

22 July, 2020

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

To the Committee Secretary,

The Operations of General Motors Holden in Australia

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) represents over 70,000 workers who create, make and maintain in every city and region across Australia. Our members in the automotive sector worked to design, build, sell, repair and upgrade Holden cars and parts – for the Australian market and for export around the world. We apologise for the late arrival of our submission.

The role of the automotive manufacturing sector in Australia

Automotive manufacturing played a vital role within the Australian manufacturing industry, as a key supporter of skills, training and providing stable work for thousands of small and medium manufacturing businesses around the country. Firms like Holden, together with Ford and Toyota, were vital anchor tenants upon which thousands of jobs depended. Between 2010-11 and 2017-18 (a period which covers the closure of Holden plants in Elizabeth and Fishermen's Bend), the number of manufacturing workers in South Australia dropped by 19% and in Victoria by 9.4%). This represents thousands of skilled workers who were out of work, in no small part because of the decision of the current government to end its support for automotive manufacturing in Australia – a decision which resulted in the decision to end the Holden brand entirely in February of this year.

The vital industrial capability provided by an automotive manufacturing sector cannot be understated. We have seen here that the remnants of that industry were able to quickly begin producing ventilators when there was a global shortage caused by COVID. The manufacturing industry in Australia provides the nation with nearly one million skilled workers and a pool of high-tech capital equipment that creates a national capability to respond to crises and develop innovative solutions. When the government decided to discard our automotive manufacturing industry, our national capacity to respond to crises was diminished.

The impact on workers

The closure of the General Motors Holden had a disastrous impact on workers. A report, completed by ACIL Allen, which we have attached, details the industry-wide effects of the auto industry's closure. In summary, most workers were forced out of the manufacturing industry, either into retirement, unemployment, part-time or casual work.

The AMWU has previously made extensive submissions on the Future of Australia's Automotive Industry, which we have attached for your information.

We thank you for the opportunity to have made a submission on behalf of our members. If you would like any additional information, please contact Warren Tegg [REDACTED] in the first instance.

Regards,

Paul Bastian
AMWU NATIONAL SECRETARY