

Topic Page: [Nauru](#)

Definition: **Nauru** from *The Macquarie Dictionary*

1.

an island republic in the central Pacific Ocean, about 40 km south of the equator; a German colony before World War I; a joint Australian, New Zealand and British mandate and trusteeship from 1920 until independence in 1968.

21 km² Nauruan, also English Australian dollar

Formerly Pleasant Island

Nauruan *adjective noun*

Nauruans



Image from: [In 2006, millions of small farmers in 122... in Encyclopedia of Environment and Society](#)

Summary Article: **Nauru**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Island country in Polynesia, southwest Pacific, west of Kiribati.

Government The constitution dates from independence in 1968. It provides for a single-chamber parliament of 19 members, elected by universal suffrage for a three-year term, and a president who is both head of state and head of government. The president and cabinet are elected by parliament from among its members and are responsible to it. The size of the country allows an intimate style of government, with the president able to combine several portfolios in a small cabinet of only six. Voting in parliamentary elections is compulsory.

Traditionally, members of parliament have been elected as independents and then grouped themselves into pro- and antigovernment factions. In 1987, however, the Democratic Party of Nauru was formed by the then opposition leader Kennan Adeang. There have been two other active political parties, but still most deputies are independents. Nauru has a police force, but no armed forces. Under an informal agreement, defence is the responsibility of Australia.

History The first Europeans, Britons, arrived in 1798 and called it Pleasant Island. The German empire seized it in 1888. Nauru was placed under Australian administration by the League of Nations in 1920, with the UK and New Zealand as co-trustees. Japan occupied and devastated Nauru 1942–45, destroying its mining facilities and deporting two-thirds of its population to Truk Atoll in Micronesia, 1,600 km/1,000 mi to the northwest. In 1947 Nauru became a United Nations trust territory administered by Australia.

Independence Internal self-government was attained in 1966, and in 1968, on achieving full independence, Nauru became a 'special member' of the Commonwealth, with no direct representation at meetings of heads of government. The chief of Nauru, Hammer DeRoburt, was elected president in

1968 and re-elected until 1983 with one interruption (1976–78) when Bernard Dowiyogo was president.

During 1922–68, Nauru's former trustees (Australia, New Zealand, and the UK) removed nearly all the island's phosphate-rich soil, leaving it barren. Nauru received \$2.5 million for phosphate worth \$65 million and had to pay Australia \$20 million to keep the remaining soil. In 1967, Nauru purchased the assets of the British Phosphate Commissioners, and in 1970 control passed to the locally owned Nauru Phosphate Corporation. In 1993 Nauru issued a lawsuit against an Australian firm of solicitors for the recovery of \$14 million of the island's trust fund. In 1989, a claim against Australia for compensation for 60 years of environmental destruction was also made at the International Court of Justice. Nauru's residual phosphate supplies, which were earning \$80 million a year, making it (per capita) one of the richest countries in the Pacific, were due to run out in 1995 and an economic diversification programme had been launched. In 1994 Australia agreed to an out-of-court settlement of A\$107 million, to which the UK and New Zealand agreed to contribute A\$12 million dollars.

Political instability Since the mid-1980s the country's declining phosphate reserves led to economic decline which in turn brought increasing political instability, with more than 20 different governments to 2003. The 1986 elections resulted in a hung parliament. In the 1987 elections, DeRoburt secured a narrow majority. This prompted the defeated Kennan Adeang, who had briefly held power in 1986, to establish the Democratic Party of Nauru as a formal opposition grouping.

In 1989 Adeang engineered the ousting of DeRoburt on a vote of no confidence and Kensas Aroi became president, with Adeang as finance minister in the new government. According to Australian government sources, Aroi was DeRoburt's 'unacknowledged natural son'. Four months later Aroi resigned on the grounds of ill health and in the subsequent election was defeated by Bernard Dowiyogo, who was re-elected in 1992.

In November 1995, Lagumot Harris replaced Dowiyogo as president, but after an early general election, Dowiyogo was back in charge within a year. But he was soon ousted on a confidence motion. Further attempts to form stable governments failed and a new general election was held in February 1997. This brought the veteran Kiza Klodimar to power as president. He formed a cabinet which included the former presidents Dowiyogo and Kennan Adeang.

In June 1998, Klodimar, who had promoted economic reform, lost a confidence motion and Dowiyogo returned briefly as president, before being replaced in April 1999 by Rene Harris. In 2000, Dowiyogo was re-elected as president for the sixth time. He was beset by allegations of corruption, and criticisms that Nauru was being used for money laundering. Despite pledging to reform the offshore banking industry to end money laundering, in March 2001 parliament ousted Dowiyogo and re-elected Rene Harris. Dowiyogo returned to power in January 2003 and died in office in March 2003. He was replaced as president by Ludwig Scotty who held power to August 2003 (when he was replaced by Rene Harris) and from June 2004 to December 2007.

Marcus Stephen, a former Commonwealth gold-medal winning weightlifter, was president between December 2007 and November 2011, when he resigned amid corruption allegations. However, there was political instability in 2010, with two parliamentary elections failing to bring a clear outcome and Stephen's briefly calling a state of emergency. His successor as president, Freddy Pitcher, survived only one week before being replaced by Sprent Dabwido. In June 2013, following new elections, parliament chose the fisheries minister, Baron Waqa, to become the new president.

With an unemployment rate of around 90%, Nauru became increasingly reliant on economic aid from Australia, and in 2001 agreed to serve as a detention centre for asylum seekers to Australia in return for financial aid equivalent to 20% of the country's GDP. In 2008 Australia decided to end this 'Pacific Solution' approach to asylum and closed the detention centre. But it re-opened a new detention camp on Nauru for asylum seekers in September 2012. Nauru has also made efforts to generate income through expanding private banking facilities and renting out tuna fishing opportunities.

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