australian Air Force](/wiki/Royal_Australian_Air_Force) (RAAF), in total numbering 81,214 personnel (including 57,982 regulars and 23,232 reservists) as of November 2015. The titular role of [Commander-in-Chief](/wiki/Commander-in-Chief) is vested in the [Governor-General](/wiki/Governor-General_of_Australia), who appoints a [Chief of the Defence Force](/wiki/Chief_of_the_Defence_Force_(Australia)) from one of the armed services on the advice of the government.[[103]](#cite_note-103) Day-to-day force operations are under the command of the Chief, while broader administration and the formulation of defence policy is undertaken by the [Minister](/wiki/Minister_for_Defence_(Australia)) and [Department of Defence](/wiki/Department_of_Defence_(Australia)).

In the 2015–16 budget, defence spending was A$31.9 billion or 1.92% of GDP,[[104]](#cite_note-104) representing the [13th largest defence budget](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures).[[105]](#cite_note-105) Australia has been involved in UN and regional peacekeeping, disaster relief and armed conflict, including the [2003 invasion of Iraq](/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq); it [currently has deployed](/wiki/Current_Australian_Defence_Force_deployments) about 2,241 personnel in varying capacities to 12 international operations in areas including [Iraq](/wiki/Operation_Okra) and [Afghanistan](/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(2015–present)).[[106]](#cite_note-106)

## Geography and climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [right|thumb|alt=Australia divided into different colours indicating its climatic zones|Climatic zones in Australia.](/wiki/File:Australia-climate-map_MJC01.png)[Template:Refn](/wiki/Template:Refn)[Template:Col-begin](/wiki/Template:Col-begin) [Template:Col-2](/wiki/Template:Col-2) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Col-2](/wiki/Template:Col-2) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Col-end](/wiki/Template:Col-end) Australia's landmass of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)[[107]](#cite_note-107) is on the [Indo-Australian Plate](/wiki/Indo-Australian_Plate). Surrounded by the Indian and Pacific oceans,[Template:Refn](/wiki/Template:Refn) it is separated from Asia by the [Arafura](/wiki/Arafura_Sea) and [Timor](/wiki/Timor_Sea) seas, with the [Coral Sea](/wiki/Coral_Sea) lying off the Queensland coast, and the [Tasman Sea](/wiki/Tasman_Sea) lying between Australia and New Zealand. The world's smallest continent[[108]](#cite_note-108) and [sixth largest country by total area](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_total_area),[[109]](#cite_note-109) Australia—owing to its size and isolation—is often dubbed the "island continent",[[110]](#cite_note-110) and is sometimes considered the [world's largest island](/wiki/List_of_islands_by_area).[[111]](#cite_note-111) Australia has [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of coastline (excluding all offshore islands),[[112]](#cite_note-112) and claims an extensive [Exclusive Economic Zone](/wiki/Exclusive_economic_zone) of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). This exclusive economic zone does not include the Australian Antarctic Territory.[[113]](#cite_note-113) Apart from [Macquarie Island](/wiki/Macquarie_Island), Australia lies between latitudes [9°](/wiki/9th_parallel_south) and [44°S](/wiki/44th_parallel_south), and longitudes [112°](/wiki/112th_meridian_east) and [154°E](/wiki/154th_meridian_east).

The [Great Barrier Reef](/wiki/Great_Barrier_Reef), the world's largest coral reef,<ref name=UNEP>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> lies a short distance off the north-east coast and extends for over [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). [Mount Augustus](/wiki/Mount_Augustus_National_Park), claimed to be the world's largest monolith,[[114]](#cite_note-114) is located in Western Australia. At [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), [Mount Kosciuszko](/wiki/Mount_Kosciuszko) on the [Great Dividing Range](/wiki/Great_Dividing_Range) is the highest mountain on the Australian mainland. Even taller are [Mawson Peak](/wiki/Mawson_Peak) (at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)), on the remote Australian territory of [Heard Island](/wiki/Heard_Island_and_McDonald_Islands), and, in the Australian Antarctic Territory, [Mount McClintock](/wiki/Mount_McClintock) and [Mount Menzies](/wiki/Mount_Menzies), at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) respectively.[[115]](#cite_note-115) [thumb|left|Coral of the](/wiki/File:Coral_Outcrop_Flynn_Reef.jpg) [Great Barrier Reef](/wiki/Great_Barrier_Reef), the world's largest [coral reef](/wiki/Coral_reef) system. Australia's size gives it a wide variety of landscapes, with tropical [rainforests](/wiki/Rainforest) in the north-east, mountain ranges in the south-east, south-west and east, and dry desert in the centre.[[116]](#cite_note-116) It is the flattest continent,[[117]](#cite_note-117) with the oldest and least fertile soils;[[118]](#cite_note-118)[[119]](#cite_note-119) [desert](/wiki/Deserts_of_Australia) or semi-arid land commonly known as the [outback](/wiki/Outback) makes up by far the largest portion of land.[[120]](#cite_note-120) The driest inhabited continent, its annual rainfall averaged over continental area is less than 500 mm.<ref name=bomclim/> The [population density](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_population_density), 2.8 inhabitants per square kilometre, is among the lowest in the world,[[121]](#cite_note-121) although a large proportion of the population lives along the temperate south-eastern coastline.[[122]](#cite_note-122) Eastern Australia is marked by the Great Dividing Range, which runs parallel to the coast of Queensland, New South Wales and much of Victoria. The name is not strictly accurate, because parts of the range consist of low hills, and the highlands are typically no more than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in height.[[123]](#cite_note-123) The [coastal uplands](/wiki/Eastern_Australian_temperate_forests) and a [belt of Brigalow grasslands](/wiki/Brigalow_Belt) lie between the coast and the mountains, while inland of the dividing range are large areas of grassland.[[123]](#cite_note-123)[[124]](#cite_note-124) These include the [western plains](/wiki/Southeast_Australia_temperate_savanna) of New South Wales, and the [Einasleigh Uplands](/wiki/Einasleigh_Uplands), [Barkly Tableland](/wiki/Barkly_Tableland), and [Mulga Lands](/wiki/Mulga_Lands) of inland Queensland. The northernmost point of the east coast is the tropical-rainforested [Cape York Peninsula](/wiki/Cape_York_Peninsula).[[125]](#cite_note-125)[[126]](#cite_note-126)[[127]](#cite_note-127)[[128]](#cite_note-128) [thumb|alt=Map showing the topography of Australia, showing some elevation in the west and very high elevation in mountains in the southeast|Topographic map of Australia. Dark green represents the lowest elevation and dark brown the highest](/wiki/File:Reliefmap_of_Australia.png) The landscapes of the [Top End](/wiki/Top_End) and the [Gulf Country](/wiki/Gulf_Country)[Template:Mdashwith](/wiki/Template:Mdash) their tropical climate[Template:Mdashinclude](/wiki/Template:Mdash) forest, [woodland](/wiki/Woodland), wetland, [grassland](/wiki/Grassland), rainforest and desert.[[129]](#cite_note-129)[[130]](#cite_note-130)[[131]](#cite_note-131) At the north-west corner of the continent are the sandstone cliffs and gorges of [The Kimberley](/wiki/Kimberley_(Western_Australia)), and below that the [Pilbara](/wiki/Pilbara). To the south of these and inland, lie more areas of grassland: the [Ord Victoria Plain](/wiki/Ord_Victoria_Plain) and the [Western Australian Mulga shrublands](/wiki/Western_Australian_Mulga_shrublands).[[132]](#cite_note-132)[[133]](#cite_note-133)[[134]](#cite_note-134) At the heart of the country are the [uplands of central Australia](/wiki/Central_Ranges_xeric_scrub). Prominent features of the centre and south include [Uluru](/wiki/Uluru) (also known as Ayers Rock), the famous sandstone monolith, and the inland [Simpson](/wiki/Simpson_Desert), [Tirari and Sturt Stony](/wiki/Tirari-Sturt_stony_desert), [Gibson](/wiki/Gibson_Desert), [Great Sandy, Tanami](/wiki/Great_Sandy-Tanami_desert), and [Great Victoria](/wiki/Great_Victoria_Desert) deserts, with the famous [Nullarbor Plain](/wiki/Nullarbor_Plain) on the southern coast.[[135]](#cite_note-135)[[136]](#cite_note-136)[[137]](#cite_note-137)[[138]](#cite_note-138) The climate of Australia is significantly influenced by ocean currents, including the [Indian Ocean Dipole](/wiki/Indian_Ocean_Dipole) and the [El Niño–Southern Oscillation](/wiki/El_Niño–Southern_Oscillation), which is correlated with periodic [drought](/wiki/Drought_in_Australia), and the seasonal tropical low-pressure system that produces [cyclones](/wiki/Cyclone) in northern Australia.[[139]](#cite_note-139)[[140]](#cite_note-140) These factors cause rainfall to vary markedly from year to year. Much of the northern part of the country has a tropical, predominantly summer-rainfall (monsoon) climate.<ref name=bomclim>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The [south-west corner of the country](/wiki/Southwest_corner_of_Western_Australia) has a [Mediterranean climate](/wiki/Mediterranean_climate).[[141]](#cite_note-141) Much of the south-east (including Tasmania) is temperate.<ref name=bomclim/>

## Environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|left|alt=A koala holding onto a eucalyptus tree with its head turned so both eyes are visible|The](/wiki/File:Koala_climbing_tree.jpg) [koala](/wiki/Koala) and the [*Eucalyptus*](/wiki/Eucalyptus) form an iconic Australian pair. Although most of Australia is semi-arid or desert, it includes a diverse range of habitats from [alpine](/wiki/Alpine_climate) heaths to [tropical rainforests](/wiki/Tropical_rainforest), and is recognised as a [megadiverse country](/wiki/Megadiverse_countries). Fungi typify that diversity; an estimated 250,000 species—of which only 5% have been described—occur in Australia.[[142]](#cite_note-142) Because of the continent's great age, extremely variable weather patterns, and long-term geographic isolation, much of Australia's [biota](/wiki/Biota_(ecology)) is unique. About 85% of flowering plants, 84% of mammals, more than 45% of [birds](/wiki/List_of_birds_of_Australia), and 89% of in-shore, temperate-zone fish are [endemic](/wiki/Endemism).[[143]](#cite_note-143) Australia has the greatest number of reptiles of any country, with 755 species.[[144]](#cite_note-144) [Australian forests](/wiki/Forests_of_Australia) are mostly made up of evergreen species, particularly [eucalyptus](/wiki/Eucalyptus) trees in the less arid regions; [wattles](/wiki/Acacia) replace them as the dominant species in drier regions and deserts.<ref name=dfat>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Among well-known [Australian animals](/wiki/Fauna_of_Australia) are the [monotremes](/wiki/Monotreme) (the [platypus](/wiki/Platypus) and [echidna](/wiki/Echidna)); a host of [marsupials](/wiki/Marsupial), including the [kangaroo](/wiki/Kangaroo), [koala](/wiki/Koala), and [wombat](/wiki/Wombat), and birds such as the [emu](/wiki/Emu) and the [kookaburra](/wiki/Kookaburra).<ref name=dfat/> Australia is home to [many dangerous animals](/wiki/Animal_attacks_in_Australia) including some of the most venomous snakes in the world.[[145]](#cite_note-145) The [dingo](/wiki/Dingo) was introduced by Austronesian people who traded with Indigenous Australians around 3000 [BCE](/wiki/Common_Era).[[146]](#cite_note-146) Many animal and plant species became extinct soon after first human settlement,[[147]](#cite_note-147) including the [Australian megafauna](/wiki/Australian_megafauna); others have disappeared since European settlement, among them the [thylacine](/wiki/Thylacine).[[148]](#cite_note-148)[[149]](#cite_note-149) Many of Australia's ecoregions, and the species within those regions, are threatened by human activities and [introduced](/wiki/Invasive_species_in_Australia) animal, [chromistan](/wiki/Chromista), fungal and plant species.[[150]](#cite_note-150) All these factors have led to Australia having the highest mammal extinction rate of any country in the world.[[151]](#cite_note-151) The federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* is the legal framework for the protection of threatened species.[[152]](#cite_note-152) Numerous [protected areas](/wiki/Protected_areas_of_Australia) have been created under the [National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity](/wiki/Biodiversity_action_plan) to protect and preserve unique ecosystems;[[153]](#cite_note-153)[[154]](#cite_note-154) 65 [wetlands](/wiki/Wetland) are [listed](/wiki/List_of_Ramsar_sites_in_Australia) under the [Ramsar Convention](/wiki/Ramsar_Convention),[[155]](#cite_note-155) and 16 natural [World Heritage Sites](/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) have been established.[[156]](#cite_note-156) Australia was ranked 3rd out of 178 countries in the world on the 2014 [Environmental Performance Index](/wiki/Environmental_Performance_Index).[[157]](#cite_note-157)

### Environmental issues[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|right|Drought affecting](/wiki/File:Lake_Hume_on_the_Upper_Murray.jpg) [Lake Hume](/wiki/Lake_Hume) on the Upper [Murray River](/wiki/Murray_River) Protection of the environment is a major political issue in Australia.[[158]](#cite_note-158)[[159]](#cite_note-159) In 2007, the [First Rudd Government](/wiki/First_Rudd_Government) signed the instrument of ratification of the [Kyoto Protocol](/wiki/Kyoto_Protocol). Nevertheless, Australia's [carbon dioxide emissions per capita](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_carbon_dioxide_emissions_per_capita) are among the highest in the world, lower than those of only a few other industrialised nations.[[160]](#cite_note-160) Rainfall in southwestern Australia has decreased by 10–20% since the 1970s, while southeastern Australia has also experienced a moderate decline since the 1990s.[[161]](#cite_note-161) According to the [Bureau of Meteorology's](/wiki/Bureau_of_Meteorology) 2011 Australian Climate Statement, Australia had lower than average temperatures in 2011 as a consequence of a [La Niña](/wiki/La_Niña) weather pattern; however, "the country's 10-year average continues to demonstrate the rising trend in temperatures, with 2002–2011 likely to rank in the top two warmest 10-year periods on record for Australia, at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) above the long-term average".[[162]](#cite_note-162) Furthermore, 2014 was Australia's third warmest year since national temperature observations commenced in 1910.[[163]](#cite_note-163)[[164]](#cite_note-164) [Water restrictions](/wiki/Water_restrictions_in_Australia) are frequently in place in many regions and cities of Australia in response to chronic shortages due to urban population increases and localised [drought](/wiki/Drought_in_Australia).[[165]](#cite_note-165)[[166]](#cite_note-166) Throughout much of the continent, [major flooding](/wiki/Floods_in_Australia) regularly follows extended periods of drought, flushing out inland river systems, overflowing dams and inundating large inland flood plains, as occurred throughout Eastern Australia in 2010, 2011 and 2012 after the [2000s Australian drought](/wiki/2000s_Australian_drought).

A [carbon tax](/wiki/Carbon_tax) was introduced in 2012 and helped to reduce Australia's emissions but was scrapped in 2014 under the [Liberal Government](/wiki/Liberal_Party_of_Australia).[[167]](#cite_note-167) Since the carbon tax was repealed, emissions have again continued to rise.[[168]](#cite_note-168) Australian biota has been severely impacted by changes occurring since European settlement began in 1788,[[169]](#cite_note-169) with more than 10% of mammal species lost in the past 225 years.[[170]](#cite_note-170) There have also been 23 bird species or subspecies,[[171]](#cite_note-171) 4 amphibians and more than 60 plant species known to be lost during this period.[[169]](#cite_note-169) The [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act](/wiki/Environment_Protection_and_Biodiversity_Conservation_Act) of 1999 was designed to minimise further impacts on ecological communities in Australia and its territories.[[172]](#cite_note-172)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|alt=A deep opencut mine in which some roads can be seen, the dirt is a rusty colour|The](/wiki/File:Kalgoorlie_The_Big_Pit_DSC04498.JPG) [Super Pit gold mine](/wiki/Super_Pit_gold_mine) in [Kalgoorlie](/wiki/Kalgoorlie), Western Australia, is the nation's largest [open cut](/wiki/Open-pit_mining) mine.[[173]](#cite_note-173) Australia is a wealthy country; it generates its income from various sources including mining-related exports, telecommunications, banking and manufacturing.[[174]](#cite_note-174)[[175]](#cite_note-175)[[176]](#cite_note-176) It has a [market economy](/wiki/Market_economy), a relatively high GDP per capita, and a relatively low rate of poverty. In terms of average wealth, Australia ranked second in the world after Switzerland in 2013, although the nation's poverty rate increased from 10.2% to 11.8%, from 2000/01 to 2013.[[177]](#cite_note-177)[[178]](#cite_note-178) It was identified by the Credit Suisse Research Institute as the nation with the highest median wealth in the world and the second-highest average wealth per adult in 2013.[[177]](#cite_note-177) The [Australian dollar](/wiki/Australian_dollar) is the currency for the nation, including Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and Norfolk Island, as well as the independent [Pacific Island states](/wiki/Pacific_Islands) of [Kiribati](/wiki/Kiribati), [Nauru](/wiki/Nauru), and [Tuvalu](/wiki/Tuvalu). With the 2006 merger of the Australian Stock Exchange and the Sydney Futures Exchange, the [Australian Securities Exchange](/wiki/Australian_Securities_Exchange) became the ninth largest in the world.[[179]](#cite_note-179) Ranked third in the [Index of Economic Freedom](/wiki/Index_of_Economic_Freedom) (2010),[[180]](#cite_note-180) Australia is the [world's twelfth largest economy](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) and has the [fifth highest per capita GDP](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capita) (nominal) at $66,984. The country was ranked second in the United Nations 2011 [Human Development Index](/wiki/Human_Development_Index) and first in [Legatum's](/wiki/Legatum) 2008 [Prosperity Index](/wiki/Legatum_Prosperity_Index).<ref name=autogenerated1>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> All of Australia's major cities fare well in global comparative livability surveys;[[181]](#cite_note-181) Melbourne reached top spot for the fourth year in a row on [*The Economist*](/wiki/The_Economist)***s 2014 list of the*** [***world's most liveable cities***](/wiki/World's_most_livable_cities)***, followed by Adelaide, Sydney, and Perth in the fifth, seventh, and ninth places respectively.***[***[182]***](#cite_note-182) ***Total government debt in Australia is about $190 billion***[***[183]***](#cite_note-183) ***– 20% of*** [***GDP***](/wiki/Gross_domestic_product) ***in 2010.***[***[184]***](#cite_note-184) ***Australia has among the highest house prices and some of the highest*** [***household debt***](/wiki/Household_debt) ***levels in the world.***[***[185]***](#cite_note-185) [thumb|left|300px|alt=World map showing the distribution of Australian goods|Destination and value of Australian exports in 2006](/wiki/File:2006Australian_exports.svg)[[186]](#cite_note-186) An emphasis on exporting commodities rather than manufactured goods has underpinned a significant increase in Australia's [terms of trade](/wiki/Terms_of_trade) since the start of the 21st century, due to rising commodity prices. [Australia has a balance of payments](/wiki/Balance_of_payments_of_Australia) that is more than 7% of GDP negative, and has had persistently large [current account](/wiki/Current_account) deficits for more than 50 years.[[187]](#cite_note-187) Australia has grown at an average annual rate of 3.6% for over 15 years, in comparison to the OECD annual average of 2.5%.[[187]](#cite_note-187) Australia was the only advanced economy not to experience a recession due to the [global financial downturn](/wiki/Late-2000s_recession) in 2008–2009.[[188]](#cite_note-188) However, the economies of six of Australia's major trading partners have been in recession, which in turn has affected Australia, significantly hampering its economic growth in recent years.[[189]](#cite_note-189)[[190]](#cite_note-190) From 2012 to early 2013, Australia's national economy grew, but some non-mining states and Australia's non-mining economy experienced a recession.[[191]](#cite_note-191)[[192]](#cite_note-192)[[193]](#cite_note-193) The [Hawke Government](/wiki/Bob_Hawke) [floated](/wiki/Floating_exchange_rate) the Australian dollar in 1983 and partially deregulated the financial system.[[194]](#cite_note-194) The [Howard Government](/wiki/Howard_Government) followed with a [partial deregulation of the labour market](/wiki/WorkChoices) and the further [privatisation](/wiki/Privatisation) of state-owned businesses, most notably in the [telecommunications](/wiki/Telecommunications_in_Australia) industry.[[195]](#cite_note-195) The indirect tax system was substantially changed in July 2000 with the introduction of a 10% [Goods and Services Tax](/wiki/Goods_and_Services_Tax_(Australia)) (GST).[[196]](#cite_note-196) In [Australia's tax system](/wiki/Taxation_in_Australia), personal and company [income tax](/wiki/Income_tax_in_Australia) are the main sources of government revenue.[[197]](#cite_note-197) In May 2012, there were 11,537,900 people employed (either full- or part-time), with an unemployment rate of 5.1%.[[198]](#cite_note-198) Youth unemployment (15–24) stood at 11.2%.[[198]](#cite_note-198) Data released in mid-November 2013 showed that the number of welfare recipients had grown by 55%. In 2007 228,621 [Newstart unemployment allowance](/wiki/Newstart_Allowance) recipients were registered, a total that increased to 646,414 in March 2013.[[199]](#cite_note-199) According to the Graduate Careers Survey, full-time employment for newly qualified professionals from various occupations has declined since 2011 but it increases for graduates three years after graduation.[[200]](#cite_note-200)[[201]](#cite_note-201) [Australian English](/wiki/Australian_English) is a major variety of the language with a distinctive accent and lexicon,[[226]](#cite_note-226) and differs slightly from other varieties of English in grammar and spelling.[[227]](#cite_note-227) [General Australian](/wiki/General_Australian) serves as the standard dialect. According to the 2011 census, English is the only language spoken in the home for close to 81% of the population. The next most common languages spoken at home are [Mandarin](/wiki/Mandarin_Chinese) (1.7%), [Italian](/wiki/Italian_language) (1.5%), [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic_language) (1.4%), [Cantonese](/wiki/Cantonese) (1.3%), [Greek](/wiki/Greek_language) (1.3%), and [Vietnamese](/wiki/Vietnamese_language) (1.2%);[[213]](#cite_note-213) a considerable proportion of first- and second-generation migrants are bilingual. A 2010–2011 study by the Australia Early Development Index found the most common language spoken by children after English was Arabic, followed by Vietnamese, Greek, Chinese, and Hindi.[[228]](#cite_note-228)[[229]](#cite_note-229) Over 250 [Indigenous Australian languages](/wiki/Indigenous_Australian_languages) are thought to have existed at the time of first European contact, of which less than 20 are still in daily use by all age groups.[[230]](#cite_note-230)<ref name=nilsr/> About 110 others are spoken exclusively by older people.<ref name=nilsr>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> At the time of the 2006 census, 52,000 Indigenous Australians, representing 12% of the Indigenous population, reported that they spoke an Indigenous language at home.[[231]](#cite_note-231) Australia has a [sign language](/wiki/Sign_language) known as [Auslan](/wiki/Auslan), which is the main language of about 5,500 deaf people.[[232]](#cite_note-232)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Bar box](/wiki/Template:Bar_box) Australia has no [state religion](/wiki/State_religion); Section 116 of the [Australian Constitution](/wiki/Australian_Constitution) prohibits the [federal government](/wiki/Federal_Government_of_Australia) from making any law to establish any religion, impose any religious observance, or prohibit the free exercise of any religion.[[233]](#cite_note-233) In the 2011 census, 61.1% of Australians were counted as [Christian](/wiki/Christian), including 25.3% as [Roman Catholic](/wiki/Roman_Catholicism_in_Australia) and 17.1% as [Anglican](/wiki/Anglicanism); 22.3% of the population reported having "[no religion](/wiki/Irreligion_in_Australia)"; 7.2% identify with non-Christian religions, the largest of these being [Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism) (2.5%), followed by [Islam](/wiki/Islam) (2.2%), [Hinduism](/wiki/Hinduism) (1.3%) and [Judaism](/wiki/Judaism) (0.5%). The remaining 9.4% of the population did not provide an adequate answer.[[213]](#cite_note-213) Before European settlement, the animist beliefs of Australia's indigenous people had been practised for many thousands of years. Mainland [Aboriginal Australians'](/wiki/Aboriginal_Australians) spirituality is known as the [Dreamtime](/wiki/Dreamtime) and it places a heavy emphasis on belonging to the land. The collection of stories that it contains shaped Aboriginal law and customs. [Aboriginal art](/wiki/Indigenous_Australian_art), story and dance continue to draw on these spiritual traditions. The spirituality and customs of [Torres Strait Islanders](/wiki/Torres_Strait_Islanders), who inhabit the islands between Australia and New Guinea, reflected their Melanesian origins and dependence on the sea. The 1996 Australian census counted more than 7000 respondents as followers of a traditional Aboriginal religion.[[234]](#cite_note-234) Since the arrival of the [First Fleet](/wiki/First_Fleet) of British ships in 1788, Christianity has grown to be the major religion practised in Australia. Christian churches have played an integral role in the development of education, health and welfare services in Australia. For much of Australian history the [Church of England](/wiki/Church_of_England) (now known as the [Anglican Church of Australia](/wiki/Anglican_Church_of_Australia)) was the largest religious denomination. However, multicultural immigration has contributed to a decline in its relative position, and the Roman Catholic Church has benefitted from recent immigration to become the largest group. Similarly, [Islam](/wiki/Islam_in_Australia), [Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism_in_Australia), [Hinduism](/wiki/Hinduism_in_Australia) and [Judaism](/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Australia) have all grown in Australia over the past half-century.[[235]](#cite_note-235) Australia has one of the lowest levels of religious adherence in the world.[[236]](#cite_note-236) In 2001, only 8.8% of Australians attended church on a weekly basis.[[237]](#cite_note-237)

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|Five Australian universities rank in the top 50 of the](/wiki/File:JCMSR.jpg) [*QS World University Rankings*](/wiki/QS_World_University_Rankings), including the [Australian National University](/wiki/Australian_National_University) (19th).[[238]](#cite_note-238) School attendance, or registration for home schooling,[[239]](#cite_note-239) is compulsory throughout Australia. Education is the responsibility of the individual states and territories[[240]](#cite_note-240) so the rules vary between states, but in general children are required to attend school from the age of about 5 until about 16.[[241]](#cite_note-241)[[242]](#cite_note-242) In some states (e.g., Western Australia,[[243]](#cite_note-243) the Northern Territory[[244]](#cite_note-244) and New South Wales[[245]](#cite_note-245)[[246]](#cite_note-246)), children aged 16–17 are required to either attend school or participate in vocational training, such as an [apprenticeship](/wiki/Apprenticeship).

Australia has an adult literacy rate that was estimated to be 99% in 2003.<ref name=cialittab>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> However, a 2011–12 report for the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that Tasmania has a literacy and numeracy rate of only 50%.[[247]](#cite_note-247) In the [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment), Australia regularly scores among the top five of thirty major developed countries (member countries of the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development)). [Catholic education](/wiki/Catholic_education_in_Australia) accounts for the largest non-government sector.

Australia has 37 government-funded universities and two private universities, as well as a number of other specialist institutions that provide approved courses at the higher education level.[[248]](#cite_note-248) The OECD places Australia among the most expensive nations to attend university.[[249]](#cite_note-249) There is a state-based system of vocational training, known as [TAFE](/wiki/Technical_and_further_education), and many trades conduct apprenticeships for training new tradespeople.[[250]](#cite_note-250) About 58% of Australians aged from 25 to 64 have vocational or tertiary qualifications,[[203]](#cite_note-203) and the tertiary graduation rate of 49% is the highest among OECD countries. The ratio of international to local students in tertiary education in Australia is the highest in the OECD countries.[[251]](#cite_note-251) In addition, 38 percent of Australia's population has a [university or college degree](/wiki/Academic_degree), which is among the highest percentages in the world.[[252]](#cite_note-252)[[253]](#cite_note-253)

### Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) Australia has the third and seventh highest life expectancy of males and females respectively in the world.[[254]](#cite_note-254) Life expectancy in Australia in 2010 was 79.5 years for males and 84.0 years for females.[[255]](#cite_note-255) Australia has the highest rates of skin cancer in the world,[[256]](#cite_note-256) while [cigarette smoking](/wiki/Tobacco_smoking) is the largest preventable cause of death and disease, responsible for 7.8% of the total mortality and disease. Ranked second in preventable causes is [hypertension](/wiki/Hypertension) at 7.6%, with obesity third at 7.5%.[[257]](#cite_note-257)[[258]](#cite_note-258) Australia ranks 35th in the world[[259]](#cite_note-259) and near the top of [developed nations](/wiki/Developed_country) for its proportion of [obese](/wiki/Obesity_in_Australia) adults [[260]](#cite_note-260) and nearly two thirds (63%) of its adult population is either overweight or obese.<ref name=aihw>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

Total expenditure on health (including private sector spending) is around 9.8% of GDP.[[261]](#cite_note-261) Australia introduced [universal health care](/wiki/Universal_health_care) in 1975.[[262]](#cite_note-262) Known as [Medicare](/wiki/Medicare_(Australia)), it is now nominally funded by an income tax surcharge known as the [Medicare levy](/wiki/Medicare_levy), currently set at 1.5%.[[263]](#cite_note-263) The states manage hospitals and attached outpatient services, while the Commonwealth funds the [Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme](/wiki/Pharmaceutical_Benefits_Scheme) (subsidising the costs of medicines) and general practice.[[262]](#cite_note-262)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|right|alt=Ornate white building with an elevated dome in the middle, fronted by a golden fountain and orange flowers|The](/wiki/File:Royal_exhibition_building_tulips_straight.jpg) [Royal Exhibition Building](/wiki/Royal_Exhibition_Building) in Melbourne was the first building in Australia to be listed as a UNESCO [World Heritage Site](/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) in 2004.[[264]](#cite_note-264) Since 1788, the primary influence behind Australian culture has been [Anglo-Celtic](/wiki/Anglo-Celtic) [Western culture](/wiki/Western_culture), with some [Indigenous](/wiki/Indigenous_Australians) influences.[[265]](#cite_note-265)[[266]](#cite_note-266) The divergence and evolution that has occurred in the ensuing centuries has resulted in a distinctive Australian culture.<ref name=bush>Davison, Hirst and Macintyre, pp. 98–99.</ref>[[267]](#cite_note-267) Since the mid-20th century, [American popular culture](/wiki/Culture_of_the_United_States) has strongly influenced Australia, particularly through television and cinema.<ref name=tw>[Teo and White](/wiki/#Teo), pp. 121–23.</ref> Other cultural influences come from neighbouring Asian countries, and through large-scale immigration from non-English-speaking nations.<ref name=tw/>[[268]](#cite_note-268)

### Arts[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The [rock art](/wiki/Rock_art) of Australia's Indigenous peoples is the oldest and richest in the world, dating as far back as 60,000 years and spread across hundreds of thousands of sites.[[269]](#cite_note-269) Traditional designs, patterns and stories infuse [contemporary Indigenous Australian art](/wiki/Contemporary_Indigenous_Australian_art), "the last great art movement of the 20th century";[[270]](#cite_note-270) its exponents include [Emily Kame Kngwarreye](/wiki/Emily_Kame_Kngwarreye).[[271]](#cite_note-271) During the first century of European settlement, colonial artists, trained in Europe, showed a fascination with the unfamiliar land.<ref name=art/> The [naturalistic](/wiki/Realism_(arts)), sun-filled works of [Arthur Streeton](/wiki/Arthur_Streeton), [Tom Roberts](/wiki/Tom_Roberts) and others associated with the 19th-century [Heidelberg School](/wiki/Heidelberg_School)—the first "distinctively Australian" movement in Western art—gave expression to a burgeoning Australian nationalism in the lead-up to Federation.<ref name=art>[Australian art](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/discover-art/learn-more/australian-art/), [Art Gallery of New South Wales](/wiki/Art_Gallery_of_New_South_Wales). Retrieved 27 August 2014.</ref> While the school remained influential into the new century, [modernists](/wiki/Modern_art) such as [Margaret Preston](/wiki/Margaret_Preston), and, later, [Sidney Nolan](/wiki/Sidney_Nolan) and [Arthur Boyd](/wiki/Arthur_Boyd), explored new artistic trends.<ref name=art/> The landscape remained a central subject matter for [Fred Williams](/wiki/Fred_Williams), [Brett Whiteley](/wiki/Brett_Whiteley) and other post-World War II artists whose works, eclectic in style yet uniquely Australian, moved between the [figurative](/wiki/Figurative_art) and the [abstract](/wiki/Abstract_art).<ref name=art/>[[272]](#cite_note-272) The [National Gallery of Australia](/wiki/National_Gallery_of_Australia) and state galleries maintain collections of Australian and international art.[[273]](#cite_note-273) Australia has one of the world's highest attendances of art galleries and museums per head of population.[[274]](#cite_note-274) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Sidney_Nolan_Snake.jpg)[Sidney Nolan's](/wiki/Sidney_Nolan) *Snake* mural (1970), held at the [Museum of Old and New Art](/wiki/Museum_of_Old_and_New_Art) in Hobart, Tasmania, is inspired by the Aboriginal creation myth of the [Rainbow Serpent](/wiki/Rainbow_Serpent), as well as desert flowers in bloom after a drought.[[275]](#cite_note-275) [Australian literature](/wiki/Australian_literature) grew slowly in the decades following European settlement though Indigenous [oral traditions](/wiki/Oral_tradition), many of which have since been recorded in writing, are much older.[[276]](#cite_note-276) 19th-century writers such as [Henry Lawson](/wiki/Henry_Lawson) and [Banjo Paterson](/wiki/Banjo_Paterson) captured the experience of [the bush](/wiki/Australian_bush) using a distinctive Australian vocabulary. Their works are still very popular; Paterson's [bush poem](/wiki/Bush_poetry) "[Waltzing Matilda](/wiki/Waltzing_Matilda)" (1895) is regarded as Australia's unofficial national anthem.[[277]](#cite_note-277) [Miles Franklin](/wiki/Miles_Franklin) is the namesake of Australia's [most prestigious literary prize](/wiki/Miles_Franklin_Award), awarded annually to the best novel about Australian life.[[278]](#cite_note-278) Its first recipient, [Patrick White](/wiki/Patrick_White), went on to win the [Nobel Prize in Literature](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature) in 1973.[[279]](#cite_note-279) Australian winners of the [Booker Prize](/wiki/Man_Booker_Prize) include [Peter Carey](/wiki/Peter_Carey_(novelist)), [Thomas Keneally](/wiki/Thomas_Keneally) and [Richard Flanagan](/wiki/Richard_Flanagan).[[280]](#cite_note-280) Author [David Malouf](/wiki/David_Malouf), playwright [David Williamson](/wiki/David_Williamson) and poet [Les Murray](/wiki/Les_Murray_(poet)) are also renowned literary figures.[[281]](#cite_note-281)[[282]](#cite_note-282) Many of Australia's performing arts companies receive funding through the federal government's [Australia Council](/wiki/Australia_Council_for_the_Arts).[[283]](#cite_note-283) There is a symphony orchestra in each state,[[284]](#cite_note-284) and a national opera company, [Opera Australia](/wiki/Opera_Australia),[[285]](#cite_note-285) well known for its famous [soprano](/wiki/Soprano) [Joan Sutherland](/wiki/Joan_Sutherland).[[286]](#cite_note-286) At the beginning of the 20th century, [Nellie Melba](/wiki/Nellie_Melba) was one of the world's leading opera singers.[[287]](#cite_note-287) Ballet and dance are represented by [The Australian Ballet](/wiki/The_Australian_Ballet) and various state companies. Each state has a publicly funded theatre company.[[288]](#cite_note-288)

### Media[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Actor playing the](/wiki/File:The_Story_of_the_Kelly_Gang_1906.jpg) [bushranger](/wiki/Bushranger) [Ned Kelly](/wiki/Ned_Kelly) in [*The Story of the Kelly Gang*](/wiki/The_Story_of_the_Kelly_Gang) (1906), the world's first feature film [*The Story of the Kelly Gang*](/wiki/The_Story_of_the_Kelly_Gang) (1906), the world's first [feature length](/wiki/Feature_length) film, spurred a boom in [Australian cinema](/wiki/Cinema_of_Australia) during the [silent film](/wiki/Silent_film) era.[[289]](#cite_note-289) After World War I, [Hollywood](/wiki/Hollywood) monopolised the industry,[[290]](#cite_note-290) and by the 1960s Australian film production had effectively ceased.[[291]](#cite_note-291) With the benefit of government support, the [Australian New Wave](/wiki/Australian_New_Wave) of the 1970s brought provocative and successful films, many exploring themes of national identity, such as [*Wake in Fright*](/wiki/Wake_in_Fright) and [*Gallipoli*](/wiki/Gallipoli_(1981_film)),[[292]](#cite_note-292) while [*"Crocodile" Dundee*](/wiki/%22Crocodile%22_Dundee) and the [Ozploitation](/wiki/Ozploitation) movement's [*Mad Max*](/wiki/Mad_Max_(franchise)) series became international blockbusters.[[293]](#cite_note-293) In a film market flooded with foreign content, Australian films delivered a 7.7% share of the local box office in 2015.[[294]](#cite_note-294) The [AACTAs](/wiki/AACTA_Awards) are Australia's premier film and television awards, and notable [Academy Award winners from Australia](/wiki/List_of_Australian_Academy_Award_winners_and_nominees) include [Geoffrey Rush](/wiki/Geoffrey_Rush), [Nicole Kidman](/wiki/Nicole_Kidman), [Cate Blanchett](/wiki/Cate_Blanchett) and [Heath Ledger](/wiki/Heath_Ledger).[[295]](#cite_note-295) Australia has two public broadcasters (the [Australian Broadcasting Corporation](/wiki/Australian_Broadcasting_Corporation) and the multicultural [Special Broadcasting Service](/wiki/Special_Broadcasting_Service)), three commercial television networks, several pay-TV services,<ref name=bbc>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> and numerous public, non-profit television and radio stations. Each major city has at least one daily newspaper,<ref name=bbc/> and there are two national daily newspapers, [*The Australian*](/wiki/The_Australian) and [*The Australian Financial Review*](/wiki/The_Australian_Financial_Review).<ref name=bbc/> In 2010, [Reporters Without Borders](/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders) placed Australia 18th on a list of 178 countries ranked by [press freedom](/wiki/Freedom_of_the_press), behind New Zealand (8th) but ahead of the United Kingdom (19th) and United States (20th).[[296]](#cite_note-296) This relatively low ranking is primarily because of the limited diversity of commercial media ownership in Australia;[[297]](#cite_note-297) most print media are under the control of [News Corporation](/wiki/News_Corporation) and [Fairfax Media](/wiki/Fairfax_Media).[[298]](#cite_note-298)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Most Indigenous Australian tribal groups subsisted on a simple [hunter-gatherer diet](/wiki/Hunter-gatherer_diet) of native fauna and flora, otherwise called [bush tucker](/wiki/Bush_tucker).[[299]](#cite_note-299)[[300]](#cite_note-300) The first settlers introduced [British food](/wiki/British_cuisine) to the continent, much of which is now considered typical Australian food, such as the [Sunday roast](/wiki/Sunday_roast).<ref name=food>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref><ref name=f2>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Multicultural immigration transformed Australian cuisine; post-World War II European migrants, particularly from the Mediterranean, helped to build a thriving Australian [coffee culture](/wiki/Coffee_culture), and the influence of [Asian cultures](/wiki/Culture_of_Asia) has led to Australian variants of their staple foods, such as the [Chinese](/wiki/Chinese_cuisine)-inspired [dim sim](/wiki/Dim_sim) and [Chiko Roll](/wiki/Chiko_Roll).[[301]](#cite_note-301) [Vegemite](/wiki/Vegemite), [pavlova](/wiki/Pavlova_(food)), [lamingtons](/wiki/Lamington) and [meat pies](/wiki/Meat_pie_(Australia_and_New_Zealand)) are regarded as iconic Australian foods.[[302]](#cite_note-302) [Australian wine](/wiki/Australian_wine) is produced mainly in the southern, cooler parts of the country.

### Sport and recreation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:AFL_Grand_Final_2010_on_the_Melbourne_Cricket_Ground.jpg) [Melbourne Cricket Ground](/wiki/Melbourne_Cricket_Ground) is strongly associated with the history and development of [cricket](/wiki/Cricket) and [Australian rules football](/wiki/Australian_rules_football), Australia's two most popular spectator sports.[[303]](#cite_note-303) About 24% of Australians over the age of 15 regularly participate in organised sporting activities.[[203]](#cite_note-203) At an international level, Australia has excelled at [cricket](/wiki/Cricket), [field hockey](/wiki/Field_hockey), [netball](/wiki/Netball), [rugby league](/wiki/Rugby_league) and [rugby union](/wiki/Rugby_union).[[304]](#cite_note-304) The majority of Australians live within the coastal zone, making the beach a popular recreation spot and an integral part of the nation's identity.[[305]](#cite_note-305) Australia is a powerhouse in water-based sports, such as swimming and surfing.[[306]](#cite_note-306) The [surf lifesaving](/wiki/Surf_lifesaving) movement originated in Australia, and the volunteer lifesaver is one of the country's icons.[[307]](#cite_note-307) Nationally, other popular sports include [Australian rules football](/wiki/Australian_rules_football), horse racing, basketball, surfing, soccer, and motor racing. The annual [Melbourne Cup](/wiki/Melbourne_Cup) horse race and the [Sydney to Hobart](/wiki/Sydney_to_Hobart_Yacht_Race) yacht race attract intense interest.[[308]](#cite_note-308) Australia is one of five nations to have participated in every [Summer Olympics](/wiki/Summer_Olympics) of the modern era,[[309]](#cite_note-309) and has hosted the Games twice: [1956](/wiki/1956_Summer_Olympics) in Melbourne and [2000](/wiki/2000_Summer_Olympics) in Sydney.[[310]](#cite_note-310) Australia has also participated in every [Commonwealth Games](/wiki/Commonwealth_Games),[[311]](#cite_note-311) hosting the event in [1938](/wiki/1938_British_Empire_Games), [1962](/wiki/1962_British_Empire_and_Commonwealth_Games), [1982](/wiki/1982_Commonwealth_Games), [2006](/wiki/2006_Commonwealth_Games) and will host the [2018 Commonwealth Games](/wiki/2018_Commonwealth_Games).[[312]](#cite_note-312) Australia made its inaugural appearance at the [Pacific Games](/wiki/Pacific_Games) in [2015](/wiki/2015_Pacific_Games). As well as being a regular [FIFA World Cup](/wiki/FIFA_World_Cup) participant, Australia has won the [OFC Nations Cup](/wiki/OFC_Nations_Cup) four times and the [AFC Asian Cup](/wiki/AFC_Asian_Cup) once – the only country to have won championships in two different FIFA confederations.[[313]](#cite_note-313) The country regularly competes among the world elite basketball teams as it is among the global top three teams in terms of qualifications to the [Basketball Tournament at the Summer Olympics](/wiki/Basketball_Tournament_at_the_Summer_Olympics). Other major international events held in Australia include the [Australian Open](/wiki/Australian_Open) tennis [grand slam](/wiki/Grand_Slam_(tennis)) tournament, international cricket matches, and the [Australian Formula One Grand Prix](/wiki/Australian_Grand_Prix). The highest-rating television programs include sports telecasts such as the Summer Olympics, FIFA World Cup, [The Ashes](/wiki/The_Ashes), [Rugby League State of Origin](/wiki/Rugby_League_State_of_Origin), and the [grand finals](/wiki/Grand_final) of the [National Rugby League](/wiki/National_Rugby_League) and [Australian Football League](/wiki/Australian_Football_League).[[314]](#cite_note-314) [Skiing in Australia](/wiki/Skiing_in_Australia) began in the 1860s and snow sports take place in the [Australian Alps](/wiki/Australian_Alps) and parts of [Tasmania](/wiki/Tasmania).

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Portal](/wiki/Template:Portal)

* [Transport in Australia](/wiki/Transport_in_Australia)
* [Tourism in Australia](/wiki/Tourism_in_Australia)
* [Visa policy of Australia](/wiki/Visa_policy_of_Australia)
* [Outline of Australia](/wiki/Outline_of_Australia)
* [Book:Australia](/wiki/Book:Australia)

## Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

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## Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links) [Template:Spoken Wikipedia-2](/wiki/Template:Spoken_Wikipedia-2)

* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)
* [Template:Osmrelation-inline](/wiki/Template:Osmrelation-inline)
* [About Australia](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/australia/) from the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](/wiki/Department_of_Foreign_Affairs_and_Trade_(Australia)) website
* [Governments of Australia website](http://www.gov.au/) (federal, states and territories)
* [Australian Government website](http://www.australia.gov.au/)
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* [Community organisations portal](https://wayback.archive.org/web/20010927181128/http://www.community.gov.au/)
* [Tourism Australia](http://www.australia.com/)
* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Australia](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/australia.htm) at *UCB Libraries GovPubs*
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