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

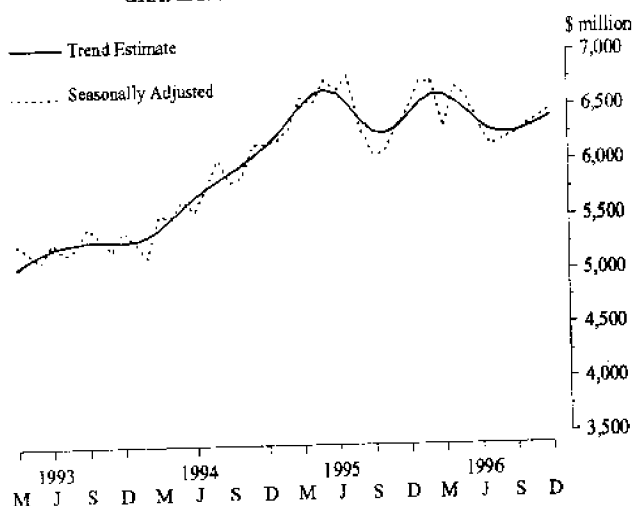
**MAIN FEATURES**

**December 1996 compared with November 1996**

The provisional **trend estimate** of *merchandise imports* rose \$58 million, or 1 per cent, to \$6,404 million.

In **seasonally adjusted terms**, *merchandise imports* for December rose \$52 million, or 1 per cent, to \$6,453 million. *Consumption goods* rose \$26 million, or 1 per cent, to \$1,766 million. *Capital goods* fell \$93 million, or 6 per cent, to \$1,393 million. *Intermediate and other goods* rose \$119 million, or 4 per cent, to \$3,294 million.

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



In **original terms**, *imports* fell \$392 million, or 6 per cent, to \$6,249 million.

Imports of *consumption goods*, in original terms, fell \$152 million, or 8 per cent, to \$1,732 million. The largest decreases were recorded in:

- consumption goods nes, down \$121 million or 22 per cent (with all components recording decreases);
- household electrical items, down \$64 million or 31 per cent (with all components recording decreases); and
- toys, books and leisure goods, down \$50 million or 21 per cent.

The largest increase was recorded by non-industrial transport equipment, up \$87 million or 21 per cent (due mainly to increased imports of passenger motor cars).

Imports of *capital goods*, in original terms, fell \$81 million, or 5 per cent, to \$1,493 million. The largest decreases were recorded in:

- civil aircraft, down \$75 million or 60 per cent; and
- telecommunications equipment, down \$23 million or 14 per cent.

The largest increase was recorded in machinery and industrial equipment, up \$25 million or 4 per cent (with most components recording increases).

Imports of *intermediate and other goods*, in original terms, fell \$159 million, or 5 per cent, to \$3,024 million. Decreases were recorded in 12 of the 14 groups, with the largest being:

- "other" parts for capital goods, down \$55 million or 10 per cent;
- processed industrial supplies nes, down \$46 million or 6 per cent;
- iron and steel, down \$43 million or 36 per cent; and
- parts for transport equipment, down \$37 million or 10 per cent.

The largest increase was recorded in fuels and lubricants, up \$85 million or 20 per cent (due mainly to increased imports of crude petroleum).

**Six months ended December 1996 compared with six months ended December 1995**

In **original terms**, *merchandise imports* rose \$213 million, or 1 per cent, to \$39,946 million, with:

- *consumption goods* rising \$587 million (5 per cent);
- *capital goods* falling \$254 million (3 per cent); and
- *intermediate and other goods* falling \$120 million (1 per cent).

**INQUIRIES** • for further information about these and related unpublished statistics, contact Dorian Bontempelli on Canberra (06) 252 5543, or any ABS State office.  
• for information about other ABS statistics and services please refer to the back page of this publication.

**TABLE 1. MERCHANDISE IMPORTS (BALANCE OF PAYMENTS BASIS)—ORIGINAL, SEASONALLY ADJUSTED AND TREND ESTIMATES (a)**

	Months												July in Dec.							
	Years			1995-96						1996-97			1995-96		1996-97					
	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	1995-96	1996-97			
<i>Consumption goods (b) —</i>																				
Food and beverages, mainly for consumption	-2,430	-2,592	-2,760	-255	263	-242	-252	-215	203	-209	-220	-193	-263	-255	225	283	-242	-264	1,468	-1,532
Household electrical items	-1,436	-1,766	-1,766	179	-178	-139	-120	-129	-137	-147	-151	-124	-170	-160	177	-204	-208	-144	-958	-1,063
Non-industrial transport equipment	-3,800	-4,758	-4,436	422	-403	-375	-277	-325	295	-368	-411	-319	-435	-498	-389	-483	-412	-499	-2,441	-2,716
Textiles, clothing and footwear	-2,320	-2,566	-2,726	-212	229	-190	-261	-293	-225	-207	-194	-155	-284	-265	244	244	-227	-201	-1,391	-1,465
Toys, books and leisure goods	-2,496	-2,545	-2,534	260	-256	-185	-190	-191	-170	-173	-192	-167	-244	-223	-250	-272	-236	-186	-1,451	-1,411
Consumption goods nes	-4,751	-5,213	-5,638	529	-539	-450	-430	-432	-422	-449	-473	-386	-542	-510	-516	-590	-559	-438	-3,046	3,155
<b>Total consumption goods</b>	<b>-17,233</b>	<b>-19,418</b>	<b>-19,860</b>	<b>-1,857</b>	<b>-1,868</b>	<b>-1,581</b>	<b>-1,530</b>	<b>-1,583</b>	<b>-1,452</b>	<b>-1,553</b>	<b>-1,641</b>	<b>-1,344</b>	<b>-1,938</b>	<b>-1,911</b>	<b>-1,801</b>	<b>-2,076</b>	<b>1,884</b>	<b>1,732</b>	<b>10,755</b>	<b>11,342</b>
<i>Capital goods (b) —</i>																				
Machinery and industrial equipment	6,414	-7,897	-8,326	-723	-726	-687	-740	-712	-653	-669	-719	-673	-702	-709	-652	718	-661	-686	-4,160	-4,128
ADP equipment	-2,629	-3,232	-3,593	273	-282	-272	-263	-274	-283	-327	-361	-342	-331	-260	-314	-270	-270	-281	-1,743	-1,726
Telecommunications equipment	-1,182	-1,804	-1,996	-179	-199	-169	-170	-141	-173	-150	-131	-150	-153	-120	-150	-168	-164	-141	-1,081	-896
Civil aircraft	-241	-529	-688	-31	-104	-28	-44	-77	-31	-70	-117	-66	9	-113	-108	-61	-124	-49	-283	-464
Industrial transport equipment nes	-2,084	-2,714	-2,214	-197	-180	-165	-158	-193	-186	-198	-191	-178	-167	-166	-145	-170	161	153	1,110	-962
Capital goods nes	-2,293	-2,365	-2,366	-213	-213	173	189	-192	-185	-194	-207	-171	-208	-182	-196	212	-194	-183	-1,228	-1,175
<b>Total capital goods</b>	<b>-14,843</b>	<b>-18,541</b>	<b>-19,183</b>	<b>-1,616</b>	<b>-1,704</b>	<b>-1,494</b>	<b>-1,564</b>	<b>-1,589</b>	<b>-1,511</b>	<b>-1,608</b>	<b>-1,726</b>	<b>-1,580</b>	<b>1,570</b>	<b>1,550</b>	<b>-1,565</b>	<b>-1,599</b>	<b>-1,574</b>	<b>-1,493</b>	<b>-9,605</b>	<b>9,351</b>
<i>Intermediate and other goods (b) —</i>																				
Food and beverages, mainly for industry	-509	-774	-700	-55	-77	-44	-77	51	-46	-52	-63	-40	-51	66	-43	-62	-48	-35	-371	-305
Primary industrial supplies nes	-701	-901	-879	-83	-76	-76	-64	-62	-106	-75	73	54	-69	-66	-70	-73	-78	-64	-445	-420
Fuels and lubricants	-3,317	-3,566	-4,163	-264	-353	-314	-387	-376	-374	-425	-391	-321	-412	-304	-254	541	-415	-500	-1,889	-2,426
Parts for transport equipment	-4,183	-4,714	-4,600	406	-340	-344	-397	-373	362	-394	419	-334	-490	-415	386	-383	-377	-340	-2,321	-2,391
Parts for ADP equipment	-1,681	-1,858	-1,857	-161	-161	-137	-160	-157	-162	-156	-154	-137	-161	-134	-138	-137	-136	-134	-931	-840
Other parts for capital goods	-5,047	-5,975	-6,393	-563	-550	-471	-539	-525	-526	-490	-557	-459	-565	-535	-526	-581	-558	-503	-3,297	-3,268
Organic and inorganic chemicals	-2,102	-2,431	-2,754	-225	-245	-193	-274	-215	248	-243	-232	-195	-264	-200	-240	269	-208	-204	-1,347	-1,385
Paper and paperboard	-1,465	-1,794	-1,868	195	-173	-151	-162	147	-115	-141	-131	-103	-143	-151	-149	-168	-147	-136	-1,069	-902
Textile yarn and fabrics	-1,869	-2,036	-1,922	-167	-172	-137	-167	-151	-142	-141	-172	-143	-182	-158	-162	-159	-151	-128	-1,006	-940
Iron and steel	-1,039	-1,285	-1,408	-125	-125	-132	-121	-113	-109	-100	-101	-93	-103	-114	-109	-99	119	-128	-771	-620
Plastics	-1,375	-1,646	-1,685	-158	-158	-149	-129	-151	-131	-128	-124	-133	-111	-145	-135	-134	-146	-120	-907	-807
Non-monetary gold	-978	-705	-702	-51	-74	-48	-66	64	-54	-52	-52	-52	45	45	-53	-60	-50	-38	-362	-291
Processed industrial supplies nes	7,783	-8,680	8,793	-747	-751	-660	755	-710	-752	-745	-771	588	-779	-744	-747	-787	-745	-699	-4,472	-4,501
Other goods	-286	-391	-337	-28	-14	-30	-42	-15	-14	13	-50	-18	-23	-24	-14	-25	-24	-47	-185	-157
<b>Total intermediate and other goods</b>	<b>32,335</b>	<b>-36,756</b>	<b>-38,061</b>	<b>3,228</b>	<b>-3,260</b>	<b>-2,866</b>	<b>-3,362</b>	<b>-3,090</b>	<b>3,138</b>	<b>-3,151</b>	<b>-3,299</b>	<b>-2,648</b>	<b>-3,440</b>	<b>-3,091</b>	<b>3,025</b>	<b>-3,490</b>	<b>-3,183</b>	<b>-3,024</b>	<b>-19,373</b>	<b>-19,253</b>
<b>Total imports fob</b>	<b>-64,411</b>	<b>-74,715</b>	<b>-77,104</b>	<b>-6,832</b>	<b>-5,941</b>	<b>-6,832</b>	<b>-6,456</b>	<b>-6,264</b>	<b>-6,101</b>	<b>-6,312</b>	<b>-6,666</b>	<b>-5,572</b>	<b>-6,948</b>	<b>-6,552</b>	<b>-6,391</b>	<b>-7,165</b>	<b>-6,641</b>	<b>-6,249</b>	<b>-39,733</b>	<b>-39,946</b>
Consumption goods				1,570	-1,656	-1,729	1,603	-1,687	-1,532	-1,662	-1,717	1,656	1,681	1,814	1,729	-1,704	-1,740	-1,740	-1,766	
Capital goods				-1,452	-1,533	-1,478	1,764	-1,838	-1,662	-1,734	1,768	1,624	-1,387	-1,439	-1,509	-1,402	-1,486	-1,393		
Intermediate and other goods				-3,056	-3,109	-3,266	3,353	-3,214	-3,113	-3,286	3,096	3,041	-3,072	-2,948	-3,006	-3,211	-3,175	-3,175	-3,294	
<b>Total imports fob</b>																				
<b>Total imports fob</b>																				

Seasonally Adjusted

Trend Estimates

(a) In keeping with balance of payments conventions, debit items such as merchandise imports, are recorded as negative entries. (b) Definitions of the component series are given in the ABS Information Paper, *Change to Commodity Classification of Merchandise Imports in Balance of Payments Publications* (ABS Catalogue No. 5344.0).

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### Introduction

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

2. Descriptions of the classifications used for merchandise imports and detailed item definitions 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.

### 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 1997 can be obtained, for \$75.00, from Melissa Hunt on Canberra (06) 252 6224.

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 December 1996 and earlier months. Estimates for months prior to those shown in this publication are also available. These data can be obtained by contacting 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 December 1996 are due for release on 31 January 1997 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 an international merchandise trade basis for December 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

**W. McLennan**  
Australian Statistician

### Release date for January 1997 issue

The expected release date for the January issue of this publication is 19 February 1997. Any variations which might occur will be notified in the *ABS Release Advice* (1105.0)

The date can be confirmed a few days prior to release by telephoning  
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