



March Quarter 1997

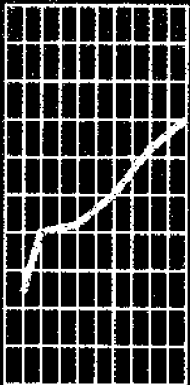
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Building Activity Australia

Dwelling Unit Commitments

Preliminary

Statistics



BUILDING ACTIVITY NOTES

FORTHCOMING ISSUES

<i>ISSUE (Quarter)</i>	<i>RELEASE DATE</i>
June 1997	11 September 1997
September 1997	15 December 1997
December 1997	18 March 1998

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 1997 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	4.0	2.0
Victoria	3.5	2.4
Queensland	3.3	2.2
South Australia	4.7	4.2
Western Australia	4.3	3.5
Tasmania	3.8	3.0
Northern Territory
Australian Capital Territory	2.1	1.6
Australia	1.8	1.1

INQUIRIES

For further information about statistics in this publication and the availability of related unpublished statistics, contact Tony Bammann on Adelaide (08) 8237 7316 or any ABS State office.

Dennis Trewin
Acting Australian Statistician

MAIN FEATURES

NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

TREND AND SEASONALLY ADJUSTED ESTIMATES

The number of dwelling units commenced in the March quarter 1997, in trend and seasonally adjusted terms, and percentage changes from the December quarter 1996 and March quarter 1996 are summarised in the table below.

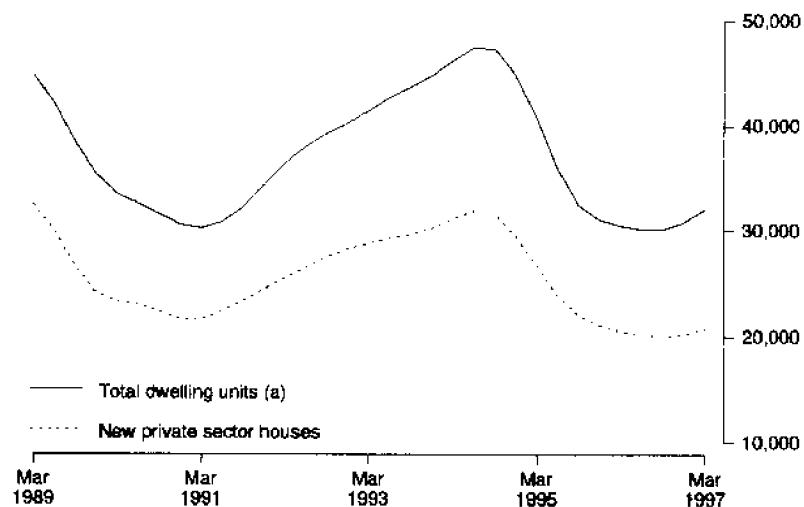
	Mar qtr 97	% change Dec qtr 96 to Mar qtr 97	% change Mar qtr 96 to Mar qtr 97
TREND ESTIMATES			
Dwelling units commenced			
New private sector houses	20 778	2.3	1.1
Total dwelling units	32 080	4.2	5.2
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
Dwelling units commenced			
New private sector houses	20 982	2.4	0.9
Total dwelling units	32 594	4.6	2.5

Australian estimates

The trend for the number of new private sector houses commenced rose by 2.3% in the March quarter 1997 and followed a rise of 1.2% in the December quarter 1996. These increases follow a 2 year decline from the June quarter 1994 high.

The trend for the total number of dwelling units commenced displayed a stronger increase with rises of 4.2% in the latest quarter and 2.1% for the December quarter 1996.

NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED, AUSTRALIA (Trend estimates)



(a) Includes Conversions, etc.

In seasonally adjusted terms, the number of new private sector houses commenced rose by 2.4% in the March quarter to 20,982. The total number of dwelling units commenced rose by 4.6% to 32,594. This was the largest number since the June quarter 1995 and 13.3% more than the low recorded for the September quarter 1996.

State estimates The increase in the trend estimate of the total number of dwelling units commenced over the last 2 quarters has been largely due to the growth in New South Wales. Lesser growth in Western Australia and small rises in South Australia and Queensland were partially offset by decreases in the Northern Territory, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania, with Tasmania recording the biggest percentage fall.

In seasonally adjusted terms, although the Australian Capital Territory recorded the biggest rise (+33.8%) in the total number of dwelling units commenced in the March quarter 1997, increases in Victoria (+18.2%) and New South Wales (+12.7%) were mainly responsible for the national increase. There were falls in Western Australia (-1.0%), Queensland (-4.5%), South Australia (-12.7%) and Tasmania (-18.3%).

ORIGINAL ESTIMATES

In original terms, 29,540 dwelling units were commenced in the March quarter 1997, a decrease of 2,316 or 7.3% from the previous quarter. Falls of 11.9% in the number of new houses commenced and 32.6% in conversions, etc. were partially offset by an increase of 6.6% in the number of new other residential dwelling units.

Total private sector commencements fell by 2,459 (8.0%), with new houses down 2,530 (11.8%) and other dwelling units (including conversions, etc) up marginally. Queensland recorded a fall of 1,597 (26.0%) in new private sector houses commenced, accounting for over 63% of the national fall.

Total public sector commencements rose by 13.0% to 1,242, the increase being entirely due to new other dwelling units.

**TABLE 1. NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED:
ORIGINAL, SEASONALLY ADJUSTED AND TREND ESTIMATES**

Period	New houses		Total dwelling units (includes conversions etc)	
	Private sector	Total	Private sector	Total
ORIGINAL				
1995 Dec. qtr	21,810	22,306	29,205	30,509
1996 Mar. qtr	18,668	19,093	27,345	28,819
June qtr	20,597	20,966	29,614	31,131
Sept. qtr	20,380	20,761	28,683	30,300
Dec. qtr	21,381	21,767	30,757	31,856
1997 Mar. qtr	18,851	19,186	28,298	29,540
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED				
1995 Dec. qtr	20,896	21,465	28,103	29,821
1996 Mar. qtr	20,793	21,224	30,261	31,805
June qtr	20,339	20,632	29,223	30,595
Sept. qtr	19,488	19,863	27,487	28,771
Dec. qtr	20,499	20,964	29,595	31,148
1997 Mar. qtr	20,982	21,316	31,310	32,594
TREND ESTIMATES				
1995 Dec. qtr	21,098	21,659	29,352	31,093
1996 Mar. qtr	20,547	20,972	28,985	30,505
June qtr	20,122	20,481	28,769	30,173
Sept. qtr	20,065	20,435	28,787	30,169
Dec. qtr	20,314	20,706	29,404	30,791
1997 Mar. qtr	20,778	21,178	30,696	32,080

**TABLE 2. TOTAL NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS (a) COMMENCED BY STATE:
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED AND TREND ESTIMATES**

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED									
1995 Dec. qtr	9,453	5,732	7,509	1,534	3,861	618	n.a.	695	29,821
1996 Mar. qtr	11,274	6,085	7,923	1,405	3,733	615	n.a.	481	31,805
June qtr	9,859	6,262	8,029	1,336	3,676	535	n.a.	572	30,595
Sept. qtr	9,491	6,152	7,338	1,240	3,256	498	n.a.	457	28,771
Dec. qtr	10,962	5,303	8,190	1,478	3,784	504	n.a.	376	31,148
1997 Mar. qtr	12,356	6,269	7,818	1,290	3,748	412	n.a.	503	32,594
TREND ESTIMATES									
1995 Dec. qtr	10,363	6,077	7,699	1,514	3,857	628	365	576	31,093
1996 Mar. qtr	10,153	6,044	7,715	1,400	3,694	589	350	577	30,505
June qtr	10,006	6,074	7,795	1,332	3,560	551	369	514	30,173
Sept. qtr	10,166	5,972	7,807	1,332	3,536	512	395	462	30,169
Dec. qtr	10,837	5,850	7,837	1,349	3,614	473	401	444	30,791
1997 Mar. qtr	12,019	5,844	7,909	1,360	3,744	435	390	434	32,080

(a) Includes conversions, etc.

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									
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
1995-96	23,058	19,399	23,082	5,070	11,510	1,880	885	1,289	86,174
1995 Dec. qtr	5,791	5,088	6,039	1,295	2,929	541	238	385	22,306
1996 Mar. qtr	5,419	4,373	4,835	1,089	2,552	467	143	217	19,093
June qtr	5,737	4,102	6,086	1,183	2,884	398	235	342	20,966
Sept. qtr	5,627	4,453	5,691	1,207	2,897	378	223	283	20,761
Dec. qtr	6,062	4,140	6,225	1,262	3,057	464	267	290	21,767
1997 Mar. qtr	5,627	4,139	4,647	1,051	2,950	327	174	271	19,186
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
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
1995-96	17,226	4,276	8,043	835	3,721	530	572	927	36,130
1995 Dec. qtr	3,500	943	1,557	264	873	111	85	360	7,693
1996 Mar. qtr	4,484	1,193	2,042	195	895	148	194	193	9,344
June qtr	4,185	1,427	2,147	120	827	129	154	170	9,159
Sept. qtr	4,327	1,722	2,142	106	530	94	134	196	9,251
Dec. qtr	4,340	1,231	2,173	266	666	52	226	116	9,070
1997 Mar. qtr	5,145	1,479	2,086	135	509	76	80	157	9,667
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
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
1995-96	1,002	913	217	55	104	8	12	70	2,381
1995 Dec. qtr	324	15	127	28	14	1	1	—	510
1996 Mar. qtr	158	180	9	12	21	1	1	—	382
June qtr	189	664	20	4	56	—	3	70	1,006
Sept. qtr	163	55	45	8	12	2	3	—	288
Dec. qtr	731	222	21	2	23	17	2	1	1,019
1997 Mar. qtr	251	307	60	1	26	10	31	1	687
TOTAL									
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
1995-96	41,286	24,588	31,342	5,960	15,335	2,418	1,469	2,286	124,685
1995 Dec. qtr	9,615	6,046	7,723	1,587	3,816	653	324	745	30,509
1996 Mar. qtr	10,061	5,746	6,886	1,295	3,468	616	338	410	28,819
June qtr	10,111	6,193	8,253	1,307	3,767	527	392	582	31,131
Sept. qtr	10,117	6,230	7,878	1,321	3,439	474	360	479	30,300
Dec. qtr	11,133	5,593	8,419	1,530	3,746	533	495	407	31,856
1997 Mar. qtr	11,023	5,925	6,793	1,187	3,485	413	285	429	29,540

TABLE 4. TOTAL NUMBER OF PRIVATE SECTOR 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									
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
1995-96	22,674	18,926	22,661	4,836	11,228	1,859	773	1,250	84,208
1995 Dec. qtr	5,630	4,989	5,965	1,242	2,876	531	194	383	21,810
1996 Mar. qtr	5,334	4,300	4,724	1,044	2,481	459	111	217	18,668
June qtr	5,674	3,999	6,006	1,153	2,833	397	230	306	20,597
Sept. qtr	5,591	4,349	5,638	1,191	2,763	373	192	281	20,380
Dec. qtr	6,026	4,086	6,149	1,245	2,899	461	227	288	21,381
1997 Mar. qtr	5,593	4,081	4,552	1,048	2,877	321	138	241	18,851
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
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
1995-96	15,775	3,218	7,292	800	2,920	378	455	839	31,677
1995 Dec. qtr	3,310	640	1,403	249	753	87	83	360	6,885
1996 Mar. qtr	4,189	980	1,832	193	723	108	91	184	8,300
June qtr	3,846	1,218	2,018	116	603	64	142	121	8,128
Sept. qtr	3,633	1,462	2,054	106	362	92	132	188	8,029
Dec. qtr	4,085	1,145	1,913	266	599	40	219	116	8,383
1997 Mar. qtr	4,545	1,445	1,918	133	460	50	78	153	8,782
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
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
1995-96	973	884	217	55	104	8	9	—	2,250
1995 Dec. qtr	324	15	127	28	14	1	1	—	510
1996 Mar. qtr	154	179	9	12	21	1	1	—	377
June qtr	172	636	20	4	56	—	1	—	889
Sept. qtr	152	55	45	5	12	2	3	—	274
Dec. qtr	725	221	21	2	17	4	2	1	993
1997 Mar. qtr	249	304	60	1	26	5	19	1	665
TOTAL									
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
1995-96	39,422	23,028	30,170	5,691	14,252	2,245	1,237	2,089	118,135
1995 Dec. qtr	9,264	5,644	7,495	1,519	3,643	619	278	743	29,205
1996 Mar. qtr	9,677	5,459	6,565	1,248	3,225	568	203	401	27,345
June qtr	9,692	5,853	8,044	1,273	3,492	461	373	427	29,614
Sept. qtr	9,376	5,866	7,737	1,302	3,137	467	327	469	28,683
Dec. qtr	10,836	5,452	8,083	1,513	3,515	505	448	405	30,757
1997 Mar. qtr	10,387	5,830	6,530	1,182	3,363	376	235	395	28,298

TABLE 5. TOTAL NUMBER OF PUBLIC SECTOR 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									
1993-94	615	934	649	431	379	46	170	61	3,285
1994-95	475	508	509	465	494	6	143	11	2,611
1995-96	384	473	421	234	282	21	112	39	1,966
1995 Dec. qtr	161	99	74	53	53	10	44	2	496
1996 Mar. qtr	85	73	111	45	71	8	32	—	425
June qtr	63	103	80	30	51	1	5	36	369
Sept. qtr	36	104	53	16	134	5	31	2	381
Dec. qtr	36	54	76	17	158	3	40	2	386
1997 Mar. qtr	34	58	95	3	73	6	36	30	335
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
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
1995-96	1,451	1,058	751	35	801	152	117	88	4,453
1995 Dec. qtr	190	303	154	15	120	24	2	—	808
1996 Mar. qtr	295	213	210	2	172	40	103	9	1,044
June qtr	339	209	129	4	224	65	12	49	1,031
Sept. qtr	694	260	88	—	168	2	2	8	1,222
Dec. qtr	255	86	260	—	67	12	7	—	687
1997 Mar. qtr	600	34	168	2	49	26	2	4	885
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
1993-94	15	3	3	1	14	1	—	—	37
1994-95	31	7	9	13	1	—	—	—	61
1995-96	29	29	—	—	—	—	3	70	131
1995 Dec. qtr	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1996 Mar. qtr	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
June qtr	17	28	—	—	—	—	2	70	117
Sept. qtr	11	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	14
Dec. qtr	6	1	—	—	6	13	—	—	26
1997 Mar. qtr	2	3	—	—	—	5	12	—	22
TOTAL									
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
1995-96	1,864	1,560	1,172	269	1,083	173	232	197	6,550
1995 Dec. qtr	351	402	228	68	173	34	46	2	1,304
1996 Mar. qtr	384	287	321	47	243	48	135	9	1,474
June qtr	419	340	209	34	275	66	19	155	1,517
Sept. qtr	741	364	141	19	302	7	33	10	1,617
Dec. qtr	297	141	336	17	231	28	47	2	1,099
1997 Mar. qtr	636	95	263	5	122	37	50	34	1,242

EXPLANATORY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 This publication contains preliminary estimates from the quarterly Building Activity Survey of the number of dwelling units commenced. More comprehensive updated results for the last two quarters will be available shortly in *Building Activity, Australia* (8752.0).

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, data for regions below State/Territory level are available from the Building Approvals series and from the monthly series of dwelling unit commencements compiled for some States 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.

TREND ESTIMATES

13 Seasonally adjusted series can be smoothed to reduce the impact of the irregular component in the adjusted series. This smoothed seasonally adjusted series is called a trend estimate.

14 The trend estimates are derived by applying a 7-term Henderson moving average to the seasonally adjusted series. The 7-term Henderson average (like all Henderson averages) is symmetric but, as the end of a time series is approached, asymmetric forms of the average are applied. Unlike weights of the standard 7-term Henderson moving average, the weights employed here have been tailored to suit the particular characteristics of individual series.

15 While the smoothing technique described in paragraphs 13 and 14 enables trend estimates to be produced for recent quarters, it does result in revisions to the estimates for the most recent three quarters as additional observations become available. There may also be revisions because of changes in the original data and as a result of the re-estimation of the seasonal factors. For further information, see *A Guide to Interpreting Time Series - Monitoring Trends: an Overview* (1348.0) or contact the Assistant Director, Time Series Analysis on (06) 252 6345.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

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

Building Approvals, Australia (8731.0) – issued monthly

Building Activity, Australia (8752.0) – issued quarterly

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

17 Current publications produced by the ABS are listed in the *Catalogue of Publications and Products, Australia* (1101.0). The ABS also issues, on Tuesdays and Fridays, a *Release Advice* (1105.0) which lists publications to be released in the next few days. The Catalogue and Release Advice are available from any ABS office.

UNPUBLISHED STATISTICS

18 The ABS can also make available certain building approvals and 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: photocopy, computer printout, floppy disk and clerically extracted tabulation. A charge may be made for providing unpublished information in these forms.

ELECTRONIC SERVICES

19 A large range of data is available via on-line services, diskette, magnetic tape, tape cartridge and CD ROM. For more details about our electronic data services, contact the ABS Office.

SYMBOLS AND OTHER USAGES

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

n.a. not available

— nil or rounded to zero

.. not applicable

For more information . . .

The ABS publishes a wide range of statistics and other information on Australia's economic and social conditions. Details of what is available in various publications and other products can be found in the ABS Catalogue of Publications and Products available from all ABS Offices.

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