

COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS
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WHOLESALE PRICE (BASIC MATERIALS AND FOODSTUFFS) INDEX
JANUARY, 1959

1. The summary overleaf contains particulars of the Wholesale Price (Basic Materials and Foodstuffs) Index from 1936-37 to the present time.
2. A list of the commodities and other information concerning the index is set out in Labour Report No. 45, 1957. (See also paragraph 6 below).
3. Commodities in the index are priced in their primary or basic form wherever possible and as nearly as may be at the point where they first make effective impact on the Australian price structure. The prices of imported goods, for instance, are on an ex-bond or into factory basis.
4. The prices used have, in the main, been obtained directly from manufacturers and merchants. With a few important exceptions, they are from Melbourne sources.
5. The weights are based on estimates of the average annual consumption of the commodities in Australia during the period 1928-29 to 1934-35. The index is constructed on the aggregative fixed weights formula.
6. During 1956, supplies and prices of potatoes and onions fluctuated violently upwards and downwards between abnormally wide limits. These fluctuations were so great as to dominate the movement of the sections of the index in which these items were included, namely, "Foodstuffs and Tobacco", "Goods Principally Home Produced" and "Total All Groups". In the circumstances of the case, neither seasonal adjustment nor conversion of the index to a "changing weights" formula could be applied to eliminate these transient fluctuations. Accordingly, in order to provide a representative measure of general trend in wholesale prices, the index was reconstructed as from the base period by omitting potatoes and onions. Indexes for January, 1959 comparable with previous indexes including potatoes and onions, are shown in a footnote to the table overleaf.
7. Consideration is being given to the enlargement of the index to cover additional groups and to revision of the weighting pattern of the index.

WHOLESALE PRICE (BASIC MATERIALS AND FOODSTUFFS) INDEX

(Base of each Group : Average of 3 years ended June, 1939 = 100)

Period	Basic Materials							Food-stuffs and Tobacco (b)	Basic Materials and Foodstuffs		Total all Groups (b)
	Metals and Coal (a)	Oils Fats and Waxes	Textiles	Chemicals	Rubber and Hides	Building Materials	Total		Goods principally Imported (c)	Goods principally Home Produced (b)	
1936-37	96	99	118	99	111	99	99	98	99	98	99
1937-38	101	101	100	100	97	104	102	102	102	101	101
1938-39	103	100	82	101	92	97	99	101	99	100	100
1950-51	256	196	641	242	292	268	264	229	256	240	244
1951-52	343	220	577	314	298	370	321	276	288	300	297
1952-53	392	234	607	350	224	404	350	293	292	331	319
1953-54	388	222	566	323	191	363	332	308	271	339	319
1954-55	391	214	510	314	246	372	330	315	277	340	322
1955-56	404	220	456	317	328	415	345	325	292	352	334
1956-57	409	241	520	344	302	463	367	324	311	357	344
1957-58	398	238	437	349	280	453	355	325	301	355	339
1957-58											
January	400	236	424	347	278	458	355	318	302	349	335
February	397	236	434	347	273	458	355	320	301	350	336
March	398	236	404	347	278	458	353	323	301	351	337
April	395	236	389	346	277	458	351	321	301	349	335
May	393	236	384	346	263	420	343	330	290	355	336
June	394	236	387	346	254	420	343	332	290	357	337
1958-59											
July	394	231	387	327	249	420	339	332	285	357	336
August	394	231	358	327	244	420	338	338	285	360	338
September	394	231	358	327	244	432	340	337	283	361	338
October	394	231	341	327	243	432	339	330	282	356	334
November	394	232	344	327	254	425	338	326	282	352	332
December	390	231	p337	327	267	420	p336	322	282	p348	p328
January	p391	231	p333	327	263	422	p336	p320	p280	p347	p327

(a) Special purpose index for the "Metals and Coal" group excluding Coal and Briquettes for January, 1959, was 408.

(b) During 1956 these indexes were reconstructed from the base period by excluding potatoes and onions. For January, 1959, index numbers for these groups comparable with the previous indexes including potatoes and onions were: "Foodstuffs and Tobacco", 320; "Goods Principally Home Produced", 347; "Total All Groups", 328.

(c) Represents only such imported commodities as are included in the Wholesale Price Index and does not measure changes in price of all imports.

p - preliminary, subject to revision.

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CANBERRA, A.C.T.

4TH MARCH, 1959