



December Quarter 1996

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Building Activity Australia

Dwelling Unit Commencements

Preliminary

BUILDING ACTIVITY NOTES

FORTHCOMING ISSUES

ISSUE (Quarter)

RELEASE DATE

March 1997

17 June 1997

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11 September 1997

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CHANGES IN THIS ISSUE

There are no changes in this issue.

SIGNIFICANT REVISIONS THIS ISSUE

- The seasonally adjusted and trend series have been revised as a result of the annual re-analysis of seasonal factors. For more details, see Explanatory Notes 10–12.
- Upward revisions have been made to the September quarter 1996 figures for the number of new private sector houses commenced in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory and to the number of new public sector houses and new public sector other residential dwelling units commenced in Western Australia. The revisions follow the identification of incorrect reporting by relevant authorities in those States.

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 December quarter 1996 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	4.1	2.2
Victoria	3.4	2.5
Queensland	2.6	1.9
South Australia	3.9	3.1
Western Australia	5.0	3.8
Tasmania	2.8	2.5
Northern Territory
Australian Capital Territory	3.2	2.2
Australia	1.7	1.1

INQUIRIES

For further information about statistics in this publication and the availability of related unpublished statistics, contact Rex Porter on Adelaide (08) 8237 7316 or any ABS State office.

W. McLennan
Australian Statistician

MAIN FEATURES

TREND AND SEASONALLY ADJUSTED ESTIMATES

NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

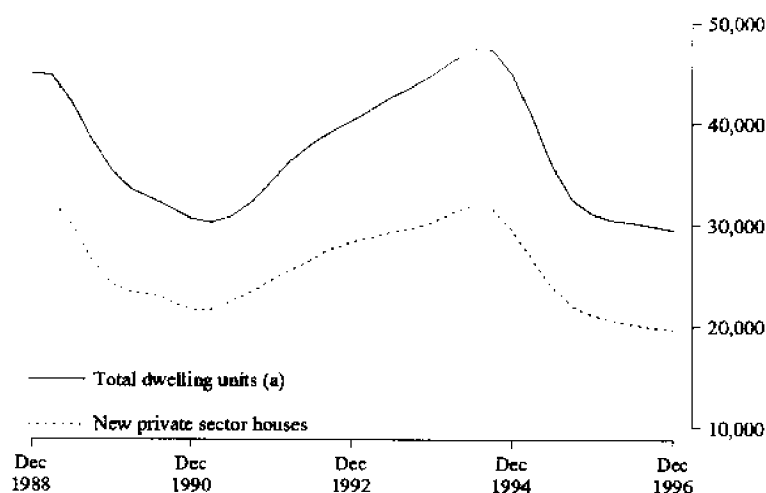
The number of dwelling units commenced in the December quarter 1996, in trend and seasonally adjusted terms, and percentage changes from the September quarter 1996 and December quarter 1995 are summarised in the table below.

	Dec qtr 96	% change Sep qtr 96 to Dec qtr 96	% change Dec qtr 95 to Dec qtr 96
TREND ESTIMATES			
Dwelling units commenced			
New private sector houses	19 663	-1.0	-6.8
Total dwelling units	29 498	-1.3	-5.1
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
Dwelling units commenced			
New private sector houses	20 004	2.6	-4.3
Total dwelling units	30 483	5.9	2.2

Australian estimates The trend for the total number of dwelling units commenced continued to decline and is 5.1% below that of the December quarter 1995.

New private sector house commencements display a slowing rate of decline in trend, having fallen by 1.0% in the latest quarter but 6.8% over the last 12 months.

NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED, AUSTRALIA (Trend estimates)



(a) Includes Conversions, etc

In seasonally adjusted terms, the total number of dwelling units commenced rose by 5.9% in the December quarter 1996 to 30,483. The number of new private sector houses commenced also rose during the December quarter, by 2.6% to 20,004.

State estimates Estimates of the trend over recent quarters in the total number of dwelling units commenced vary considerably between States and Territories. The Northern Territory shows the strongest growth in the trend estimate, while New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia show relatively flat trends. Trend estimates for Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory continue to decline.

In seasonally adjusted terms, four States showed increases in the total number of dwelling units commenced in the December quarter 1996, with South Australia showing the largest increase (+16.7%). Other increases were in New South Wales (+13.8%), Western Australia (+10.7%) and Queensland (+10.5%). There were falls in the Australian Capital Territory (-23.2%), Victoria (-16.2%) and Tasmania (-1.4%).

ORIGINAL ESTIMATES

In original terms, 31,176 dwelling units were commenced in the December quarter 1996, an increase of 874 or 2.9% from the previous quarter.

The number of new houses commenced rose by 2.3% to 21,242, the increase being confined to the private sector. Conversions, etc commenced during the December quarter were up sharply to 994, mainly due to 724 commenced in New South Wales. However, the number of new other dwelling units commenced fell by 3.4% to 8,940 in the latest quarter. This fall was confined to the public sector, for which other dwelling unit commencements fell to 676, the lowest quarterly number for 18 years.

Total private sector commencements rose by 1,413 (4.9%), with new houses up 2.4% and other dwelling units (including conversions, etc.) up 11.2%.

Total public sector commencements fell by 33.3% to 1,078, the fall being almost entirely due to the fall in other dwelling units commenced.

**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				
1995 Sept. qtr	23,132	23,808	31,970	34,225
Dec. qtr	21,810	22,306	29,205	30,509
1996 Mar. qtr	18,668	19,093	27,345	28,819
June qtr	20,455	20,824	29,461	30,978
Sept. qtr	20,380	20,761	28,685	30,302
Dec. qtr	20,866	21,242	30,098	31,176
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED				
1995 Sept. qtr	22,121	22,786	30,628	32,491
Dec. qtr	20,896	21,465	28,103	29,821
1996 Mar. qtr	20,793	21,224	30,261	31,805
June qtr	20,199	20,492	29,072	30,444
Sept. qtr	19,488	19,863	27,489	28,773
Dec. qtr	20,004	20,457	28,961	30,483
TREND ESTIMATES				
1995 Sept. qtr	22,014	22,651	30,664	32,518
Dec. qtr	21,090	21,651	29,344	31,084
1996 Mar. qtr	20,534	20,961	28,978	30,500
June qtr	20,146	20,508	28,867	30,272
Sept. qtr	19,860	20,227	28,519	29,893
Dec. qtr	19,663	20,075	28,093	29,498

**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									
1995 Sept. qtr	10,794	6,533	7,884	1,662	4,049	649	n.a.	518	32,491
Dec. qtr	9,453	5,732	7,509	1,534	3,861	618	n.a.	695	29,821
1996 Mar. qtr	11,274	6,085	7,923	1,405	3,733	615	n.a.	481	31,805
June qtr	9,760	6,222	8,020	1,337	3,676	535	n.a.	572	30,444
Sept. qtr	9,474	6,179	7,330	1,240	3,256	498	n.a.	457	28,773
Dec. qtr	10,785	5,176	8,096	1,447	3,605	491	n.a.	351	30,483
TREND ESTIMATES									
1995 Sept. qtr	10,843	6,423	7,967	1,639	4,094	652	360	547	32,518
Dec. qtr	10,358	6,073	7,699	1,514	3,857	628	366	576	31,084
1996 Mar. qtr	10,133	6,041	7,718	1,402	3,705	590	350	579	30,500
June qtr	10,081	6,105	7,781	1,333	3,577	548	357	521	30,272
Sept. qtr	10,045	5,924	7,779	1,324	3,480	509	387	451	29,893
Dec. qtr	10,060	5,513	7,791	1,358	3,435	475	428	390	29,498

(a) Includes conversions, etc.

TABLE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

<i>Period</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Australia</i>
NEW HOUSES									
1993-94	29,162	27,904	35,751	9,590	18,118	3,020	1,205	1,764	126,513
1994-95	28,222	25,846	31,047	8,210	16,225	2,548	947	1,533	114,577
1995-96	22,958	19,359	23,082	5,070	11,510	1,880	883	1,289	86,032
1995 Sept. qtr	6,111	5,836	6,122	1,504	3,146	474	269	346	23,808
Dec. qtr	5,791	5,088	6,039	1,295	2,929	541	238	385	22,306
1996 Mar. qtr	5,419	4,373	4,835	1,089	2,552	467	143	217	19,093
June qtr	5,637	4,062	6,086	1,183	2,884	398	233	342	20,824
Sept. qtr	5,627	4,453	5,691	1,207	2,897	378	223	283	20,761
Dec. qtr	5,882	4,076	6,191	1,232	2,895	451	252	263	21,242
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
1993-94	18,019	3,562	17,334	1,891	6,682	1,092	446	2,383	51,409
1994-95	23,271	3,612	15,113	1,525	6,073	582	541	1,194	51,911
1995-96	17,224	4,276	8,033	836	3,721	530	572	927	36,119
1995 Sept. qtr	5,057	713	2,297	256	1,126	142	139	204	9,934
Dec. qtr	3,500	943	1,557	264	873	111	85	360	7,693
1996 Mar. qtr	4,484	1,193	2,042	195	895	148	194	193	9,344
June qtr	4,183	1,427	2,137	121	827	129	154	170	9,148
Sept. qtr	4,309	1,750	2,134	106	530	94	134	196	9,253
Dec. qtr	4,347	1,176	2,110	264	653	52	222	116	8,940
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
1993-94	2,141	1,198	302	20	196	17	7	18	3,899
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
1995 Sept. qtr	331	54	61	11	13	6	7	—	483
Dec. qtr	324	15	127	28	14	1	1	—	510
1996 Mar. qtr	158	180	9	12	21	1	1	—	382
June qtr	189	664	20	4	56	—	3	70	1,006
Sept. qtr	163	55	45	8	12	2	3	—	288
Dec. qtr	724	207	21	2	21	17	1	1	994
TOTAL									
1993-94	49,322	32,664	53,387	11,501	24,996	4,129	1,658	4,165	181,821
1994-95	53,592	30,509	46,369	9,796	22,433	3,142	1,499	2,732	170,071
1995-96	41,184	24,548	31,332	5,961	15,335	2,418	1,467	2,286	124,532
1995 Sept. qtr	11,499	6,603	8,480	1,771	4,285	622	415	550	34,225
Dec. qtr	9,615	6,046	7,723	1,587	3,816	653	324	745	30,509
1996 Mar. qtr	10,061	5,746	6,886	1,295	3,468	616	338	410	28,819
June qtr	10,009	6,153	8,243	1,308	3,767	527	390	582	30,978
Sept. qtr	10,099	6,258	7,870	1,321	3,439	474	360	479	30,302
Dec. qtr	10,953	5,459	8,322	1,498	3,569	520	475	380	31,176

TABLE 4. TOTAL NUMBER OF PRIVATE SECTOR DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

<i>Period</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Australia</i>
NEW HOUSES									
1993-94	28,547	26,970	35,102	9,159	17,739	2,974	1,035	1,703	123,228
1994-95	27,747	25,338	30,538	7,745	15,731	2,542	804	1,522	111,966
1995-96	22,574	18,886	22,661	4,836	11,228	1,859	771	1,250	84,066
1995 Sept. qtr	6,036	5,638	5,966	1,398	3,039	472	238	345	23,132
Dec. qtr	5,630	4,989	5,965	1,242	2,876	531	194	383	21,810
1996 Mar. qtr	5,334	4,300	4,724	1,044	2,481	459	111	217	18,668
June qtr	5,574	3,959	6,006	1,153	2,833	397	228	306	20,455
Sept. qtr	5,591	4,349	5,638	1,191	2,763	373	192	281	20,380
Dec. qtr	5,847	4,023	6,118	1,216	2,740	449	212	261	20,866
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
1993-94	16,385	3,130	16,187	1,534	5,495	1,031	430	2,326	46,518
1994-95	21,513	3,077	13,761	1,339	5,227	542	522	1,072	47,053
1995-96	15,773	3,218	7,282	801	2,920	378	455	839	31,666
1995 Sept. qtr	4,430	380	2,039	242	841	119	139	174	8,364
Dec. qtr	3,310	640	1,403	249	753	87	83	360	6,885
1996 Mar. qtr	4,189	980	1,832	193	723	108	91	184	8,300
June qtr	3,844	1,218	2,008	117	603	64	142	121	8,117
Sept. qtr	3,615	1,490	2,046	106	362	92	132	188	8,031
Dec. qtr	4,092	1,090	1,853	264	594	40	215	116	8,264
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
1993-94	2,126	1,195	299	19	182	16	7	18	3,862
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
1995 Sept. qtr	323	54	61	11	13	6	6	—	474
Dec. qtr	324	15	127	28	14	1	1	—	510
1996 Mar. qtr	154	179	9	12	21	1	1	—	377
June qtr	172	636	20	4	56	—	1	—	889
Sept. qtr	152	55	45	5	12	2	3	—	274
Dec. qtr	718	206	21	2	15	4	1	1	968
TOTAL									
1993-94	47,058	31,295	51,588	10,712	23,416	4,021	1,472	4,047	173,608
1994-95	51,328	29,459	44,499	9,132	21,092	3,096	1,337	2,599	162,541
1995-96	39,320	22,988	30,160	5,692	14,252	2,245	1,235	2,089	117,982
1995 Sept. qtr	10,789	6,072	8,066	1,651	3,893	597	383	519	31,970
Dec. qtr	9,264	5,644	7,495	1,519	3,643	619	278	743	29,205
1996 Mar. qtr	9,677	5,459	6,565	1,248	3,225	568	203	401	27,345
June qtr	9,590	5,813	8,034	1,274	3,492	461	371	427	29,461
Sept. qtr	9,358	5,894	7,729	1,302	3,137	467	327	469	28,685
Dec. qtr	10,657	5,319	7,992	1,482	3,349	493	428	378	30,098

TABLE 5. TOTAL NUMBER OF PUBLIC SECTOR DWELLING UNITS COMMENCED

<i>Period</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Australia</i>
NEW HOUSES									
1993-94	615	934	649	431	379	46	170	61	3,285
1994-95	475	508	509	465	494	6	143	11	2,611
1995-96	384	473	421	234	282	21	112	39	1,966
1995 Sept. qtr	75	198	156	106	107	2	31	1	676
Dec. qtr	161	99	74	53	53	10	44	2	496
1996 Mar. qtr	85	73	111	45	71	8	32	-	425
June qtr	63	103	80	30	51	1	5	36	369
Sept. qtr	36	104	53	16	134	5	31	2	381
Dec. qtr	35	53	73	16	155	2	40	2	376
NEW OTHER RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS									
1993-94	1,634	432	1,147	357	1,187	61	16	57	4,891
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
1995 Sept. qtr	627	333	258	14	285	23	---	30	1,570
Dec. qtr	190	303	154	15	120	24	2	---	808
1996 Mar. qtr	295	213	210	2	172	40	103	9	1,044
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	257	---	59	12	7	---	676
CONVERSIONS, ETC									
1993-94	15	3	3	1	14	1	---	---	37
1994-95	31	7	9	13	1	---	---	---	61
1995-96	29	29	---	---	---	---	3	70	131
1995 Sept. qtr	8	---	---	---	---	---	1	---	9
Dec. qtr	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1996 Mar. qtr	4	1	---	---	---	---	---	---	5
June qtr	17	28	---	---	---	---	2	70	117
Sept. qtr	11	---	---	3	---	---	---	---	14
Dec. qtr	6	1	---	---	6	13	---	---	26
TOTAL									
1993-94	2,264	1,369	1,799	789	1,580	108	186	118	8,213
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
1995 Sept. qtr	710	531	414	120	392	25	32	31	2,255
Dec. qtr	351	402	228	68	173	34	46	2	1,304
1996 Mar. qtr	384	287	321	47	243	48	135	9	1,474
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	296	140	330	16	220	27	47	2	1,078

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* (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. Relative standard errors are shown on page 2.

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, dwelling unit commencement data for regions below State/Territory level are shown in the monthly series of dwelling unit commencements compiled 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* (1348.0) or contact the Assistant Director, Time Series Analysis on (06) 252 6345.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

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

Building Approvals, Australia (8731.0) – issued monthly

Building Activity, Australia (8752.0) – issued quarterly

Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Australia (5609.0) – issued monthly

Price Index of Materials Used in House Building (6408.0) – issued monthly

Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building (6407.0) – issued monthly

House Price Indexes: Eight Capital Cities (6416.0) – issued quarterly

17 Current publications produced by the ABS are listed in the *Catalogue of Publications and Products, Australia* (1101.0). The ABS also issues, on Tuesdays and Fridays, a *Release Advice* (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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