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Manufacturing has a bright future in a strong and diverse Australian economy, say unions

Australia's manufacturing industry must have the right support and planning to ensure it continues to provide secure jobs for more than a million workers, say unions.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said the *Smarter Manufacturing for a Smarter Australia* report to the Prime Minister's Manufacturing Taskforce confirmed Australia's manufacturing can continue to underpin a broad-based national economy.

The report, released today by the non-government members of the taskforce, also found Australia must not become a one-track economy reliant on mining.

"This report shows that current global and cyclical challenges within the industry can be overcome as long as we take advantage of opportunities for innovation and investment," said Mr Oliver, who is a member of the taskforce.

"Manufacturing employs a million Australians, generates billions of dollars in export income, and makes a huge contribution to Australian research and development.

"The sector has always provided jobs with good pay and conditions, career opportunities and high skills, and all of our efforts must be put into ensuring that current and future generations of young Australians have the same opportunities for secure jobs in manufacturing.

"Australia must act now to ensure our manufacturing industry can take advantage of the opportunities identified in this report, because we cannot afford to face a vacuum that takes a decade or more to fill after the mining boom ends.

"It is essential we continue to have a sustainable and diverse economy with an innovative manufacturing sector playing its part."

Mr Oliver noted that the report's focus on skills, training, research and innovation were the recipe to deliver real productivity improvements, unlike narrow calls from some sections of business and politicians to introduce workplace laws that attacked penalty rates, conditions and job security.

It is hoped the Government will take up the recommendations of the report, which include:

- Starting a new national conversation between industry, unions and government about 'Smarter Workplaces' that focus on innovation in managerial and workforce skills and a new Smarter Australia Network linking businesses, research organisations and others;
- Improvements in research and information flow to encourage small and medium enterprises to innovate and to learn new skills;
- Improvement to the costs of doing business and new initiatives in transport, broadband, energy, regulation and taxation in order to ultimately improve productivity; and
- Fast-tracking the public and private investment pipeline with help for businesses, workers and communities to manage change, to overcome current challenges.

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