



NEWS RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS CANBERRA

STATISTICS BUREAU TO INTRODUCE NEW EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS COLLECTIONS

The Australian Bureau of Statistics today announced a program to replace the previous method of estimating employment and average earnings, which has been shown to produce unreliable results. The program will take up to two years to implement fully.

Following a period in which the former civilian employment series had shown changes not consistent with other information, the Australian Statistician, Mr Roy Cameron, decided on a detailed investigation of inadequacies in the collection.

The review showed that the only adequate method of providing reliable estimates of employment and earnings was to replace the present payroll tax based series by a quarterly sample survey of about 20,000 business units in the private sector. Mr Cameron said today that because attempts to devise a satisfactory system based on payroll tax returns had been unsuccessful there is no alternative but to initiate a new collection of information from businesses. The number of employers included in the sample from whom returns will be collected will be kept to the smallest number consistent with obtaining reliable statistics. The information to be collected will be kept as simple as possible to enable it to be extracted from business records.

Until results are available from the employment survey, the Bureau will maintain quarterly estimates of average weekly earnings and of wages and salaries for the national accounts, by introducing a small quarterly earnings survey along the lines of the one now conducted annually. It will be restricted to 3,500 private employers and 1,000 government bodies and will eventually be incorporated in the larger survey.

From today, as a first step, the Bureau resumes publication of the monthly government employment series in the May issue of the Labour Force, Australia (Preliminary). Details of the new program and the reasons for it are outlined in the information paper "Review of ABS Employment Statistics". (Copies of both publications are attached.)

The new series will provide an effective complement to the present monthly labour force survey based on a representative sample of households.

Should media representatives wish to find out more about the new employment and earnings program, the Bureau's First Assistant Statistician of the Demography, Social and Manpower Division, Mr Fred Bagley; and the Acting Assistant Statistician, Manpower, Mr Max Griffiths, will be available to answer questions in the House of Representatives Committee Room 1 at Parliament House, between 12.45pm and 3.00pm today, Wednesday, 8 July 1981.

Before 12.00 and after 3.30pm, Mr Bagley can be contacted by telephone on 527172, and Mr Griffiths on 52 7166.

Ends.