



COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS,  
CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA.

---

# LABOUR REPORT, 1929.

No. 20.

---

Prepared under Instructions from the  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS

by

CHAS. H. WICKENS, I.S.O., F.I.A., F.S.S.,

Hon. M.S.S. (Paris),

Commonwealth Statistician  
and Actuary.

---

SEPTEMBER, 1930.

---

By Authority.

H. J. GREEN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, CANBERRA.

[C.S. No. 545.]—2109.

## PREFACE.

The first Labour Report of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics was published in 1912. The present Annual Report is the twentieth issued by the Bureau, and deals chiefly with the year 1929; but data are also included for earlier years, in most cases back to 1925, and in others back to 1891. The subject-matter in the Report has been divided into four main Chapters, covering information on Prices (Wholesale, Retail, and International Comparisons), Wages (Nominal, Effective, and International Comparisons), Employment (Unemployment and Industrial Disputes), and Associations (Trade Unions and Employers' Associations).

Particulars regarding operations under the Commonwealth Arbitration Acts and the various State Acts for the regulation of wages, hours, and conditions of labour, and concerning also industrial legislation introduced during 1929, are given in the Chapter relating to Wages. Other matters of interest included in the Report are those relating to the Basic Wage and Child Endowment in Australia; Retail prices of chief food items in principal cities in Australia and other countries, and information relating to the organization and work of State Free Employment Bureaux.

In Appendix II. the average retail prices of food and groceries in each of the capital cities of Australia during each month of the year 1929 are given, while Appendix IV. is a comprehensive table showing the minimum rates of wage for adult male workers in the capital cities of the Commonwealth. Similar information is given in Appendix V. for adult female workers. Rates of wage and hours of labour for adult male workers in Sydney, London, Auckland, and Montreal are shown in Appendix VI. The retail price index numbers (Food, Groceries and Rent—all houses) computed for the use of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, with the weighted average for the six capital cities in 1911, as base = 1,000, are given for each quarter of the years 1925 to 1929 in Appendix VII. Rent (all houses) index numbers are also shown in Appendix VII.

For the purpose of tabulating the results of the investigations which have been made in regard to rates of wage, labour organizations, employees' associations, unemployment, industrial disputes, &c., the following classification of trades and occupations has been adopted:—

### Classification of Industries and Occupations.

<p>I. Wood, Furniture, Sawmill, Timber-works, &amp;c.</p> <p>II. Engineering, Metal Works, &amp;c.</p> <p>III. Food, Drink, and Tobacco—Manufacture and Distribution.</p> <p>IV. Clothing, Hats, Boots, Textiles, &amp;c.</p> <p>V. Books, Printing, Bookbinding, &amp;c.</p> <p>VI. Other Manufacturing.</p> <p>VII. Building.</p>	<p>VIII. Mining, Quarries, &amp;c.</p> <p>IX. Railway and Tramway Services.</p> <p>X. Other Land Transport.</p> <p>XI. Shipping, Wharf Labour, &amp;c.</p> <p>XII. Pastoral, Agricultural, Rural, Horticultural, &amp;c.</p> <p>XIII. Domestic, Hotels, &amp;c.</p> <p>XIV. Miscellaneous.</p>
---	--

It is gratifying to record that secretaries of trade unions and of employers' associations, officials of State and Commonwealth Departments, private employers, retail dealers, house agents, and others have readily responded to the somewhat heavy demands made upon them.

Without the help so rendered, the investigations contained herein would have been impossible, and I take this opportunity of expressing my cordial thanks to all who have thus assisted.

The valuable assistance rendered to the Bureau by the Statistical Offices in the various States, especially in regard to the collection of retail prices, is acknowledged, and to the officers concerned I desire to express my sincere thanks.

I am specially indebted to Mr. H. J. Petrie, the officer in charge of Labour Statistics in this Bureau, for the care and attention which he has bestowed on the compilation of this Report and in seeing the matter through the press, also to the staff under his control for their cordial co-operation and valuable services.

CHAS. H. WICKENS,

*Commonwealth Statistician and Actuary.*

Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics,  
*Canberra, F.C.T., 4th September, 1930.*

# SYNOPSIS.

	Page
<b>CHAPTER I.—PRICES.</b>	
<b>§ 1. Wholesale Prices.</b>	
1. General .. .. .	9
2. Bases .. .. .	10
3. Index-numbers, 1861 to 1930 ..	12
4. Quarterly Variations in Price Levels .. .. .	14
5. Variations since Outbreak of War ..	14
6. Seasonal Fluctuations .. .. .	15
7. Prices—1928 and 1929 .. .. .	15
<b>§ 2. Retail Prices—Food, Groceries and Rent.</b>	
1. General .. .. .	15
2. The Regimen or Composite Unit ..	16
3. Collection of Data .. .. .	17
4. Method of Computation .. .. .	18
5. Investigations concerning Retail Prices .. .. .	19
6. Retail Prices, Capital Cities, 1907 to 1929 .. .. .	20
7. Change of Bases for Rent Constituent .. .. .	23
8. Retail Prices, 30 Towns, 1925 to 1929 .. .. .	23
Population Weights .. .. .	27
9. Relative Retail Prices, 30 Towns Food, Groceries and Housing .. .. .	27
10. Retail Price Index-numbers in Terms of Currency .. .. .	29
11. Price Details, 1929 .. .. .	31
Retail Price Index Numbers, base, 1911—	
Rent—All houses .. .. .	177
Food, Groceries and Rent—All houses .. .. .	179
<b>§ 3. Food, &amp;c., Clothing and Miscellaneous.</b>	
1. General .. .. .	31
2. Methods Adopted .. .. .	32
3. Base .. .. .	33
4. Variations, 30 Towns .. .. .	33
6. Retail Prices, November, 1914, to 4th Quarter, 1929 .. .. .	33
<b>§ 4. Retail Price Index-numbers, 200 Towns.</b>	
1. General .. .. .	40
2. Results, 1927 to 1929 .. .. .	40
3. Comparisons with Quarterly Results .. .. .	44

	Page
<b>Chapter I.—Prices—continued.</b>	
<b>§ 5. International Comparison of Price Index-numbers.</b>	
1. Wholesale Prices—Australia and other Countries .. .. .	45
2. Retail Prices—Australia and Other Countries .. .. .	46
<b>CHAPTER II.—WAGES.</b>	
<b>§ 1. Operations under Arbitration and Wages Board Acts and Industrial Legislation.</b>	
1. General .. .. .	48
2. Awards and Determinations and Industrial Agreements Filed .. .. .	48
3. Awards, Determinations and Agreements in Force, Boards Authorized and Constituted, and Industrial Legislation .. .. .	49
<b>§ 2. Changes in Rates of Wage.</b>	
1. General .. .. .	59
2. Effect of Changes in 1929 .. .. .	60
3. Effect of Changes, Australia, 1925 to 1929 .. .. .	60
4. Changes in each State, 1925 to 1929 .. .. .	61
5. Changes in Industrial Groups, 1929 .. .. .	61
6. Changes in Industrial Groups, 1927 to 1929 .. .. .	63
7. Methods by which Changes were effected—Australia, 1925 to 1929 .. .. .	63
<b>§ 3. Rates of Wage and Hours of Labour.</b>	
1. General .. .. .	64
2. Adult Male Weekly Wages—States, 1914 to 1929 .. .. .	65
3. Adult Male Weekly Wages—Industrial Groups, 1914 to 1929 .. .. .	66
4. Adult Female Weekly Wages—States, 1914 to 1929 .. .. .	68
5. Adult Female Weekly Wages—Industrial Groups, 1914 to 1929 .. .. .	70
6. Hours of Labour and Hourly Rates of Wage, 31st December, 1929 .. .. .	71

	Page
<b>Chapter II.—Wages—continued.</b>	
§ 2. Rates of Wage and Hours of Labour—continued.	
7. Hours of Labour and Hourly Rates of Wage, 1914 to 1929 ..	73
8. Weighted Average Nominal Hours of Labour ..	76
9. Average Nominal Weekly Wage—States, 1891 to 1929 ..	77
10. Average Nominal Weekly Wage—Industrial Groups, 1891 to 1929 ..	78
11. Nominal Wage Index-numbers—States, 1901 to 1929 ..	78
12. Nominal Wage Index-numbers—Industrial Groups, 1901 to 1929 ..	79
13. Nominal Wages and Effective Wages ..	79
14. Variations in Effective Wages, 1901 to 1929 ..	79
15. Effective Wages and Standard of Comfort, 1901 to 1929 ..	80
16. Relative Productive Activity and Effective Wages, 1871 to 1929 ..	82
§ 4. The Basic Wage and Child Endowment in Australia.	
1. The Basic Wage .. ..	84
2. Child Endowment .. ..	88

**CHAPTER III.—EMPLOYMENT.****§ 1. Industrial Disputes.**

1. General .. ..	89
2. Collection of Information ..	89
3. Methods of Tabulation ..	89
4. Definitions of Terms .. ..	90
5. Other Particulars .. ..	91
6. Industrial Disputes in Industrial Groups, 1929 .. ..	91
7. Particulars of Principal Disputes in 1929 .. ..	93
8. Industrial Disputes, 1925 to 1929 ..	99
9. Duration of Disputes .. ..	102
10. Causes of Industrial Disputes ..	103
11. Results of Industrial Disputes ..	105
12. Methods of Settlement .. ..	107
13. Interstate Disputes .. ..	110

**§ 2. Fluctuations in Employment.**

1. General .. ..	111
2. Unemployment—States, 1929 .. ..	112
Australia, 1891 to 1930 .. ..	113
3. Employment Index-numbers ..	113
4. Unemployment by Industries ..	114
5. Unemployment—States .. ..	115
6. Causes of Unemployment, 1925 to 1929 .. ..	116
7. Seasonal Employment in Australia .. ..	117

	Page
<b>Chapter III.—Employment—continued.</b>	

**§ 2. State Free Employment Bureaux.**

1. General .. ..	117
2. Applications and Positions Filled ..	119
3. Details for each State .. ..	119
4. Details in Industrial Groups ..	120
5. Details by Sexes .. ..	121

**§ 4. Assisted Immigration.**

1. General .. ..	121
2. Immigrants to each State .. ..	122
3. Immigrants in Industrial Groups ..	122

**§ 5. Industrial Accidents.**

1. Source of Information .. ..	123
2. Number of Accidents Reported ..	123
3. Accidents in Industrial Groups ..	124
4. Mining Accidents .. ..	124

**CHAPTER IV.—ASSOCIATIONS.****§ 1. Labour Organizations.**

1. General .. ..	126
2. Trade Unions and Branches—Number and Membership, 1925 to 1929 .. ..	126
3. Trade Unions—Industrial Groups, 1925 to 1929 .. ..	127
4. Trade Unions—Numbers and Percentages of Male and Female Members .. ..	128
5. Trade Unions—Classification according to Number of Members, 1925 to 1929 .. ..	129
6. Interstate or Federated Trade Unions .. ..	130
7. Central Labour Organizations ..	130
8. Organizations registered under Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act .. ..	131

**§ 2. Employers' Associations.**

1. General .. ..	132
2. Employers' Associations in each State, 1925 to 1929 .. ..	132
3. Employers' Associations in Industrial Groups, 1928 and 1929 ..	133
4. Employers' Associations in Membership Groups, 1925 to 1929 ..	133
5. Federations of Employers' Associations .. ..	134

	Page
Chapter IV.—Associations—continued.	
§ 3. International Comparisons.	
1. The International Labour Conferences .. ..	135
2. Unemployment .. ..	136
3. Trade Unionism in other Countries .. ..	136
4. Retail Prices of Food—Australia and other Countries .. ..	137

## APPENDIX.

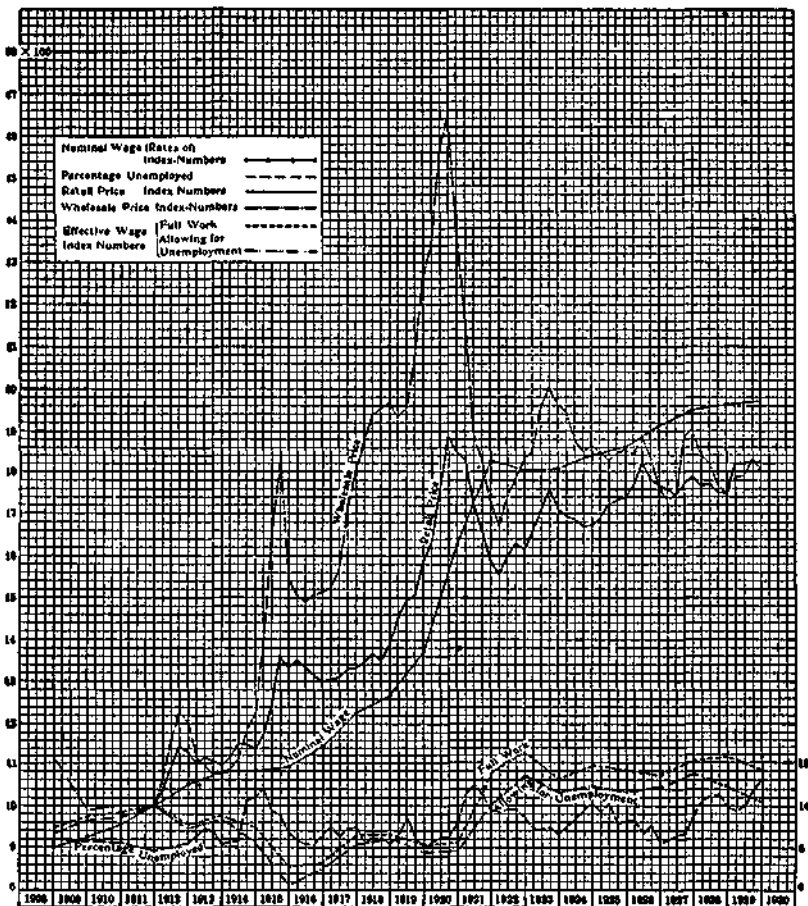
Section 1. Wholesale Prices, 1923 and 1929	140
" 2. Retail Prices, 1929 .. ..	141
" 3. House Rents, 1925 to 1929 .. ..	147
" 4. Minimum Rates of Wage and Hours of Labour for Adult Male Workers, 31st December, 1929	148

	Page
Appendix—continued.	
Section 6. Minimum Rates of Wage and Hours of Labour for Adult Female Workers, 31st December, 1929 .. ..	170
" 6. Rates of Wage and Hours of Labour, Australia and other Countries .. ..	174
" 7. Retail Price Index Numbers (1911 base) 1925 to 1929— (a) Rent (all houses) .. ..	177
(b) Food, Groceries and Rent (all houses) .. ..	179

## GRAPHS.

1. Retail Prices, Wholesale Prices and Nominal and Effective Wage Index-numbers and Percentage of Unemployed .. ..	8
2. Industrial Disputes—Working Days lost in Industrial Groups, 1913 to 1929	101

**Retail and Wholesale Prices and Nominal and Effective Wage Index-Numbers, and Percentage of Unemployed 1908 to 1929.**



**NOTE.**—The figures on the right represent the scale for the percentage unemployed according to trade-union returns. The figures on the left represent the scale for the several index-numbers, the year 1911 being taken in each case as base (= 1000). Since the end of the year 1911, the Retail Price Index-numbers (weighted average cost of food, groceries, and house rent for the six capital cities), and the Wholesale Price Index number (Melbourne) are shown in each quarter, while unemployment percentages are shown quarterly since the end of the year 1912 only. The other index-numbers since 1913 refer to the average for the whole year, but for purposes of convenience are plotted on the graph as at the end, not the middle, of the year. Retail Price and Wholesale Price Index-numbers show the average level during the whole of each quarter, and they also for convenience are plotted at the end, and not the middle, of each quarter.