



PART ONE

Australia and its people

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At the citizenship ceremony, you pledge your loyalty to Australia and its people. It is therefore important for you to have an understanding of Australia's community and population, including our Indigenous heritage. It is also important for you to understand Australia's history and how we have developed into a stable and successful multicultural nation.

In this section, you will read about some of the events that have contributed to our story. There is information about our states and territories, and the traditions and symbols that we proudly identify as being distinctly Australian.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Australia's first inhabitants are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who have the oldest continuous cultures and traditions in the world.

Historically, Aboriginal people are from mainland Australia and Tasmania. The archaeological record indicates that Aboriginal peoples arrived in Australia between 65,000 and 40,000 years ago; however, the Aboriginal peoples believe they are central to the creation stories of this land, and their creation stories commence with the beginning of time. Torres Strait Islander people are from islands between the northern tip of Queensland and Papua New Guinea.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have age-old beliefs and traditions that still guide them today. They have a deep connection with the land, which is expressed in their stories, art and dance. Indigenous cultures are diverse and an important part of Australia's national identity.

More information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can be found in *Part 5, Australia today* and *Part 6, Our Australian story*.

Early days of European settlement

European settlement started when the first 11 convict ships, which became known as the 'First Fleet', arrived from Great Britain on 26 January 1788.

At this time British laws were harsh and the jails could not hold the large number of people imprisoned for their crimes. To manage this problem, the British Government decided to transport convicts to the other side of the world: to the new colony of New South Wales.

The first Governor of the colony of New South Wales was Captain Arthur Phillip. The colony survived, and as more convicts and free settlers arrived, it grew and developed. More colonies were established in other parts of Australia.

Early free settlers came from Great Britain and Ireland. This British and Irish heritage has had a major influence on Australia's recent history, culture and politics.

In 1851, a 'gold rush' began when gold was discovered in the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. People from all around the world came to these colonies to try to make their fortunes. Chinese people arriving at this time were the first large group of migrants not from Europe. In 10 years, Australia's population more than doubled.



The nation of Australia

In 1901, the separate colonies were united into a federation of states called the Commonwealth of Australia. It was at this time that our national democratic institutions, including our national parliament, government and the High Court were established under the new Australian Constitution. In 1901, Australia's population was about four million. This number did not include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as it was not until after a Referendum in 1967 that they were included in official estimates of the Australian population.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, migration levels rose and fell. There were programs to actively encourage British migrants to settle here, and many did.

A wave of non-British migration came after World War II, when millions of people in Europe had to leave their homelands. Large numbers of Europeans came to Australia to build a new life.

In recent years, our migration and refugee programs have brought people to Australia from all over the world. People have come here to join family, to make a new life, or to escape poverty, war or persecution.

The diversity of Australia's population has increased over the last two centuries. This diverse and prosperous society enhances Australia's connection to the world. While we celebrate the diversity of Australia's people, we also aim to build a cohesive and unified nation.

Australia's national language is English. It is part of our national identity. In keeping with Australian values, migrants should learn and use English to help them participate in Australian society. Communicating in English is important for making the most of living and working in Australia.

Other languages are also valued, including more than 100 distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Australia's states and territories

The Commonwealth of Australia is a federation of states and territories. There are six states and two mainland territories. Canberra is Australia's capital city, and each state and mainland territory has its own capital.



State	Capital city
New South Wales (NSW)	Sydney
Victoria (Vic.)	Melbourne
Queensland (Qld)	Brisbane
Western Australia (WA)	Perth
South Australia (SA)	Adelaide
Tasmania (Tas.)	Hobart
Territory	Capital city
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	Canberra
Northern Territory (NT)	Darwin

The states

New South Wales was the first colony established by the British. Sydney is the capital city of New South Wales and is the nation's largest city. The Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House are national icons.



Victoria is the smallest of the mainland states. Victoria's capital city is Melbourne. Many fine buildings in Victoria were built from the wealth created by the gold rush of the 1850s. Victoria's icons include the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the 12 Apostles, and the Royal Exhibition Building.



Queensland is the second largest state. Queensland's capital city is Brisbane. The Torres Strait Islands lie to the north of the state and the world-famous Great Barrier Reef runs along its eastern coast. Queensland has tropical rainforests, temperate coastal areas and an often dry inland.



Western Australia is the largest state. Perth is the capital city of Western Australia. The east of the state is mostly desert, while the south-west is a rich agricultural and wine-growing area. The state is home to many large mining projects. Western Australia's icons include the Ningaloo Coast, Margaret River, and the Kimberley region.



South Australia has a rugged coastline and many famous wine regions. Adelaide, the capital city, has many examples of fine colonial architecture. South Australia's icons include the Barossa Valley and the Flinders Ranges.



Tasmania is the smallest state, separated from the mainland by the Bass Strait. Tasmania's capital city is Hobart. Much of the island has unspoilt wilderness landscapes. Tasmanian icons include Cradle Mountain, Port Arthur, and the Bay of Fires.



The territories

The **Australian Capital Territory** is located between Sydney and Melbourne. It is home to the nation's capital city, Canberra. Several national institutions are located in Canberra, including Parliament House and the High Court of Australia.



The **Northern Territory** has a tropical environment in the north of the state and dry red desert in the south. Darwin is the capital city. Northern Territory icons include Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Kings Canyon.





Traditions

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols

A Welcome to Country is a cultural practice performed by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander custodian of the local region, welcoming visitors to their traditional land. This was traditionally performed to ensure visitors had a safe and protected journey during their time on that land.

A Welcome to Country can take place through many forms, including songs, dances, smoking ceremonies or speeches in traditional language or English.

A Welcome to Country is usually the first item of proceedings to open an event.

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity to recognise that the gathering is on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land; pay respect to Traditional Custodians, particularly Elders past and present; and pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in attendance.

An Acknowledgement of Country is usually delivered as part of the Welcome and Housekeeping at meetings and events. Anyone can deliver an Acknowledgement of Country. At meetings/events, this would generally be done by the Chair or Master of Ceremonies.

These practices are performed to show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Important days for Australians

Australia Day

On 26 January each year, we celebrate Australia Day. Australia Day is a public holiday in every state and territory in Australia. It is the anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet from Great Britain in 1788.

On Australia Day, communities across Australia reflect on our history, and the people who have contributed to our shared achievements. It is the biggest annual public holiday in Australia.

Australia Day is about acknowledging and celebrating the contribution that every Australian makes to our contemporary and dynamic nation: from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—who have been here for approximately 65,000 years—to those who have lived here for generations, and those who have come from all corners of the globe to call our country home. Australia Day is marked by events across Australia, including special citizenship ceremonies.

During Australia Day celebrations, the Prime Minister announces the Australian of the Year Awards in Canberra.

Anzac Day

Anzac Day is commemorated on 25 April each year. Anzac Day is named after the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, which landed at Gallipoli in Türkiye during World War I on 25 April 1915.

Anzac Day is a solemn day when we remember the sacrifice of all Australians who served and died in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. We also honour the courage and commitment of all servicemen and women and reflect on the many different meanings of war.

Information about other important national days and celebrations can be found in *Part 5, Australia today*.

Australia's flags

The Australian National Flag is the official flag of our nation. Other flags that are officially recognised and may be flown in the community include the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag.

Each state and territory also has its own flag, which can be viewed on page 11.

The Australian National Flag

The Australian National Flag is blue, white and red.

- The 'Union Jack', which is the flag of the United Kingdom is in the top left corner. It represents our history of British settlement and the laws and institutions we inherited as a result.
- The Commonwealth Star is under the Union Jack. This star has seven points, each point representing one of the six states and one point for the territories.
- The Southern Cross, on the right, is a group of stars that can be seen in the southern sky.



The Australian Aboriginal Flag

The Australian Aboriginal Flag is black, red and yellow.

- The top half is black and represents the Aboriginal peoples of Australia.
- The bottom half is red and represents the earth, which has ceremonial significance.
- The yellow circle represents the sun.



The Torres Strait Islander Flag

The Torres Strait Islander Flag is green, blue, black and white.

- The green stripes represent the land.
- The blue panel in the centre represents the sea.
- The black lines represent the Torres Strait Islander people.
- The white dancer's headdress in the centre is a symbol for all Torres Strait Islanders.
- The points of the white star represent the island groups in the Torres Strait, and the colour white symbolises peace.



Australia's symbols

Commonwealth Coat of Arms

The Commonwealth Coat of Arms is the official symbol of the Commonwealth of Australia. It represents our national unity. It identifies the authority and property of the Commonwealth of Australia.

- The shield in the centre represents the six states and federation.
- A kangaroo and an emu support the shield on each side. Both are native Australian animals.
- A gold Commonwealth Star sits above the shield.
- The background is the golden wattle, Australia's national flower.



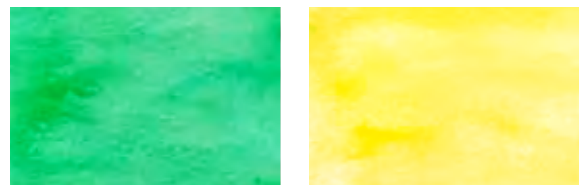
Australia's national flower

Australia's national flower is the golden wattle. This small tree grows mainly in south-eastern Australia. It has bright green leaves and many golden yellow flowers in spring. Each of the states and territories of Australia also has its own floral emblem.



Australia's national colours

Australia's national colours are green and gold—the colours of the golden wattle. The uniforms of our national sports teams are usually green and gold.



Australia's national gemstone

The opal is Australia's national gemstone. According to Aboriginal legend, a rainbow touched the earth and created the colours of the opal.



Australia's national anthem

'Advance Australia Fair' is Australia's national anthem. It is sung on occasions of national importance, including at Australian citizenship ceremonies and major sporting events.



Advance Australia Fair

*Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are one and free;
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature's gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*

*Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
We'll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who've come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*