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## MEDIA RELEASE

UNDER EMBARGO until 0:00 hours 16 February 2005

### ACT experiences highest level of burnout in Australia

- 43% of ACT managers report increase in employee burnout – the highest level in Australia
- 36.1% of these managers are reporting increased numbers of sick days being taken as key impact of burnout
- Government sector hardest hit by burnout in ACT (45%)
- Professional Services sector second hardest hit by burnout in ACT (23.1%)
- Government one of the highest sectors witnessing burnout nationally (35%)
- Improvement in role clarity cited as key to reinvigorating ACT workers

**16 February 2005** – Managers in the ACT have witnessed the highest increase in employee burnout in Australia, according to research from global recruitment and human resource consulting firm Hudson, released today.

The latest national Hudson Report survey of more than 7,800 employers found that an alarming 43% of ACT employers are witnessing a growing amount of burnout among their employees, with employers in the Government sector seeing the highest rates (45%).

The Report also found that of those ACT managers who have seen increased levels of burnout, 36.1% said that a direct result was a rise in the number of sick days being taken by employees.

**% of Employers seeing increased levels of burnout among employees (by State)**

ACT	43%
SA	34%
VIC	34%
NSW	31%
WA	31%
QLD	30%

In addition, 35.4% were seeing an increase in the number of employees leaving the organisation specifically for a career change and 28.5% reported declining levels of productivity.

Andrew Williams, General Manager for Hudson in the ACT said, “As the region in Australia which is most keen to attract suitable staff<sup>1</sup>, these findings on burnout will certainly sound a clear warning to ACT employers. Employers will need to carefully manage this issue if they want to attract and retain top talent in the nation’s capital.

<sup>1</sup> Recent findings from the Hudson Report show that “Attracting Suitable Staff” is a higher priority for ACT employers than it is for any other State or Territory in Australia.

“The findings also show the Government sector has been the hardest hit by burnout in the ACT. Interestingly, this could actually be because the Government sector is likely to be more aware of burnout issues than the private sector and therefore managers recognise it more easily. Also, the timing of the survey would have contributed strongly towards this result as it was just prior to the elections.

“It is highly likely that employee burnout is more prevalent in certain pockets of the Government sector, rather than across the board. This sector is also exposed to cyclical periods which are more challenging than others, which is precisely why attracting and assessing the right people for these Government roles is critical,” said Williams.

“Utilising skills effectively is also essential to driving productivity during these stressful periods,” he added.

## **National Overview**

Nationally, The Hudson Report findings show an alarming one in three managers (32%) have witnessed a growing amount of burnout among their employees.

Of the managers who reported increased levels of burnout, more than one-third (37%) said that a direct outcome was a rise in the number of valuable employees leaving the organisation.

According to the Hudson Report, workplace burnout will erode the bottom line of Australian businesses, with 34% of those employers experiencing increased levels of burnout witnessing a decline in productivity and 29% reporting an increase in the number of sick days being taken.

The Report findings show the issue of burnout is prevalent across organisations of all sizes and all industries in Australia, with the Government sector and fast-moving Telecommunications industry being the hardest hit.

Matthew Dale, Hudson’s National Practice Manager for Talent Management said, “Given that employers’ top HR priority for 2005 is staff retention and development<sup>2</sup>, these findings sound a clear warning to employers who are battling to hold on to their best performers in an environment of record low unemployment levels.

“Growing numbers of workers feeling physically and emotionally exhausted leads to poor customer and client service, a sense of low morale and reduced job satisfaction,” Dale added.

“It is concerning that Australian management does not appear to be grasping the simple concepts of increasing productivity and holding onto top talent at the same time. Given the snowball effect of burnout, this is an issue which must be tabled at the most senior levels of Australian organisations,” said Dale.

## **A Burning Issue**

### **What Australian Organisations Should be Doing to Reinvigorate Staff**

- Ensure a robust assessment methodology is used to place the right people in the right role
- Make sure that employees are clear about their roles
- Ensure that there are sufficient resources to deliver to stakeholder demands and business requirements
- Involve people in the redesign of their roles
- Educate about burnout and what can be done about it
- Provide support to those affected
- Model work-life balance

### **What Can the Individual do?**

- Talk to his/her manager and human resource department
- Focus on solutions and look to be involved
- Make sure that he/she is working towards a balance in lifestyle; diet, exercise, hobbies and interests outside of work
- Seek support outside of work if need be

*Recommendations provided by Hudson*

The Report recommends that the most effective way of dealing with burnout and work-related strain is to adopt a simple framework, based loosely on many health-related policies. It also strongly recommends a framework that incorporates redesigning roles and systems in which people work in order to reduce overload and increase the clarity with which employees view their roles.

The Report goes on to highlight the critical importance of incorporating competencies as well as hard performance metrics into the job analysis process. As a consequence, employees are clear about what they need to deliver as well as how to go about it.

Dale stresses the importance of organisations taking responsibility for addressing employee burnout. “For an organisation to leave the employees to deal with burnout problems by themselves is like telling patients to diagnose and treat themselves,” said Dale.

“Given the right help, individuals can manage the issue through seeking to understand what they are experiencing, drawing on appropriate support networks and being involved in designing a more effective and sustainable role for themselves,” Dale added.

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## **The Hudson Report:**

Based on nationwide research, The Hudson Report uncovers and analyses the hiring expectations of Australian employers over the coming quarter, and provides insights into a range of topical human resource issues impacting business.

Results from the Q1 2005 Hudson Report were gathered through 7,881 surveys conducted by Hudson recruitment and consulting professionals. The Employment Expectations component

of the Hudson Report was previously known as the Job Index Survey. Copies of The Hudson Report are available at [www.hudson.com](http://www.hudson.com)

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