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INTERIM RETAIL PRICE INDEX
DECEMBER QUARTER, 1956

1. Particulars concerning variations in retail prices as measured by the Interim Retail Price Index for the six State capital cities of Australia are given herein.
2. This Interim Retail Price Index was instituted in March, 1954, with post-war weights and components. It is published quarterly and is described in "Annual Labour Report" No. 43 (1954).
3. During September Quarter, 1956, supplies of potatoes and onions diminished rapidly in most cities and towns and abnormal price movements occurred in all States except Western Australia. As the new crop of these vegetables restored supplies progressively during December Quarter, 1956 their prices receded again very rapidly in most cities.
4. The highly abnormal seasonal fluctuations in the prices of these two items affected the movement of the Aggregate All Groups Index in most cities in September Quarter and December Quarter, 1956.
5. In order to provide an indication of the recent trend of the index in respect of items not materially affected by seasonal factors, an All Groups Index which excludes the effects of movements in the prices of potatoes and onions is shown herein in comparison with the Aggregate All Groups Index mentioned in paragraph 4 above.
6. An approximate analysis for each capital city is shown hereunder and a corresponding analysis for the weighted average of the six capital cities is shown on page 4:-

Analysis of Movements in Interim Retail Price Index
Six Capital Cities - (Base : Year 1952-53 = 100)

	Interim Index Points					
	Exclud- ing Potatoes and Onions	Movement due to Potatoes and Onions	Aggre- gate All Groups	Exclud- ing Potatoes and Onions	Movement due to Potatoes and Onions	Aggre- gate All Groups
	SYDNEY			MELBOURNE		
Index points for March Quarter, 1956	105.3	(+)0.9a	106.2	109.4	(+)1.0a	110.4
Movement during June Quarter	(+)1.7	(+)0.6	(+)2.3	(+)2.2	(+)0.7	(+)2.9
Index points for June Quarter, 1956	107.0	(+)1.5a	108.5	111.6	(+)1.7a	113.3
Movement during Sept. Quarter	(+)4.2	(+)1.3	(+)5.5	(+)0.7	(+)1.7	(+)2.4
Index points for Sept. Quarter, 1956	111.2	(+)2.8a	114.0	112.3	(+)3.4a	115.7
Movement during Dec. Quarter	(+)1.4	(-)1.6	(-)0.2	(+)0.8	(-)1.0	(-)0.2
Index points for Dec. Quarter, 1956	112.6	(+)1.2a	113.8	113.1	(+)2.4a	115.5
	BRISBANE			ADELAIDE		
Index points for March Quarter, 1956	105.8	(+)1.5a	107.3	106.1	(+)0.7a	106.8
Movement during June Quarter	(+)1.9	(+)0.3	(+)2.2	(+)2.3	(+)0.6	(+)2.9
Index points for June Quarter, 1956	107.7	(+)1.8a	109.5	108.4	(+)1.3a	109.7
Movement during Sept. Quarter	(+)1.0	(+)1.4	(+)2.4	(+)0.2	(+)1.7	(+)1.9
Index points for Sept. Quarter, 1956	108.7	(+)3.2a	111.9	108.6	(+)3.0a	111.6
Movement during Dec. Quarter	(+)0.8	(-)1.5	(-)0.7	(+)0.1	(-)0.8	(-)0.7
Index points for Dec. Quarter, 1956	109.5	(+)1.7a	111.2	108.7	(+)2.2a	110.9
	PERTH			HOBART		
Index points for March Quarter, 1956	113.1	a	113.1	111.9	(+)1.1a	113.0
Movement during June Quarter	(+)1.9	(+)0.2	(+)2.1	(+)2.2	(-)0.1	(+)2.1
Index points for June Quarter, 1956	115.0	(+)0.2a	115.2	114.1	(+)1.0a	115.1
Movement during Sept. Quarter	(+)1.1	(+)0.3	(+)1.4	(+)2.3	(+)0.9	(+)3.2
Index points for Sept. Quarter, 1956	116.1	(+)0.5a	(+)16.6	116.4	(+)1.9a	118.3
Movement during Dec. Quarter	(+)1.1	(-)0.1	(+)1.0	(+)1.3	(-)0.2	(+)1.1
Index points for Dec. Quarter, 1956	117.2	(+)0.4a	117.6	117.7	(+)1.7a	119.4

(a) Cumulative from base period. (+) Denotes increase.
(-) Denotes decrease. * Revised

7. Comparative average retail prices of potatoes for the six capital cities are shown hereunder:-

AVERAGE PRICE OF POTATOES

Fence per 7 lbs.

	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane	Adelaide	Perth	Hobart	Weighted Average of Six Capitals
Dec. Qtr. 1952	34	24	23	24	28	29	28
" " 1953	61	53	58	52	29	65	55
" " 1954	29	18	30	23	29	29	25
Sept. " 1955	54	49	59	44	37	51	51
Dec. " 1955	56	56	46	54	33	60	53
March " 1956	66	59	71	46	31	67	60
June " 1956	88	82	80	64	37	67	79
Sept. " 1956	127	129	116	110	37	90	118
Dec. " 1956	81	99	76	88	44	88	85
Month of December, 1956	43	35	37	36	44	51	39

8. The observations in these Statistical Bulletins are made, as is customary to assist public understanding of the trends in retail prices within the definition of the respective indexes.

9. Tribunals and other authorities concerned with wage adjustment and other purposes decide in the light of their own requirements what price index (if any) is relevant to their purposes and how it shall be applied. The Statistician's function is to supply indexes and information thereon as required by those authorities. The Statistician expresses no view as to the merits or demerits of the use of price indexes in this connection.

10. Group and aggregate Interim Retail Price Index Numbers are shown below:-

TABLE 1 : INTERIM RETAIL PRICE INDEX - GROUP INDEXES

Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities

(Base : Year 1952-53 = 100)(a)

Period	Food		Clothing and Drapery	Rent	Other Items	Aggregate All Groups	
	A	B				A	B
Year ended June -							
1953	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1954	102.8	103.7	101.6	105.0	100.9	102.2	102.5
1955	104.8	104.6	102.4	109.6	101.4	103.7	103.6
1956	108.1	110.6	103.3	115.5	106.4	107.0	108.0
Quarter -							
1953 : September	102.4	103.9	101.5	103.3	101.0	101.9	102.4
December	101.4	103.4	101.6	103.9	100.5	101.5	102.2
1954 : March	103.7	104.0	101.8	104.9	101.2	102.6	102.7
June	103.8	103.7	101.5	107.7	100.9	102.7	102.7
September	103.6	103.0	101.6	108.9	101.2	102.9	102.7
December	104.3	103.7	102.3	109.3	101.2	103.4	103.2
1955 : March	105.3	105.3	102.4	109.7	101.2	103.8	103.8
June	106.0	106.4	103.3	110.5	101.9	104.5	104.7
September	106.7	108.2	103.3	111.4	102.8	105.1	105.7
December	107.0	109.0	103.4	112.0	106.2	106.3	107.0
1956 : March	108.2	110.6	103.3	118.8	106.7	107.4	108.3
June	110.7	114.5	103.4	119.7	110.1	109.4	110.8
September	111.9	119.6	103.8	120.6	115.6	111.5	114.4
December	111.6	116.2	105.3	121.5	117.8	112.5	114.2

(a) Figures appearing after the decimal point in the tables herein possess little significance for general statistical purposes. They are inserted to avoid the minor distortions that would occur in rounding off the figures to the nearest whole number.

The index in Column "A" excludes, and that in Column "B" includes, potatoes and onions. See paragraphs 3 to 6 on page 1 of this Bulletin.

11. The next table shows aggregate Interim Retail Price Index Numbers for each of the six State capital cities individually in comparison with the weighted average index for the six State capitals combined:-

**TABLE 2 : INTERIM RETAIL PRICE INDEX
FOR SIX CAPITAL CITIES, SEPARATELY AND COMBINED**
(Base of Index for Each City and for Six Capital Cities :
Year 1952-53 = 100)(a)

Period	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane	Adelaide	Perth	Hobart	Six Capital Cities (b)
Aggregate - All Groups							
Year ended June -							
1951	74.6	75.2	76.4	74.7	74.5	73.1	74.9
1952	91.7	91.0	92.7	90.9	90.7	89.9	91.4
1953	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1954	102.2	102.4	103.0	102.0	103.9	106.6	102.5
1955	103.1	102.7	104.0	103.6	109.6	105.6	103.6
1956	106.1	109.5	107.1	107.2	112.7	111.5	108.0
Quarter -							
1952 September	98.6	98.6	99.3	99.7	98.8	97.2	98.8
December	99.4	99.2	99.4	99.0	99.3	97.8	99.3
1953 March	100.5	100.3	100.2	100.1	100.4	101.8	100.4
June	101.5	101.8	101.1	101.2	101.6	103.2	101.6
September	102.2	102.6	102.0	102.1	102.7	106.9	102.4
December	101.8	102.2	103.1	101.7	102.2	107.4	102.2
1954 March	102.6	102.4	103.8	102.0	103.3	106.7	102.7
June	102.2	102.3	103.3	102.0	107.6	105.3	102.7
September	102.2	101.8	102.8	102.5	109.0	105.1	102.7
December	102.9	102.2	103.6	102.8	108.7	104.9	103.2
1955 March	103.4	102.9	104.5	103.5	109.3	105.8	103.8
June	103.8	104.0	105.1	105.4	111.2	106.6	104.7
September (a)	104.6	105.8	105.6	106.0	111.1	108.2	105.7
December (a)	105.4	108.3	106.0	106.4	111.6	109.6	107.0
1956 March (a)	106.2	110.4	107.3	106.8	113.1	113.0	108.3
June (a)	108.5	113.3	109.5	109.7	115.2	115.1	110.8
September (a)	114.0	115.7	111.9	111.6	*116.0	118.3	114.4
December (a)	113.8	115.5	111.2	110.9	117.6	119.4	114.2
All Groups EXCLUDING Potatoes and Onions (a)							
Year ended June -							
1956	105.3	108.4	105.9	106.3	112.6	110.6	107.0
Quarter -							
1955 September	104.1	105.1	104.6	105.4	110.8	107.7	105.1
December	104.8	107.3	105.4	105.4	111.5	108.6	106.3
1956 March	105.3	109.4	105.8	106.1	113.1	111.9	107.4
June	107.0	111.6	107.7	108.4	115.0	114.1	109.4
September	111.2	112.3	108.7	108.6	116.1	116.4	111.5
December	112.6	113.1	109.5	108.7	117.2	117.7	112.5

(a) Figures appearing after the decimal point in the tables herein possess little significance for general statistical purposes. They are inserted to avoid the minor distortions that would occur in rounding off the figures to the nearest whole number. (b) Weighted average. (c) See paragraphs 3 to 6 on page 1 of this Bulletin. * Revised.

12. The above indexes measure price movements for each city individually and the difference in degree of price movement in respective cities over the periods shown. But they do not provide a comparison of absolute retail price levels in any city with the retail price levels of any other city.

13. The Interim Retail Price Index was first published and described in S.S.265 of 24th March, 1954. It has been compiled for the years 1950-51 to 1955-56 and for each quarter from September quarter, 1952. The list of items covered by the index is representative of a high proportion of expenditure of wage earner households. The group weights and the item weights of the Interim Index relate broadly to the consumption pattern of 1950-1953. Those of the "C" Series Index relate to the pre-war pattern.

14. The list of items in the Interim Index is more comprehensive than that of the "C" Series Index and some of the principal food weights and group weights differ substantially from those used in the "C" Series Index. A comparison of group weights and of the list of items in the respective indexes is shown on pages 10-12 of the annual "Labour Report" No. 43 - 1954.

15. Latterly some appreciable disparities have begun to appear in the movement of the respective indexes for individual cities from quarter to quarter. The Interim Index, being based on recent weights and an extended list of items, is the more accurate measure of quarterly retail price variations.

16. In view of the circumstances described briefly on page 1 of this Bulletin the following analysis is provided of the movements in the Interim Retail Price Index for the six capital cities combined (Base year 1952-53 = 100) in comparison with those of the "C" Series Index converted arithmetically to the same base year :-

Approximate Analysis of Movements in the "Interim" and "C" Series Retail Price Indexes
Weighted Average Six Capital Cities

	Index Points (Base : Year 1952-53 = 100)					
	Exclud- ing Potatoes and Onions	Movement due to Potatoes and Onions(a)	Aggre- gate All Groups	Exclud- ing Potatoes and Onions	Movement due to Potatoes and Onions(b)	Aggre- gate All Groups
	"C" Series Index			Interim Index		
Index points for Dec. Quarter, 1955	106.7	(+)1.0a	107.7	106.3	(+)0.7b	107.0
Movement during March Quarter	(+)1.1	(+)0.2	(+)1.3	(+)1.1	(+)0.2	(+)1.3
Index points for March Quarter, 1956	107.8	(+)1.2a	109.0	107.4	(+)0.9b	108.3
Movement during June Quarter	(+)1.9	(+)0.9	(+)2.8	(+)2.0	(+)0.5	(+)2.5
Index points for June Quarter, 1956	109.7	(+)2.1a	111.8	109.4	(+)1.4b	110.6
Movement during Sept. Quarter	(+)1.4	(+)2.4	(+)3.8	(+)2.1	(+)1.5	(+)3.6
Index points for Sept. Quarter, 1956	111.1	(+)4.5a	115.6	111.5	(+)2.9b	114.4
Movement during Dec. Quarter	(+)0.6	(-)2.0	(-)1.4	(+)1.0	(-)1.2	(-)0.2
Index points for Dec. Quarter, 1956	111.7	(+)2.5a	114.2	112.5	(+)1.7b	114.2

(a) Cumulative from September Quarter, 1955.
(+) Denotes increase.

(b) Cumulative from base period.
(-) Denotes decrease.

17. The following table shows the Interim Index for the Six Capital Cities combined (with the year 1952-53 as base = 100) in comparison with the "C" Series Index converted arithmetically to the same base year.

TABLE 3 : COMPARATIVE MOVEMENTS IN RETAIL PRICES (Base : Year 1952-53 = 100)(a)

Period	Six Capital Cities (Weighted Average)			
	"C" Series Index		Interim Index	
	A	B	A	B
Year ended June - 1953	100.0		100.0	100.0
1954	102.8		102.2	102.5
1955	103.7		103.7	103.6
1956	A	B		
Quarter - 1953 : September	107.5	108.8	107.0	108.0
December			101.9	102.4
1954 : March			101.5	102.2
June			102.6	102.7
September			102.7	102.7
December			102.9	102.7
1955 : March			103.4	103.2
June			103.9	103.8
			104.5	104.7
1956 : September	A	B		
December	105.9	106.6	105.1	105.7
1956 : March	106.7	107.7	106.3	107.0
June	107.8	109.0	107.4	108.3
September	109.7	111.8	109.4	110.8
December	111.1	115.6	111.5	114.4
	111.7	114.2	112.5	114.2

(a) See note to Table 1 herein.

The index in Column A excludes, and that in Column B includes potatoes and onions. See paragraphs 3 to 6 on page 1 of this Bulletin.

18. Pending analysis of data of the Census of 1954 the rental component used in these retail price indexes has been continued on the basis described on pages 2 and 10 of "Labour Report" No. 41.

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