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Jobs must be protected if Australia is to ride out global economic uncertainty: unions

Employers must pull out all stops to protect Australian jobs and not take a gunshot approach to addressing global economic challenges, say unions.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said it was becoming too easy for employers to cut jobs in response in response to overseas uncertainty in the economy.

Ms Kearney said today's announcement that Toyota would cut 350 local jobs was another blow to both the manufacturing sector and to the Australian economy.

"We know this year will be challenging on many fronts because of the instability in the economy throughout Europe and other parts of the globe," she said. "Australia is better placed than almost any other developed nation to ride out the challenges from overseas, thanks to the Labor Government's strong economic management during the Global Financial Crisis three years ago.

"But if employers start slashing jobs at the first sign of difficulty then Australia cannot get through the current challenges unscathed. A strong economy is dependent on jobs growth which will sustain demand."

Ms Kearney said support for the car industry and the manufacturing sector was an investment in protecting jobs into the future.

"We know the Labor Government is committed to protecting jobs across the sector, but it is time Tony Abbott stands up to be counted on whether he believes in the future of manufacturing and Australian jobs," she said.

"The Liberal Party campaigned against Labor's economic stimulus program during the GFC so Mr Abbott must tell Australians whether he is still opposed to supporting jobs and working Australians. Australia already has a multi-speed economy and if the manufacturing industry is not supported then the gap between the mining sector and the rest of the country will be widened.

"Manufacturing is a key strategic industry which contributes billions of dollars to exports, tax revenues and the economy, employs hundreds of thousands of people, and contributes to skills and technology development.

"Industry assistance is provided for reform and restructure, and is backed by unions and business groups alike. Jobs losses hurt families and individuals, they do long-term damage to communities and they blunt the economy.

"The reverberations will be felt for a long time to come so employers must think carefully about the long-term consequences of their actions. It is only January and already this year we have heard of around 1000 job losses in the banking sector and ongoing turmoil within manufacturing.

"It is time for cool heads and a considered approach so that Australia can ride out this year's economic storms in the same good shape in which we survived the Global Financial Crisis."

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