

**AUSTRALIA'S FIFTH REPORT UNDER
THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC,
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (ICESCR)
2010-2014**

**Appendix 3
General Information about Australia**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Appendix

1. The Australian Government is pleased to present this Appendix to Australia's fifth report under articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).
2. This Appendix provides general information and statistics about Australia's population (including indigenous peoples and migration), cultural and linguist diversity, economy, health systems and media. The purpose of this Appendix is to provide the committee with additional context on contemporary Australia.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

Population

3. A national Census of Population and Housing is conducted every five years, with the last census conducted in 2011. At the end of June 2014, Australia had a population of approximately 23,490,700 people.¹

4. Australia's population is concentrated along the southern and eastern coastal region from Adelaide to Cairns, with an additional concentration in Perth in Western Australia. The most populous states are New South Wales and Victoria, and their respective capitals, Sydney and Melbourne, the largest cities in Australia. At June 2013, close to two-thirds of Australia's population resided in a greater capital city region.²

Indigenous Australians³

5. The estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia at 30 June 2011 was 669,881 people or 3% of the total population.⁴ Since 2006, there has been a 30% increase in the estimated resident population for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, reflecting both demographic changes and a growing propensity to identify Indigenous status in the census.

6. In 2011, around 79% of Indigenous Australians lived in regional and metropolitan areas, and 21% in remote and very remote areas. While only 14% of Indigenous Australians lived in very remote areas, they made up a large proportion of Australians living in very remote areas (45%). New South Wales and Queensland have the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.

7. The median age of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at June 2011 was 22 years, compared to 38 years for the non-Indigenous population.

Migrants⁵

8. In the 2011 Census, there were 5.3 million migrants in Australia - one in every four Australian residents was born overseas (26%). Among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations, only Luxemburg (42%), Israel (31%) and Switzerland (28%) have larger proportionate migrant populations. Most migrants live in the major urban areas of Australia. While 64% of Australian-born people lived in a major urban area, 85% of those born overseas lived in a major urban area. Within urban areas, migrants in Australia tend to live in Australia's two largest cities: Sydney and Melbourne.

¹ Data sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2014*, (Cat. No. 3101.0) available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0>

² 'Greater Capital City', in this context, represents a broad socioeconomic definition of each of the state and territory capital cities. They contain not only the urban area of the city, but also the surrounding and non-urban areas where much of the population has strong links to the capital city through, for example, commuting to work. Data sourced from ABS, *Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2012-13*, (Cat. No. 3218.0) at: www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3218.0~2012-13~Main+Features~Main+Features?OpenDocument

³ Data sourced from ABS, *Media Release – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia revealed as 2011 Census data is released, June 2012*, available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/CO-63?opendocument&navpos=620>. Disaggregated population estimates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011 can be accessed via the ABS at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001>

⁴ Data sourced from ABS, *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011*, (Cat No. 3238.0.55.001), available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001>

⁵ Data sourced from ABS, *Australian Social Trends, 2014*, (Cat No. 4102.0), available at: www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0main+features102014

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

9. English is the official and main language spoken in Australia. However, the 2011 Census identified that there are over 300 ancestries and more than 300 languages spoken.⁶ One in 10 Australians speak an Asian language at home and almost 1.3 million speak a European language other than English.

10. About 120 Indigenous languages are also spoken. Of these, 18 are considered strong and about 110 are considered endangered.⁷ Efforts are underway to keep language strong in communities and to revive vulnerable languages (see Concluding Observation 33).

11. Australia is one of the most ethnically diverse societies in the world today, being home to people from all corners of the globe and to one of the oldest continuous cultures in existence, that of the Australian Indigenous peoples. The Australian Government is committed to our diversity and to building and sustaining a harmonious, prosperous and socially cohesive Australia.

Economy

12. Australia is entering its 25th consecutive year of economic growth and Australians enjoy some of the highest living standards in the world. The economy is expected to continue to grow with the transition from the resources investment boom to broader based growth well underway.

13. Australia's fundamentals are solid with a lower exchange rate, rising household wealth, lower electricity prices and macroeconomic policy settings working together to underpin stronger growth in Australia.

14. The Australian Government's Economic Action Strategy is to repair the budget, build a strong and prosperous economy and create jobs. Key to this is a structural reform agenda to help support Australia's future living standards and to lift economic growth potential by investing in infrastructure, reducing the regulatory burden, promoting competition and by making Australia's tax system stronger, fairer and simpler.

15. In some cases, over the reporting period the Australian Government has made required changes to programmes and payments to ensure the sustainable funding and delivery of government services in the future.

16. However, the Australian Government remains committed to driving economic growth through responsible national budgets which build productivity, create opportunity, ensure sustainable government services in the medium to long-term, and provide the flexibility to address future budgetary challenges as they arise.

Education

17. Australian students participate in formal school education from the age of five or six to around 18. Australia's secondary school enrolment rate is the highest in the world. Some groups have a lower attendance rate at formal school education, and increasing Indigenous education participation rates is a national priority. In May 2013, it was estimated that of the 15.5 million people aged 15 to 64 years in Australia, 2.9 million, or 19%, were enrolled in formal study.

⁶ Data sourced from ABS, *Media Release – 2011 Census shows Asian languages on the rise in Australian households, June 2012*, available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/CO-60>

⁷ Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Report, *Community, identity, wellbeing: the report of the Second National Indigenous Languages Survey, 2014*, available at: <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/projectproducts.html>

Health care

18. Australia consistently ranks in the World Health Organization's best performing countries for health life expectancy and health expenditure per person. The non-Indigenous Australian population generally has a good health status with an average life expectancy at birth of 83 years (80 for men, 84 for women). There are some groups with poor health status, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Improving the life expectancy of Australia's Indigenous peoples is a national priority.

Media and Communications

19. Australia has a diverse media, with many media outlets. There are two national radio, television and online broadcasters that receive public funding: the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).

20. There are three commercial free-to-air television networks, an Indigenous commercial television station, hundreds of pay television channels, and many print, radio, digital and online outlets. About 83% of Australia's population has access to the internet.

Further Information

21. The Australian Government produces a number of publications on Australia and its peoples. For additional contextual information the committee may wish to consider *Australia in Brief*, a publication produced by the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.⁸

⁸ *Australia in Brief* is available online at: <http://www.dfat.gov.au/aib/>