

# Mitsubishi Project

## Fact Sheet



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**ADELAIDE  
AUSTRALIA**

## **AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE RETRENCHMENT OF MITSUBISHI WORKERS ON AFFECTED WORKERS, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

### **BACKGROUND**

South Australia has a number of mature industries which are vulnerable to downturn resulting from global restructuring of manufacturing industries. There is an urgent need for well researched information on the impacts of plant closures on employees and their communities.

The retrenchment of approximately 1000 permanent workers from Mitsubishi Motors (Australia) Limited's (MMAL) Lonsdale foundry and reduction of activities at Tonsley Park is expected to have a significant impact on the lives of retrenched workers, their families and communities.

The southern suburbs of Adelaide have a number of features that make them especially vulnerable to the impacts of MMAL restructuring, including:

- A relatively under-developed industrial base, with few large employers in the region and a weaker entrepreneurial culture when compared with other parts of Adelaide
- Ongoing impact of the closure of Mobil's facility at Port Stanvac
- Significant pockets of low income and relative deprivation in the region and associated poor health outcomes
- High rates of youth unemployment in the region
- Social services are already under considerable pressure and some health services, such as general practitioners, are in short supply compared with the rest of Adelaide.

### **THE RESEARCH**

**Flinders University is leading a major longitudinal study of the housing, economic, labour market, health and social service impacts of the job losses for Mitsubishi employees.**

The research will explore: mental and physical health, disruption of social networks, prospects for re-employment, attributes and behaviours of the workers that are associated with good outcomes, demand for social and health services, levels of housing stress and impact on children and young people.

The research findings will inform policy and service development to help South Australians better prepare for large-scale employment changes in the future.

The research project is supported by Mitsubishi Motors Australian Limited and is funded by the State Government.

### AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The research project aims to identify the impact of the Mitsubishi plant closures on the employees and their families. It will address 5 key objectives:

- Objective 1: To complete a longitudinal questionnaire of the housing, economic, labour market, health and social service impacts of the job losses in order to track the changing effects of job loss over the critical transition period.
- Objective 2: To conduct detailed investigations with sub-samples of the above populations
- Objective 3: To study the impact of job losses on the children of retrenched workers
- Objective 4: To assess the perceived impact of job losses on the region by service providers
- Objective 5: To provide policy recommendations based on the above research.

### OUTCOMES

Research outcomes of the project will identify the most effective re-employment strategies of retrenched workers and what services were valuable in assisting them.

The research project will also:

- Inform policy makers of the first, second and third order impacts of the job losses at MMAL
- Provide an evidence base of the impact of the MMAL job losses to inform future policy negotiations on industry restructuring
- Identify strategies to alleviate the worst impacts of the job losses
- Provide an evidence base on the most useful support strategies for employees to inform future responses to large-scale job losses
- Give information on local services and supports to people being interviewed
- Offer a template of best practice for Mitsubishi Motors Australian Limited in managing employee retrenchments.

### RESEARCH PLAN

The research project will involve more than 2000 interviews over the next 18 months.

#### **Stage 1 – before job loss**

Face-to-face quantitative survey interviews will be held with up to 500 permanent full-time workers experiencing job loss. In-depth qualitative interviews with a small group of these workers.

A comparison group of 250 workers from similar companies, whose jobs are not under threat, will be interviewed.

100 children of the workers who will be retrenched will also be interviewed.

#### **Stage 2 – 6 months after Stage 1 interview**

Survey interviews  
In-depth interviews

#### **Stage 3 – 18 months after Stage 1 interview**

Survey interviews  
In-depth interviews

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What effect does involuntary retrenchment have on the mental and physical health of workers?
2. What characteristics of workers lead to greater resilience in response to retrenchment?
3. How are housing careers affected by involuntary retrenchment?
4. How does the use and perception of housing change with the changed work circumstances, is home ownership a burden, a support or something else?
5. What job-finding strategies are effective for retrenched workers?
6. What role do social networks play in retrenched workers' experience of job loss and future employability?
7. What are children's experiences of their parents' changing employment conditions, with particular emphasis: on relationships with family and peers, education, sport, leisure and holidays, current and future expectations and hopes about their own employment, and impact on their sense of opportunities and threats in their worlds?
8. What are the policy implications of the involuntary retrenchments?

### FLINDERS UNIVERSITY LEAD RESEARCHERS

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