MARCH QUARTER 1998

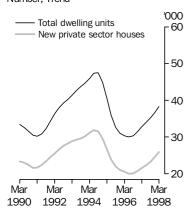
BUILDING ACTIVITY DWELLING UNIT COMMENCEMENTS

AUSTRALIA

PRELIMINARY

EMBARGO: 11:30AM (CANBERRA TIME) FRI 19 JUN 1998

Dwelling units commenced Number, Trend



MARCH QTR KEY FIGURES

TREND ESTIMATES	Mar qtr 98	% change Dec qtr 97 to Mar qtr 98	% change Mar qtr 97 to Mar qtr 98
Dwelling units commenced			
New private sector houses	25 965	5.6	20.4
Total dwelling units	38 358	4.4	16.9
	• • • • • • • • • • • • • •		
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED	Mar qtr 98	% change Dec qtr 97 to Mar qtr 98	% change Mar qtr 96 to Mar qtr 98
Dwelling units commenced			
New private sector houses	25 889	2.7	16.8
Total dwelling units	37 671	-1.2	11.1

MARCH QTR KEY POINTS

TREND ESTIMATES

- The trend for the number of new private sector houses commenced rose by 5.6%, continuing the growth evident from the September quarter 1996. The trend is now midway between the recent low in the June quarter 1996 and the last peak in the June quarter 1994.
- The trend for the total number of dwelling units commenced rose by 4.4% and followed increases for the September and December 1997 quarters of 3.5% and 4.3% respectively.

SEASONALLY ADJUSTED ESTIMATES

• The number of new private sector houses commenced increased by 2.7% in the quarter to 25,889 and by 16.8% over the year. However, the total number of dwelling units commenced fell by 1.2% to 37,671, still 11.1% above the level of a year ago.

ORIGINAL ESTIMATES

- In original terms, 35,156 dwelling units were commenced in the March quarter, a decrease of 8.9%. However, this was still 11.3% higher than the March quarter 1997.
- There were decreases of 10.2% in the number of new houses commenced and 4.0% in new other residential dwelling units, while 'Conversions etc.' fell for the third consecutive quarter.
- Total private sector commencements fell by 9.7% with falls in new houses of 10.4% and new other residential dwelling units of 5.9%. However, new houses and new other residential dwelling units were still 16.9% and 5.0% respectively higher than the March quarter 1997. Public sector commencements rose by 21.8% from last quarter's low to 1,145, mainly due to a 37.0% increase in new other residential units.
- For further information about these and related statistics, contact Martin Yard on Adelaide 08 8237 7494, or any ABS office shown on the back cover of this publication.

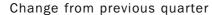
	ΝΟΤΕ S						
FORTHCOMING ISSUES	ISSUE (Quarter)		RELEASE DATE				
	June 1998		14 September 1998				
	•••••						
CHANGES IN THIS ISSUE	There are no changes in th	is issue.					
	•••••	• • • • • • • •					
SIGNIFICANT REVISIONS THIS ISSUE		-	enced during the December quarter 1997 has ustralia, including 229 (1.9%) in				
	New South Wales, 205 (2.3	%) in Victoria a	nd 181 (2.0%) in Queensland.				
	••••	• • • • • • •	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •				
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	Relative standard errors for	the number of	new private sector houses and total dwelling				
ERRORS	units commenced in the March quarter 1998 are given below. There is 67% confidence						
			standard error of the sample estimate, and				
	95% confidence that it lies within two standard errors.						
		New private sector houses	Total dwellings				
		%	%				
	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • • • • • •	• • • • • • • •				
	New South Wales	3.6	2.0				
	Victoria	3.3	2.5				
	Queensland	2.6	1.7				
	South Australia	3.4	2.9				
	Western Australia	3.8	3.2				
	Tasmania Northern Territory	2.5	2.3				
	Australian Capital Territory	1.9	1.6				
	Australia	1.6	1.0				

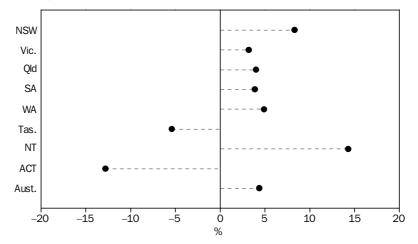
W. McLennan Australian Statistician

TOTAL NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

Trend estimates

- The Northern Territory recorded the largest increase (14.3%) in the trend estimate of the number of dwelling units commenced in the March quarter 1998, followed by New South Wales (8.3%), Western Australia (4.9%), Queensland (4.0%), South Australia (3.9%) and Victoria (3.2%).
- Falls occurred in the Australian Capital Territory (-12.8%) and Tasmania (-5.4%).
- When compared with a year previously the Northern Territory also showed the largest increase (41.6%) and was followed by Victoria (33.7%) and South Australia (22.2%). Only the Australian Capital Territory (-38.9%) and Tasmania (-15.7%) reported a decrease in commencements.





Seasonally adjusted estimates

New South Wales showed the largest increase (+10.9%) in the number of dwelling units commenced in the March quarter, followed by Western Australia (1.7%). Queensland and South Australia were steady while falls occurred in the Australian Capital Territory (-10.9%), Tasmania (-7.3%) and Victoria (-6.2%).

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

	New houses		Total dwelling units (includes cor	versions etc)	
_	Private		Private		
Period	sector	Total	sector	Tota	
	0	RIGINAL			
1996 Dec. qtr	21,474	21,860	30,856	31,955	
1997 Mar. qtr	20,103	20,469	30,308	31,593	
June qtr	22,688	23,156	33,213	34,324	
Sept. qtr	23,334	23,840	34,074	35,313	
Dec. qtr	26,222	26,665	37,671	38,61	
1998 Mar. qtr	23,502 23,502		34,011	35,156	
	SEASONA	ALLY ADJUSTED			
1996 Dec. qtr	20,642	21,070	30,049	31,530	
1997 Mar. qtr	22,159	22,551	32,564	33,893	
June qtr	22,325	22,741	32,656	33,686	
Sept. qtr	22,537	23,012	33,270	34,142	
Dec. qtr	25,211	25,708	36,704	38,114	
1998 Mar. qtr	25,889	26,375	36,494	37,671	
	TRENI	D ESTIMATES			
1996 Dec. qtr	20,766	21,154	30,114	31,497	
1997 Mar. qtr	21,569	21,980	31,581	32,820	
June qtr	22,357	22,787	32,945	34,042	
Sept. qtr	23,308	23,768	34,151	35,224	
Dec. qtr	24,577	25,064	35,570	36,735	
1998 Mar. qtr	25,965	26,467	37,074	38,358	

 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
			SEASON	ALLY ADJUS	STED				
1996 Dec. qtr	10,770	5,432	8,213	1,454	3,776	495	n.a.	376	31,530
1997 Mar. qtr	12,514	6,874	8,549	1,350	3,899	451	n.a.	528	33,893
June qtr	10,764	7,379	8,342	1,725	3,901	436	n.a.	578	33,686
Sept. qtr	11,471	7,999	8,215	1,478	3,858	432	n.a.	305	34,142
Dec. qtr	12,056	8,917	9,126	1,808	4,289	410	n.a.	367	38,114
1998 Mar. qtr	13,376	8,362	9,077	1,795	4,361	380	n.a.	327	37,671
			TREN	D ESTIMATI	ES				
1996 Dec. qtr	10,903	6,043	8,088	1,379	3,670	478	410	470	31,497
1997 Mar. qtr	11,449	6,550	8,298	1,467	3,816	458	445	491	32,826
June qtr	11,463	7,401	8,417	1,554	3,912	441	457	480	34,042
Sept. qtr	11,556	8,097	8,534	1,636	4,001	425	487	413	35,224
Dec. qtr	12,151	8,488	8,821	1,724	4,176	408	551	344	36,735
1998 Mar. qtr	13,156	8,759	9,175	1,792	4,381	386	630	300	38,358

(a) Includes conversions, etc.

TABLE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
			NE	W HOUSES					
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
1996-97	23,385	18,652	22,871	5,113	12,522	1,561	985	1,158	86,246
1996 Dec. qtr	6,075	4,139	6,281	1,262	3,082	462	268	290	21,860
1997 Mar. qtr	5,825	4,597	4,985	1,102	3,090	363	225	283	20,469
June qtr	5,858	5,463	5,913	1,541	3,453	357	269	301	23,156
Sept. qtr	6,213	5,717	6,132	1,402	3,513	316	315	232	23,840
Dec. qtr	7,050	7,067	6,224	1,588	3,788	374	270	302	26,665
1998 Mar. qtr	6,746	6,042	5,377	1,444	3,464	352	293	234	23,951
		NE	W OTHER RE	SIDENTIAL	BUILDINGS				
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
1996-97	18,681	6,047	9,004	651	2,241	291	701	729	38,345
1996 Dec. qtr	4,340	1,238	2,173	266	666	52	226	116	9,077
1997 Mar. qtr	5,382	1,560	2,428	144	516	76	82	161	10,349
June qtr	4,632	1,527	2,261	135	529	69	259	256	9,668
Sept. qtr	5,096	1,822	2,486	130	484	93	172	71	10,354
Dec. qtr	4,882	1,938	3,058	312	461	67	227	98	11,043
1998 Mar. qtr	5,224	1,732	2,543	145	571	27	320	40	10,602
			CONV	ERSIONS, E	ТС				
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
1996-97	1,667	1,132	535	26	86	30	40	65	3,580
1996 Dec. qtr	730	222	21	2	23	17	2	1	1,018
1997 Mar. qtr	268	361	73	1	29	10	31	1	774
June qtr	506	493	396	15	22	1	4	63	1,500
Sept. qtr	442	524	123	9	17	_	4	_	1,119
Dec. qtr	539	174	141	6	41	—	2	—	903
1998 Mar. qtr	309	163	29	67	30	_	2	2	602
				TOTAL					
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
1996-97	43,733	25,830	32,410	5,790	14,849	1,882	1,726	1,952	128,172
1996 Dec. qtr	11,145	5,599	8,475	1,530	3,771	531	496	407	31,955
1997 Mar. qtr	11,475	6,518	7,486	1,247	3,635	449	338	445	31,593
June qtr	10,996	7,484	8,570	1,691	4,004	427	532	620	34,324
Sept. qtr	11,751	8,063	8,741	1,541	4,014	409	491	303	35,313
Dec. qtr	12,471	9,179	9,424	1,906	4,290	441	499	400	38,611

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TABLE 4. TOTAL NUMBER OF PRIVATE SECTOR DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
			NE	W HOUSES					
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
1996-97	23,180	18,395	22,524	5,058	12,013	1,544	815	1,117	84,645
1996 Dec. qtr	6,039	4,085	6,205	1,245	2,924	459	228	288	21,474
1997 Mar. qtr	5,787	4,539	4,889	1,099	3,011	355	171	253	20,103
June qtr	5,763	5,422	5,791	1,522	3,315	356	224	294	22,688
Sept. qtr	6,178	5,699	6,041	1,354	3,256	315	259	232	23,334
Dec. qtr	7,032	6,988	6,133	1,531	3,665	371	200	300	26,222
1998 Mar. qtr	6,699	5,909	5,338	1,417	3,358	350	198	234	23,502
		NE	W OTHER RE	SIDENTIAL	BUILDINGS				
1994-95	21,513	3,077	13,761	1,339	5,227	542	522	1,072	47,053
1994-95	15,775	3,218	7,292	800	2,920	378	455	839	47,033
1996-97	16,878	5,636	8,314	647	1,858	246	685	711	34,975
1996 Dec. qtr	4,085	1,152	1,913	266	599	40	219	116	8,390
1997 Mar. gtr	4,772	1,526	2,258	142	467	50	80	157	9,452
June gtr	4,388	1,496	2,089	133	430	64	254	250	9,104
Sept. qtr	4,689	1,719	2,413	126	411	93	134	63	9,648
Dec. qtr	4,733	1,813	2,945	304	386	65	207	98	10,551
1998 Mar. qtr	4,927	1,600	2,469	141	418	23	310	40	9,928
			CONV	ERSIONS, E	ГС				
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
1996-97	1,638	1,119	535	23	80	12	28	5	3,439
1996 Dec. qtr	724	221	21	2	17	4	2	1	992
1997 Mar. qtr	266	358	73	1	29	5	19	1	752
June qtr	496	484	396	15	22	1	4	3	1,421
Sept. qtr	437	524	101	9	17	_	4	_	1,092
Dec. qtr	534	174	141	6	41	—	2	—	898
1998 Mar. qtr	308	142	29	67	30	—	2	2	580
				TOTAL					
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
1996-97	41,696	25,149	31,373	5,728	13,951	1,802	1,528	1,833	123,060
1996 Dec. qtr	10,848	5,458	8,139	1,513	3,540	503	449	405	30,856
1997 Mar. qtr	10,825	6,423	7,220	1,242	3,507	410	270	411	30,308
June qtr	10,647	7,403	8,276	1,670	3,767	421	482	547	33,213
Sept. qtr	11,304	7,942	8,555	1,489	3,684	408	397	295	34,074
Dec. qtr	12,299	8,975	9,220	1,841	4,092	436	409	398	37,671

TABLE 5. TOTAL NUMBER OF PUBLIC SECTOR DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
			NEV	W HOUSES					
1994-95	475	508	509	465	494	6	143	11	2,611
1995-96	384	473	421	234	282	21	112	39	1,966
1996-97	205	257	347	55	509	17	170	41	1,601
1996 Dec. qtr	36	54	76	17	158	3	40	2	386
1997 Mar. qtr	38	58	96	3	79	8	54	30	366
June qtr	95	41	122	19	138	1	45	7	468
Sept. qtr	35	18	91	48	257	1	56	_	506
Dec. qtr	18	79	91	57	123	3	70	2	443
1998 Mar. qtr	47	133	39	27	106	2	95	_	449
		NEV	V OTHER RE	SIDENTIAL	BUILDINGS				
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
1996-97	1,803	411	690	4	383	45	16	18	3,370
1996 Dec. qtr	255	86	260	_	67	12	7	_	687
1997 Mar. qtr	610	34	170	2	49	26	2	4	897
June qtr	244	31	172	2	99	5	5	6	564
Sept. qtr	407	103	73	4	73	_	38	8	706
Dec. qtr	149	125	113	8	75	2	20	_	492
1998 Mar. qtr	297	132	74	4	153	4	10	_	674
			CONVI	ERSIONS, ET	TC				
1994-95	31	7	9	13	1	_	_	_	61
1995-96	29	29	_	_	_	_	3	70	131
1996-97	29	13	_	3	6	18	12	60	141
1996 Dec. qtr	6	1	_	_	6	13	_	_	26
1997 Mar. qtr	2	3	_	_	_	5	12	_	22
June qtr	10	9				_		60	79
Sept. qtr	5	_	22	_	_	_	_		27
Dec. qtr	5	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	5
1998 Mar. qtr	1	21	_	_	_	_	_	_	22
				TOTAL					
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
1996-97	2,037	681	1,037	62	898	80	198	119	5,112
1996 Dec. qtr	297	141	336	17	231	28	47	2	1,099
1997 Mar. qtr	650	95	266	5	128	39	68	34	1,285
June qtr	349	81	294	21	237	6	50	73	1,111
Sept. qtr	447	121	186	52	330	1	94	8	1,239
Dec. qtr	172	204	204	65	198	5	90	2	940
1998 Mar. qtr	345	286	113	31	259	6	105	_	1,145

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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* (Cat. no. 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. The relative standard errors for these estimates are shown on page 2. Also, some returns containing jobs not known to have commenced are not received in time for inclusion in these estimates. Allowance is made for a proportion of these jobs, based on past experience, to have commenced. Estimates in this issue are therefore subject to revision.

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 and Territory level are available from the building approvals series and from the monthly series of dwelling unit commencements compiled for South Australia and Western Australia by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (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 *bouse* 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).

DEFINITIONS continued

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 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 the Building Activity Survey, 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.

EXPLANATORY NOTES continued

TREND ESTIMATES continued

	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 <i>Information Paper: A Guide to Interpreting Time Series</i> — <i>Monitoring 'Trends': an Overview</i> (Cat. no. 1348.0) or contact the Assistant Director, Time Series Analysis on Canberra (02) 6252 6345.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
	16 ABS publications draw extensively on information provided freely by individuals, businesses, governments and other organisations. Their continued cooperation is very much appreciated: without it, the wide range of statistics published by the ABS would not be available. Information received by the ABS is treated in strict confidence as required by the <i>Census and Statistics Act 1905</i> .
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SYMBOLS AND OTHER USAGES

- ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics
- n.a. not available
- nil or rounded to zero
- .. not applicable

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

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