



**1**  
***Geography***  
***and***  
***Government***



## INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains an outline of Victoria's geography with contributions from the Bureau of Meteorology and the Rural Water Corporation. It also includes information on the system of government in Victoria and some associated details.

### Physical features

Although Victoria is the second most populous State or Territory in the country, it is ranked sixth in terms of geographic size and accounts for only 3 per cent of Australia's total area. Its relatively small size is emphasised by the observation that no point of the State is more than 380 kilometres from the sea.

TABLE 1.1 AREA OF STATES AND TERRITORIES

State or Territory	Area in square kilometres	Length of coastline in kilometres	Percentage of total area
Western Australia	2,525,500	12,500	32.88
Queensland	1,727,200	7,400	22.48
Northern Territory	1,346,200	6,200	17.52
South Australia	984,000	3,700	12.81
New South Wales	801,600	1,900	10.44
Victoria	227,600	1,800	2.96
Tasmania	67,800	3,200	0.88
Australian Capital Territory	2,400	(a) 35	0.03
<b>Australia</b>	<b>7,682,300</b>	<b>36,735</b>	<b>100.00</b>

(a) Jarvis Bay Territory.

### Location

The most southerly point of Wilsons Promontory, latitude 39° 08' S., longitude 146° 22' 30' E., is the southernmost point of the mainland of Victoria and similarly of the mainland of Australia; the northernmost point is where the western boundary of the State meets the Murray River, latitude 33° 59' S., longitude 140° 58' E; the point furthest east is Cape Howe, situated in latitude 37° 31' S., longitude 149° 58' E. The westerly boundary lies upon the meridian 140° 58' E., and extends from latitude 33° 59' S. to latitude 38° 04' S., a distance of 451 kilometres.

### Coastline

The Victorian coastline comprises many types of environments. Broad sandy beaches and impressive cliffed headlands along the ocean coast contrast with mangrove-fringed mudflats and marshland of the sheltered embayments and estuaries. There are approximately 1,300 kilometres of ocean coast between Cape Howe and the South Australian border; in addition, three large embayments - Port Phillip Bay (270 kilometres), Western Port Bay (150 kilometres), and Corner Inlet (80 kilometres) - partially enclose protected waters where most of the ports and harbours are situated.

**Divisions**

The chief physical divisions of Victoria are shown below. Each of these divisions has certain physical features which distinguish it from the others.

**1. Murray Basin Plains**

- (a) The Mallee: Predominantly East-West running sand dunes.
- (b) The Riverine Plains: Thick alluvium plain with few hills.
- (c) The Wimmera: Aelian and alluvial sandplain; minor sandstone ridges.

**2. Central Highlands**

- (a) The Eastern Highlands: Plateau area with peaks of up to 2,000 metres composed of granite, volcanic, sandstone and limestone rocks.
- (b) The Western Highlands:
  - (i) The Midlands: Local variations with higher areas caused by erosion or faulting.
  - (ii) The Grampians: Sandstone ridges heavily forested with annual rainfall over 75cms.
  - (iii) The Dundas Tablelands: Western limit of the Western highlands. Predominant flat surface cut by deep narrow valleys.

**3. Western District Plains**

- (a) The Volcanic Plains: Built by outpourings of lava. Features include volcanic cones, stony rises and lakes.
- (b) The Coastal Plains: Limestones and clays. Heavily eroded along the coasts forming vertical cliffs and rock stacks.

**4. Gippsland Plains**

- (a) The East Gippsland Plains: Overlain by gravel and sand deposited by streams.
- (b) The West Gippsland Plains: Sandy and contained large areas of swamp which have mostly been reclaimed.

**5. Southern Uplands**

- (a) The Otway Ranges: Between 500 and 700 metres above sea level. Sandstone rocks with deep valleys cut by waterways.
- (b) The Barrabool Hills: North east of Otway Ranges made up of sandstone.
- (c) The Mornington Peninsula: Complex geological structure caused by faults.
- (d) The South Gippsland Highlands: Composed of sandstone and somewhat similar in appearance to the Otway Ranges.
- (e) Wilsons Promontory: Granite residual, once an island, now tied to the mainland by a sand bar.

**Other features**

Victoria's highest mountain is Mt Bogong, located in the highlands of north-eastern Victoria. The longest river is the Goulburn which runs from Lake Eildon to the Murray east of Echuca. Other major physical features are given in Table 1.2.

**TABLE 1.2 SELECTED PHYSICAL FEATURES, VICTORIA**

<i>Mountain</i>	<i>Height (metres)</i>	<i>River</i>	<i>Length (Km)</i>
Bogong	1,986	Goulburn	566
Feathertop	1,922	Gleneig	457
Nelse North	1,883	Loddon	381
Fainter South	1,877	Mitta Mitta	286
Loch	1,874	Hopkins	281

*Source: Rural Water Corporation*

**Climate**

The major topographical determinant of the climate is the Great Dividing Range, running east-west across the State, and rising to nearly 2,000 metres in the eastern half. This acts as a barrier to the moist south-east and south-west winds and together with its proximity to the coast, causes the south of the State to receive more rain than the north.

To the south of Victoria, except for Tasmania and its islands, there is no land for 3,000 kilometres. This vast area of ocean has a moderating influence on Victoria's climate in winter. Snow, which is a common winter occurrence at similar latitudes on the eastern seaboard of the great land masses of the northern hemisphere, is rare in Victoria below elevations of 600 metres. To the north of Victoria, the land mass of Australia becomes very hot in the summer, and on several days at this time of year the temperature over the State may rise to between 35°C and 40°C, often with a strong northerly wind.

**In Melbourne**

The proximity of Port Phillip Bay bears a direct influence on the climate of the metropolitan area. The hottest months in Melbourne are normally January and February, when the average maximum temperature is 26°C. Inland, Watsonia has an average of 27°C, while along the Bay, Aspendale and Black Rock, which are subject to any sea breeze, have an average of 25°C. This difference does not persist throughout the year, however, and in July average maxima at most stations are within 1°C of one another, at approximately 13°C. The hottest day on record in Melbourne was 13 January 1939, when the temperature reached 45.6°C. This is the second highest temperature ever recorded in an Australian capital city. In Melbourne, the average number of days per year with maxima over 35°C is about nine, but there were twenty-five in the summer of 1897-98 and there has been only one year with no occurrence, namely 1984. The average annual number of days over 30°C is approximately twenty-nine.

Nights are coldest at places a considerable distance from the sea, and away from the city where heat retention by buildings, roads, and pavements may maintain the air at a slightly higher temperature. The lowest temperature ever recorded in the city was  $-2.8^{\circ}\text{C}$  on 21 July 1869, and the highest minimum ever recorded was  $30.6^{\circ}\text{C}$  on 1 February 1902.

In Melbourne the overnight temperature remains above  $20^{\circ}\text{C}$  on about four nights per year. During the early years of record, temperatures below  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$  were recorded during most winters. However, over more recent years, the urban 'heat island' effect has resulted in such low temperatures occurring only once in two years on average. Minima below  $-1^{\circ}\text{C}$  have been experienced during the months of May to August, while even as late as October extremes have been down to  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ . During the summer, minima have never been below  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

Wide variations in the frequency of occurrences of low air temperatures happen across the Melbourne metropolitan area. For example, there are approximately ten annual occurrences of  $2^{\circ}\text{C}$  or less around the Bay, but the frequency increases to over twenty in the outer suburbs and probably to over thirty a year in the more frost susceptible areas. The average frost-free period is about 200 days in the outer northern and eastern suburbs, gradually increasing to over 250 days towards the city, and approaching 300 days along parts of the bayside. The means of the climatic elements for the seasons in Melbourne, computed from all available official records, are given in Table 1.3.

## Rainfall

The average annual number of days of rain (0.2mm or more in 24 hours) is over 150 on the West Coast and in West Gippsland, and exceeds 200 over the Otway Ranges. The average number of wet days a year is reduced to 100 at a distance of approximately 160 kilometres inland from the coast. The distribution of rainfall in Victoria by districts is given in Table 1.4.

Distribution of average rainfall in Victoria is shown in Figure 1 on page 36. Average rainfall ranges from 250mm for the driest parts of the Mallee to 2,600mm at Falls Creek in the Alps.

**TABLE 1.3 MEANS OF CLIMATIC ELEMENTS, MELBOURNE**

<i>Meteorological element</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Summer</i>	<i>Autumn</i>	<i>Winter</i>
Atmospheric pressure (hectopascals)	1,015.0	1,013.2	1,018.4	1,018.4
Maximum temperature of air in shade (°C)	19.5	25.2	20.2	14.0
Minimum temperature of air in shade (°C)	9.4	13.7	10.8	6.3
Relative humidity at 9 a.m. (per cent, saturation = 100)	64	62	73	79
Rainfall (mm)	187	155	168	150
Number of days of rain	40	25	34	44
Amount of evaporation (mm) (a)	347	546	271	134
Daily amount of cloudiness (scale 0 to 8) (b)	4.9	4.2	4.8	5.2
Daily hours of sunshine (c)	6.0	8.0	5.2	3.9
Number of days of fog	1.4	0.6	5.8	10.2

(a) Measured by Class A Pan (records commenced 1967).

(b) Scale: 0 = clear, 8 = overcast.

(c) Measured at Laverton (records commenced 1968).

Source: Bureau of Meteorology

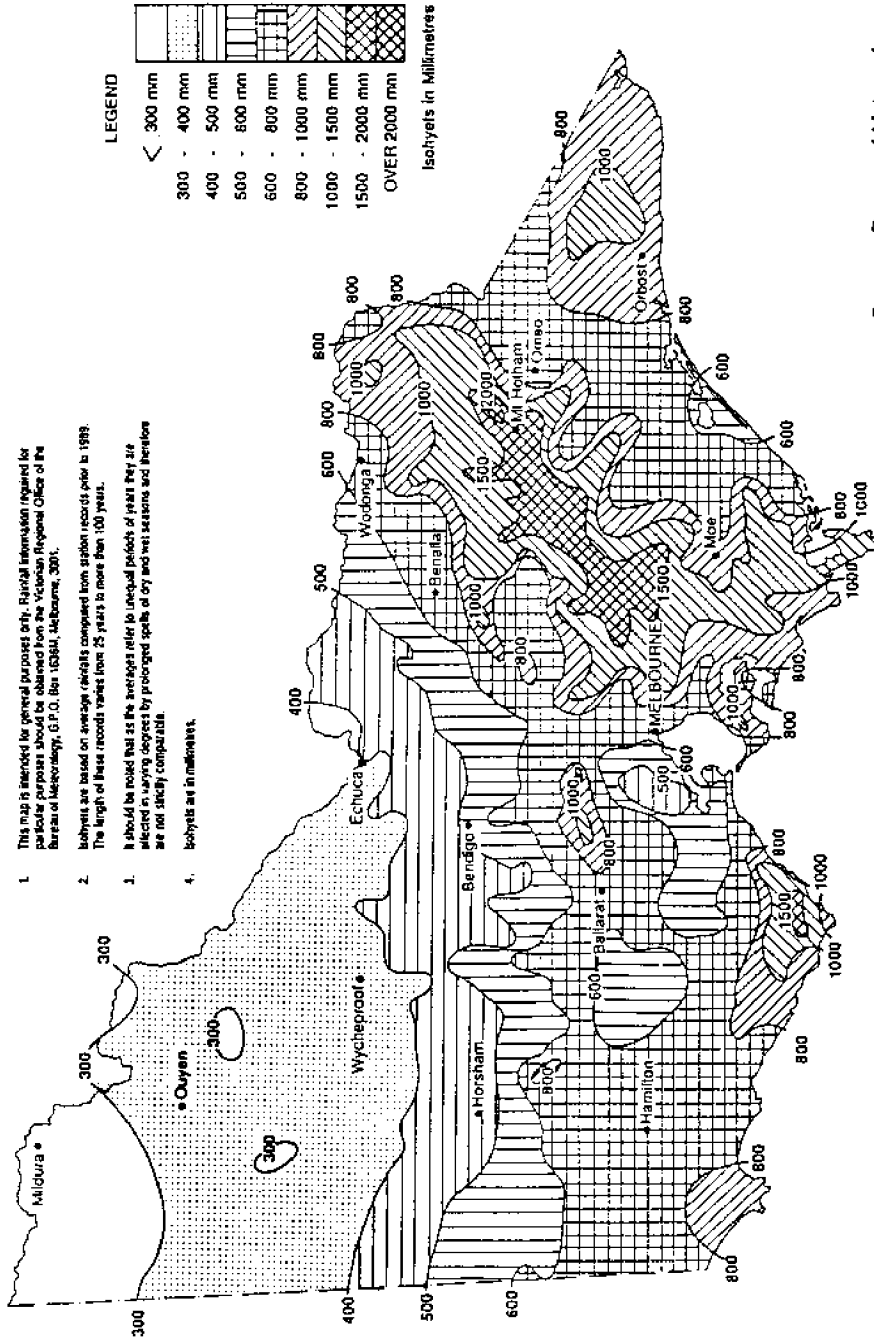
**TABLE 1.4 RAINFALL IN DISTRICTS, VICTORIA**  
(mm)

<i>District</i>	<i>Year</i>						<i>Average</i> (a)
	<i>1987</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1992</i>	
North Mallee	316	348	358	273	300	475	310
South Mallee	378	408	429	294	319	564	357
North Wimmera	400	441	431	313	408	567	412
South Wimmera	547	630	568	460	562	763	507
Lower North	364	537	519	376	401	625	434
Upper North	452	634	613	437	500	704	515
Lower Northeast	688	954	927	925	794	1,129	786
Upper Northeast	1,068	1,341	1,334	1,237	1,117	1,453	1,111
East Gippsland	639	868	910	862	782	1,049	781
West Gippsland	828	982	999	975	1,033	972	919
East Central	859	931	1,094	923	1,061	1,171	896
West Central	690	635	741	675	634	811	616
North Central	815	920	932	782	803	1,030	732
Western Plains	634	592	641	622	642	866	633
West Coast	724	760	858	854	955	1,043	779

(a) Average for 80 years 1913 to 1992.

Source: Bureau of Meteorology

AVERAGE ANNUAL RAINFALL



Source: Bureau of Meteorology



**ABS STATISTICAL  
GEOGRAPHY**

The Statistical Division structure of Victoria was formed in 1974 by combining legal local government areas (LGAs) into coherent socio-economic zones. This Victorian Statistical Division structure remained fairly stable until the January 1991 ASGC review, with some changes caused by LGA boundary alterations.

Since January 1986, ABS statistical geography has been based on the Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC). The current ASGC was implemented in January 1991, following an extensive review designed to accommodate future population growth, especially in the eastern and south-eastern parts of the Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD). The Wimmera, Mallee, Loddon-Compaspe, Melbourne and Gippsland Statistical Divisions were altered with Statistical Local Area (SLA) additions/losses at January 1991, and the East Central Statistical Division was abolished. Two new Labour Force Regions were created at January 1991, and the names of some regions were changed. The previous review occurred in the mid 1960s.

The ASGC is an hierarchical structure designed to cover the whole of Australia, without omission or overlap. Within Victoria's 1991 ASGC structure there are 12 Statistical Divisions, 50 Sub-divisions, 238 SLAs, and 7,501 Collection Districts (CDs). The ASGC also contains 14 Labour Force Regions, of which 9 are in the MSD and 5 are in the Rest of Victoria (ROV). Labour Force Regions are often used for ABS social surveys, including the Labour Force Survey. Victoria also has 7 Statistical Districts, which are urban areas outside the MSD with a population exceeding 25,000. The smallest geographic unit normally used in ABS published material is the SLA, but some special data runs and electronic products can utilise CD level data. Many Census outputs are available by CD. Chapter 2 contains maps of the SLAs for the MSD and the Statistical Divisions for Victoria.

In order to meet census collector requirements, approximately 9 per cent of CDs changed between 1986 and 1991. A total of 17 SLAs changed status within the ASGC in January 1991, either through splitting or recombining. The SLA structure in Victoria (238 SLAs) is largely equivalent to that for Local Government Areas (210 LGAs), with the exception that 23 LGAs are split and 5 SLAs cover unincorporated areas.

The ASGC is being increasingly used by government agencies and other organisations to facilitate geographic comparability. The SLA/LGA unit is usually the key when looking for concordance across government department regions which differ from the ASGC. During 1993 the State Government amalgamated six LGAs into the City of Greater Geelong, and Melbourne (C) also experienced considerable boundary alterations, which will cause difficulties with time series data analysis.

**TABLE 1.5 NORTH EAST VICTORIAN RIVERS: FLOOD SUMMARY, OCTOBER 1993**

River Catchment	Stream	Station	1993 Peak River Levels			Highest Since			Previous Highest			Flood Class Levels		
			Level (metres)	Date	Time	Ranked Order	Date	Level (metres)	Records Commenced	Date	Level (metres)	Normal October River level (metres)	Minor (metres)	Moderate (metres)
Broken	Broken R.	Benalla	>5.4	4 Oct 93	11am	1st	Highest on Record	1886	1974	unknown	<1.7	2.5	3.7	4.5*
Ovens	Ovens R.	Wangaratta	12.99	5 Oct 93	7pm	1st	Highest on Record	1885	1974	12.93	9.5	11.9	12.4	12.7*
	Ovens R.	Rocky Point	6.18	4 Oct 93	6pm	1st	Highest on Record	1965	1974	5.85	1.9	3.2	4.4	5.2
	Ovens R.	Myrtleford	3.65	4 Oct 93		1st	Highest on Record	1947	1974	unknown	1.2	-	-	-
	Ovens R.	Bright	5.44	4 Oct 93	9am	1st	Highest on Record	1924	1974	4.87	1.1	2.0	2.6	3.3
Goulburn	Goulburn R.	Shepparton	11.74	6 Oct 93	6pm	2nd	17 May 74	1921	1974	12.09	5.0 to 6.0	9.5	10.7	11.0
	Seven Cks.	Euroa	5.68	5 Oct 93	8am	1st	Highest on Record	1963	1992	5.2	1.2	4.9*	-	-
Murray	Murray	Echuca	94.77	12 Oct 93	3pm	4th	1916	1965	1870	96.19	88.0 to 89.0	93.1	93.6*	94.4*
									1867	95.34				
									1916	94.79				

Notes: Benalla peak height requires survey for verification. River levels for Echuca are quoted in Australian Height Datum (AHD) or height above sea level. \*Indicates preliminary flood class levels that are yet to be verified.

**GOVERNMENT**

The system of government in Victoria provides for responsible Cabinet government based on a legislature of two Houses, the Legislative Assembly (Lower House) and the Legislative Council (Upper House), both elected by Australian citizens over the age of 18. Voting is compulsory.

**The Constitution**

From 1855 until 1975, the Constitution of Victoria was contained in the Schedule to an Act of the United Kingdom in 1855, but Victoria finally adopted a Constitution of its own with the Constitution Act 1975.

Under the Victorian Constitution, the ultimate executive power is vested in the Crown, and is exercised by the Governor as the Monarch's representative. The Governor is the titular head of the government, while the Premier is the effective head of government. Further information on the powers and function of the Governor may be found on page 60 of the Victorian Year Book 1986.

The Constitution is affected by the Commonwealth Constitution enacted by the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900, an act of the Imperial Parliament, by which legislative and executive powers upon certain specified matters were granted to the Commonwealth Parliament and the Commonwealth Government, some of them exclusively, and provision was made that, in case of inconsistency of valid laws, the Commonwealth law should prevail.

**Victorian Government responsibilities**

The Victorian Government is responsible for such things as health, education, law enforcement, administration of justice, the control of resources, and the provision of roads, water, sewerage, power, and other services. Under Victorian law a complete system of courts, a police force, a teaching service, and many statutory bodies have been established.

**Victorian government departments and statutory authorities**

Victorian government departments and statutory authorities administer legislation, implement government policy, provide policy advice to government, and supply goods and services to the people of Victoria.

Information concerning Victorian government departments and statutory authorities may be found in previous editions of the Victorian Year Book. More recent information may be found in the Victorian Government Directory, which is compiled by Information Victoria - Department of Finance.

**Victorian representation in the Commonwealth Parliament**

The federation of the Australian colonies formally commenced on 1 January 1901. The House of Representatives was seen as representing the people and directly chosen by the people for a maximum three year term on single Member constituencies. The Senate was seen as representing the rights of the States, and Senators are appointed for a six year term with half of them retiring every three years. Victoria currently has 38 members of the House of Representatives and 12 members of the Senate.

**TABLE 1.6 ELECTORS ON JOINT ROLLS, VICTORIA, 30 JUNE**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of electors enrolled</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of electors enrolled</i>
1988	2,680,181	1991	2,835,591
1989	2,773,200	1992	2,904,865
1990	2,805,773	1993	2,943,112

Source: Australian Electoral Commission

### **The Legislative Assembly**

There are currently 88 members of the Legislative Assembly. Each of these members represents a single Electoral District. Members are elected for a minimum of three years and a maximum of four years. (Governments are able to call elections at anytime during the fourth year after their last election, provided all is in accordance with the Constitution).

The Legislative Assembly is known as the seat of Government. The political party (or group of parliamentarians) who control the majority of support in the Legislative Assembly (Lower House) can form the Government. The Premier of the State is the leader of the majority of the Lower House. The official opposition is the largest grouping or political party which opposes the government.

The Presiding Officer of the Legislative Assembly is known as the Speaker and is a Lower House member selected by the Government. The Speaker is responsible for the conduct of the Lower House and along with the President, who is the Presiding Officer of the Upper House, represents the Parliament on official and ceremonial occasions.

### **The Legislative Council**

There are 44 members of the Legislative Council representing 22 Electoral Provinces (two members for each province).

Members of the Legislative Council are elected for two terms of the Legislative Assembly. At any general election half of the Council members are required to face the electorate for re-election.

The Legislative Council (Upper House) is often referred to as the "House of Review" and its primary role is to provide a "second opinion" or review to bills and measures proposed by the Lower House.

The Presiding Officer of the Legislative Council is known as the President of the Council.

TABLE 1.7 PREMIERS, VICTORIA 1943 TO 1994 (a)

Premier	Date of assumption of office	Date of retirement from office	Duration of office (days)
Albert Arthur Dunstan	18 September 1943	2 October 1945	746
Ian Macfarlan, K.C.	2 October 1945	21 November 1945	51
John Cain	21 November 1945	20 November 1947	730
Thomas Tuke Hollway	20 November 1947	3 December 1948	380
Thomas Tuke Hollway	3 December 1948	27 June 1950	572
John Gladstone Black McDonald	27 June 1950	28 October 1952	855
Thomas Tuke Hollway	28 October 1952	31 October 1952	3
John Gladstone Black McDonald	31 October 1952	17 December 1952	48
John Cain	17 December 1952	31 March 1955	835
John Cain	31 March 1955	7 June 1955	69
Henry Edward Bolte, G.C.M.G.	7 June 1955	23 August 1972	6,288
Rupert James Hamer, E.D.	23 August 1972	5 June 1981	3,209
Lindsay Hamilton Thompson, C.M.G.	5 June 1981	8 April 1982	299
John Cain (b)	8 April 1982	10 August 1990	3,046
Joan Elizabeth Kirner	10 August 1990	6 October 1992	786
Jeffrey Gibb Kennett	6 October 1992	-	-

(a) A complete list since responsible government in 1855 can be found on pages 741-2 of the Victorian Year Book 1984.

(b) The Hon. John Cain is the son of the Hon. John Cain who held the office of Premier on three occasions between 1945 and 1955.

### Local government administration

At 30 June 1993, Victoria was divided, for local government purposes, into 205 municipal districts and the Yallourn Works Area, which was severed from the municipal districts of which it then formed a part by the State Electricity Commission (Yallourn Area) Act 1947. For certain purposes it is deemed to be a borough and municipal administration is the responsibility of the Commission, assisted by an Advisory Council. The 205 municipalities comprise 66 cities, 4 rural cities, 3 towns, 6 boroughs and 126 shires.

Councils may make by-laws on a number of specified subjects. They exercise functions relating to roads and bridges, for which they have a construction and maintenance responsibility; drainage, water supply and sewerage; building control; community welfare, including infant and pre-school centres, home help, elderly citizens, meals-on-wheels and garbage; parking areas and traffic engineering.

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