



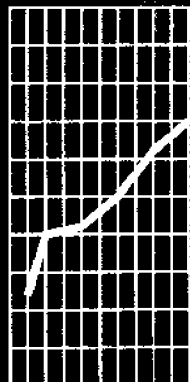
September Quarter 1997

EMBARGO: 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) MON 15 DEC 1997

Building Activity Australia

Dwelling Unit Commencements

Preliminary



BUILDING ACTIVITY NOTES

FORTHCOMING ISSUES	<i>ISSUE (Quarter)</i> December 1997	<i>RELEASE DATE</i> 18 March 1998
CHANGES IN THIS ISSUE	There are no changes in this issue.	
SIGNIFICANT REVISIONS THIS ISSUE	The total number of dwelling units commenced during the June quarter 1997 has been revised upwards by 1,634 (5.0%) for Australia, including 498 (7.2%) in Victoria, 637 (6.2%) in New South Wales and 254 (3.1%) 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 errors for the number of new private sector houses and total dwelling units commenced in the September 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	3.1	1.7
Victoria	3.2	2.4
Queensland	2.5	1.8
South Australia	3.7	3.3
Western Australia	3.9	3.1
Tasmania	3.3	2.5
Northern Territory
Australian Capital Territory	3.1	2.4
Australia	1.4	1.0

INQUIRIES

For further information about statistics in this publication and the availability of related unpublished statistics, contact Martin Yard on Adelaide (08) 8237 7494 or any ABS State office.

W. McLennan
Australian Statistician

MAIN FEATURES

NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

TREND AND SEASONALLY ADJUSTED ESTIMATES

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

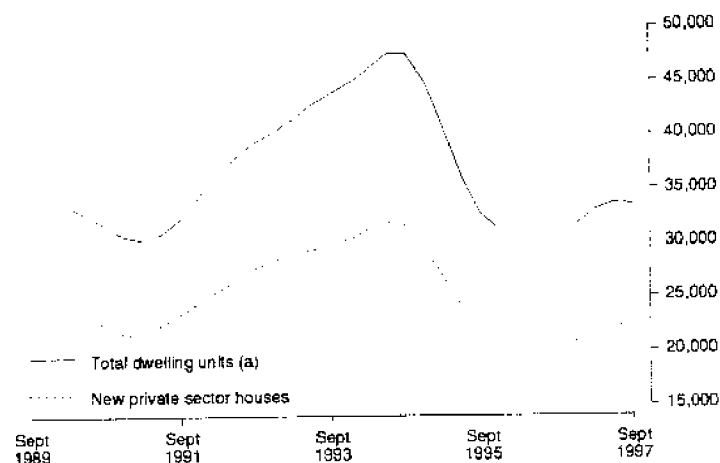
	Sep qtr 97	% change Jun qtr 97 to Sep qtr 97	% change Sep qtr 96 to Sep qtr 97
TREND ESTIMATES			
Dwelling units commenced			
New private sector houses	22 289	0.3	11.1
Total dwelling units	33 512	-0.3	10.5
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
Dwelling units commenced			
New private sector houses	21 843	-2.0	12.1
Total dwelling units	32 836	-1.9	12.6

Australian estimates

The trend for the number of new private sector houses commenced rose marginally in the September quarter 1997. This follows a rise of 2.3% in the June quarter and was 11.1% above the level of a year ago.

The trend for the total number of dwelling units commenced fell marginally in the September quarter, following rises of 1.9% and 4.6% in the June and March quarters 1997.

NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED, AUSTRALIA (Trend estimates)



(a) includes Conversions, etc

In seasonally adjusted terms, the number of new private sector houses commenced fell by 2.0% in the September quarter to 21,843. The total number of dwelling units commenced also fell, by 1.9% to 32,836. These series were 12.1% and 12.6% respectively above the levels of September quarter 1996.

State estimates The trend estimate of the number of new dwelling units commenced in the September quarter 1997 rose by 7.7% in Victoria.

The largest falls occurred in the Australian Capital Territory (-12.9%), Tasmania (-5.0%) and Queensland (-3.4%).

Compared with a year previously, Victoria (+29.9%) and South Australia (+18.9%) have shown the largest increases. Only Tasmania (-18.1%) and Australian Capital Territory (-8.2%) reported decreased numbers of commencements.

In seasonally adjusted terms, New South Wales showed an increase (+5.5%) in the number of dwelling units commenced in the September quarter, while Victoria remained steady. All other States fell with the largest falls recorded by the Australian Capital Territory (-54.5%) and South Australia (-18.0%).

ORIGINAL ESTIMATES

In original terms, 34,100 dwelling units were commenced in the September quarter 1997, almost the same as for the June quarter. Although the number of new other residential dwelling units commenced increased by 4.1% and new houses commenced increased by 1.2%, they were offset by a fall of 43.4% in conversions, etc. from the high figure for the previous quarter.

The number of dwelling units commenced in the September quarter 1997 was steady for both the private and public sectors.

**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				
1996 June qtr	20,597	20,966	29,614	31,131
Sept. qtr	20,380	20,761	28,683	30,300
Dec. qtr	21,474	21,860	30,856	31,955
1997 Mar. qtr	20,103	20,469	30,308	31,593
June qtr	22,580	23,048	32,981	34,092
Sept. qtr	22,844	23,318	32,981	34,100
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED				
1996 June qtr	20,339	20,632	29,167	30,571
Sept. qtr	19,488	19,863	27,820	29,155
Dec. qtr	20,587	21,052	29,775	31,213
1997 Mar. qtr	22,376	22,741	33,012	34,371
June qtr	22,298	22,682	32,486	33,478
Sept. qtr	21,843	22,304	32,011	32,836
TREND ESTIMATES				
1996 June qtr	20,045	20,403	28,611	30,027
Sept. qtr	20,059	20,427	28,917	30,320
Dec. qtr	20,790	21,186	30,141	31,526
1997 Mar. qtr	21,717	22,122	31,721	32,991
June qtr	22,216	22,622	32,552	33,617
Sept. qtr	22,289	22,709	32,692	33,512

**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									
1996 June qtr	9,928	6,119	8,050	1,346	3,700	536	n.a.	575	30,571
Sept. qtr	9,760	6,202	7,343	1,245	3,265	495	n.a.	453	29,155
Dec. qtr	10,842	5,405	8,185	1,456	3,776	491	n.a.	395	31,213
1997 Mar. qtr	12,498	6,872	8,644	1,361	3,909	460	n.a.	493	34,371
June qtr	10,769	7,354	8,213	1,743	3,917	434	n.a.	606	33,478
Sept. qtr	11,356	7,386	7,840	1,429	3,703	422	n.a.	276	32,836
TREND ESTIMATES									
1996 June qtr	9,990	5,999	7,759	1,332	3,559	551	370	511	30,027
Sept. qtr	10,326	5,930	7,851	1,308	3,536	509	392	449	30,320
Dec. qtr	10,914	6,071	8,101	1,381	3,676	478	415	467	31,526
1997 Mar. qtr	11,454	6,571	8,317	1,484	3,834	461	439	484	32,991
June qtr	11,494	7,150	8,274	1,547	3,876	439	446	473	33,617
Sept. qtr	11,271	7,701	7,991	1,555	3,796	417	439	412	33,512

(a) Includes conversions, etc.

TABLE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
NEW 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	23,360	18,622	22,838	5,113	12,509	1,561	985	1,151	86,138
1996 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	6,075	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	5,833	5,433	5,880	1,541	3,439	358	269	294	23,048
Sept. qtr	6,240	5,478	6,006	1,384	3,395	312	280	223	23,318
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL 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	18,679	6,041	8,894	651	2,236	291	701	729	38,222
1996 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	1,238	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	4,630	1,521	2,151	135	524	69	259	256	9,545
Sept. qtr	5,099	1,668	2,279	125	484	91	122	66	9,934
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
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	1,131	535	26	86	30	40	65	3,579
1996 June qtr	189	664	20	4	56	—	3	70	1,006
Sept. qtr	163	55	45	8	12	2	3	—	288
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	492	396	15	22	1	4	63	1,499
Sept. qtr	426	275	120	8	17	—	3	—	849
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	43,706	25,793	32,267	5,790	14,831	1,882	1,726	1,945	127,939
1996 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	11,145	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	10,969	7,447	8,427	1,691	3,985	428	532	613	34,092
Sept. qtr	11,765	7,420	8,405	1,517	3,896	403	405	289	34,100

TABLE 4. TOTAL NUMBER OF PRIVATE SECTOR DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
NEW 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	23,155	18,365	22,491	5,058	12,000	1,544	815	1,110	84,537
1996 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	6,039	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	5,738	5,392	5,758	1,522	3,301	357	224	287	22,580
Sept. qtr	6,206	5,467	5,916	1,339	3,155	311	227	223	22,844
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
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
1996-97	16,876	5,630	8,204	647	1,853	246	685	711	34,852
1996 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	1,152	1,913	266	599	40	219	116	8,390
1997 Mar. qtr	4,772	1,526	2,258	142	467	50	80	157	9,452
June qtr	4,386	1,490	1,979	133	425	64	254	250	8,981
Sept. qtr	4,692	1,607	2,211	121	414	91	122	58	9,316
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
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	1,118	535	23	80	12	28	5	3,438
1996 June qtr	172	636	20	4	56	—	1	—	889
Sept. qtr	152	55	45	5	12	2	3	—	274
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	483	396	15	22	1	4	3	1,420
Sept. qtr	421	275	98	8	17	—	3	—	822
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	41,669	25,112	31,230	5,728	13,933	1,802	1,528	1,826	122,827
1996 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	10,848	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	10,620	7,366	8,133	1,670	3,748	422	482	540	32,981
Sept. qtr	11,319	7,348	8,225	1,468	3,586	402	352	281	32,981

TABLE 5. TOTAL NUMBER OF PUBLIC SECTOR DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

Period	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
NEW 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 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	38	58	96	3	79	8	54	30	366
June qtr	95	41	122	19	138	1	45	7	468
Sept. qtr	34	11	90	45	240	1	53	—	474
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL 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 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	610	34	170	2	49	26	2	4	897
June qtr	244	31	172	2	99	5	5	6	564
Sept. qtr	407	61	68	4	70	—	—	8	618
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
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 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
June qtr	10	9	—	—	—	—	—	60	79
Sept. qtr	5	—	22	—	—	—	—	—	27
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 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	650	95	266	5	128	39	68	34	1,285
June qtr	349	81	294	21	237	6	50	73	1,111
Sept. qtr	446	72	180	49	310	1	53	8	1,119

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* (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 and relative standard errors 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/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 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* (Cat. no. 1348.0) or contact the Assistant Director, Time Series Analysis on (02) 6252 6345.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

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

Building Approvals, Australia (Cat. no. 8731.0) – issued monthly

Building Activity, Australia (Cat. no. 8752.0) – issued quarterly

Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Australia (Cat. no. 5609.0) – issued monthly

Price Index of Materials Used in House Building (Cat. no. 6408.0) – issued monthly

Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building (Cat. no. 6407.0) – issued monthly

House Price Indexes: Eight Capital Cities (Cat. no. 6416.0) – issued quarterly

17 Current publications produced by the ABS are listed in the *Catalogue of Publications and Products, Australia* (Cat. no. 1101.0). The ABS also issues, on Tuesdays and Fridays, a *Release Advice* (Cat. no. 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.

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

SYMBOLS AND OTHER USAGES

n.a. not available
— nil or rounded to zero
... not applicable

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Produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics
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2875000009975

ISSN 0818-3511