

Australia's Maritime Zones

Definition of Terms

Nautical mile (nm) is a unit of distance equal to 1852 metres. This value was adopted by the International Hydrographic Conference in 1929 and was subsequently adopted by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures. It is also the unit adopted for purposes of Australian maritime legislation.

Convention means the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 10 December 1982.

The following definitions should be read in conjunction with the diagram below.

TERRITORIAL SEA BASELINE (TSB)

The line from which the seaward limits of Australia's maritime zones are measured. The baseline is made up of the following components, each of which is dependent upon the shape of the coastline in any given locality.

Normal baseline corresponds with the low water line along the coast, including the coasts of islands. For Australian purposes, normal baseline corresponds to the level of Lowest Astronomical Tide. Under the Convention, low tide elevations which are defined as naturally formed areas of land surrounded by and above water at low tide but submerged at high tide may be used as normal baselines if they are wholly or partly within 12 nautical miles of the coast.

Straight baselines are a system of straight lines joining specified or discrete points on the low water line, usually known as straight baseline end points, which may be used in localities where the coastline is deeply indented and into, or where there is a fringe of islands along the coast in its immediate vicinity. The line drawn between those points forms part of the TSB.

River closing lines are straight lines drawn between the respective low water marks of the natural entrance points of rivers.

Bay closing lines are straight lines, not exceeding 24 nautical miles in length, drawn between the respective low water marks of the natural entrance points of bays. Under the Convention, the area of the bay must also be greater than or equal to that of the area drawn by a semi-circle whose diameter is the length of the line closing the bay.

Waters on the landward side of the baseline are internal waters for the purposes of international law.

3nm LIMIT: COASTAL WATERS (CW)

A belt of water between the limits of the Australian States and of the Northern Territory and a line 3 nautical miles seaward of the territorial sea baseline. Title to the seabed seabed is vested in the adjacent State or Territory as if that seabed was in waters that formed part of that State or Territory.

NOTE: Given the small scale of this map, and of the insets and diagram, for the most part it has not been possible to differentiate between coastal waters and waters within the limits of a State or Territory.

12nm LIMIT: TERRITORIAL SEA (TS)

A belt of water not exceeding 12 nautical miles in width measured from the territorial sea baseline. Australia's sovereignty extends to the territorial sea, its bed and subsoil, and to the air space above it. This sovereignty is exercised in accordance with international law as reflected in the Convention. The major limitation on Australia's exercise of sovereignty in the territorial sea is the right of innocent passage for foreign ships. The territorial sea around certain islands in the Torres Strait is 3 nautical miles.

24nm LIMIT: CONTIGUOUS ZONE (CZ)

A zone contiguous to the territorial sea, the outer limit of which does not exceed 24 nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline. In this zone, Australia may exercise control necessary to prevent and punish infringement of its customs, fiscal, immigration or sanitary laws and regulations within its territory or territorial sea.

200nm LIMIT: EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE (EEZ)

An area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea. The outer limit of the exclusive economic zone cannot exceed 200 nautical miles from the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured. In the EEZ, Australia has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing all natural resources of the waters superjacent to the sea bed and of the sea bed and its subsoil together with other activities such as the production of energy from water, currents and wind. Jurisdiction also extends to the establishment and use of artificial islands, installations and structures, marine scientific research, the protection and preservation of the marine environment, and other rights and duties. The Australian EEZ is less than 200 nautical miles in certain areas subject to delimitation with other countries.

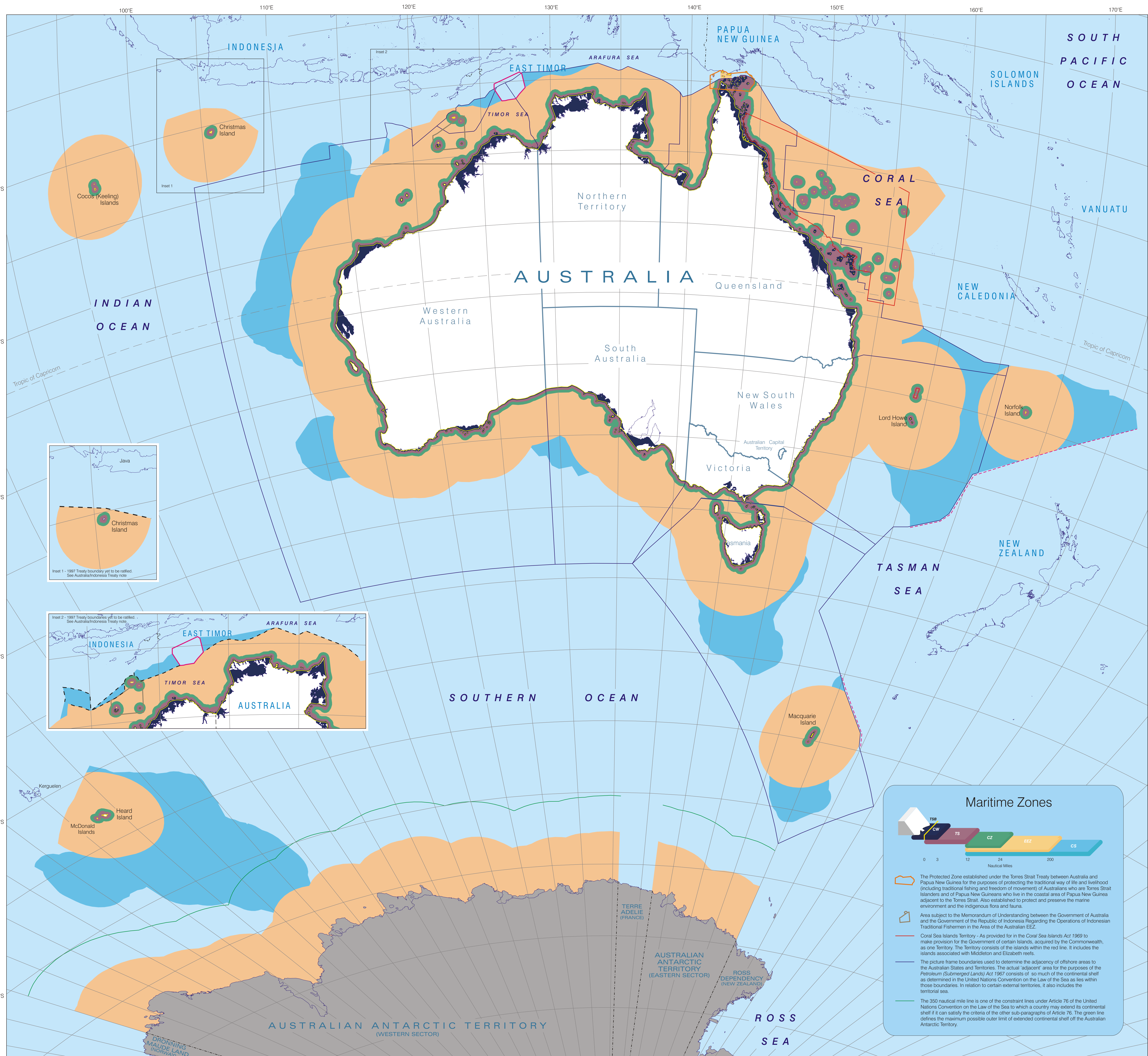
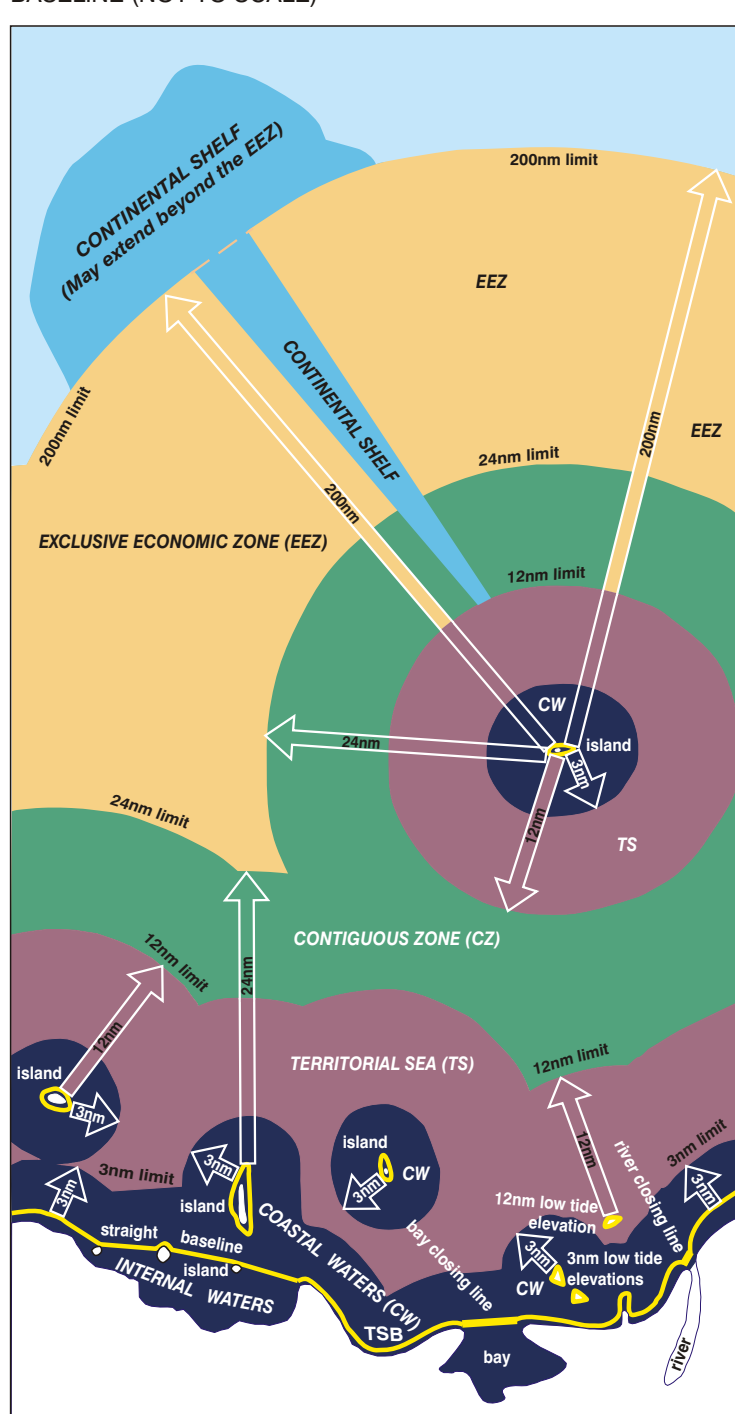
CONTINENTAL SHELF (CS)

The area of the seabed and subsoil which extends beyond the territorial sea to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline. Also includes the natural prolongation of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles to the outer edge of the continental margin as defined in Article 76 of the Convention. The continental shelf is largely co-extensive with the exclusive economic zone within 200 nautical miles from the territorial sea baselines (there are certain areas between Australia and Indonesia and Australia and Papua New Guinea where they are not co-extensive).

Australia has sovereign rights over the continental shelf for the purposes of exploring and exploiting the mineral and other non-living resources of the seabed and subsoil, together with sedentary organisms. In this area, Australia also has jurisdiction with regard to marine scientific research as well as other rights and responsibilities.

In order to support delimitation of the outer limit of the extended continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles as measured from the territorial sea baseline, Australia will be required to submit details, together with supporting scientific information, to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. The limits of the extended continental shelf beyond the exclusive economic zone, as depicted on this map, are indicative only.

DIAGRAM SHOWING RELATIONSHIP OF MARITIME FEATURES, LIMITS AND ZONES SEAWARD OF THE TERRITORIAL SEA BASELINE (NOT TO SCALE)



Defining Australia's Maritime Boundaries

Geoscience Australia's National Mapping Division maintains the Australian Maritime Boundaries Information System (AMBIS), a geographic information system encompassing maritime boundaries of interest to all levels of Australian government. AMBIS is used to facilitate the meeting of specific international obligations as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Australia ratified the Convention on 10 October 1994 and became legally bound to its provisions when it entered into force on 16 November 1994.

The primary task within AMBIS is the definition of the baseline from which the outer limits of the maritime zones are measured. This Territorial Sea Baseline (TSB) consists of several components including normal baseline, straight baselines and bay and river closing lines.

Using digital mapping and charting data supplied by a number of Commonwealth and State government authorities, Geoscience Australia continues to validate the position of the TSB around the entire Australian coastline. This ensures that the TSB is totally consistent with the data supplied by those authorities and also with the requirements of UNCLOS. The TSB is used to define the outer limits of a number of maritime zones, including the 12 nautical mile of coastal waters, the 24 nautical mile territorial sea, the 200 nautical mile Australian Exclusive Economic Zone and the outer limit of the extended continental shelf in cases where it is based on the UNCLOS Article 76 constraint line lying 350 nautical miles beyond the TSB.

Geoscience Australia's Law of the Sea Project is responsible for the survey work, data processing and compilation, and interpretation and analysis to determine the necessary geological and geomorphological information to support the delineation of the outer limit of the extended continental shelf around Australia and its territories.

The maritime zones shown on this map are diagrammatic only and have been produced from digital data held by Geoscience Australia.

Australian Exclusive Economic Zone

The outer edge of the EEZ is 200 nautical miles from Australia's territorial sea baseline, other than in areas subject to delimitation with neighbouring countries. In those areas the location of the outer edge of the EEZ will depend on whether Australia has entered into a treaty with the relevant country delimiting the EEZ boundary. Where Australia has entered into such a treaty, the outer edge of the Australian EEZ will be the boundary agreed in the treaty. In the absence of a delimitation treaty the outer edge of the Australian EEZ has been drawn back to the point of equidistance between Australia and the other relevant country. In the latter case, the provisional outer edge based upon equidistance does not necessarily represent the full extent of the EEZ claimed by Australia.

Maritime boundary arrangements with other countries

Australia has entered into maritime boundaries treaties with Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and France (New Caledonia and Kerguelen). Australia has not entered into any delimitation arrangements with other countries in relation to maritime areas adjacent to the Australian Antarctic Territory. Other treaties that have been negotiated (and that have not entered into force) are:

Australia/Indonesia Treaty

Australia and Indonesia signed a Treaty on 14 March 1987 which will settle a number of maritime boundaries between the two countries. These boundaries are depicted in insets 1 & 2. They relate to areas between continental Australia and the Indonesian archipelago and the area between the Australian Territory of Christmas Island and the Indonesian island of Java. The boundaries established by the Treaty will enter into force when both countries have ratified the Treaty. Those boundaries indicated in the insets will then replace certain boundaries shown on this map.

Australia/East Timor Boundaries

Final maritime boundaries have still to be negotiated between Australia and East Timor. These include the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf boundaries in the Timor Sea.

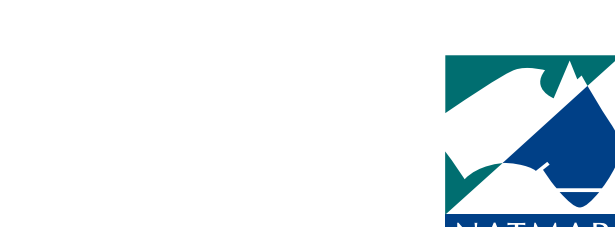
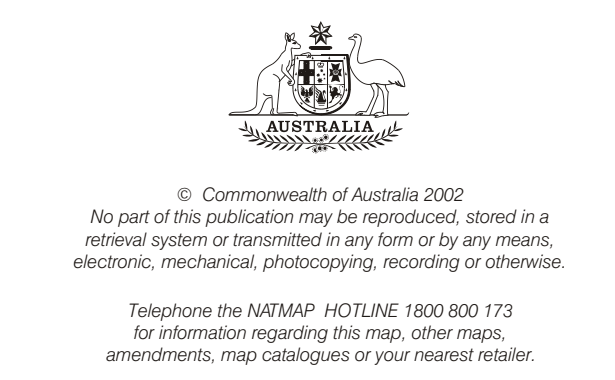
Joint Petroleum Development Area

This is the area of joint development for petroleum purposes agreed by Australia and East Timor in an Exchange of Notes dated 20 May 2002. For the purposes of current Australian legislation, it is Area A of the Zone of Co-operation. It will be titled the Joint Petroleum Development Area on entry into force of the Timor Sea Arrangements Act 2002.

Australia/New Zealand Boundaries

Maritime boundaries have still to be negotiated between Australia and New Zealand. These include exclusive economic zone and continental shelf boundaries in the Tasman Sea and in the area between Macquarie Island, the islands adjacent to it, and the southern islands of New Zealand (Auckland and Campbell Islands).

Australian claims in those areas related to delimitation with New Zealand are more extensive than the maritime zones depicted on the map. For the purposes of this map, and pending the completion of maritime boundary negotiations, these areas have been drawn back to the point of equidistance (median line - shown in red).



THE AUSTRALIAN MAP SERIES

