

Australian stone: imports and exports

Following a decrease in 2006, the value of stone imports and exports rose in 2007.

Providing a complete picture of the Australian stone market is complicated by the fact that the quarrying, production and processing of dimension stone is not tracked at a national level; data must be sourced from the relevant departments in each state and territory. However, some general trends are evident from import and export data alone.

Stone is included in two chapters of the international Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HCS), which forms the basis of both the Australian Harmonized Export Commodity Classification (used to collect export statistics) and the Combined Australian Customs Tariff Nomenclature and Statistical Classification (used to collect import statistics). **Table 1** lists the headings for which data are provided here.

Unfortunately, the Australian Bureau of Statistics records only the dollar value of stone imports and exports, so their volume or weight is not known.

Imports

In the 2007 calendar year, Australia imported stone with a value of A\$130.611 million, an increase of more than A\$19 million (17.4 per cent) over the previous year (**Table 2**). Most of this value can be attributed to worked monumental building stone (as described in HCS chapter 68) such as marble, travertine, alabaster, granite and other stones. Unworked stone (as described in HCS chapter 25) consistently represents less than 5 per cent of the total value of imports, and has dropped since 2005. This reflects an increased interest in – or perhaps just the increased cost of – worked stone compared with roughly cut slabs.

In the past three years, the same countries have accounted for the most valuable imports into Australia (**Table 3**). The value of imports from China increased by 16.7 per cent in 2007 compared with 2006, and now accounts for one-third of the total. Italy and India also supply a large proportion of the most valuable imports, together comprising more than 40 per cent of the total. Since 2005, the percentage of the total value imported from countries other than the top suppliers has dropped from more than 10 per cent to less than 5 per cent.

Unsurprisingly, New South Wales took the largest proportion of imports (by value) during the past three years, with the remaining states and territories ranked in almost exactly the same order as their populations (**Table 4**). Since 2005, the value of products entering most states and territories has increased, with the exception of the Northern Territory, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

Exports

Australia exported stone worth A\$9.120 million in 2007, an increase of A\$722,000 over 2006, and A\$461,000 over 2005 (**Table 5**). The bulk of this value came from unworked stone, particularly granite (which accounted for more than 45 per cent of the 2007 exports' total value).

China took A\$3.629 million worth of Australian exports (39.8 per cent) in 2007 – a sharp increase of 150 per cent over the previous year's value, which itself was a 50 per cent increase over 2005 (**Table 6**). In that same time frame, the value of exports to Italy dropped by more than 50 per cent from A\$2.735 million to A\$1.324 million, whereas the values for New Zealand remained comparatively steady.

Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia together provided approximately

Table 1. Some sub-sections of the international Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System that are relevant to stone.

Code	Description
25.15	Marble, travertine, ecaussine and other calcareous monumental or building stone of an apparent specific gravity of 2.5 or more, and alabaster, whether or not roughly trimmed or merely cut, by sawing or otherwise, into blocks or slabs of a rectangular (including square) shape:
25.15.1	Marble and travertine
25.15.11	Crude or roughly trimmed
25.15.12	Merely cut, by sawing or otherwise, into blocks or slabs of a rectangular (including square) shape
25.16	Granite, porphyry, basalt, sandstone and other monumental or building stone, whether or not roughly trimmed or merely cut, by sawing or otherwise, into blocks or slabs of a rectangular (including square) shape:
25.16.1	Granite
25.16.11	Crude or roughly trimmed
25.16.12	Merely cut, by sawing or otherwise, into blocks or slabs of a rectangular (including square) shape
25.16.90	Other monumental or building stone
68.02	Worked monumental or building stone (except slate) and articles thereof, other than goods of 6801; mosaic cubes and the like, of natural stone (including slate), whether or not on a backing; artificially coloured granules, chippings and powder, of natural stone (including slate):
68.02.2	Other monumental or building stone and articles thereof, simply cut or sawn, with a flat or even surface
68.02.21	Marble, travertine and alabaster
68.02.23	Granite
68.02.29	Other stone
68.02.9	Other
68.02.91	Marble, travertine and alabaster
68.02.93	Granite
68.02.99	Other stone

Table 2. Types of stone imported into Australia, 2005-2007.

Code	2005		2006		2007	
	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%
25.15.11	0.015	0.010	0.026	0.020	0.039	0.030
25.15.12	0.905	0.800	1.182	1.060	0.946	0.720
25.16.11	0.288	0.250	0.232	0.210	0.160	0.120
25.16.12	2.183	1.920	1.691	1.520	1.291	0.990
25.16.90	1.165	1.020	0.713	0.640	0.996	0.760
68.02.21	12.210	10.720	10.694	9.610	11.640	8.910
68.02.23	15.638	13.730	12.450	11.190	12.809	9.810
68.02.29	6.281	5.520	5.414	4.870	10.839	8.300
68.02.91	24.340	21.370	24.816	22.310	32.206	24.660
68.02.93	35.163	30.880	39.818	35.790	41.804	32.010
68.02.99	15.698	13.780	14.210	12.770	17.882	13.690
Total	113.886	100.000	111.246	100.000	130.611	100.000

Table 3. Country of origin for Australian imports, 2005-2007.

Country	2005		2006		2007	
	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%
China	30.851	27.090	37.413	33.630	43.662	33.430
Italy	32.800	28.800	30.832	27.720	36.484	27.930
India	19.187	16.850	15.250	13.710	18.266	13.990
Turkey	5.026	4.410	5.152	4.630	7.591	5.810
Spain	4.825	4.240	4.370	3.930	6.210	4.750
Indonesia	4.156	3.650	4.580	4.120	5.036	3.860
Iran	1.197	1.050	1.730	1.560	3.333	2.550
Brazil	2.818	2.480	2.003	1.800	1.748	1.340
Vietnam	0.980	0.860	1.134	1.020	1.464	1.120
New Zealand	0.496	0.440	0.251	0.230	0.961	0.740
Other	11.552	10.130	8.531	7.650	5.855	4.480
Total	113.886	100.000	111.246	100.000	130.611	100.000

Table 4. State/territory of destination for Australian imports, 2005-2007.

State	2005		2006		2007		Population*
	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%	
NSW	55.103	48.384	48.319	43.434	57.170	43.771	6,889,100
Vic	26.157	22.968	25.345	22.783	28.258	21.635	5,205,200
Qld	17.803	15.632	20.391	18.330	25.101	19.218	4,182,100
WA	10.567	9.279	12.789	11.496	15.814	12.108	2,118,500
SA	3.137	2.755	3.739	3.361	3.502	2.681	1,584,500
NT	0.553	0.486	0.316	0.284	0.457	0.350	217,559
Tas	0.530	0.465	0.342	0.307	0.308	0.236	494,520
ACT	0.036	0.031	0.004	0.004	0.000	0.000	339,900
Total	113.886	100.000	111.246	100.000	130.611	100.000	

*Source: Wikipedia

Table 6. Country of destination for Australian exports, 2005-2007.

Country	2005		2006		2007	
	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%
China	0.964	11.140	1.449	17.250	3.629	39.790
New Zealand	1.933	22.330	1.867	22.240	1.785	19.570
Italy	2.735	31.580	2.508	29.870	1.324	14.520
Taiwan	0.797	9.200	1.064	12.680	0.768	8.420
Thailand	0.092	1.060	0.147	1.750	0.474	5.200
Hong Kong	0.029	0.330	0.005	0.060	0.204	2.240
Macau	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.144	1.580
South Africa	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.126	1.380
United States	0.537	6.200	0.529	6.300	0.120	1.320
India	0.012	0.140	0.098	1.170	0.105	1.160
Other	1.560	18.020	0.731	8.680	0.441	4.820
Total	8.659	100.000	8.398	100.000	9.120	100.000

Table 5. Types of stone exported from Australia, 2005-2007.

Code	2005		2006		2007	
	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%
25.15.11	0.979	11.300	0.012	0.140	0.104	1.140
25.15.12	0.163	1.890	0.482	5.740	0.319	3.500
25.16.11	3.395	39.210	3.657	43.550	3.083	33.810
25.16.12	0.705	8.140	1.265	15.060	1.165	12.780
25.16.90	0.048	0.560	0.198	2.360	1.373	15.060
68.02.21	0.297	3.430	0.250	2.980	0.211	2.310
68.02.23	0.379	4.370	0.185	2.200	0.689	7.550
68.02.29	0.229	2.640	0.710	8.450	0.117	1.280
68.02.91	0.148	1.710	0.167	1.980	0.215	2.360
68.02.93	1.029	11.890	1.152	13.720	0.773	8.470
68.02.99	1.287	14.860	0.320	3.820	1.072	11.750
Total	8.659	100.000	8.398	100.000	9.120	100.000


Table 7. State of origin of Australian exports, 2005-2007.

State	2005		2006		2007	
	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%	A\$ mil	%
Qld	0.683	7.890	0.799	9.510	1.940	21.270
NSW	2.159	24.940	2.097	24.970	1.833	20.090
WA	1.882	21.740	1.042	12.410	1.794	19.670
NT	0.507	5.850	0.700	8.340	1.131	12.400
SA	2.570	29.680	2.925	34.830	0.897	9.830
Vic	0.526	6.070	0.419	4.990	0.588	6.450
Tas	0.002	0.030	0.007	0.090	0.000	0.000
Re-Exports	0.330	3.810	0.409	4.870	0.938	10.290
Total	8.659	100.000	8.398	100.000	9.120	100.000

three-fifths of the value of exports in 2007, thanks to an increase in Queensland's share of 143 per cent since 2006 (Table 7). The value of exports from the Northern Territory has steadily increased since 2005, whereas the value of exports from South Australia has dropped dramatically: from A\$2.570 million in 2005 to A\$897,000 in 2007.

In the first four months of 2008 (data not shown), China received A\$1.046 million worth of Australian exports – an increase of 158 per cent compared with the same period in 2007, which could signal another dramatic increase in the total value of stone exported to China by the end of the calendar year.

The value of re-exported stone has increased almost three-fold since 2005, and now accounts for more than 10 per cent of the total value of exported stone. Of course, this also means that a percentage of the stone imports is destined to leave again once it has been processed in Australia.

Based only on import and export data, the Australian stone market appears to be growing. Despite fluctuations in the types of stone, the suppliers and the recipients, the overall result is a steady increase in the value of both imports and exports. 
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