**The commonwealth of Australia**

The Commonwealth of Australia is a federal state within the Commonwealth of Nations. Its territories are the continent of Australia, the island of Tasmania and a number of smaller islands. It has an area of about eight million square kilometres.

The continent of Australia is mostly a great plain with mountains in the east and south-east. The western part of the continent forms a plateau which occupies half of the continent. Australia's greatest rivers are the Murray and the Darling. Australia has several different climatic regions, from warm to subtropical and tropical.

There are five big cities in Australia: Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane. Each city is the capital of the state in which it is situated. Most of the factories are concentrated in or around the big cities. They produce goods for the motor-car, machine-building, clothing and food industries. Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth are the country's main ports. Agriculture is the main occupation in Australia. Wheat and sugar are the main agricultural crops, fruit-growing is also highly developed. Australia is famous for its sheep. The great sheep-farms, called sheep-stations are found in many parts of the country.

Today there are about fifteen million people in Australia, most of them are of British origin. There are now only 40000 full aborigines in the country.

The Commonwealth of Australia is a self-governing federal state. Formally the head of the state is the King or Queen of England represented by the Governor-General. The Commonwealth of Australia consists of six states and two territories: the Federal Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. The Capital Territory is the land around the Federal Capital, Canberra. Australia has a parliament in each state and the Federal Parliament of the Commonwealth at Canberra. The Federal Parliament consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The federal government of the country is headed by the Prime Minister, usually the leader of the party which has the majority.