

## **Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union - Answer to additional question**

*The Committee has heard that skills are crucial for transitioning jobs in communities that are likely to be affected by changing energy and resource markets. Can you provide some detail on the role that the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union could play in training and reskilling its members?*

Skills, education, and training are indeed crucial for workers in communities impacted by a changing energy and resource market, and for the future of manufacturing in Australia in general. An education and training system that produces highly skilled workers for the jobs of the future is key to the success of any industry, but particularly for an innovation-intensive industry like manufacturing in an extremely globally competitive skills market. We are facing multiple challenges and changes to our industry, including in the energy sector, but also regarding automation and high-tech manufacturing. This requires a high-quality, regulated education and training system, that is accessible to both new workers and existing workers, with the resources necessary to train, retrain, and upskill across our working lives.

Alongside many other unions and specialists, the AMWU has long-advocated for a reversal of government cuts to TAFE, which has seen a marked deterioration in quality, accessibility, and enrolment throughout our VET sector. This is particularly felt in regional communities that are already experiencing higher unemployment and economic downturn. We also advocate for greater regulation of the for-profit private sector, epitomised by private training colleges who promise a qualification and free iPad, and in exchange provide low completion rates, educational standards that aren't subject to external scrutiny, and high student debt. This could include capping and reducing the share of public funding that goes to private institutions, ensuring that a majority of public funding must go to TAFE, and that private, for-profit institutions be subjected to external audits and defunded and shut down if found lacking. Government investment in education and training plays a critical role in fostering economic growth and job creation.

The AMWU would work with governments and industry to foster liaisons and workplace development programs between local businesses and TAFEs. We also advocate for a skills audit to identify skills gaps and opportunities for retraining, upskilling, and adaptation of skills from one job to another. Incentives should also be used to engage and train more apprentices and improve apprenticeship completion rates. We would also consider implementing targets or quotas for government projects, including the number of apprentices and the number of local workers employed, including those who have been impacted by industry changes or are seeking to retrain.

We also want to work with businesses and government where new technologies, such as automation, robotics, and high-tech manufacturing, are introduced into the workplace and the manufacturing industry. In other countries, such as Germany, workers and their representatives have seats on company and industry decision-making bodies to ensure workers are consulted on changes to their workplace, including the introduction of new technologies and job changes. This provides opportunity to ensure workers have access to skills training to adapt to changes to their work before they are implemented. We should also establish and embed new rights for workers to access training to prepare them for changes to their jobs, including paid time off to access training courses, mandated access to training courses for new skills and technologies, including utilising TAFE where possible, and building new classifications into awards to take into account new skills being used. All of these rights and entitlements should become part of the NES, in order to prepare workers for the jobs of the future.

The AMWU's role is, and always will be, to advocate for the rights and entitlements of our members, and to ensure that the benefits and prosperity which will be brought by these new industries and ways of working are also shared with the workers who build them. We are willing and ready to work with both governments and businesses, if they are willing to work with us in the best interests of working Australians.