

Christmas Island

Overview:

Christmas Island is an Indian Ocean Territory of the Commonwealth of Australia, administered by the Australian Department of Transport and Regional Services. It is a parliamentary democracy that retains responsibility for internal matters.

Territory:

Land: 135 sq. km. (52 sq. mi.), 19 km (7 mi.) x 14 km (5 mi.). Highest elevation: 361 m (1,184 ft).

Location:

Located 360 km. (224 miles) South of Jakarta, Indonesia, and 2,650 km (1,647 miles) Northwest of Perth, Australia.

Latitude and Longitude:

10 30 South Latitude and 105 40 East Longitude. 1 hour behind Western Standard Time.

Time Zone:

GMT +7

Total Land Area:

135

EEZ:

Climate:

Climate is tropical, with wet (approximately November to April) and dry (approximately May to October) seasons. Mean annual rainfall is 1,930 mm. There is little temperature variation from month to month, with average daily maximum highest at 28 Celsius in April and a minimum average temperature of 22 Celsius in August.

Natural Resources:

Phosphates

ECONOMY:

| |
|-------------------|
| Total GDP: |
|-------------------|

| |
|------------------------|
| Per Capita GDP: |
|------------------------|

| | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| % of GDP per Sector: | | |
| Primary | Secondary | Tertiary |

| | | | |
|---|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| % of Population Employed by Sector | | | |
| | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary |
| 2006 | 14% | 14% | 71% |

| |
|--|
| External Aid/Remittances: |
| External Aid/Remittances (1998-1999): Spending by federal government: \$40 million |

Growth:

N/A

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Labour Force: | |
| 2006 | 684 |

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Unemployment | |
| Year: | Unemployment Rate (% of pop.) |

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Year: | Unemployment Rate (% of pop.) |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Year: | Unemployment Rate (% of pop.) |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|

Industry:

Phosphate mining, tourism The Australian Bureau of Statistics does not collect GDP information for Christmas Island due to its minute size. In May 2001 180 worked in phosphate mining. This resulted in sales worth \$50 million. The median weekly income for those over 15, according to the 1996 census, was a mere \$521.

Niche Industry:

Scuba diving, sport fishing

Tourism:

| | |
|------------------------------|---------|
| Imports and Exports: | |
| Tot. Value of Imports | 0.00 () |
| From EU: | |
| Import Partners (EU): | |
| Partners Outside EU: | |
| Import Partners: | |
| Tot. Value of Exports | () |
| To EU: | |
| Export Partners: | |
| Partners Outside EU:: | |
| Export Partners: | |
| Main Imports: | |
| Main Exports: | |

TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS

External:

Number of Airports:

Number of Main Ports:

Internal:

Air

Road:

Sea:

Other Forms of Transportation:

Economic Zones:

The island is a duty-free zone

Energy Policy:

Generated by diesel plants in local power station, which is managed and maintained by Christmas Island. 240 V, 50 cycles.

| Year | Total Energy Production (Mwh) | Type | | | Total Energy Consumption (Mwh) | Sector | | | | |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| | | Thermic (Mwh) | Geothermic (Mwh) | Other (Mwh) | | Domestic (Mwh) | Commercial (Mwh) | Public Service (Mwh) | Industry (Mwh) | Public Lighting (Mwh) |



Official Currency:
Australian Dollar

Banking and Insurance:
Number of Banks and Credit Unions:
Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:
Number of Insurance Companies:

There is one branch of the Westpac Bank in The Settlement featuring a full range of services, including currency exchange. The Christmas Island Post Office at Flying Fish Cove offers a wide range of banking services for Australian banks, as well as services such as cash advances from credit cards. There are no automatic bank machines on the island, but major credit cards are widely accepted.

Financial Services:
N/A

Communications/E-Commerce:
Have a local radio station, Radio VLU2, operated by volunteers in English, Malay, and Chinese. There is no local television channel, although a number of mainland Australian television channels are received on the island. There is no newspaper produced locally, although the Shire of Christmas Island produces a newsletter, "The Islander," every 2 weeks. Off-island papers and magazines are available for purchase, but rendered expensive due to the costs of importation. Mail delivery off-island is slow, as it travels to mainland Australia by boat unless sent by air express, which is expensive. A variety of internet services, tailored for residential and business clients, are available from the Christmas Island Internet Administration, which is a not-for-profit, community-owned company. In 2001 464 islanders used the internet at home, work, or elsewhere. Government presence online is weak. Telephones are within the Australian network.

Public Ownership:
The government is heavily involved in the economy. Investment by others is limited due to the island's isolation and small population.

Land Use:
Christmas Island National Park covers 85 sq. km, or 63%, of the island's total surface. The National Park was created in 1980 (with extensions in 1986 and 1989), and is managed by Parks Australia. The Park protects at least 35 endemic species. The Christmas Island Rainforest Rehabilitation Program (CIRRP) is operated by Parks Australia in an effort to restore old mining areas. Approximately 3,300 ha, or one-quarter of the island's total rainforest, had been lost over the previous century. To date, an estimated 170 ha has been rehabilitated. Funding for the CIRRP comes from a conservation levy paid by the mining company to the Australian government. The mining company is responsible for rehabilitating the land it is affecting, so the CIRRP focuses on older minefields. Priority for rehabilitation is placed on areas with a high density of the endangered Abbott's booby, which breeds on the island.

Agriculture/Forestry:
There is minimal agricultural activity on Christmas Island.

Marine Activity:

Fishing:
Maritime claims: 12 nautical miles. Exclusive fishing zone: 200 nautical miles. Australia maintains jurisdiction over the marine area surrounding Christmas Island.

Marine Life:

Critical Issues:
The island's small size and isolation has led to transportation problems, such as infrequent flights and high cost. Christmas Island's economy requires diversification. It is currently overly reliant on phosphate mining; however, it is predicted that the supply will be exhausted within 20 years.

JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES

Capital:

Political System:
The island is governed internally by the unicameral Christmas Island Shire Council. Island Government: Christmas Island Shire Council consists of 9 seats elected by popular vote to 4 year terms, and is responsible for the provision of local government services. Council is governed by the Western Australian Local Government Act 1995 (Cl) (CKI). Since there is no state-level government on the island, the Shire Council fulfills this role by representing the island in discussions with the Commonwealth. Council meets every 4 weeks. Meeting times are published and the public is allowed to attend question time, although they may be asked to vacate the room when confidential matters are handled. President: nominations for President and Deputy President of the Shire of Christmas Island open upon the announcement of those elected in the biannual elections, closing at the end of the next council meeting. If more than one nomination for each position are put forward, the Chief Executive Officer of the Shire of Christmas Island conducts a secret ballot election. Administrator: appointed by the Governor General on advice of the federal Cabinet, is responsible for maintaining law, order, and good government on Christmas Island. The Administrator handles the territory on behalf of the Commonwealth, exercises powers and function on behalf of instructions from the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government. The Administrator also works closely with the Shire Council and the Union of Christmas Island Workers, which is the union that has represented miners since the 1970s. Justice System: Under authority of Australian law. There are 3 branches on Christmas Island, the Magistrate's, District, and Supreme Court. Court system is handled by visiting magistrates from the Australian mainland.

Political Parties:
Political Parties: No political parties. All candidates run as independents. Elections: staggered, being held every 2 years (5/4) on the first Saturday in May. All those over the age of 18 are eligible to vote if they are on the electoral roll of the Commonwealth Division of the Northern Territory, own property or a business on the island, or be a permanent resident.

Important Legislation:
Christmas Island Act 1958 Transferred sovereignty over the islands from Britain to Australia. Is the legislative basis of the territory. Territories Law Reform Act 1992 Amended the Christmas Island Act 1958, which was based largely on the laws of Singapore. This Act introduced modern Australian law and extended many of the same rights, responsibilities, and obligations enjoyed by mainland Australians to the territory. Local Government (Transition) Ordinance 1992 Created the Christmas Island Shire Council to provide local government services. Western Australian Local Government Act 1995 (Cl) (CKI) Governs the operation of the Shire of Christmas Island, as well as the duties of its members.

Principal Taxes:
Subject to Australian tax system, except there is no GST or sales tax applied. Also, "state" taxes are applied based on those applied in Western Australia. Australian [Commonwealth] Income Tax: Resident Individual Income Tax (2004/05) Taxable Income \$0-6,000 Nil \$6,001-21,600 17¢/dollar over \$6,000 \$21,601-58,000 \$2,6652 plus 30¢/dollar over \$21,600 \$58,001-70,000 \$13,572 plus 42¢/dollar over \$58,000 Over \$70,000 \$18,612 plus 47¢/dollar over \$70,000 Above taxes do not include medical levy of 1.5% Company Tax Rates (2003/04) Companies generally 30% Non-profit Companies Taxable Income \$0-416 Nil \$417-915 55% \$915-Over 30% Western Australia State Taxes: Land Tax (2004/05) Unimproved value of land \$0-100,000 Nil \$100,000-220,000 \$150.00 plus 0.15¢/dollar over \$100,000 \$220,000-570,000 \$330.00 plus 0.45¢/dollar over \$220,000 \$570,000-\$2,000,000 \$1,905.00 plus 1.76¢/dollar over \$570,000 \$2,000,000-5,000,000 \$27,073.00 plus 2.30¢/dollar over \$2,000,000 \$5,000,000-Over \$96,073.00 plus 2.50¢/dollar over \$5,000,000 Pay-roll Tax (2005) 5.5% [Assessed on wages paid by employer, unless total wages paid per annum is below \$750,000] There are also a variety of Stamp Duties charged on transfers and sales.

Associated Power:
Australia

Citizenship:
Australian Unlike most Commonwealth Territories, which under the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 are exempt from federal Parliament legislation unless explicitly stated in the legislation, all Australian federal legislation is applicable to Christmas Island. Australian Customs Service is responsible for customs on the island. Travellers from the Australian mainland do not require visas or passports when visiting the island.

Paradiplomacy:
Christmas Island has no international status separate from Australia. As such, Australia is responsible for handling international treaties on the island's behalf.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Population (by year): 1,508 (2001) 1,906 (1996) 2,500 (1994 est.) Population (by age): <15: 463 15-65: 950 > 65: 53 (2001) (It should be noted that this total reaches 1,466; this deviates slightly from the total population figure of 1,508 provided that year.)

| Island | Area (km sq.) | Population | % of Total Population |
|------------------|---------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Christmas Island | 135 | 1,351 | 100% |

Population (by year): 1,508 (2001) 1,906 (1996) 2,500 (1994 est.) Population (by age): <15: 463 15-65: 950 > 65: 53 (2001) (It should be noted that this total reaches 1,466; this deviates slightly from the total population figure of 1,508 provided that year.)

| Population: | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Year | Resident Population |
| | |

| Age of Population: | 0-14 | 15-24 | 25-49 | 50-64 | 65 and up |
|--------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|
| 2006 | 310 | 126 | 539 | 305 | 71 |

Migration:
N/A

| Crude Birth Rate: |
|-------------------|
| |

Life Expectancy:

| Crude Death Rate: |
|-------------------|
| |

Ethnicity:
Chinese (60%), European (10-15%), Malay (25-30%) (2001 est.)

Class Division:

Languages:
English (official). Approximately 80% of the island's inhabitants speak Malay or one of four Chinese dialects as their first language. As English is not necessary for the workplace, many are not fluent in the language.

Religion:
Buddhist (34%), Muslim (21%), Christian (23%), No Religion (11%), Not Stated/Inadequately Described (11%)

Literacy:

Education System:
Christmas Island High School provides kindergarten to grade 12. Teachers are recruited from the Education Department of Western Australia, and the school follows the Western Australia state curriculum. Standards of achievement are comparable to those in Western Australia schools. The language of instruction is English. The school features modern facilities, with computers in all classrooms, internet and email access, art and music rooms, as well as medical and dental centres. In 2002 there were approximately 420 students. An Early Childhood Program was initiated by the Christmas Island Women's Association in 1991. After 3 years the Education Department took control of the program. The aim of the Centre is to prepare English skills in children prior to entering the school system. There are a variety of other educational routes operating on Christmas Island. The Indian Ocean Group Training is a community-based association that provides vocational training and comprehensive employment services for job seekers and employers. The Christmas Island Play Group, open daily from 9:00-11:00 AM, involves children aged 3 and under. It is managed by volunteers. The Christmas

Island Language Centre meets every Saturday morning. Approximately 200 students, from years 1-10 are taught Mandarin and Malay. Core funding is provided by the Education Department of Western Australia. The Christmas Island Islamic School meets behind the Kampong Mosque in Flying Fish Cove. It provides daily religious education for Islamic youth. There are also 2 music schools operating on the island.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Total Pre-schools:() | |
| Total Primary Schools | |
| First Level: | |
| Second Level: | |
| Third Level: | |
| Total Secondary Schools: | |
| Total Professional Schools | |
| Universities: | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|----------|----------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Number of Schools per Island: | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Pre-school | | Elementary | | | High-school | | Prof. | University | |
| | Pub | Priv | 1 | 2 | 3 | Pub | Priv | | Pub | Priv |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Students Enrolled: | | | | | |
| Year: | Pre-School | Elementary | High-school | Prof. | University |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Teachers | | | | | | | |
| Year | Pre-School | Elementary | | | High-School | Prof. | University |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | |

Medical Services:
A wide range of health services are provided under the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service, which operates an 8-bed hospital, with services such as x-rays, anaesthetics, dentistry, and midwifery services. Specialized cases and births are handled in Perth. The Christmas Island hospital is regularly visited by specialist doctors from the mainland. The hospital is publicly funded, so service is free to Australian citizens and permanent residents of Christmas Island; however, residents are strongly encouraged to hold insurance that covers medical evacuation to the mainland. A standard medical evacuation can cost \$15,000 (Australian), while an emergency evacuation to Perth can cost anywhere from \$28,000-\$54,000. Besides the high cost of medical evacuations, the lack of flights to Christmas Island can be problematic insofar that many tests and assessments handled on the island are sent to Perth for analysis. For example, an x-ray conducted on the island can take up to 10 days to be flown to Perth for assessment. This can lead to an unfortunate delay in medical diagnosis. Christmas Island also has a licensed chemist (pharmacist). The island is devoid of common tropical diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever, and vaccinations are not typically required for those travelling to the island.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

History:

Christmas Island received its name as a result of its first recorded sighting, by Captain William Mynors on 25 December 1643. The first recorded landing on Christmas Island occurred in 1688 when Captain William Dampier of Great Britain landed with 2 crewmen. After the island was surveyed in the 1870s the British annexed on 6 June 1888. The first settlement occurred in November 1888 with the central purpose of collecting food and timber supplies for Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Development has been closely interlinked with phosphate mining. The British government granted joint rights for 99 years to George Clunies-Ross and John Murray, in exchange for royalties, in 1891. In 1897 the Christmas Island Phosphate Company formed, staffed by imported labour (200 Chinese labourers, 8 managers from Europe, and 5 Sikh policemen) because there was no indigenous population. The first major shipment of phosphate left in 1900. Following the Second World War, during which time the island was occupied by Japan, Christmas Island came under control of the newly created British colony of Singapore. In 1957 Australia acquired the island in exchange for £2.9 million in compensation. Beginning in the 1980s the Commonwealth has undertaken a process of normalisation with its territories. This meant that the federal government committed itself to providing access to the same services and conditions as those living in comparable communities on the mainland. In 1984 the benefits of Australian citizenship were extended to the islanders in the form of social service benefits and the ability to vote in Commonwealth elections. Taxation was also introduced. A further step was taken in 1991 when the Commonwealth and Christmas Island Assembly endorsed the "Proposed Package of Changes Extending to the Residents of Christmas Island Rights, Opportunities and Obligations Equivalent to Those of their Fellow Australians in Comparable Communities." This was followed by the Territories Law Reform Act 1992, which replaced the Singapore-era law with modern Australian law. It further extended many of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations enjoyed by mainland Australians to the population of Christmas Island.

Referenda:

N/A

Recent Significant Events:

Economic Development: The island has long suffered from high unemployment. Furthermore, it has traditionally been dependent upon large-scale projects for its economy. In the mid-1990s there was a casino/resort that employed approximately 350 workers. The casino/resort was a cornerstone in the local economy. Attracting wealthy "high rollers" from Indonesia as its core clientele, it resulted in an increased frequency of flights into the island. It also had substantial spin-offs on the local economy. This casino/resort went into receivership in 1998, and has not yet been reopened. At the time of its closing, it had 156 guest rooms and suites [in 2000, there were only 140 beds available on the island in all the other tourist lodgings], a bar and 2 restaurants, 2 nightclubs, and a swimming pool, among other attractions. The island's population has tumbled rapidly since the casino/resort's closure. Phosphate mining remains a key aspect of the Christmas Island economy. The government in 1987, citing droughts and a nearly exhausted supply of high-grade phosphates, closed the mines. The workers reopened the mine in 1991. Recent data from Phosphate Resources Limited reveals that the current supply will be exhausted by 2006. There is belief that there are sufficient phosphates located elsewhere on the island to continue mining for another 20 years. It is hoped that the creation of a satellite launching facility, announced in June 2001 by the Asia Pacific Space Centre, will lead to major improvements in the island economy. This spaceport, estimated to cost \$800 million in construction, is expected to create upwards of 550 jobs, and launch at least 10 vehicles per year, when fully functional. The spaceport was originally expected to commence in 2002 and be completed by 2004; however, the developer is still seeking investors. The Commonwealth, which has announced up to \$100 million in aid, continues to maintain its support for the project. This will be the first fully commercial space launch facility in the world. Construction has started for the federally funded Immigration Reception and Processing Centre. This facility will have a capacity for up to 1,200 asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, and is expected to open in late 2006. This is an important site because Australia maintains a policy of mandatory, non-reviewable detention for asylum seekers and refugees. Tourism is small-scale, with approximately 1,000 tourists annually. This is viewed as a potential growth area.

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

Sources:

2006 Census Tables: Christmas Island <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/ViewData?breadcrumb=LPTD&method=Place%20of%20Usual%20Residence&subaction=-1&issue=2006&producttype=Census%20Tables&documentproductno=IARE99001&textversion=false&documenttype=Details&collection=Census&javascript=true&topi=31st+March+2008>

CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> 31st March 2008

Useful Links:
IslandStudies.ca
www.upei.ca
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