

**News Release**  
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## **Skills Index identifies employments ‘biggest winners’ and ‘back seat drivers’**

- ***Seven occupation areas in shortage***
- ***Skills Index easing to “Moderate”***
- ***Economy and sentiment driving ‘bespoke’ employer behavior***
- ***Candidates operating on low speed’ staying put or taking ‘lower skilled’ roles for security***
- ***Businesses warned to adopt ‘shovel ready’ strategies for when climate turns***

The big winners in the Australian job market in the 2012 March quarter were managers in corporate services and advertising and sales, and professionals in engineering and ICT, according to the latest Clarius Skills Index.

The Index - which is Australia's only measure of supply and demand of skilled labour - showed there was a shortage of 16,400 employees for these four job categories, with engineering professionals being in most demand with a shortage of 7,000.

Those in the ‘back seat’ were accounting clerks and bookkeepers, office and practice managers, inquiry clerks and receptionists and personal assistants and secretaries where there was an oversupply of 25,900 candidates.

Overall, the Clarius Skills Index, which is based on 20 occupations representing more than 2.5 million skilled Australian workers, eased from a “balanced” result of 99.6 to a “**moderate**” **99.4** and a total oversupply of 15,000 skilled workers, compared to 10,000 in the December 2011 quarter.

Clarius CEO Kym Quick said the easing of the Index was the result of a two-speed economy, coupled with international economic uncertainty.

“These factors and a lack of business incentive in the recent Federal Budget is now seeing ‘bespoke behaviour’ by employers seeking to hedge against unpredictability in the economy,” Ms Quick said.

“Employers across all occupations remain cautious and as a result are re-engineering the structure of their workforce to shorter-term solutions. For example, across all occupations, employers have been looking at ways to get the job done through contracting, working with smaller teams, or simply ‘freezing’ what would be an otherwise available role.

“In terms of candidates, many are operating primarily at ‘low-speed’ with very little churn as people are either staying put, or if moving, it’s to take on a role they may believe is ‘beneath’ their technical abilities but provides them with job security.”

The outlook for occupations related to the resources sector remains strong at the expense of occupations in other industries such as manufacturing, retail and tourism, as they try to adapt to a higher exchange rate and continuing softness in domestic demand.

This may result in a reluctance by employers to hire more staff and a slowing employment growth in the near future.

“Labour supply may also decrease in the short term due to the relocation and training required to adapt to structural change, and in some cases, to reallocate labour to the faster growing regions of Australia, for example WA and Queensland,” Ms Quick said.

“NSW is somewhat quarantined from this impact as it has a broad spread of industry, but it presents some major challenges for states like Victoria which has a high penetration of manufacturing.”

Clarius, and its recruitment brands, is recommending employers be ‘shovel ready’ for when the environment changes, and to capitalise on major infrastructure and investment opportunities.

For example, there are large projects underway and slated across many sectors including the Federal Government’s ‘rebuilding Australia’s roads’ construction program, the rollout of NBN, oil and gas projects investment.

There are also large scale IT projects such as the \$240.3 million investment in the National Disability Insurance Scheme, \$68.5 million investment to improve the Australian Business Register (ABR), and \$22.2 million for the expansion of Telehealth Services.

“Australia is faring exceptionally well in the current global turbulence and we have low unemployment levels, but employers don’t know what’s going to happen next. Employers need to act now to ensure that when confidence does return, they aren’t on the back foot,” Ms Quick said.

She recommends that employers act now to take extra measures to retain their top talent for as long as commercially possible and not ‘knee jerk’ decisions letting too many people go – key staff they will only have to find again once business confidence returns.”

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## About Clarius Group

Clarius Group (ASX: CND) is a specialist in the employment services market providing recruitment, contractor and staff services in the accounting, administration, banking, engineering, finance, information management, information technology, library, marketing, records, sales and senior Management markets to governments and corporations across the Asia Pacific region.

Established over 27 years ago and listed on the Australian Securities Exchange in 1997, Clarius Group has a reputation for high-quality delivery and remains one of the largest, longest standing and best performing recruitment suppliers in the region.

Clarius Group operates through a number of quality specialist brands including:

- Alliance Recruitment: Corporate Services
- Candle: Information Technology
- Lloyd Morgan: Accounting, Banking and Finance
- SouthTech: Architecture, Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing
- The One Umbrella: Library and Information Management
- Ignite: Payroll and Contractor Management Services
- JAV IT: Managed IT Services and Professional IT

Clarius Group employs over 320 staff through a network of offices located in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra in Australia; Auckland and Wellington in New Zealand; Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai in China; and Singapore.

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