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SAE-A says Holden move is wake-up call

The Society of Automotive Engineers – Australasia (SAE-A) says Holden's departure from Australia is a wake-up call to make the most of Australia's engineering expertise.

As the Asia Pacific professional body for automotive and mobility engineers, it represents more than 2,000 auto engineering professionals employed in Australia.

SAE-A Chairman and CEO Adrian Feeney said the Holden engineering cuts were less than a quarter of the total number of engineers employed in Australia's auto industry.



"Australian based car, truck and specialist vehicle companies employ thousands of world-class auto engineers, and Holden is only part of the story," he said.

"The departure of Holden from our market is a sad event without doubt, but it is also wake-up call for Australia to make the most of its internationally admired engineers.

"Several companies are capitalising on the special talents of Australia's engineers, and one new start-up is already recruiting direct from Holden.

"Now is the time to reinvigorate our focus on engineering education and employment – to keep these engineers gainfully employed and live up to our image as the clever country."

Mr Feeney said Ford Australia led the industry, with more than 2000 engineers, designers, technical and automotive specialists working at four locations across Victoria.

"Ford's Australian-based engineers and designers are developing award-winning vehicles for global markets – and they are not alone," he said.



“There are hundreds more at companies such as PACCAR, which builds Australia’s DAF and Kenworth trucks, and HSV, which builds right-hand-drive versions of American cars.

“And then there is VinFast, the Vietnamese car maker which is recruiting its engineers from Europe and Australia – and it already employs dozens of engineers in Melbourne.”

Mr Feeney said Holden’s demise was low point in Australia’s automotive history, especially for the people who would lose their jobs, but it did have a potential silver lining.

“As a former Holden engineer myself, I feel for all these good people, many of whom have been my colleagues and friends, but they are too good not to rise again,” he said.

“Holden engineers have long been admired internationally for their can-do attitude, original thinking and the ability to solve the toughest engineering challenges.

“You can be sure that a host of emerging electric and autonomous vehicle makers will join the likes of VinFast in looking to Australia for their best engineers.

“Now is the time for government, industry and the educational sector to strengthen their resolve and offer Australia’s engineering capabilities more than ever to global customers.”

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