

CHAPTER I.—RETAIL PRICES AND PRICE INDEXES.

§ 1. Collection of Information as to Retail Prices.

Retail prices of food and groceries and average rentals of houses for years extending back to the year 1901 were collected by the Commonwealth Statistician, and in some cases have been recorded by the Statisticians of various States for earlier years.

Retail prices of a more extensive range of commodities (including clothing) and certain services in common demand have been ascertained at frequent and regular intervals since 1923 for each of the six capital cities and for 27 of the more important towns of Australia. Comparable information is available for the month of November in each year from 1914 to 1922 for each of the six capital cities.

The range of items for which retail price data is now obtained was considerably extended in 1948.

The retail prices of food and groceries in approximately 200 towns throughout Australia were collected as at November of each year from 1913 to 1942, when collection was discontinued.

The methods by which prices used in the retail price indexes are ascertained and the measures adopted to ensure their accuracy and comparability are briefly as follows:—

- (i) Representative and reputable retailers are selected for each city and town covered by the indexes and each is required to furnish information as to prices monthly in respect of food and groceries and quarterly in respect of other items. Prices for each item are obtained where practicable from ten or more retailers in each of the capital cities, and from five or more retailers in each of the provincial towns. To cover all commodities in the indexes, collection is made from more than 60 retailers in each capital city and 30 in each provincial town. Whenever necessary, supplementary information is obtained from other retailers.
- (ii) Information is collected under authority of the Census and Statistics Act 1905-1949, which requires that information be supplied accurately and promptly and ensures that particulars supplied by individual retailers will not be divulged to any other person or Government authority. Penalties are provided against failure to supply information, against supplying false information and against failure to answer truthfully any question asked by an authorized officer in respect of the contents of any return.
- (iii) The actual collection of information is carried out by qualified Field Officers of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics working under the supervision of the Statisticians of the respective States. These Field Officers have very wide powers of investigation, including entry of premises and inspection of goods, records, etc.
- (iv) The Field Officers not only receive and check returns but visit the retail shops concerned, whenever necessary, to obtain requisite information. In respect of articles of clothing and the like where variation of quality may be considerable, Field Officers are equipped with samples of the goods used for price comparisons. In such cases the Field Officers visit every retail informant at each quarterly collection and personally inspect the relevant goods and prices thereof.

- (v) Before each quarterly collection Supervising Field Officers review the standards of the whole of the items for which prices are collected, after making extensive inquiries among manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. These Supervising Field Officers periodically accompany Field Officers at their price collections and check their work. This not only ensures accuracy and assiduity but also that all Field Officers work on uniform lines and that, as far as care and effort can make it possible, prices are recorded for representative goods of constant quality.
- (vi) The lists of items and the standards thereof are revised from time to time to keep them in harmony with changing conditions. Where such changes become necessary, suitable adjustments are made in computing the retail price indexes to ensure that they reflect changes in price with due precision and that they are not vitiated by the influence of other changes. Because of rapidly changing conditions since 1948, prices have been ascertained for an extended list of items. The purpose of this is to ensure that the indexes are kept representative and reliable within their definitions.
- (vii) Returns of rents for unfurnished houses of four and five rooms are made at the middle of each quarter by a representative number (ranging up to 30) of house agents in each city and town covered by the indexes for brick and wooden houses respectively, classified according to number of rooms. These returns show the weekly rental of a substantial number of individual houses each of which is selected by the Field Officer as suitable for inclusion in a sample designed to measure the quarterly ratio of change in weekly rentals. The aim is to measure variations equivalent to change in price for a constant standard. The ratio of change is used to vary basic average rentals derived from Census results. Consideration is being given to the problem of obtaining data appropriate to a more broadly based housing component for the Interim Retail Price Index described in § 4 herein.

§ 2. Nature and Purpose of Retail Price Indexes.

1. **General.**—The basic principle of a retail price index is relatively simple. It is to select commodities representative of the field to be covered and to combine their prices at regular intervals in accordance with their relative importance in that field. The aim is to measure the degree of change in prices for the selected field taken as a whole.

In practice the application of this principle over a term of years presents great difficulty by reason of the numerous changes which occur in the type, grade and relative quantities of many of the items commonly used.

In compiling the retail price indexes the price of each item is multiplied by its quantity "weight" and then by its appropriate population or household "weight". The sum of these products for all items at any given date represents an "aggregate expenditure". The "aggregate expenditures" for successive periods are converted into an index by representing the aggregate of a selected or "base" period by an appropriate number (e.g., 100 or 1,000), and calculating all index numbers to such base by the proportions which their aggregates bear to the aggregate of the base period.

2. **Essential Features.**—Apart from clear thinking, common sense and sound arithmetic, the prime essentials in compiling a retail price index are—

- (a) that prices be accurately ascertained at regular intervals for goods of constant grade and quality;
- (b) that the list of items be as representative as possible of the field to be covered;
- (c) that the weights be in approximate proportion to quantities actually used in the selected field.

3. **The List of Items.**—The list of items must be a selected list because it is impossible in practice to ascertain at regular intervals prices of every item of goods and services entering into household expenditure. There is considerable difficulty in ensuring that the selected items are always a true sample. Some items which it would be desirable to include must be excluded because comparative prices cannot be accurately ascertained for them at different times and different places. It is deemed better to limit the list to items for which price variations can be ascertained with reasonable accuracy than to distend it by including items for which price comparisons are necessarily inaccurate. Similarly, many items of small aggregate or individual importance are excluded. The list therefore is not (as is sometimes erroneously supposed) a basic wage regimen, nor yet is it a full list of component items in a standard of living. It does not imply that any particular goods or any selected grades or quantities of these goods should enter into determination of a basic or living wage. The lists used are simply selected items combined in certain proportions for the purpose of measuring price variations. The items are representative of the fields covered, and the proportions approximate to those in average consumption so far as can be ascertained. The list of items in the "C" Series Retail Price Index is representative of a high proportion of the expenditure of wage earner households as current in pre-war years. That of the Interim Retail Price Index is similarly representative for post-war years as from 1950.

4. **Purpose of Retail Price Indexes.**—Retail price indexes are designed to measure the extent of changes in price levels only. While they may be used as indicating proportionate variations in cost of a *constant* standard of living, they do not measure the absolute cost of any standard of living, nor the absolute cost of changes in the standard of living. In other words, they measure, as nearly as may be, the proportionate change in the aggregate cost of specified quantities and qualities of the selected list of items included in the index. See also Resolution 13 (d) of Conference of Statisticians quoted on page 6 hereof.

5. **Effects of Variable Conditions on Indexes.**—Under variable conditions since 1940, scarcity of certain types of goods, erratic supply and changes of grades in common use have created recurrent difficulty in obtaining the data necessary for measuring variations in prices. In some instances, these factors, as well as technological development and changes in fashion, have rendered it necessary to substitute new grades, qualities or types of articles for those formerly used as indicators of changes in price. This has been the case more particularly in the clothing, household drapery and household utensils sections of the indexes. Substitutions of similar kind were necessary at times under pre-war conditions in order to meet changes of fashion and usage. Such substitutions help to keep the indexes representative of current conditions and are not injurious to an index provided the transitional difficulties can be solved as they arise. No change in principle is involved. The indexes continue to measure, as nearly as may be, price variations, and price variations only. Those differences in prices which are solely due to substitution of a new item

for one, which has ceased to be available or in common use are neutralized by taking the price of the old items as typical of price variation in its class up to the time of substitution, and the prices of the new items as typical of such changes in price thereafter.

Popular usage of items in general consumption changes slowly and the weights of individual items and groups of items used in retail price indexes require to be changed only at long intervals. But at times, scarcity of supplies of some goods, rationing and kindred factors may actually produce short-term changes in usage. In such periods, continuity of the index requires that the weights applicable to the items in the index be not changed at frequent short intervals.

Nevertheless, it becomes desirable periodically to compile a new retail price index with a list of items and weights more representative of current usage than those of the former index. The problem of maintaining an index adequately representative of current usage has intensified since 1950 because of changes in the pattern of household expenditure and in modes of living.

The ensuing §§ 3 and 4 are the substance of a Statistical Bulletin issued in March, 1954 concerning the new Interim Retail Price Index (1952-53 Base Year) then issued for the first time.

§ 3. Previous Retail Price Indexes.

1. **General.**—Four series of retail price indexes had been compiled at various times for Australia by the Commonwealth Statistician prior to 1954. Each of these was continued until changed conditions required the compilation of indexes more directly relevant to current conditions. The respective indexes were:—

- (i) *The "A" Series Index* (covering food, groceries and house rents) was first compiled in 1912 with the year 1911 as base = 1,000. It was discontinued in June, 1938. From 1913 to May, 1933 this index was used for wage adjustment purposes by the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration. Some other tribunals continued to use it until 1938 in certain localities.
- (ii) *The "B" Series Index* (covering food, groceries and rent of 4 and 5 roomed houses) was first compiled in 1925 and continued until the December Quarter, 1953. It was the food and rent constituent of the "C" Series Index and was designed to replace the "A" Series Index for general statistical purposes. The "B" Series Index was not used by industrial tribunals in connexion with the adjustment of wages. Its publication was discontinued as from the December Quarter, 1953.
- (iii) *The "C" Series Index* (covering food and groceries, rent of 4 and 5-roomed houses, clothing, household drapery, household utensils, fuel, lighting, fares, smoking and some other miscellaneous items) was first compiled in 1921. It was used by the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration for purposes of quarterly wage adjustments from May, 1934 to August, 1953. Some State tribunals use or consider it in their proceedings. Its publication in mimeograph each quarter continues for the present in the customary form and on its customary basis. For general statistical purposes it has been replaced by the Interim Retail Price Index (1952-53 base year) described in the following pages.
- (iv) *The "D" Series Index*, derived by combining the "A" and "C" Series Indexes, was used by the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration from May, 1933 to May, 1934 and then discontinued.

Of the four retail price indexes described above, only the "C" Series continues to be compiled. The new Interim Retail Price Index, first published in March, 1954, will continue in its present form until the components of certain groups are finalized.

2. The "Court" Index.—In 1937 the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration introduced a "Court" Index for the purpose of its system of making automatic quarterly adjustments to the basic wage within its jurisdiction. A "Court" Index (Second Series) was created by the Court in 1946 and a "Court" Index (Third Series) in November, 1950 to provide for automatic adjustment of the increased amounts of adjustable basic wage then determined by the Court at those dates. By decision of the Court the "Court" Index ceased to be issued by the Industrial Registrar as at the December Quarter, 1953. These "Court" Indexes were an arithmetical conversion of the "C" Series Retail Price Index.

§ 4. The Interim Retail Price Index (1952-53: Base Year).

1. Origin of the Interim Retail Price Index (1952-53 Base Year).—The list of component items and the weighting pattern of the "C" Series Retail Price Index were first adopted in 1921 but were reviewed by Conference of Statisticians in 1936. (See Labour Report No. 41, 1952, page 33, para. 2.)

From the outbreak of war in 1939 to late in 1948 periodic policy changes in regard to various war-time controls (including rationing) caused recurrent changes in consumption and the pattern of expenditure. This rendered it impracticable either to produce a new index or to revise the old one on any basis that would render the index more representative than it already was, of the changing pattern. (See Labour Report No. 41, 1952, page 35, paras. 5 and 6, and Appendix, Section V., pages 164-213, especially page 174 showing the War-time "Trial" Index 1939-48 in comparison with the "C" Series Index with comments submitted in the Statistician's evidence before the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration in July, 1949.)

When commodity rationing had virtually ceased in the latter part of 1948, action was taken by the Statistician to collect price data of about 100 additional items and to gather information as to current consumption and expenditure patterns. This was done to facilitate review of the component items and weighting system of the "C" Series Retail Price Index, in the light of the new pattern of wage earner expenditure and consumption then emerging.

By the middle of 1949 a considerable number of new price series was coming into being and the body of data available as to expenditure and consumption (in the post-rationing period) was beginning to indicate something of the new weighting pattern likely to be appropriate for post-war review of the components and construction of the "C" Series Index. The position at that time and the action then taken were set out in a Memorandum submitted in evidence by the Statistician to the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration in July, 1949. This was reprinted in Section V. of the Appendix to Labour Report No. 41, 1952, pp. 164-213.

There supervened in the next two years conditions which caused wide price dispersion, a very rapid rise in prices and a new sequence of changes in consumption and the pattern of wage earner expenditure. Under these conditions it was not possible to devise any new weighting pattern for the years 1949-50, 1950-51 and 1951-52 likely to be better suited to the index or more continuously representative of conditions then current than was the existing "C" Series Index on the 1936 revision. It was therefore decided by Conference of Statisticians to defer revision of the weighting system and component items of the "C" Series Index, and the new data on prices and consumption were used to test whether the aggregate "C" Series Index was reasonably reliable for current use as a retail price index.

In June, 1953, Conference of Statisticians was advised by the Acting Commonwealth Statistician (a) that although the aggregate "C" Series Index (as verified by supplementary indexes) was still reasonably reliable for current use, some of the component groups (more particularly food and miscellaneous) were not satisfactory individually; and (b) that the time had arrived either to produce a new index or to reconstruct the "C" Series Index extensively.

Concurrently in 1953 the Acting Commonwealth Statistician indicated (in successive Quarterly Statistical Statements containing the "C" Series Retail Price Index) that a memorandum would be prepared and issued on the subject of the index and the question of its weighting pattern and list of component items. The matter of the proposed memorandum was mentioned by a witness in evidence before the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration in August, 1953. But as none of the parties to the Basic Wage Case then proceeding desired to raise any issue as to the adequacy or validity of the "C" Series Index for purposes of the Court, the Statistician did not present any memorandum or evidence in that case.

A Statistical Bulletin issued in March, 1954 and reproduced in this and the preceding section contains the substance of the memorandum then contemplated, with the addition of the new Interim Index.

The Interim Retail Price Index has been compiled pursuant to Resolution 13 of the Conference of Statisticians in June, 1953, reading:—

"13. *Retail Price Indexes*—

- (a) That, in view of the persistence of recurrent changes in the pattern of consumer expenditure in the post-war period, it is undesirable to make a general revision of the list of items and weighting system of the "C" Series Retail Price Index at present, unless industrial tribunals expressly desire some revision for special purposes.
- (b) That an Interim Retail Price Index be compiled with putative weights and components representative, as nearly as may be, of the post-war pattern of consumer usage and expenditure.
- (c) That, having regard to the complexities of the problem and the limit of staff resources available, such interim index relate only to each capital city and to the six capital cities combined.
- (d) That attention be drawn again to the statement already published that the "C" Series Retail Price Index cannot measure changes in relative retail price levels as between capital cities consistently with its main purpose of measuring periodic changes in retail price levels for each city.
- (e) That the problem of measuring comparative retail price levels as between cities at any point of time differs in principle from the problem of measuring periodic variations in price levels in an individual city".

In conformity with Section (a) of the foregoing Resolution, the "C" Series Retail Price Index has continued to be compiled and published quarterly in its customary form.

The Interim Retail Price Index (1952-53 base year) is compiled to implement Section (b) of Conference Resolution and used as the current retail price index in statistical publications of the Commonwealth Statistician for general statistical purposes, irrespective of what use is made of either index by any industrial tribunal for its own purposes.

In this regard the position is that industrial tribunals themselves decide what use (if any) they make of any available retail price index or whether they desire the Statistician to compile some special-purpose index for them. It is not the practice for the Statistician to express any view as to whether such tribunals should use retail price indexes in their deliberations. The Statistician, in the normal course of his duties, compiles and publishes various price indexes, states their definition (what they measure), explains how they are constructed and gives evidence or public information when desired concerning them.

With respect to Sections (d) and (e) of the Conference Resolution the Statistician is prepared to compile data as to relative price levels in respective capital cities on the basis specified by an industrial tribunal for its purposes. The Interim Retail Price Index relates only to six capital cities of Australia, because it is not practicable with existing staff resources to collect price data for the greatly enlarged list of items for 28 other cities and towns. These continue to be covered for the less extensive list of items used for the "C" Series Index.

2. Definition of the Interim Retail Price Index.—This index provides the interim results of researches designed to measure retail price variations for each of six capital cities individually (with 1952-53 = 100 as base year for each city) on the basis of:—

- (a) a current pattern of wage earner expenditure using recent consumption weights for foods and recent expenditure weights for combining groups of items into the aggregate index;
- (b) a wider range of commodities and services than that covered by any existing price index in order to provide greater representativeness; and
- (c) individual city weights for such items as electricity, gas and fares.

The components and weighting of the Interim Retail Price Index are being reviewed in the light of data derived from the Census of Retail Sales as to consumer expenditure on various kinds of goods, estimates of consumer expenditure on services relevant to construction of a retail price index of this type and data as to rents and housing derived from the Census of 30th June, 1954 and additional special surveys. It is proposed to cast the index into final form as soon as possible and this may entail some revision in the index.

3. Differences between the Structure of the Interim Retail Price Index and the "C" Series Retail Price Index.—The main differences between the structure of the Interim Retail Price Index and that of the "C" Series Retail Price Index are (a) the group weights and item weights of the Interim Index relate broadly to the consumption pattern 1950-53, while those of the "C" Series Index relate to pre-war years; and (b) the Interim Index includes a large number of items not included in the "C" Series Index. A full list of the items used in the Interim Index is shown in § 4, pp. 9-12 hereof. The list of items in the Interim Index is to be amended in some respects when the index is put into final form.

The differences in structure of each group of items as adopted for the Interim Retail Price Index are summarized below:—

(i) *Food Group.*—(a) The weights of some of the main items (e.g., milk, eggs, meat, potatoes and flour) in the Interim Index are substantially different from those in the "C" Series Index to accord generally with average consumption in the years 1949–50 to 1952–53. (b) Twenty-four new items have been added to the Food Group, extending the group coverage over a wider field. The principal new items are lamb, packaged breakfast foods, biscuits, ice-cream, packet cheese, honey, sandwich spreads, coffee, cocoa, soft drinks and certain types of confectionery. (c) The total number of items in the Food Group of the Interim Index is 60 as compared with 38 in the "C" Series Index. Two items which were included in the "C" Series Index are not included in the Interim Index owing to the difficulty of securing satisfactory price data for them. Two non-food items (soap and kerosene) included in the Food and Groceries Group of the "C" Series Index appear in the Household Sundries Group of the Interim Index. The Group name "Food and Groceries" in the "C" Series Index is changed to "Food" in the Interim Index.

(ii) *Clothing and Drapery Group.*—In the Interim Index, 17 new items have been added to the Clothing and Drapery Group, and 25 items each formerly represented by one type of article are now each represented by two or more types. Consequential adjustments have been made in weights of individual items. The principal new items added to this group are:—sports coat, sports trousers, cardigan (and other types of knitted wear), overalls, piece-goods (rayon, cotton and woollen) and knitting wool.

(iii) *Rent Group.*—This group is almost identical in both indexes. Available data indicate (a) that, in general, very few new houses have been built by private owners for renting in the post-war years; (b) that in some cities considerable numbers of new Government houses have been built for renting or occupancy on a quasi-rental basis; and (c) that there has been a substantial increase in the numbers of owner-occupied houses, including new instalment-purchase or quasi-instalment-purchase houses under Governmental and private housing schemes. In recent years the difficulty of obtaining data suitable for the housing component of a price index has therefore intensified. The Census of 1954 showed that a very rapid diminution had occurred since 1947 in both the numbers and proportions of privately rented houses. Supplementary surveys in 1956 and 1957 indicated a continuation of this trend in the six capital cities. Further study is therefore being given to the hitherto intractable problems associated with measuring at quarterly intervals "housing price" variations in a form suitable for use in a retail price index in respect of owner-occupied houses, instalment-purchase houses, and houses occupied under the various types of Governmental housing schemes.

(iv) *Other Groups.*—Six new sub-groups are included in the Interim Index to replace Sections L, M and N of the Miscellaneous Group of the "C" Series Index. These six sub-groups of the new index comprise 75 items as compared with 32 in the old index, substantially enlarging their representativeness. The principal new items are garden tools, floor coverings, shaving cream, toilet soap, etc., patent medicines, baby foods, haircuts, dry cleaning, shoe repairs, postage, etc. Necessary adjustments have been made to bring the group weight into conformity with recent expenditure and consumption patterns. The weight of this group is much greater than it was in the "C" Series Index. Further extensions of the list of items are under consideration and research is proceeding into problems of weighting for additional items.

(v) *Group Weights*.—The group weights in the new Interim Index have been brought into general conformity with the estimated group distribution of wage earner household expenditure in recent years over the field covered. In some cases the weights are putative weights assessed on available data and are subject to some revision.

In the year 1952-53 the ratio of the individual group "aggregate expenditure" to the "aggregate expenditure" of the whole index for the six capital cities combined was as follows:—

Group.	"C" Series Retail Price Index. (Per cent.)	Interim Retail Price Index. (Per cent.)
Food	41.0	37.1
Clothing and Drapery	33.0	26.8
Rent	11.3	9.0
Other Groups	14.7	27.1
	4.5	4.6 Fuel and Light
	5.3	4.6 Household Sundries
	2.8	2.5 Certain Repairs and Services
	2.1	3.0 Cinema, Radio, Newspapers
		6.6 Rail, Tram and Bus Fares
		5.8 Tobacco and Cigarettes
	100.0	100.0

In the Interim Index common weights are adopted for all groups and items in the index for each city except in respect of fares, gas, electricity and some minor items. The resultant indexes measure price movement from period to period for each city separately. While they indicate degree of price movement from time to time for respective cities, they do not indicate the relative level of prices (or level of living costs) in each city.

For that reason the Interim Index of each city in the base year 1952-53 is 100. In the case of the "C" Series Index as published herein, the weighted average of the six capital cities combined is 1,000 on the base period 1923-27 and the index of each individual capital city is in ratio thereto (except where "C" Series Indexes of each city have been arithmetically converted to the base 100 for the year 1952-53 for purposes of comparison with the Interim Index).

4. *List of Items—Interim Retail Price Index*.—The following is a list of items embraced within the Interim Retail Price Index. Items included in the Interim Index and not in the "C" Series Retail Price Index are denoted by asterisks.

List of Items—Interim Retail Price Index.

FOOD—

- Cereal Products—
- Bread.
- Flour, Plain.
- Flour, Self-raising.
- Biscuits.*
- Flaked Oats.
- Rice.
- Prepared Breakfast Foods—
- From Wheat.*
- From Maize.*

FOOD—continued.

- Dairy Produce—
- Milk, Fresh.
- Milk, Powdered.*
- Milk, Condensed.
- Cheese, Packet.*
- Cheese, Mild.
- Butter.
- Eggs.
- Bacon.

List of Items—Interim Retail Price Index—continued.

Food—continued.

Potatoes, Onions, Preserved Fruit and Vegetables—

Peaches, Canned.
Pears, Canned.
Raisins, Seeded.
Currants, Loose.
Prunes.*
Green Peas, Canned.*
Potatoes.
Onions.

Soft Drink, Chocolate Confectionery and Ice Cream—

Soft Drink.*
Chocolate Confectionery.*
Ice Cream.*

Other (except Meat)—

Sugar.
Jam.
Golden Syrup.
Honey.*
Sandwich Spreads.*
Baked Beans.*
Spaghetti.*
Sardines.*
Margarine.*
Seed Tapioca.
Sauce, Tomato.*
Tea.
Cocoa.*
Coffee.*

Meat—

Beef—

Sirloin Roast.
Rib Roast.
Steak—Rump.
Steak—Blade.*
Steak—Chuck.
Sausages
Silverside.
Brisket.

Mutton—

Leg.
Forequarter.
Chops, Loin.
Chops, Leg.

Lamb—

Leg.*
Forequarter.*
Chops, Loin.*
Chops, Leg.*

Pork—

Leg.
Loin.
Chops.

CLOTHING AND DRAPERY—

Men's—

Suit.
Overcoat.
Sports Coat.*
Sports Trousers.*

CLOTHING AND DRAPERY—continued.

Men's—continued.

Pullover.
Cardigan.*
Pullover (Sleeveless).*
Working Trousers (Cotton).
Working Trousers (Wool).*
Overalls.*
Shirt, Ordinary Wear.
Shirt, Work.
Singlet, Flannel.*
Singlet, Wool and Cotton.
Singlet, Athletic.
Underpants, Wool and Cotton.
Underpants, Cotton.
Pyjamas.
Socks.
Hats.
Braces.
Handkerchiefs.

Women's—

Costume.
Skirt.
Cardigan.
Twin Set.*
Dress, Cotton.
Dress, Rayon.
Slip.
Vest, Wool and Rayon.
Vest, Rayon.
Panties, Bloomers, etc.
Brassiere.
Nightdress.
Pyjamas.
Corsets.*
Stockings, Nylon.
Stockings, Lisle.
Hat, Felt.
Beret.*
Hat, Straw.
Gloves, Fabric.
Gloves, Nappa.
Umbrella.*
Apron.

Children's—

Boys'—

Suit.
Overcoat.
Pants.
Pullover.
Shirt—
Sports.
Ranger.
Singlet—
Wool.
Cotton Athletic.
Hose—
Golf.
Anklet.
Pyjamas.
Cap.
Braces.

List of Items—Interim Retail Price Index—*continued.*CLOTHING AND DRAPERY—*continued.*Children's—*continued.*

- Girls'—
 - Tunic.
 - Overcoat.
 - Blazer.*
 - Pullover.
 - Dress.
 - Petticoat.
 - Singlet—
 - Wool and Rayon.
 - Rayon.
 - Panties, Bloomers, etc.—
 - Fleecy Lined.
 - Rayon.
 - Pyjamas—
 - Winceyette.
 - Rayon.
 - Socks.
 - Hat—
 - Felt.
 - Straw.

Piecegoods, etc.—

- Rayon.*
- Cotton.*
- Woollen.*
- Fingering Wool.*

Footwear—

- Men's—
 - Working Boots.
 - Shoes.
- Women's—
 - Shoes, Best.
 - Shoes, Ordinary.
- Children's—
 - Shoes, Boys'.
 - Girls' Best.
 - Girls' School.
 - Young Children's.

Household Drapery—

- Blankets, D.B.
- Blankets, S.B.
- Sheets, D.B.
- Sheets, S.B.
- Sheeting.*
- Pillow Slip.
- Pillow.*
- Towel.
- Tea Towel.

RENT—

- Four and five-roomed tenanted houses.

OTHER GROUPS—

Electricity, Gas, and Firewood—

- Electricity.
- Gas.
- Firewood.

Household Sundries—

- Household Utensils—
 - Plate, Dinner.
 - Jug.
 - Pudding Basin.

OTHER GROUPS—*continued.**Household Sundries—continued.*Household Utensils—*continued.*

- Tumbler.
- Saucepan.
- Pressure Cooker.*
- Cake Tin.*
- Frying Pan.*
- Boiler.*
- Cutlery—
 - Knife.
 - Tea Spoon.
 - Dessert Spoon.
 - Table Fork.
- Globe, Electric.
- Iron, Electric.
- Toaster, Electric.*
- Jug, Electric.*
- Spade.*
- Fork.*
- Rake.*
- Hoe.*
- Lawn Mower.*
- Bucket.
- Broom—
 - Millet.
 - Hair.
- Scrubbing Brush.
- Polishing Mop.
- Axe.*
- Floor Coverings—
 - Carpet.*
 - Linoleum.*
 - Felt.*
- Other—
 - Matches.*
 - Kerosene.
 - Steel Wool.*
 - Boot Polish.*
 - Starch.*
 - Cleaner Paste.*
 - Soap, Household.
 - Soap, Powder.*
 - Personal Requisites—
 - Toilet Soap.*
 - Shaving Cream.*
 - Tooth Paste.*
 - Razor Blades.*
 - Antiseptic.*
 - Proprietary Medicines, etc.—
 - Cough Mixture.*
 - Tonic.*
 - A.P.C.*
 - Cascara.*
 - Ointment.*
 - Baby Food.*
 - School Requisites—
 - Lead Pencil.
 - Penholder.
 - Nibs.
 - Eraser.
 - Ruler.
 - Pastels.
 - Blotting Paper.
 - Exercise Books.

List of Items—Interim Retail Price Index—continued.

OTHER GROUPS—continued.

Services—

Hairdressing.*

Drycleaning—

Men's—

Suit (3 piece).*

Suit (2 piece).*

Sports Trousers.*

Sports Coat.*

Women's—

Frock.*

Skirt.*

Overcoat.*

Shoe Repairs—

Men's.*

Boys'.*

Women's.*

Postage.*

Telegram.*

Telephone—

Private Phone Call.*

Public Phone Call.*

Rental.*

OTHER GROUPS—continued.

Cinema Admission, Radio Licence and Newspapers—

Cinema—

Adult Admission.

Child's Admission.

Radio Licence.

Newspapers—

Morning.

Evening.

Fares (City and Suburban Train, Tram and Bus)—

Train Fares.

Tram and Bus Fares.

Tobacco and Cigarettes—

Cigarettes—

Australian.

Imported.*

Tobacco (Australian)—

Cigarette.

Pipe.

Cigarette Papers.

5. Comparison of Trends of the Interim Retail Price Index with Trends of the "C" Series Retail Price Index.—The following table shows for each of the years 1952-53 to 1956-57 and for each quarter from the December Quarter, 1954 to the December Quarter, 1957 the Interim Index for the six capital-cities combined, with the year 1952-53 as base = 100, in comparison with the "C" Series Index arithmetically converted to the same base:—

Period.	Six Capital Cities (Weighted Average).			
	"C" Series Index.		Interim Index.	
	A	B	A	B
Year ended June—1953	100.0		100.0	100.0
1954	102.8		102.2	102.5
1955	103.7		103.7	103.6
	A	B		
1956	107.5	108.8	107.0	108.0
1957	112.2	114.1	113.0	114.3
Quarter—1954: December	103.2		103.4	103.2
1955: March	103.9		103.8	103.8
June	105.0		104.5	104.7
	A	B		
September	105.9	106.6	105.1	105.7
December	106.7	107.7	106.3	107.0
1956: March	107.8	109.0	107.4	108.3
June	109.7	111.8	109.4	110.8
September	111.1	115.6	111.5	114.4
December	111.7	114.2	112.5	114.2
1957: March	112.6	112.8	113.5	113.7
June	113.5	113.8	114.5	114.8
September	114.0	113.8	115.1	115.1
December	114.0	113.5	115.1	114.9

Note.—Indexes in Columns "A" exclude, and those in Columns "B" include, potatoes and onions. See paragraph 6 on page 15.

The figures appearing after the decimal point possess little significance for general statistical purposes. They are inserted merely to avoid the distortion that would occur in rounding-off the figures to the nearest whole number. For instance, if the Interim Indexes of the Six Capital Cities (Weighted Average) for each quarter of 1953 were rounded off to 100, 102, 102 and 102 respectively, they would suggest a rise of 2 per cent. in the June Quarter, 1953 and no change in the September Quarter, 1953. The figures for the Interim Index as presented in the table indicate a rise of the order of 1 per cent. in the June Quarter, 1953, and 1 per cent. in the September Quarter, 1953. Price indexes cannot measure aggregate price variations with an accuracy of the order of one-tenth of 1 per cent.

With changing conditions significant divergencies may occur between the movements shown by a retail price index (such as the "C" Series Index) constructed on pre-war weights and a comparatively limited range of major items and a retail price index (such as the Interim Index) constructed on 1950-53 weights and a broader list of items.

Due regard should be paid to the fact that a composite price index is necessarily an approximate summary which combines into one aggregate price variations of many items. Any more rigid use of the index for specific purposes is the responsibility of the bodies or persons using the indexes.

The following indexes are based on the year 1952-53 = 100 for each city. They therefore measure price movements from period to period for each city separately. While they indicate degree of price movement from time to time for respective cities, they do not indicate the relative level of prices (or level of living costs) in each city.

At times appreciable disparities appear in the movement of the respective indexes for individual cities from quarter to quarter. The Interim Index, being based on recent weights and an extended list of items, is the more representative measure of current quarterly retail price variations.

Pending completion of investigations into the problem of devising a housing component more widely based than the present rent component, housing is represented in both indexes only by rentals of private houses of 4 and 5 rooms. As the laws governing rent control differ as between cities and as modifications therein are made in varying degrees and at irregular intervals, both indexes (including this rent component) show sporadic periodic movements due to sudden changes in law relating to rents. These are reflected in Table A below.

In order to provide a clearer perspective of the movement of retail commodity prices, Table B has been compiled to embrace all commodities and services (other than rents) which are included within the respective indexes.

"C" SERIES AND INTERIM RETAIL PRICE INDEX NUMBERS.

(Base of Each Index for Each City: Year 1952-53 = 100.0.)

TABLE A.—ALL GROUPS INCLUDING RENT.(a)

Quarter.	SYDNEY.		MELBOURNE.		BRISBANE.		ADELAIDE.		PERTH.		HOBART.		SIX CAPITALS. (Weighted Average).	
	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.
1954—September ..	101.9	102.2	101.4	101.8	102.4	102.8	103.3	102.5	111.9	109.0	104.7	105.1	102.6	102.7
December ..	102.8	102.9	101.7	102.2	103.7	103.6	103.5	102.8	111.5	108.7	104.6	104.9	103.2	103.2
1955—March ..	103.3	103.4	102.6	102.9	104.5	104.5	104.3	103.5	112.0	109.3	105.6	105.8	103.9	103.8
June ..	104.1	103.8	103.9	104.0	105.0	105.1	106.2	105.4	114.4	111.2	106.6	106.6	105.0	104.7
September ..	105.5	104.6	106.7	105.8	105.8	105.6	106.8	106.0	114.1	111.1	107.9	108.2	106.6	105.7
December ..	106.2	105.4	108.6	108.3	105.8	106.0	107.7	106.4	114.7	111.6	109.8	109.6	107.7	107.0
1956—March ..	107.0	106.2	110.6	110.4	107.6	107.3	107.8	106.8	116.0	113.1	113.6	113.0	109.0	108.3
June ..	109.8	108.5	113.9	113.3	109.4	109.5	110.7	109.7	117.9	115.2	115.4	115.1	111.8	110.8
September ..	114.5	114.0	117.2	115.7	112.8	111.9	114.0	111.6	119.4	116.6	118.2	118.3	115.6	114.4
December ..	112.7	113.8	116.1	115.5	111.2	111.2	112.7	110.9	119.8	117.6	118.6	119.4	114.2	114.2
1957—March ..	111.9	113.7	113.5	114.1	110.5	111.4	109.8	109.7	120.9	118.7	117.5	118.9	112.8	113.7
June ..	112.5	114.7	114.7	115.3	111.2	112.4	111.5	111.3	122.5	120.2	118.4	119.6	113.8	114.8
September ..	112.7	115.0	114.5	115.5	111.5	112.5	112.2	112.2	122.4	120.1	117.2	118.8	113.8	115.1
December ..	112.3	114.8	114.1	115.3	112.9	113.4	111.3	111.7	120.6	119.1	117.4	119.1	113.5	114.9

TABLE B.—COMMODITIES AND SERVICES EXCLUDING RENT.(a)

(The following indexes relate to food, groceries, clothing and miscellaneous items other than rent.)

Quarter.	SYDNEY.		MELBOURNE.		BRISBANE.		ADELAIDE.		PERTH.		HOBART.		SIX CAPITALS. (Weighted Average).	
	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.	"C" Series.	Interim.
1954—September ..	100.9	101.5	101.4	101.8	102.1	102.7	103.3	102.4	106.8	104.6	104.1	104.7	101.8	102.1
December ..	101.8	102.2	101.7	102.2	103.5	103.5	103.4	102.6	106.2	104.2	103.9	104.4	102.4	102.5
1955—March ..	102.4	102.7	102.7	103.0	104.4	104.4	104.2	103.4	106.6	104.8	105.1	105.5	103.2	103.2
June ..	103.3	103.2	104.1	104.1	104.9	105.0	105.8	105.0	108.9	106.5	106.2	106.3	104.4	104.1
September ..	104.7	104.0	107.1	106.1	105.7	105.6	106.1	105.3	108.2	106.1	107.7	108.1	106.0	105.2
December ..	105.5	104.8	109.3	108.9	105.8	106.0	106.9	105.7	108.6	106.5	109.8	109.5	107.2	106.5
1956—March ..	106.3	105.6	109.5	109.5	107.6	107.3	106.7	105.9	109.8	107.7	110.2	110.3	107.8	107.3
June ..	109.5	108.1	113.1	112.6	109.6	109.6	109.7	108.8	111.4	109.6	111.5	112.1	110.9	109.9
September ..	114.8	114.2	116.7	115.1	113.3	112.2	113.1	110.7	112.7	110.9	114.3	115.3	115.0	113.8
December ..	112.8	113.9	115.4	114.8	111.3	111.2	111.3	109.6	113.0	111.8	114.3	116.2	113.4	113.5
1957—March ..	111.6	113.7	112.5	113.2	110.4	111.3	107.6	108.0	114.0	113.0	112.7	115.3	111.5	112.8
June ..	112.0	114.6	113.6	114.4	111.0	112.3	109.3	109.5	115.6	114.3	113.5	116.0	112.4	113.9
September ..	112.1	114.9	113.3	114.5	111.1	112.3	109.7	110.2	115.2	114.0	112.0	115.0	112.3	114.0
December ..	111.5	114.5	112.8	114.3	112.5	113.2	108.4	109.6	113.0	112.7	111.9	115.0	111.8	113.7

(a) Including potatoes and onions. See paragraph 6 on page 15.

6. Compilation of Indexes Including and Excluding Price Movement of Potatoes and Onions.—Abnormally large seasonal fluctuations in prices of potatoes and onions had a major effect (first upwards and then downwards) on the movement of the price indexes in most cities from the September Quarter, 1956 to the March Quarter, 1957. These transient fluctuations also caused highly disparate movements in the aggregate indexes as between cities. In order to provide an indication of the recent trend of the indexes apart from these abnormally large seasonal fluctuations, index numbers excluding the effects of price movements of potatoes and onions are calculated for comparison with those which include the items.

The Interim Retail Price Index is calculated both inclusive and exclusive of potatoes and onions as from the base period 1952-53. For the "C" Series Retail Price Index, index numbers excluding the price movement of potatoes and onions have been calculated as from (and including) the September Quarter, 1955.

7. Tabular Statements of Interim Retail Price Index Numbers.—Information relating to the Interim Retail Price index numbers is published as follows:—

Monthly.—The *Monthly Review of Business Statistics* contains annual and quarterly index numbers to the latest available date.

Quarterly.—Statements are issued about three weeks after the end of each quarter relating to the Interim Retail Price Index for that quarter and immediately preceding quarters. The *Quarterly Summary of Australian Statistics* contains annual and quarterly index numbers to the latest available date.

Annual.—In addition to the information published in the annual Labour Report, the *Official Year Book* contains a brief summary concerning the Index.

On the following pages are published:—

- (i) the Interim Retail Price index numbers for each of the years ended June from 1953 to 1957, and for each quarter during the period December Quarter, 1956 to December Quarter, 1957, for each capital city and for the six capital cities combined, and showing also separate indexes for each of the four groups of items (page 16);
- (ii) the Interim Retail Price index numbers for each of the years ended June from 1953 to 1957, and for each quarter during the period December Quarter, 1954 to December Quarter, 1957, for the weighted average of the six capital cities combined, showing also separate indexes for each of the four groups of items (page 17).

INTERIM RETAIL PRICE INDEX NUMBERS.

(Base of each Index: Year 1952-53 = 100.)

NOTE.—The index numbers hereunder are designed to measure aggregate variations in retail prices of specified groups of items for specified cities individually. They measure variations from time to time and not differences in price level as between cities nor comparative costs of groups of items.

City.	Year ended June, 1953.	Year ended June, 1954.	Year ended June, 1955.	Year ended June, 1956.	Year ended June, 1957.	1956.		1957.		
						Dec. Qtr.	Mar. Qtr.	June Qtr.	Sept. Qtr.	Dec. Qtr.

GROUP I.—FOOD (EXCLUDING POTATOES AND ONIONS).^(a)

Sydney ..	100.0	101.5	104.0	106.7	111.4	110.8	111.8	111.8	112.6	111.9
Melbourne ..	100.0	103.8	104.7	109.9	114.2	113.8	114.5	115.2	115.6	114.3
Brisbane ..	100.0	102.2	103.4	104.7	108.4	107.2	108.6	110.1	110.0	112.5
Adelaide ..	100.0	102.5	106.3	103.7	111.1	109.7	110.7	112.7	113.3	110.7
Perth ..	100.0	106.3	109.4	111.0	115.8	114.3	115.8	118.0	116.6	113.5
Hobart ..	100.0	106.9	106.7	111.3	115.3	115.7	115.5	115.9	114.5	114.8
Six Capitals ^(b)	100.0	102.8	104.8	108.1	112.4	111.6	112.6	113.3	113.7	112.8

GROUP I.—FOOD (INCLUDING POTATOES AND ONIONS).

Sydney ..	100.0	102.4	103.6	109.0	114.4	114.2	112.1	112.4	112.3	110.9
Melbourne ..	100.0	104.6	104.3	112.9	118.6	120.2	115.4	116.5	115.9	114.6
Brisbane ..	100.0	104.1	104.2	108.1	112.9	111.6	109.9	111.1	110.5	112.1
Adelaide ..	100.0	103.5	106.2	111.1	114.9	115.7	110.9	113.4	113.1	110.4
Perth ..	100.0	106.3	109.5	111.3	116.8	115.4	116.7	118.8	117.5	114.0
Hobart ..	100.0	107.7	106.8	113.6	118.3	120.4	116.7	117.0	114.2	114.2
Six Capitals ^(b)	100.0	103.7	104.6	110.6	115.8	116.2	113.2	114.2	113.8	112.4

GROUP II.—CLOTHING AND DRAPERY.

Sydney ..	100.0	101.7	102.3	103.0	105.9	105.7	106.6	107.6	108.1	108.7
Melbourne ..	100.0	101.3	102.2	103.9	106.4	105.8	106.6	109.0	109.6	110.3
Brisbane ..	100.0	101.7	102.9	103.3	105.8	104.9	106.7	107.9	108.3	109.1
Adelaide ..	100.0	102.2	102.9	102.9	103.9	103.2	104.1	105.5	106.2	107.1
Perth ..	100.0	100.9	101.6	103.0	105.4	104.4	106.0	107.3	107.7	108.3
Hobart ..	100.0	102.6	103.1	104.6	107.8	106.8	108.6	109.6	109.9	110.4
Six Capitals ^(b)	100.0	101.6	102.4	103.3	105.8	105.3	106.3	107.9	108.4	109.1

GROUP III.—RENT^(c) (4 AND 5 ROOMED HOUSES).

Sydney ..	100.0	107.7	109.5	111.3	113.5	112.4	114.2	115.4	116.9	117.9
Melbourne ..	100.0	100.8	102.3	111.9	123.3	122.4	123.6	125.2	125.9	126.6
Brisbane ..	100.0	102.9	105.2	107.0	111.0	110.3	111.7	113.3	115.0	115.5
Adelaide ..	100.0	102.7	105.6	114.9	124.8	123.7	126.3	128.1	131.2	132.6
Perth ..	100.0	110.8	119.6	159.1	169.2	168.5	169.7	171.8	173.5	174.7
Hobart ..	100.0	108.8	109.4	126.1	151.9	150.9	153.9	155.0	156.8	158.9
Six Capitals ^(b)	100.0	105.0	109.6	115.5	122.5	121.5	123.1	124.6	126.1	127.0

GROUP IV.—OTHER ITEMS.

Sydney ..	100.0	100.5	100.9	103.6	121.5	121.4	122.5	124.1	124.6	124.8
Melbourne ..	100.0	100.9	101.3	109.6	116.4	116.4	116.7	116.9	117.4	117.7
Brisbane ..	100.0	103.0	104.5	110.1	117.9	118.0	118.6	119.0	119.4	119.6
Adelaide ..	100.0	99.3	99.9	103.7	107.9	107.9	108.3	108.5	110.5	111.1
Perth ..	100.0	100.8	101.9	106.4	113.7	114.5	114.8	115.3	115.6	115.7
Hobart ..	100.0	108.2	105.1	110.3	120.1	119.7	120.3	121.1	121.2	121.0
Six Capitals ^(b)	100.0	100.9	101.4	106.4	117.8	117.8	118.5	119.3	119.9	120.1

NOTE.—For footnotes see next page.

INTERIM RETAIL PRICE INDEX NUMBERS—continued.

(Base of each Index: Year 1952-53 = 100.)

City.	Year ended June, 1953.	Year ended June, 1954.	Year ended June, 1955.	Year ended June, 1956.	Year ended June, 1957.	1956.		1957.		
						Dec. Qtr.	Mar. Qtr.	June Qtr.	Sept. Qtr.	Dec. Qtr.
ALL GROUPS (EXCLUDING POTATOES AND ONIONS). (a)										
Sydney	100.0	101.9	103.2	105.3	113.0	112.6	113.7	114.5	115.2	115.2
Melbourne	100.0	102.1	102.9	108.4	113.5	113.1	113.7	114.8	115.3	115.2
Brisbane	100.0	102.3	103.7	105.9	110.3	109.5	110.9	112.0	112.3	113.6
Adelaide	100.0	101.6	103.6	106.3	109.5	108.7	109.7	111.0	112.2	111.8
Perth	100.0	103.9	109.5	112.6	117.9	117.2	118.4	119.9	119.8	118.9
Hobart	100.0	106.3	105.6	110.6	118.0	117.7	118.5	119.2	119.0	119.4
Six Capitals(b)	100.0	102.2	103.7	107.0	113.0	112.5	113.5	114.5	115.1	115.1

ALL GROUPS (INCLUDING POTATOES AND ONIONS).										
Sydney	100.0	102.2	103.1	106.1	114.1	113.8	113.7	114.7	115.0	114.8
Melbourne	100.0	102.4	102.7	109.5	115.1	115.5	114.1	115.3	115.5	115.3
Brisbane	100.0	103.0	104.0	107.1	111.7	111.2	111.4	112.4	112.5	113.4
Adelaide	100.0	102.0	103.6	107.2	110.9	110.9	109.7	111.3	112.2	111.7
Perth	100.0	103.9	109.6	112.7	118.3	117.6	118.7	120.2	120.1	119.1
Hobart	100.0	106.6	105.6	111.5	119.1	119.4	118.9	119.6	118.8	119.1
Six Capitals(b)	100.0	102.5	103.6	108.0	114.3	114.2	113.7	114.8	115.1	114.9

(a) See paragraph 6 on page 15. (b) Weighted average. (c) Rent.—The rent index numbers shown in the table above and elsewhere in this publication measure the proportionate rise and fall in the average weekly rentals paid for houses of four and five rooms taking corresponding houses throughout. They are "price" indexes in the strict sense, i.e., they are designed to measure only the "price" element in rent fluctuations. Rentals of new tenanted houses completed since the end of the war are not taken into account.

INTERIM RETAIL PRICE INDEX: GROUP INDEXES.

WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF SIX CAPITAL CITIES.

(Base: Year 1952-53 = 100.)

Period.	Food.(a)		Clothing and Drapery.	Rent.(b)	Other Items.	Aggregate All Groups.(a)	
	A	B				A	B
Year ended June—							
1953	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1954	102.8	103.7	101.6	105.0	100.9	102.2	102.5
1955	104.8	104.6	102.4	109.6	101.4	103.7	103.6
1956	108.1	110.6	103.3	115.5	106.4	107.0	108.0
1957	112.4	113.8	105.8	122.5	117.8	113.0	114.3
Quarter ended—							
1954—December	104.3	103.7	102.3	109.3	101.2	103.4	103.2
1955—March	105.3	105.3	102.4	109.7	101.2	103.8	103.8
June	106.0	106.4	103.3	110.5	101.9	104.5	104.7
September	106.7	108.2	103.3	111.4	102.8	105.1	105.7
December	107.0	109.0	103.4	112.0	106.2	106.3	107.0
1956—March	108.2	110.6	103.3	118.8	106.7	107.4	108.3
June	110.7	114.5	103.4	119.7	110.1	109.4	110.8
September	111.9	119.6	103.8	120.6	115.6	111.5	114.4
December	111.6	116.2	105.3	121.5	117.8	112.5	114.2
1957—March	112.6	113.2	106.3	123.1	118.5	113.5	113.7
June	113.3	114.2	107.9	124.6	119.3	114.5	114.8
September	113.7	113.8	108.4	126.1	119.9	115.1	115.1
December	112.8	112.4	109.1	127.0	120.1	115.1	114.9

(a) Indexes in Columns "A" exclude, and those in Columns "B" include, potatoes and onions. See paragraph 6 on page 15. (b) See note (c) above.

§ 5. The "C" Series Retail Price Index: 1914-1957.

1. **Construction.**—Full particulars relating to the construction, items, weights and method of tabulation of the "C" Series Retail Price Index were last published in Labour Report No. 41, 1952, on pages 10-18. Tabular statements of index numbers were shown on pages 19-27, and historical particulars of the index, and its relation to automatic basic wage variations prior to 12th September, 1953, on pages 32-40.

2. **Significant Dates.**—The following table furnishes index numbers for the six capital cities as a whole, for certain significant dates since November, 1914—the earliest date for which this index is available.

"C" SERIES RETAIL PRICE INDEX NUMBERS.

WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF SIX CAPITAL CITIES.

(Base: Weighted average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-27 = 1,000.)

1914, November	687 (Beginning of 1914-18 War)
1918, November	905 (End of 1914-18 War)
1920, November	1,166 (Post-War peak)
1922, November	975 (Post-War trough)
1929, Year	1,033 (Pre-Depression peak)
1933, Year	804 (Depression trough)
1939, September Quarter	916 (Pre-1939-45 War)
1943, March Quarter	1,123 (Pre-Price Stabilization)
1943, June Quarter	1,143 (1939-45 War peak)
1945, September Quarter	1,126 (End of 1939-45 War)
1948, September Quarter	1,311
1950, September Quarter	1,572
1952, September Quarter	2,238
1953, September Quarter	2,321
1954, September Quarter	2,321
1955, September Quarter(a)2,394
1956, September Quarter(a)2,511
1957, September Quarter(a)2,578

(a) Excludes price movement of potatoes and onions. See paragraph 6 on page 15.

The index rose by approximately 32 per cent. during the 1914-18 War and by a further 29 per cent. in the two post-war years (November, 1918 to November, 1920). From November, 1920 to November, 1922, there was a fall of 16 per cent., and the index remained relatively stable until the onset of the depression in 1929. During the four years of the depression 1929 to 1933 the index fell by 22 per cent., rising thereafter steadily until 1939 when it was nearly 14 per cent. above the level of 1933, and approximately at the level it had occupied at the date of the Armistice of 1918. Between the outbreak of war (September, 1939) and March, 1943 (pre-price stabilization), the index rose by approximately 23 per cent. to a level slightly below that reached at the height of the post-war boom in 1920. Compared with that for the March Quarter, 1943, the index number at the close of the war was practically unchanged.

Immediately after the outbreak of the war, price control was established by the Government under Regulations dated 28th September, 1939, and a national policy of price stabilization was applied as from 12th April, 1943, backed by more stringent price control and price subsidies. The retail price level, as measured by the index, remained relatively steady throughout 1944 and 1945 at the level of March, 1943. This stabilized level was approximately 23 per cent. above that of 1939 and 63 per cent. above the level prevailing at the beginning of the 1914-18 War. After the June Quarter, 1946, war-time controls, subsidies, etc., were progressively modified and by early 1949 had been virtually eliminated. In the latter part of 1950 export prices (especially for wool) rose very substantially and have remained relatively very high. In December, 1950, the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration raised the basic wage by approximately 14 per cent. Concurrently, public works expenditure and private investment rose to very high levels.

This retail price index rose by 16 per cent. in the three years following the end of the 1939-45 War (i.e., to the September Quarter, 1948) and by 77 per cent. in the next five years to the September Quarter, 1953, and remained relatively stable at that level until the end of 1954. Since then the index (excluding recent price movement of potatoes and onions—see paragraph 6 on page 15) has risen each year and by the September Quarter, 1957 was 11.1 per cent. higher than at the September Quarter, 1954. The index including potatoes and onions showed an increase of 10.9 per cent. over the same period. This level was approximately 181 per cent. above that of 1939.

An account of price control measures and of price stabilization in Australia was published in *Official Year Book* No. 37, pages 458-464, and No. 40, pages 279-280.

3. Tabular Statements of "C" Series Retail Price Index, Six Capital Cities, 1914 to 1957.—Information relating to the "C" Series Retail Price index numbers is published as follows:—

Monthly.—The *Monthly Review of Business Statistics* contains annual and quarterly index numbers to the latest available date.

Quarterly.—Statements are issued about three weeks after the end of each quarter relating to the "C" Series Retail Price Index for that quarter and immediately preceding quarters. The *Quarterly Summary of Australian Statistics* contains annual and quarterly index numbers to the latest available date. This publication also contains certain average prices of items of food and groceries for each month of the latest available quarter.

Annual.—In addition to the information published in the annual Labour Report the *Official Year Book* contains a brief summary concerning the index.

The movement in the various groups of the index and in the index as a whole for each year for which it has been compiled is shown in the following table for the six capital cities combined:—

"C" SERIES RETAIL PRICE INDEX AND ITS "GROUP" INDEX NUMBERS(a)
FOR THE SIX CAPITAL CITIES COMBINED.

(Base of Each Group: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-27 = 1,000).

Period.	Food and Groceries.(b)	Rent (4 and 5 roomed Houses).(c)	Clothing.	Miscel- laneous.	Total "C" Series Index.(b)	
1914(d)	641	649	754	749	687	
1915(d)	842	659	792	786	782	
1916(d)	812	665	881	802	795	
1917(d)	836	685	992	882	847	
1918(d)	861	722	1,097	972	905	
1919(d)	1,026	768	1,238	1,036	1,022	
1920(d)	1,209	851	1,365	1,194	1,166	
1921(d)	950	877	1,246	1,010	1,013	
1922(d)	945	929	1,052	999	975	
1923	1,009	950	1,045	999	1,003	
1924	969	988	1,003	1,004	987	
1925	998	1,008	991	992	997	
1926	1,023	1,026	986	998	1,011	
1927	1,000	1,030	975	1,008	1,002	
1928	985	1,066	997	1,010	1,009	
1929	1,044	1,073	996	1,007	1,033	
1930	941	1,047	951	999	975	
1931	826	901	853	973	873	
1932	796	817	804	958	830	
1933	751	804	787	950	804	
1934	783	810	785	944	817	
1935	806	839	783	946	832	
1936	825	879	792	947	850	
1937	851	912	811	960	873	
1938	886	942	829	961	897	
1939	927	965	841	962	920	
1940	939	973	956	998	957	
1941	947	976	1,118	1,060	1,008	
1942	1,031	976	1,308	1,112	1,091	
1943	1,037	975	1,440	1,160	1,131	
1944	1,026	976	1,435	1,165	1,126	
1945	1,034	975	1,425	1,161	1,126	
1946	1,036	976	1,505	1,167	1,145	
1947	1,100	977	1,566	1,199	1,188	
1948	1,256	979	1,744	1,257	1,295	
1949	1,394	982	1,997	1,338	1,415	
1950	1,566	987	2,286	1,435	1,560	
1951	2,041	1,009	2,749	1,679	1,883	
1952	2,526	1,057	3,096	1,958	2,196	
1953	2,641	1,138	3,223	2,053	2,302	
1954	2,671	1,192	3,218	2,062	2,326	
1955	2,811	1,226	3,237	2,081	2,393	
1956	A 2,923 B 3,084	1,325	3,261	2,236	A 2,489 B 2,547	
1957	2,973	2,971	1,380	3,357	2,567	2,565

For footnotes see next page.

"C" SERIES RETAIL PRICE INDEX AND ITS "GROUP" INDEX NUMBERS(a)
FOR THE SIX CAPITAL CITIES COMBINED—continued.

(Base of Each Group: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-27 = 1,000.)

Period.	Food and Groceries. (b)	Rent (4 and 5 rooms) Houses. (c)	Clothing.	Miscel- laneous.	Total "C" Series Index:(b)		
Quarter—							
1939—September..	920	967	836	961	916		
1945—September..	1,040	975	1,415	1,161	1,326		
1948—March ..	1,190	978	1,661	1,231	1,248		
June ..	1,229	979	1,720	1,248	1,278		
September..	1,274	979	1,778	1,271	1,311		
December..	1,330	980	1,818	1,277	1,341		
1949—March ..	1,361	981	1,849	1,304	1,364		
June ..	1,388	981	1,963	1,325	1,403		
September..	1,396	982	2,043	1,345	1,428		
December..	1,429	983	2,132	1,378	1,466		
1950—March ..	1,473	984	2,156	1,402	1,491		
June ..	1,520	986	2,261	1,413	1,534		
September..	1,582	987	2,316	1,432	1,572		
December ..	1,689	989	2,410	1,492	1,643		
1951—March ..	1,790	1,004	2,487	1,564	1,713		
June ..	1,925	1,007	2,746	1,641	1,833		
September..	2,136	1,010	2,833	1,715	1,943		
December..	2,311	1,013	2,930	1,794	2,042		
1952—March ..	2,404	1,023	2,992	1,828	2,098		
June ..	2,567	1,041	3,099	1,949	2,206		
September..	2,592	1,070	3,105	2,018	2,238		
December..	2,542	1,094	3,177	2,035	2,243		
1953—March ..	2,572	1,122	3,200	2,048	2,268		
June ..	2,605	1,136	3,245	2,051	2,293		
September..	2,686	1,144	3,228	2,054	2,321		
December ..	2,702	1,151	3,217	2,060	2,327		
1954—March ..	2,683	1,162	3,228	2,070	2,327		
June ..	2,670	1,191	3,212	2,061	2,324		
September..	2,654	1,205	3,210	2,058	2,321		
December..	2,677	1,209	3,222	2,060	2,333		
1955—March ..	2,730	1,213	3,218	2,046	2,349		
June ..	2,770	1,222	3,240	2,070	2,375		
	A	B			A	B	
1955—September..	2,810	2,854	1,232	3,243	2,081	2,394	2,411
December..	2,831	2,891	1,238	3,248	2,128	2,413	2,435
1956—March ..	2,851	2,926	1,310	3,243	2,137	2,437	2,465
June ..	2,922	3,054	1,320	3,248	2,212	2,480	2,528
September..	2,966	3,244	1,330	3,260	2,273	2,511	2,612
December..	2,954	3,111	1,339	3,292	2,320	2,526	2,583
1957—March ..	2,973	2,982	1,357	3,323	2,336	2,547	2,550
June ..	2,977	2,997	1,373	3,354	2,368	2,565	2,572
September..	2,987	2,975	1,389	3,365	2,387	2,578	2,574
December..	2,955	2,928	1,400	3,386	2,397	2,576	2,565

(a) "Group" index numbers in the above table cannot be compared with each other in order to show the relative cost of Food and Groceries, Rent, Clothing or Miscellaneous requirements, since each "Group" has its own Base = 1,000, namely, the weighted average cost for the six capital cities as a whole during the five-year period 1923-27. (b) Indexes in Columns "A" exclude, and those in Columns "B" include, the price movement of potatoes and onions. See paragraph 6 on page 15. (c) Rent. The rent index numbers shown in the tables in this Report measure the proportionate rise and fall in the average weekly rentals paid for houses of four and five rooms, taking corresponding houses throughout. They are "price" indexes in the strict sense, i.e., they are designed to measure only the "price" element in rent fluctuations. Rentals of new tenanted houses completed since the end of the war are not taken into account. (d) November.

A graph showing "C" Series retail price index numbers appears on page 65.

§ 6. International Comparisons: Retail Price Index Numbers.

A.—The following table shows the increases in retail prices in Australia and certain other countries since the quarter during which the 1939–45 War commenced. In this section, the index used for Australia is of necessity the "C" Series Retail Price Index. The figures show fluctuations in prices in each country, and do not measure relative price levels as between the various countries included.

RETAIL PRICE INDEX NUMBERS.

(FOOD, RENT, CLOTHING, MISCELLANEOUS HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE.)

(Base: September Quarter, 1939 = 100.)

Period.	Australia.(a)		United Kingdom.	Canada.	New Zealand.	Union of South Africa.(b)	United States of America.
1939—							
September Quarter	100		100	100	100	100	100
1940—Year	105		119	105	104	104	100
1941— " "	110		104	111	108	109	105
1942— " "	119		129	116	111	118	116
1943— " "	124		128	117	114	126	125
1944— " "	123		129	118	116	130	123
1945— " "	123		131	119	118	133	127
1946— " "	125		131	123	119	135	138
1947— " "	130		(c)102	134	122	141	158
1948— " "	141		108	154	132	149	170
1949— " "	155		111	(d)160	(e)134	154	168
1950— " "	170		114	165	142	160	171
1951— " "	206		124	183	157	172	185
1952— " "	240		136	186	170	187	189
1953— " "	251		140	184	177	194	190
1954— " "	254		143	185	186	197	191
1955— " "	261		149	185	(d)190	204	191
1956— " "	A 272	B 278	(d)157	188	197	207	193
1955—March Qtr. . .	256		146	185	189	202	190
June " " "	259		148	185	190	203	190
Sept. " " "	261	263	150	185	191	204	191
Dec. " " "	263	266	153	186	191	205	191
1956—March Qtr. . .	266	269	154	186	193	205	190
June " " "	271	276	157	186	195	207	192
Sept. " " "	274	285	157	189	199	208	194
Dec. " " "	276	282	158	191	199	208	196
1957—March Qtr. . .	278	278	160	192	198	210	197
June " " "	280	281	161	193	201	211	199

(a) Indexes in Column "A" exclude, and those in Column "B" include, the price movement of potatoes and onions. See paragraph 6 on page 13. (b) Food, Rent and Miscellaneous Expenditure. (c) New Series (Base: 17th June, 1947 = 100); cannot be linked to former series. (d) New series linked to former series. (e) Consumers' (Retail) Price Index from March quarter, 1949, onwards. Index numbers for earlier periods (shown for purposes of comparison) are obtained by linking the movement in the Retail Price Index (Base: 1926–30) to the new index.

B.—The following tables give index numbers of retail prices for various countries. Except where otherwise noted, the average prices for the year 1953 are taken as base (= 100). The figures, which have been taken from the *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* of the Statistical Office of the United Nations, show fluctuations in prices in each country, and do not measure relative price levels as between the various countries included.

INDEX NUMBERS OF RETAIL PRICES IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES.

(Source: *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* of the Statistical Office of the United Nations.)

(Base: 1953 = 100.)

FOOD, CLOTHING, RENT AND MISCELLANEOUS.

Period.	ARGENTINA (Buenos Aires).	AUSTRALIA.	BELGIUM (d)	BRAZIL (Sao Paulo).	CANADA.	DENMARK (b)	FRANCE (Paris).	GERMANY (Western).	INDIA.	IRELAND (c)	ITALY.
1950	51	68	91	62	89	87	77	93	95	81	86
1951	69	-82	99	-57	98	96	91	100	98	87	94
1952	96	96	100	82	101	100	101	102	97	95	98
1953	100	100	-100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1954	104	101	101	118	101	101	100	100	95	100	103
1955	117	104	101	142	101	106	101	102	96	103	106
1956	132	110	104	173	102	111	103	105	99	107	111
1956—											
March Qtr. ..	122	107	102	159	101	109	103	104	93	106	109
June	131	109	103	166	101	110	103	105	98	107	111
Sept.	135	113	104	176	103	111	102	105	101	108	111
Dec.	140	112	105	189	104	112	103	106	102	107	111
1957—											
March Qtr. ..	146	112	106	197	104	114	103	106	101	108	112
June	159	113	106	204	105	114	103	106	103	111	112

Period.	JAPAN.	NETHERLANDS.	NEW ZEALAND.	NORWAY.	PAKISTAN (Karachi).	PHILIPPINES (Manila).	SWEDEN.	SWITZERLAND.	UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA (e)	UNITED KINGDOM.	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
1950	77	91	80	78	85	102	79	94	83	81	90
1951	-89	99	89	90	88	111	92	98	89	89	97
1952	94	100	96	98	90	104	99	101	97	-97	99
1953	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	-100
1954	106	104	105	104	98	99	a-101	101	102	102	100
1955	105	106	-107	105	94	98	104	102	105	106	100
1956	106	108	111	109	97	100	109	103	107	-112	102
1956—											
March Qtr. ..	105	107	109	106	96	98	107	102	106	-110	100
June	106	108	110	110	96	99	109	103	107	112	101
Sept.	106	109	112	111	99	101	109	104	107	112	102
Dec.	107	109	112	110	99	102	110	104	108	113	103
1957—											
March Qtr. ..	109	110	112	111	102	101	113	104	108	114	104
June	110	111	113	113	105	99	113	105	109	115	105

(a) Rent is not included. (b) Including direct taxes. (c) Base: August, 1953 = 100.
(d) July-December. (e) Europeans only. Including direct taxes.

NOTE.—Symbol - on each side of an index number (e.g., -95-) indicates that two series have been linked at that period. Symbol — between two index numbers indicates that it is not possible to link two series (change in scope, etc.) and therefore the index numbers are not comparable with each other even though they are shown on the same base period.

INDEX NUMBERS OF RETAIL PRICES IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES—*continued.*

(Base: 1953 = 100.)

INDEX NUMBERS OF RETAIL PRICES OF FOOD.

Period.	ARGENTINA (Buenos Aires).	AUSTRALIA.	BELGIUM.	BRAZIL (Sao Paulo).	CANADA.	DENMARK.	FRANCE (Paris).	GERMANY (Western).	INDIA.	INDONESIA (Jakarta).	IRELAND.(g)
1950	49	59	90	55	91	85	80	89	93	53	78
1951	67	-76	96	-57	104	94	93	97	96	89	83
1952	97	95	99	74	104	100	102	102	94	94	92
1953	100	100	-100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	-100
1954	99	101	103	119	100	104	98	102	93	106	100
1955	110	105	102	142	100	111	99	104	85	141	104
1956	125	113	104	175	101	116	101	106	96	161	105
1956—											
March Qtr. ..	116	108	103	164	98	116	101	106	88	173	106
June	125	112	104	166	98	117	101	107	96	156	106
Sept.	127	117	104	179	103	114	100	106	100	155	105
Dec.	135	114	105	192	104	115	100	107	101	161	102
1957—											
March Qtr. ..	142	111	106	196	104	116	100	107	99	156	102
June	158	112	106	195	104	110	99	107	101	158	106

Period.	ITALY.	JAPAN.	NETHERLANDS.	NEW ZEALAND.	NORWAY.	PAKISTAN (Karachi).	PHILIPPINES (Manila).	SWEDEN.	UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.(c)	UNITED KINGDOM.(d)	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
1950	88	79	89	74	74	84	103	74	76	113	90
1951	94	-91	96	86	87	89	111	87	81	126	100
1952	98	94	99	94	99	93	106	98	95	95	102
1953	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	-100
1954	103	108	104	105	108	98	99	100	101	103	100
1955	106	105	106	-108	108	95	98	105	104	110	98
1956	110	104	109	114	113	100	101	113	106	102	99
1956—											
March Qtr. ..	109	103	107	109	108	96	98	111	105	101	97
June	111	104	109	112	116	97	99	114	107	104	98
Sept.	113	102	111	118	116	104	103	113	106	101	101
Dec.	110	104	110	117	112	102	104	112	107	102	100
1957—											
March Qtr. ..	110	107	111	110	113	107	100	114	108	103	100
June	109	108	113	114	115	111	99	114	109	105	102

(a) Base: August, 1953 = 100. (b) July-December. (c) Europeans only. (d) Prior to 1952, base: 1948 = 100; beginning 1956, base: January, 1956 = 100.

NOTE.—Symbol — on each side of an index number (e.g., -95-) indicates that two series have been linked at that period. Symbol — between two index numbers indicates that it is not possible to link two series: (change in scope, etc.) and therefore the index numbers are not comparable with each other even though they are shown on the same base period.