

E-mail copy of submission

South West Trade and Labour Council

Wednesday, 5 March 2003

The Commissioner,
TCF Inquiry
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
Belconnen, ACT 2616

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the South West Trade and Labour Council, which represents workers in the South West of Victoria I wish to convey the following matters to the Commission:

Twenty-Five Years ago this region had a substantial textile and clothing industry base including Fletcher Jones in Warrnambool which employed around twelve hundred workers, providing employment for specialist in the production and equipment associated with this industry but equally importantly they provided training and long term job prospects for unskilled workers and initiated the first acceptable standards for the employment of disabled workers (without this industry jobs for the disabled may have never eventuated) This establishment now only runs a cutting room, after sales, a warehouse, small office and three sewing positions. The regions Woollen Mill (blanket factory) has closed as have two long established clothing factories in the Portland area.

Government tariff policies have created most of these redundancies resulting not just in the loss of employment in this industry but also dismantling the skills base that supported these industries.

We have at the present moment about a dozen industry related businesses in this region, mostly family or solely owner operated but any further demise would result in a loss of expertise and machinery that would create a vacuum making it financially untenable for the South West of Victoria to re-establish this industry.

Unlike many skills based industries the clothing and footwear industry has proven itself compatible with decentralised/regional areas where training and skilled employment are traditionally limited therefore increasing the need to maintain if not increase incentives for local manufacturing.

Australia has in the past shown that it has the ability to be self-supporting in this area of productivity and as clothing and footwear are a necessity we should be striving to enhance our local content. With this sentiment in mind I ask the commission to consider favourably the benefits that maintaining our textile, clothing and footwear industry will have not just for the workers in the industry but for the creative image that may be lost to Australia's future.

Yours Sincerely

Margaret Brabender
Assistant Secretary
South West Trades & Labour Council