

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Commonwealth of Australia

conventional short form: Australia

Digraph: AS

Type: federal parliamentary state

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 ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952), represented by Governor General William George HAYDEN (since 16 February 1989)

head of government: Prime Minister Paul John KEATING (since 20 December 1991); Deputy Prime Minister Brian HOWE (since 4 June 1991)

cabinet: Cabinet; prime minister selects his cabinet from members of the House and Senate

Legislative branch: bicameral Federal Parliament

Senate: elections last held 13 March 1993 (next to be held by NA 1996); results - percent of vote by party NA; seats - (76 total) Liberal-National 36, Labor 30, Australian Democrats 7, Greens 2, independents 1

House of Representatives: elections last held 13 March 1993 (next to be held by NA 1996); results - percent of vote by party NA; seats - (147 total) Labor 80, Liberal-National 65, independent 2

Judicial branch: High Court

Political parties and leaders:

government: Australian Labor Party, Paul John KEATING

opposition: Liberal Party, John HOWARD; National Party, Timothy FISCHER; Australian Democratic Party, Cheryl KERNOT; Green Party, leader NA

Other political or pressure groups: Australian Democratic Labor Party (anti-Communist Labor Party splinter group); Peace and Nuclear Disarmament Action (Nuclear Disarmament Party splinter group)

Member of: AfDB, AG (observer), ANZUS, APEC, AsDB, Australia Group, BIS, C, CCC, CP, EBRD, ESCAP, FAO, G- 8, GATT, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IEA, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, ILO, IMF, IMO, INMARSAT, INTELSAT, INTERPOL, IOC, IOM, ISO, ITU, MINURSO, MTCR, NAM (guest), NEA, NSG, OECD, PCA, SPARTECA, SPC, SPF, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNFICYP, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNOSOM, UNTSO, UNU, UPU, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, ZC

Diplomatic representation in US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Donald Eric RUSSELL
chancery: 1601 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036
telephone: [1] (202) 797-3000
FAX: [1] (202) 797-3168
consulate(s) general: Atlanta, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Pago Pago (American Samoa), and San Francisco

US diplomatic representation:

chief of mission: Ambassador Edward J. PERKINS
embassy: Moonah Place, Yarralumla, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600
mailing address: APO AP 96549
telephone: [61] (6) 270-5000
FAX: [61] (6) 270-5970
consulate(s) general: Melbourne, Perth, and Sydney
consulate(s): Brisbane

Flag: 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; 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

Defense Forces

Branches: Australian Army, Royal Australian Navy, Royal Australian Air Force

Manpower availability: males age 15-49 4,934,175; males fit for military service 4,274,900; males reach military age (17) annually 131,852 (1995 est.)

Defense expenditures: exchange rate conversion - \$7.2 billion, 2.2% of GDP (FY94/95)