RESTRUCTURING

They seem to have left something out..

PROFITS
SHAREHOLDERS
INVESTORS
PROFESSIONALS
EXPERTS

OPPORTUNITY
COMMUNITY
SKILLS
HOUSING
ENTRY-LEVEL JOBS
The end of the Australian car industry has left South Australia grappling with the phenomenon of economic restructuring, as the economy is forced to shift from a manufacturing to a service sector focus. The prospect of the Holden closure in Adelaide’s north presents a grim outcome for the manufacturing sector in South Australia. If the closure of the Mitsubishi plant at Tonsley (in Adelaide's South) is to be any indication of the post-Holden future of South Australia's economy, the picture is not encouraging. 1,200 people lost their jobs and only one third of them were able to obtain adequate, alternative employment (Beer et al, 2006). This was after the cessation of only one major manufacturer. What we now face is the end of an entire industry.

The loss of automotive manufacturing jobs in northern Adelaide alone is estimated to be around 6,871, while South Australia is looking at a total job loss of 23,900 (Barbaro and Spoehr, 2014). This is a significant number, which brings about heavy economic, social and political implications. Many highly-skilled workers are finding themselves out of work and with few viable options. And it is not just the 24,000 people losing their jobs who are directly affected, it is their children too who find little hope in future job availability. We are looking at generations of potentially economically disadvantaged people, and a further increase in the gap between the rich and the poor.
No quick shift

The solution of transitioning workers into other sectors is often called upon in the public narrative. While it is true there are growth industries that can and will absorb some people left unemployed by the automotive manufacturing industry closure, there are just not enough jobs to solve the problem. Furthermore, there is considerable disparity between sectors in terms of qualifications, nature of the work and rates of pay.

There are some cases in which transitioning will, in fact, suit individual workers, such as that of Adris. Adris now works as a carer in a residential care facility. He wanted to “get out early” and took a redundancy from Holden in May 2015. He gained the necessary qualifications and reported that he now enjoys doing a variety of care work, from personal care to transportation and domestic work. However, it is not a “one size fits all” solution. Adris is the exception, rather than the rule.

When considering the possibility of work in the health and community services sector for a redundant (predominantly male) automotive industry worker, we need to think about the worker’s sense of self and capacities within a (predominantly female), healthcare workforce environment. It is not enough to shift workers, train them and expect them to adapt. They need additional support systems – such as psycho-social and family support – in a time of increased personal and familial stress. And even though these roles may offer solid employment, traditionally the rates of pay are far lower than that of the automotive industry.

Unfortunately, there remains a disconnect between vocational retraining and placement programs, and the social supports required by displaced workers and their families.
supports required by displaced workers and their families. AnglicareSA’s emergency assistance (EA) sites meet demands for food, clothing, advice, support and advocacy for individuals and families in their time of need. Through its regular Turnaway census, AnglicareSA found that although demand was not fully met in any of the five metropolitan sites in Adelaide, the greatest degree of unmet need was reported in Adelaide’s northern region, where 68 percent of all turnaways were recorded (AnglicareSA 2016). Without doubt, this economic restructuring is generating economic stress and hardship for families.

A targeted response

There is desperately need for a targeted response to the economic hardship experienced in South Australia, especially in northern Adelaide, as called for in the 2014 Productivity Commission Inquiry report into Australia’s automotive manufacturing industry. To recover the jobs lost and to enable employment growth in an area now characterised by chronic underemployment and high unemployment will require attraction and retention of investment, which in turn will need to build on the strengths of the region.

While investment in economic infrastructure is often seen as a focalised target, social infrastructure such as well-functioning schools and community involvement plays a major role. One of the region’s greatest assets is its pool of highly-educated young people. Another is the resilient and entrepreneurial nature of the community, with many cash enterprises in its informal economy.

To leverage the State’s assets and provide social and economic infrastructure, and to attract investment into a stable, educated workforce, government, industry and social services must work together. However, too often they work in silos. To generate and drive strategies that are more effective, we need greater collaboration and joint action. In particular, economic agencies need to understand the value of social agencies in helping to build community capacity and resilience.
Whole of community

In October 2015, as part of a deeply collaborative partnership between AnglicareSA and the South Australian government’s Renewal SA, the management of nearly 500 community housing properties in Adelaide’s north was transferred to AnglicareSA’s housing team. Since then, the team has received glowing endorsements from tenants due to the level of personal customer service and the access to AnglicareSA’s wraparound services. This initiative, where AnglicareSA acts as landlord while the government holds the titles, is underpinned by a vision of housing renewal, reinvestment and neighbourhood engagement. Although work security in the region has been eroded over the past few years, this investment in community, which is such a fundamental part of the housing project, provides a base for future development and employment.

At AnglicareSA we foster a community whose constituent parts are included and integrated into a common strategy: a whole-of-community approach that encourages the development of each individual’s potential. We look to support families and local businesses to be ambitious, self-reliant, proactive, educated and passionate; and to cultivate industries that are aware of and responsive to the community. Our approach is as much about citizen alliances and thriving communities as it is about industry clusters.

Housing, education and healthcare need to be as much a part of economic development as business investment and training. We need investment in integrated infrastructure that will, in turn, lead to long-term reinvestment and development.

Another good example of collaboration – this time between AnglicareSA, government and the business and education sectors – that has the potential to optimise outcomes is the Northern Adelaide State Secondary Schools Alliance (NASSSA). NASSSA is a confederation of 11 schools formed to maximise the learning opportunities, career pathways, retention and educational outcomes for all students collaborating, combining resources and mobilising community and industry support across the Alliance.
A NASSSA member school, Northern Adelaide Senior College, provides alternative educational opportunities when young people are excluded from other schools. The focus is on language and other fundamentals, as well as on building interest in creative industry areas such as music, art, drama, production and technology. The aim is to develop young people’s capacity to move into the workforce in non-traditional areas. AnglicareSA supports students and provides case management services to increase their engagement with learning and find viable workplace options.

**Build on the strengths**

These types of programs demonstrate the potential for greater community benefit from business, governments and community agencies working together to generate change. This is feasible in the northern suburbs of Adelaide where there is a skilled and stable workforce who are embedded in the local community and economy.

South Australian families, particularly in Adelaide’s north, are being impacted in many and varied ways by the transition away from manufacturing largely brought on by, or evident in, the closing of the motor vehicle industry. The challenge is to develop other collaborative ways to move forward with clear direction, input and participation from government, agencies, business, schools, families and local communities.
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Kate joined Anglicare SA two years ago following more than six years with Anglicare NT, and she continues in her work to build community responses to vulnerable individuals and families.
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This article is from the Anglicare Australia’s 2016 State of the Family report, if you’d like to read more please visit www.anglicare.asn.au.