



THE CONFERENCE BOARD

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. AEST, THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2010

The Conference Board®
Australia Business Cycle IndicatorsSM
**THE CONFERENCE BOARD LEADING ECONOMIC INDEX®
(LEI) FOR AUSTRALIA**
AND RELATED COMPOSITE ECONOMIC INDEXES FOR FEBRUARY 2010

The Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (LEI) for Australia declined 0.3 percent and **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index®** (CEI) declined 0.2 percent in February.

- The Conference Board LEI for Australia declined again in February, following a small decrease in January. A substantial drop in building approvals more than offset small positive contributions from most of the other components. With this month's decline, the six-month increase in the leading economic index slowed to 1.0 percent (about a 2.0 percent annual rate) in the period through February 2010, down from 1.8 percent (about a 3.7 percent annual rate) for the previous six months. Moreover, the weaknesses among the leading indicators have become far more widespread than the strengths in recent months.
- The Conference Board CEI for Australia also decreased slightly in February – the first decline since August last year. A large drop in retail trade contributed to the decline this month. Despite the decrease in February, the six-month growth rate of the coincident economic index continued to pick up, to 1.3 percent (about a 2.7 percent annual rate) in the period ending in February, up from 0.4 percent (about a 0.7 percent annual rate) during the previous six months. At the same time, real GDP increased at a 3.7 percent annual rate during the last quarter of 2009, an improvement from the gains of 1.1 percent annual rate in the third quarter and 3.0 percent average annual rate for the first half of the year.
- The Conference Board LEI for Australia has declined for two consecutive months, after generally increasing since early 2009. In addition, its six-month growth rate has continued to slow, amid widespread weaknesses among its components. Meanwhile, The Conference Board CEI for Australia has been on a modest rising trend since mid-2009. Taken together, the current behavior of the composite indexes suggests that the economy will continue to expand, but perhaps at a modest pace in the near term.

LEADING INDICATORS. Four of the seven components in The Conference Board LEI for Australia increased in February. The positive contributors to the index — in order from the largest positive contributor to the smallest — are the yield spread, money supply*, gross operating surplus*, and share prices. Building approvals*, the sales to inventories ratio*, and rural goods exports* declined in February.

With the 0.3 percent decrease in February, The Conference Board LEI for Australia now stands at 113.4 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index declined 0.2 percent in January and increased 0.6 percent in December. During the six-month period through February, the leading economic index increased 1.0 percent, and two of the seven components increased (diffusion index, six-month span equals 28.6 percent).

The next release is scheduled for May 27, 2010 at 10:00 A.M. (AEST)
In the U.S. – May 26, 2010 at 8:00 P.M. (ET)

COINCIDENT INDICATORS. Two of the four components in The Conference Board CEI for Australia increased in February. The increases occurred in industrial production* and household gross disposable income*. Retail trade and employed persons declined in February.

With the decrease of 0.2 percent in February, The Conference Board CEI for Australia now stands at 114.9 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.4 percent in January and increased 0.3 percent in December. During the six-month period through February, the coincident economic index increased 1.3 percent, with two of the four components in the series making positive contributions (diffusion index, six-month span equals 50.0 percent).

* See notes under data availability.

FOR TABLES AND CHARTS, SEE BELOW

DATA AVAILABILITY. The data series used to compute **The Conference Board Leading Economic Index[®]** (LEI) for Australia and **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index[®]** (CEI) for Australia reported in this release are those available “as of” 10 A.M. ET on April 27, 2010. Some series are estimated as noted below.

NOTES: Series in The Conference Board LEI for Australia that are based on our estimates are sales-to-inventory ratio and gross operating surplus for private non-financial corporations, the implicit price index used to deflate rural goods exports and building approvals, and the CPI used to deflate money supply M3. Series in The Conference Board CEI for Australia that are based on our estimates are industrial production and household disposable income. CPI was used to deflate retail trade.

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THE CYCLICAL INDICATOR APPROACH. The composite economic indexes are the key elements in an analytic system designed to signal peaks and troughs in the business cycle. The leading and coincident economic indexes are essentially composite averages of several individual leading or coincident indicators. (See page 3 for details.) They are constructed to summarize and reveal common turning point patterns in economic data in a clearer and more convincing manner than any individual component—primarily because they smooth out some of the volatility of individual components.

Historically, the cyclical turning points in The Conference Board LEI for Australia have occurred before those in aggregate economic activity, while the cyclical turning points in The Conference Board CEI for Australia have occurred at about the same time as those in aggregate economic activity.

Further explanations of the cyclical indicator approach and the composite economic index methodology appear in The Conference Board’s *Business Cycle Indicators* report and Web site: <http://www.conference-board.org/economics/bci/>.

Australia Composite Economic Indexes: Components and Standardization Factors

<u>Leading Economic Index</u>	<u>Factor</u>
1. Yield Spread, 10 year minus Policy Rate	.1113
2. Share Prices, All Ordinaries	.0398
3. Money Supply, M3	.2274
4. Rural Goods Exports	.0261
5. Sales to Inventory Ratio	.4299
6. Gross Operating Surplus, Private Non-Financial Corporations	.1140
7. Building Approvals	.0515
 <u>Coincident Economic Index</u>	
1. Retail Trade	.2591
2. Industrial Production	.0941
3. Employed Persons	.4386
4. Household Disposable Income	.2082

Notes:

The component factors are inversely related to the standard deviation of the month-to-month changes in each component. They are used to equalize the volatility of the contribution from each component and are “normalized” to sum to 1.

These factors were revised effective with the January 2010 release, and all historical values for the two composite economic indexes have been revised at the time to reflect the changes. (Under normal circumstances, updates to the leading and coincident economic indexes only incorporate revisions to data over the past six months.) The factors above were calculated using 1979 to 2008 as the sample period for measuring volatility for The Conference Board LEI for Australia, and 1982 to 2008 as the sample period for The Conference Board CEI for Australia. There are additional sample periods as the result of different starting dates for the component data. When one or more components are missing, the other factors are adjusted proportionately to ensure that the total continues to sum to 1. For additional information on the standardization factors and the index methodology visit our Web site: <http://www.conference-board.org/economics/bci/>.

The trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LEI for Australia is -0.0605 calculated from 1960-1973, and -0.1194 calculated over the sample period 1974-2008.

To address the problem of lags in available data, those leading and coincident indicators that are not available at the time of publication are estimated using statistical imputation. An autoregressive model is used to estimate each component. The resulting indexes are constructed using real and estimated data, and will be revised as the data unavailable at the time of publication become available. Such revisions are part of the monthly data revisions, now a regular part of the U.S. Business Cycle Indicators program. The main advantage of this procedure is to utilize in the leading economic index the data, such as stock prices, that are available sooner than other data on “real” aspects of the economy, such as new orders and changes in inventory. Empirical research by The Conference Board suggests there are real gains in adopting this procedure to make all the indicator series as up-to-date as possible.

NOTICES

The schedule for “**The Conference Board Leading Economic Index**® (LEI) for Australia” news release for 2010 is:

March 2010 Data	Wednesday, May 26, 2010
April 2010 Data	Wednesday, June 23, 2010
May 2010 Data	Monday, July 26, 2010
June 2010 Data	Wednesday, August 25, 2010
July 2010 Data	Tuesday, September 28, 2010
August 2010 Data	Wednesday, October 27, 2010
September 2010 Data	Tuesday, November 23, 2010
October 2010 Data	Monday, December 20, 2010

All releases are at 8:00 PM EST (10:00 A M AEDST the next day).

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE BOARD

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AVAILABLE FROM THE CONFERENCE BOARD:

Australia Business Cycle Indicators Internet Subscription <i>(Includes monthly release, data, charts and commentary)</i>	not currently available
Individual Data Series	not currently available
Monthly BCI Report <i>(Sample available at http://www.conference-board.org/publications/describeBCI.cfm)</i>	\$ 275 per year
BCI Handbook (published 2001)	\$ 20
Corporate Site License	contact Indicators Program at (212) 339-0330

Business Cycle Indicators for France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Spain and the U.K. are available at \$635 per country per year (1 user). Discounts are available to Associates of The Conference Board and accredited academic institutions.

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The Conference Board Australia Business Cycle Indicators

Table 1.--Summary of Australia Composite Economic Indexes

	2009							2010
	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	
Leading index	112.3	113.0	113.1 r	113.2 r	113.9 p	113.7 p	113.4 p	
Percent change	1.4	0.6	0.1	0.1 r	0.6 p	-0.2 p	-0.3 p	
Diffusion index	42.9	50.0	35.7	50.0	64.3	42.9	50.0	
Coincident index	113.4	113.6	113.9 r	114.3 r	114.6 p	115.1 p	114.9 p	
Percent change	-0.4	0.2	0.3 r	0.4 r	0.3 p	0.4 p	-0.2 p	
Diffusion index	0.0	50.0	62.5	75.0	87.5	100.0	62.5	
	Jan to Aug	Feb to Sep	Mar to Oct	Apr to Nov	May to Dec	Jun to Jan	Jul to Feb	
Leading index								
Percent change	1.8	2.3	2.3 r	2.8 r	3.1 p	2.7 p	1.0 p	
Diffusion index	57.1	57.1	57.1	57.1	57.1	42.9	28.6	
Coincident index								
Percent change	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.6 p	1.1 p	1.3 p	
Diffusion index	50.0	75.0	62.5	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	

p Preliminary. r Revised (noted only for index levels and one-month percent changes).

CALCULATION NOTE: The diffusion indexes measure the proportion of the components that are rising. Components that rise more than 0.05 percent are given a value of 1.0, components that change less than 0.05 percent are given a value of 0.5, and components that fall more than 0.05 percent are given a value of 0.0.

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The Conference Board Australia Business Cycle Indicators

Table 2.--Data and Net Contributions for Components of the Australia Leading Economic Index

Component	2009							2010
	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	
Australia Leading Economic Index component data								
Yield Spread (10 Year - Policy Rate, 3 month moving average)	2.51	2.46	2.44	2.29	2.22	1.92	1.82	
Share Prices, All Ordinaries (Index 2005=100).....	103.2	109.3	107.0	108.3	112.2	105.3	106.8	
Money Supply, M3 (Mill. Constant A\$, SA).....	709655 r	706232 r	703664 r	701085 r	696024 ###	696952 ###	699927 ###	
Building Approvals, (Thous. '07-'08 A\$, SA, 3 month moving average).....	7085218 r	7703681 r	7847817 r	7703493 r	8038820 r	7794143 r	7070351 #	
Rural Goods Exports, (Mill. Constant A\$, SA).....	2136.5 r	1983.8 r	1910.7 r	1936.9 r	2062.7 r	2135.7 r	2118.8 #	
Sales to Inventories Ratio, SA (Q).....	1.320	1.320	1.320	1.320	1.320 **	1.310 **	1.310 **	
Gross Operating Surplus, Private Non-Financial Corp. (Mill. '07-'08 A\$, SA, Q).....	53296	54144	54993	55841	56477 **	56974 **	57376 **	
LEADING INDEX (2004=100).....	112.3	113.0	113.1	113.2	113.9 p	113.7 p	113.4 p	
Percent change from preceding month.....	1.4	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.6 p	-0.2 p	-0.3 p	
Australia Leading Economic Index net contributions								
Yield Spread (10 Year - Policy Rate, 3 month moving average)	....	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.25	0.21	0.20
Share Prices, All Ordinaries (Index 2005=100).....	....	0.23	-0.09	0.05	0.14	-0.25	0.06
Money Supply, M3 (Mill. Constant A\$, SA).....	....	-0.11	-0.08 r	-0.08 r	-0.16 ###	0.03 ###	0.10 ###
Building Approvals, (Thous. '07-'08 A\$, SA, 3 month moving average).....	....	0.43 r	0.10	-0.10 r	0.22 r	-0.16 r	-0.50 #
Rural Goods Exports, (Mill. Constant A\$, SA).....	....	-0.19	-0.10 r	0.04 r	0.16 r	0.09 r	-0.02 #
Sales to Inventories Ratio, SA (Q).....	....	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07	-0.05 **	-0.04 **	-0.03 **
Gross Operating Surplus, Private Non-Financial Corp. (Mill. '07-'08 A\$, SA, Q).....	....	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.13 **	0.10 **	0.08 **

p Preliminary. r Revised. -- * Inverted series; a negative change in this component makes a positive contribution.

Estimates of the quarterly deflator (implicit price index) are used to deflate these series

Estimates of the quarterly deflator (CPI) are used to deflate money supply.

Money Supply (M3) level from April 2002 and on are derived from growth rates reported by the Reserve Bank of Australia

** Statistical Imputation (See page 2 for more details) -- Q: Quarterly series; these series are converted to monthly through a linear interpolation

Data Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Reserve Bank of Australia, Thomson Financial

CALCULATION NOTE--The percent change in the index does not always equal the sum of the net contributions of the individual components (because of rounding effects and base value differences).

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The Conference Board Australia Business Cycle Indicators

Table 3.--Data and Net Contributions for Components of the Australia Coincident Economic Index

Component	2009						2010
	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.
Australia Coincident Economic Index component data							
Retail Trade (Mill. Constant A\$, SA, 3-month moving average)	11761.4 r	11717 r	11721.6 r	11761.2 r	11772.8 r	11815.3 r	11742.5
Industrial Production (Index 2007-08=100, SA, Q).....	96.8	98.3	99.8	101.3	102.3**	103.2 **	103.8 **
Employed Persons (Thousands of Persons, SA).....	10773.4	10814.3 r	10844.2 r	10876.9 r	10914.1 r	10973.5 r	10968.7
Household Gross Disposable Income, (Mill. Constant A\$, SA, Q).....	121206.1	120947.7	120690.3	120434.1	120419.4**	120539.3 **	120733.7 **
COINCIDENT INDEX (2004=100).....	113.4	113.6	113.9	114.3	114.6 p	115.1 p	114.9 p
Percent change from preceding month.....	-0.4	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3 p	0.4 p	-0.2 p
Australia Coincident Economic Index net contributions							
Retail Trade (Mill. Constant A\$, SA, 3-month moving average)	....	-0.10 r	0.01	0.09 r	0.03 r	0.09 r	-0.16
Industrial Production (Index 2007-08=100, SA, Q).....	....	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.10 **	0.07 **	0.06 **
Employed Persons (Thousands of Persons, SA).....	....	0.17	0.12	0.13	0.15	0.24 r	-0.02
Household Gross Disposable Income, (Mill. Constant A\$, SA, Q).....	....	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	0.00 **	0.02 **	0.03 **

* Inverted Series, a negative change in this component makes a positive contribution

** Statistical Imputation (See page 2 for more details)

Estimates of the quarterly deflator (CPI) are used to deflate retail trade

Q Quarterly series; these series are converted to monthly through a linear interpolation.

Data Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Reserve Bank of Australia, Thomson Financial

CALCULATION NOTE--The percent change in the index does not always equal the sum of the net contributions of the individual components (because of rounding effects and base value differences).

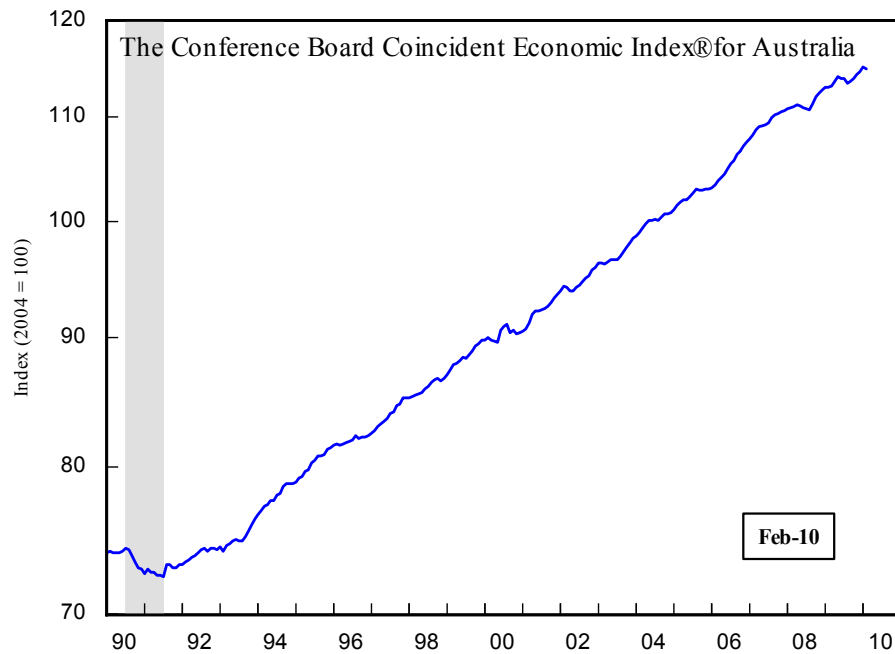
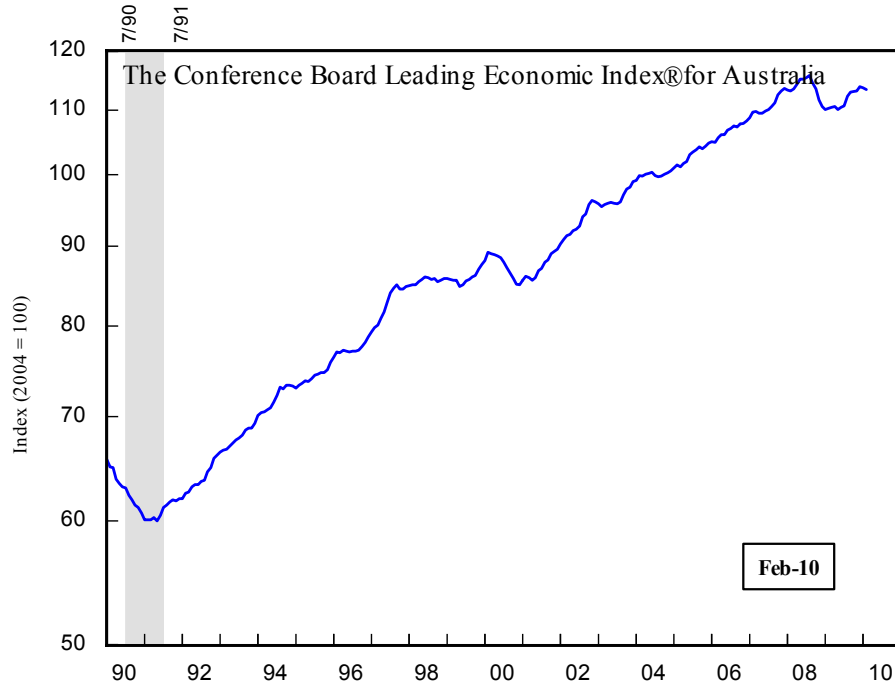
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Source: The Conference Board

Note: The shaded areas represent business cycle recessions. The peaks and troughs are designated by The Conference Board based on the coincident index and real GDP.