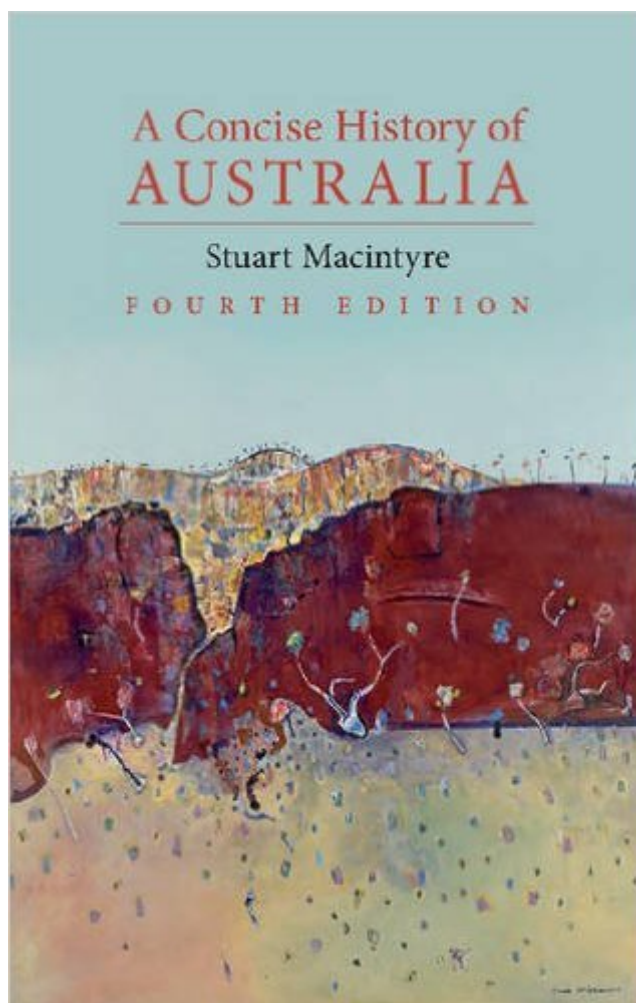


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# A Concise History Of Australia (Cambridge Concise Histories)



## Synopsis

Australia is the last continent to be settled by Europeans, but it also sustains a people and a culture tens of thousands years old. For much of the past 225 years the newcomers have sought to replace the old with the new. This book tells how they imposed themselves on the land, and describes how they brought technology, institutions and ideas to make it their own. The fourth edition incorporates the far-reaching effects of an export and investment boom in the early years of the twenty-first century that lifted Australia to unprecedented prosperity. The sale of minerals and energy enabled the economy to withstand the global financial crisis of 2007-08 but there was no agreement on how the wealth was to be managed and its benefits distributed. The book describes a continuing search for solutions to climate change, the unauthorised arrival of refugees, Indigenous disadvantage and generational change.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Stuart's work is an excellent overview of Australian history from the dreamtime to the present. He captures the major periods and events that shaped the progress of Australia towards federation and beyond, into the current malaise over national identity and the development of a unique and identifiable cultures. Modern thought increasingly accepts the indigenous problems that were part of Australian colonisation, and Stuart probes these and other contemporary issues by drawing from both sides of the debate. He illustrates research that examines the language of overland explorers, to determine whether they were 'exploring' or 'conquering', and he comments on modern

interpretations of the constitution by the high court. Readers not well versed in Australian issues may pass over these slights of hands without understanding their importance in the nature of forging an Australian history, culture and identity. I would recommend this book as a necessary overview for any person interested in the history of the country, including potential tourists.

I have long wanted to read a general history of Australia, and when I read, on April 3, 1988, *The Fatal Shore*, by Robert Hughes, I said to myself, in my post-reading note: "I am glad I read this book, but maybe I'd've done better to read a plain history of Australia than this long account of this aspect of its beginning." I am shamed to say that it has taken over 12 years to do what I thought I should have done back then. This book goes up to 1999, and portrays very well the current dilemmas facing Australia. If you enjoy the articles in *Current History*, as I do, this book reminds me of those articles, except it is less bland and neutral. Ordinarily I avoid histories with designations such as "short" or "concise" figuring that I want a fuller treatment. But when one knows as little of a country as I do of Australia, I thought this a good introduction to its history.

Until I read this book I did not realize the degree of conflict between the settler-descended population and the Aborigines. This seems to be a legacy that Australia is still struggling with, and the author takes a rather more critical and less patriotic view of the situation than most Australian historians. The problem of identity and what the country stands for now that it is no longer a part of the British Empire seems to be a lingering issue as well, but here the author strikes a more optimistic note, arguing that Australia can rightfully take its place in the world as a preserver and promoter of liberal democracy. This book was interesting in ways that I did not expect; I expected to read stories of the Outback and the exploits of barely reformed derelicts; instead I found my attention drawn to issues that are common to all developed democratic countries. Definitely worth a read.

One has the sense, when slogging through this book, that there is interesting material here. The inclusion of information about the aboriginals who inhabited Australia before 1778 is laudable. However, as has been noted previously, the language is just too difficult to read. The sentence structure is so complicated, and the vocabulary so obscure, that it feels as if it were written 100 years ago, when the English language was in a different stage of evolution. I was actually unable to finish the book. At a certain point Macintyre begins to discuss at length the activities of "the Chartists." However, he makes no attempt to establish who the Chartists were, what they stood for,

or why they were called the Chartists. That was it for me.... I cut my losses and put it down. I am just beginning Robert Hughes' "The Fatal Shore," and so far it is infinitely more engaging.

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