

# Foreword

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The conference on ‘Unemployment and the Australian Labour Market’ held on 9–10 June was the tenth in a series of annual conferences which the Bank began in 1989. Previous conferences have covered a range of macroeconomic topics, including the financial system, the balance of payments, productivity and growth, and inflation and monetary policy. The labour market was one amongst several areas covered in the 1990 volume which examined Australian economic performance in the 1980s, but it had not been the exclusive focus of a conference. The 1990s, moreover, have left economists with much to explain about the operation of labour markets, not only in Australia but around the world. It seemed appropriate, therefore, that the 1998 conference be devoted entirely to labour market questions.

When we in the Bank commenced our planning along these lines, we became aware that the Centre for Economic Policy Research at the ANU was working towards a similar conference. It was agreed that we should combine our efforts, and organise and present the conference jointly. The result is the set of papers and discussions in this volume. The conference brought together some of the Bank’s economists, economists from business and academia, both domestic and international, and other interested parties. The bulk of the organisational work fell on Guy Debelle of the Bank’s Economic Research Department, and Jeff Borland of the ANU. They are the editors of this volume, which the Bank is pleased to publish to make the results available to a wider audience.

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11 August 1998