

Jeff Leddin

To: Commissioner Mike Woods; Productivity Commission.
Cc: Commissioner Philip Weickhardt.
Subject: Inquiry into the Australian Car Manufacturing Industry.

Commissioner Woods, Presiding Commissioner, Productivity Commission.
Inquiry into the Australian Car Manufacturing Industry.

Friday, 21 March, 2014.

Dear Commissioner Woods,

I thank you for this opportunity of bringing before this Inquiry, matters directly responding to the Terms of Reference, and with some, indirectly.

May I also repeat that the Government has done the citizens of Australia a great disservice by giving your Commission such a limited period of time within which to examine, analyse and report upon such an important and vital sector as Australia's car manufacturing and associated industries are to the Nation. Especially so when so many thousands of its citizens' livelihoods have already been affected by announced car manufacturing company closures, and with the spectre of a gloomy and disparaging report from your Commission expected. Other respondents have similarly chastised the Government for allowing so short a period of time for your investigations and deliberations.

As you have noted during this Inquiry, many respondents have also stated that other industries are interwoven with the car manufacturing industry which comprise a major part of Australia's economy. As such, these respondents have also indicated, that were reference NOT made to appropriate periphery matters, that their submissions would be incomplete.

So you may have observed in my submissions as well.

It is unfortunate that annexures containing supporting details of submissions are not able to be posted for public perusal and edification. Perhaps the volume of annexures which have been received at the Commission would have come with unrealistic expectations, due to their magnitude, for staff to so regard.

CAR INDUSTRY --- "Essential for Defence" --- Tariff Board Inquiry. (The Canberra Times, ACT, Saturday 24 April, 1937).

-so states the article banner.

"From a defence standpoint, the Defence Department would welcome the establishment of the motor engine industry in Australia", follows the article's opening sentence. (News items included).

The Australian auto wheel has now turned the full circle. From almost nothing, to something great, to almost nothing once more. The studs holding the four wheels of our horseless, 'Made-in-Australia' carriages have been removed. The wheels are due to fall off completely. Those with bicycles and horses may well be kings and queens of the road in the not-too-distant future. Instead and in place of car battery re-charging stations, the old horse-feed chaff boxes may be seen by our roadsides once again!

As we so often use the now, well-worn expression, 'the rest is history', it is for this very reason that much of my submitted detail is to review our very recent, modern Australian history, about which the last two generations have little or no idea. We are all doomed to repeat our mistakes, to the same extent that we remain in ignorance of the very valuable lessons we should all know about from our past mistakes, to avoid and prevent such omissions, once again occurring, to our grave peril. It is for your children, grandchildren, and their successors, and for my own, that all have voiced their opinions in these submissions regarding whether Australia should or shouldn't have a viable car manufacturing industry.

To those of mature years, it is a no-brainer. But our young ones need to have it pointed out to them exactly why we should have one. The auto industry's WWII contribution in providing a free Australia as their own, and not kow-towing to foreign powers today (of whom those Returned Servicemen and Women do not have fond memories), doing their wills and not our young ones' own, has to be told them. Us of mature years have this onerous duty of and for their care. And there ARE the ways and means by which a resurrected car manufacturing industry may be accomplished. I and many others have offered their suggestions.

To all whom believe Australia cannot afford their own car manufacturing, defence-capable industry, do not deserve their freedoms, which was so painfully gained by the so many thousands who PAID the supreme sacrifice, whilst armed with defending weaponry, armaments, munitions and aircraft – MADE IN AUSTRALIA.

At this point, it is appropriate to draw to the attention of the Commissioners the participating companies of just one of Australia's aircraft manufacturers making fighter aircraft in the defence of Australia. These were The Broken Hill Proprietary Company Ltd; Broken Hill Smelters Pty. Ltd.; General Motors-Holden's Ltd.; I.C.I.A.N.Z. Ltd.; the Electrolytic Zinc Company of Australia Ltd., and the Orient Steam Navigation Company Ltd. This syndicate was registered in Victoria as the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty. Ltd. in October, 1936. ('The Aircraft Industry', Chapter 18, Volume V, "Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Series 4-Civil.")

As I have noted, only three other respondents have recalled and pointed out that with no viable car mfg. industry, Australia is once again extremely vulnerable and weakened industrially, to respond with a commensurate defence production capability that would match one of many would-be, covetous aggressors in hostilities, of our wide open spaces and enormous resources.

This final material tendered is to reinforce the thrust of my concerns of the planned dismantling of the Australian car manufacturing industry, with other industries, by notables known, to render our once great Nation extremely vulnerable to enemy invasion and occupation once again.

We all must salute those Australian industrialists such as Essington Lewis, L.J.Hartnett, John Storey, Harold Clapp and so many others, for their untiring efforts given during WWII, and hundreds of thousands of Australian citizens working in countless humble and high capacities, to secure their and our freedoms and our democracy.

Other industries referred to above are liquid fuel refining, supply and distribution capacity; food production, processing, preservation and distribution (vide Australia's liquid fuels vulnerability reports, prepared by John Blackburn AO, Air Vice-Marshal, Retired, now Defence Consulting. Reports, 2013, 2014, prepared for the NRMA).

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION. Productivity Commission Report, released 27 March, 2007. Presiding Commissioner Mike Woods.

I have noted sections of that report which specifically have a bearing to this current Inquiry. These are:

1. 10.8 'Automotive Competitiveness and Investment Scheme', pp. 438-440;
2. 11.5 'Defence Science and Technology', pp. 490-494; and
3. 11.6 'Defence Science Technology Organisation's Role', pp. 494-496.

In view of the matters investigated, summarised and recommendations made almost exactly seven (7) years ago now, I should like to respectfully invite Commissioner Woods to revisit this report, review its contents as they reflected the recent years previous to March, 2007 with its forward prognostications. Would you please reconsider these recommendations made seven years ago, their affects upon the outcomes upon our car manufacturing industry, whether such conclusions were wise in hindsight, from our stance now in 2014 ?

1937.

Included are a number of complementary, noteworthy matters coinciding in the same week in April, 1937. All relate to self-reliance, defence preparedness, increased industrialisation and fuel independence, etc. A comparison of two nations' approach to self-reliance and sufficiency is enabled with these articles. We may compare Germany with Australia. There are many lessons for Australia to glean here. Japan's war preparations were somewhat similarly understood (Pig-Iron Bob ?).

Today, we are witnessing the arming of China, Japan and all of our Asian neighbours. It is obvious to this layman why certain of our 'third-world' neighbours are building their own car manufacturing industries. I hear them. Do our Commissioners perceive this also ?

Will our Commissioners choose to educate our Nation positively with their findings, their responsibility due all Australian citizens as their priority, and our Government secondly ?

'EVEREADY' -- Batteries -- CSIRO -- Axxess Concept cars I and II.

To employ the name of a very useful household item and apply that name to our Nation's composition of a future car manufacturing industry, should be the catchcry and goal of this Inquiry and its outcome and its recommendations for Australia.

The DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE.

Again I raise the matter of whether the DoD has made a submission ? I enquired of Air-Marshal John Blackburn AO, retired, whether he knew. He said that he was not aware, and suggested I pose the question to the Minister for Defence, Senator Johnson. Today, Friday, 21st March I emailed Senator Johnson's office, requesting an urgent reply, pointing out your reporting to Government by the end of the month.

Without its submission, I would consider your Inquiry's findings and recommendations very incomplete, and unbalanced. I sincerely hope that I may learn sometime soon that the Department has made a submission.

VOLUMES I-V. "AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR OF 1939-1945". Series 4 - CIVIL.

I cannot recommend more strongly, the reading of at least the Contents Page of Volume V – 'The Role of Science and Industry', by the Commissioners to glean a wonderful and comprehensive overview of the many types of car and other industries that Australia possessed before WWII, and all of which we were so very blessed and fortunate to have, and which unstintingly gave so much, to strive and ensure that Australia remained free from invasion and occupation in WWII.

All of these volumes should be in every school library today, or at least, be a stand-alone class subject, "Modern Australian History". To every new high school pupil, the 4-page handout, the reformatted SMH "Pacific Victory Supplement", page 9, 'Miracles of Production and Supply', August, 1945 should be given, each year. This hand-out I have provided to the Commission.

With these volumes, we may compare with what is left to us today, from which to rebuild a comprehensive defence-capable, manufacturing industry to defend Australia once more.

A PRO-ACTIVE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION IN THE FUTURE.

The Nation's PRODUCTIVITY and its ECONOMY. It is my fervent wish and hope for the approach by the Productivity Commission to future requests by Governments, that it chooses to adopt a PRO-ACTIVE, constructive stance towards its commissions, in so far that a vigorous reconstruction of our Nation's industrial manufacturing capability and capacity will be uppermost in its thinking. Our present and future generations are all depending upon the JOBS which they hope their elected officials chosen to govern them will indirectly provide, by creating the necessary financial, exchange rate, infrastructure, low credit card interest rates, national security and all other parameters within which they may with peace and assurance go about their daily pursuits, occupations and achieve their goals of life, imbued and embedded in every heart – apart from that which the predatory advertising industry insists they must aspire to.

But where is their hope, and what hope have they, following the disastrous decisions taken by some of our past national leaders over the preceding 4-5 decades, and which it is now the responsibility of the Commission to sort out this 'train wreck' of our economy, and restore the parameters for PRODUCTIVITY, and common wealth, to be generated for all once more ?

FOREIGN INVESTMENT REVIEW BOARD.

To start with the task alluded to above, I should like to suggest that the productivity of this body be the subject of a Productivity Commission examination.

Where are ITS economic impact statements, describing the benefits, and negative impacts that its decisions have imposed upon our Nation's economy, standards of living and way of life that was enjoyed prior 1970 ? Fortunately, our broom cupboards and workshops have many 'yardsticks' with which to measure and compare these qualities prior 1970, and after !

As I have pointed out previously, to safeguard the security interests of its citizens, -- no representatives from the Defence Department have ever sat or been present at the FIRB's deliberations of whether to approve or not approve the sale to foreign interests, so many of whom have become foreign owners of the generators of our agricultural, manufacturing and mining wealth and resources. I have deduced this assessment from the FIRB's Annual Reports.

The composition of the Board should consist of at least an equal portion of Defence Service Chiefs, and some representatives from the Productivity Commission. Your Commission has a responsibility broad enough to request seats at the FIRB table, to also represent the interests of its citizens.

The Nation's Productivity and its economy, its citizens' welfare and happiness rests in a large degree with your adjudications.

We look forward to a 'Yes, we can' approach to resurrecting Australia's car manufacturing industry in some form, and uppermost being the principle of maintaining a viable defence manufacturing capability for our Nation's security interests.

These were the goals of every individual whom contributed their utmost leading up to, and during WWII, to defeat a very aggressive enemy, and to prevent imminent invasion and occupation. It would be their wish that each successive, patriotic generation carry on this legacy. The costs of our freedom, given and won at their expense, have been bequeathed to us today, with love from the bottom of their hearts.

Whom have squandered this priceless legacy, and what remains of it today ?

In the name of John Storey, I am your humble petitioner.

Yours sincerely, Jeff Leddin.