

Australian Bureau of Statistics Policy on Release of Statistics

Purpose

To preserve its position of independence and impartiality in the release of statistics, it is the aim of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to ensure that the main findings of statistical collections and compilations are widely known, easily accessible and that equal opportunity in access is enjoyed by all users or potential users of the statistics. General releases are the primary means by which the ABS fulfils its mission through publishing the main findings of statistical collections and compilations, and more detailed statistical and related information. They are prepared in anticipation of demand and are subject to ABS policy.

Legislation

2 Section 12(1) of the Census and Statistics Act 1905 (CSA) requires the Statistician to compile and analyse the statistical information collected under the CSA, and to publish and disseminate the results of any such compilation and analysis, or abstracts of those results.

Delegation

3. The following delegations are in place:

- a. The Australian Statistician must approve the issue of any new Central Office publication.
- b. The relevant Regional Director must approve the issue of any new State Office publication.
- c. The First Assistant Statistician (FAS) or delegate of the author area must approve the issue of a Main Economic Indicator (MEI) publication.
- d. The Assistant Statistician (AS) or delegate of the appropriate author area of an NPC or State must approve the issue of State publications produced by an NPC or State.
- e. The AS or delegate of the appropriate author area must approve the issue of all other publications. For author areas which report directly to a Deputy Australian Statistician (DAS) or FAS, the DAS, FAS or their delegate must approve the issue of all other publications.

Rules

4 The following rules apply to the release of statistics:

- a. The first results of collections, compilations and analyses must be published and their publication must precede or coincide with the release of the detailed data. Electronic only release of first results on the ABS web site is permitted provided the release is discernible (as a PDF file or Main Features), advised in the Release Advice and subject to release approvals procedures.

b. Release times are set in advance for ABS publications and other standard products and are managed through internal registration systems. Release times are notified as an indicative month up to 18 months before the intended release time and dates are progressively upgraded to a firm month and then a firm date. The times prior to release at which these upgrades in firmness are made are different according to the importance and frequency of the publication - Main Economic Indicators (MEIs) and Other Leading Indicators (OLIs); other monthly and quarterly releases, annual and irregular releases.

c. Areas producing MEIs and OLIs (listed below) must provide firm release dates at least twelve months in advance. These dates will be published and each regular monthly and quarterly publication will advise the date of the next release.

d. Areas producing other regular monthly and quarterly releases must provide firm release dates six months in advance. Each regular monthly and quarterly publication will publish these six months ahead release dates.

e. Areas producing annual and irregular releases must provide an accurate indication of the month of release twelve months in advance and firm release dates three months in advance. Only the month of release will be published twelve months in advance. The day of release will be published at the beginning of the third month before release.

f. MEIs are grouped into "Category 1" Main Economic Indicators and "Category 2" Main Economic Indicators.

"Category 1" Main Economic Indicators

(Q= Quarterly, M= Monthly):

5206.0 Q	Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product
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6202.0 M	Labour Force, Australia
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6401.0 Q	Consumer Price Index, Australia
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"Category 2" Main Economic Indicators

(Q= Quarterly, M= Monthly)

5302.0 Q	Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia
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5368.0 M	International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia
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5609.0 M	Housing Finance, Australia
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5625.0 Q	Private New Capital Expenditure and Expected Expenditure, Australia
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5671.0 M	Lending Finance, Australia
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5676.0 Q	Business Indicators, Australia
6345.0 Q	Labour Price Index, Australia
6354.0 Q	Job Vacancies, Australia
6416.0 Q	House Price Indexes: Eight Capital Cities
6427.0 Q	Producer Price Indexes, Australia
6457.0 Q	International Trade Price Indexes, Australia
8501.0 M	Retail Trade, Australia
8731.0 M	Building Approvals, Australia
8750.0 Q	Dwelling Unit Commencements, Australia, Preliminary
9314.0 M	Sales of New Motor Vehicles, Australia (Electronic)

g. OLIs are referred to as a third category of main release:

"Category 3" Other Leading Indicators (OLIs)

(Q= Quarterly)

6302.0 Q	Average Weekly Earnings, Australia
8755.0 Q	Construction Work Done, Australia, Preliminary

h. Major releases must be scheduled to avoid the need for key users having to digest too many indicators released at the same time. To achieve this, spreading rules are applied as follows.

Only one category 1 MEI can be released on any day. When category 1 MEIs are released, one OLI (i.e. not another category 1 or a category 2 MEI) can be released on the same day.

When two category 2 MEIs are released, no OLI can be released on the same day. If only one category 2 MEI is being released only one OLI can be also be released on the same day.

OLIs are not restricted otherwise as to how many are released in a day.

i. Once a "firm" release date has been registered and advertised it can be varied only with the approval of the relevant Deputy Australian Statistician, or the relevant Regional Director in the case of state specific publications. This requirement does not apply to the routine upgrading of release time firmness progressively from "indicative month" through "firm month" to "firm date".

- j. All publications are subject to an embargo.
- k. The embargo time in all ABS offices for national publications is 11.30 a.m. Canberra time and is published on the ABS website at that time and not before.
- l. Release of all publications is subject to strict security; no unauthorised persons can access publications or their contents prior to the nominated embargo time. However, given the high level of market and community interest in some statistical series, it is important from a 'public good' perspective that key ministers are able to respond in an informed manner to requests for early comment on the released statistics from the media, thereby avoiding any inadvertent misinterpretation. Policy on access to embargoed statistical products is covered under Policy section 5c. below

Policy

5 The following policies apply to the release of statistics:

- a. The results of collections, compilations and analyses should be disseminated to users as soon as practicable after the data on which they are based have been collected.
- b. Release times
 - i. Monthly MEI publications should be released within the month following the reference month; other monthly publications should be released within 6 weeks of the reference month;
 - ii. Quarterly MEI publications should be released within 2 months of the reference quarter; other quarterly publications should be released within the quarter following the reference quarter;
 - iii. Annual publications should be released within one year of the reference year;
 - iv. For irregular collections the first major release should be within 12 months of the reference period.
- c. Access to embargoed statistical products may occur for one of four purposes:
 - i. through the conduct of a Secure lockup – or in one circumstance restricted prerelease access – to avoid the potential but significant consequences of inadvertent misinterpretation or misreporting of the headline features of a key statistical release of high public interest by the relevant minister(s), once the embargo is lifted;
 - ii. to facilitate Peer review of an upcoming statistical release;
 - iii. to facilitate production of a Joint release with another organisation; or
 - iv. to assist the Statistician to release ABS statistics at a public launch or similar event
- d. A reference to unpublished statistics should appear in all ABS publications.
- e. Unpublished statistics which are unrelated to a specific publication should not be released until their availability has been publicised.

Procedures

6 Detailed procedures which provide advice regarding the process for releasing statistics, are available in the ABS Publishing Manual.