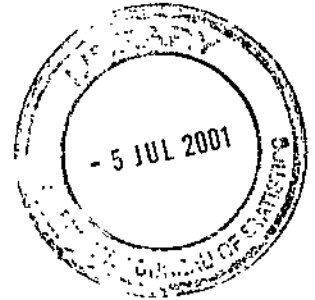


**LABOUR STATISTICS
AUSTRALIA, 1987**



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Commonwealth of Australia 1988

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Symbols

The following *symbols*, where shown in columns of figures or elsewhere in tables mean:

- n.a. not available
- . . not applicable
- nil or rounded to zero
- n.e.c. not elsewhere classified
- * subject to sampling variability too high for most practical uses
- p preliminary figure subject to revision
- r figures or series revised since previous issue

Other

In tables, totals may differ slightly from the sum of the items because of rounding.

PREFACE

This publication, presents a statistical summary of the operations of the Australian labour market. Topics covered include employment and underemployment, unemployment; award rates, earnings, income and labour costs; hours of work and industrial relations. International comparisons of the more important labour statistics series are also provided.

The publication has been developed primarily as a reference document, offering an overview of the labour market data produced by the ABS, and providing a base for analysis and research on any aspect of the labour market. It is also of value to those who want only an overall picture and to those who require an introduction to the range of ABS labour statistics. To assist readers, following the introduction to each chapter, 'Selected Features' have been presented to highlight some of the more significant elements and trends of the Australian labour market.

Readers should note that the data presented in the publication do not cover the full range of labour statistics produced by the ABS. More detailed information is contained in the specific ABS publications indicated at the bottom of each chart or table and listed in Appendix 1. Individual publications also contain details of ABS officers who may be contacted for further information about the statistics.

The statistics shown are the latest available as at April 1988 and generally relate to the calendar year 1987. Wherever possible, a time series of the principal characteristics is provided. Definitions are given in the Glossary in Appendix 2, and information on methods of collection and concepts are given in the Technical Notes in Appendix 3.

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616
October 1988

IAN CASTLES
Australian Statistician

INTRODUCTION

User demand on the ABS in the field of labour market statistics has been considerable and consistent over many years and has led to continued improvements in both the quality and comprehensiveness of the data.

Nevertheless, because pressure comes from users in both the economic and social areas, and because their specific needs for data are many and varied, the demand for an even more comprehensive service continues unabated.

Broadly, and at the risk of oversimplification, users tend to be interested in the following topics:

- the social, demographic, industrial, occupational, educational and labour force characteristics of the working age population;
- income and non-wage benefits derived from the efforts of labour, and award rates of pay and their relationship to overall income;
- work patterns, hours of work, job satisfaction and work preferences;
- industrial relations;
- labour costs and labour productivity;
- the relationship of labour market indicators to other social and economic data;
- conditions of the workplace including occupational health and safety and industrial accidents.

The ABS relies on a mix of household and employer based surveys and administrative data to produce the wide range of labour market statistics currently available.

Household Surveys

Household Surveys include the monthly Labour Force Survey, supplementary surveys carried out in conjunction with the Labour Force Survey and a set of separate special household surveys employing somewhat different methodologies.

The *Labour Force Survey* has been in existence from the early 1960s. Collection of monthly labour force data began in February 1978, prior to which it had been conducted at quarterly intervals.

Supplementary Surveys attached to the Labour Force Survey have been conducted since the 1960s. They enable the ABS to collect information on new topics or to obtain more detail on topics already covered in the Labour Force Survey. Since the mid-seventies, topics which have been covered by the supplementary survey program have increased markedly, and the conduct of some surveys on a regular basis has led to the development of time series of various social and labour force indicators.

Special Supplementary Surveys are generally large scale omnibus surveys covering topics considered too

complex or sensitive to be incorporated into a monthly supplementary survey. Some of the more recent topics concerning the labour market covered by this collection vehicle include.

- *Career Paths of Persons with Trade Qualifications, September-November 1982* (6243.0) which sought information enabling the identification of persons with trade qualifications; and whether those qualifications are being or have been used;
- *Superannuation, September-November 1982* (6319.0) which collected data on the extent of coverage of superannuation or retirement schemes and life assurance policies, in conjunction with the 1982 Income and Housing Survey. This was the first ABS survey to include information on superannuation coverage and costs, on the extent of coverage of life assurance policies, and on payments (including lump sum payments) received from superannuation schemes, life assurance policies and worker's compensation, as well as current and annual income;
- *Income and Housing Survey, September-November 1982* (6502.0) which collected current and annual income, along with data on housing occupancy and costs;
- *1984 Household Expenditure Survey (HES)*, a twelve month field enumeration which began in January 1984 — the survey's main objective was to obtain data on 'household expenditure', namely expenditure on goods and services for private consumption (for more information on the HES refer to *Information Paper: 1984 Household Expenditure Survey* (6527.0));
- *Alternative Working Arrangements, September-December 1986* (6341.0) which obtained information about certain aspects of the working arrangements of employees and their preferences for changes to those arrangements.

For more information on the population survey program, see *Information Paper: Population Survey Program* issued by the ABS in January 1985.

Employer Based Surveys

For many years, estimates of civilian employees, average weekly earnings, distribution and composition of employee earnings and hours and job vacancies and overtime were based on a statistical framework constructed from lists of employers subject to payroll tax, supplemented by lists of government employers, religious and benevolent institutions and other non-profit organisations. Following a review conducted in 1981, it was concluded that the civilian employees series had substantially underestimated the rate of growth in employment because a significant number of small businesses were exempt from payroll tax. This deficiency in coverage of small busi-

nesses also adversely affected the quality of data on average weekly earnings because small businesses were under-represented in estimates based on the payroll tax framework.

In the light of the review, it was decided that the information required would be best obtained directly from employers using sample surveys based on the ABS register of businesses and organisations. Consequently, a new integrated statistical system based on the business register (which required an upgrade in the coverage of small businesses) was developed. Since May 1983, the following new or upgraded surveys have been introduced:

- Quarterly Survey of Average Weekly Earnings;
- Quarterly Survey of Employment and Earnings;
- Quarterly Survey of Overtime;
- Quarterly Survey of Job Vacancies;
- Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours; and
- Survey of Major Labour Costs.

To provide a link between the old and new statistical series, parallel surveys on the old and new systems were conducted for the Employment and Earnings and Average Weekly Earnings surveys for the September and December quarters, 1983. Further details on the new statistical series outlined above have been published in *Information Paper : New Statistical Series — Employment, Average Weekly Earnings, Job Vacancies and Overtime (6256.0)*.

The Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours was conducted annually to 1981, again in 1983 and then annually from 1985 onwards.

A Guide to Labour Statistics

The publication of *A Guide to Labour Statistics (6102.0)* was released in early 1986. The Guide provides an overview of:

- the development of labour statistics in Australia;
- major International Labour Organisation conventions providing the rationale for such statistics;
- the concepts, methodology and sources of ABS labour market data;
- the comparability between different ABS and non-ABS data sources.

The development of the Guide grew out of a recognition by the ABS that users required more than the ongoing issue of ABS labour market data. The Guide is structured according to subject matter topics similar to chapter headings used in this publication, and is intended as a companion volume to this publication.

Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO)

ASCO is a skill-based classification of occupations developed as a national standard for the production and analysis of labour force statistics, human resources management, education planning, the listing of job applicants and vacancies, the provision of occupational information and for vocational guidance. The First Edition of ASCO was released in September 1986 as the result of an extensive joint project undertaken by the ABS and the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR) (now the Department of Employment, Education and Training).

The classification groups occupations on the basis of type of work performed. This criterion has been interpreted in terms of two variables: skill level and skill specialisation. The skill level of an occupation (not of an individual) is defined in terms of the length and type of training normally required for the satisfactory performance of the primary tasks involved. The skill specialisation of an occupation is defined in terms of the field of knowledge required, tools and equipment used, materials worked on, and goods and services produced.

These variables were used to group jobs into 1079 occupations, 282 unit groups, 52 minor groups and 8 major groups. At major group level, groups are separated principally according to skill level; at the lower levels the skill specialisation criterion is applied in successively finer degrees of detail.

ASCO was introduced into ABS collections from May 1986, starting with the May 1986 Labour Force Survey, the 1986 Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours and the 1986 Population Census. Data on occupation in ABS labour statistics collected before this time were coded to the Classification and Classified List of Occupations (CCLO). While the titles of some of the groups in the two classifications are similar, the content of these groups is different because occupations are grouped according to different criteria. These differences are likely to be accentuated by the introduction of a structured method for coding survey data to ASCO. Extreme caution must therefore be exercised in attempting to compare data coded to CCLO with that coded to ASCO.

A cross-tabulation of the two classifications at the major group level was presented in Table 41 of the August 1986 issue of *The Labour Force, Australia (6203.0)*. The estimates contained in this table were produced by coding a sub-sample of occupation responses from the May 1986 Labour Force Survey to both ASCO and CCLO. Occupation data from the 1986 Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours were coded to both classifications and presented in the May 1986 issue of *The Distribution and Composition of Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (6306.0)*. More detailed information on the relationship between ASCO and CCLO is presented in *Census 86 - ASCO/CCLO Link (2182.0)* and *Census 86 - ASCO/CCLO Link File : Technical Details (2199.0)*.

CALO was originally based on the 1958 version of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and thus afforded Australian labour force statistics some international comparability. There were many severe criticisms of CALO and thus ASCO was developed using a completely different conceptual approach. Since the publication of ASCO in 1986, ISCO (1988) has been revised using a very similar conceptual approach to that adopted for ASCO. Other countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada are currently revising their national classifications along similar lines.

The following priced publications about ASCO are available from the ABS:

1. *ASCO Statistical Classification* (1222.0) outlines the conceptual basis and structure of ASCO, and provides definitions of the major, minor and unit groups in the classification. It is intended principally as an aid in interpreting statistics coded to ASCO.

2. *ASCO Coding System Unit Group Level* (1225.0) details the procedures and provides the indexes required for the accurate coding of survey responses to ASCO. Other indexes contained in the *Statistical Classification* and the *ASCO Dictionary* are not suitable for this purpose.

3. *ASCO Computer Assisted Coding System*, comprising a *Coders' Manual* (1223.0) and *Supervisors' Supplement* (1224.0), includes a coding program, computer based tutorial and associated documentation and is based on the same Index as the clerical system. The system runs on IBM PC compatibles.

The *ASCO Dictionary* (AGPS cat. No. 85 1291 0) was produced jointly by ABS and DEIR (now the Department of Employment, Education and Training) and contains descriptions of all groups in the classification down to the occupation level. It is published by the Australian Government Publishing Service and is available from AGPS bookshops.