

COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS,Canberra, F.C.T.23rd JUNE, 1931.

CONFIDENTIAL. To be treated as strictly confidential until released for publication as follows:-

EVENING PAPERS - 30th JUNE, 1931.MORNING PAPERS - 1st JULY, 1931.COST OF FOOD AND GROCERIES, MAY, 1931.

The results of the investigations made under the direction of the Minister for Home Affairs by the Acting Commonwealth Statistician (Professor L. F. Giblin) as to the price of food and groceries (46 commodities) have been made available for the month of MAY, 1931.

CHANGE OF BASE PERIOD. Special attention is directed to the base period to which the index numbers in the attached tables are computed. In tabulations of retail prices of food and groceries prior to and including December, 1929, the base (1000) to which the index numbers were computed was the weighted average aggregate cost in the year, 1911, for the Six Capital Cities, of the commodities included in the investigations. The desirability of computing retail price indexes on a post-war period base was considered by a Conference of Statisticians and it was resolved that the period of five years, 1923-27, be adopted as base for retail price indexes as from January, 1930.

The computation of the retail price index numbers (Food, Groceries and Rent of all houses) used by the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration in the determination and adjustment of rates of wage on the original base, viz., year, 1911 = 1000, will be continued, and these figures will be published in the Quarterly Summary of Australian Statistics, and Annual Labour Reports.

In the table herewith particulars are given in the form of index numbers, of the price levels of food and groceries in May, 1931, compared with July, 1914, the base period, 1923-1927, May, 1930, and April, 1931. In the last column, the percentage increase in May, 1931, compared with July, 1914, is shown. The base, 1000, to which the index numbers are computed, is the weighted average aggregate cost in the five-yearly base period, 1923-1927, in the Six Capital Cities, of the commodities included in the investigations.

Compared with the previous month, April, 1931, retail prices of food and groceries in May showed a decrease of 1.3% in the weighted average cost for the 30 principal towns regarded as a whole, and a decrease of 1.4% in the weighted average cost for the Six Capital Cities of the Commonwealth. In all States decreases were recorded when compared with the previous month - Victoria, with a decrease of 1.6% showing the greatest fall, then Queensland and South Australia, each with a decrease of 1.4%; New South Wales, 1.3%; Tasmania, 1.1%; and Western Australia, 1.0%.

Compared with the corresponding month, May, of last year, decreases were recorded in all of the States - South Australia with a decrease of 13.0% registering the greatest, followed in the order named, by Victoria, 15.9%; Tasmania, 15.5%; Western Australia, 15.3%; New South Wales, 12.6%; and Queensland, 8.6%. The weighted average index number for the 30 Towns considered as a whole was 940 in May, 1931, compared with 978 in May, 1930, a decrease of 14.1%.

The increase in cost since July, 1914, was greatest in New South Wales, 35.2%, followed by Queensland, 31.6%; Victoria, 28.5%; Tasmania, 23.5%, South Australia, 17.2%, and Western Australia, 12.3%. The increase in the 30 Towns considered as a whole since July, 1914, was 29.0%, while for the Six Capital Cities the increase for the same period was 29.5%. The actual cost of the regimen of food and groceries for the month of May, 1931, was highest in New South Wales, and lowest in Victoria. In the case of the individual towns, the cost was greatest in Broken Hill and lowest in Toowoomba.

Compared with the previous month, average retail prices of oatmeal, potatoes, butter, bacon, ham, and pork, showed a general downward tendency, while eggs were higher in price in all of the towns. The average prices of beef showed a slight downward tendency in most of the towns, while in some cases a slight increase was recorded. Prices of mutton showed a marked decrease in a number of the towns.

Oatmeal, potatoes, milk, butter, cheese, and all cuts of meat were retailed at reduced prices in Sydney, while eggs and flour were higher in price. In Melbourne, flour, tea, potatoes, milk, bacon, ham, and pork were lower in price, while eggs were retailed at a slightly higher price. Potatoes, butter, bacon, ham, and all classes of meat showed reductions in Brisbane, while increases were recorded in the average prices of tea and eggs. In Adelaide, flour, potatoes, kerosene, milk, butter, and ham, were lower in price. Eggs, showed an increased price in that city. Flour, butter, bacon, ham, and beef showed reduced prices in Perth, while eggs and mutton were higher in price. In Hobart, potatoes, milk, butter, and pork were lower in price. Flour, tea, eggs, beef, and mutton, on the other hand, showed increased prices in that city.

RETAIL PRICE INDEXES.

Based upon cost of Food and Groceries only.

MAY, 1931.

Retail Price Index Numbers for each of the 30  
Principal Towns in Australia for the periods specified.  
Weighted Average cost in the Six Capital Cities during the five-yearly  
base period, 1923-27 = 1000.

Town.	July, 1914.	Average - 5-yearly period, 1923-27	May, 1930.	April, 1931.	May, 1931.	Percentage Increase from July, 1914 to May, 1931.
Sydney .. ..	645	1012	1012	896	883	36.9
Newcastle .. ..	622	1015	1004	398	823	39.1
Broken Hill .. ..	621	1155	1227	1048	1045	27.3
Goulburn .. ..	661	1013	999	881	865	30.9
Bathurst .. ..	613	974	935	886	869	41.8
<u>N. Aver. - N.S. Wales, ..</u> <u>(5 Towns).</u>	652	1016	1016	900	888	36.2
Melbourne .. ..	619	978	940	806	792	28.1
Ballarat .. ..	617	989	985	826	814	31.9
Bendigo .. ..	619	993	937	830	820	22.5
Geelong .. ..	609	967	936	791	769	26.3
Murraymooloolool .. ..	603	957	954	794	800	21.6
<u>N. Aver. - Victoria, ..</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u>	613	978	944	807	794	28.5
Brisbane .. ..	591	960	857	797	787	32.2
Toowoomba .. ..	582	934	868	783	768	32.0
Rockhampton .. ..	646	983	927	864	845	30.8
Charters Towers .. ..	696	1074	1010	920	914	31.3
Murwick .. ..	605	951	901	802	810	33.9
<u>N. Aver. - Queensland, ..</u> <u>(5 Towns).</u>	605	965	871	807	796	31.6
Adelaide .. ..	699	1025	992	824	812	16.2
Perth .. ..	680	1032	1035	803	885	28.6
Port Pirie .. ..	722	1060	1065	878	868	20.2
Mount Gambier .. ..	595	989	938	779	775	30.3
Portborough .. ..	742	1064	1038	897	882	17.8
<u>N. Aver. - S. Australia,</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u>	697	1026	996	829	817	17.2
Perth .. ..	749	1042	1022	879	869	16.0
Melbourne .. ..	931	1179	1205	1017	1008	8.3
Perth .. ..	-	1104	1100	889	901	-
Bunbury .. ..	793	1094	1123	923	912	15.0
Geraldton .. ..	809	1112	1103	946	937	16.0
<u>N. Aver. - W. Australia</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u>	790	1060	1047	896	887	12.2
Hobart .. ..	678	1027	989	838	833	22.9
Launceston .. ..	540	1013	960	879	819	28.0
Burnie .. ..	-	1040	1045	854	847	-
Devonport .. ..	-	1035	962	849	820	-
Queenstown .. ..	735	1127	1095	956	928	26.3
<u>N. Aver. - Tasmania, ..</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u>	672	1027	985	841	832	23.8
<u>N. Aver. - Australia,</u> <u>(30 Towns)</u>	651	1003	978	851	840	29.0
<u>N. Aver. - Australia,</u> <u>(6 Capitals)</u>	645	(base)	972	847	835	29.5
Canberra (a) .. ..	(b)	(b)	1108	987	960	-
Townsville (a) .. ..	(b)	(b)	1099	1035	928	-

(a) Not included in weighted average. (b) Not available.