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# CHAPTER 1

## FROM PRE-HISTORY TO FEDERATION

### Early knowledge and discovery of Australia

#### Pre-history

Man entered the Australian continent from the South-East Asian area during the last glaciation at least 40,000 years ago, when sea levels were lower than in recent times. Nevertheless, these first migrations would have entailed sea voyages of at least some 60 kilometres. Settlement was well established at least 25,000 to 30,000 years ago, and by 20,000 years ago almost all the continent was inhabited.

The original Australians, the Aborigines, probably achieved maximum exploitation of local resources within the limits of their technology. Population balance had apparently been attained long before European settlement, and anthropologists accept that there were at least some 250,000 to 300,000 Aborigines in Australia in 1788.

The physical barriers of distance and aridity within Australia itself were cause in part of the cultural isolation and linguistic diversity of its people. European exploration and settlement was for most Aboriginal societies their first contact with an outside culture. The impact of this settlement led rapidly to the disappearance of the traditional Aboriginal way of life in those areas where the colonists established themselves most successfully.

More detailed notes on Aboriginal culture can be found in Year Book No. 63.

#### Terra Australis

Although references to an Austral land are found in the works of writers in the early centuries after Christ, and evidence appears in maps, globes, and manuscripts from the Middle Ages onward, there is no definite evidence connecting this so-called *Terra Australis* with Australia. Cornelius Wytfliet's map of 1597, however, indicates roughly the eastern and western coasts of Australia, as well as the Gulf of Carpentaria.

#### Early discoveries of Australia

The Portuguese may have discovered part of the Australian coast before 1542, and it has been suggested that the Arabs may have come to Australia even earlier, though there is no evidence to support this theory. For all practical purposes, however, the coastal exploration of Australia may be taken as having begun with the Spaniards and the Dutch.

#### Discoveries by the Spanish

In 1606 the Spaniard, Quiros, on reaching the island that has retained the name of Espiritu Santo (the largest island of the New Hebrides group), thought he had discovered the great land of the south and therefore named the group *La Australia del Spiritu Santo*. After leaving the New Hebrides, Quiros sailed eastward, but Torres, his second-in-command, took a westerly course and passed through the strait that now bears his name. In all probability he sighted the Australian continent, although no mention of it is made in his records.

#### Discoveries by the Dutch

A map published by Cornelius Wytfliet in 1597 had indicated roughly the eastern and western coast of Australia, as well as the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The Dutch first explored the coast of Australia when, during 1606, the yacht *Duyfken* having coasted along the southern shores of New Guinea, followed the west coast of Cape York Peninsula as far as Cape Keer-Weer (Turn Again). Subsequent visits were made by Hartog (1616), de Houtman (1619), Carstensz (1623), Thijssen (1627), Pelsaert (1629), Tasman (1642) and others, so that by 1644 the Dutch had discovered and explored the Australian coast from Fowler's Bay in the South to the tip of Cape York Peninsula, as well as the south of Tasmania.

More detailed notes on discoveries by the Dutch can be found in Year Book No. 63.

### Discoveries by the English

In the meantime, the English had made their first appearance on the Australian coast in 1688, when the north-westerly shores were visited by William Dampier as supercargo of the *Cygnets*, a trading vessel whose crew had turned buccaneers. In 1699 he again visited Australia in command of H.M.S. *Roebuck* and, on his return to England, published an account in which a description was given of trees, flowers, birds, and reptiles observed, and of encounters with natives.

At the end of the seventeenth century it was uncertain whether Tasmania and New Zealand were parts of Australia or whether they were separated from it but themselves formed part of a great Antarctic Continent. Lieutenant (later Captain) James Cook's first voyage, though undertaken primarily for the purpose of observing from Tahiti the transit of Venus, had also the objective of ascertaining whether the unexplored part of the southern hemisphere was only an immense mass of water or whether it contained another continent. In command of H.M.S. *Endeavour*, and accompanied by botanist Sir Joseph Banks, naturalist Dr Daniel Solander, astronomer Charles Green, draughtsmen and servants, Cook, after observing the transit of Venus at Tahiti, turned towards New Zealand, sighting that land on 7 October 1769 in the neighbourhood of Poverty Bay.

On 20 April 1770, Cook sighted the Australian mainland at a place he called Point Hicks, naming it after his first-lieutenant, who first saw it. Coasting northwards, on 29 April 1770 he discovered Botany Bay, where he landed. Cook sailed along the coast in a northerly direction for nearly 2,100 kilometres until 11 June 1770, when the *Endeavour* was seriously damaged by striking a coral reef in the vicinity of Trinity Bay. Repairs occupied nearly two months, and the *Endeavour* then again set her course to the north, through Torres Strait.

More detailed notes on Cook's voyages can be found in Year Book No. 63.

## The annexation of Australia

### Possession taken of eastern coast of Australia by Captain Cook

On 22 August 1770, the history of Australia was brought into definite political connection with western civilisation when Captain Cook took possession 'of the whole eastern coast, from latitude 38°S. to this place, latitude 104°S. in right of His Majesty King George the Third', i.e. over only what now is Victoria, the eastern parts of New South Wales and Queensland.

### Annexation of eastern part of Australian continent and Tasmania

Formal possession on behalf of the British Crown of the whole of the eastern part of the Australian continent and Tasmania was not taken until 26 January 1788, when Captain Phillip's commission, first issued to him on 12 October 1786 and amplified on 2 April 1787, was read to the people whom he had brought with him in the 'First Fleet'. The commission appointed Phillip 'Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief in and over our territory called New South Wales, extending from the Northern Cape or extremity of the coast called Cape York, in the latitude of ten degrees thirty-seven minutes south, to the southern extremity of the said territory of New South Wales or South Cape, in the latitude of forty-three degrees thirty-nine minutes south and of all the country inland westward as far as the one hundred and thirty-fifth degree of east longitude reckoning from the meridian of Greenwich, including all the islands adjacent in the Pacific Ocean within the latitudes aforesaid of ten degrees thirty-seven minutes south and forty-three degrees thirty-nine minutes south'.

By the middle of 1829, the whole territory, now known as Australia, had been constituted a dependency of the United Kingdom.

For more detailed notes on the annexation of Australia, see Year Book No. 63.

## The exploration of Australia

### Early exploration

From 1788, when Governor Phillip established his colony on the shores of Port Jackson, expeditions began to explore the immediate area of settlement in search of good farming land. Among suitable locations discovered were those just above the head of navigation of the Parramatta River, where the settlement of Rose Hill (later Parramatta) was established in November 1788, and the alluvial flats of the Hawkesbury River, which were explored in 1789.

Other minor exploratory journeys in the 1790s and early 1800s included John Wilson's two investigations of various parts of the Southern Highlands of New South Wales, Lieutenant John Shortland's discovery of the Hunter River (and the future site of Newcastle), and expeditions by Henry Hacking (1794), George Bass (1796), Francis Barrallier (1802) and George Caley (1804) to penetrate the mountain foothills west of the Nepean River.

By the end of the first two decades of colonisation, settlement stretched along the east coast from the Hawkesbury River to the cedar forests of Illawarra, but for barely 65 kilometres inland, where it was compacted by the seemingly impenetrable barrier presented by the Blue Mountains.

The encumberment on the existing land persisted until 1813, when Gregory Blaxland, Lieutenant William Lawson and William Charles Wentworth succeeded in finding a route through the mountain range, thereby allowing the later exploratory parties of George William Evans (1813 and 1815), John Oxley (1817 and 1818), Allan Cunningham (1823 and 1827), Hamilton Hume and William Hovell (1824) and others to open the way for expansion from Port Phillip in the south to the Darling Downs in the north.

#### **Exploring the eastern rivers and to the south**

Between 1828 and 1841, exploration of south-eastern Australia was concerned mainly with establishing whether or not there was a large river system emptying into the sea on the south coast.

Between late 1828 and early 1829, an expedition led by Charles Sturt followed the Macquarie River to its meeting with the Darling River and explored part of the Castlereagh River. On his next expedition, in 1830, Sturt pieced together more of the network of waterways which make up the Murray-Darling system by following the Murrumbidgee River from Jugiong down to the river's meeting with the Murray, which he followed as far as Lake Alexandrina and Encounter Bay on the southern coastline. Three years later, Sturt completed his exploration of the Murray by investigating its upper reaches.

Meanwhile, Captain John MacArthur and others had discovered that merino sheep were naturally suited to the dry climate of the interior. The colony's wool industry flourished and, by 1831, 1,340,000 kilograms of fine wool was being exported annually. As a result of the wool boom, settlers became anxious to push further into the interior in search of new pastures.

During three expeditions between 1831 and 1836, Thomas Livingstone Mitchell explored north of the Liverpool Plains and discovered the Macintyre River; discovered well-grassed country at the junction of the Darling and Bogan Rivers; and explored the Lachlan River to its meeting with the Murrumbidgee River, the Murray to its meeting with the Darling River, and south and south-east of the Murray through the region he called 'Australia Felix' to Discovery Bay on the southern coast.

Gradually, the push south continued. In 1838, Angus McMillan discovered a practicable route from Monaro to the southern coastline, and, in 1840, Paul Edmund de Strzelecki made a journey from the Murrumbidgee River south to Melbourne, during which he discovered and named Mount Kosciuszko.

#### **Exploring the south**

By the mid-to late-1830s, all south-eastern Australia up to the present Queensland border had been explored and was sparsely settled.

In 1831, Captain Collet Barker landed at what was to become Port Adelaide and, by the late 'thirties, cattle-droving journeys undertaken by Joseph Hawdon, Charles Bonney, Charles Sturt and E. J. Eyre had established links between the settlement of Adelaide and the settlements in the east.

In August 1844, Charles Sturt led a sixteen-man expedition from Adelaide into the interior with instructions to investigate a theory that there was an inland sea. After much hardship and near disaster during what was a period of exceptional heat and drought in the region, Sturt found the channels of Cooper's Creek, part of the inland river system of Queensland, dispersed among grassy plains. However, with the waters drying up rapidly in the November (1845) heat and his health deteriorating, Sturt was forced to retreat, declaring the land to be worthless.

#### **Exploring north-eastern Australia**

In 1844-45, Ludwig Leichhardt left Jimbour Station on the Darling Downs to lead an expedition on an epic 144 month, 4,800 kilometres journey north and north-west to Port Essington, thereby winning a reputation for opening up large tracts of rich land. In 1848, however, he and his party disappeared without trace while on another expedition attempting to cross the continent to Perth. Paradoxically much valuable incidental exploration was carried out by a number of search parties.

Meanwhile, Thomas Mitchell's fourth expedition, in 1846, had failed in its objective of finding a river which flowed to the northern coast, but led to the opening up of good pastoral country in the Maranoa and Barcoo Rivers regions.

In 1848, E. B. Kennedy was speared to death by local Aboriginals while exploring the interior of Cape York Peninsula from Rockingham Bay to the Cape.

In the mid-to late-1850s, Angus C. Gregory led two expeditions: one, in 1855-56, across northern Australia in a west-east direction from the mouth of the Victoria River to the east coast at Port Curtis; and the other, in 1858, from the Barcoo River south to Adelaide.

Exploration of what was by then the new colony of Queensland was continued through the 1860s and 1870s by George Dalrymple, Ernest Henry, the Macdonald brothers, William Hann, James Venture Mulligan, R. L. Jack and others, which led to the founding of such towns as Bowen, Rockhampton and Mackay, and the opening up of much valuable farming land.

#### **Across the continent south to north**

In the late 1850s and early 1860s, most exploratory interest was concentrated on Central Australia, especially after April 1860, when John McDouall Stuart raised a Union Jack on what he considered to be the geographic centre of the continent, Central Mount Stuart. The South Australian Government offered a large reward to the first explorer to cross Australia from south to north.

In August 1860, Robert O'Hara Burke and W. J. Wills set out from Melbourne with a large party to take up the challenge. On 11 February 1861, four expedition members (Burke, Wills, John King and Charles Gray) reached a mangrove swamp on what appeared to be the coast at the Gulf of Carpentaria (though they could not see the sea). After a succession of sorry incidents, however, Burke, Wills and Gray died of exposure and starvation on the return journey.

As in the case of Leichhardt, search parties sent out after Burke and Wills discovered much valuable land in their own right: John McKinlay led an expedition from Adelaide to the north-east; William Landsborough from the Gulf of Carpentaria southward; and Frederick Walker from Rockhampton to the west.

Meanwhile, John McDouall Stuart had set out from Adelaide on his own expedition across Australia and, in July 1862, reached the sea at Van Diemen Gulf.

#### **Exploring the west**

As early as 1697, Willem de Vlamingh of the Dutch ship *Geelvinck* had carried out limited inland exploration on the west coast of Australia in the vicinity of what he named the Swan River. However, the first major inland exploration in the colony of Western Australia took place 130 years later when, in 1827, Edmund Lockyer explored the watershed of the Kalbar River to within about 60 kilometres of its mouth.

In the 1830s, exploration and settlement was mainly to the south of Perth (founded in 1829), although, as the soil grew richer, dense hardwood forests made land-clearing difficult. Among the explorers during this decade were Ensign Robert Dale, who found the rich agricultural land of the Avon Valley (1830); Lieutenant H. W. Bunbury, who opened the way to rich pastoral flats in the south-west (1836); and Captain George Grey, who discovered the rich hinterland that now serves Geraldton (1839).

During the 1840s, J. S. Roe, who had also conducted several exploratory journeys during the 1830s, discovered good grazing country while on a 2,900 kilometres York-Pallinup River-Russell Range-Bunbury-Perth trek (1848).

In the 1850s and 1860s, the south-west was extensively occupied as far south as Albany and Kojonup, while to the north the Greenough district quickly became the principal wheat-producing region.

Due largely to the efforts of Grey in the 1830s, the Gregory brothers in the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s, and the Forrest brothers in the 1860s and 1870s, pastoralists were able gradually to push further north to occupy the Murchison, Gascoyne and De Grey districts. By the 1880s, again due largely to exploration by the Forrest brothers, even the Kimberley region was being settled.

Meanwhile, journeys to, or in, the east and south-east of Western Australia by E. J. Eyre (1841), E. A. Delisser (1861), John Forrest (1870) and others had gradually filled in many 'blanks' in those directions also.

#### **Exploring the hinterland**

In 1875, Ernest Giles set out from Beltana, South Australia, and made a 4,000 kilometre journey to Perth. Two years previous, two other parties, led by Peter Egerton Warburton and W. C. Gosse respectively, had explored west from the MacDonnell Ranges to the Oakover River, and from Alice Springs to Perth.

Exploration of the hinterland was continued by W. P. Goddard (1890), J. H. Rowe (1895), A. W. Canning (1906) and others into the early twentieth century.

#### **Exploring Tasmania**

In 1793, Lieutenant John Hayes, commander of the *Duke of Clarence*, sailed up the Derwent River to become the first explorer to journey more than a few kilometres inland from the coast of Van Diemen's Land (by which name Tasmania was known until 1856). Then, as always, the island's rugged topography hindered any extensive exploration, and it was not until 1807 that Lieutenant Thomas Laycock crossed the island from Port Dalrymple to Hobart.

Much early exploration was carried out either with the encouragement of Lieutenant-Governor William Sorell (including expeditions aimed primarily at discovering the nature of the west coast and determining its suitability for a future penal settlement), or under the auspices of the Van Diemen's Land Company (which fostered efforts to find land suitable for agricultural settlement).

Some of the most noteworthy of Tasmania's early explorers were official surveyors, including John Oxley, G. W. Evans and Thomas Scott who, between 1820 and 1837, examined parts of the east, north-west and west coasts and, no doubt, influenced decisions to establish the infamous penal settlements at Macquarie Harbour (in 1822) and Port Arthur (in 1830).

Between the late 1820s and early 1840s a considerable amount of incidental exploration resulted both from expeditions to round up the remaining Tasmanian Aborigines following the declaration of martial law against them in 1828; and from the personal encouragement by Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Franklin of scientific expeditions to Tasmania in the late 1830s and early 1840s.

In the 1840s and 1850s, licensed surveyor N. L. Kentish was responsible for opening up the rich pastoral areas between the north-west coast and the first high mountains, while Assistant-Surveyor James Scott explored much of the north-east.

The 1860s and 1870s were marked by a number of exploratory journeys in search of minerals, including those of Charles Gould (1862), who found traces of silver, lead and gold in the Franklin and Gordon Valleys; James Smith (1871), who discovered tin at Mt. Bischoff, destined to become the richest mine of its kind in the world; and C. P. Sprent (1876–77), who found gold, copper, osmiridium and platinum while prospecting between the Arthur and Pieman Rivers.

## The establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia

### Federation

On 1 January 1901, the colonies, with the exception of New Zealand (see Year Book No. 63, page 5), were federated under the name of the 'Commonwealth of Australia', the designation of 'Colonies'—except in the case of the Northern Territory, to which the designation 'Territory' applied—being at the same time changed to that of 'States'.

### Transfer of the Northern Territory to the Commonwealth

On 7 December 1907, the Commonwealth and the State of South Australia entered into an agreement for the transfer of the Northern Territory to the Commonwealth, subject to approval by the Parliaments of the Commonwealth and the State. This approval was given by the South Australian Parliament under the Northern Territory Surrender Act, 1907 and by the Commonwealth Parliament under the *Northern Territory Acceptance Act* 1910. The Territory was formally transferred to the Commonwealth on 1 January 1911, and became the Northern Territory of Australia.

By Imperial Order in Council dated 23 July 1931, Ashmore Islands, known as Middle, East and West Islands, and Cartier Island, situated in the Indian Ocean off the north-west coast of Australia, were placed under the authority of the Commonwealth. The islands were accepted by the Commonwealth on 10 May 1934, in the *Ashmore and Cartier Islands Acceptance Act* 1933, under the name of the Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands. The Act authorised the Governor of Western Australia to make ordinances having the force of law in and in relation to the Territory. An amendment to the Act in July 1938 annexed the islands to the Northern Territory, whose laws, ordinances, and regulations, wherever applicable, thereupon applied. On the attainment of self-government by the Northern Territory on 1 July 1978, the Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands was retained as Commonwealth Territory.

The area of Ashmore Reef is approximately 150 square kilometres (to the limit of the reef), and it is situated 350 kilometres off the western coast of Australia and 850 kilometres west of Darwin. Cartier Island is approximately 9 square kilometres in area (to the limit of the reef), and is situated 290 kilometres off the western coast of Australia and 790 kilometres west of Darwin.

### Transfer of the Australian Capital Territory to the Commonwealth

On 18 October 1909, the Commonwealth and the State of New South Wales entered into an agreement for the surrender to and acceptance by the Commonwealth of an area of 2,359 square kilometres as the Seat of Government of the Commonwealth. In December 1909, Acts were passed by the Commonwealth and New South Wales Parliaments approving the agreement, and on 5 December 1910 a proclamation was issued vesting the territory in the Commonwealth on and from 1 January 1911. By the *Jervis Bay Territory Acceptance Act* 1915, an area of 73 square kilometres at Jervis Bay, surrendered by New South Wales according to an agreement made in 1913, was accepted by the Commonwealth and was transferred as from 4 September 1915.

### Present composition of Australia

In 1973, the total area of Australia and of the individual States and Territories was determined by the Division of National Mapping as 7,682,300 square kilometres. Some historical dates and the present areas of the several States and Territories and of Australia are shown below. For detailed notes on the creation of the several colonies, see Year Book No. 63, pages 4-5.

#### AUSTRALIA: COMPONENT STATES AND TERRITORIES

<i>State or Territory</i>	<i>Year of annexation</i>	<i>Year of first permanent settlement</i>	<i>Year of formation into separate Colony or Territory</i>	<i>Year in which responsible government was granted</i>	<i>Present area in km<sup>2</sup></i>
New South Wales . . . . .	1770	1788	1786	1855	801,600
Victoria . . . . .	1770	1834	1851	1855	227,600
Queensland . . . . .	1770	1824	1859	(a) 1859	1,727,200
South Australia . . . . .	1788	1836	1834	1856	984,000
Western Australia . . . . .	1829	1829	1829	1890	2,525,000
Tasmania . . . . .	1788	1803	1825	1855	67,800
Northern Territory . . . . .	..	..	(b) 1863	..	1,346,200
Australian Capital Territory . . . . .	..	..	(c) 1911	..	2,400
<b>Australia . . . . .</b>	..	..	..	(d)	<b>7,682,300</b>

(a) As part of New South Wales in 1855; as a separate colony in 1859.  
 (b) Previously part of New South Wales; brought under the jurisdiction of South Australia in 1863; transferred to the Commonwealth in 1911.  
 (c) Previously part of New South Wales.  
 (d) Constituted as from 1 January 1901.

### The external Territories of Australia

More detailed information on Australia's external Territories can be found in Chapter 27, The Territories of Australia.

#### Norfolk Island

In 1856, Norfolk Island was created a distinct and separate settlement under the jurisdiction of New South Wales. Later, in 1896, it was made a dependency under the Governor of that colony, and finally, by the passage of the *Norfolk Island Act* 1913, it was accepted as a Territory of the Commonwealth of Australia. The island is situated in latitude 29° 02' S., longitude 167° 57' E., and comprises an area approximately 36 square kilometres.

#### Australian Antarctic Territory

An Imperial Order in Council of 7 February 1933 placed under Australian authority 'all the islands and territories other than Adelie Land which are situated south of the 60° S. latitude and lying between the 160° E. longitude and the 45° E. longitude'.

The Order came into force with a proclamation issued by the Governor-General on 24 August 1936, after the passing of the *Australian Antarctic Territory Acceptance Act* 1933 by the Commonwealth Parliament. The boundaries of Adelie Land were definitely fixed by a French Decree of 1 April 1938 as latitude 60° S., longitude 136° E., and longitude 142° E.

#### Heard and McDonald Islands

Heard Island and the McDonald Islands, all about 4,100 kilometres south-west of Fremantle, were transferred from United Kingdom to Australian control as from 26 December 1947. Heard Island is approximately 43 kilometres long and 20 kilometres wide, while the McDonald Islands, about 43 kilometres to the west of Heard Island, are small, rocky and precipitous.

#### Cocos (Keeling) Islands

The *Cocos (Keeling) Islands Act* 1955 provided for the acceptance of the Cocos Islands as a Territory under the authority of the Commonwealth of Australia and was parallel to an Act of the United Kingdom Parliament transferring authority over the islands to the Commonwealth. Consequent on the passing of these Acts, Her Majesty, by Order in Council, specified 23 November 1955 as the date of transfer. From that date the islands came under Australian administration. Day to day affairs in the Territory are managed by an Administrator under delegation from the Minister for Home Affairs. The 27 coral islands of the Territory have an area of about 14 square kilometres, and are situated in the Indian Ocean in latitude 12° 05' S. and longitude 96° 53' E.

**Christmas Island**

The *Christmas Island Act* 1958 provided for the acceptance of Christmas Island as a Territory under the authority of the Commonwealth of Australia. Complementary legislation having been passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the island was transferred to the Australian administration on 1 October 1958. Day to day affairs in the Territory are managed by an Administrator under delegation from the Minister for Home Affairs. The area of the island is about 135 square kilometres and it is situated in the Indian Ocean in latitude 10° 25' S. and longitude 105° 40' E.

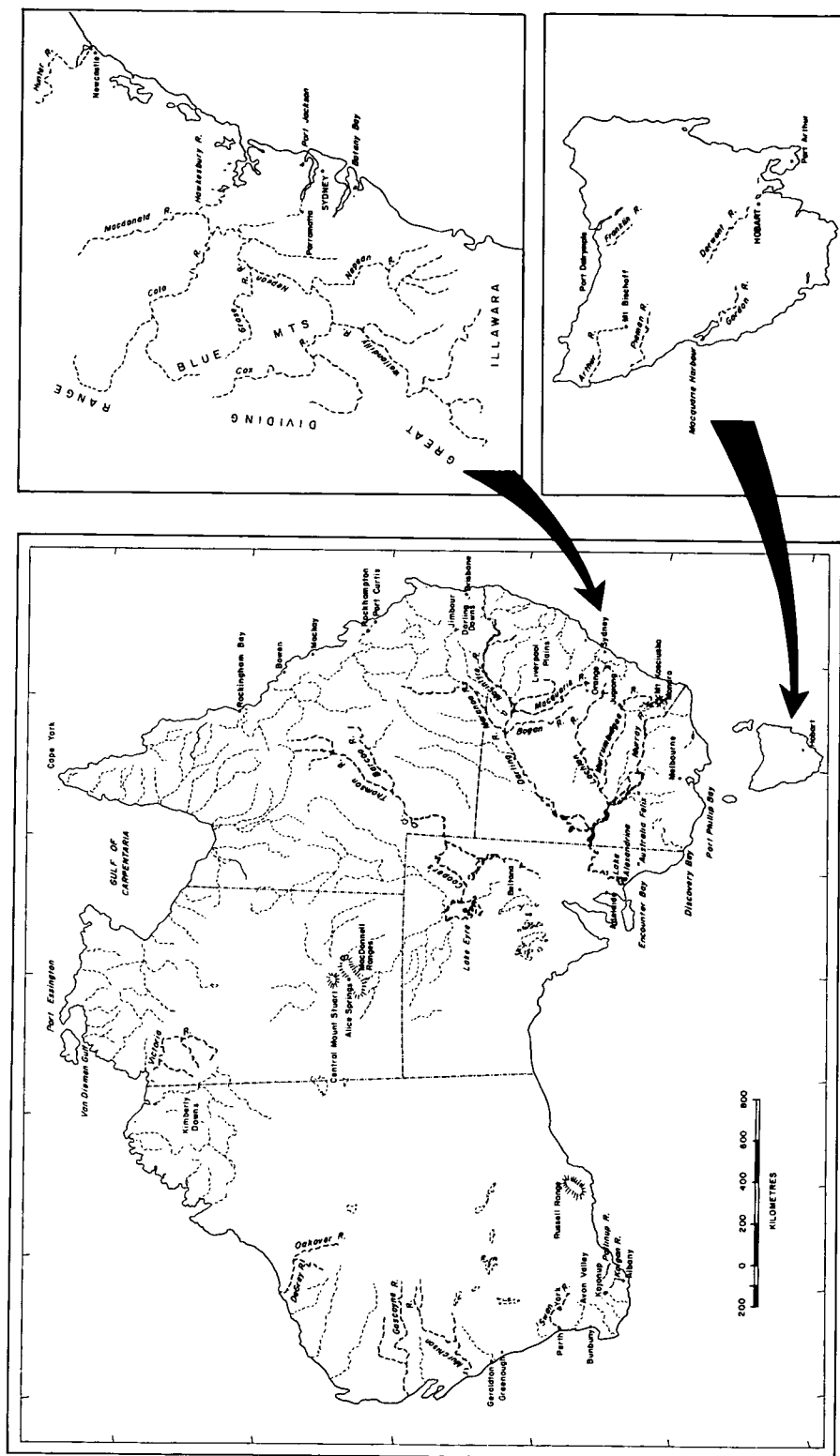
**Coral Sea Islands**

The Coral Sea Islands were declared to be a Territory of the Commonwealth of Australia by the *Coral Sea Islands Act* 1969. The scattered reefs and islands, often little more than sandbanks, spread over a sea area of about 1 million square kilometres with only a few square kilometres of actual land area, between the Great Barrier Reef, latitude 12° S. and longitude 157° 10' E. The Minister for Home Affairs is responsible for matters affecting the Territory.

**The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia**

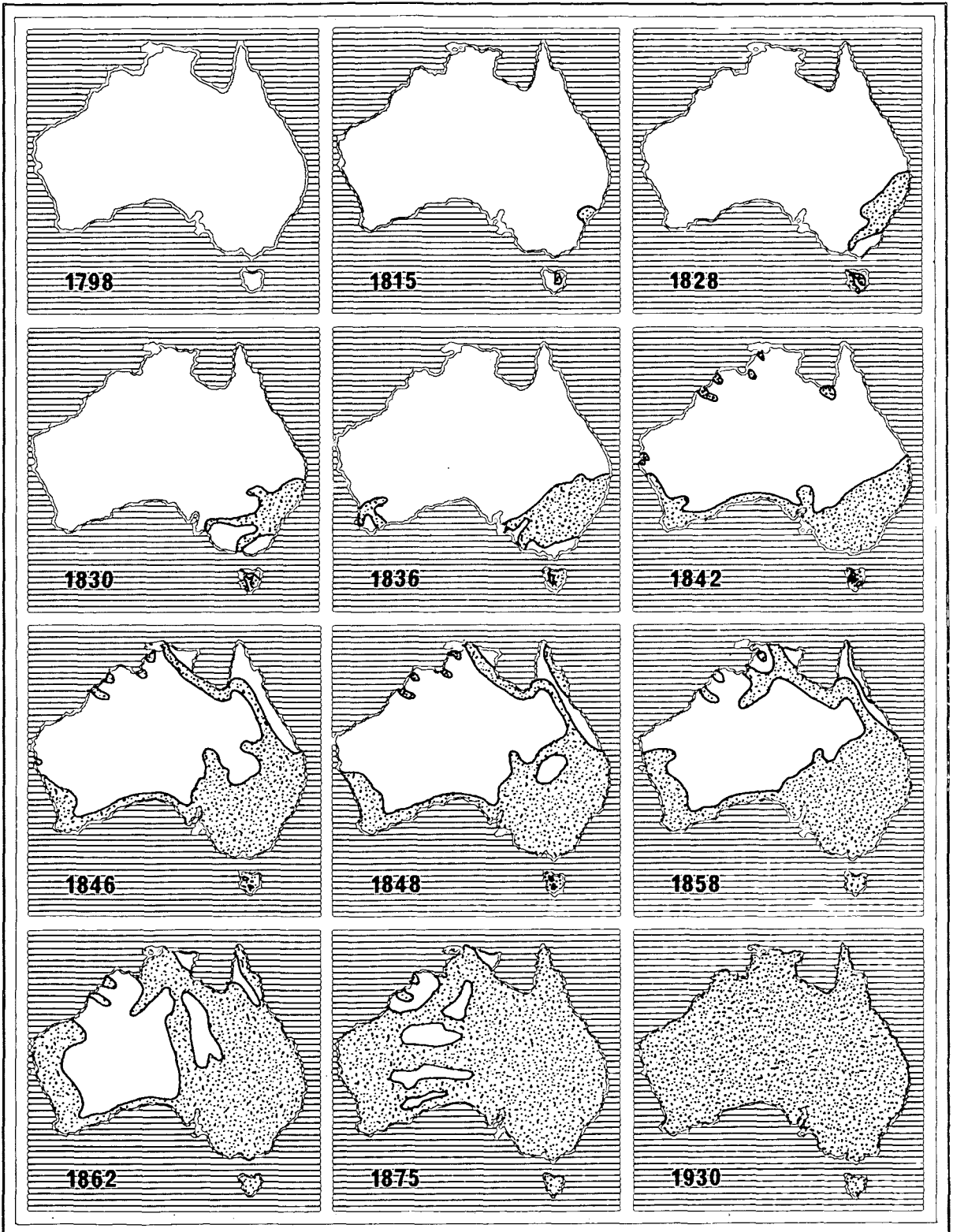
Information regarding the development of the Constitutions of the various Colonies (now States), together with a brief history of the federal movement in Australia, was embodied in this chapter in earlier issues of the Year Book. A complete copy of the revised Constitution is included in Year Book No. 62, pages 7–24.





*These maps show the locations of places and landforms referred to in the accompanying notes on the exploration of Australia.*

**PLATE 2**



*This map series shows the work of the explorers at various significant times in Australia's history.*

