

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Economics : The Australian Manufacturing Industry
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To the Committee

Let me introduce myself and I was a Boilermaker who worked in a mine and also in many metal fabrication workshops from 1966 to 1985. In that time period I witnessed the decline of our manufacturing in this country and up to the present day its complete decline.

For those on the committee you need a history lesson on how this came about. The demise of Australian manufacturing started when the then Prime Minister Mr Gough Whitlam took the advice from the Industries Assistance Commission and reduced tariffs by 25 percent. The country could not compete with the low wages in Asian countries.

The decline in manufacturing has been helped along by the policies of the prime ministers after Whitlam and up to the present day.

What happened to the report that was issued as a media release on 26 May 2006. "Inquiry into the state of Australia's manufacturing industry now and beyond the resources boom"?

That inquiry was Chaired by Bruce Baird MP, and the Deputy Chair was Dr Craig Emerson MP. What did the government at that time do about recommendations in that report? It would appear to me that they did nothing about getting manufacturing up and running in this country. Fifteen years later we now have another inquiry into manufacturing in Australia.

Are we going to get manufacturing up and running again or is this another talkfest by the present government that makes out that it is listening to the people and then ignores any recommendations that are put forward in submissions to the committee?

As for your terms of reference I will put forward what I believe needs to be done about restoring manufacturing in this country.

1. The failure since the 1970'S policy of neoliberal economics has to be abandoned as it has destroyed manufacturing jobs. After the second world war Australia had close to full employment and manufacturing jobs were about 25 percent of the workforce. We use to make a lot of things and we did not have to rely on other countries. Fancy that, we were actually self-sufficient.
2. A national development bank should be set up to direct credit to new business start-ups. No speculating to be allowed and no private or foreign banks are to be allowed to have shares in the bank. Politicians of both political parties should take note of what governments can do to set up its own bank by taking the advice of Professor Steve Keen and learn something new for a change instead of the drivel that mainstream economists push. These mainstream economist have been pushing the failed neoliberal policy that has helped destroy the Australian economy since the 1970'S.
3. Both major parties have seen education as a direct cost now, instead of an investment in the future. The manufacturing workforce in the future must have creative thinkers and not neoliberal drivel that seems to run through the veins of advisors in Canberra.

4. With our skills base being depleted since the 1970'S we now have to increase our skills base and that means the restructuring of TAFE colleges around Australia. When I completed my apprenticeship (1966 - 1970) and became a qualified Boilermaker I spent 3 years at Technical College learning the different processes in the trade which complimented what I was doing in the workshop. Today as far as I am concerned industry and its so-called leaders have negated their duty and will not train their workforce properly.

That is where TAFE should be a leveller and rather than teaching specific skills should be for supplementing industry and not doing industry's work. Industry and its so called leaders have as far as I am concerned have also been a part of the problem with the demise of manufacturing in this country.

5. With the lunatic policies of the left and the right of the political class in this country, there needs to be a cheap base load energy policy put in place that will revive manufacturing in this country. Renewable energy sources such as windmills or solar panels will not have the capacity to run industry. A premature shut-down of coal - fired power stations as advocated by certain groups should not happen until there is an equivalent replacement.

The best source of power in the future is nuclear. Thorium can be used as a fuel source and cannot be turned into weapons of mass destruction. The plants can be set-up around the country to produce cheap electricity for households and business..

6. The main concern that I have is the depletion of oil refineries in Australia. Relying on places like Singapore for our oil needs is a disaster waiting to happen. When we manufacture goods we need a reliable source so that we can transport the finished goods around the country. With the depletion of our oil refineries we have lost the skilled workforce to maintain these facilities. Many years ago I worked on shut-downs at one of the refineries in Brisbane.

7. In this country we have Federal, State and Local governments who over the years have not backed our domestic manufacturing. A good example at the time was the Queensland Government who gave the job of building new trains to Bombardier who built the trains in India. Trains were found not to not comply to Australian standards. Consequently they had to be repaired in Queensland and there was that extra cost.

8. Australia does not have to be a global leader in manufacturing. Globalisation as far as I am concerned has not been a benefit to Australia.

9. It's about time that this present government woke up to itself and put money into Australian owned companies who had the ability to innovate and research the production of goods that the general population could purchase. Relying on foreign owned companies has been a disaster for the last 40 years. I remember when growing up in the 1950'S and up until the 1970'S that Australia actually manufacture electrical goods and as I will say again we were self sufficient.

CONCLUSION

As there was an inquiry into the state of Australia's manufacturing industry in 2006, will this report to the government 15 years later make any difference? What I have noticed with this present government is that they seem to have developed tin ears.

It will take probably 5 to 10 years to develop a viable manufacturing base in this country.

There has be as far as I am concerned retraining and up skilling of the workforce. Because we depleted our manufacturing capability our skills base has been depleted.

Another area of concern is if there are wars breaking out to our north where it concerns water and what about our reliance on oil supplies.

There has been too much reliance on other countries producing products that we used to make, it's about time the present government did something about it,

COVID is now showing up weaknesses in the supply chains and that is where this country is vulnerable in the present and future..

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