

COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS.

Canberra, F.C.T.

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COST OF FOOD AND GROCERIES, MARCH, 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 (26 commodities) have been made available for the month of MARCH, 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, February, 1931, a decrease in cost of 1.7% was recorded in the case of the 30 principal towns regarded as a whole, and a similar decrease 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 1.0% showing the greatest fall, then Tasmania, 1.7%; New South Wales, 1.1%; Queensland, 1.0%; and South Australia, 0.4%. In the State of Western Australia, the cost in March showed an increase of 0.3% over the previous month.

Compared with the corresponding month of last year, decreases were recorded in all of the States, South Australia with a decrease of 16.3% registered the greatest, followed by Western Australia, 11.5%; New South Wales and Tasmania, each with a decrease of 13.0%; Victoria, 13.7%; and Queensland, 2.7%. The weighted average index number for the 30 Towns considered as a whole was 854 in March, 1931, compared with 930 in March, 1930, a decrease of 12.9%.

In the following table, particulars are given in the form of index numbers, of the price levels of food and groceries in March, 1931, compared with July, 1914, the base period, 1923-1927, March, 1930 and February, 1931. In the last column, the percentage increase in March, 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 the cost since July, 1914, was greatest in New South Wales, 36.7%; followed in the order named, by Queensland, 33.7%; Victoria, 32.7%; Tasmania, 26.8%; South Australia, 19.7%; and Western Australia, 13.3%. The increase in the 30 Towns considered as a whole since July, 1914, was 31.2%, while for the Six Capital Cities, the increase for the same period was 31.6%. The actual cost of the regimen of food and groceries for the month of March, 1931, was highest in Western Australia, and lowest in Queensland. 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 flour, potatoes, onions, oatmeal and meat showed a downward tendency, while butter, cheese, and eggs were higher in price in most of the towns. In Queensland, the price of flour increased but in the other States this commodity was sold at lower prices. Bread prices in the Capital Cities showed little variation from those of the previous month, but in a number of country towns, especially in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, lower prices were in operation.

Bread, flour, potatoes, onions, milk, eggs, and all cuts of meat, were retailed at reduced prices in Sydney, while raisins, butter, cheese, and ham, were higher in price. In Melbourne, bread, flour, jam, oatmeal, potatoes, onions, bacon, ham, beef, mutton, and pork, showed reductions, while increases were recorded in the prices of tea, butter, and eggs. Jam, oatmeal, potatoes, onions, milk, ham, beef and mutton were lower in price in Brisbane, while on the other hand, flour, tea, butter, cheese, and eggs, were higher in price in that city. In Adelaide, flour, oatmeal, potatoes, bacon, and pork, were lower in price, while bread, jam, marmoset, butter, eggs, and cheese showed increases. Flour, jam, oatmeal, soap, beef, and mutton, showed reduced prices in Perth, while potatoes, butter, eggs, ham and pork were higher in price. In Hobart, bread, jam, potatoes, onions, eggs, mutton, and pork were lower in price. Butter, cheese, and raisins, on the other hand, showed increased prices in that city.

RETAIL PRICE INDEXES.

Based upon cost of Food and Groceries only.

MARCH, 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, 1924-1927 = 1000.

Town.	July, 1914	Average - 5-yearly period, 1927-27	March, 1930.	February, 1931.	March, 1931	Percentage Increase from July, 1914, to March, 1931.
Sydney ..	655	1012	1013	897	897	37.5
Melbourne ..	642	1015	1012	903	890	39.6
Broken Hill ..	821	1155	1233	1052	1045	27.5
Geelong ..	661	1013	1015	874	871	31.8
Adelaide ..	613	974	976	831	875	42.7
<u>W. AVER. - N.S. Wales</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	652	1016	1024	901	891	36.7
Milbourne ..	619	979	976	835	819	32.3
Ballarat ..	617	989	985	855	838	35.8
Geelong ..	619	993	997	863	854	38.0
Geelong ..	609	967	921	803	794	30.4
Murraybidge ..	606	967	957	849	823	35.4
<u>W. AVER. - Victoria</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	618	979	939	835	820	32.7
Traralgon ..	591	960	873	806	796	34.7
Duynvondt ..	532	934	868	814	802	37.8
Rockhampton ..	646	988	954	877	876	35.6
Charlton Towers ..	696	1074	1025	920	925	32.9
Warrack ..	605	951	903	819	825	36.4
<u>W. AVER. - Queensland</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	605	965	886	817	809	33.7
Adelaide ..	699	1025	990	829	829	18.6
Adelaide ..	692	1032	1085	931	911	32.1
Pert River ..	722	1080	1067	916	881	22.0
Mount Gambier ..	595	989	965	781	772	29.7
Portborough ..	719	1064	1080	914	906	21.0
<u>W. AVER. - S. Australia</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	617	1026	997	837	834	19.7
North ..	749	1042	1010	879	882	17.8
Adelaide ..	331	1179	1159	1018	1020	9.6
North ..	-	1101	1032	914	897	-
Banbury ..	793	1093	1117	920	926	16.8
Paralton ..	808	1112	1101	933	943	17.3
<u>W. AVER. - West Australia</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	790	1060	1039	896	897	13.3
Robart ..	678	1027	977	866	850	25.4
Perth ..	640	1015	938	851	837	30.8
Burnie ..	-	1040	1023	854	860	-
Devonport ..	-	1035	962	876	860	-
Queenstown ..	735	1127	1035	979	971	32.1
<u>W. AVER. - Tasmania</u> <u>(5 Towns)</u> ..	672	1027	979	867	852	26.8
<u>W. AVER. - Australia</u> <u>(30 Towns)</u> ..	651	1003	960	854	854	31.2
<u>W. AVER. - Australia</u> <u>(6 Capitals)</u> ..	645	(base) 1000	974	859	849	31.6
Canberra (a) ..	(b)	(b)	1116	992	993	-
Canberra (c) ..	(b)	1091	1044	907	940	-

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

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