Down under- to Australia

Area 7, 692,000 square kilometres Population: 16 million Capital City: Canberra

Australia is in the southern hemisphere and lies between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. It is the smallest of the continents. Its total area is about the same as that of the U.S.A.

Like The Bahamas, northern Australia has a tropical climate. It is hot most of the time, with temperatures generally over 25°C and in the coastal towns and cities, swimming, surfing and sailing are popular all the year round.

Away from the coast, much of Australia is desert. Very little rain falls here- The land is dry and bare, and very few people live in this huge area, which is called the **outback**. The rest of Australia has a warm climate, with hot summers and mild winters, although in the high mountains to the south-east there is usually snow in winter-so they are called the **snowy mountains.**

Australian Outback

The northern part of Australia is at the same latitude from the Equator as The Bahamas, but in a different hemisphere. The climate in the coastal parts of northern Australia is therefore similar to that in The Bahamas.

<u>People of Australia</u>- The parents and grandparents of many of the people who now live in Australia were immigrants from another country. Many came from the United Kingdom, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Germany and other European countries. More recently there have been many immigrants from the countries of South-east Asia.

The earliest settlers of Australia, the **Aborigines** arrive there 30,000 years ago. They did not farm the land or keep animals, but moved from place to place hunting animals and gathering food. Although some Aborigines still live in this way, many of them now work on the big cattle and sheep stations and some have moved into the cities. Few Aborigines remain today. Their fate was similar to that of the Lucayans of The Bahamas.

<u>Sheep farming in the Outback</u>- Some people live in the middle of Queensland. They have thousands of sheep on a huge farm, or sheep station. It can be so big that it takes

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three days to ride around the outer boundaries of the property! Because it is so dry there, the sheep need a large area of land to find enough grass to eat. It is known as *The Outback.*

Sheep farming in the Outback

The people who live and work on the station form a small community. There are houses, storage sheds, a tool repair workshop, shearing sheds, a power generator and a vegetable garden. Water is pumped up from underground by a wind pump.

There are no school buildings in the Outback but students get their lessons through the mail and by radio. They join in the *School of the Air*, a special radio school. They talk to their teachers by radio and receive homework assignments. They send these in by mail to be marked and graded!

Each sheep station in The Outback is so large that it is a long way to the next property. The radio helps make life less isolated for the people there. They use it to chat with neighbours and in emergencies also. A team of flying doctors travel huge distances every year to care for their patients who live all over The Outback.

There are also animals and plants in Australia which are not found anywhere else in the world. Some of them are kangaroos, koala bears, eucalyptus trees, duck-billed platypus and the wallaby.

Kangaroo

koala bear

duck-billed platypus

wallaby

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