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Media Release

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SURGE IN EMPLOYER SENTIMENT PROPELS WA TO MOST CONFIDENT REGION IN AUSTRALIA: HUDSON REPORT

Perth, Australia – Wednesday 20 January 2010 – Employer confidence in Western Australia has rebounded strongly, recording by far the largest increase in sentiment of all Australian States and Territories, according to the latest *Hudson Report: Employment Expectations* survey released today.

Up a significant 23pp from last quarter, a net 43.1 percent of employers indicated an intention to increase their permanent staff levels over the January–March 2010 period. This is well above the national average of 29.1 percent.

"This is a very positive start to the New Year," said Andrew Tomich, General Manager, Hudson WA. "Resurgent demand from China and a recovery in commodities prices have seen a range of oil and gas projects being fast tracked and business and consumer confidences are high as local economic conditions appear to be improving. All of this has clearly resulted in employers' confidence reaching high levels not seen since 2008."

Employers in the resources industry are now at their most confident levels in the last 12 months, with a net 54.1 percent reporting an intention to increase their permanent staff levels during the first three months of 2010. Up a considerable 39.3pp from last quarter, the industry is now one of the most confident in the State.

"Before the beginning of the downturn, a significant number of projects had been in the planning and design stages but construction was unable to get underway because of widespread shortages in labour and equipment," said Tomich. "However, many of these projects are now viable with work fast tracked to get underway this year."

The Gorgon gas project, Kimberley LNG project and Gindalbie Metals project at Karara were given the green light in 2009 and a wide range of projects are in the pipeline for 2010, including Woodside's \$11.2 billion Pluto 2 project, the MCC project at Cape Lambert, the Inpex project at Ichthys, the Oakajee Port, Sinosteel's Weld Range project and the Aquila project in West Pilbara.

"These projects are generating a rapid improvement in employer confidence as employers ramp up workforce planning for the work ahead and hiring begins to return," said Tomich.

"However, as more projects get signed off, skills shortages are expected to return in a number of key areas and WA will again have to make efforts to attract resources from other parts of Australia," he said. "There are already signs of a skills shortage beginning to emerge, particularly for estimators and engineers with LNG experience.

"The WA economy has undoubtedly outperformed expectations in recent months. Consistent net employment growth is expected to be well underway during 2010, once spare capacity in the number of average hours worked has been absorbed.

"We're already feeling a pinch in the availability of good people in many industries and this will certainly tighten as the economy continues to gain strength. It's imperative that WA employers turn their attention to effective talent acquisition and succession management activities to preserve healthy, viable profitable business while positioning themselves for future growth," added Tomich.

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Editor Note

Please contact us for more information and print-ready graphs.

The Hudson Report

The *Hudson Report* is an established and highly reputable publication, based on in-depth and nationwide research. Released quarterly, the report uncovers and analyses the hiring expectations of Australian employers over the forthcoming quarter and provides insights into a range of human resource issues currently impacting business and the broader Australian economy.

In its ninth year of quarterly publication, the *Hudson Report* combines robust data on employment expectations with economic commentary and extensive market insights gleaned from Hudson's conversations with employers nationwide. *Hudson Report: HR Insights* is used by employers throughout Australia to stay abreast of contemporary human resources issues and best practice. *Hudson Report: Employment Expectations* is a leading economic indicator and a trusted source of information on issues and trends affecting the Australian labour market. It is used by Australia's wider business community to assist in long-term strategic planning.

Results for this issue *Hudson Report* were gathered through interviews with 4,470 employers across Australia, conducted by Hudson recruitment, talent management and managed services professionals. Participants are surveyed from 19 core industry groups, aligned with the Australian Bureau of Statistics industry classifications. Copies of the *Hudson Report* are available at www.au.hudson.com

About Hudson

Hudson is a leading provider of permanent recruitment, contract professionals and talent management services worldwide. From single placements to total outsourced solutions, Hudson helps clients achieve greater organisational performance by assessing, recruiting, developing, engaging and retaining the best and brightest people for their businesses. The company employs nearly 2,500 professionals serving clients and candidates in more than 20 countries. More information is available at www.hudson.com

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