



# Natural disasters in Australia

Throughout Australian history, natural disasters such as flood, bushfire and drought have killed many Australians and destroyed their properties and livestock.

**1** Read about the different types of disasters outlined below, as well as the information on page 45 of the *Jacaranda Primary Atlas Second Edition*. Complete the timeline at right by showing when the natural disasters occurred.

## Floods

Floods are a natural event. They occur when water overflows onto land that is normally not covered by water. They are only a hazard to people who have built towns, roads or farms on floodplains near rivers. Recent floods causing great damage occurred at Nyngan (1990), Wangaratta (1993), Katherine (1998) and Gympie (1999).

## Earth movements

Earthquakes or landslides and avalanches can cause earth movements. Earthquakes are the result of movements in the Earth's plates. The vibrations felt on Earth can lead to massive damage and high death tolls. Australia's worst earthquake disaster occurred at Newcastle in 1989 when 13 people died. Landslides happen on unstable land or when humans have made changes to steep land. In 1997, 20 people died when a landslide destroyed two ski lodges at Thredbo.

## Bushfires

See information and one example on page 45 of the *Jacaranda Primary Atlas Second Edition*. Other major bushfires have occurred at Hobart (1967), Adelaide Hills — just east of Adelaide (1983), and the Dandenongs (1983, 1997).

## Cyclones

See information and one example on page 45 of the *Jacaranda Primary Atlas Second Edition*. Other major cyclones have occurred at Townsville (1971), Cairns (1997), and Exmouth (1999).

**2** Mark each of the disaster locations on the map of Australia at right. Give each disaster (i.e. flood, earth movement, bushfire and cyclone) a special symbol. Provide a key to the symbols with your map.

