



March Quarter 1996

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Building Activity Australia

Dwelling Unit Commencements

Preliminary

BUILDING ACTIVITY NOTES

FORTHCOMING ISSUES

<i>ISSUE (Quarter)</i>	<i>RELEASE DATE</i>
June 1996	11 September 1996
September 1996	13 December 1996
December 1996	18 March 1997
March 1997	17 June 1997

CHANGES IN THIS ISSUE

There are no changes in this issue.

SAMPLING ERRORS

The estimates in this publication are based on a sample survey of private sector house building activity and a complete enumeration of other building activity. Because data are not collected for all private sector house building jobs, the published estimates are subject to sampling variability. Relative standard errors give a measure of this variability and therefore indicate the degree of confidence that can be attached to the data.

Relative standard errors for the number of new private sector houses and total dwelling units commenced in the March quarter 1996 are given below. There is 67% confidence that the actual value would be within one standard error of the sample estimate, and 95% confidence that it lies within two standard errors.

RELATIVE STANDARD ERRORS

	<i>New private sector houses</i>	<i>Total dwellings</i>
	%	%
New South Wales	4.5	2.7
Victoria	2.9	2.4
Queensland	2.5	1.9
South Australia	4.6	3.6
Western Australia	3.5	2.7
Tasmania	3.4	2.7
Northern Territory
Australian Capital Territory	3.1	1.6
Australia	1.6	1.2

INQUIRIES

For further information about statistics in this publication and the availability of related unpublished statistics, contact Rex Porter on Adelaide (08) 237 7496 or any ABS State office.

W. McLennan
Australian Statistician

MAIN FEATURES

SEASONALLY ADJUSTED ESTIMATES

NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

The number of dwelling units commenced in the March quarter 1996, in seasonally adjusted terms, and percentage changes from the December quarter 1995 and March quarter 1995 are summarised in the table below.

	Mar qtr 95	% change Dec qtr 95 to Mar qtr 95	% change Mar qtr 94 to Mar qtr 95
Dwelling units commenced			
New private sector houses	20 556	- 0.7	- 23.0
Total dwelling units	31 027	4.4	- 22.2

Australian estimates

The preliminary estimate of the number of dwelling units commenced in the March quarter 1996 was 31,027. This was an increase of 4.4% over the December quarter 1995 and follows decreases in each of the six previous quarters. The growth in the March quarter 1996 was entirely due to increased commencements of new other residential buildings (townhouses, flats, apartments, etc.). Seasonally adjusted estimates are not available for this series. However, in original terms, the number of new other residential dwelling units commenced increased by 14.4% in the March quarter.

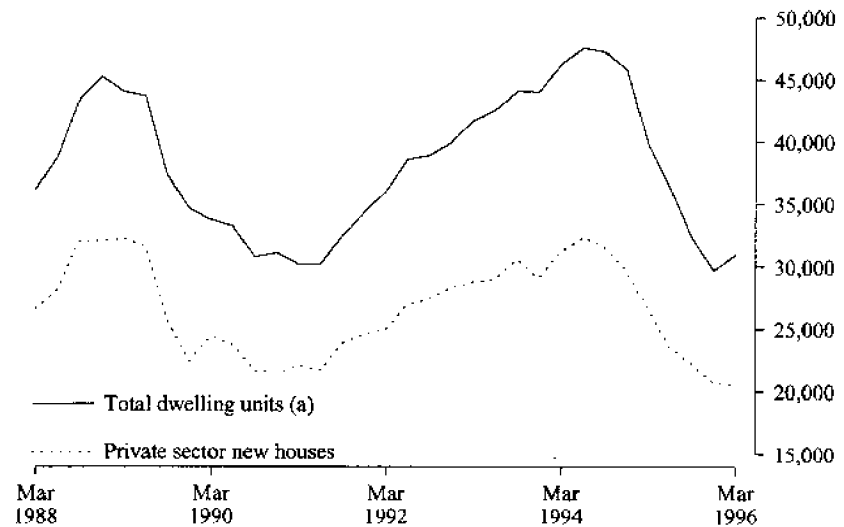
The number of new private sector house commencements in the March quarter 1996 fell marginally (by 0.7%) to 20,556. This was 23.0% below the March quarter 1995 estimate and was the seventh consecutive quarterly fall. It was also the lowest quarterly estimate since the June quarter 1983.

Users of these statistics should note that the latest quarter's increase in total dwelling commencements was from the very low base of 29,719 commencements in the December quarter 1995, which represented the lowest quarterly number of commencements since June 1987. The increase in the March quarter was due, in part, to the commencement of a number of large other residential jobs which had been approved up to nine months earlier. These jobs could normally have been expected to have commenced prior to the March quarter. It should also be noted that dwelling unit approval data already available to April 1996 suggests that while the fall in residential dwelling activity may be levelling out, the level of growth observed in March quarter commencements, in seasonally adjusted terms, is unlikely to be sustained in the June quarter 1996.

State estimates

The increase in total dwelling unit commencements in the March quarter 1996 was mainly because of increases in New South Wales (+15.3%) and Queensland (+9.8%), with Tasmania also up by 11.0%. The Australian Capital Territory recorded the biggest percentage fall (-39.9%), followed by South Australia (-10.8%) and Western Australia (-5.5%), while commencements for Victoria were not significantly changed from the December quarter.

NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED, AUSTRALIA (Seasonally adjusted)



(a) Includes Conversions, etc.

ORIGINAL ESTIMATES

In original terms, 27,962 dwelling units were commenced in the March quarter 1996, a decrease of 2,597 or 8.5% from the previous quarter. A fall of 16.1% in the number of new houses commenced was only partially offset by an increase of 14.4% in the number of new other residential dwelling units commenced.

Total new private sector commencements fell 9.6% in the March quarter, with new houses down 16.1% and new other residential dwelling units up 12.3%.

Total new public sector commencements rose 15.5% in the March quarter, due entirely to an increase of 32.4% in new other residential dwelling units, with a decrease of 13.3% in new house commencements.

There were 353 dwelling units commenced in the March quarter 1996 as part of alterations and additions to existing buildings (including conversions to dwelling units) and as part of the construction of non-residential building. This compares with 470 in the December quarter 1995 and 671 in the March quarter 1995.

**TABLE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED,
ORIGINAL AND SEASONALLY ADJUSTED, AUSTRALIA**

Period	New houses		New other residential buildings	Conversions etc.	Total dwelling units	
	Original	Seasonally adjusted			Original	Seasonally adjusted
PRIVATE SECTOR						
1992-93	113,708	..	37,389	1,480	152,577	..
1993-94	123,228	..	46,518	3,862	173,608	..
1994-95	111,966	..	47,053	3,522	162,541	..
1994 Dec. qtr	31,333	29,679	13,152	1,496	45,981	44,077
1995 Mar. qtr	23,814	26,681	9,978	663	34,455	38,279
June qtr	23,848	23,567	10,122	747	34,718	34,415
Sept. qtr	23,132	22,250	8,364	474	31,970	30,505
Dec. qtr	21,861	20,710	6,936	470	29,267	28,053
1996 Mar. qtr p	18,331	20,556	7,791	348	26,470	29,429
PUBLIC SECTOR						
1992-93	3,471	..	7,037	3	10,511	..
1993-94	3,285	..	4,891	37	8,213	..
1994-95	2,611	..	4,858	61	7,530	..
1994 Dec. qtr	534	n.a.	708	13	1,255	n.a.
1995 Mar. qtr	513	n.a.	989	8	1,510	n.a.
June qtr	758	n.a.	1,402	16	2,176	n.a.
Sept. qtr	676	n.a.	1,570	9	2,255	n.a.
Dec. qtr	490	n.a.	802	—	1,292	n.a.
1996 Mar. qtr p	425	n.a.	1,062	5	1,492	n.a.
TOTAL						
1992-93	117,179	..	44,426	1,483	163,088	..
1993-94	126,513	..	51,409	3,899	181,821	..
1994-95	114,577	..	51,911	3,583	170,071	..
1994 Dec. qtr	31,867	30,279	13,860	1,509	47,236	45,906
1995 Mar. qtr	24,327	27,180	10,967	671	35,965	39,895
June qtr	24,606	24,220	11,524	763	36,894	36,431
Sept. qtr	23,808	22,967	9,934	483	34,225	32,372
Dec. qtr	22,351	21,241	7,738	470	30,559	29,719
1996 Mar. qtr p	18,756	20,972	8,853	353	27,962	31,027

**TABLE 2. TOTAL NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED (a), STATES (b) AND AUSTRALIA
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED**

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
1994 Dec. qtr	13,921	8,083	12,662	2,802	6,102	849	n.a.	864	45,906
1995 Mar. qtr	12,963	7,302	10,461	2,213	5,326	723	n.a.	656	39,895
June qtr	12,286	7,113	9,116	1,797	4,542	702	n.a.	477	36,431
Sept. qtr	10,867	6,648	7,846	1,676	4,007	638	n.a.	473	32,372
Dec. qtr	9,272	5,755	7,354	1,546	3,954	619	n.a.	782	29,719
1996 Mar. qtr p	10,695	5,710	8,074	1,379	3,736	687	n.a.	470	31,027

(a) Includes conversions, etc. (b) Seasonally adjusted data are not available for the Northern Territory.

TABLE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

<i>Period</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Australia</i>
NEW HOUSES									
1992-93	27,397	25,717	33,516	9,416	15,011	2,878	828	2,417	117,179
1993-94	29,162	27,904	35,751	9,590	18,118	3,020	1,205	1,764	126,513
1994-95	28,222	25,846	31,047	8,210	16,225	2,548	947	1,533	114,577
1994 Dec. qtr	7,486	7,521	8,788	2,435	4,297	722	245	373	31,867
1995 Mar. qtr	6,137	5,494	6,295	1,735	3,565	576	196	329	24,327
June qtr	6,343	5,734	6,278	1,512	3,514	599	304	323	24,606
Sept. qtr	6,111	5,836	6,122	1,504	3,146	474	269	346	23,808
Dec. qtr	5,751	5,182	5,997	1,290	2,980	542	229	380	22,351
1996 Mar. qtr p	5,218	4,168	4,908	1,086	2,553	480	130	213	18,756
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
1992-93	17,064	2,438	13,469	2,219	5,778	1,099	366	1,993	44,426
1993-94	18,019	3,562	17,334	1,891	6,682	1,092	446	2,383	51,409
1994-95	23,271	3,612	15,113	1,525	6,073	582	541	1,194	51,911
1994 Dec. qtr	5,762	909	4,315	399	1,650	171	212	442	13,860
1995 Mar. qtr	5,204	929	2,700	329	1,328	132	106	239	10,967
June qtr	5,823	1,067	2,947	240	1,109	93	84	161	11,524
Sept. qtr	5,057	713	2,297	256	1,126	142	139	204	9,934
Dec. qtr	3,497	990	1,549	267	881	113	81	360	7,738
1996 Mar. qtr p	4,156	967	2,071	195	888	193	190	193	8,853
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
1992-93	1,152	21	160	11	76	7	6	50	1,483
1993-94	2,141	1,198	302	20	196	17	7	18	3,899
1994-95	2,100	1,051	209	61	135	12	11	5	3,583
1994 Dec. qtr	1,125	247	43	39	39	6	10	—	1,509
1995 Mar. qtr	203	362	66	9	31	—	—	—	671
June qtr	355	330	37	11	25	—	1	4	763
Sept. qtr	331	54	61	11	13	6	7	—	483
Dec. qtr	320	15	91	28	14	1	1	—	470
1996 Mar. qtr p	140	169	9	12	21	1	1	—	353
TOTAL									
1992-93	45,613	28,176	47,145	11,646	20,865	3,984	1,200	4,460	163,088
1993-94	49,322	32,664	53,387	11,501	24,996	4,129	1,658	4,165	181,821
1994-95	53,592	30,509	46,369	9,796	22,433	3,142	1,499	2,732	170,071
1994 Dec. qtr	14,373	8,677	13,146	2,873	5,986	899	467	815	47,236
1995 Mar. qtr	11,544	6,785	9,061	2,073	4,924	708	302	568	35,965
June qtr	12,521	7,131	9,262	1,763	4,648	692	389	488	36,894
Sept. qtr	11,499	6,603	8,480	1,771	4,285	622	415	550	34,225
Dec. qtr	9,568	6,187	7,637	1,585	3,875	656	311	740	30,559
1996 Mar. qtr p	9,514	5,304	6,988	1,292	3,462	674	321	406	27,962

TABLE 4. TOTAL NUMBER OF PRIVATE SECTOR DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
NEW HOUSES									
1992-93	26,554	24,633	32,793	9,122	14,615	2,840	744	2,408	113,708
1993-94	28,547	26,970	35,102	9,159	17,739	2,974	1,035	1,703	123,228
1994-95	27,747	25,338	30,538	7,745	15,731	2,542	804	1,522	111,966
1994 Dec. qtr	7,382	7,393	8,717	2,303	4,255	718	201	364	31,333
1995 Mar. qtr	6,090	5,360	6,170	1,631	3,469	574	192	328	23,814
June qtr	6,203	5,627	6,108	1,396	3,378	599	216	322	23,848
Sept. qtr	6,036	5,638	5,966	1,398	3,039	472	238	345	23,132
Dec. qtr	5,590	5,086	5,923	1,237	2,927	532	188	378	21,861
1996 Mar. qtr p	5,132	4,092	4,790	1,044	2,482	472	106	213	18,331
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
1992-93	14,225	2,155	12,096	1,759	3,955	997	353	1,849	37,389
1993-94	16,385	3,130	16,187	1,534	5,495	1,031	430	2,326	46,518
1994-95	21,513	3,077	13,761	1,339	5,227	542	522	1,072	47,053
1994 Dec. qtr	5,523	818	4,131	367	1,520	164	207	422	13,152
1995 Mar. qtr	4,922	722	2,468	303	1,108	132	106	217	9,978
June qtr	5,120	926	2,580	227	1,010	64	70	125	10,122
Sept. qtr	4,430	380	2,039	242	841	119	139	174	8,364
Dec. qtr	3,307	695	1,393	252	761	89	79	360	6,936
1996 Mar. qtr p	3,861	754	1,845	193	716	151	87	184	7,791
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
1992-93	1,150	21	160	11	76	7	6	49	1,480
1993-94	2,126	1,195	299	19	182	16	7	18	3,862
1994-95	2,069	1,044	200	48	134	12	11	5	3,522
1994 Dec. qtr	1,125	247	43	26	39	6	10	—	1,496
1995 Mar. qtr	195	362	66	9	31	—	—	—	663
June qtr	348	323	35	11	25	—	1	4	747
Sept. qtr	323	54	61	11	13	6	6	—	474
Dec. qtr	320	15	91	28	14	1	1	—	470
1996 Mar. qtr p	136	168	9	12	21	1	1	—	348
TOTAL									
1992-93	41,929	26,809	45,049	10,892	18,646	3,844	1,103	4,306	152,577
1993-94	47,058	31,295	51,588	10,712	23,416	4,021	1,472	4,047	173,608
1994-95	51,328	29,459	44,499	9,132	21,092	3,096	1,337	2,599	162,541
1994 Dec. qtr	14,030	8,458	12,891	2,696	5,814	888	418	786	45,981
1995 Mar. qtr	11,207	6,444	8,704	1,943	4,608	706	298	545	34,455
June qtr	11,671	6,876	8,723	1,634	4,413	663	287	451	34,718
Sept. qtr	10,789	6,072	8,066	1,651	3,893	597	383	519	31,970
Dec. qtr	9,217	5,796	7,407	1,517	3,702	622	268	738	29,267
1996 Mar. qtr p	9,129	5,014	6,644	1,248	3,219	624	194	397	26,470

TABLE 5. TOTAL NUMBER OF PUBLIC SECTOR DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
NEW HOUSES									
1992-93	843	1,084	723	294	396	38	84	9	3,471
1993-94	615	934	649	431	379	46	170	61	3,285
1994-95	475	508	509	465	494	6	143	11	2,611
1994 Dec. qtr	104	128	71	132	42	4	44	9	534
1995 Mar. qtr	47	134	125	104	96	2	4	1	513
June qtr	140	107	170	116	136	—	88	1	758
Sept. qtr	75	198	156	106	107	2	31	1	676
Dec. qtr	161	96	74	53	53	10	41	2	490
1996 Mar. qtr p	86	76	118	42	71	8	24	—	425
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
1992-93	2,839	283	1,373	460	1,823	102	13	144	7,037
1993-94	1,634	432	1,147	357	1,187	61	16	57	4,891
1994-95	1,758	535	1,352	186	846	40	19	122	4,858
1994 Dec. qtr	239	91	184	32	130	7	5	20	708
1995 Mar. qtr	282	207	232	26	220	—	—	22	989
June qtr	703	141	367	13	99	29	14	36	1,402
Sept. qtr	627	333	258	14	285	23	—	30	1,570
Dec. qtr	190	295	156	15	120	24	2	—	802
1996 Mar. qtr p	295	213	226	2	172	42	103	9	1,062
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
1992-93	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3
1993-94	15	3	3	1	14	1	—	—	37
1994-95	31	7	9	13	1	—	—	—	61
1994 Dec. qtr	—	—	—	13	—	—	—	—	13
1995 Mar. qtr	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
June qtr	7	7	2	—	—	—	—	—	16
Sept. qtr	8	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	9
Dec. qtr	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1996 Mar. qtr p	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
TOTAL									
1992-93	3,684	1,367	2,096	754	2,219	140	97	154	10,511
1993-94	2,264	1,369	1,799	789	1,580	108	186	118	8,213
1994-95	2,264	1,050	1,870	664	1,341	46	162	133	7,530
1994 Dec. qtr	343	219	255	177	172	11	49	29	1,255
1995 Mar. qtr	337	341	357	130	316	2	4	23	1,510
June qtr	850	255	539	129	235	29	102	37	2,176
Sept. qtr	710	531	414	120	392	25	32	31	2,255
Dec. qtr	351	391	230	68	173	34	43	2	1,292
1996 Mar. qtr p	385	290	344	44	243	50	127	9	1,492

EXPLANATORY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 This publication contains preliminary estimates of the number of dwelling units commenced during the March quarter 1996. More comprehensive results from the quarterly survey will be available shortly.

2 The statistics were compiled on the basis of returns collected from builders and other individuals and organisations engaged in building activity. The quarterly survey comprises a sample survey of private sector house building activity and a complete enumeration of other building activity. Estimates in respect of commencements of private sector houses are therefore subject to sampling variability. Relative standard errors are shown on page 2.

3 The use of sample survey techniques in the Building Activity Survey means that reliable estimates of private sector house commencements based on survey results are available only at the State/Territory and Australia levels. Further geographic disaggregations are not available. However, dwelling unit commencement data for regions below State/Territory level are shown in the monthly series of dwelling unit commencements compiled by the ABS. Unlike data in this publication compiled from the Building Activity Survey, the series for smaller geographic areas are based on information reported by local and other government authorities.

DEFINITIONS

4 A *building* is defined as a rigid, fixed and permanent structure which has a roof. Its intended purpose is primarily to house people, plant, machinery, vehicles, goods or livestock. An integral feature of a building's design, to satisfy its intended use, is the provision for regular access by persons.

5 A *dwelling unit* is defined as a self-contained suite of rooms, including cooking and bathing facilities and intended for *long-term* residential use. Units (whether self-contained or not) within buildings offering institutional care, such as hospitals, or temporary accommodation, such as motels, hostels and holiday apartments, are not defined as dwelling units.

6 A *residential building* is defined as a building predominantly consisting of one or more dwelling units. Residential buildings can be either *houses* or *other residential buildings*:

- A *house* is defined as a detached building predominantly used for long-term residential purposes and consisting of only one dwelling unit. Thus, detached granny flats and detached dwelling units such as caretakers' residences associated with non-residential buildings are defined as houses for the purpose of these statistics.
- An *other residential building* is defined as a building which is predominantly used for long-term residential purposes and which contains (or has attached to it) more than one dwelling unit (e.g. includes townhouses, duplexes, apartment buildings, etc.).

These statistics present the number of dwelling units in other residential buildings (and not the number of buildings).

7 *Conversions, etc.* Dwelling units can also be created as part of alterations and additions to existing buildings (including conversions to dwelling units) and as part of the construction of non-residential buildings. Such dwelling units are referred to in this publication under the heading of Conversions, etc..

8 *Commenced.* A building is regarded as commenced when the first physical building activity has been performed on site in the form of materials fixed in place and/or labour expended (this includes site preparation but excludes delivery of building materials, the drawing of plans and specifications and the construction of non-building infrastructures, such as roads).

9 *Ownership.* The ownership of a building is classified as either public sector or private sector according to the sector of the intended owner of the completed building as evident at the time of approval. Residential buildings being constructed by private sector builders under government housing authority schemes whereby the authority has contracted, or intends to contract, to purchase the buildings on or before completion, are classified as public sector.

SEASONAL ADJUSTMENT

10 Seasonally adjusted building statistics are shown in tables 1 and 2. In the seasonally adjusted series, account has been taken of normal seasonal factors and the effect of movement in the date of Easter which may, in successive years, affect figures for different quarters. Details regarding the methods used in seasonally adjusting the series are available on request.

11 Since seasonally adjusted statistics reflect both irregular and trend movements, an upward or downward movement in a seasonally adjusted series does not necessarily indicate a change of trend. Particular care should therefore be taken in interpreting individual quarter to quarter movements. Each of the component series shown has been seasonally adjusted independently. As a consequence, while the unadjusted components in the original series shown add to the totals, the adjusted components may not add to the adjusted totals. Further, the difference between independently seasonally adjusted series does not necessarily produce series which are optimal or even adequate adjustments of the similarly derived original series. Thus the figures which can be derived by subtracting seasonally adjusted private sector dwelling units from the seasonally adjusted total dwelling units should not be used to represent seasonally adjusted public sector dwelling units.

12 As happens with all seasonally adjusted series, the seasonal factors are reviewed annually to take account of each additional year's data. For Building Activity, the results of the latest review are shown in the December quarter issue each year.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

13 Users may also wish to refer to the following publications:

Building Approvals, Australia (8731.0) — issued monthly

Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Australia (5609.0) — issued monthly

Price Index of Materials Used in House Building (6408.0) — issued monthly

Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building (6407.0) — issued monthly

House Price Indexes: Eight Capital Cities (6416.0) — issued quarterly

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15 The ABS can also make available certain building activity data which are not published. Where it is not practicable to provide the required information by telephone, data can be provided in the following forms: microfiche, photocopy, computer printout, floppy disk and clerically extracted tabulation. A charge may be made for providing unpublished information in these forms.

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17 Where figures have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

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