

Section 2. Australia

2.1 In brief.

Australia is the world's sixth largest country, covering an area of nearly 8 million square kilometres and almost as large as the United States of America, excluding Alaska. Measuring 4,000 kilometres from east to west and 3,200 kilometres from north to south, it is home to a population of some 17 million people. Approximately 70% of the population live in state capital cities or major cities on the southern and eastern coasts.

Australia has two dominant population centres: Sydney (3.7 million) and Melbourne (3.1 million), which together account for almost 40% of the total population. The next largest city is Brisbane (1.3 million). Over 20% of the population were born outside the country. About 1% are Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the indigenous people of Australia.

Australia is a federation of six States and two Territories. The population of the states is shown below in descending order:

New South Wales:	6.0 million
Victoria:	4.5 million
Queensland:	3.0 million
Western Australia:	1.7 million
South Australia:	1.5 million
Tasmania:	0.5 million
Australian Capital Territory:	0.3 million
Northern Territory:	0.2 million

Australia has a Parliamentary democracy with a Federal (currently Labor) government (the Commonwealth Government). Australia is a relatively