In general, information available as of 1 January 2003 was used in the preparation of The World Factbook 2003.

This page was last updated on 18 December, 2003

Legend:  
Introduction Australia

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

Geography

| Location:   | Oceania, continent between the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean |
| Geographic coordinates: | 27 00 S, 133 00 E |
| Map references: | Oceania |
| Area:       | total: 7,686,850 sq km  
             | water: 68,920 sq km  
             | note: includes Lord Howe Island and Macquarie Island  
             | land: 7,617,930 sq km |
| Area - comparative: | slightly smaller than the US contiguous 48 states |
| Land boundaries: | 0 km |
| Coastline: | 25,760 km |
| Maritime claims: | contiguous zone: 24 NM  
                     | territorial sea: 12 NM  
                     | exclusive economic zone: 200 NM  
                     | continental shelf: 200 NM or to the edge of the continental margin |
| Climate: | generally arid to semiarid; temperate in south and east; tropical in north |
| Terrain: | mostly low plateau with deserts; fertile plain in southeast |
| Elevation extremes: | lowest point: Lake Eyre -15 m  
                      | highest point: Mount Kosciuszko 2,229 m |
| Natural resources: | bauxite, coal, iron ore, copper, tin, gold, silver, uranium, nickel, tungsten, mineral sands, lead, zinc, diamonds, natural gas, petroleum |
| Land use: | arable land: 6.88%  
            | permanent crops: 0.03%  
            | other: 93.09% (1998 est.) |
Irrigated land: 24,000 sq km (1998 est.)

Natural hazards: cyclones along the coast; severe droughts; forest fires

Environment - current issues: soil erosion from overgrazing, industrial development, urbanization, and poor farming practices; soil salinity rising due to the use of poor quality water; desertification; clearing for agricultural purposes threatens the natural habitat of many unique animal and plant species; the Great Barrier Reef off the northeast coast, the largest coral reef in the world, is threatened by increased shipping and its popularity as a tourist site; limited natural fresh water resources


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

People

Australia

Population: 19,731,984 (July 2003 est.)

Age structure:
0-14 years: 20.2% (male 2,045,783; female 1,949,864)
15-64 years: 67.1% (male 6,680,531; female 6,553,141)
65 years and over: 12.7% (male 1,099,275; female 1,403,390) (2003 est.)

Median age:
total: 36 years
male: 35.2 years
female: 36.8 years (2002)

Population growth rate: 0.93% (2003 est.)

Birth rate: 12.55 births/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Death rate: 7.31 deaths/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Net migration rate: 4.05 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Sex ratio:
at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female
under 15 years: 1.05 male(s)/female
15-64 years: 1.02 male(s)/female
Infant mortality rate:
- total: 4.83 deaths/1,000 live births
- female: 4.4 deaths/1,000 live births (2003 est.)
- male: 5.23 deaths/1,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth:
- total population: 80.13 years
- male: 77.27 years
- female: 83.13 years (2003 est.)

Total fertility rate:
- 1.76 children born/woman (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:
- 0.1% (2001 est.)

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:
- 12,000 (2001 est.)

HIV/AIDS - deaths:
- less than 100 (2001 est.)

Nationality:
- noun: Australian(s)
- adjective: Australian

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

Religions:
- Anglican 26.1%, Roman Catholic 26%, other Christian 24.3%, non-Christian 11%, other 12.6%

Languages:
- English, native languages

Literacy:
- definition: age 15 and over can read and write
- total population: 100%
- male: 100%
- female: 100% (1980 est.)

Government:
- Australia

Country name:
- conventional long form: Commonwealth of Australia
- conventional short form: Australia

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

Capital:
- Canberra

Administrative divisions:
- 6 states and 2 territories*; Australian Capital Territory*, New South Wales, Northern
Territory*, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia

Dependent areas:
Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Coral Sea Islands, Heard Island and McDonald Islands, Norfolk Island

Independence:
1 January 1901 (federation of UK colonies)

National holiday:
Australia Day, 26 January (1788)

Constitution:
9 July 1900, effective 1 January 1901

Legal system:
based on English common law; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, with reservations

Suffrage:
18 years of age; universal and compulsory

Executive branch:

chief of state: Queen of Australia ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952), represented by Governor General Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Michael JEFFREY (since 11 August 2003)
head of government: Prime Minister John Winston HOWARD (since 11 March 1996); Deputy Prime Minister John ANDERSON Deputy Prime Minister John ANDERSON (since 20 July 1999)
cabinet: Parliament nominates and selects, from among its members, a list of candidates to serve as government ministers; from this list, the governor general swears in the final selections for the Cabinet
elections: none; the monarch is hereditary; governor general appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the prime minister; following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or leader of a majority coalition is sworn in as prime minister by the governor general

note: government coalition - Liberal Party and National Party

Legislative branch:
bicameral Federal Parliament consists of the Senate (76 seats - 12 from each of the six states and two from each of the two mainland territories; one-half of the members elected every three years by popular vote to serve six-year terms) and the House of Representatives (150 seats - this is up from 148 seats in 2001 election; members elected by popular vote on the basis of preferential representation to serve three-year terms; no state can have fewer than five representatives)
elections: Senate - last held 10 November 2001 (next to be held by February 2005); House of Representatives - last held 10 November 2001 (next to be held by February 2005)

Judicial branch:
High Court (the chief justice and six other justices are appointed by the governor general)

Political parties
and leaders: Australian Democrats [Andrew BARTLETT]; Australian Labor Party [Mark LATHAM]; Australian Progressive Alliance [Meg LEES]; Country Labor Party [leader NA]; Australian Greens [Bob BROWN]; Liberal Party [John Winston HOWARD]; The Nationals [John ANDERSON]; One Nation Party [Len HARRIS]

Political pressure groups and leaders: Australian Monarchist League [leader NA]; Australian Republican Movement [leader NA]

International organization participation: ANZUS, APEC, ARF (dialogue partner), AsDB, ASEAN (dialogue partner), Australia Group, BIS, C, CP, EBRD, ESCAP, FAO, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICCt, ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IEA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCs, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO, ITU, NAM (guest), NEA, NSG, OECD, OPCW, PCA, Sparteca, SPC, SPF, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNMEE, UNTSO, UNU, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTrO, ZC


Diplomatic representation from the US: chief of mission: Ambassador J. Thomas SCHIEFFER embassy: Moonah Place, Yarralumla, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600 mailing address: APO AP 96549 telephone: [61] (02) 6214-5600 FAX: [61] (02) 6214-5970 consulate(s) general: Melbourne, Perth, Sydney

Flag description: blue with the flag of the UK in the upper hoist-side quadrant and a large seven-pointed star in the lower hoist-side quadrant known as the Commonwealth Star, representing the federation of the colonies of Australia in 1901; the star depicts one point for each of the six original states and one representing all of Australia's internal and external territories; the remaining half is a representation of the Southern Cross constellation in white with one small five-pointed star and four larger, seven-pointed stars

Economy - overview: Australia has a prosperous Western-style capitalist economy, with a per capita GDP on par with the four dominant West European economies. Rising output in the domestic economy has been offsetting the global slump, and business and consumer confidence remains robust. Australia's emphasis on reforms is another key factor behind the economy's strength. The stagnant economic conditions in major export partners and the impact of the worst drought in 100 years cast a shadow over prospects for 2003.

GDP: purchasing power parity - $525.5 billion (2002 est.)

GDP - real growth rate: 3.6% (2002 est.)
GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - $26,900 (2002 est.)

GDP - composition by sector:
- agriculture: 3%
- industry: 26%
- services: 71% (2001 est.)

Population below poverty line: NA%

Household income or consumption by percentage share:
- lowest 10%: 2%
- highest 10%: 25.4% (1994)

Distribution of family income - Gini index: 35.2 (1994)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 2.8% (2002 est.)

Labor force: 9.2 million (37256)

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

Unemployment rate: 6.3% (2002)

Budget:
- revenues: $86.8 billion
- expenditures: $84.1 billion, including capital expenditures of $NA (FY 00/01 est.)

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

Industrial production growth rate: 4.3% (2002 est.)

Electricity - production: 198.2 billion kWh (2001)

Electricity - production by source:
- fossil fuel: 90.8%
- hydro: 8.3%
- other: 0.9% (2001)
- nuclear: 0%

Electricity - consumption: 184.4 billion kWh (2001)

Electricity - exports: 0 kWh (2001)

Electricity - imports: 0 kWh (2001)
Oil - production: 731,000 bbl/day (2001 est.)

Oil - consumption: 796,500 bbl/day (2001 est.)

Oil - exports: 523,400 bbl/day (2001)

Oil - imports: 530,800 bbl/day (2001)

Oil - proved reserves: 3.664 billion bbl (37257)

Natural gas - production: 33.08 billion cu m (2001 est.)

Natural gas - consumption: 23.33 billion cu m (2001 est.)

Natural gas - exports: 9.744 billion cu m (2001 est.)

Natural gas - imports: 0 cu m (2001 est.)

Natural gas - proved reserves: 2.407 trillion cu m (37257)

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

Exports: $66.3 billion (2002 est.)

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

Exports - partners: Japan 18.5%, US 9.6%, South Korea 8.3%, China 6.9%, New Zealand 6.5%, UK 4.7%, Singapore 4.1%, Taiwan 4% (2002)

Imports: $68 billion (2002 est.)

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

Imports - partners: US 18.3%, Japan 12.3%, China 10.1%, Germany 5.7%, UK 4.6% (2002)

Debt - external: $176.8 billion (yearend 2002 est.)

Economic aid - donor: ODA, $894 million (FY 99/00)

Currency: Australian dollar (AUD)

Currency code:
AUD

Exchange rates:

Fiscal year:
1 July - 30 June

Communications    Australia

Telephones - main lines in use:
10.05 million (2000)

Telephones - mobile cellular:
8.6 million (2000)

Telephone system:
general assessment: excellent domestic and international service
domestic: domestic satellite system; much use of radiotelephone in areas of low population density; rapid growth of mobile cellular telephones
international: submarine cables to New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Indonesia; satellite earth stations - 10 Intelsat (4 Indian Ocean and 6 Pacific Ocean), 2 Inmarsat (Indian and Pacific Ocean regions) (1998)

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

Television broadcast stations:
104 (1997)

Internet country code:
.au

Internet Service Providers (ISPs):
571 (2002)

Internet users:
10.63 million (2002)

Transportation    Australia

Railways:
total: 41,588 km (4,612 km electrified)
broad gauge: 2,193 km 1.600-m gauge
narrow gauge: 15,456 km 1.067-m gauge
dual gauge: 291 km dual gauge (2002)
standard gauge: 23,648 km 1.435-m gauge

Highways:
total: 811,603 km
paved: 314,090 km (including 18,619 km of expressways)
unpaved: 497,513 km (1999 est.)

Waterways:
8,368 km (mainly used by small, shallow-draft craft)

Pipelines:
condensate 36 km; condensate/gas 243 km; gas 27,321 km; liquid petroleum gas 240 km; oil 4,779 km; oil/gas/water 104 km; water 40 km (2003)

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

Merchant marine:
total: 51 ships (1,000 GRT or over) 1,415,810 GRT/1,806,554 DWT
note: includes some foreign-owned ships registered here as a flag of convenience:
France 2, UK 2, US 14 (2002 est.)
ships by type: bulk 20, cargo 6, chemical tanker 3, combination bulk 1, container 2,
liquefied gas 4, passenger 2, petroleum tanker 7, roll on/roll off 6

Airports:
444 (2002)

Airports - with paved runways:
total: 294
over 3,047 m: 10
2,438 to 3,047 m: 11
1,524 to 2,437 m: 126
914 to 1,523 m: 134
under 914 m: 13 (2002)

Airports - with unpaved runways:
total: 150
1,524 to 2,437 m: 20
914 to 1,523 m: 116
under 914 m: 14 (2002)

Military
Australia

Military branches: Australian Army, Royal Australian Navy, Royal Australian Air Force

Military manpower - military age:
17 years of age (2003 est.)

Military manpower - availability:
males age 15-49: 5,037,538 (2003 est.)

Military manpower - fit for military service:

Military manpower - reaching military age annually:
males: 142,377 (2003 est.)

Military expenditures - dollar figure:
$11.39 billion (FY02)

Military expenditures - percent of GDP:
2.9% (FY02)
Transnational Issues

Disputes - international: Maritime delimitation and resource sharing agreements signed with East Timor resolve dispute over "Timor Gap" hydrocarbon reserves; no agreement reached on dividing Timor Sea with Indonesia (see Ashmore and Cartier Islands disputes); Australia asserts a territorial claim to Antarctica and to its continental shelf (see Antarctica)

Illicit drugs: Tasmania is one of the world's major suppliers of licit opiate products; government maintains strict controls over areas of opium poppy cultivation and output of poppy straw concentrate

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