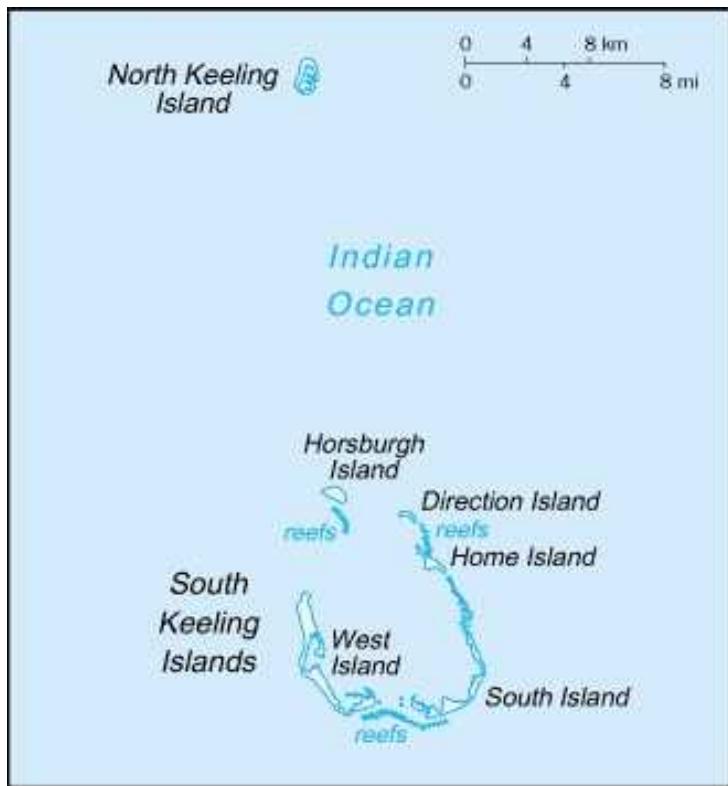




# Cocos (Keeling) Islands



**Background** British sea captain William KEELING discovered the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 1609, and they were named for their coconut trees in 1622. Some maps began referring to them as the Keeling Islands in 1703. In 1825, Scottish trader John CLUNIES-ROSS was trying to get to Christmas Island but was blown off course and landed on Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The next year, a British trader hired CLUNIES-ROSS's brother to bring slaves and a harem of Malay women to create the first permanent settlement on the island. By the 1830s, the Clunies-Ross family had firmly established themselves as the leaders of the islands, and they ruled Cocos (Keeling) Islands in a feudal style until 1978.

The UK annexed the islands in 1857 and administered them from Ceylon after 1878 and from Singapore after 1886. The Cocos (Keeling) Islands hosted a cable relaying station and was attacked by the Germans in World War I. The Japanese similarly attacked the islands in World War II. The UK transferred the islands to Australia in 1955, when they were officially named the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and in 1978, Australia bought all the land held by the Clunies-Ross family, ending their control of the islands. In a referendum in 1984, most islanders voted to integrate with Australia, and Western Australian laws have applied on the islands since 1992.

**Capital** name: West Island

**Government type** non-self-governing overseas territory of Australia

**Area**  
total : 14 sq km  
land: 14 sq km  
water: 0 sq km

**Climate** tropical with high humidity, moderated by the southeast trade winds for about nine months of the year

**Natural resources** fish

**Population** total: 593 (2021 est.)

**Ethnic groups** Europeans, Cocos Malays

**Religions** Muslim (predominantly Sunni) 75%, Anglican 3.5%, Roman Catholic 2.2%, none 12.9%, unspecified 6.3% (2016 est.)

**Languages** Malay (Cocos dialect) 68.8%, English 22.3%, unspecified 8.9%; note - data represent language spoken at home (2016 est.)

**Executive branch** chief of state: King CHARLES III (since 8 September 2022); represented by Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia General Sam MOSTYN (since 1 July 2024)  
head of government: Administrator Farzian ZAINAL (since 11 May 2023)

<b>Legislative branch</b>	legislature name: Cocos (Keeling) Islands Shire Council
<b>Diplomatic representation from the US</b>	embassy: none (territory of Australia)
<b>Exports - partners</b>	USA 31%, Singapore 29%, UK 12%, Australia 3%, Brazil 3% (2023)
<b>Exports - commodities</b>	ships (2023)
<b>Imports - partners</b>	Australia 87%, USA 3%, Philippines 2%, Sweden 2%, Brazil 1% (2023)
<b>Imports - commodities</b>	iron structures, special purpose motor vehicles, cars, ships, aluminum structures (2023)