



## Newsletters

### Environmental Statistics Newsletter

#### Edition 3 June 2001

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#### ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY STATISTICS SECTION

The Environment and Energy Statistics Section (EESS) of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is a multi-disciplinary team involved in the research and analysis of environmental and energy issues based on ABS and non-ABS data.

Since its inception in June 1991, EESS's scope has progressively expanded and advances made into new areas of environment statistics. Notable achievements include:

- The publication of the popular time series on household data which covers people's concerns, attitudes and behaviour on water, energy, transport and waste.
- Work accomplished in the area of environment protection expenditure (EPE) and environmental resource accounting.
- The publications of a number of well received compendiums presenting current environmental data.
- Advice to statistical agencies in other countries (e.g. China, the Philippines) on the establishment of various environmental statistics collections, including EPE, Household surveys and Environmental Accounts.
- Participation on national and international committees.

Staff in EESS have experience in researching and collating data from various sources for publication. Various products and services, such as consultancy and user funded data gathering, are available if other priorities permit. Data can be customised to suit specific requirements.

#### ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The ABS Environment Statistics Newsletter is produced on a half yearly basis. It features news and developments in relation to work done by EESS. If you would like to be placed on our free electronic mailing list, please contact Boon Lim and leave your address details.

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## **INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING**

The ABS played a prominent role when a group representing national statistical agencies, international agencies and international experts met in the Netherlands on 7-11 May. This meeting was to discuss the latest draft of a new handbook on integrated economic and environmental accounting (SEEA 2000). This extended "London Group" meeting resolved all remaining issues and points of contention and over the next two months final editorial changes will be made to the draft manuscript.

The handbook will be published jointly by the UN, OECD, World Bank, Eurostat and (probably) the IMF next year. A revised version of the SEEA 2000 handbook is foreseen by the end of July and will be placed on the London Group web-site: <http://www4.statcan.ca/citygrp/london/publicrev/intro.htm>, still labelled as work in progress. The current version of the manuscript can also be found at that internet address.

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## **UNESCAP WORKSHOPS ON ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS**

A series of four subregional training workshops on environment statistics for Asian and Pacific countries were organised by United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) during 2000 and 2001. Australia is one of a limited number of countries in the region with expertise in environment statistics and environmental and economic accounting. Hence the ABS was invited to present sessions on the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA) and on ABS practices in this area for the First Workshop held in Bangkok in May 2000 and for the Third Workshop which was specifically held for the Pacific islands, in Port Vila from 30 April to 11 May 2001.

The broad aim of the workshops was to improve national capabilities of developing countries in the Asian-Pacific region for identifying, collecting, processing, analysing and utilizing environment data needed for formulating policies and programmes for environment and sustainable development, as well as for monitoring and evaluating the progress made.

The main objectives of the workshops are to: (i) train middle and senior level officials from national statistical offices and environmental agencies in East and South-East Asia and the Pacific islands by exposing them to recent developments and methodological issues in the fields of environment statistics, indicators and accounting including definitions, classifications, survey and estimation methodologies, and data sources; and (ii) review the progress made in the countries/areas of the region in the field of environment statistics and share their experiences of issues encountered and strategies adopted to overcome some of the obstacles faced.

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## **IRRIGATION STATISTICS**

The ABS is represented on the newly formed Murray Darling Basin Commission's Irrigation Management Information Reporting System (IMIRS) Steering Committee. This committee has been selected to provide representation by agencies and key industries involved with irrigation management and data collation in the Murray Darling Basin. It has been initiated to assist the MDBC and other stakeholders to access up to date information on irrigation in the Basin that will guide improved planning and management decisions.

Currently \$millions are spent on monitoring and reporting for a particular purpose. Where feasible, data collection in the Basin should be appropriate for more than one purpose. The IMIRS data framework should include environmental response to management interventions and support the development of strategies and mechanisms for broad scale change.

It is not intended that the IMIRS will replace existing data collation networks, but rather will support existing networks by providing a framework for the collation and reporting of data relevant to the management of irrigation in the Basin. The current data collation framework will be assessed and through consultation an improved framework will be recommended to address any issues identified. The staged IMIRS development process can be regarded as transitioning from the 'best available' information to a better understanding of the 'right information' needed to facilitate change in the Basin.

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## NEW LOOK AGRICULTURAL CENSUS

The Agricultural Census, like the Population Census, takes place once every five years. It goes to around 150,000 agricultural establishments and is a major source of information to industry and government. In response to increasing demand for information on land management issues this year's agricultural census will include a number of new questions. Additionally, the census form has undergone some cosmetic changes, having been redesigned so the data can be read electronically. This will improve the accuracy and speed with which the ABS can process forms and compile information.

These new questions are on management of salinity and land preparation methods, reflecting the increasing importance given to issues relating to sustainable agriculture and the rural economy in recent years. Information will also be collected on irrigation, tree planting, fertiliser use, and the fencing of environmentally sensitive or degraded areas. This information can be used by industry and government alike to measure, for example, the extent that producers are changing agricultural management practices in response to environmental changes.

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## HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS

The seventh edition of **Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices**, ABS Cat. No. 4602.0 is in progress. Publication of the 2001 survey results on Household Water Use and Conservation is expected to be released in November 2001. Results from past surveys are also available for comparison.

Next year's publication will be on Household Energy Use and Conservation. A set of draft questions has been prepared with input from stakeholders and is undergoing pilot testing and refinement. The Australia wide survey is expected to be conducted in March 2002 and results published by the end of the year.

In 2003, a survey on Household Waste Management, Transport Use and Vehicle Ownership will be conducted. It was last carried out in 2000. Drafting of the survey questionnaire will be done in 2002. Stakeholders and interested parties are welcome to participate in the drafting of the questionnaire. If you would like to be involved in the drafting process and making the questionnaire more relevant to your needs or would like to see new issues considered, please contact Boon Lim. You will be informed in early 2002 regarding your participation.

[A summary of the main findings of the 2000 publication is available on this site.](#)

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## WATER ACCOUNT FOR AUSTRALIA

In May last year the Environment and Energy Statistics Section released **Water Account for Australia 1993-94 to 1996-97** (Cat. No. 4610.0). This was the first attempt at producing an environmental account for water in Australia and one of only a few examples of a water account in the world. This report presents quantitative water resource data on a State and national level, and details on the supply of water from, and the use of water by, various sectors. Information on water reuse and discharge of water back to the environment are included. An analysis of water use, water consumption

and economic data are also presented, providing some economic water efficiency measures.

The next Water Account for 2000-01 is being developed, and the ABS has sought feedback about the future directions of the next edition and how it can better link into data collection activities of other organisations. The focus of the Water Account for 2000-01 is likely to include:

- resource information (data from the National Land and Water Resources Audit);
- water supply and usage across the whole economy with greater focus on rural water usage and perhaps less on other parts of the economy; and
- if possible, more detailed information on water reuse across the economy especially in the manufacturing and mining sectors as well as by the water and sewerage industry.

Consideration is being given to include some of the following issues in the next edition of the Water Account:

- water quality
- water trading (inter and intrastate)
- water pricing
- providing supply and usage data at a more regional level
- environmental flows.

[A summary of the main findings on the first water account is available on this site.](#)

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## WASTE ACCOUNT

Exploratory work is soon to begin on the compilation of a waste account. This is part of the broader project being undertaken on environmental accounts. At this point it is planned to focus data collection on solid waste, which will include both hazardous and non-hazardous waste streams. As well, recycling activity and data on the international trade and movements of waste to and from overseas nations will be included where available.

The ABS is seeking information about data sources relating to waste and how it can better link into the data collection activities of other organisations. We welcome any feedback you may have about this topic.

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## FIRST EDITION OF A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLICATION

**Australia's Environment: Issues and Trends** (ABS Cat. No. 4613.0) is the fifth general publication about Australia's environment produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It differs from some other environmental publications in that it covers a selection of issues and will be published on an annual basis. Enhanced understanding of environmental issues within the wider community is its ultimate goal. The format developed for 4613.0 allows for a shorter, annual publication that can cover current and emerging socioeconomic and environmental issues, written for a general audience. The first edition of **Australia's Environment: Issues and Trends** is expected to be released soon.

Chapter 1 of the first edition of **Australia's Environment: Issues and Trends** begins by presenting a brief summary of the main demographic trends that shape Australia's population, along with discussion of some of the links between the environment and population. The second part of the chapter provides examples of our responses as a nation to environmental problems.

Chapter 2 discusses issues concerned with land use, Chapter 3, the use of Australia's water resources, and Chapter 4, pressures on the marine environment. Each chapter briefly outlines selected environmental issues and examines some of the major issues in detail. Chapter 5 begins by examining Australia's patterns of energy consumption. Other major issues discussed include air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

Future editions of **Australia's Environment: Issues and Trends** will cover new issues and the ABS will continue to develop the issues based approach described here. This is intended to provide the Australian public with an environmental publication that is flexible and responsive to user needs and

the emerging discipline of sustainable development.

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## **ENERGY AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS ACCOUNTS**

Drawing on a wide range of information sources, the Environment and Energy Statistics section has released (16 May 2001) a comprehensive snapshot of Australian energy consumption, usage patterns and associated greenhouse gas emissions. The publication is a landmark that only three countries in the world have attained.

In addition to comprehensive information on direct energy consumption and generation of selected greenhouse gas emissions by industries and households, the indirect impacts of household consumption, Australia's exports, capital formation and government final consumption are also explored.

New results show that Australian households are responsible - either directly or indirectly - for the generation of most of our energy-related greenhouse gas emissions (around 56%), mainly through household electricity use (about 17%) and motor vehicle use (about 12%).

Just under one quarter of Australia's energy-related emissions are generated in the production of goods and services for export. The most greenhouse-intensive of these are basic non-ferrous metals and products, the production of which generates around 6% of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Australia is heavily reliant on fossil fuels. Over 90% of total energy consumed in Australia is based on an energy source derived from fossil fuels, reflecting Australia's economic structure and the significant role coal plays as a fuel source, particularly for power generation.

About 40% of Australia's total energy use is for electricity generation and about 90% of the country's electricity is produced from fossil fuels. About 30% of the energy used in Australia is lost in the conversion of primary energy to secondary energy mainly through electricity generation.

The combustion of fossil fuels contributed over 70% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions in 1997-98. Electricity generation contributed 50% of Australia's energy-related greenhouse gas emissions, followed by transport activity at about 25%.

Amongst the States, Northern Territory (368.4 GJ) and Western Australia (362.0 GJ) had the highest per capita consumption of energy while Tasmania (203.4 GJ) and New South Wales (207.8 GJ) had the lowest. This reflects the differing industry compositions among the States and Territories.

Details are in **Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Accounts** (Cat No. 4604.0) available from ABS bookshops.

[A summary of the main findings is available on this site.](#)

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## **ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION EXPENDITURE**

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, the collection of information related to the publication **Environment Protection Expenditure, Australia 4603.0** has been modified to broaden the scope and include aspects of environmental management. This has included financial questions on the administration of environment management activities, physical measures of water use, recycling, and minesite rehabilitation, and eco-efficiency. The survey has been renamed the Environment Management Survey. It will cover the 2000-01 financial year and be sent to a sample of Mining and Manufacturing businesses.

Over the past six months, the Environment Management Survey team has been busy developing and testing new questions. Two rounds of forms testing were conducted in December and February. As a result of this process, the forms have been finalised and will be ready for dispatch in August. It is anticipated that the results from the survey will be available for release in mid 2002.

[Key points of the previous publication are available on this site.](#)

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## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION EXPENDITURE

The second publication presenting estimates of expenditures and revenues related to environmental protection and natural resource management by local government authorities of Australia was released in July 2000. The statistics are based on a survey of local governments across Australia that measures expenditure on services and activities to protect the environment and to manage the natural resources within each municipality, as well as councils' revenue related to provision of these services. Details of financial transfers relating to the environment between Commonwealth, State and local governments are included.

The expenditures and related revenues are divided into two accounts, 'Environmental Protection' and 'Natural Resource Management'.

Environment Protection groups together all actions and activities whose primary purpose is the prevention, reduction or elimination of waste, pollution or other degradation of the environment. The Environment Protection account is divided into seven different categories: waste water management; solid waste management; biodiversity and landscape; soil and groundwater; ambient air and climate; cultural heritage; and other environment protection.

Natural Resource Management covers all activities relating to making more efficient use of natural resources. The three categories are: inland water management; land management and development; and other natural resource management.

The survey of Local Government authorities for the 1999-2000 financial year was run earlier in the year. The 1999-2000 edition is due out in September.

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## NEW NAME FOR THE ABS INFORMATION SERVICE

The ABS National Information Service is currently reviewing its customer service model and from this is implementing a change of name.

The National Information Service (NIS) will be changing its name to the **Australian Bureau of Statistics National Information and Referral Service (ABSNIRS)**. The National Information and Referral Service will be focusing on assisting clients with self help options (eg website and the Library Extension Program) and providing information when appropriate to aid clients in their enquiries.

The official name change will occur on Wednesday 11th July. There will not be any disruption in our service to clients.

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