

Dear Committee Members,

We offer this addendum to the testimony we provided at the Sydney Hearing on 20 February. A query was raised by one of the Senators (Senator Steele-John), about the relationship between labour unions and cooperatives (platform or otherwise) in considering the future of work and workers. We interpreted the tenor of the question as being concerned that an 'either/or' choice must be made - that is, that either workers join unions and enter into a mediated relationship with employers, or they form a cooperative and become worker-owners and in the process move beyond capital-labour mediations.

Certainly, in Australia, the UK, the United States, Germany and elsewhere there have been periods where tension between the labour and cooperative movements have been evident. However, we take this opportunity to draw your attention to other initiatives and trajectories that illustrate a much more complex and rich picture than a simple 'either/or' relationship might suggest.

For example, in the United States there is a history of co-operators who have joined unions related to their particular sector as well as moments where unions have started or supported cooperatives as a way of furthering their objectives. Please see <http://www.geo.coop/node/630>

The Role of Unions in Worker Co-op Development ...

www.geo.coop

By Mary Hoyer, Liz Ryder, Frank Adams, John Curl, and Deb Groban Olson of the USFWC UnionCo-ops Committee Labor unions and cooperatives enjoy a long and rich history ...

for a brief history of this in the United States. Also of particular pertinence to this Inquiry is the union model that Community in the UK has developed, which works with the kind of 'portability' needs that have been discussed at length in submissions and testimony <https://community-tu.org/>



We are Community |
Community

community-tu.org

Community is creating a new kind of trade union. We've spent decades protecting workers in the UK, and we're now opening our doors to everyone.

We also note that the world's largest and most renowned Cooperative enterprise — Mondragon Cooperative Corporation <https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/en/>

Web MONDRAGON Corporation

www.mondragon-corporation.com

Corporación MONDRAGON, referencia mundial del trabajo en cooperación, constituye el primer grupo empresarial del País Vasco y el décimo de España, con

— has a long history of functionally supporting trade unions in a spirit of national solidarity in the Basque region of Spain.

We would also like to take this opportunity to emphasise one other point, drawing on the research our submission was based on. Whilst the popular discourse is easily captured by new and emerging technologies and their impacts (such as platforms, AI, robots etc), we suggest it is imperative to developing a balanced response to these and other 'future work' considerations to remember that products such as 'milk, meat and mattresses' will always be needed. These products are the domain of some of the manufacturing enterprises involved in our study. There is much to be learnt from how these mid-tier manufacturers have navigated previous periods of technological and other change, with some having survived over 100 years in markets that have undergone significant shifts. We submit that the future of work and workers must consider - in addition to the 'sexy' elements that capture the imagination - the more mundane needs of the population, and include support for the already successful efforts of the types of enterprises engaged in these sectors.

On behalf of the *Reconfiguring the Enterprise: Shifting Manufacturing Culture in Australia* research project team