

13 May 2008

Senator the Hon Kim Carr  
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research  
26 Lygon Street  
Carlton South Vic 3053

For the attention of Mr Steve Bracks

Dear Mr Bracks,

**Government Review of Australian Automotive Industry**

I am writing in response to the call for submissions relating to the Federal Automotive Review. In 1980 I started my career working in the auto service repair industry. I progressed through the TAFE system as a panel beater apprentice in the early eighties. Upon completing my apprenticeship, I worked in the UK, restoring and hand building bespoke classic and thoroughbred sports cars.

Over the years my career evolved into working in the highly specialised discipline of coachbuilding. More recently, for the last 15 years I have been responsible for the maintenance, restoration and management of the private car collection of Mr. Lindsay Fox here in Melbourne.

The Fox Car Collection in Docklands, Melbourne, over the last ten years has hosted many educational automotive tours and tours for special interest groups. The personal experience I gained from hosting these visits, and from partnering and developing a series of education programs for primary, secondary schools and universities has enriched my understanding of this area. My involvement in the project control group, consultation, design and construction of Stage One Automotive Centre of Excellence, Melbourne Docklands, led in turn to the advancement of a program that I believe is pertinent to the discussion paper and the Auto Review forum currently taking place.

The program I am currently involved with, the FR-1 Program, is designed to showcase attainable career opportunities within the automotive industry. This industry has a vast breadth of innovation that has been harnessed within the FR-1 Program.. which is a hands-on example designed to improve the end process, resources and skills that can be delivered by the Australian auto industry.



FR-1 is a consolidated and unique platform where auto manufacturers, research institutions and auto component partners can showcase their expertise, excellence and new technologies locally and globally. Our fundamental objective is to create awareness and inspire young Australians to consider a career in automotive manufacturing and the associated trade disciplines.

In reading the recently published Auto Discussion paper my colleague at VCAMM, Sam Davis (Program Manager), and I noted the following:

- The Green Innovation Fund is asking for *new frontiers*. We believe that the government is referring to radical and new methods of propulsion. However, taking critical mass out of a vehicle by using lightweight materials, as used in our program, will demonstrate a significant saving in fuel consumption, and the lightweight technology utilised is available right now. It has been demonstrated time and again that simply reducing consumption is far more effective than changing the process by which energy in a liquid fuel is transformed into motive power. In the short term, the most cost effective way to reduce consumption is to reduce the power required to propel vehicles at current and practical traffic speeds.
- Although there is much talk about large cars being forsaken for small cars, this is not borne out in the charts. The statistics suggest that large cars are being displaced by large SUVs [Refer to chart one background paper]. Once again, this demonstrates that lightweight materials have a major role to play in providing the vehicles that people want to buy, but using significantly less fuel.
- The question is asked about how Australia can carve out a niche in particular areas of technology. Carbon fibre manufacture is one of these areas, and VCAMM - Victorian Centre of Advanced Materials & Manufacturing (FR-1's principal partner) is lobbying for a business case to be put together for a carbon fibre factory in Australia, thus creating the possibility of many manufacturing opportunities (including automotive) based on freely available and relatively cheap lightweight carbon fibre.
- Our program is pioneering a new method of chassis manufacture and construction using Quickstep cured carbon fibre panels that are melded or glued together. Our program and the ACE vision in Docklands have provided an incubator for relationships and partnerships between industry and research groups to work together and evolve a product in a practical and engaging way. Ultimately, the end product, we believe, will lead to a new method of producing an automotive primary structure in a mass production environment, and thus is consistent with the requirement of potential new niche areas of technology.



**FR-1**

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- There is much discussion in the papers about the skill levels of employees. Our program continues to engender interest in young people and educators in proactively promoting the automotive industry as a career pathway. The forum we have created accords participating university undergraduates and apprentices the opportunity to pick up skill sets that make them ready for employment. Further, it breaks down some of the unfortunate stigma that has plagued employers and automotive peak bodies in attempting to attract young people to the industry. The use of new technology such as carbon fibre, and the delivery of the program at the Docklands Automotive Centre of Excellence (ACE) has created much interest amongst young people, and continues to engage them at an emotive level.

Thank you for your attention,

Yours sincerely

Brian Tanti  
Program Director

