

CATALOGUE NO. 5320.0

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11.30 AM 19 APRIL 1996

**MERCHANDISE IMPORTS (BALANCE OF PAYMENTS BASIS)  
AUSTRALIA, MARCH 1996**

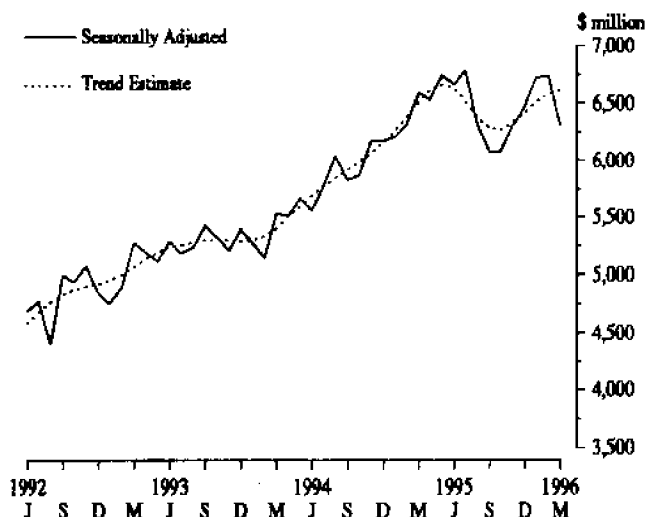
**MAIN FEATURES**

*March 1996 compared with February 1996*

The provisional trend estimate of *merchandise imports* rose \$40 million, or 1 per cent, to \$6,617 million.

In seasonally adjusted terms, *merchandise imports* for March fell \$428 million, or 6 per cent, to \$6,310 million. *Consumption goods* fell \$155 million, or 9 per cent, to \$1,532 million. *Capital goods* fell \$173 million, or 9 per cent, to \$1,660 million. *Intermediate and other goods* fell \$100 million, or 3 per cent, to \$3,118 million.

GRAPH 1: MERCHANDISE - IMPORTS F.O.B.



In original terms, *imports* fell \$160 million, or 3 per cent, to \$6,104 million.

Imports of *consumption goods*, in original terms, fell \$133 million, or 8 per cent, to \$1,452 million. The largest decreases were recorded in:

- textiles, clothing and footwear, down \$67 million or 23 per cent (due mainly to decreased imports of articles of apparel);
- non-industrial transport equipment, down \$30 million or 9 per cent (due to decreased imports of passenger motor cars); and

- toys, books and leisure goods, down \$22 million or 12 per cent.

Imports of *capital goods*, in original terms, fell \$76 million, or 5 per cent, to \$1,509 million. The largest decreases were recorded in:

- machinery and industrial equipment, down \$59 million or 8 per cent; and
- civil aircraft, down \$46 million or 60 per cent on the February figure which included a Qantas aircraft valued at \$52 million.

These decreases were partly offset by increases in telecommunications equipment, up \$32 million or 23 per cent; and ADP equipment, up \$9 million or 3 per cent.

Imports of *intermediate and other goods*, in original terms, rose \$49 million, or 2 per cent, to \$3,143 million. The largest increases were recorded in:

- primary industrial supplies nes, up \$45 million or 73 per cent;
- processed industrial supplies nes, up \$45 million or 6 per cent (mainly due to increased imports of non-crude fertilizers); and
- organic and inorganic chemicals, up \$33 million or 15 per cent.

These increases were partly offset by decreases in 10 of the 14 groups. The largest decrease was recorded in paper and paperboard, down \$32 million or 22 per cent.

*Nine months ended March 1996 compared with nine months ended March 1995*

In original terms, *merchandise imports* rose \$2,744 million, or 5 per cent, to \$58,566 million:

- *consumption goods* rose \$473 million (3 per cent);
- *capital goods* rose \$549 million (4 per cent); and
- *intermediate and other goods* rose \$1,722 million (6 per cent).

**INQUIRIES** • for further information about these and related unpublished statistics, contact Mr Frank Bingham on Canberra (06) 252 7193, or any ABS State office.  
• for information about other ABS statistics and services please refer to the back page of this publication.



## EXPLANATORY NOTES

**Introduction**

1. This publication contains preliminary estimates of Australia's merchandise imports on a balance of payments basis for March 1996, together with estimates for previous months.

2. Descriptions of the classifications used for merchandise imports, detailed item definitions and long term historical data are presented in *Change to Commodity Classification of Merchandise Imports in Balance of Payments Publications* (5344.0).

3. Descriptions of the underlying concepts and structure of merchandise imports on a balance of payments basis and the sources and methods used in compiling the estimates are presented in *Balance of Payments, Australia: Concepts, Sources and Methods* (5331.0). That publication also provides explanations of seasonal adjustment and trend estimates; and an analysis of the quality of the estimates.

**Accuracy, reliability and volatility**

4. The latest estimates in this publication are preliminary and subject to revision as more complete and accurate information becomes available.

5. Particular care should be exercised in interpreting month-to-month movements in original and seasonally adjusted series as short term movements cannot be assumed to indicate changes in trend. The monthly estimates are volatile, being subject to seasonal factors (except where adjusted in the table) and large irregular influences. The irregular influences may reflect both random economic events and difficulties of statistical recording. Seasonal adjustment does not aim to remove the irregular or non-seasonal influences which may be present in any particular month. This means that the month-to-month movements of the seasonally adjusted estimates may not be reliable indicators of trend behaviour. For example, irregular factors unrelated to the trend account for more than half the seasonally adjusted monthly movements in merchandise imports fob in 9 out of 10 months.

6. The impact of the irregular influences upon the seasonally adjusted series is reduced by smoothing, as shown by the trend estimates in the table and graph. The trend estimates are generally derived by applying a 13-term Henderson-weighted moving average to the seasonally adjusted series.

**Seasonal adjustment**

7. The factors to be used in seasonally adjusting the monthly merchandise imports statistics, as well as the monthly balance of payments statistics, during 1996 can be obtained, for \$75.00, from Ms Karen McGuigan on Canberra (06) 252 6239.

8. The seasonally adjusted statistics in this publication should not be regarded as in any way definitive as results from seasonal adjustment vary according to the method used.

**More detailed and longer term series**

9. More detailed information than that shown in this publication is available for March 1996 and earlier months. Estimates for months prior to those shown in this publication are also available. These data can be obtained by contacting Mr Trevor Jolly on Canberra (06) 252 6820. There may be a charge for this information.

**Related products and services**

10. Preliminary estimates of Australia's balance of payments for March 1996 are due for release on 2 May 1996 in the monthly publication *Balance of Payments, Australia* (5301.0). The estimates of merchandise imports shown as part of the balance of payments in 5301.0 will normally be the same as those already released in the corresponding issue of this publication.

11. More detailed merchandise imports data, including dissections by commodity and country of origin, are also available on a foreign trade basis for March 1996 and previous months. These data series can be obtained by contacting International Trade Client Services on Canberra (06) 252 5400.

**Symbols and other usages**

fob	free on board
nes	not elsewhere specified
—	nil or rounded to zero
..	not applicable
p	provisional

Dennis Trewin  
Acting Australian Statistician

**Release date for April 1996 issue**

The expected release date for the April issue of this publication is 17 May 1996.  
Any variations which might occur will be notified in the ABS Publications Advice (1105.0)  
and on DISCOVERY

The date can be confirmed a few days prior to release by telephoning  
Canberra (06) 252 6627.

## 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.

### ABS Products and Services

Many standard products are available from ABS bookshops located in each State and Territory. In addition to these products, information tailored to the needs of clients can be obtained on a wide range of media by contacting your nearest ABS Office. The ABS also provides a Subscription Service for standard products and some tailored information services.

### National Dial-a-Statistic Line

0055 86 400

*Steadycorn P/L: premium rate 25c/21.4 secs.*

This number gives 24-hour access, 365 days a year, for a range of important economic statistics including the CPI.

### Internet

<http://www.statistics.gov.au>

A wide range of ABS information is available via the Internet, with basic statistics available for each State, Territory and Australia. We also have Key National Indicators, ABS product release details and other information of general interest.

## Sales and Inquiries

Keylink STAT.INFO/ABS  
X.400 (C:Australia,PUB:Telememo,O:ABS,FN:STAT,SN:INFO)  
Internet [stat.info@abs.telememo.au](mailto:stat.info@abs.telememo.au)

National Mail Order Service (06) 252 5249  
Subscription Service 1800 02 0608

	Information Inquiries	Bookshop Sales
SYDNEY	(02) 268 4611	268 4620
MELBOURNE	(03) 9615 7755	9615 7755
BRISBANE	(07) 3222 6351	3222 6350
PERTH	(09) 360 5140	360 5307
ADELAIDE	(08) 237 7100	237 7582
HOBART	(002) 205 800	205 800
CANBERRA	(06) 252 6627	207 0326
DARWIN	(089) 432 111	432 111



Client Services, ABS, PO Box 10, Belconnen ACT 2616

