

TASMANIA

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Introduction

Tasmania, the smallest of Australia's six states, is an island lying south of the south-east corner of the Australian mainland. Roughly triangular in shape, it is surrounded by smaller islands, the most important of which are King, Flinders and Bruny islands.

Including these smaller islands, the State has a total area of 68,331 km² and is separated from the Australian mainland by Bass Strait, a shallow sea with an average width of 240km.

Tasmania, or Van Diemen's Land as it was originally known, is the second oldest of the Australian colonies. Its capital, Hobart, near the mouth of the Derwent River on the south-east coast, was established in 1803 and early in its history a major whaling port and shipbuilding centre. More recently the city has come to function as the main administrative and commercial centre of the State.

Tasmania's population of 456,600 is divided almost equally between the north and the south. About 40 per cent of Tasmanians live in and around Hobart, which has a population of close to 50,000. The population pattern has resulted from geographical, historical and commercial factors which have led to the development of a number of relatively large centres on the island's north coast. These serve as centres for the agricultural and industrial activities typical of the region and include Launceston, Devonport and Burnie.

Geography

Tasmania is the most mountainous of Australian States. It is distinctive not so much for the height of its mountains, which rarely exceed 1500m, but for their domination of the landscape because the proportion of mountainous country to total area is particularly high.

The island is dominated by a central plateau sloping south-east from an average level of 1000 m in the south. On the western edge, it gives way to a range of mountains running parallel to the west coast. This region is sparsely populated and contains the State's main mining areas.

Between the central plateau and a mountainous region in the north-east corner of the State lies an area known as the Midlands, one of Tasmania's richest agricultural areas. The Midlands open to the south-east on to another low plateau which is another important agricultural region.

Climate

Tasmania lies between latitudes 40 degrees and 43.5 degrees south, and its climate is temperate maritime. The State's location on the northern edge of the 'Roaring Forties' (a westerly airstream), plus its mountainous terrain, produce marked variations of climate, particularly of rainfall. Tasmania has the highest average rainfall of any Australian State. Annual rainfall can be as high 3600mm in the west and as low as 500mm in the east. In the west and north-west, maximum rainfall is received in winter. In the east and south-east, rainfall is more evenly distributed throughout the year.

Economy

Agriculture is an important part of Tasmania's economy, and agricultural establishments occupy about 29 per cent of Tasmania's total land area. The most fertile regions of the State lie along the north-west and east and along the river valleys of the Midlands and south-east plateau.

There is a considerable diversity in the State's agricultural activity. Beef cattle establishments are distributed throughout the State, sheep are run mainly in the Midlands and south-east plateau regions, and dairy cattle and pigs are centred in the north and north-west areas.

Sheep numbers have increased to 5.3 million and the State produces more than 20,000 tonnes of wool a year. About 400,000 cattle are kept for meat and over 135,000 for milk. Dairying is an important part of agricultural activity, with dairy products contributing about 15 per cent of the total value of agricultural production.

Although the State's apple crop has declined considerably over the past 10 years to fewer than 60,000 tonnes, apples remain a significant crop. Vegetable growing, mainly for the processing industry, is well established in the north-east and north-west regions. Tasmania produces about 25 per cent of the Australian potato crop, worth about \$60 million. Hops, peas and French beans are among the other crops.

In recent years, marketing difficulties in many of the traditional areas, especially orchard, dairy and beef production, have prompted many farmers to investigate alternative livestock types and crops. These include goats, mainly

for cashmere and mohair fibre production, and deer for the venison market. Leading alternative crops in commercial production include oil poppies for the pharmaceutical industry and lavender. Other essential oil crops under development include peppermint, fennel, boronia and pyrethrum.

Fishing is another important primary industry and the annual catch includes scale fish, shark, scallops, oysters, abalone, and crayfish (southern rock lobster). Gross value of production is about \$150 million.

Tasmania is well endowed with natural resources. About 40 per cent of the State is covered by forest and most of the timber cut is native hardwood, but plantations of exotic softwoods are being established. As well as providing raw materials for the building and construction industries, the forests are exploited for paper production (newsprint, fine and writing papers), wood pulp, hardboard, and plywood.

Tasmania also has significant mineral deposits. The richest are in the rugged western region of the State and more than 2 million tonnes each of iron ore pellets and scheelite-concentrate are produced annually. Latest available figures show that 632,000 tonnes of raw coal and 356,000 tonnes of washed coal are produced annually. Smaller quantities of zinc-concentrate, tin-concentrate, copper, silver and gold are produced. Additionally there are deposits of black coal and lead. Sulphuric acid is produced in the south.

King Island, off the north-west tip of the State, has a large scheelite industry and is Australia's main producer of tungsten. The island has a thriving kelp industry. It is the world's largest single producer of alginates, supplying about one third of the world's need.

The State's tourism industry - worth more than \$530 million a year and employing more than 17,000 Tasmanians - is continually growing. Recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showed a 11.4 per cent occupancy increase which translated into a \$1.6 million increase in takings.

Industrial development

Abundance of high country and rainfall have created ideal conditions for hydro-electric power generation and the ready availability of cheap power has been a major factor in determining the development of some industries. The electrolytic production of metals such as aluminium provides a leading example.

Tasmania's electricity requirements are provided by the Hydro-Electric Commission from a system based almost entirely on hydro installations. The total installed generator capacity is more than 2 million kW, of which 90 per cent is supplied by the hydro network.

Manufacturing remains one of the main contributors to the local economy. It accounts for almost 20 per cent of the State's gross domestic product at factor cost, second to the government-dominated public administration, defence and community sectors. Manufacturing employs around 17 per cent of Tasmania's workforce producing a wide range of goods, including food, textiles, clothing, footwear, wood and paper products, chemicals, metals, transport equipment, industrial machines, and household appliances.

Three areas account for most manufacturing in Tasmania: food and beverages; wood, wood products and furniture; and paper, paper products, print-

ing and publishing. They account for just over 60 per cent of the manufacturing turnover.

Communication and transport within the State are helped by a well-developed road system. Air and sea connections exist with the Australian mainland.

Education

Children must attend school between the ages of six and 16. Government primary and secondary schools are free and largely co-educational while primary and secondary education are also available through private or church organisations.

Tertiary education is provided by the University of Tasmania at Hobart and Launceston and the Australian Maritime College, Australia's centre for maritime studies. Technical and further education, which includes adult education, is provided at colleges at Hobart, Launceston, Devonport, Burnie and Queenstown. Other adult education centres are in Smithton, Scottsdale, Campbell Town, Oatlands and Huonville. Correspondence courses are available for isolated students and others unable to attend regular classes.

Government

Tasmania elects 12 senators and five members of the House of Representatives to the Australian Parliament in Canberra. The State has its own State Parliament, which consists of two chambers - a Legislative Council, or upper house, of 19 members, and a House of Assembly of 35 members. Tasmania

has a Governor who is the direct representative of the monarch. A system of local government is responsible for the control of certain works, building and servicing, water supply and recreational facilities.

Hobart

Hobart, founded in 1803, is the second-oldest of Australia's State capitals. Situated about 20 km from the mouth of the River Derwent in the south-east of the State, it is spread over about 100 km² on both sides of the Derwent. Its western limit is marked by Mount Wellington, 1269m. The city experiences mild summers and cool to cold winters and the, mountain, often snow-capped in winter, is its most prominent landmark. The city's population is nearly 50 000.

Hobart's modern deep-water port can handle large ships and is a terminal for the freighters that trade between Tasmania and mainland Australia. Japanese long-line and squid-fishing boats working in the waters around Tasmania regularly use Hobart to replenish supplies.

The city is the home of several large industries, including zinc, sulphuric acid and superphosphate production, fruit preservation and processing, paper and confectionery. The city is also the centre of a large agricultural area specialising in apple and other fruit growing, and cattle and sheep grazing.

Hobart is served by a State Government-controlled system of buses operating in all suburbs. The eastern shores of the Derwent are linked by the five-lane concrete-arch Tasman Bridge and the four-lane Bowen Bridge. An ex-

tensive road system connects Hobart with other cities and towns in Tasmania.

The city has several private and public hospitals, the largest of which is the State-run Royal Hobart Hospital.

Public primary and secondary schools and technical colleges and several private schools cater for Hobart's educational needs and the University of Tasmania provides comprehensive tertiary courses. Hobart has a large public library and a State-supported museum and art gallery, as well as many privately owned museums, galleries and exhibition halls.

Hobart retains a strong flavour of its past in the many colonial buildings still standing in the city. Among the most important are Parliament House, completed about 1840 and formerly the Customs House; the Town Hall; the State Government offices in Franklin Square; Government House on the Queens Domain; the Theatre Royal, Australia's oldest theatre, built in 1837; Anglesea Barracks, begun in 1814, the oldest military establishment in the country still occupied by the Army; a terrace of waterfront warehouses at Salamanca Place dating from the city's whaling days; and several churches.

All these buildings are of interest, as is Battery Point and Australia's oldest surviving colonial village. Dotted with antique shops, old homes converted to restaurants, museums and carefully preserved houses, it is a tourist drawcard. The warehouses of Salamanca Place have been converted to unusual shops and restaurants and on Saturday mornings, an open-air market is held in Salamanca Place offering a wide range of goods, including wood carvings, leathersgoods, paintings, clothes and fruit and vegetables. Musicians enter-

tain shoppers as they wander through the market.

Hobart's main parks and gardens include the Royal Botanic Gardens, the Queens Domain-Franklin Square, Parliament Square, Fitzroy Gardens and St David's Park, the city's original burial ground.

Beaches border both sides of the Derwent, a popular place for water activities, and Tasmania's main surfing venue, Clifton Beach, is a few kilometres south of the city. Hobart is well served for entertainment with theatres, cinemas, discos and hotels and has Australia's first licensed gambling casino at Wrest Point, which includes the nation's largest convention and entertainment centre.

An important annual event is the Sydney-Hobart yacht race which finishes in Hobart just before New Year's Day and hundreds of city residents turn out to greet the yachts as they move up the Derwent.

Hobart takes great pride in its history and a lot of time, money and effort is spent to preserve its links with the past. Many of the historic buildings have been classified by the National Trust and, in much of the immediate city environs, this has tended to shape present building patterns.

Source: DFAT