

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA



Introduction

Geography

The Commonwealth of Australia is a sovereign country, a continent and an island comprising of:

- the mainland of the Australian continent,
- the island of Tasmania and
- numerous smaller islands

Australia's capital is Canberra, and its largest urban area is Sydney.



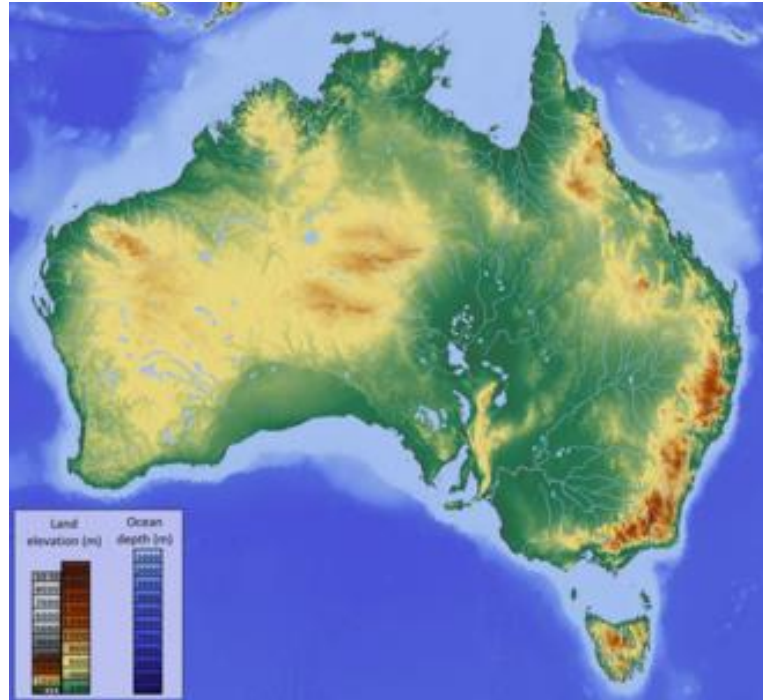
THE OPERA HOUSE



THE HARBOUR BRIDGE

The city of Sydney

- It is located in Oceania between the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean.
- It is the sixth largest country in the world with a total area of 7,686,850 square kilometers (2,967,910 sq. mi) (including Lord Howe Island and Macquarie Island), making it slightly smaller than the 48 states of the contiguous United States and 31.5 times larger than the United Kingdom.



Relief map showing major rivers and lakes

Australia is situated in the middle of the tectonic plate, and therefore currently has no active volcanism.

- Minor earthquakes which produce no damage occur regularly, while major earthquakes measuring greater than magnitude 6 occur on average every five years.
- The terrain is mostly low plateau with deserts, rangelands and a fertile plain in the southeast.
- Tasmania and the Australian Alps do not contain any permanent icefields or glaciers, although they may have existed in the past.
- The Great Barrier Reef, by far the world's largest coral reef, lies a short distance off the north-east coast.



Grassland and mountain ranges in Queensland

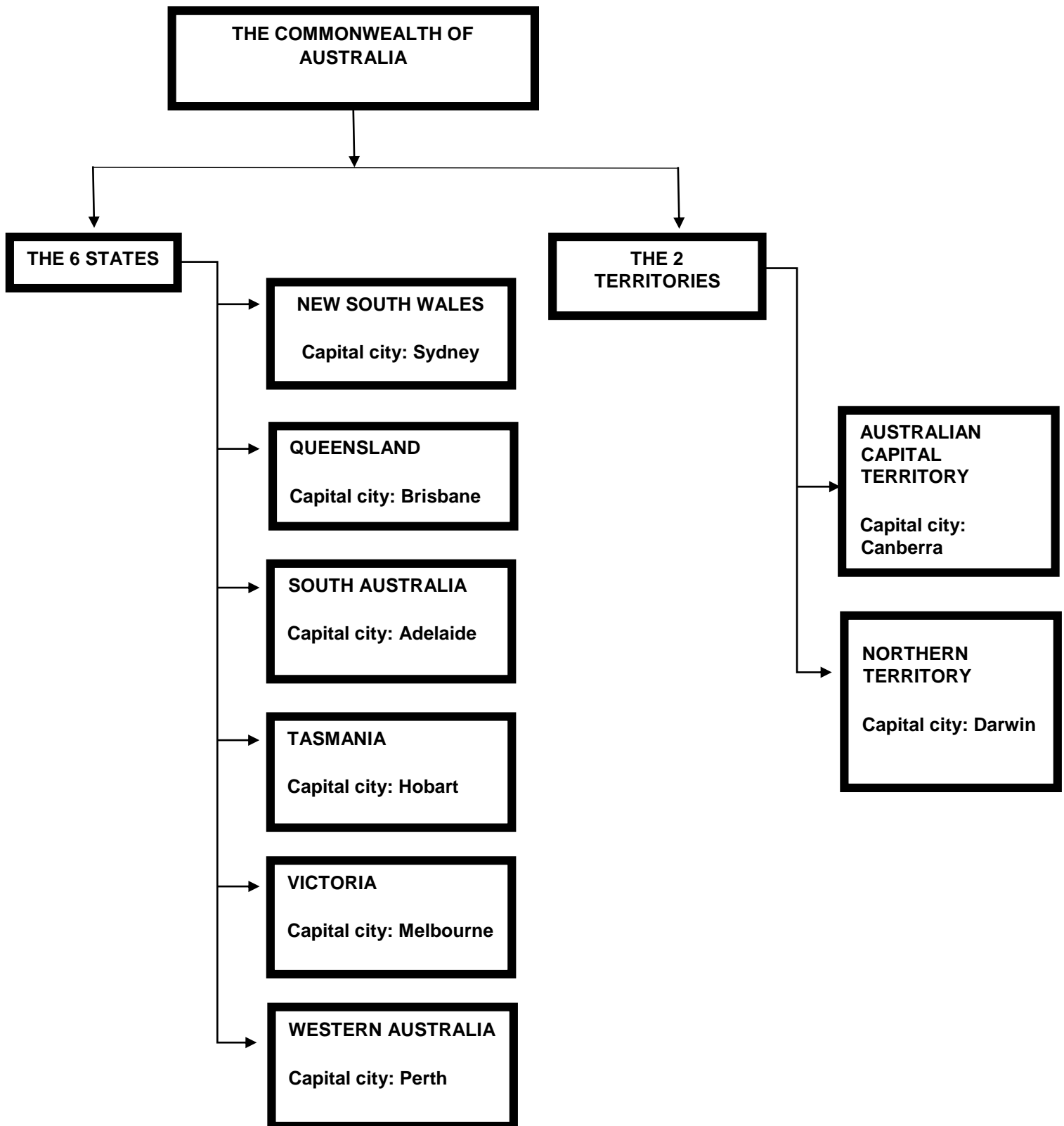


Whitehaven Beach in Queensland



The Victorian Alps

THE 6 STATES & 2 TERRITORIES OF AUSTRALIA

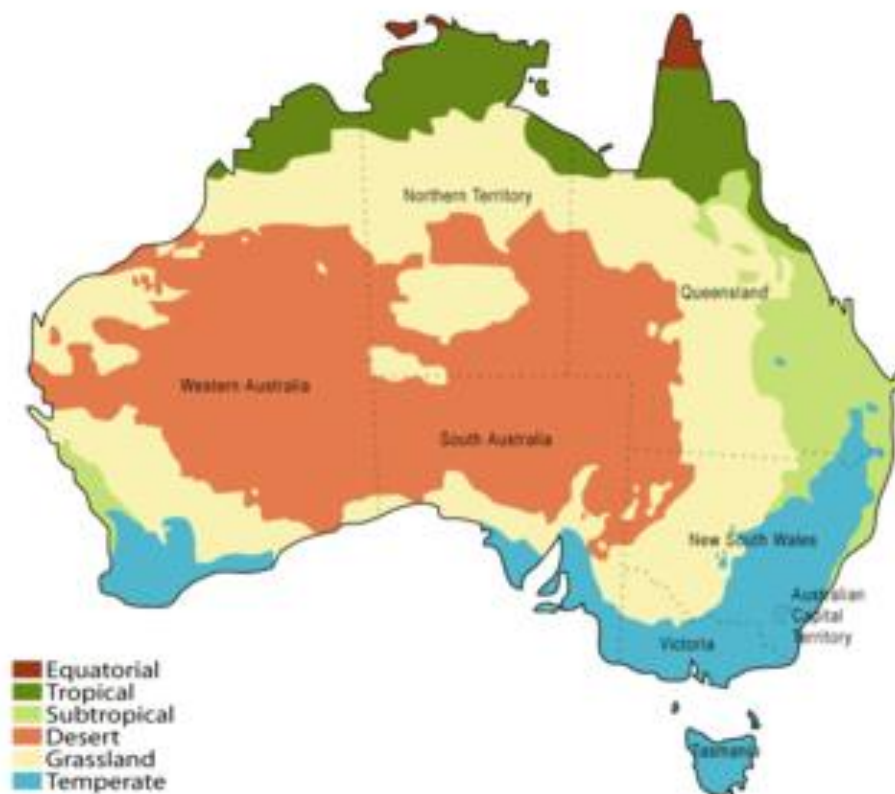


POPULATION

Australia is highly urbanized (a population density of 25 million) which is heavily concentrated on the eastern seaboard.

Australia has the world's 9th largest immigrant population, 26% of the population.

CLIMATE



Australia's climate is governed largely by:

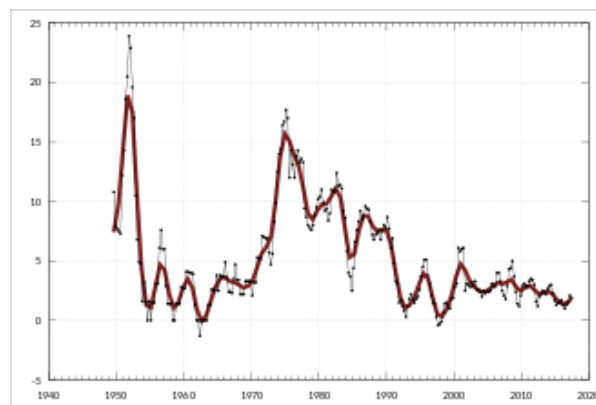
- The largest part of Australia is desert or semi-arid.
- The south-east and south-west corners have a temperate climate (a moderately fertile soil).
- The northern part of the country has a tropical climate, varied between tropical rainforests, grasslands and part desert.

Cyclones along the northern coasts, severe thunderstorms, droughts, occasional floods, heat waves, and frequent bushfires are natural hazards that are present in Australia.

AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY

Australia is a wealthy country. Rich in natural resources, Australia is a major exporter of agricultural products, particularly wheat and wool, minerals such as iron-ore and gold, and energy in the forms of liquified natural gas and coal. Australia's largest export markets are Japan, China, the US, South Korea, and New Zealand.

The **economy of Australia** is highly developed and one of the largest mixed market economies in the world, with a GDP of AUD\$1.69 trillion as of 2017. Australia is the second wealthiest nation in terms of wealth per adult, after Switzerland. Australia's total wealth was AUD\$8.9 trillion as of June 2016. In 2016, Australia was the 14th largest national economy by nominal GDP, 20th largest by PPP-adjusted GDP, and was the 25th-largest goods exporter and 20th-largest goods importer.



- It has a market economy
- A relatively high GDP per capita
- A low rate of poverty
- 9th-highest per capita income (IMF).
- With the second-highest human development index globally, the country ranks highly in quality of life, health, education, economic freedom, and civil liberties and political rights.
- Australia is the world's fourth largest exporter of wine, and the wine industry contributes \$5.5 billion per year to the nation's economy.
- Australia's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate unexpectedly fell to **5.7 percent** in March of 2016 from **5.8 percent** in February and below market consensus of 5.9 percent.

Foreign relations

Australia is a founding member country of the United Nations, it is strongly committed to multilateralism and maintains an international aid program under which some 60 countries receive assistance.

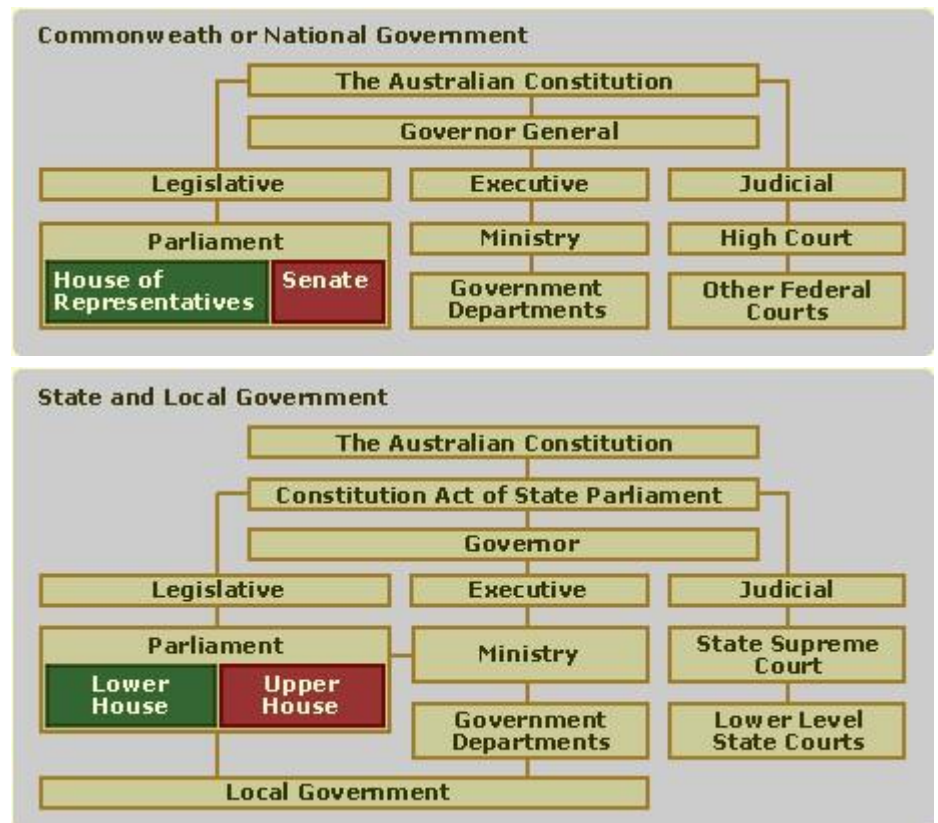
Australia is a member of the:

- United Nations,
- G20,
- Commonwealth of Nations,
- ANZUS, it has a close association with United States
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),
- World Trade Organization, organization for economic co-operation and development
- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation,
- the Pacific Islands Forum.
- Australia is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.
- Australia has pursued the cause of international trade liberalization
- It led the formation of the Cairns Group and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.
- Australia has pursued several major bilateral free trade agreements, most recently the Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement.
- Australia has a closer relationship with New Zealand
- There is a free trade agreement being negotiated with China—the Australia–China Free Trade Agreement—and Japan and South Korea in 2011
- There is also Australia–Chile Free Trade Agreement,
- Along with New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Singapore, Australia is party to the Five Power Defence Arrangements, a regional defence agreement.

Australian Political System

Australia has maintained a stable liberal democratic political system that functions as a federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy comprising six states and several territories.

- The Federal Government of Australia comprises the House of Representatives and the Senate.



- Its institutions and practices reflect British and North American models but are uniquely Australian.
- Its institutions include religious tolerance and freedom of speech and association.
- The Commonwealth of Australia was created on January 1, 1901 - Federation Day - when six former British colonies - now the six States of Australia - agreed to form a union. The Australian Constitution, which took effect on January 1, 1901, lays down the framework for the Australian system of government.

The Constitution

The Australian Constitution sets out the rules and responsibilities of government and outlines the powers of its three branches:

- legislative,
- executive and
- judicial

http://www.abc.net.au/ra/federasi/tema1/aus_pol_chart_e.pdf

The legislative branch of government contains the parliament - the body with the legislative power to make laws. The executive branch of government administers the laws made by the legislative branch, and the judicial branch of government allows for the establishment of the country's courts of law and the appointment and removal of its judges. The purpose of the courts is to interpret all laws, including the Constitution, making the rule of law supreme.

The Constitution can only be changed by referendum.

Australia's Constitutional Monarchy

Australia is known as a constitutional monarchy. This means it is a country that has a queen or king as its head of state whose powers are limited by a Constitution. Australia's head of state is Queen Elizabeth II. Although she is also Queen of the United Kingdom, the two positions now are quite separate, both in law and constitutional practice.

In practice, the Queen plays no role within the Australian political system and is merely a figurehead. In Australia, the Queen is formally represented by a Governor General whom she appoints on the recommendation of Australia's Prime Minister. The Queen plays no role in the day-to-day duties of the Governor General.

The Governor General and State Governors

While recognised as the Queen's representative, the Governor General is in no way subject to the direction, supervision or veto of the Queen or the British Government.

Under the Constitution, the Governor-General's powers and duties include summoning, proroguing and dissolving Parliament, assenting to Bills, appointing Ministers, setting up Departments of State and appointing judges.

By convention, however, the Governor-General acts only on the advice of Ministers in virtually all matters and the appointee to the office is selected on the advice of the Government. The six State Governors perform similar roles in their States.

The Commonwealth or National Government

The National Parliament is bicameral, having two chambers:

- The House of Representatives (Lower House) and
- the Senate (Upper House).

Both are responsible for national laws, such as:

- trade,
- taxation,
- immigration,
- citizenship,
- social security,
- industrial relations and
- foreign affairs.

Legislation has to be approved by both houses before it can become law.

The House of Representatives, initiates most legislation. It currently has 148 elected members, each representing around 80,000 voters. The political party or parties with the most seats in the House of Representatives forms the Government.

The Senate is known as the 'house of review'. Proposed legislation is generally considered clause-by-clause and often referred to committees. One of the Senate's original roles was to ensure that laws were fair to all states. Voters therefore elect 12 Senators from each State and two Senators from each of Australia's two Territories.

State and Territory Governments

State and Territory Governments are responsible for those powers not administered by the Commonwealth Government.

Every State and Territory has its own Parliament and its own Constitution Act (which can be amended by its Parliament), but they are also bound by the national constitution.

Commonwealth law also overrules State laws where the law is within the Constitutional powers of the Commonwealth.

All State Parliaments other than Queensland are bicameral with an Upper and Lower House. The Parliament of each Territory has only one House.

State and Territory governments are responsible for matters which include: public health, education, roads, public land use, police, fire and ambulance services and local government within their own States or Territories.

Local Government

There are approximately 900 local government bodies in Australia. The powers of local government vary from State to State and are the responsibility of State Governments.

Some local government bodies operate transport and energy enterprises. Most levy rates as well as receiving funding from the higher tiers of government.

Local government responsibilities typically include town planning, supervision of building codes, local roads, water, sewerage and drainage, waste and sanitary services, and community recreational facilities.

Relations between levels of Government

The Commonwealth and State Governments co-operate in many areas where States and Territories are formally responsible, such as education, transport, health and law enforcement.

Income tax is levied federally, and debate between the levels of governments about access to revenue is a perennial feature of Australian politics.

Migration conditions in Australia

Australian visas are available from the Australian Government at a lower cost or for free when you apply directly.

Australian Immigration requires you to have a visa to enter Australia unless you are an Australian passport holder or qualifying New Zealand passport holder.

There are a number of visa options, and knowing which visa to apply for should be the first step taken when making plans to travel to Australia. The visa classes have been divided into the following four categories:

- Australian Temporary Visas

This type of visa is mainly to those who want to travel to Australia for short-term tourism or a working holiday.

- Australian Skilled Migration Visas

Australian Skilled Migration Visas are visas which help to take permanent residence in Australia based on your skills and work experience.

- Australian Family Migration Visas

The above-mentioned visa is mainly to those who want to emigrate to Australian based on your relationship to an eligible Australian citizen.

- Other Visas for Migration to Australia

There are other visas for migration to those who wish to take another Australian immigration pathway that doesn't fall into either the skilled or family categories.

International commercial exchange between Australia and Africa

Recently, the Australian private sector had been quicker to recognize the economic importance of Africa than had the Australian public sector. It is not just investment. Trade with Africa is also growing.

- The mineral resources industry- More than 150 Australian minerals and petroleum resources companies have interests in more than 40 African countries, with current and prospective investment estimated at \$20 billion.
- Australia's minerals and resources companies have more projects in Africa than in any other region of the world.

Trade in goods with Africa is valued at close to \$5 billion, having grown at more than 6 per cent annually over the preceding decade.

Recognizing Africa's economic potential, the Australian Government is committed to supporting expanded economic linkages with Africa.

A number of African countries have hosted trade and investment fora here in Australia, including the Australia-Africa Business Council Conference on the Gold Coast in September last year and just this week, South Africa hosted a trade and investment seminar in Melbourne.

Just as there are sound economic reasons for enhancing the engagement with Africa, there are also good strategic and geopolitical reasons.

Implementing our Africa agenda

Over the last two years, the Australian Government has strengthened Australia's relations with Africa and its constituent nations.

They have set about:

- Enhancing the political and diplomatic engagement,
- promoting trade and investment,
- addressing peace and security challenges in Africa, and
- delivering targeted development and humanitarian assistance.

Australia now has diplomatic relations with 51 of Africa's 53 countries, excluding Guinea Bissau and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is compared with 41 in 2007.

Foreign Policy – An overview of the White Paper 2017

After a gap of 14 years, the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull along with the Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Trade Minister they have launched the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper which is a written document about Australia's core interests, values and priorities. The role of the White Paper is to act as a guidance in the Australian Foreign policy goals in the next 20 years.

Key elements:

- It will guide foreign aid, trade and diplomatic efforts for the next decade.
- It will focus to remain on In-Pacific region.
- Most immediate challenge is North Korea's missile and nuclear program.
- Russia to remain a significant strategic player in the Indo-Pacific.
- US alliance remains central. South Korea, Indonesia and Vietnam will grow in relative wealth, strength and influence.
- More student exchanges and teaching of Asian languages.

5 key objectives of the White Paper:

- Promoting an open, inclusive and prosperous Indo- Pacific region in which the rights of all states are respected;
- Standing against protectionism and promoting business; ensuring Australians are safe, secure and free in the face of threats such as terrorism;
- Promoting and protecting international rules;
- greater support for the Pacific and Timor- Leste.

The Australian Government is pushing for new free trade agreement and the priority deal is the one with Indonesia.

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The **Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry** (Australian Chamber) is Australia's largest and most representative business association, comprising state and territory chambers of commerce and national industry associations.

The Australian Chamber contributes to public discussion and government decision-making on issues that impact on business, including economics, trade, workplace relations, work health and safety and employment, education and training. The Australian Chamber also speaks on behalf of Australian business in international forums.

International Network

The Australian Chamber speaks on behalf of Australian business in international forums, including:

- International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)
- Business and Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC) to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- International Organization of Employers (IOE)
- Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI)
- Confederation of Asia-Pacific Employers (CAPE)
- International Labor Organization (ILO)

In 2016 the Australian Chamber released its “Top 10 in 10: Ten steps towards a more competitive Australia” policy manifesto. The 10 steps are:

1. Give young people a chance to succeed by making it easier for employers to take on apprentices and trainees
2. Ensure government spending is sustainable by reducing it to less than 25% of GDP
3. Help industries grow through workplace regulation that better responds to their needs
4. Let entrepreneurs get on with growing their businesses by reducing government red tape each year
5. Create jobs by allowing employers and employees to negotiate workplace arrangements that best meet their needs
6. Boost incomes by cutting the company tax rate to 25% within ten years through annual reductions
7. Build the transport, communications and energy facilities we need by backing the independent plan of Infrastructure Australia
8. Lower building costs by bringing back the Australian Building and Construction Commission
9. Encourage innovation and value for money by facilitating greater competition in government-funded education, health and aged care services
10. Welcome more international visitors by making visas cheaper and easier to obtain