

15. Australia and Oceania – population and settlements

Population

= the most sparsely populated of the inhabited continents. It has a population of 20,000,000. Average population density = 2.5 inh./km², but for climatic and other environmental reasons, AUS settlement = one of the most heavily concentrated in the world:

- 90% of the population lives in about 3% of the land area.

Urbanization and population density

URB = 85% = towns and cities along the E + SE + SW seabords and in Tasmania = most densely populated AUS areas.

The fastest-growing region is the east coast of Queensland, boosted by its nearness (closeness) to the booming economies of SE Asia. The coastal zones around and between the mainland capitals in the east, south-east, and south-west are also growing rapidly.

The remaining 97 per cent of Australia is uninhabited (average population density of >0.03 inh./km²). Settlements occur in the semi-arid grazing lands of the interior of Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia, where the huge cattle and sheep stations are located. Other settlement includes Alice Springs and Darwin (Northern Territory) and Kalgoorlie and Boulder (Western Australia).



Population growth

1788 = first European settlement (by James Cook)

= annual rate of 1.4% during the 1990s ⇔ high level of immigration, which has maintained the numbers of younger people in the childbearing and childrearing age groups.

2002: 1%. Average life expectancy is about 83 years for women and 77 years for men. However, of population growth rate.

Life expectancy among the *Aborigine population* is generally much lower. In particular, Aborigines who still live in the more remote Outback areas often have to endure living conditions more associated with the developing nations. This is reflected in a disease profile that includes leprosy, tuberculosis and diabetes also mixed with *alcoholism*.

Largest AUS cities:

- *Sydney* (4,000,000 inh.) – financial and commercial centre, important port, contains the *world's largest area of suburbs* (6x than Rome)
- *Melbourne* (3,400,000 inh.)
- *Brisbane* (1,600,000 inh.)
- *Perth* (1,400,000 inh.)
- *Adelaide* (1,000,000 inh.)
- *Canberra* (300,000 inh.) – capital of the country

The Aborigines

= the first Australians, quite distinct from any group outside the continent.

The Aborigines arrived in Australia approximately 60,000 yrs. ago, at a time of lowered sea levels which created an almost continuous land bridge between the two continents.

These original Australians were primarily nomadic hunter-gatherers, who survived and multiplied through the development of an intimate knowledge of the location, distribution, and characteristics of Australia's flora and fauna, and of its climatic conditions.

Their life was simple, e.g. digging sticks, spears, boomerangs. Aborigines also used *bark canoes* and rafts.

Australia's Aborigines developed a *complex social organization* and one of the world's richest belief systems, which encompassed all aspects of their lives. Complex of myth, ritual, dance, and objects developed which bound the human, spiritual, and physical worlds together.

Trade was important, with networks stretching across the continent.

The population is estimated to have ranged between 300,000 and 1 million, and more than 200 different languages were spoken.

The arrival of the **Europeans = disaster** for the Aborigines. Communication = minimal, and the culture gap almost total. Aborigines were quickly forced into the AUS interior – "pacification by force". Also diseases => 1920 – estimation of 60,000 Aborigines surviving.

Since 1960s = Aborigines spread back into urban areas creating *ghetto-like communities*.

The greatest concentrations of people of Aboriginal descent today are in New South Wales and Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

More than 70% live in urban areas. In the early 1990s it was estimated that only about 10,000 Aborigines had had direct experience of traditional life, concentrated primarily in the Northern Territory where the rural population is still predominant.

Agriculture

= 5% of total employment, pastures = 94% of total farmland.

Grazing and rearing of *cattle (beef and dairy), goats and sheep* => AUS = world's largest producer and exporter of wool. Almost ½ of the country's wool is produced in *New South Wales* and *Western Australia*.

Main types of farming:

- extensive *cattle ranching* (using helicopters and motorcycles)
- commercial *wheat production* (very intensive ⇔ thin topsoil cover).

Oats, barley, rye, maize (corn) and *tobacco* production is important as well. Rice and cotton mainly in Murumbidgee Irrigation Area => problems with salinisation of a soil

Lot of *fruits*, e.g. apples, bananas, grapes, oranges, pears, pineapples and papayas.

Raw materials

Production of *coal, oil, natural gas, and metallic minerals* (zinc, copper, lead, manganese and iron ore, gold and silver). AUS = 1 of the largest aluminium producers.

Manufacturing industry

= concentrated mostly to Sydney and Melbourne =>

- iron and steel industry
- aircraft industry
- electronic equipment
- oil and petrochemical products
- food processing industry
- clothing (garment) industry

Commerce

Import: USA, Japan, UK, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and New Zealand (machinery, transport equipment, chemicals, non-ferrous metals, paper and textile).

Export: to Europe, Japan, USA (metalliferous ores, coal, non-ferrous metals, oil, wool, and cereals). Meat is also an important export item.

Keywords

Aborigines, immigration, grazing, ranching, processing/manufacturing industry, imports/exports