

Australia

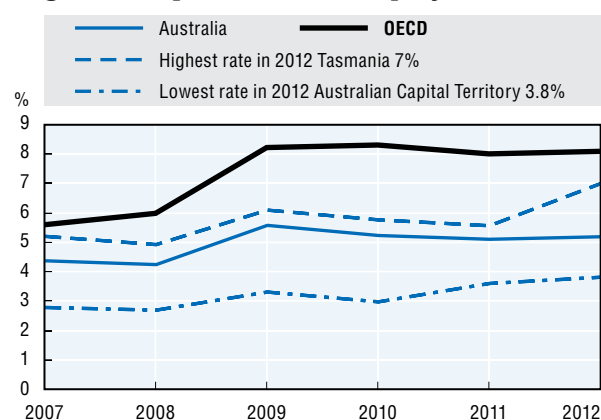
Recent policy developments

- In September 2013, with the change of government, a new ministry responsible for regional development was created: the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, absorbing the regional development tasks of the previous ministry, the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport. The new ministry is responsible for infrastructure, regional development, local government, territories and administration of the National Disaster Recovery Taskforce.
- Given that more than three-quarters of Australia's population lives in urban centres of 100 000 inhabitants or more, there has been an increasing interest in an urban agenda. This has resulted in the 2011 National Urban Policy, which recognises the critical roles that governments, the private sector and individuals play in planning, managing and investing in cities, and also in the recently created Urban Transportation Strategy (2013), focusing on the urban transport infrastructure needs of Australian cities.
- The Corporate Plan 2012-17 of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) focuses on productivity growth, research capacity and supporting rural industries.

Government structure	Municipal-level governments	Intermediate-level governments	Regional or state-level governments
Federation	565		8
Regional development policy			
Lead ministry(ies) or committees	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development		
Regional development framework	While state governments have their own regional development initiatives, the federal government supports community development and engagement.		
Urban development policy			
Lead ministry(ies) or committees	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development		
Urban policy framework or strategy	The 2011 National Urban Policy defines three goals of productivity, sustainability and liveability for major urban centres.		
Rural development policy			
Lead ministry(ies) or committees	Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development		
Rural policy framework or strategy	The rural/regional agenda includes improving the well-being of rural areas through the construction, expansion and enhancement of economic infrastructure.		

Note: The functional urban areas have not been identified in Australia.

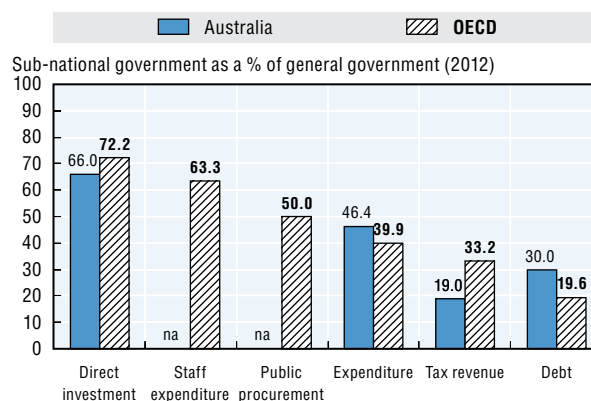
Regional disparities in unemployment trends



In recent years, Australia has maintained a low rate of unemployment, and regional disparities in unemployment were among the lowest in OECD countries (24th out of 34 countries).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933107275>

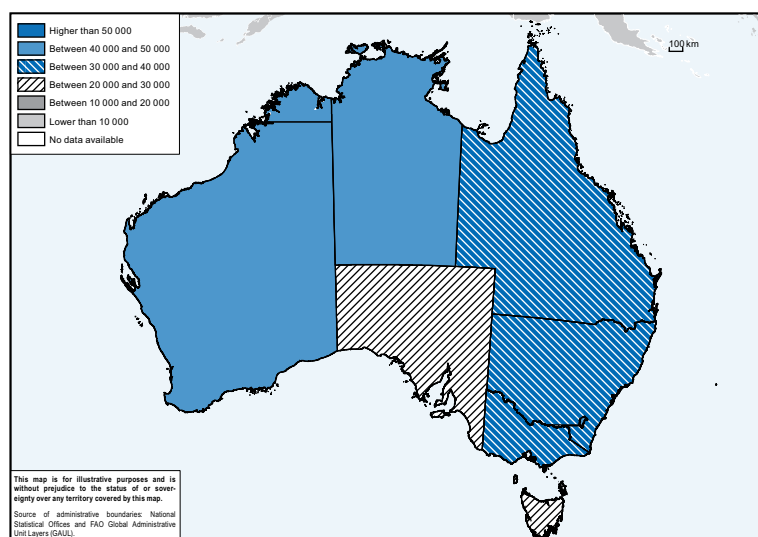
The role of sub-national governments in public finance



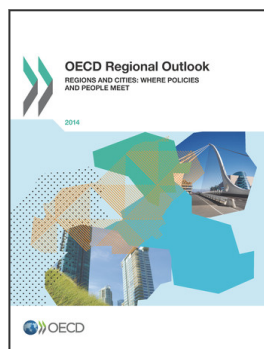
In Australia, 66% of total public investment was undertaken by sub-national governments (SNG), as compared to 72% in the OECD area as a whole. In recent years, despite the economic downturn, SNG investment in Australia increased from USD 964 per capita in 2007 to USD 1 047 per capita in 2011, whereas it decreased in the OECD area by around USD 46 per capita.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933107294>

Regional differences in GDP per capita levels



In the previous decade, GDP growth in all Australian regions was above the OECD average; regional growth varied from +6.2% annually in Western Australia to +1.5% in New South Wales, the 5th largest regional range among OECD countries.



From:

OECD Regional Outlook 2014

Regions and Cities: Where Policies and People Meet

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264201415-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2014), "Australia", in *OECD Regional Outlook 2014: Regions and Cities: Where Policies and People Meet*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264201415-15-en>

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