



Doing Business With WA

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Australia's Political Structure

The Commonwealth of Australia was formed on 1 January, 1901 when 6 former British Colonies – now six states – Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland and two territories – Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, agreed to form a union. The Australian Constitution, which lays down the framework for the Australian system of government, also took effect on this day.

The Australian Constitution has three branches:

- Legislative – contains the parliament, the body with the legislative power to make laws.
- Executive – administers of the law
- Judicial – allows for the establishment of the Country's courts of law and the appointment and removal of it's judges.

The Australian constitution sets out the responsibility of the government including areas of national importance such as taxation, defence, foreign affairs and immigration.

Commonwealth Parliament

The Commonwealth of Australia uses the Westminster system of government. The official Head of State is Queen Elizabeth II, represented in Australia by the Governor-General, Ms Quentin Bryce AC. The Governor-General is appointed by the Queen on advice of the Prime Minister of Australia.

The current Prime Minister of Australia is Kevin Rudd of the Australian Labour Party. In opposition is Malcom Turnbull of the Liberal Party.

Australia is a representative democracy. Voting in Australia is compulsory for citizens over the age of 18. The next election can occur within three years of the first sitting of the new Parliament, at a date selected by the incumbent government. The last election was held in 2007.

Visit the [Australian Government](#) website



State and Territory Government

The state and territory government are responsible for the powers not administered by the commonwealth government.

Each state and territory has its own parliament and its own constitution (which can be amended by its parliament), but they are bound by the national constitution.

The state and territories are responsible for matters which include: public health, education, roads, public land use, police, fire, ambulance services and local government within their State or Territory.

Visit the [Government of Western Australia](#) website

Local Government

Local governments are established by state and territory governments to take responsibility for a number of community services. Local government have a legislature and an executive but no judiciary. Their powers are defined by the state or territory government which established them. Local governments are also known as local councils.

Visit the Western Australia [Department of Local Government](#) website