

# Statistics Weekly

Thursday, 6 June 1991

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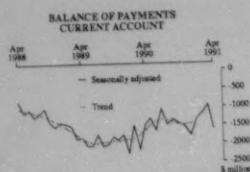
IAN CASTLES  
Australian Statistician

## Imports boost April deficit, but year-to-date figure well down

In seasonally adjusted terms, the current account deficit for April 1991 rose \$661 million to \$1,609 million.

The rise was mainly due to a \$682 million turnaround in the balance on merchandise trade to a deficit of \$67 million. Merchandise exports fell 7 per cent to \$4,160 million. Merchandise imports rose 9 per cent to \$4,227 million.

Apart from the merchandise trade outcome, there was a fall of \$37 million in the net services deficit, the net income deficit rose \$13 million and the net unrequited transfers surplus fell \$3 million.



BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, CURRENT ACCOUNT  
\$ million

	March 1991		April 1991	
	Original	Seasonally adjusted	Original	Seasonally adjusted
Balance on merchandise trade	642	615	259	- 67
Net services	- 248	- 378	- 330	- 341
Net income	- 1,461	- 1,415	- 1,425	- 1,428
Net unrequited transfers	200	230	250	227
Balance on current account	- 867	- 948	- 1,746	- 1,609

In original terms, merchandise exports were virtually unchanged, falling \$1 million to \$4,299 million.

Non-rural exports fell \$118 million or 4 per cent. The most significant falls were recorded in transport equipment and 'other' mineral fuels. Transport equipment was down \$159 million or 60 per cent as no civil aircraft or ANL ships were exported in April following the export of two Qantas aircraft and one ANL ship in March. 'Other' mineral fuels was down \$119 million or 33 per cent. This was due mainly to falls in both prices and volumes of crude oil. The largest rise was recorded in metal ores and minerals, up \$116 million or 21 per cent.

Rural exports rose \$117 million or 11 per cent. Rises in wool, meat, sugar and 'other' rural exports totalling \$184 million were partially offset by a \$67 million decrease in cereals exports (due mainly to a fall in wheat volumes).

Merchandise imports rose \$382 million, or 10 per cent, in original terms, with rises recorded for most commodity groups. The largest rises were in machinery, up \$119 million or 11 per cent (partly reflecting increases in imports of general machinery and electrical appliances); 'other' transport equipment, up \$105 million or 95 per cent (due mainly to the import of an ANL ship valued at \$81 million and one Eastwest aircraft valued at \$31 million); chemicals, up \$81 million or 21 per cent; and fuels, up \$57 million or 24 per cent. The largest fall was in civil aircraft, which recorded no imports in April, compared with \$51 million in March.

Continued ...

In original terms, the surplus on merchandise trade for the first ten months of 1990-91 was \$908 million, representing a turnaround of \$4,657 million from a deficit of \$3,749 million for the same period of 1989-90.

The current account deficit for the first ten months of 1990-91 was \$13,991 million, compared with \$19,276 million for the ten months to April 1990.

For further information, order the publication *Balance of Payments, Australia* (5301.0), or contact Zia Abbasi on (06) 252 6689.

## Economic activity remains flat in March quarter

Constant price gross domestic product (GDP) rose 0.1 per cent in March quarter 1991 after seasonal adjustment, following a 0.3 per cent rise in the December quarter.

Despite these small rises, total constant price gross domestic product was 0.6 per cent lower in the six months ended March 1991 than in the previous six months.

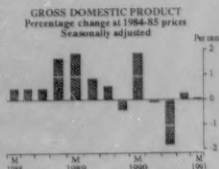
Major features of the expenditure aggregates this quarter include: weak private final consumption expenditure; the seventh consecutive fall in private gross fixed capital expenditure; largely offsetting contributions to growth in GDP from private non-farm stocks (positive) and public marketing authority stocks (negative); higher exports and a fall in imports.

MAIN NATIONAL ACCOUNTS AGGREGATES, MARCH QUARTER 1991  
Seasonally adjusted estimates at average 1984-85 prices  
Percentage change

	From previous quarter	From corresponding quarter of previous year
Final consumption expenditure —		
Private	0.3	0.4
Government	3.5	3.1
Gross fixed capital expenditure	-6.7	-12.2
Gross national expenditure	-0.6	-5.1
Exports of goods and services	1.6	10.3
Imports of goods and services	-1.8	-8.9
Gross domestic product	0.1	-1.5
Gross farm product	-3.1	7.9
Gross non-farm product	0.3	-1.9

Private final consumption expenditure increased marginally by 0.3 per cent in March quarter, but has recorded little real growth over the past year. Expenditure on goods has declined in real terms over this period, but expenditure on services has continued to grow.

*Continued ...*



Private gross fixed capital expenditure declined by 6.9 per cent in March quarter, the seventh consecutive fall in this aggregate. Public gross fixed capital expenditure also declined, falling by 6.3 per cent, mainly as a consequence of the sale overseas of a number of second-hand aircraft by Qantas.

Private non-farm stocks increased by \$12 million in constant price terms in March quarter following a decline of \$753 million in December quarter. Consequently, private non-farm stocks made a positive contribution to growth in GDP in the March quarter of 1.2 percentage points.

Public marketing authority stocks increased by only \$10 million in March quarter following six quarters in which significant increases were recorded, the increase in December quarter being \$664 million. Consequently, public marketing authority stocks made a negative contribution to growth in GDP in the March quarter of 1.0 percentage points.

Exports of goods and services rose 1.6 per cent in the March quarter making a positive contribution to growth of 0.3 percentage points. On the other hand, imports of goods and services declined by 1.8 per cent in March quarter, but made a positive contribution to growth in GDP of 0.4 percentage points.

Initial estimates show that Australia's terms of trade fell 3.2 per cent in March quarter, to a level 10.8 per cent below the peak recorded in March quarter 1989. The imports to sales ratio fell to 0.119 from 0.121 in December quarter. The stocks to sales ratio increased marginally to 0.555 from 0.549 in December quarter 1990.

In current price seasonally adjusted terms, wages, salaries and supplements increased by 1.0 per cent. A rise of 2.1 per cent in average earnings more than offset a significant decline in employment. The gross operating surplus of private corporate trading enterprises fell 6.3 per cent following a rise of 4.1 per cent in the previous quarter.

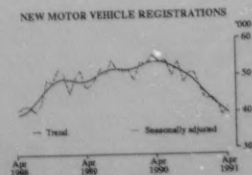
*(Unless otherwise indicated these comments are based on seasonally adjusted constant price estimates.) For further information, order the publication Australian National Accounts: National Income and Expenditure (5206.0), or contact Paul Curran on (06) 252 6708.*

## New motor vehicle registrations

Total new vehicle registrations increased by 0.9 per cent to 40,274 in April 1991 in original terms.

New car and station wagon registrations rose by 0.3 per cent while other vehicle registrations were up by 3.4 per cent.

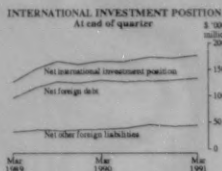
*For further information contact Kevin Toudon on (06) 252 6255.*



## Foreign debt still rising, but servicing ratios improve

Net foreign liabilities at 31 March 1991 totalled \$177,337 million, an increase of \$5,068 million or 3 per cent on the position at the end of the December quarter.

Australia's net foreign debt of \$133,491 million accounted for three-quarters of the level of net foreign liabilities at 31 March 1991. The ratio of net foreign debt to GDP for the year ended March quarter 1991 was 35.2 per cent, a rise of 0.7 percentage points on the ratio recorded a quarter earlier.



AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT POSITION  
\$A thousand million

	Level at end of	
	December 1990	March 1991
Foreign investment in Australia		
Borrowing from abroad	163.0	165.5
Other investment	101.4	104.1
Total	264.4	269.6
Australian investment abroad	92.2	92.3
Net international investment position		
Net foreign debt	130.2	133.5
Net other liabilities	42.1	43.8
Total	172.3	177.3

There was a net capital inflow of \$3,491 million during the March quarter 1991, being made up of a net inflow of foreign investment into Australia of \$5,046 million, partly offset by a net outflow of Australian investment abroad of \$1,555 million.

Net investment income payable abroad during the March quarter was \$3,936 million, down \$565 million (13%) on the amount payable in the December quarter.

For the year ended March quarter 1991, the ratio of net investment income payable abroad to exports of goods and services was 25.7 per cent, a fall of 1.2 percentage points on the ratio recorded for the year ended December quarter 1990.

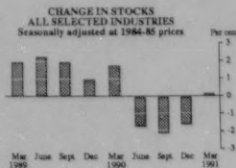
The ratio of net interest payable on foreign debt to exports of goods and services for the year ended 30 March 1991 was 20.5 per cent, compared with 20.7 per cent for the year ended a quarter earlier.

For further information, order the publication *Foreign Investment, Australia, Preliminary (5307.0)*, or contact Martin Keating on (06) 252 6252.

## Decline in stocks is arrested but manufacturers' sales fall

The level of stocks held by private businesses showed a marginal increase in the March quarter 1991 in seasonally adjusted constant price terms, following falls in the previous three quarters. Sales by manufacturing businesses however, declined between the December and March quarters.

The value of stocks held by private businesses at 31 March 1991 was 0.2 per cent higher in seasonally adjusted constant price terms than at the end of December 1990, but still 5.1 per cent below the levels of March 1990. Since March 1990 stocks held by the mining industry have increased 12.7 per cent, while all other major industry groups have shown a decline.



**STOCKS OF PRIVATE BUSINESSES**  
31 MARCH 1991  
Seasonally adjusted at 1984-85 prices

Industry	Stock level \$m	Percentage change since	
		31 December 1990	31 March 1991
Mining	2,689	3.7	12.7
Manufacturing	16,053	-0.6	-6.5
Wholesale trade	12,422	0.7	-7.2
Retail trade	9,349	0.3	-4.1
Other selected industries	333	-6.5	-5.4
<i>All selected industries</i>	<i>40,846</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>-5.1</i>

Manufacturers' sales in the March quarter 1991 were estimated to be \$31,937 million which represents a fall of 1.5 per cent over the December quarter 1990 in seasonally adjusted terms.

For the year ended March 1991, manufacturers' sales in constant price terms were 4.9 per cent lower than for the year to March 1990. Declines were recorded in all industries with the exception of food, beverages and tobacco which rose 5.8 per cent and chemicals, petroleum and coal products which rose 2.4 per cent. The most significant changes occurred in transport equipment, and clothing and footwear which registered falls of 24.2 per cent and 17.4 per cent respectively.

Expected sales data reported by manufacturers for 1990-91 indicate an expected fall of 1.7 per cent over actual sales for 1989-90 in current price terms. Expected sales for the 6 months to December 1991 have been revised downwards by 2.4 per cent from the December 1990 survey. If these expectations are realised, sales for the 6 month period to December 1991 would be only marginally higher than actual sales for the corresponding period in 1990.

## Australia's 12th National Census: a look behind the scenes

On 31 April the Australian Bureau of Statistics released *How Australia Takes a Census*. This publication was produced to help Australians understand more about the 1991 Census; why there is one, how it is planned, designed and conducted and how the information is used. The result should be a better understanding of the nature of census statistics.

The publication is available free and is included in several kits targeted at special groups who may need to know more about the census. These groups include the media, schools, politicians, migrant education groups and community service organisations.

The publication includes a copy of the 1991 Household Form and the Information Booklet which will be distributed to all households. It also includes an interesting table which shows the content of each census from 1911 to 1991, and details on each of the following aspects of the census process.

### Who is counted?

Australia's twelfth national census of population and housing will be held on 6 August 1991. The census counts all persons in Australia on census night including visitors to Australia. Australian residents overseas and foreign diplomats and their families are excluded. The two external territories of Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island are included in the census although their populations are not included in the total Australian counts.

### Why have a Census?

The objective of the census is to measure the number and key characteristics of people in Australia on census night. This then provides a reliable basis for the population estimates used primarily for electoral purposes and the distribution of government funds. The census also provides the characteristics of the population and its housing within small areas and for small population groups to support the planning, administration and policy development activities of governments, businesses and other users.

Census taking in Australia began as early as 1788 with what were known as musters. *How Australia Takes a Census* covers the history of the census from those early musters right through until the present day.

The census is the largest statistical collection undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It requires long and detailed planning. Well before one census is completed work on the next census begins. Planning for the 1991 Census began in 1985 ahead of the last census in 1986. *How Australia Takes a Census* includes a chapter which shows the extent of planning involved in conducting a census. It includes information about the consultation between the ABS and census users which eventually led to the selection of 31 topics for the 1991 Census.

### Confidentiality

Since its inception the ABS has made arrangements to ensure the confidentiality of all statistical information it collects. This confidentiality is guaranteed by the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. *How Australia Takes a Census* details the measures taken to ensure census confidentiality, which include the destruction of all forms after processing.

## Statistics Weekly

### Synopsis of articles, May 1991

2 May 1991

#### Small increase in building materials prices

Prices for materials used in house building increased by 0.1 per cent in February 1991 as did prices for materials used in other than house building.

#### Slump in new vehicle registrations extends to March

While unadjusted total new motor vehicle registrations increased by 1.2 per cent (to 39,880) in March 1991, in seasonally adjusted terms, there was a decline of 9.4 per cent between February and March 1991.

#### Manufacturing input prices show fourth successive fall

The price index of materials used in manufacturing industries fell by 3.3 per cent in February 1991.

#### Manufacturing in March ...

The publication *Manufacturing Production, Australia, Preliminary (8301.0)* contains up-to-date time series data on the production of twenty-seven major indicators of production.

#### Further decreases in prices of manufactured goods

Prices of manufactured goods fell by 0.5 per cent in February 1991, following falls of 0.6 per cent and 0.8 per cent in December and January.

9 May 1991

#### First surplus on goods and services since January 1988

In seasonally adjusted terms, the current account deficit for March 1991 fell \$242 million to \$1,209 million.

#### Housing approvals continue to fall

Total dwelling unit approvals fell by 2.5 per cent, in seasonally adjusted terms, between February and March 1991 with private sector house approvals falling by 4.2 per cent.

#### More than 1.8 million jobs started in 1989-90

A total of 1,880,300 persons started a job for wages or salary in the twelve months to July 1990, of whom 63 per cent had started a full-time job.

#### What bedevils Tasmanians

Tasmanians felt more threatened by artificial hazards than by naturally occurring ones at the time of a survey conducted in October 1989.

16 May 1991

#### Unemployment still rising sharply despite more part-time work

The April 1991 labour force survey recorded the largest rise in unemployment since the monthly survey commenced in 1978. The unemployment rate also rose sharply to a level just below 10 per cent.

#### Tourist industry boosts capacity

The number of rooms available in hotels, motels and guest houses Australia-wide increased by 7.7 per cent between December quarter 1989 and December quarter 1990.

#### First results of national health survey

Nearly 80 per cent of the Australian population aged 18 years or more felt they were in good or excellent health around the end of 1989.

#### First home buyers a third of Sydney, Melbourne markets

First home buyers were over a third of all purchasers in the Sydney and Melbourne home markets between 1988 and 1990.

23 May 1991

#### Rare negative movement in March quarter CPI

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell by 0.2 per cent between the December quarter 1990 and March quarter 1991 — the first negative movement since the March quarter 1984 and only the second since December quarter 1963.

## Synopsis of articles, May 1991 - continued

23 May 1991 continued

## Drop in annual arrivals from our traditional migrant sources

For the year 1990, the number of settler arrivals (121,560) was 7 per cent lower than in 1989 and 20 per cent lower than in 1988. The decrease was largest for those born in New Zealand, down 48 per cent, while the number born in the United Kingdom and Ireland fell by 11 per cent.

## Home lending up again as societies pick up the slack from banks

Total seasonally adjusted housing finance commitments for March 1991 increased by 1.0 per cent over February, the third successive monthly increase. The increase was attributable to permanent building societies, which increased their lending by 7.9 per cent.

## Livestock — the major trends

The sheep flock in Australia increased by 5.4 per cent to 170 million in the year to 31 March 1990, with a corresponding 9.6 per cent increase in wool production to 842.5 kilotonnes.

## Growth slows in super assets

The rate of increase in the value of total assets of superannuation funds and approved deposit funds (ADFs) has slowed appreciably in the last two quarters.

30 May 1991

## Company profits show large decrease in March quarter

Company profits before income tax fell in seasonally adjusted terms by 29 per cent in the March quarter 1991 from December quarter 1990.

## March quarter sees smaller decline in new capital spending

New capital expenditure in the March quarter 1991 declined 3 per cent in real terms from the December quarter.

## Major manufacturers bear the brunt of slump in car industry

The trend estimate for motor vehicle registrations fell by 3.6 per cent in March 1991, continuing the decline since April 1990.

## Continuing decreases in prices of manufactured goods

Prices of manufactured goods fell by 0.7 per cent in March 1991, the fourth consecutive monthly fall.

## Manufacturing in April ...

The publication *Manufacturing Production, Australia, Preliminary* (8301.0) contains up-to-date time series data on the production of twenty-seven major indicators of production.

## Building materials prices stable

Overall, prices for materials used in house building were unchanged in March 1991, while prices for materials used in other than house building increased by 0.1 per cent.

## Biggest annual fall in export prices for 23 years

Export prices fell by 2.1 per cent between February and March 1991, bringing the total decline in the year to March to 7.9 per cent. This is the largest annual decrease recorded since December 1967.

## What are employers spending on training?

Results of the 1990 Training Expenditure Survey show that Australian employers spent the equivalent of 2.6 per cent of gross wages and salaries on the formal training of their employees during the period 1 July to 30 September 1990.

## March livestock products summary

Calf slaughterings during March 1991, at 41 thousand, were 23.1 per cent higher than in February 1991.

*Continued from page i*

If you have ever wanted to know more about how census information is collected then *How Australia Takes a Census* can tell you that, too. It details how this is done right through from the production of maps to the delivery and collection of forms to and from 6.5 million households across Australia.

#### Census awareness

To help ensure that everyone is counted the ABS conducts a comprehensive communications campaign to inform the community about the census and its uses. There are also special procedures for Aboriginals, ethnic groups and any other groups who may need help or advice. More information on these procedures can be found in the chapter on Collection.

#### Processing

One of the biggest tasks of the census is the processing of the millions of individual returns. To process the information from the 1991 Census the ABS is using Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) Technology, and Computer Assisted Coding. These technologies represent a major advance in the processing of census data. The chapter on Processing provides more detailed information on these and all other procedures used by the ABS.

High quality data are essential if the census is going to be of maximum benefit to its users. To this end, extensive effort is put into form design, collection procedures, public awareness and accurate processing of the data collected. Information on the procedures used by the ABS to achieve high quality census data is included in the chapter on Quality. This chapter also talks about the sources of error in census data and the ways in which these errors are kept to a minimum.

#### Products

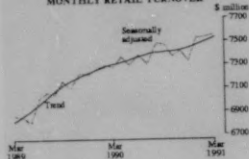
Finally the publication focuses on the products which result from the census and how they are used. As in the past, the broad results from the 1991 Census will be available in printed publications. *How Australia Takes a Census* also gives details of the latest technological advances in product development such as CDATA91 and digitised maps, and shows how census information can be tailored to individual user needs. The chapter on products also gives details of the standard products available from the census.

#### Uses of Census data — some practical examples

One of the most interesting chapters of *How Australia Takes a Census* shows exactly how census information can be used by providing examples of how it has been used in the past. As the examples show, census information can be used both commercially and for community projects, with applications ranging from planning childcare facilities through to private enterprise wishing to expand a company. Census data is widely used to plan for the future of Australia. The ABS itself has had over 250,000 requests for information from the 1986 Census and this does not include the many inquiries made to libraries and other organisations that disseminate census information. This chapter may help you to realise what potential census data may have for your own uses.

*How Australia Takes a Census* is an informative look behind the scenes of the census. It will help everyone understand more about the way in which the 1991 Census is conducted and its benefit to the planning and development of Australia.

MONTHLY RETAIL TURNOVER



## Grocers produce slight lift for retail trade

Growth in retail turnover remains weak despite marginally improved figures for the first three months of 1991 in seasonally adjusted terms. The trend estimates of turnover at current prices increased by an average of 0.4 per cent per month over the three months to March, slightly above the average growth of 0.3 per cent per month over the last twelve months.

The indications are that the slowing of the annual growth rate has ceased as it has remained fairly static for the past few months. The trend estimate of growth in the twelve months to March was 3.1 per cent, compared with 2.9 per cent in each of the previous two months.

The trend estimates show strong growth in the grocery industry. The average growth over the last three months for this industry, at 1.0 per cent, is slightly above the average monthly growth over the last year of 0.9 per cent. The trend remains weak for department stores, while hotels, liquor stores and licensed clubs remain in decline.

RETAIL TURNOVER

	Original value in March 1991 \$ million	Percentage change in trend estimates	
		Average monthly increase for 3 months to March 1991	March 1991 over March 1990
Grocers, confectioners, tobacconists	2,238	1.0	10.4
Hotels, liquor stores, licensed clubs	994	-0.6	-0.2
Department and general stores	712	0.2	2.1
Clothing and fabrics stores	475	0.7	4.4
Other industries	2,835	n.a.	n.a.
All industries	7,254	0.4	3.1

Average growth in State retail turnover over the last three months ranged from 0.1 per cent per month for Victoria and Western Australia through to 1.3 per cent for Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

The value of retail turnover in constant price seasonally adjusted terms increased marginally in the March quarter 1991 over the December quarter 1990. In the past year however, retail turnover has declined by 1.4 per cent.

For further information, order the publication *Retail Trade, Australia (8501.0)*, or contact Bill Powell on (06) 252 6132.

## Manufacturing input costs continue their fall

The price indexes of materials used in manufacturing industries fell by 2.0 per cent in March 1991. The decrease was again mainly due to lower prices for imported and domestic crude petroleum, reflecting the continuing decrease in world oil prices.

Prices for home produced materials decreased by 2.2 per cent due to a decrease in domestic crude petroleum prices. Prices for imported materials were down 1.6 per cent; lower prices for crude petroleum, as well as machinery and equipment components were partly offset by higher prices for chemicals and chemical based materials.

Over the year to March, prices of manufacturing materials decreased by 2.0 per cent, the first annual decrease since July 1990.

PRICE INDEXES OF MATERIALS USED IN MANUFACTURING, MARCH 1991  
Percentage change

Source of material	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year
Imported	-1.6	-0.1
Home produced	-2.2	-2.9
All manufacturing	-2.0	-2.0

For further information, order the publication Price Indexes of Materials Used in Manufacturing Industries, Australia (6411.0), or contact Geoff Brown on (06) 252 5348.

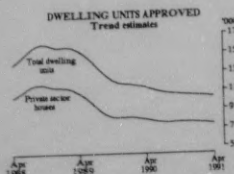
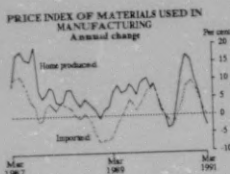
## April housing approvals increase but trend is still down

Total dwelling unit approvals rose marginally (by 0.3%), in seasonally adjusted terms between March and April 1991 with the private sector house component rising by a stronger 4.4 per cent.

The increases in April follow falls in both figures in the two previous months, and the trend for total dwelling units approved continued the decline which began in March 1989. Despite some recovery in the number of private sector house approvals in April, the trend here is also still declining under the cumulative effect of recent months' figures.

DWELLING UNITS APPROVED, APRIL 1991

	Private sector houses		Total dwelling units	
	No.	Percentage change on previous month	No.	Percentage change on previous month
Original	7,438	7.3	10,045	2.8
Seasonally adjusted	7,538	4.4	10,241	0.3
Trend estimate	7,411	-0.6	10,284	-0.5



The value of total building approved (residential and non-residential) fell by 8.5 per cent from the March 1991 figure of \$1,622.6 million, seasonally adjusted, and was 26.3 per cent lower than the April 1990 figure.

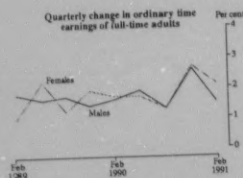
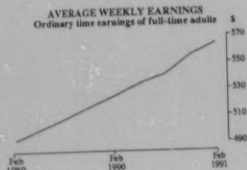
The trend series for the value of total building approved continues to show a steady decline. While the trend had been showing early signs of levelling out as a result of the high value of non-residential building approved in February 1991, these small gains have been offset by relatively low approvals in March and April.

For further information, order the publication *Building Approvals, Australia* (8731.0), or contact Paul Seville on (06) 252 6067.

## Weekly earnings rise influenced by lay-offs of lower paid staff

Preliminary estimates of average weekly ordinary time earnings increased by 1.6 per cent for full-time adults between November 1990 and February 1991. The increase for males was 1.5 per cent, while for females it was 2.1 per cent.

It appears that compositional changes in the work force continued to affect the estimates, albeit to a lesser degree than in the November 1990 quarter. The trend to shed lower paid staff continued and this effect appeared to have a greater impact on female earnings than on male earnings. For full-time adults, average weekly total earnings increased by 1.2 per cent (an annual increase of 7.1 per cent). Males contributed 1.1 per cent (7.1 per cent annually) to this growth while the female figures increased by 2.0 per cent (7.6 per cent annually).



**AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS, FEBRUARY 1991**

	Weekly earnings (\$)			Percentage change in 'Persons' from	
	Males	Females	Persons	Nov. 90	Feb. 90
Full-time adults					
Ordinary time	598.10	499.30	564.30	1.6	7.5
Total	643.00	511.40	598.00	1.2	7.1
All employees	586.00	385.40	497.10	1.3	6.9

Average weekly earnings statistics represent average gross earnings of employees and do not relate to average award rates nor to the earnings of the 'average person'. Estimates of average weekly earnings are derived by dividing estimates of weekly total earnings by estimates of employment. Changes in the averages may be affected not only by changes in the level of earnings of employees but also by changes in the overall composition of the labour force.

It should also be noted by those using average weekly earnings data for contractual adjustment or related purposes, that these estimates are preliminary. Final estimates for February 1991 are expected to be published on 27 June 1991 in *Average Weekly Earnings, States and Australia, February 1991* (6302.0).

For further information, order the publication *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia*, Preliminary (6301.0), or contact Mick Atkinson on (06) 252 5946.

## Inquiries

The ABS supplies a wide range of 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

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### Suggestions

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## All the week's releases: 29 May to 4 June

### General

Year Book Aust., 1991 (1301.0; \$69.00)  
Statistics Weekly, 30 May 1991 (1318.0; \$4.00)  
NIF-10S Model Data Base Manual, March Qtr 1991 (1340.0; free)  
Monthly Summary of Statistics, NSW, May 1991 (1305.1; \$13.50)  
Monthly Summary of Statistics, Vic., May 1991 (1303.2; \$10.00)  
Monthly Summary of Statistics, Qld, May 1991 (1304.3; \$9.00)  
Monthly Summary of Statistics, WA, May 1991 (1305.5; \$10.00)  
South Australian Year Book, 1991 (1301.4; \$29.50)  
Monthly Summary of Statistics, SA, May 1991 (1303.4; \$9.00)

### Demography

Australian Demographic Statistics, December Qtr 1990 (3101.0; \$11.50)

### Social statistics

Schools, Aust., 1990 (4221.0; \$20.00)

### National accounts, finance and foreign trade

Australian National Accounts: National Income and Expenditure, March Qtr 1991 (5206.0; \$20.00)  
Australian National Accounts: Quarterly Data on Floppy Disk, March Qtr 1991 (5228.0; \$86.50)  
Balance of Payments, Aust., April 1991 (5301.0; \$15.00)  
Balance of Payments, Aust., March Qtr 1991 (5302.0; \$20.00)  
Foreign Investment, Aust., March Qtr 1991, Preliminary (5307.0; \$10.00)  
Exports, Aust., Monthly Summary Tables, March 1991 (5432.0; \$9.00)  
Reissue: Taxation Revenue, Aust., 1989-90 (5506.0; \$15.00)  
Stocks, Manufacturers' Sales and Expected Sales to December 1991, Aust., March Qtr 1991 (5629.0; \$10.00)  
State and Local Government Finance, NSW, 1988 (5502.1; \$16.20)

### Labour statistics and prices

Reissue: Persons Not in the Labour Force, Aust., September 1990 (6220.0; \$11.50)  
Average Weekly Earnings, Aust., February 1991, Preliminary (6301.0; \$10.00)  
Industrial Disputes, Aust., February 1991 (6321.0; \$7.00)  
Price Indexes of Materials Used in Manufacturing Industries, Aust., March 1991 (6411.0; \$10.00)

### Agriculture

Principal Agricultural Commodities, Aust., 1990-91, Preliminary (7111.0; \$10.00)  
Principal Agricultural Commodities, Vic., 1990-91, Preliminary (7111.2; \$10.00)  
Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced, Tas., 1989-90 (7501.6; \$15.00)

### Secondary industry and distribution

Manufacturing Production, Aust.: Household Appliances and Electrical Equipment, March 1991 (8357.0; \$6.50)  
Retail Trade, Aust., March 1991 (8501.0; \$10.00)  
Building Approvals, Aust., April 1991 (8731.0; \$12.50)  
Production Statistics, NSW, March 1991 (8304.1; \$7.50)  
Building Approvals, NSW, April 1991 (8731.1; \$10.00)  
Building Approvals, Vic., April 1991 (8731.2; \$10.00)  
Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, Vic., March 1991 (8741.2; \$10.00)  
Tourist Accommodation, WA, December Qtr 1990 (8635.5; \$10.00)  
Building Approvals, WA, April 1991 (8731.5; \$10.00)  
Building Approvals, SA, April 1991 (8731.4; \$10.00)  
Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, SA, March 1991 (8741.4; \$10.00)  
Building Approvals, NT, April 1991 (8731.7; \$5.50)  
Tourist Accommodation, ACT, March Qtr 1991 (8635.8; \$4.50)

### Transport

Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Aust., April 1991, Preliminary (9301.0; \$10.00)  
Motor Vehicle Registrations, Vic., April 1991 (9303.2; \$10.00)  
Road Traffic Accidents, Qld, September Qtr 1990 (9405.3; \$10.00)  
Motor Vehicle Registrations, WA, March 1991 (9303.5; \$7.00)

## Calendar of key releases

Expected releases over the fortnight to 18 June 1991

### June

- 5** Corrigendum: Retail Trade, Australia, March 1991 (8501.0)
- 6** The Labour Force, Australia, May 1991, Preliminary (6202.0; \$10.00)  
Import Price Index, Australia, March Quarter 1991 (6414.0; \$9.00)
- 11** Australian National Accounts: Gross Product, Employment and Hours Worked, March 1991 (5222.0; \$9.00)
- 13** Quarterly Indexes of Industrial Production, Australia, March 1991 (8125.0; \$10.00)  
Retail Trade, Australia, April 1991 (8501.0; \$10.00)
- 17** Building Activity, Australia; Dwelling Unit Commencements, March 1991, Preliminary (8750.0; \$10.00)

## Feature article — 1991 Census

A removable supplement is included in this issue between pages 6 and 7. This contains a feature, taking a look behind the scenes of Australia's 12th National Census, as part of an occasional series and a synopsis of *Statistics Weekly* articles released in May 1991.

## The latest ...

Changes to key State indicators — consolidated to 4 June 1991



Statistics Weekly  
6 June 1991

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
	— Percentage change from same period previous year —								
New capital expenditure (Dec. qtr 90)	-2.4	-28.6	-15.3	-11.7	2.8	30.0	n.a.	n.a.	-8.6
Retail turnover (Mar. 91) (trend estimate)	3.2	-1.7	4.2	9.6	3.2	9.4	n.a.	10.8	3.1
New motor vehicle registrations (Apr. 91)†	-14.5	-49.8	11.4	-24.7	-14.6	-19.1	-9.6	-20.3	-21.5
Number of dwelling unit approvals (Apr. 91)	-1.3	-12.1	16.1	3.6	14.1	10.7	-26.8	-13.8	2.7
Value of total building work done (Dec. qtr 90)	2.5	-11.1	-23.0	9.6	-25.5	-24.7	11.4	5.3	-8.5
Employed persons (Apr. 91)*	0.6	-6.1	-1.6	-0.3	-1.4	-2.0	0.8	3.9	-1.8
Capital city consumer price index (Mar. qtr 90)	4.7	5.3	4.8	6.0	3.9	4.2	5.4	4.2	4.9
Average weekly earnings (full-time adult ordinary time) (Nov 90)	6.8	7.1	9.9	8.3	7.9	6.6	9.8	8.7	7.5
Population (Dec. 90)	1.1	1.3	2.3	1.1	2.2	1.1	1.2	2.5	1.5
Room nights in licensed hotels and motels, etc (Dec. qtr 90)	-2.3	0.9	8.0	-0.7	0.3	29.3	32.8	4.6	2.8

\* Seasonally adjusted except for NT and ACT. † Seasonally adjusted except for Tas., NT and ACT.

## Key national indicators - consolidated to 4 June 1991

		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	Mar. qtr 91	91,167	95,056	-0.4	1.0
	— 1984-85 prices			61,295	64,415	0.1	-1.5
<b>Industrial activity</b>							
New capital expenditure	— current prices	\$m	Mar. qtr 91	5,736	6,463	-2.9	-11.6
	— 1984-85 prices			4,334	4,480	-3.4	-11.5
Expected new capital expenditure			Three months to Jun. 91	7,300	n.a.	n.a.	-10.4
Retail turnover	— current prices		Mar. 91	7,253.8	7,555.7	0.3	3.8
	— 1984-85 prices		Mar. qtr 91	14,274.7	15,231.0	0.3	-1.4
New motor vehicle registrations		no.	Apr. 91	40,274	42,313	8.2	-21.5
Dwelling unit approvals			Apr. 91	10,045	10,241	0.3	-6.9
Value of all building approvals		\$m		1,516	1,484	-8.6	-26.4
Value of total building work done	— current prices		Dec. qtr 90	7,391	7,069	0.5	-8.5
	— 1984-85 prices			4,452	4,452	0.1	-10.9
Manufacturers' sales	— current prices		Mar. qtr 91	31,937	34,424	-1.9	-4.7
	— 1984-85 prices			22,162	23,833	1.5	-7.0
Expected manufacturers' sales			Three months to June 91	34,850	n.a.	n.a.	-6.2
<b>Labour</b>							
Employed persons (e)		'000	Apr. 91	7,750.5	7,721.0	0.1	-1.8
Unemployment rate † (e)	%			9.9	9.9	0.7	3.6
Participation rate † (e)	%			64.0	63.7	0.5	0.2
Job vacancies		'000	Nov. 90	34.1	35.4	-27.8	-45.6
Average weekly overtime per employee	hours			1.3	1.3	-1.9	-16.2
<b>Prices, profits and wages</b>							
Consumer price index	1980-81 = 100.0		Mar. qtr 90	214.1	n.a.	-0.2	4.9
Price index of materials used in manufacturing industries	1984-85 = 100.0		Mar. 91	119.1	n.a.	-2.0	-2.0
Price index of articles produced by manufacturing industry	1988-89 = 100.0		Mar. 91	110.5	n.a.	-0.7	2.3
Company profits before income tax		\$m	Mar. qtr 91	2,266	2,762	-29.1	-32.0
Average weekly earnings (preliminary) (Full-time adults; ordinary time)		\$	Feb. 91	564.30	n.a.	1.6	7.5
<b>Interest rates (b) (monthly average)</b>							
90-day bank bills †	% per annum		Apr. 91	11.30	n.a.	-0.30	-3.75
10-year Treasury bonds †				11.00	n.a.	-0.40	-2.8
<b>Balance of payments</b>							
Exports of merchandise		\$m	Apr. 91	4,299	4,160	-7.1	0.8
Imports of merchandise				4,040	4,227	9.5	3.3
Balance on merchandise trade (c)				259	-67	n.a.	n.a.
Balance of goods and services (c)				-71	-408	n.a.	-49.5
Balance on current account (c)				-1,246	-1,609	-69.7	-7.1
Terms of trade (d)	1984-85 = 100.0		Mar. qtr 91	n.a.	98.9	-3.3	-6.5
<b>Foreign investment</b>							
Net foreign debt		\$m	31 Mar. 91	133,491	n.a.	2.6	3.2
Net foreign liabilities				177,337	n.a.	2.9	6.7
<b>Exchange rates (monthly average)</b>							
SUS	per \$A		Apr. 91	0.7798	n.a.	1.0	2.1
Trade weighted index	May 1970 = 100.0			59.6	n.a.	2.4	-1.7
<b>Other indicators</b>							
Population (resident at end of qtr)	million		Dec. 90	17.2	n.a.	0.4	1.5
Overseas visitor arrivals	'000		Dec. 90	253	176	0.7	4.1

(a) Based on seasonally adjusted figures where available. (b) Source: Reserve Bank of Australia. (c) For percentage changes, 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. (e) Later figures expected to be released Thursday, 6 June 1991.

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 10). 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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