

Dear Productivity Commission,

I am a retiree, age 73 with 4 children and 7 grandchildren. All of my children have good jobs and have never been unemployed, and neither have I. My father was a hardworking labourer, had a large family and served overseas in both WW1 and WW2. He was a humble and gentle man who cared for and about his family. But without any blame on his part he was unemployed during the depression years (before I was born) when he had a family and they experienced very hard times.

I am lucky to have no family in the auto industry> I have one dear friend who is disabled who has a partner who is a long-term employee of GMH at Elizabeth and I know they would both be very affected by closure of that plant.

I taught in a primary school at Elizabeth for 10 years and know from first hand how unemployment seriously damaged many lives in that area. It was a long time ago but still has a serious impact on me when I think about some of the innocent children that were affected.

I am not a big supporter of cars these days. I would prefer to see a comprehensive system of public transport accessible to all Australians. The reality is, however, that our cities compel most people to rely on cars. While many cars are imported closing down all our car plants would lead to a loss of valuable skills developed over decades. Re-skilling is fine but not effective for everyone and more lives would be shattered. Do we want to set off a spiral leading to increasing unemployment and more long-term unemployed?

Mine paid working life is over. But who doesn't want a prosperous future for their children and grandchildren and for everyone else's for that matter? Making cars is not the be all and end all but it's what we are good at now. Until we have a proper plan in place to use the skills of the automotive industry for better - such as building an extensive rail and tram infrastructure for Australia, or to build components for Australia's first solar/thermal power station at Port Augusta - then we must keep it.

Kind Regards,  
Graham Thomas