

5. **Table of Prices, 1914 and 1915.**—In Appendix V. particulars are given as to the average price of each commodity in the years 1913, 1914, and 1915. Corresponding information for previous years, as far back as 1871, was given in Appendix VI. to Report No. 1, and for 1912 in Report No. 2, Appendix IV.

## SECTION VI.—IMPORT AND EXPORT PRICE INDEX-NUMBERS.

1. **General.**—The list of commodities included in the investigation into import and export prices for the years 1914-15, as well as the mass units, units of measurement, and sources of information, are the same as those in the previous investigations for the years 1901 to 1913, particulars of which are given on pages 66 to 68 of Report No. 1 on "Prices, Price Indexes and Cost of Living in Australia," and in Report No. 5, pp. 41 to 43. These index-numbers are computed annually, the data being obtained from the returns of imports and exports.

2. **Index-Numbers.**—Owing to the change in the system of collecting the statistics of imports and exports in the Commonwealth, by which the figures are made up to the end of the financial year at 30th June instead of at 31st December, as heretofore, the index-numbers in the last line of the following table represent the import and export values for the eighteen months ending 30th June, 1915, instead of for the year ending 31st December, 1914. The index-number for import and export prices in the Commonwealth for 1914-15 was 1141, compared with 1045 for 1913. This gives an increase of 9.2 per cent., compared with an increase during the same period of, 17 per cent. in wholesale prices, and of 5.4 per cent. in the purchasing-power-of-money index-number. The index-numbers for previous years for the various groups and for all groups together are shewn in the following table:—

**Commonwealth Import and Export Values. Index-Numbers for each Group, and all Groups combined.**

Particulars.	I. Metals and Coal.	II. Textiles.	III. Agricul- tural Produce.	IV. Meat, Dairy Produce etc.	V. Grocer- ies, etc.	VI. Miscel- laneous.	All Groups.*
No. of Commodities.	5	4	7	7	7	14	44
1901 .. ..	1,046	730	884	978	994	979	911
1902 .. ..	1,015	828	1,011	1,010	969	934	959
1903 .. ..	931	885	863	993	956	842	918
1904 .. ..	888	935	707	915	908	877	870
1905 .. ..	867	915	950	888	902	899	907
1906 .. ..	962	947	951	888	839	906	921
1907 .. ..	1,017	987	823	929	1,005	937	935
1908 .. ..	981	882	1,148	1,004	1,002	902	993
1909 .. ..	958	879	1,081	914	937	970	952
1910 .. ..	980	1,013	1,033	940	970	1,017	989
1911 .. ..	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
1912 .. ..	1,061	980	1,238	1,038	1,030	1,044	1,067
1913 .. ..	1,086	934	1,126	1,043	1,018	1,110	1,045
1914-15 ..	1,001	966	1,239	1,253	1,154	1,087	1,141

\* Weighted Average

3. **Variations in Price Levels of Commodity Groups.**—Of the six groups into which the 44 commodities are classified, the index-numbers for four groups were higher in 1914-15 than in the preceding year. These groups are:—Group II. (Textiles), Group III. (Agricultural Produce), Group IV. (Meat, Dairy Produce, etc.), and Group V. (Groceries). In the other two groups, viz., Group I. (Metals and Coal), and Group VI. (Miscellaneous), index-numbers decreased in 1914-15. The increases amounted to 3.4, 10.0, 20.1, and 11.3 per cent. in Groups II., III., IV. and V. respectively, and the decreases to 7.8 and 2.1 per cent. in Groups I. and VI. respectively.

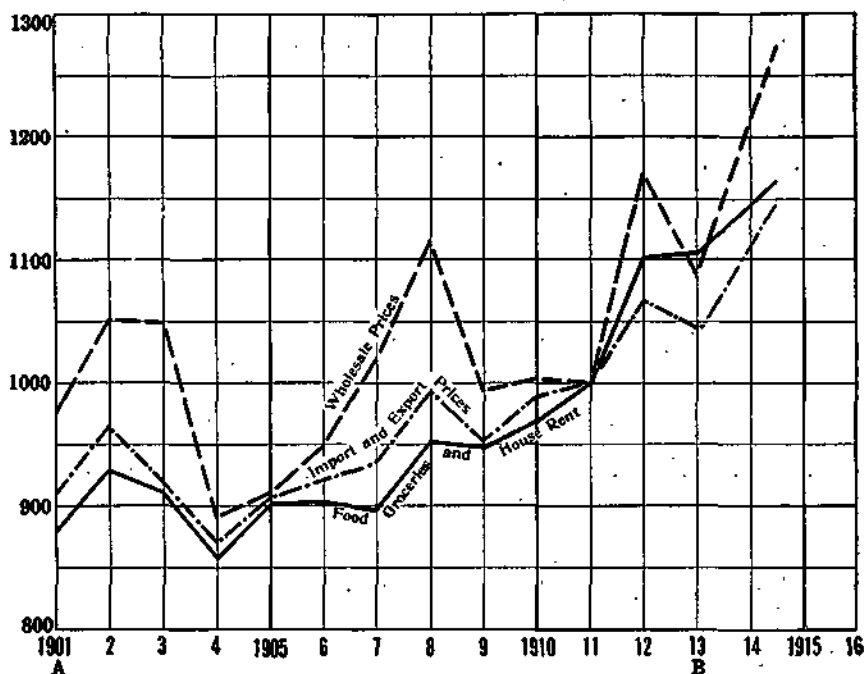
4. **Comparisons between Purchasing Power of Money, Wholesale and Import and Export Index-Numbers.**—In the following table particulars are given of the purchasing-power of money (retail prices and house rent), wholesale and import and export index-numbers from 1901 to 1914-15, inclusive:—

**Food, Groceries, and House Rent, Wholesale Price and Import and Export Price Index-Numbers, 1901 to 1914-15.**

YEAR.	INDEX-NUMBERS.		
	Food, Groceries, and House Rent (Weighted Average for 6 Capital Towns).	Wholesale Price (Melbourne).	Import and Export Price (Commonwealth).
1901 .. .. .	880	974	911
1902 .. .. .	929	1,051	959
1903 .. .. .	910	1,049	918
1904 .. .. .	858	890	870
1905 .. .. .	901	910	907
1906 .. .. .	902	948	921
1907 .. .. .	897	1,021	935
1908 .. .. .	951	1,115	993
1909 .. .. .	948	993	952
1910 .. .. .	970	1,003	989
1911 .. .. .	1,000	1,000	1,000
1912 .. .. .	1,101	1,170	1,067
1913 .. .. .	1,104	1,088	1,045
1914-15 .. .. .	1,164	1,273	1,141

The above index-numbers are shewn in the graph on page 55. In making comparisons between these three sets of index-numbers, it is to be borne in mind that the figures do not, of course, indicate the relation between the different prices themselves, that is between retail and wholesale prices, etc., for the reason that the weighted average prices are in each case made equal to 1000 on the year 1911: The figures shew the relative increase or decrease in each set of price-indexes.

PRICE INDEX-NUMBERS, GRAPH SHEWING RELATION BETWEEN COST OF FOOD, GROCERIES, AND HOUSE RENT, WHOLESALE PRICES AND IMPORT AND EXPORT PRICES IN AUSTRALIA, 1901 to 1915.



It may be seen that for the years 1901 to 1913 (from A to B on the graph), the index-numbers which represent averages for the years specified, have been plotted on the vertical line of the years to which they refer, from B onwards the index-numbers are plotted midway between the two years (1914-5). It should be observed that the index-number for this period includes the whole of 1914 and the first half of 1915, but that in future they will refer to the latter half of one year and the first half of the following year, i.e., from 1st July to 30th June.

Broadly speaking, the fluctuations in prices are more violent and more frequent in the case of wholesale than retail prices, a phenomenon which is observed not only in Australia, but in other countries also. Various explanations have been put forward as to the reasons for this. For example, it has been stated to be due to the fact that a variation in the wholesale price of a raw material may be substantial in itself, but yet may not be large enough to necessitate a change in the retail price of the manufactured commodity; that is to say, the cost of the labour element in the retail price of a commodity may be comparatively large, or, again, there may be a disinclination on the part of shopkeepers to vary prices until the urgent necessity therefor arises. It is stated, moreover, that retail dealers in certain branches of trade purchase their stock at contract or standard prices, which do not reflect all the movements in the prices of raw materials.

The fact that house-rent in the Australian results continuously increased from 1901 to 1914, has had the result of increasing the general upward tendency of the purchasing power of money index-numbers, while at the same time it has diminished the magnitude in the aggregate results (food, groceries, and house-rent) of the fluctuations which have occurred in the index-numbers for food and groceries only.

In each set of index-numbers the effect of the drought years, 1902, 1908, 1912, and 1914 is clearly seen, the increases being greatest in the wholesale-price results.

## SECTION VII.—CURRENT RATES OF WAGES AND HOURS OF LABOUR.

**1. General.**—The collection of material respecting the current rates of wages payable in different callings and in occupations in various industries carried on in each State of the Commonwealth was first undertaken by this Bureau, in the early part of the year 1913. The inquiry, which was confined to the rates of wages payable to adult workers only,\* was further limited in a degree to those industries in operation within the metropolitan area of the capital town in each State.† The particulars acquired were obtained primarily from awards, determinations, and industrial agreements under Commonwealth and State Acts, and related to the minimum wage prescribed. In cases where no award, determination or agreement was in force, the ruling union or predominant rate of wage being paid was ascertained from employers and secretaries of trade unions. For convenience of comparison, weekly rates of wages were adopted, though in many instances they were actually based on daily or hourly rates, as specified in awards, determinations, or agreements.‡

The information thus obtained referred to the weekly rates of wage in upwards of 400 industries, and related to 1569 male occupations or callings. These particulars furnished the necessary data for the computation of average rates of wages in various industrial groups, and in

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\* This limitation was necessary owing to the difficulty of ascertaining reliable particulars of the numbers of apprentices, improvers and other juvenile workers, to whom progressive rates of wage fixed or otherwise, according to increasing age or experience, are payable from year to year.

† In order to make the inquiry a comprehensive one, it was necessary to include certain industries which obviously are not carried on in the capital towns, *e.g.*, Mining, Shipping, Agricultural, and Pastoral.

‡ This precaution was necessary, in view of the fact that it is often in those industries and occupations in which employment is of an exceptionally casual or intermittent nature that wages are fixed and paid at a daily or hourly rate. Hence the average weekly earnings in such occupations will probably fall considerably short of the computed weekly rates.