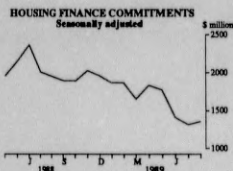


# Statistics Weekly

**Thursday, 26 October 1989**

## *The week in statistics ...*

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## August home finance goes against the trend

Monthly figures on housing finance turned upwards in August for the first time since April this year.

In seasonally adjusted terms, the value of secured commitments by housing lenders was \$1,359.3 million in August, a rise of \$43.3 million or 3.3 per cent over July.

As the table below shows, however, commitments in August 1989 were 30.3 per cent below those in the same month last year.

The seasonally adjusted figure has been trending downward since June 1988, but the volatile nature of monthly statistics in this field means that the August figure by itself cannot be taken as indicating a change in that trend.

HOUSING FINANCE COMMITMENTS BY TYPE OF LENDER, AUGUST 1989  
Seasonally adjusted

| Type of lender               | \$ million     | Percentage change   |                                           |
|------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|                              |                | From previous month | From corresponding month of previous year |
| Savings banks                | 911.8          | 4.9                 | -32.4                                     |
| Trading banks                | 177.5          | -7.4                | -10.5                                     |
| Permanent building societies | 131.6          | 11.7                | -57.4                                     |
| Other lenders                | 138.4          | 1.2                 | 45.1                                      |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>1,359.3</b> | <b>3.3</b>          | <b>-30.3</b>                              |

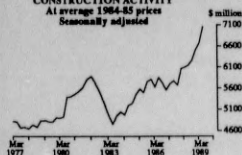
As can be seen, higher lending by the major lending group, the savings banks, and by the building societies and other lenders was partly offset by a fall in lending by trading banks in August.

In original terms the August 1989 figure was \$1,467.1 million, which was \$256.8 million, or 21.2 per cent, higher than in July 1989.

For further information, order the publication *Housing Finance for Owner Occupation*, Australia (5609.0), or contact Mark Dennis on (062) 52 7117

## Construction activity — the complete picture

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY  
At average 1984-85 prices  
Seasonally adjusted



The new quarterly publication *Construction Activity at Constant Prices, Australia* provides an overall picture of the value of construction work done each quarter.

The publication provides comprehensive data on both building and engineering construction in the public and private sectors, and overall totals. Seasonally adjusted figures are also supplied, in all categories except engineering construction.

VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY, JUNE QUARTER 1989  
Average 1984-85 prices

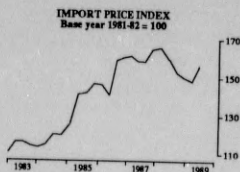
|                           | \$ million<br>(original series) | Percentage change<br>(seasonally adjusted series) |                                                   |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
|                           |                                 | From previous<br>quarter                          | From<br>corresponding quarter<br>of previous year |
| Residential building      | 2,520                           | 1.3                                               | 23.4                                              |
| Non-residential building  | 2,618                           | 8.1                                               | 19.2                                              |
| <b>Total building</b>     | <b>5,138</b>                    | <b>4.7</b>                                        | <b>21.2</b>                                       |
| Engineering construction  | 1,911                           | n.a.                                              | n.a.                                              |
| <b>Total construction</b> | <b>7,049</b>                    | <b>5.7</b>                                        | <b>14.7</b>                                       |

The June quarter issue of the new publication shows that in seasonally adjusted terms, total construction activity increased 5.7 per cent over the March quarter — the seventh consecutive quarterly increase.

Components of the June quarter rise were a 1.3 per cent increase in residential building and an 8.1 per cent increase in non-residential building. Non-residential construction, which is the total of non-residential building and engineering construction, rose 8.2 per cent.

In the original (unadjusted) data for the year 1988-89, total construction activity at average 1984-85 prices increased over 1987-88 by 10.4 per cent to a high of \$26,465 million. This increase was mainly due to the very high level of activity in residential building (up 28.3%) during 1988-89.

For further information, order the publication *Construction Activity at Constant Prices, Australia* (8782.0), or contact Stan Niemiec on (062) 52 5734



## Import prices record large quarterly rise

Import prices jumped 5.6 per cent in June quarter 1989, reversing the downward trend of the previous four quarters.

However, because of the previous falls, June quarter 1989 import prices remained 2.1 per cent lower than the June quarter last year.

Further increases in oil prices, and a weakening of the Australian dollar against the currencies of major trading partners, were the main factors behind the June quarter turnaround. (A strengthening Australian dollar had been a significant factor in the earlier falls in the Import Price Index.)

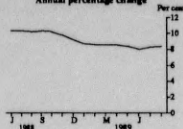
**IMPORT PRICES, JUNE QUARTER 1989**  
Percentage change

| <i>Selected items</i>                | <i>From previous quarter</i> | <i>From corresponding period of previous year</i> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Foodstuffs                           | 4.3                          | -1.1                                              |
| Crude materials                      | 7.0                          | 7.9                                               |
| Crude petroleum & petroleum products | 18.6                         | 6.6                                               |
| Chemicals                            | 5.2                          | 0.1                                               |
| Manufactured goods                   | 6.0                          | -0.5                                              |
| Machinery & transport equipment      | 4.0                          | -5.5                                              |
| <i>All items</i>                     | <i>5.6</i>                   | <i>-2.1</i>                                       |

Since its base year 1981-82, the Import Price Index has risen 56 per cent. In terms of broad economic category, commodity price changes have ranged from transport equipment, which has more than doubled in price, to fuels and lubricants where prices have dropped by 28 per cent.

*For further information, order the publication Import Price Index, Australia (6414.0) or contact Geoff Brown on (062) 52 5348*

PRICE INDEX FOR NON-DWELLING  
BUILDING MATERIALS  
Annual percentage change



## Air conditioners lead building costs up

Materials used in non-dwelling construction went up by 0.6 per cent in price in August following a marginally higher rise in July.

Air conditioning equipment, partly under the influence of higher prices for imported components, rose in all capital cities and made the main single contribution to the monthly rise.

Structural steel and ready mixed concrete rose significantly in all cities except Perth, and there were lesser rises in the prices of most of the other items contributing to the index.

The annual rate of increase in the cost of non-dwelling building materials rose marginally for the second month in a row. At 8.4 per cent however, it remains well below the 10.3 per cent peak of September 1988.

The accompanying table shows the month-on-month and annual changes for each of the capital cities. One feature is that Perth, which had been running well above the national average on the annual rate, is now back to the average figure.

PRICES FOR NON-DWELLING BUILDING  
MATERIALS, AUGUST 1989  
Percentage change

| City                                   | From previous month | From corresponding month of previous year |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Sydney                                 | 0.8                 | 8.2                                       |
| Melbourne                              | 0.5                 | 9.1                                       |
| Brisbane                               | 0.7                 | 9.0                                       |
| Adelaide                               | 0.3                 | 6.7                                       |
| Perth                                  | 0.3                 | 8.4                                       |
| Hobart                                 | 0.6                 | 6.9                                       |
| Weighted average of six State capitals | 0.6                 | 8.4                                       |
| Darwin                                 | 0.4                 | 7.7                                       |
| Canberra                               | 0.9                 | 8.8                                       |

For further information, order the publication *Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building* (6407.0) or contact Peter Sturgeon on (062) 52 6198

## Inquiries

The ABS supplies statistical information:

- ☐ through its bookshops
- ☐ by mail order (including subscription)
- ☐ by facsimile
- ☐ electronically.

To order any of the publications that appear in *Statistics Weekly* or to inquire about the statistics and services available from the ABS, contact Information Services at any of the offices listed below. An Information Consultancy Service in each office provides assistance of a more extensive or complex nature.

### ABS Central Office

- ☐ PO BOX 10  
BELCONNEN ACT 2616
- ☐ Phone (062) 52 6627
- ☐ Fax (062) 53 1404

### ABS State Offices

- ☐ NSW Phone (02) 268 4611
- ☐ Vic. Phone (03) 615 7000
- ☐ Qld Phone (07) 222 6351
- ☐ WA Phone (09) 323 5140
- ☐ SA Phone (08) 237 7100
- ☐ Tas. Phone (002) 20 5800
- ☐ NT Phone (089) 81 3456

Any suggestions for improvement to this publication should be addressed to:

The Editor  
*Statistics Weekly*  
(062) 52 6917

## All the week's releases: 18 to 24 October

### General

- Statistics Weekly, 19 October 1989 (1318.0; \$3.50)
- Economic Indicators, Qld, October 1989 (1307.3; \$4.50)
- Brisbane City Statistical Summary, 1989 (1313.3; \$7.50)

### Census of Population and Housing

- Census 86 — Cross-classified Characteristics of Persons and Dwellings, SA, (2494.0; \$16.00) — *new issue*

### Demography

- Births, NSW, 1988 (3306.1; \$10.50)
- Divorces, Vic., 1988 (3308.2; \$7.00)

### National accounts, finance and foreign trade

- Exports, Aust., Monthly Summary Tables, August 1989 (5432.0; \$7.50)
- Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Aust., August 1989 (5609.0; \$7.50)

### Labour statistics and prices

- Employed Wage and Salary Earners, Aust., June Qtr 1989 (6248.0; \$11.50)
- Industrial Disputes, Aust., July 1989 (6321.0; \$5.00)
- Information Paper: Development of the Employer Training Expenditure Survey, 1989 (6355.0; free) — *new issue*
- Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building, Eight Capital Cities, August 1989 (6407.0; \$8.00)
- Price Indexes of Copper Materials, Aust., September 1989 (6410.0; \$3.25)
- Import Price Index, Aust., June Qtr 1989 (6414.0; \$4.50)
- The Labour Force, Vic., August Qtr 1989 (6202.2; \$12.00)

### Agriculture

- Crops and Pastures, NSW, 1987-88 (7321.1; \$16.00)
- Crops for Grain: Estimates of Area Sown, WA, 1989-90 (7311.5; \$3.00)

### Secondary industry and distribution

- Manufacturing Industry: Details of Operations, Aust., 1987-88 (8203.0; \$11.50)
- Manufacturing Commodities: Principal Articles Produced, Aust., 1986-87 (8303.0; \$19.00)
- Sales of Australian Wine and Brandy by Winemakers, August 1989 (8504.0; \$4.50)
- Sales and Stocks of New Agricultural Machinery, Aust., June Qtr 1989 (8505.0; \$5.00)
- Sales of New Construction Machinery and Selected Attachments, Aust., June Qtr 1989 (8506.0; \$3.25)
- Sales and Stocks of New Tractors, Aust., June Qtr 1989 (8507.0; \$3.25)
- Construction Activity at Constant Prices, Aust., June Qtr 1989 (8782.0; \$7.50)
- Tourist Accommodation, NSW, June Qtr 1989 (8635.1; \$8.00)
- Tourist Accommodation, Major Hotels and Motels, Qld, September 1989 (8646.3; \$5.00)
- Building Approvals: Small Area Statistics, Qld, 1988-89 (8733.3; \$7.50)
- Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, Qld, July 1989 (8741.3; \$4.50)
- Estimated Stocks of Dwellings in Census Collection Districts and Statistical Local Areas, WA, June 1989 (8705.5; \$15.00)
- Tourist Accommodation, SA, June Qtr 1989 (8635.4; \$8.00)
- Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, Tas., July 1989 (8741.6; \$3.00)
- Tourist Accommodation: Selected Establishments, ACT, July and August 1989 (8646.8; \$5.00) — *new issue*

### Transport

- Road Traffic Accidents Involving Fatalities, Aust., September 1989 (9401.0; \$3.00)
- Motor Vehicle Registrations, Qld, August 1989 (9303.3; \$5.00)
- Motor Vehicle Registrations, Tas., August 1989 (9303.6; \$3.25)
- Road Traffic Accidents Involving Casualties, Tas., June Qtr 1989 (9405.6; \$4.50)



## Calendar of key releases

Expected releases over the fortnight to 7 November

### October

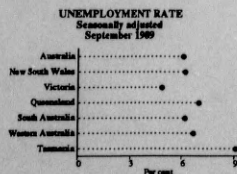
- 25** Balance of Payments, Aust., September 1989 (\$301.0; \$10.00)  
Export Price Index, Aust., August 1989 (6405.0; \$4.50)  
Price Index of Materials Used in House Building, Six State Capital Cities and Canberra, August 1989 (6408.0; \$3.25)
- 26** Private New Capital Expenditure, Aust., June Qtr 1989 (5626.0; \$8.00)  
Consumer Price Index, September Qtr 1989, (6401.0; \$8.00)  
Production Statistics, Aust., September 1989, Preliminary (8301.0; \$4.50)
- 27** Price Indexes of Articles Produced By Manufacturing Industry, Aust., August 1989 (6412.0; \$5.00)
- 30** Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Aust., September 1989, Preliminary (9301.0; \$3.25)
- 31** Building Approvals, Aust., September 1989 (8731.0; \$8.00)
- \*** Price Indexes of Materials Used in Manufacturing Industries, Aust., August 1989 (6411.0; \$8.00)

\* Expected to be released during the week ending Friday, 3 November.

## The latest ...

Changes to key State indicators — consolidated to

24 October 1989



|                                                                       | NSW   | Vic.  | Qld   | SA   | WA    | Tas.  | NT    | ACT   | Aust. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| — Percentage change from same period previous year —                  |       |       |       |      |       |       |       |       |       |
| New capital expenditure (Mar. qtr 89)*                                | 29.9  | 27.9  | -15.3 | -7.0 | 6.2   | 81.7  | n.a.  | n.a.  | 18.0  |
| Retail turnover (August 89) (trend estimate)                          | 14.6  | 5.2   | 9.4   | 7.1  | 13.0  | 10.1  | n.a.  | 6.0   | 10.4  |
| New motor vehicle registrations (August 89)*                          | 32.5  | 1.8   | 11.4  | 24.0 | 20.3  | n.a.  | n.a.  | n.a.  | 18.1  |
| Number of dwelling unit approvals (August 89)                         | -27.0 | -16.5 | -27.7 | -2.3 | -40.2 | -14.1 | -41.1 | -29.5 | -25.6 |
| Value of total building work done (June 89)                           | 38.6  | 42.1  | 34.4  | 22.9 | 54.9  | 17.4  | -8.5  | -3.0  | 36.8  |
| Employed persons (September 89)*                                      | 3.6   | 5.3   | 6.1   | 5.3  | 3.6   | 3.6   | n.a.  | n.a.  | 4.7   |
| Capital city consumer price index (June qtr 89)                       | 8.0   | 7.4   | 7.4   | 7.8  | 7.5   | 6.7   | 4.8   | 6.7   | 7.6   |
| Average weekly earnings (full-time adult, ordinary time) (May 89)     | 9.0   | 6.6   | 7.7   | 6.9  | 8.0   | 8.2   | 5.6   | 6.6   | 7.8   |
| Population (Mar. 89)                                                  | 1.2   | 1.3   | 3.0   | 1.1  | 3.0   | 0.4   | 0.0   | 1.8   | 1.6   |
| Room occupancy rates in licensed hotels and motels, etc (Mar. qtr 89) | 1.5   | -0.7  | -3.2  | 1.0  | 2.9   | 4.1   | -2.7  | -7.6  | -1.1  |

\* Seasonally adjusted

Key national indicators – consolidated to 24 October 1989

|                                                            |                  |       | Period                | Latest figure available |                     | Percentage change (a) on |                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                                                            |                  |       |                       | Original                | Seasonally adjusted | Previous period          | Corresponding period last year |
| <b>National production</b>                                 |                  |       |                       |                         |                     |                          |                                |
| Gross domestic product                                     | — current prices | \$m   | June qtr 89           | 85,333                  | 87,970              | 2.5                      | 13.1                           |
|                                                            | — 1984-85 prices |       | "                     | 60,986                  | 62,991              | 0.6                      | 3.9                            |
| <b>Industrial activity</b>                                 |                  |       |                       |                         |                     |                          |                                |
| New capital expenditure                                    | — current prices | \$m   | June qtr 89           | 7,688                   | 7,307               | 2.0                      | 13.9                           |
|                                                            | — 1984-85 prices |       | "                     | 6,130                   | 5,809               | 0.8                      | 16.1                           |
| Expected new capital expenditure                           |                  | "     | Six months to Dec. 89 | 14,975                  | n.a.                | n.a.                     | 13.7                           |
| Retail turnover                                            | — current prices | "     | August 89             | 6,559                   | 6,724               | -1.5                     | 10.8                           |
|                                                            | — 1984-85 prices | "     | June qtr 89           | 14,145                  | 14,642              | 0.0                      | 3.5                            |
| New motor vehicle registrations                            |                  | No.   | August 89             | 54,652                  | 49,896              | -1.8                     | 18.1                           |
| Dwelling unit approvals                                    |                  | "     | "                     | 13,338                  | 11,790              | -2.8                     | -27.3                          |
| Value of all building approvals                            |                  | \$m   | "                     | 2,281                   | 1,943               | -6.8                     | -1.8                           |
| Value of total building work done                          | — current prices | "     | June qtr 89           | 7,622                   | 7,711               | 7.6                      | 36.9                           |
|                                                            | — 1984-85 prices | "     | "                     | 5,138                   | 5,198               | 4.7                      | 21.1                           |
| Manufacturers' sales                                       |                  | "     | June qtr 89           | 34,261                  | 34,196              | 3.4                      | 14.6                           |
| Expected manufacturers' sales                              |                  | "     | Six months to Dec. 89 | 70,922                  | n.a.                | n.a.                     | 12.0                           |
| <b>Labour</b>                                              |                  |       |                       |                         |                     |                          |                                |
| Employed persons                                           |                  | '000  | Sept. 89              | 7,854.4                 | 7,813.8             | 0.2                      | 4.7                            |
| Unemployment rate †                                        |                  | %     | "                     | 6.0                     | 6.1                 | 0.2                      | -0.9                           |
| Participation rate †                                       |                  | "     | "                     | 63.8                    | 63.5                | 0.1                      | 1.0                            |
| Job vacancies                                              |                  | '000  | August 89             | 64.3                    | n.a.                | -12.1                    | -2.3                           |
| Average weekly overtime per employee                       |                  | hours | "                     | 1.5                     | n.a.                | 1.6                      | 10.7                           |
| <b>Prices, profits and wages</b>                           |                  |       |                       |                         |                     |                          |                                |
| Consumer price index                                       | 1980-81 = 100.0  |       | June qtr 89           | 192.6                   | n.a.                | 2.4                      | 7.6                            |
| Price index of materials used in manufacturing industry    | 1984-85 = 100.0  |       | July 89               | 120.1                   | n.a.                | 0.2                      | 7.3                            |
| Price index of articles produced by manufacturing industry | 1968-69 = 100.0  |       | "                     | 548.5                   | n.a.                | 0.6                      | 7.6                            |
| Company profits before income tax                          |                  | \$m   | June qtr 89           | 4,610                   | 5,054               | 9.3                      | 24.6                           |
| Average weekly earnings (Full-time adults; ordinary time)  |                  | \$    | May 89                | 501.10                  | n.a.                | 1.8                      | 7.8                            |
| <b>Interest rates (b) (monthly average)</b>                |                  |       |                       |                         |                     |                          |                                |
| 90-day bank bills †                                        | % per annum      |       | Sept. 89              | 18.35                   | n.a.                | 0.4                      | 4.6                            |
| 10-year Treasury bonds †                                   |                  |       | "                     | 13.65                   | n.a.                | 0.7                      | 1.7                            |
| <b>Balance of payments</b>                                 |                  |       |                       |                         |                     |                          |                                |
| Exports of merchandise                                     |                  | \$m   | August 89             | 3,906                   | 3,874               | -1.8                     | 14.0                           |
| Imports of merchandise                                     |                  | "     | "                     | 5,232                   | 4,768               | 13.1                     | 32.4                           |
| Balance on merchandise trade (c)                           |                  | "     | "                     | -1,326                  | -894                | -229.9                   | -336.1                         |
| Balance of goods and services (c)                          |                  | "     | "                     | -1,748                  | -1,236              | -121.1                   | -296.2                         |
| Balance on current account (c)                             |                  | "     | "                     | -2,580                  | -2,257              | -39.7                    | -78.8                          |
| Terms of trade (d)                                         | 1984-85 = 100.0  |       | June qtr 89           | n.a.                    | 112.8               | -0.3                     | 11.5                           |
| <b>Foreign investment</b>                                  |                  |       |                       |                         |                     |                          |                                |
| Net foreign debt                                           |                  | \$m   | June qtr 89           | 108,159                 | n.a.                | 3.7                      | 19.8                           |
| Net foreign liabilities                                    |                  | "     | "                     | 140,906                 | n.a.                | 4.5                      | 16.3                           |
| <b>Exchange rates (monthly average)</b>                    |                  |       |                       |                         |                     |                          |                                |
| US\$                                                       | per \$A          |       | August 89             | 0.7621                  | n.a.                | 0.7                      | -5.5                           |
| Trade weighted index                                       | May 1970 = 100.0 |       | "                     | 59.2                    | n.a.                | 1.0                      | -3.7                           |
| <b>Other indicators</b>                                    |                  |       |                       |                         |                     |                          |                                |
| Population (estimated resident)                            | million          |       | Mar. 89               | 16.7                    | n.a.                | 0.4                      | 1.6                            |
| Overseas visitors                                          | '000             |       | August 89             | 161                     | 181                 | -4.7                     | -17.6                          |

(a) Based on seasonally adjusted figures where available. (b) Source: Reserve Bank of Australia. (c) For the percentage change, a minus sign indicates an increase in the deficit; no sign means a decrease in the deficit or an increase in the surplus. (d) The ratio of the price of goods and services for exports to that for imports.

NOTES: † = change is shown in terms of percentage points. n.a. = not available.

Figures have been taken from a variety of ABS publications. Copies may be obtained from Information Services (see page 6).

Some of the figures shown are preliminary, some final, and some are revisions of previously published figures. Users should check the latest relevant publication or with the ABS Information Services if the status of the statistic is important.

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