

WE'RE IN A SORRY STATE FOR MANUFACTURING



Sausages are always in demand, so the production line at Bertocchi Smallgoods in Thomastown is busy. Picture: JAY TOWN

Foreign officials 'let off'

POLICE have sought the waiver of diplomatic immunity for foreign embassy staff five times in the past two years.

But data provided to the *Herald Sun* reveals that several official requests went unanswered, allowing misbehaving foreign officials to avoid potential prosecution and continue to work in Australia.

Under Australian and international law, foreign consular staff cannot be interviewed by police without a waiver from their own government.

On one occasion Australian authorities sought a waiver of diplomatic immunity to allow the provision of CCTV footage.

The latest data follows the recent release, under Freedom of Information laws, of documents detailing a further 10 cases between 2010 and 2012 in which waivers were sought.

In two of the more serious cases — one involving an act of indecency and the other an assault — the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade sought from the relevant foreign missions a revocation of diplomatic immunity.

But the department did not receive any response.

Jobs hit a snag

MORE than 13,000 jobs were lost in Victoria's battling manufacturing sector during the past two years.

New figures reveal the industry copped a 15 per cent drop in employment — the worst of any state or territory — amid the Federal Government's tough approach to industry bailouts, a high dollar and sluggish economy.

Across Australia the manufacturing sector employment fell by 6 per cent, with Tasmania and South Australia falling 9 per cent.

Car companies Ford, Holden and Toyota started phasing out assembly in that time — with Victoria's transport manufacturing sector dropping from 33,930 people employed in July 2012 to 28,786 in July last year.

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics yesterday showed textile and footwear workers were also hit hard,

ROB HARRIS

with the number of workers employed dropping by 12 per cent from 16,063 to 14,083.

The only two Victorian manufacturing industries to grow were beverages, which created almost 1000 jobs, and chemicals. Employment remained steady in food processing, despite multiple closures of regional factories, with the growing dairy industry driving a 15 per cent increase in ice-cream jobs nationwide.

The period includes the introduction of the former Labor government's carbon tax, but unions and some companies have dismissed its impact on competitiveness.

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union state assistant secretary Craig Kelly said the figures were "hardly a surprise" given the "lack of support or vision" coming from Canberra.

"It's frightening when Victoria is soon to overtake Sydney with population, that all the ecosystems to support cars, ships are here but the jobs are evaporating," Mr Kelly said.

"We've had Alcoa hanging on by its fingernails and the sector here has missed out on the fruits of the mining boom."

Mr Kelly said the environment of historically low interest rates should see all levels of government supporting local manufacturing.

More than 254,000 Victorians were directly employed in manufacturing as of last July, while around 879,000 have jobs in the sector nationwide.

Victorian Industry Minister Lily D'Ambrosio said the job losses were "disappointing but not surprising".

"Tony Abbott does not care about these workers," she said. "The previous Liberal government did nothing for them."

At least one federal Cabinet

minister recently privately raised expressed concerns at his Government's "complete lack of a plan" for the manufacturing industry.

Federal Opposition employment spokesman Brendan O'Connor said the Abbott Government had "turned its back on manufacturing".

A spokesman for Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane said the job-loss figures highlighted the fact that Victorian manufacturers were facing challenges "due to a range of global economic factors".

He said the Government had committed more than \$200 million in innovation and investment fund.

"The Government is taking a measured, strategic and long-term approach to supporting the transition of manufacturing in order to help find opportunities among the challenges and create new jobs," he said.

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GREAT WALL'S GREAT FALL

AROUND 30 per cent of China's Ming-era Great Wall has gone as adverse natural conditions and reckless human activities — including stealing the bricks to build houses — erode the UNESCO World Heritage site.

The wall stretches for thousands of kilometres in sections, from Shanhaiguan in the east to Jiayuguan in the windswept sands of the Gobi desert. Construction began in the third century BC but nearly 6300km were built in the 1368-1644 Ming Dynasty.

Asbestos!
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HSV OFFERS SUPERCHARGED SALUTE

JOSHUA DOWLING

With enthusiasts driving demand, Holden Special Vehicles will by the end of the year fit the supercharged V8 — previously reserved for the \$100,000 flagship GTS sedan and GTS Maloo ute — to its Clubsport sedan and wagon, and the regular Maloo ute.

HSV has been forced to introduce the 6.2-litre LSA supercharged V8 to the more

affordable models in its range because, later this year, Holden will fit to Commodore SS models the Corvette V8 that was previously exclusive to the HSV range.

But GTS owners will still retain bragging rights, as HSV is understood to be capping the power of the LSA on the other models — ensuring the GTS remains the flagship.

THE Australian car industry might be dying but it is definitely not going to go quietly.

Holden's fast-car division is poised to add supercharged V8 power across most of its line-up to farewell the Commodore on a high note.

While Holden sales are at 21-year lows, V8 sales are up and now account for more than one-third of all Commodores sold.



The GTS Maloo