

# INDUSTRY PROGRAMS WORKING GROUP



AUSTRALIAN AUTOMOTIVE TALENT: A NEW ERA.

Martha Opoliadis - Industry Programs & Allied Societies Chair, SAE-A

With the announcements that Ford, Holden and Toyota will wind up their automotive manufacturing activities in Australia by 2017, the future looks very uncertain – and potentially bleak – for thousands of automotive industry employees.

Job losses at all major employers have already commenced. Development projects are coming to an end, and many design, development and validation engineers are actively seeking work, or trying to figure out what the next phase of their career will look like.

The final report from the Productivity Commission, released in August 2014 estimates job losses of up to 40,000 across the industry.

Currently, a number of overseas companies are taking advantage of the closing of Australia's automotive industry, and are actively recruiting in Australia. Attractive packages are available for relocation – and there are an enormous number of jobs available in the USA and Europe. Whilst these opportunities are of great benefit to the individual engineers whose personal situations enable them to take advantage of such offers, a mass exodus of highly trained, highly skilled individuals is a great loss to the nation as a whole.

The Government recently conducted an economic review to identify growth sectors and industries that could benefit from the skills of Australia's automotive professionals, so that automotive engineers could target these industries when seeking employment opportunities. Sadly, such reports provide little tangible

benefit to people currently, or soon to be, out of work.

The review is a good start, but it needs to be followed up with a program that provides action, focusing on connecting automotive talent with employers in complementary industries.

The SAE-A represents automotive industry members and has created a new committee, the Industry

*“To place engineers into roles that add value to the employer and where the automotive professional can utilise their skills, knowledge and experience.”*

Programs Working Group, to assist in addressing these issues. The work of the IPWG will be fundamental to empowering engineers and professionals to make their next career decisions and will add long term benefits to Australian industry through the retention of a highly skilled workforce.

The committee is chaired by Martha Opoliadis, Engineering Manager at GM Holden and SAE-A board member, and has the following remit:

- To place engineers into roles that add value to the employer and where the automotive professional can utilise their skills, knowledge and experience.
- To retain the skills and knowledge of Automotive Professionals