

NATIONAL MANUFACTURING SUMMIT 2018

SOLUTIONS TO CRITICAL ISSUES: ENERGY AND TECHNICAL TRAINING

The 2018 National Manufacturing Summit saw a diverse group of industry stakeholders assemble at Parliament House in Canberra on Tuesday 26 June. Hosted by Weld Australia, with the theme *Solutions to Critical Issues: Energy and Technical Training*, the Summit sought solutions to the two crucial constraints faced by the manufacturing sector in Australia: energy insecurity and fragmented skills and training.

Energy Insecurity

The increasing cost and unreliability of Australia's energy supply is putting manufacturing under considerable pressure, undermining the sector's competitiveness in today's global market.

Many of the Summit's keynote speakers, including Professor Ross Garnaut (President, SIMEC Zen Energy) and the Hon Mark Butler (Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy) highlighted the importance of innovative, sustainable and environmentally ethical solutions to return much needed certainty and security to Australian businesses, making a significant contribution to the renewal of manufacturing.

According to Garnaut, the way to ensure energy security in Australia is through renewable energy sources, balancing the intermittence of these sources with battery technologies, and investing in training skills for the manufacturing sector. In fact, Garnaut says Australia also has a comparative advantage in the new world of renewables.

"Nowhere in the developed world are solar and wind resources together so abundant as in the west-facing coasts and peninsulas of southern Australia. South Australian resources are particularly rich...Play our cards right, and Australia is a superpower of the low-carbon world economy," said Garnaut.

Technical Training

With increasing employment opportunities in manufacturing (particularly in light of the Australian Government's \$90 billion Naval Shipbuilding Plan), highly skilled workers are required now more than ever, by defence prime contractors, a range of subcontractors and numerous manufacturing companies. If projects are to be delivered efficiently and Australian companies are to take full advantage of the opportunities available, technical training needs an overhaul.

Many of the Summit's keynote speakers—including Dr Jim Stanford (Economist and Director, Centre for Future Work), Neil Coulson (Victorian Skills Commissioner), and the Hon Dough Cameron (Shadow Minister for Skills, TAFE and Apprenticeships)—focused on the importance of technical training to the future of Australian manufacturing, and what action needs to be taken now to ensure Australia has the workforce capability to deliver major projects.

"No sector feels the pain of the failure of vocational training more than manufacturing, precisely because advanced skills are so essential for the success of advanced manufacturing techniques," said Stanford.

According to Coulson, the answer to the failure of vocational training is cooperation between industry and training organisations, "Industry input can lead to more strategic and targeted interventions to align the training system with industry needs. As such, the manufacturing industry can help facilitate information sharing and collaboration between government, employers, trade unions and training providers," he said.

Shadow Minister for Skills, TAFE and Apprenticeships, Doug Cameron, addressed the increasing demand for technical skills throughout Australia's manufacturing sector—an area where Australia is falling short, according to Cameron.

"Demand for deeper technical skills for the workforce, particularly in advanced manufacturing, is growing," said Cameron. "We need a system built on quality, collaboration, depth, reliability and transferability that: equips people with knowledge and education for good working lives; skills the workforce for existing and emerging jobs...and recognises the importance of highly skilled TAFE teaching professionals."

The Summit was closed by Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills, Karen Andrews, who spoke about rebuilding confidence in the manufacturing industry

"Rebuilding confidence in the industry will grow the demand for skilled workers as well, presenting an opportunity to thousands of Australian apprentices and trainees," said Andrews. "I am confident the apprentices in the coming years and the qualified workers they will become will have the exact skill sets needed by the manufacturing sector to deliver major projects to world standard and beyond."

The 2018 National Manufacturing Summit was hosted by Weld Australia



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