A History Of Australia

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The Australian National Flag has three elements on a blue background: the Union Flag or Union Jack, the Commonwealth Star and the Southern Cross. The Union Jack in the upper left corner recognizes the history of British settlement. Below the Union Jack is a white Commonwealth or Federation star. It has seven points symbolizing the unity of the six states and the territories of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Early History

The first settlers arrived around 50,000 years ago. This was at a time when sea levels were lower and the land was less fertile. The central dry area of Australia was populated by Aborigines from Bathurst Island (1939), one of the Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory.

Transportation of convicts eventually brought a total of about 160,000 prisoners to Australia. The initial character of a penal colony lasted for about 60 years in the areas of major original settlement. It ended in 1840 in New South Wales and in 1852 in Van Diemen’s Land (modern Tasmania), which became a colony in 1825. Western Australia, which was founded in 1830 by free immigrants, added convicts to its population by its own choice from 1850 to 1868. Convicts were not sent to South Australia, which became a colony in 1836.