

# Made overseas? Tell us

## CAMERON ENGLAND

AUSTRALIA should consider making it compulsory to label foreign-made products, in order to give Australian-made goods an edge in the market, Defence Teaming Centre chief executive Audra McCarthy says.

Speaking at a Fearless Conversation Forum on manufacturing hosted by The Advertiser and Flinders University on Wednesday, Ms McCarthy said people wanted to buy local, but there were actually barriers in place for Australian companies who wanted to show their colours.

Perhaps a fairer solution would be to insist that foreign companies identified themselves, she said.

“After the pandemic, there’s been increased attention on the need to support Australian-made, and it’s a little ironic that Australian companies have to spend the extra effort to differentiate themselves in the market with their own local consumers that they are Australian-made, yet our imports don’t have to make it very clear that they’re an imported product.

“It’s great to be part of the ‘Australian Made’ logo, but to be part of that actually costs.

“Shouldn’t it be the other way around? If you’re importing a product it should be very clearly labelled. It makes it a lot easier for the consumer.” Ms McCarthy said there were good environmental reasons to buy locally made and more sustainable products.

Ms McCarthy was joined on the forum panel by REDARC managing director Anthony Kittel, BAE Systems maritime Australia continuous naval shipbuilding strategy director Sharon Wilson, tech entrepreneur George Freney and Flinders University’s pro-vice chancellor of research impact, John Spoehr.

Dr Spoehr said South Australia had made good progress in pivoting towards advanced manufacturing over the past decade or so as vehicle manufacturing in the state wound down, culminating in the closure of Holden in 2017.

But lessons could be learnt from countries such as the UK, which had set up what was called the “Catapult Network” under the auspices of Innovate UK, while Germany had set up more than 60 institutes to drive Industry 4.0.

“It’s a strategy, it’s not a set of technologies, it’s actually a strategy for accelerating the growth of advanced manufacturing ... we’re all trying to emulate that internationally,” he said.

Dr Spoehr said the plan needed to be long-term, with 10-20 year horizons, but if the

will was there, you could successfully develop a sustainable and prosperous advanced manufacturing sector.

Extended coverage of the Fearless Conversation on manufacturing will be in the Sunday Mail on October 10.