Optus

Lebara

This project requires you to produce:

* two comprehensive reports that evaluate the economic and political influences on the networking industry in Australia and describe the impact of regulations and legislation on the networking industry.
* two summary reports that evaluate the impact of legislation on planning processes and accessibility to networks.

## Australian economic conditions

Australia’s economy in the March quarter 2025 recorded modest growth, with real GDP up just 0.2% for the quarter (1.3% annually), weighed down by severe weather events and the strongest detraction from public sector activity since 2017. Private demand supported the economy through rising household consumption (+0.4%) and private investment (+0.7%), while public investment (-2.0%) and weaker net trade (exports -0.8%) detracted from growth. Prices continued to rise, with nominal GDP up 1.4% and the implicit price deflator rising 1.2%, reflecting higher labour costs and strong increases in services such as health, education, rent, and energy. Export and import prices both rose (led by iron ore and rural goods on the export side), leaving the terms of trade only marginally higher (+0.1%). Mining output fell sharply due to cyclones, while non-mining industries such as construction, information media and telecommunications provided positive contributions. Compensation of employees grew 1.5% amid a still-tight labour market (unemployment around 4.1%), lifting household disposable income and pushing the household saving ratio up to 5.2% from 3.9%. Overall, growth momentum remains fragile, underpinned by household spending resilience but offset by weak trade and subdued public sector demand.

**Supports growth:**

* **Household consumption** (+0.4%), particularly essential spending on electricity, gas and food, as well as recreation and culture.
* **Private investment** (+0.7%), driven by dwelling investment (+2.6%) and non-dwelling construction (+1.3%), especially in mining and electricity projects.
* **Changes in inventories** (+0.1ppt), with build-ups in mining, manufacturing (gold, steel, alumina), and some public authorities.
* **Non-mining industries**: Construction, Information Media & Telecommunications (+2.1%), and Administrative & Support Services (+1.9%).
* **Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing** (+4.3%), supported by strong livestock demand from overseas markets.
* **Compensation of employees** (+1.5%), with wage growth across private and public sectors, boosting household incomes.
* **Household saving ratio** rose to 5.2%, reflecting stronger disposable income relative to consumption.

**Detracted growth:**

* **Public sector activity**: public investment (–2.0%) detracted 0.1ppt, with major projects delayed or completed, and government consumption flat.
* **Net trade** (–0.1ppt), with exports down (–0.8%) more than imports (–0.4%); services exports fell 3.0% (lower student arrivals, weaker spending), and coal/LNG exports declined.
* **Mining output** (–2.0%), with severe weather events disrupting production and exports of coal, iron ore, and oil & gas.
* **Weather impacts** more broadly, which reduced tourism, shipping, and crop planting.
* **Weak discretionary household spending** (+0.3%), softer after a strong December 2024 quarter.
* **Falling public sector contributions** after nine consecutive quarters of government consumption growth.

**Key economic indicators (March quarter 2025)**

* **Real GDP growth (q/q):** +0.2%
* **Real GDP growth (y/y):** +1.3%
* **Nominal GDP growth (q/q):** +1.4%
* **Terms of trade:** +0.1%
* **Household saving ratio:** 5.2% (up from 3.9%)
* **Household consumption:** +0.4%
* **Private investment:** +0.7%
* **Public investment:** –2.0%
* **Exports:** –0.8%
* **Imports:** –0.4%
* **Compensation of employees:** +1.5%
* **Unemployment rate:** ~4.1%

## Economic factors that can affect growth

1. **Household consumption:** Essential vs. discretionary spending; electricity and fuel costs significantly influence demand.
2. **Private investment:** Housing construction, non-dwelling construction, and machinery/equipment spending drive or restrain growth.
3. **Public sector and investment**: Government consumption and infrastructure projects can either support or detract from GDP depending on funding cycles.
4. **Trade:** Shifts in export and import prices, influenced by global demand and exchange rate movements.
5. **Weather and natural events**: Cyclones, floods and other extreme events disrupt mining, agriculture, shipping, and tourism.
6. **Labour market:** Employment levels, wages, and compensation of employees affect disposable income and household spending.
7. **Household saving:** Changes in the saving to income ratio influence consumption capacity and financial resilience.
8. **Commodity:** Particularly Chinese demand for iron ore, and international trends for coal, LNG, and rural products.
9. **Exchange rate:** A weaker Australian dollar raises import prices but can support export competitiveness.
10. **Inflation:** Rising labour costs, rents, fuel and services prices shape both household budgets and business margins.

## A political influence on public and commercial network services

**Security:**

The government created the "Cyber ​​Security Act 2024" in response to the lack of a legal framework for cybersecurity.

Between 2022 and 2023, the data theft scandals that rocked the country highlighted the lack of legal measures to respond to cybercriminals. In 2022, Optus suffered an attack that allowed the personal data of 40% of the population to be published. That same year, Medibank suffered a ransomware attack that compromised the personal data of 9.7 million people, resulting in the data being leaked to the dark web after the ransom was not received. Finally, in 2023, Latitude Financial suffered an attack that exposed the personal data of 14 million people online.

Prior to the Cyber ​​Security Act, the legal framework was provided by the Privacy Act 1988, on the protection of personal data, and the Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018, on the protection of critical sectors for the country. Despite the existence of these laws, there were no laws regarding the legal obligations of companies.

The Cyber ​​Security Act requires companies to report serious cybersecurity incidents and report ransom demands starting May 30 of this year. This response to cyber extortion also increased fines for security breaches from 2.2 million to 50 million, or more as determined by law.

In short, the law was created to protect Australians' data, increase transparency in the face of cyberattack incidents, and strengthen national resilience to cyber threats.

**Consumer Protection:**

Both the ACCC and ACMA have increased their focus on protecting consumers from issues like scams, misleading advertising, and unfair sales practices. This includes issuing hefty penalties, like the $100 million penalty Optus agreed to pay for unconscionable conduct in selling products consumers did not need.