

COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS.

Canberra, F.C.T.

20th MAY, 1931.

CONFIDENTIAL. To be treated as strictly confidential until released for publication on the MORNING of TUESDAY, 26th MAY, 1931.

COST OF FOOD AND GROCERIES, APRIL, 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 APRIL, 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.

It is intended, however, to continue 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, and to publish these figures in the Quarterly Summary of Australian Statistics.

Compared with the previous month, March, 1931, retail prices of food in April showed little variation for Australia, increases offsetting decreases, with the result that a small decrease in cost of 0.4% was recorded in the case of the 30 principal towns regarded as a whole, and a decrease of 0.2% in the weighted average for the Six Capital Cities of the Commonwealth. In five States decreases were recorded when compared with the previous month - Victoria, with a decrease of 1.6% showing the greatest fall, then Tasmania, 1.3%; South Australia, 0.6%; Western Australia, 0.3% and Queensland, 0.2%. In the State of New South Wales, the cost in April showed an increase of 1.0% over the previous month.

Compared with the corresponding month, April, of last year, decreases were recorded in all of the States, South Australia with a decrease of 17.5% registering the greatest, followed by Victoria, 14.7%; Tasmania, 14.4%; Western Australia, 13.4%; New South Wales, 11.9%; and Queensland, 8.4%. The weighted average index number for the 30 Towns considered as a whole was 851 in April, 1931, compared with 952 in April, 1930, a decrease of 13.3%.

In the following table, particulars are given in the form of index numbers, of the price levels of food and groceries in April, 1931, compared with July, 1914, the base period, 1923-1927, April, 1930, and March, 1931. In the last column, the percentage increase in April, 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.

The increase in cost since July, 1914, was greatest in New South Wales, 38.0%, followed in the order named, by Queensland, 33.4%; Victoria, 30.6%; Tasmania, 25.1%; South Australia, 18.9%; and Western Australia, 13.4%. The increase in the 30 Towns considered as a whole since July, 1914, was 30.7%, while for the Six Capital Cities, the increase for the same period was 31.3%. The actual cost of the regimen of food and groceries for the month of April, 1931, was highest in New South Wales, and lowest in Victoria and Queensland, the weighted averages for each of these two States being equal. In the case of the individual towns the cost was greatest in Broken Hill and lowest in Mount Gambier.

Compared with the previous month, prices of oatmeal, potatoes, onions and butter showed a general downward tendency, while eggs were much higher in price in all of the towns. Meat prices were firmer in most of the towns, many of the

decreases recorded being due to reduced prices in certain cuts of meat and not to general reduction. In New South Wales, the prices of bread and flour increased, but in a number of towns in other States, flour was being sold at lower rates. Coffee, oatmeal, raisins, currants, potatoes, onions, milk, and butter were retailed at slightly reduced prices in Sydney, while bread, flour, and eggs were distinctly higher in price, and prices of all cuts of meat showed a tendency to rise. In Melbourne, bread, flour, tea, jam, oatmeal, butter, potatoes, and cheese, showed reductions, while increases were recorded in the prices of coffee, raisins, and eggs. Oatmeal, butter, bacon, beef, mutton, and pork, were lower in price in Brisbane, while flour, tea, potatoes, onions, eggs, and ham, showed higher rates. In Adelaide, bread, flour, tea, coffee, oatmeal, butter, bacon, ham and beef, were lower in price, while potatoes, eggs, mutton and pork showed increases. Coffee, milk, butter, bacon, ham and meat showed reduced prices in Perth, while flour, tea, potatoes, cheese, and eggs, were higher in price. In Hobart, flour, tea, oatmeal, raisins, potatoes, onions, milk, butter, ham, beef, and pork, were lower in price. Eggs and mutton on the other hand, showed increased prices in that city.

RETAIL PRICE INDEX

Based upon cost of Food and Groceries only.

APRIL, 1931.

Retail Price Index Numbers for each of the 30
Principal Towns in Australia for the period specified..

Weighted average cost in the Six Capital Cities during the five-yearly
period, 1923-27 = 1000.

Town.	July, 1914.	Average - 5-yearly period, 1923-27	April, 1930.	March, 1931.	April, 1931.	Percentage Increase from July, 1914 to April, 1931.
Sydney ..	645	1012	1017	887	896	38.9
Newcastle ..	642	1015	1008	890	898	39.9
Broken Hill ..	821	1155	1231	1045	1048	27.6
Goulburn ..	661	1018	1021	871	881	33.3
Bathurst ..	613	974	999	875	886	44.5
<u>N. Aver. - N.S. Wales,</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	652	1016	1022	891	900	38.0
Melbourne ..	619	978	941	819	806	30.2
Ballarat ..	617	939	993	838	826	33.9
Bendigo ..	619	993	998	854	830	34.1
Geelong ..	609	967	937	794	791	29.9
Warrnambool ..	608	967	959	823	794	30.6
<u>N. Aver. - Victoria,</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	618	978	946	820	807	30.6
Brisbane ..	591	960	869	796	797	34.9
Toowoomba ..	582	934	873	802	783	34.5
Rockhampton ..	646	938	937	876	864	33.7
Charter Towers ..	696	1074	1025	925	920	32.2
Warwick ..	605	951	903	825	809	33.7
<u>N. Aver. - Queensland,</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	605	965	881	809	807	35.4
Adelaide ..	699	1025	993	829	824	17.9
Bedford ..	688	1032	1086	911	903	31.3
Port Pirie ..	722	1060	1075	881	878	21.6
Mount Gambier ..	595	989	947	772	779	30.9
Peterborough ..	749	1164	1098	906	897	19.8
<u>N. Aver. - S. Australia,</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	697	1026	1005	834	829	18.9
Perth ..	749	1642	1013	882	879	17.4
Kalgoorlie ..	931	1179	1161	1020	1017	9.2
Northam ..	-	1104	1089	887	889	-
Bunbury ..	793	1094	1132	926	923	16.4
Geraldton ..	808	1112	1102	948	946	17.1
<u>N. Aver. - West Australia,</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	790	1050	1035	899	896	13.4
Hobart ..	678	1027	985	850	838	23.6
Launceston ..	640	1013	959	837	829	29.5
Lurnea ..	-	1040	1040	860	854	-
Devonport ..	-	1035	963	860	849	-
Queensdown ..	735	1127	1064	971	956	30.1
<u>N. Aver. - Tasmania,</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	672	1027	982	852	841	25.1
<u>N. Aver. - Australia,</u> <u>(30 Towns)</u> ..	651	1003	982	854	851	30.7
<u>N. Aver. - Australia,</u> <u>(6 Capitals)</u> ..	645	(base) 1000	976	849	847	21.3
Canberra (a) ..	(b)	(b)	1119	993	987	-
Tourville (a) ..	(c)	1001	1044	940	928	-

(a) Not included in Weighted Averages. (b) Not available.

- 3. -

Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics,
CANBERRA, F.C.T. 20th MAY, 1931.