
Chapter Three

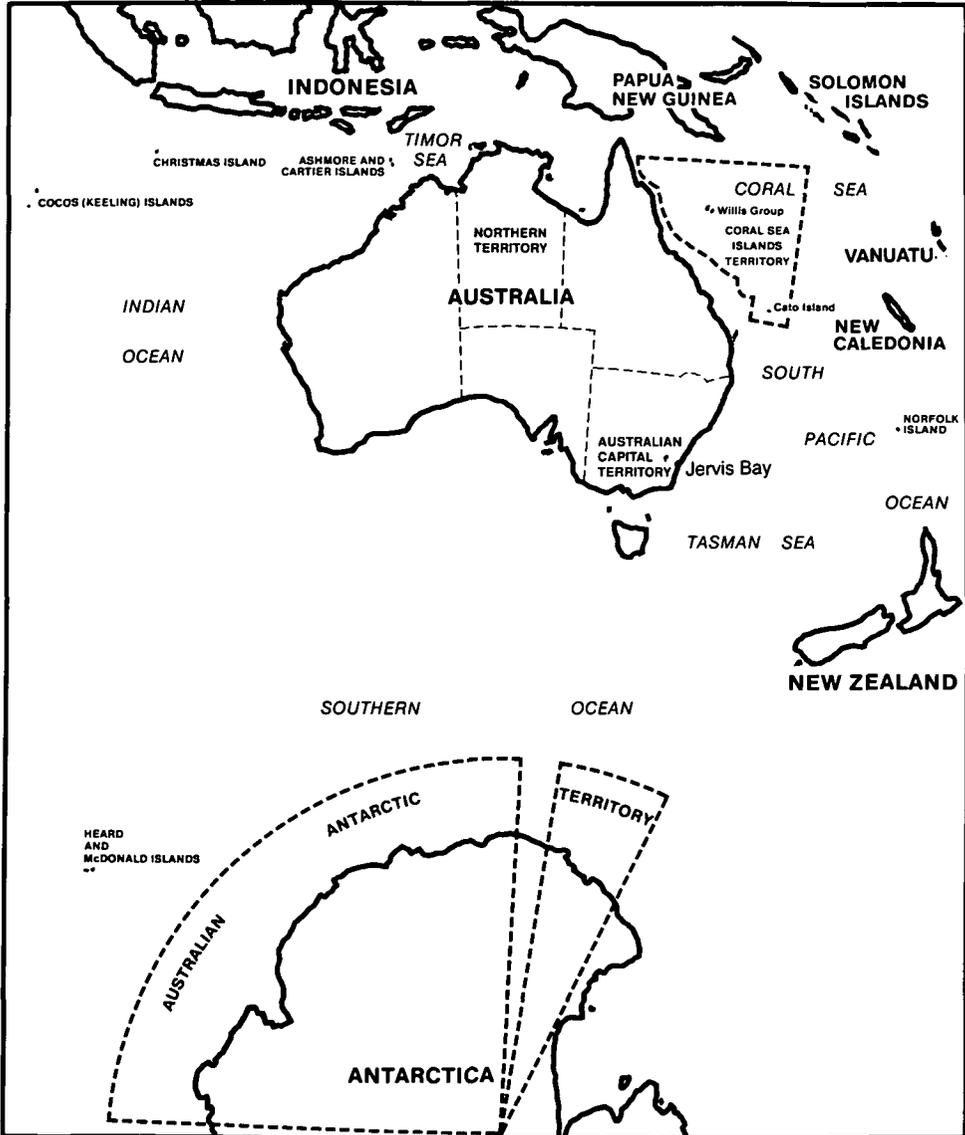
**Territories of
Australia**

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The external territories of Australia are: Norfolk Island; the Territory of Heard and McDonald Islands; the Australian Antarctic Territory; the Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands;

Islands; the Territory of Christmas Island; the Coral Sea Islands Territory and the Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands.



Source: Overseas Information Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

In previous editions of *Year Book Australia*, information on the internal territories of Australia — the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and the Jervis Bay Territory — were included in this chapter. The Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory are now self-governing territories, under the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1977*; and the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988*. In keeping with the practice in *Year Book Australia* of covering information on States under chapter headings, information on the first two Territories is no longer included in this separate chapter. Detailed statistics and descriptive matter can be found in the following two ABS publications, *Northern Territory Statistical Summary* (1306.7) and the *Australian Capital Territory Statistical Summary* (1307.8), and in the annual reports and other official publications of the administrations of the two territories.

JERVIS BAY TERRITORY

The Jervis Bay Territory comprises 70 square kilometres on the southern shore of Jervis Bay, about 195 kilometres south of Sydney. The Territory was accepted by the Commonwealth in 1915 under the *Jervis Bay Territory Acceptance Act 1915*. The acceptance was in accordance with the *Seat of Government Acceptance Act 1909* which stated that the seat of government (the Australian Capital Territory) should have access to the sea. Following ACT self-government in 1988, the Jervis Bay Territory remained a separate Commonwealth Territory and is administered by the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories.

Two-thirds of the Territory is nature reserve with the balance consisting of land used for Defence purposes, Aboriginal land at Wreck Bay, a few private leases and other Commonwealth land. The population of the Territory is relatively constant at about 800. Residents of the Territory vote in the federal electorate of Fraser for representation in the House of Representatives and the Senate. However, Territory residents are excluded from representation in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Administration

The laws of the ACT apply so far as they are applicable by virtue of sub-section 4A(1) of the *Jervis Bay Territory Acceptance Act 1915*, and the ACT Supreme Court has jurisdiction in the Territory. On 17 December 1990, the *Jervis Bay Territory Administration Ordinance 1990* was made by the Governor-General (who has the power to make ordinances specifically for the Territory). The Ordinance makes provision, among other things, for the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories to make regulations under an applied ACT act.

The Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories (DASET) provides a full range of municipal and territorial services in the Territory. The majority of these are provided by ACT government agencies under the terms of Memoranda of Understanding between the relevant agencies and DASET. The total expenditure in 1990–91 on managing the Territory and providing municipal and Territorial services was \$5.1 million.

Land Management

The nature reserve, along with some adjacent Commonwealth lands and the waters of the Territory, are managed by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service on a contract basis — expenditure in 1990–91 amounted to \$2.1 million. Most of the lands and all of the waters of the Territory will be declared a national park in early 1992 under the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975*. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service will take over management of the park on 1 July 1992.

Tourism

Approximately 700,000 people visit the Territory each year. The Territory has a unique natural environment, including a richly diverse natural vegetative cover, relatively undisturbed plant communities supporting varied natural fauna, attractive recreational areas and pristine marine waters. The most common activities undertaken in the Territory include camping, bush walking, diving and boating.

NORFOLK ISLAND

Norfolk Island, discovered by Captain Cook in 1774, is situated approximately in latitude 29°02'S, longitude 167°57'E, 1,676 kilometres east of Sydney. Its total area is approximately 3,455 hectares, the island being about 8 kilometres long and 5 kilometres wide. The coastline which is 32 kilometres long, consists of almost inaccessible cliffs rising from the waters edge, except at Kingston in the south and the landing place at Cascade on the northern side. The climate is equable, the average daily maximum temperature varying between 16°C and 28°C, and the average annual rainfall is 1,350 millimetres. The resident population is about 2,000.

The island served as a penal station from 1788 to 1814 and from 1825 to 1855. In 1856, 194 descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers were transferred from Pitcairn Island.

Administration

In 1856, the island was created a distinct and separate settlement under the jurisdiction of the Governor of New South Wales. In 1897 it was made a dependency under the Governor of that colony, and finally, by the passage of the *Norfolk Island Act 1913*, became a Territory of Australia.

The *Norfolk Island Act 1979*, established a form of government involving the island's own elected representatives under which the necessary revenue could be raised by its own system of law. In broad terms, the Act equips Norfolk Island with responsible legislative and executive government to enable it to run its own affairs to the greatest practicable extent. Wide powers are exercised by the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly and by an Executive Council, comprising the executive members of the Legislative Assembly who have ministerial-type responsibilities. The Act preserves the Commonwealth's responsibility for Norfolk Island as a Territory under its authority, with the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories as the responsible Minister. Since 1979, various additional powers have been transferred to the responsibility of the Norfolk Island Government and further progress towards self-government was made in 1989 with the transfer of a significant number of new powers.

The Office of the Administrator is financed from Commonwealth expenditure which amounted to approximately \$486,700 in 1990-91. An amount of \$334,000 was provided by the Commonwealth during the year for the restoration and maintenance of historic structures and a further \$100,000 towards the cost of a water assurance scheme.

Tourism

The island's major economic activity is tourism. Regular air services to the island are available for those who seek a quiet holiday in surroundings of beauty and historic interest. There were 28,712 tourist arrivals in 1990-91.

Primary industries

The soil on the island is particularly fertile, the climate equable and the rainfall fairly evenly distributed except for a pronounced dry period in November. This enables a wide range of temperate and semi-tropical products to be cultivated. However, the island's comparative isolation presents trading difficulties and there is only very limited production of export crops.

Fish are in abundance and in the past a number of ventures have been formed to exploit this resource, but they have been short-lived, mainly because of the lack of a sheltered harbour. A forestry program is being carried out to increase the resources of Norfolk Island Pine and to introduce suitable types of eucalypts.

Primary production is not fully adequate for local needs and foodstuffs are imported from New Zealand and Australia.

Employment

A large proportion of the population derives its income from various aspects of the tourist industry. Very few people rely entirely on agricultural pursuits for their income.

Finance

Until 1979, Norfolk Island revenue was supplemented by annual grants from the Commonwealth Government. Under present constitutional arrangements, the cost of maintaining the island, other than the Administrator and staff, is met as far as practicable from island sources.

NORFOLK ISLAND: REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE
(\\$'000)

	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
REVENUE						
Customs duty	1,373	1,833	2,008	1,902	1,881	2,005
Liquor service	439	578	614	611	632	658
Company fees	94	84	92	108	80	79
Postal operations	801	744	114	272	20	20
Vehicle registration and licence fees	117	124	128	136	132	181
Departure fees(a)	—	—	—	272	278	226
Public works levy(a)	—	—	—	249	263	261
Fuel levy(a)	—	—	—	142	167	164
Telecommunications(a)	—	—	—	185	185	203
Electricity service(a)	—	—	—	115	190	215
All other(b)	1,624	1,777	2,173	688	984	1,096
Interest on investments(a)	—	—	—	336	437	544
Total revenue	4,448	5,140	5,129	5,016	5,249	5,652
EXPENDITURE						
Administration	1,669	1,770	1,245	1,343	1,193	1,259
Education services	627	927	755	880	865	942
Health and welfare services	514	552	627	611	619	740
Repairs and maintenance	571	706	830	777	774	781
Capital works and services	265	768	1,682	638	507	588
Miscellaneous services	312	431	501	509	996	1,133
Legislative Assembly	230	234	210	182	167	207
Total expenditure	4,188	5,388	5,850	4,940	5,121	5,650

(a) For the years 1986-87 and prior, these amounts had been included in the total of 'All other revenue'. (b) 'All other revenue' is made up of sundry classifications none of which individually exceeds \$100,000.

Source: *The Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories.*

Trade

Imports to Norfolk Island since World War II have risen in value from \$65,000 in 1945-46 to over \$20 million in 1989-90. The major proportion came from Australia and New Zealand. Exports in 1989-90 amounted to \$2.6 million, with Australia and New Zealand as the principal markets.

Transport

A shipping company operates cargo services to Norfolk Island at approximately five weekly intervals, linking the island with Australia and New Zealand.

An air passenger and freight service operates a number of times a week between Norfolk Island and Sydney, Brisbane and Auckland.

Communication

There are approximately 80 kilometres of motor roads on the island. A substantial section of the population possesses motor cars.

The island has an automatic telephone exchange and international telephone connection with Australia, New Zealand and Fiji by way of the ANZCAN submarine cable system. A local broadcasting service is operated by the Administration. The Administration also provides a television service. A central ground station receives ABC and SBS services via the AUSSAT satellite which are then re-broadcast throughout the island.

Education

Education is provided by a school conducted for the Administration by the New South Wales Department of Education. It conforms to the Australian standard of public education, ranging from Kindergarten to the School Certificate (Year 10) level. The number of students enrolled at 30 June 1991 was 320.

Some bursaries, subject to a means test, are available for pupils who wish to attend a mainland school either to continue their studies beyond the School Certificate level or to undertake high school courses not available on

the island. A limited number of trainee scholarships are available for pupils who have left school and wish to undertake apprenticeships or similar training away from the island.

Judiciary

The judicial system of Norfolk Island consists of a Supreme Court and a Court of Petty Sessions. The Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority in the Territory and is a superior court of record with original criminal and civil jurisdiction. The jurisdiction of the court is exercised by one judge sitting in court or, to the extent provided by or under ordinance, sitting in chambers. The jurisdiction of the Court of Petty Sessions is exercised by the Chief Magistrate or any three Magistrates.

TERRITORY OF HEARD ISLAND AND McDONALD ISLANDS

Heard Island, about 43 kilometres long and 20 kilometres wide, is the largest of a group of southern Indian Ocean islands about 4,100 kilometres south-west of Fremantle.

The islands, now known as the Territory of Heard Island and the McDonald Islands, were transferred from the United Kingdom to Australia as from 26 December 1947. The legal regime of the Territory is provided for in the *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Act 1953*. Under this Act, the laws in force in the Territory are those of the Australian Capital Territory and the criminal laws of the Jervis Bay Territory, so far as they are applicable and not inconsistent with an ordinance made under the Act. The Act also provides that Commonwealth laws apply when expressed to do so and that ordinances may be made for the Territory.

In December 1947, the first of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE) set up a scientific station on Heard Island. Various scientific and meteorological investigations were conducted until the station was closed in March 1955 following the establishment of Mawson station on the Antarctic mainland. Australian expeditions have since visited the island from time to time. From 1985 until March 1988, a major new research program was undertaken on the island, mainly involving investigation of the

Island's wildlife as part of international studies of the Southern Ocean ecosystem. This research is being continued with subsequent Australian expeditions to the island in June 1990 and throughout 1992.

The McDonald Islands are 43 kilometres to the west of Heard Island. They are small, rocky and precipitous. The first known landing on McDonald Island, the largest of the group of that name, was by ANARE expeditioners on 27 January 1971.

Heard Island is widely regarded as one of the last Antarctic habitats remaining free of introduced organisms and is thus of significance as a benchmark for ecological studies. In January 1988, introduction of the Environment Protection and Management Ordinance under the *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Act 1953* put in place the framework for sustained conservation of the islands. In 1990 the Territory was nominated by Australia for consideration by the World Heritage Committee for World Heritage listing.

AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC TERRITORY

An Imperial Order in Council of 7 February 1933 placed under Australian authority all the territories and islands, other than the French Terre Adelie, south of 60°S latitude and between 45°E and 160°E longitude, a total land area of six million square kilometres, or the size of Australia less Queensland. The Order came into force with a proclamation issued by the Governor-General on 24 August 1936, after the passage of the *Australian Antarctic Territory Acceptance Act 1933*. The boundaries of Terre Adelie were definitively fixed by a French decree of 1 April 1938 as the islands and territories south of 60°S latitude and between 136°E and 142°E longitude.

The legal regime of the Territory is provided for in the *Australian Antarctic Territory Act 1954*. Under this Act, the laws in force in the Territory are those of the Australian Capital Territory and the criminal laws of the Jervis Bay Territory, so far as they are applicable and not inconsistent with any ordinance made under the Act. The Act also provides that Commonwealth laws apply when expressed to do so and that Ordinances may be made for the Territory.

On 13 February 1954, ANARE established the first permanent Australian Antarctic station on MacRobertson Land at latitude 67°36'S and longitude 62°53'E. The station was named Mawson in honour of the Australian Antarctic pioneer Sir Douglas Mawson. A second Australian continental station was established in 1957 at latitude 68°35'S and longitude 77°58'E and was named Davis to commemorate Captain John King Davis, second-in-command of two of Mawson's expeditions and master of several famous Antarctic ships. On 4 February 1959, Australia accepted from the United States Government custody of Wilkes station which had been established two years earlier at latitude 66°15'S and longitude 110°32'E. Wilkes was subject to inundation by snow and ice and was closed on 19 February 1969 when activities were transferred to Casey, a new station built nearby. Casey was named in honour of Lord Casey, former Governor-General of Australia, in recognition of his long association with Australia's Antarctic effort.

Australian science in Antarctica deals mainly with the Antarctic ecosystem, the region's natural phenomena, and atmospheric and space studies. Disciplines include marine science, land based biology, meteorology, cosmic ray physics, upper atmosphere physics, glaciology and earth sciences.

In addition to its three permanent continental stations (a fourth permanent station is on the Tasmanian territory of Macquarie Island), Australia conducts its Antarctic science from summer bases at Cape Denison (in the eastern sector of Australian territory), the Prince Charles Mountains, the Larsemann Hills and the Bunger Hills, as well as temporary field camps in such places as Enderby Land, Scullin Monolith, Amery Ice Shelf and Law Dome.

In 1981-82, a program for redeveloping Australia's Antarctic stations began. It is now well advanced and the first of the new stations to be completed — Casey — was occupied in 1989.

Specific legislation has been enacted which puts into effect Australia's obligations under various international agreements, many of which relate to environment protection. Adoption of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty in October 1991 enabled a comprehensive environment protection regime for all Antarctica to be put in place. Under the protocol,

Antarctica has been declared a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science.

The Protocol bans mining and provides strict rules for modifying the ban. Agreement of all parties is needed for any change. After 50 years the ban may only be lifted if at least three-quarters of the current Consultative Parties (26 nations including Australia) agree, a legal regime for controlling mining is in force, and sovereignty interests of all parties are safeguarded. Australia legislated in 1991 to ban all mining in Australian Antarctic Territory and on the adjacent continental shelf. The legislation also prohibits Australian nationals from mining elsewhere in Antarctica.

See also the chapter on International Relations.

COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

The Territory of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands comprises a group of 27 small coral islands in two separate atolls in the Indian Ocean, 2,768 kilometres north-west of Perth.

The Territory's administrative community, airport and animal quarantine station are located on West Island, the largest island, about 10 kilometres long. The Cocos Malay community lives on Home Island. The main atoll is low-lying, flat, thickly covered by coconut palms and surrounds a lagoon which has an anchorage in the northern part but which is extremely difficult for navigation.

The climate is equable and pleasant, usually being under the influence of the south-east trade winds for about nine months of the year. However, the winds vary at times and meteorological reports from the Territory are particularly valuable for those engaged in forecasting for the eastern Indian Ocean. The temperature varies between 21°C and 32°C, and the average yearly rainfall is 1,998 millimetres. There are occasional violent storms.

History and administration

The islands were discovered in 1609 by Captain William Keeling of the East India Company, but were uninhabited until Alexander Hare and John Clunies-Ross established small settlements at different points on the main atoll in 1826 and 1827 respectively. Clunies-Ross secured sole possession in 1831 and the islands were

declared part of the British Dominions in 1857. In 1878, responsibility for the supervision of the islands was transferred to the Government of Ceylon and eight years later, to the Government of the Straits Settlements.

In 1903, the islands were incorporated in the Settlement of Singapore but were attached again to Ceylon during World War II while Singapore was under Japanese occupation.

By mutual agreement between the British and Australian Governments and confirmed by complementary legislation, the islands became an Australian territory in 1955. The Australian Government purchased the Clunies-Ross interests in the Territory in 1978, except for the family home and grounds.

The *Cocos (Keeling) Islands Act 1955* is the basis of the Territory's administrative, legislative and judicial systems.

An Administrator, appointed by the Governor-General and responsible to the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories, is the senior Government representative in the Territory.

On 25 July 1979, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Council, elected by members of the Home Island community, was established. The Council has responsibility for a range of functions in the Home Island village area, advises the Administrator on local affairs and is also empowered to make representations on ordinances proposed for the Territory.

The Cocos Islands Cooperative Society Limited, also established in 1979, conducts the business enterprises of the Cocos people. The Cooperative undertakes building maintenance and construction, stevedoring and lighterage services, retailing and provision of accommodation and catering services.

On 6 April 1984, the Cocos Malay community, in an Act of Self Determination which took the form of a referendum observed by the United Nations, chose to integrate with Australia.

The 1991 population count of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands was 647.

Transport and communications

There is an airport of international standard at West Island controlled by the Administrator under licence from the Department of Transport and Communications. The

Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories operates a weekly air charter service which alternates between the routes Perth-Christmas Island-Cocos (Keeling) Islands-Perth and Perth-Cocos (Keeling) Islands-Christmas Island-Perth. A shipping service operates to the Territory every 6-8 weeks. The Administration operates and maintains, on behalf of the Overseas Telecommunications Commission (Australia), a satellite communications facility which provides telephone, facsimile and telex services to the Australian mainland and beyond. There are local postal and telephone services, and a non-commercial broadcasting station.

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Christmas Island is an isolated peak situated in the Indian Ocean, latitude 10°25'S, longitude 105°40'E, 2,623 kilometres north-west of Perth. Christmas Island covers an area of about 135 square kilometres. It consists of a central plateau varying in height from 250 metres above sea level at the eastern side of the island to 150 metres on the western side. Several prominent rises in the plateau reach 360 metres above sea level. The plateau descends to the sea in a series of steep slopes alternating with terraces. Sea cliffs over 20 metres high run along a considerable portion of the coastline except in a few places, the chief of which is Flying Fish Cove where the principal settlement is located and which is the only anchorage.

The climate is tropical, with prevailing winds coming from the south-east to east-south-east from May to December, and occasionally shifting round to between north and west from December to April (the wet season). The average yearly rainfall is 2,673 mm with a marked summer incidence. The porous nature of the ground prevents the formation of pools of water, but there are several good springs which provide an adequate supply of fresh water for the population and for the mining operation. The mean average temperature is about 28°C and does not vary greatly throughout the year.

The 1991 population count of the island was 1,275. The majority are Chinese with the remainder being mostly Malays and Europeans. There is no indigenous population.

History and administration

Summarised particulars of the history of Christmas Island up to its administration by the United Kingdom as a separate Crown Colony (from 1 January 1958, pending transfer to Australia) are given in *Year Book Australia 1965* and in earlier issues. On 1 October 1958, the island was accepted by Australia under the *Christmas Island Act 1958*. The Territory is administered by an Administrator appointed by the Governor-General. Responsibility for the administration and government of the Territory rests with the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories. The Administrator reports to the Minister and is subject to his direction. The laws which were in force on the island at 30 September 1958 were continued as the laws of the Territory after its transfer to Australia.

The *Migration Act 1958* was extended to the Territory from 23 January 1981, enabling all island residents to become Australian residents and to acquire Australian citizenship. A number of measures have since been taken to extend the same benefits and responsibilities to island residents as apply on the Australian mainland so that the islanders will be in no better or worse a position than their mainland counterparts.

The *Services Corporation Ordinance 1984* was made on 26 October 1984, creating the Christmas Island Services Corporation (CISC) with power to provide many local and community services on the island.

The *Taxation Laws Amendment Act 1985* received Royal assent on 30 May 1985. The Act provided for the introduction of full company tax and the Medicare levy, as well as the phased introduction of personal income tax on Christmas Island over a four year period from 1 July 1985.

The *Christmas Island Assembly Ordinance 1985* and the Christmas Island Assembly (Election) Regulations permitted Christmas Island residents to elect their first Assembly on 28 September 1985. Nine members were elected for a one-year term under a voting system similar to that used in electing Senators of the Commonwealth of Australia. The Christmas Island Assembly has responsibility for directing the CISC in the performance of its functions.

Economy

The economy of the Territory has historically been based almost entirely on the mining and extraction of phosphate. In November 1985, responsibility for the mining operation was transferred from the Phosphate Mining Company of Christmas Island (a limited liability company wholly owned by the Australian Government) to the Phosphate Mining Corporation of Christmas Island (PMCI), a statutory authority.

When it became apparent that PMCI could not operate within an agreed Government underwrite, the Government decided to close down the mining operation. A liquidator was appointed on 11 November 1987 to wind up PMCI. The mining operation ceased on 31 December 1987, although it was announced in February 1988 that the Government would consider proposals by private operators to recommence phosphate mining on the Island provided that certain guidelines were met, including that there be no further rainforest clearing.

In July 1990 a Mining Joint Venture (MJV) of Saley Investments (Saley) and Clough Engineering (Clough) was accepted as the preferred tenderer for the Christmas Island phosphate mining operation on the basis of superior financial return to the Commonwealth.

The mine employs approximately 60-70 staff and it is expected to ship a minimum of 300,000 dry tonnes of phosphate per year.

A lease and sales agreement was signed by the MJV on 26 September 1990 and included 40 per cent equity for Island residents through Phosphate Resources NL (PRNL). In October 1990 PRNL acquired all the Saley shares increasing its equity to 49 per cent. On 11 June 1991 PRNL acquired Clough's equity in the mining venture.

The lease requires that a royalty payment be made to the Commonwealth for each tonne of phosphate rock shipped. The royalty payment includes a \$1.50 per tonne rehabilitation levy, payable to the Commonwealth in order to carry out rehabilitation work on mined and previously mined areas on the Island.

In allowing phosphate mining to recommence on the Island, the Commonwealth has set strict environmental controls, including no further rainforest clearing.

Notwithstanding the recommencement of mining, the Government is actively encouraging private sector investment in new activities on the island to secure an economic future which is not solely dependent on mining. Several development proposals, including a major tourist hotel/casino project, are progressing.

The Resort/Casino covers 47 hectares and includes a core building with entertainment, restaurant, service and gaming facilities and detached single and double storey five star accommodation. It is intended that the casino will be operated by the existing operator of the Launceston and Hobart Casinos, Federal Hotels.

The Christmas Island Casino Control Ordinance was made on 22 September 1988. This ordinance provides for the establishment of a casino surveillance authority and the appointment of a Casino Controller. A lease for the site was signed on 17 May 1989.

The main construction work commenced on the hotel core buildings on March 1991. The opening date for the hotel is approximately October/November 1992. During construction of the development, a minimum of 30 local residents will be employed.

The Government has recognised that the unique environment of the Island holds the key to its future development, in particular tourism. Several rare and endangered species of wildlife live on Christmas Island, the best known being the Abbotts Booby, an endemic sea bird which nests in emergent trees in the rainforest canopy. On 5 April 1989, the Government notified a major extension to the National Park. The Park now covers approximately 60–70 per cent of the Island.

Transport and communications

A Joint Island Supply System (JISS) commenced operations on 1 February 1989. It was designed to provide a more efficient and cost effective shipping service to meet the needs of people living and working on both the Christmas and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

An air charter arranged by the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories provides a weekly service to the island following alternate routes, Perth–Christmas Island–Cocos (Keeling) Islands–Perth one week and Perth–Cocos (Keeling) Islands–Christmas Island–Perth the next. The Department also

currently operates a fortnightly air charter between Singapore and the island.

The Territory has its own radio broadcasting station, police force, hospital, postal service and philatelic bureau. The VISTA communications system which provides an external telex and telephone service by INTELSAT satellite, and a back-up INMARSAT system, became fully operational on 17 October 1985.

Education

The Christmas Island Area School is run by the Administration. The school provides education from pre-school level through to Year 10 secondary level. It follows a locally developed curriculum aligned with that used in Western Australia. There are 306 students enrolled at the school. Senior secondary students (Years 11 and 12) receive assistance from the Administration to attend schools in Western Australia.

CORAL SEA ISLANDS TERRITORY

The Coral Sea Islands Territory is situated east of Queensland between the Great Barrier Reef and longitude 156°06'E and between latitudes 12° and 24°S. The Territory comprises all the islands in a sea area of approximately 780,000 square kilometres. The islands are largely formed of sand and coral. Some have grass or scrub cover, but most are extremely small, with no permanent fresh water. The remaining islands are uninhabited. A meteorological station, staffed by three people, has operated on Willis Island since 1921. There are occasional tropical cyclones in the area. Meteorological data are relayed to the mainland from automatic weather stations located on Cato Island, Flinders Reef, Frederick Reef, Holmes Reef, Lihou Reef, Creal Reef, Gannet Cay and Marion Reef.

In the 19th century many ships were wrecked in the area, and the reefs and islands are often named for the ships which foundered there. There are navigation aids on several of the reefs and islands.

There have been a number of scientific expeditions to the region since 1859 and many specimens of flora and fauna are now housed in Australian herbariums and museums.

Six species of sea turtle nest in the Coral Sea Islands Territory, including the largest species in the world, *Dermochelys coriacea* which is regarded as one of the most endangered of the world's sea turtles. There are at least 24 bird species in the Territory; a number of these species are protected under Australia-Japan and Australia-China agreements on endangered and migratory birds. In 1982, the Lihou Reef and Coringa-Herald National Nature Reserves were declared to protect the wildlife in the Territory.

Administration

In 1969, the Coral Sea Islands became a Territory of the Commonwealth under the Coral Sea Islands Act. The Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories in Canberra, is responsible for the administration of the Territory.

THE TERRITORY OF ASHMORE AND CARTIER ISLANDS

Ashmore Islands (known as Middle, East and West Islands) and Cartier Island are situated in the Indian Ocean some 850 to 790 kilometres west of Darwin. The islands lie at the outer edge of the continental shelf. They are small and low and are composed of coral and sand. Vegetation consists mainly of grass. The islands have no permanent inhabitants.

Great Britain took formal possession of the Ashmores in 1878 and Cartier Island was annexed in 1909. By Imperial Order in Council of 23 July 1931, the islands were placed under the authority of the

Commonwealth of Australia. The islands were accepted by Australia through the *Ashmore and Cartier Islands Acceptance Act 1933* under the name of the Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands. By amendments to the Act in 1938, the Territory was annexed to, and deemed to form part of, the Northern Territory. With the granting of self-government to the Northern Territory on 1 July 1978, the administration of the Territory became a direct responsibility of the Commonwealth Government.

Responsibility for the administration of the Territory rests with the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories. Laws of the Northern Territory apply in the Territory insofar as they are applicable.

Birdlife is plentiful on the islands of Ashmore Reef. Turtles are plentiful at certain times of the year and bêche-de-mer are abundant. In recognition of the environmental significance of the area, the Reef was in 1983 given the status of a national nature reserve under the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975*. Regular visits are made to the Reef by officers of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

An agreement between Australia and Indonesia allows Indonesian fishermen to continue to fish in some waters of the Territory. Since 1985, an Australian presence has been maintained at Ashmore Reef during the March to November fishing season to monitor the activities of visiting Indonesian fishermen.

The Jabiru and Challis oil fields are located within the adjacent area of the Territory.

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Northern Territory Statistical Summary (1306.7)

Other Publications

Information is available in the annual reports and other publications of the Administrations of the various Territories.

Other Sources of Information

Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories — Territories Branch and Australian Antarctic Division

