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Lack of government support leaves local manufacturing industry ripe for more job losses

The sacking of 70 maintenance workers and their replacement with cheap contract labour at SPC Ardmona's Shepparton cannery raises serious concerns about the future of Australia's last fruit manufacturer and its workers, according to the ACTU.

Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick said the Abbott Government had been elected on the promise of jobs and prosperity, but it has done little to protect jobs in the local manufacturing sector, including at SPC.

"It leaves a bitter taste in the mouths of many Australians to see the Abbott Government play politics with SPC and allow job losses from regional communities," Mr Borowick said.

"We call on the Government and SPC to come clean on their plans for maintenance workers and the future of the rest of the local SPC workforce.

"We know the Federal Government's been putting pressure on SPC and the result is 70 jobs gone days after Christmas. Workers are looking for action from the Government that will create jobs, not cut them.

"If SPC alone folds, about 2000 people will lose their jobs with devastating impacts on growers, staff and their families and local communities.

"Major job losses like these hit regional areas hard, with the community hollowed out as workers and their families are forced to leave.

"The Abbott Government's decisions have already brought the automotive industry to its knees and contributed to the loss of local Holden manufacturing.

"Now the Government risks the last can of tinned Australian fruit rolling off the production line on its watch unless urgent action is taken to support SPC.

"The ACTU calls on Prime Minister Abbott to stop turning his back on local industry and come up with a comprehensive plan for supporting Australian manufacturing," Mr Borowick said.

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