

Australian Imports of Stone

Words: Peter Halliday

Peter Halliday provides an in depth analysis of stone imports which cover the period from 2004-2005 up to and including the last six months of 2010. Peter explains that during the referenced time frame some codes changed. He also highlights how difficult it can be to accurately clarify some of the numbers, however we are pleased to be able to include figures for man-made quartz for the first time. Members of ASAA can access broader statistics on a country by country basis by visiting the members area of www.asaa.com.au. In the next edition we will publish a report on local production and exports.

Natural stone is categorised by Australian Customs under the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System when it is imported or exported. The Harmonised Tariff Item Statistical Codes (HTISC) is used for Australian imports and is based on the international standards that attempt to define all internationally traded goods under categories that broadly describe the materials and use. It is used by governments for determining tariff rates and applying concessions. Like any international system it is broad, inflexible and at times frustratingly limited.

There are over 7000 HTISC codes in use in Australia. As they are used to categorise everything imported they can be quite broad and can actually group dissimilar items due to the end use of the product imported. Some HTISC codes for natural stone are quite specific and the resulting data is useful for statistical analysis. Unfortunately most data is not like this. Helpful measures such as weight, volume or area covered, are not collected for most categories of natural stone. The only common data collected across all categories is the country of origin, the Australian state the goods land in and the Value for Customs purposes. This value is the cost price

and includes transport to the Australian wharf and a conversion to Australian dollars on the date the goods enter Australia.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collates all the information collected by Australian Customs. In this report we are presenting the ABS data for the last six financial years and the first 6 months of the 2010-2011 Financial Year. The total value for customs purposes of stone imports for 2009-2010 was A\$187.6 million. The data is grouped into broad categories and presented in 3 tables below for clarity. Stone that can be described as "crude or roughly trimmed blocks and slabs" and has a HTISC code beginning with 25 can be seen in **Fig.1**. The various types of stone covered can be seen in the various code descriptions.

All stone that can be described as "worked or finished natural stone" have HTISC codes beginning with 68. This data is presented in **Fig.2** and again the various sub categories and descriptions of stone type. It should be noted that there was a minor change in international and Australian HTISC numbers and descriptions in January 2007 which resulted in the old number 680222 being replaced by a new number 680292.

Figure 1. Crude or Roughly Trimmed Natural Stone Import Value A\$

Harmonised Tariff Item Statistical Classification (with Description)	FINANCIAL YEAR (July - June)						6 MONTHS Jul - Dec 2010	% of Total Customs Value
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010		
251400 Slate, crude, roughly trimmed or cut by sawing into blocks or slabs of a rectangular shape	947,524	863,067	585,428	621,472	785,888	541,381	477,561	30.8%
251511 Crude or roughly trimmed marble and travertine of an apparent specific gravity of 2.5 or more	39,111	13,866	40,740	11,041	73,181			0.0%
251512 Marble, travertine, merely cut by sawing or otherwise, into blocks or slabs of a rectangular shape of an apparent specific gravity of 2.5 or more	977,414	1,014,659	1,172,571	1,274,301	706,748	558,186	225,019	14.5%
251520 Ecaussine and other calcareous monumental or building stone of an apparent specific gravity of 2.5 or more, and alabaster, crude, roughly trimmed or cut by sawing into blocks or slabs of a rectangular shape	52,194	63,788	64,166	52,825	20,406	18,085	11,347	0.7%
251612 Granite, merely cut by sawing or otherwise, into blocks or slabs of a rectangular shape	1,863,084	2,338,930	1,256,900	1,159,377	2,760,810	971,016	326,650	21.0%
2516201009 Crude or roughly trimmed sandstone			122,947	276,267	158,150	341,887	87,582	5.6%
2516202010 Sandstone merely cut, by sawing or otherwise, into blocks or slabs of a rectangular (incl. square) shape			689,322	959,011	422,964	447,376	199,597	12.9%
2516210007 Crude or roughly trimmed sandstone	373,520	256,214	168,321					0.0%
2516220008 Sandstone merely cut into blocks or slabs of a rectangular (incl. square) shape	3,316,642	3,259,832	1,686,805					0.0%
251690 Porphyry, basalt and other monumental or building stone (excl. granite and sandstone), crude, roughly trimmed or cut by sawing into blocks or slabs of a rectangular shape	1,012,152	1,029,777	655,078	1,179,290	2,277,032	910,874	224,917	14.5%
Total Value - Crude or Roughly Trimmed Stone	8,581,641	8,840,133	6,442,278	5,533,584	7,205,179	3,788,805	1,552,673	100.0%

Source:ABS

Figure 2. Worked Natural Stone Import (Customs Value A\$)

Harmonised Tariff Item Statistical Classification (with Description)	FINANCIAL YEAR (July - June)						6 MONTHS Jul - Dec 2010	% of Total Customs Value
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010		
680100 Setts, curbstones and flagstones of natural stone (excl. slate)	2,534,427	3,869,525	4,582,385	8,713,154	10,054,704	10,897,031	6,477,148	7.6%
680210 Tiles, cubes and similar articles of natural stone, the largest surface area of which is capable of being enclosed in a square the side of which is less than 7 cm; artificially coloured granules, chippings and powder	3,865,775	3,000,075	3,697,786	3,888,460	3,017,571	2,479,632	1,266,907	1.5%
680221 Marble, travertine and alabaster, simply cut or sawn, with a flat or even surface	12,603,855	10,495,610	11,029,223	14,549,004	17,998,487	15,240,004	8,278,290	9.7%
680222 Calcareous stone, (excl. marble, travertine and alabaster), simply cut or sawn, with a flat or even surface	3,037,207	3,351,190	2,683,691	-	-			0.0%
680223 Granite, simply cut or sawn, with a flat or even surface	15,132,508	13,882,832	12,826,341	11,520,136	13,808,507	9,590,395	4,578,304	5.4%
680229 Stone (excl. calcareous or granite), simply cut or sawn, with a flat or even surface	5,818,340	5,867,610	9,055,841	9,522,802	13,177,718	14,042,281	6,301,335	7.4%
680291 Marble, travertine and alabaster (excl. simply cut or sawn with a flat or even surface)	25,056,785	23,416,639	29,530,550	33,414,399	38,691,580	32,822,754	17,346,071	20.4%
680292 Calcareous stone (excl. marble, travertine and alabaster, and simply cut or sawn with a flat or even surface)	9,001,726	10,606,037	11,927,816	13,057,605	16,084,155	11,110,945	5,849,206	6.9%
680293 Granite, (excl. simply cut or sawn with a flat or even surface)	38,203,267	36,144,119	42,748,159	36,489,231	37,304,902	34,118,400	20,613,489	24.3%
680299 Stone, (excl. calcareous or granite, and simply cut or sawn having a flat or even surface)	16,147,646	15,484,480	16,034,365	19,629,530	20,467,202	17,124,070	9,127,621	10.7%
6803 Worked slate and articles of slate or of agglomerated slate	5,083,495	5,496,937	6,993,912	7,418,804	7,777,770	7,874,866	5,132,598	6.0%
Total Value -Worked Stone	136,485,031	131,615,054	151,110,069	158,203,125	178,382,596	155,300,378	84,970,969	100.0%

Source:ABS

Figure 3. Other Stone (including Composite Stone) Import Value A\$

Harmonised Tariff Item Statistical Classification (with Description)	FINANCIAL YEAR (July - June)						6 MONTHS Jul - Dec 2010
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
681591 Articles of stone or other mineral substances nes, containing magnesite, dolomite or chromite	3,532,098	4,341,344	4,182,813	3,447,568	3,279,761	2,313,030	731,404
6815990009 Articles of stone or other mineral substances nes(excl. non-electrical articles of graphite or other carbone,art. of peat,art. containing magnesite,dolomite or chromite & refractory bricks,blocks,tiles & similar refract. constructional g	13,069,319	11,183,705	11,428,076	14,695,025	21,806,002	17,683,077	10,581,693
6815990010 Stone or other mineral substances refractory bricks, blocks, tiles and similar refractory constructional goods, not fired	921,335	1,581,484	3,851,563	4,074,084	5,098,737	3,760,607	2,524,152

Source:ABS

Codes 2516201009 and 2516202010 also replaced two similar old codes in 2007. These can be seen in **Fig.1**.

There has been a lot of enquiry and speculation regarding the amount of man-made quartz or composite stone products imported into Australia. Composite stone is natural stone components bound together with a resin or binder and generally imported as slabs. We are advised that this material is imported under HTISC codes beginning in 6815. The data for these codes can be seen in **Fig.3**. Unfortunately other stone items can also be described under these codes so these values do not represent only composite stone products.

A further complication arises when analysing the data. If an article is for example, a finished composite stone or natural stone bench top and including an edge finish with a hole cut for a sink or taps, the article is classed as a component under the finished article category

- in this case, a kitchen cabinet, and are consequently imported under the code describing furniture. The furniture code does not mention stone so the value of those stone items is impossible to identify for statistical analysis.

The historical Customs Value for all categories of stone imports is combined and is shown for the last six financial years along with the first six months of the 2011 financial year. ASAA members can view reports which cover the last full financial year and are broken down by Country of Origin and State of Import by visiting the members area of www.asaa.com.au and entering their password. The values shown in those tables are Customs Value in Australian dollars. Basically we can report that 39 percent of all stone is imported from China, with 39 percent of Chinese imports being brought into New South Wales. Italy still supplies the second highest value in imports at 15 percent of the total, followed by India at 12 percent and Turkey at 11 percent. ☺