



AUSTRALIAN STEEL INSTITUTE

National COVID-19 Coordination Commission Chair Addresses Questions from ASI

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)—of which the Australian Steel Institute is a member—recently facilitated a video conference with Neville Power, Chair of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission.

During the conference, Power provided an update on the activities of the Commission across its two key objectives: to help minimise and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on jobs and businesses, and to facilitate the fastest possible recovery of lives and livelihoods.

Neville also responded to questions posed by conference attendees, including the ASI's Chief Executive, Mark Cain.

Encouraging Local Procurement

With local manufacturers frequently failing to win government project work, Cain asked Neville how the NCCC will help 'level the playing field', and give more weight to the broader economic benefits of local supply, thereby encouraging investment to meet future needs?

According to Power, "The Commission is providing practical advice to government on policy and regulatory reform that will be needed to grow the economy and increase productivity. The COVID-19 outbreak has highlighted the importance of domestic capabilities, and companies will be considering their supply chain vulnerabilities and reliance on overseas inputs. We are looking at all levers available to support business and accelerate our recovery; that includes things like incentivising investment."

Reviving Regional Manufacturing Centres

Steel fabrication has historically been a significant employer in Australia's regional centres. As such, Cain posed the question whether the revival of such industries in regional areas is a priority for the NCCC and Governments?

"The disruption of global supply chains has presented Australia with an opportunity to revive its manufacturing sector. The Commission is looking closely at these opportunities, including through a manufacturing working group led by Andrew Liveris," responded Power.

"The long-term recovery is a chance for us to reconfigure our manufacturing to modern, high-tech, flexible systems that can operate in niche markets like Australia. Our priority is identifying projects that can start quickly, be done commercially and stand on their own two feet, creating jobs in the short term and economic growth into the future. Some of these opportunities will be in regional centres; for example, value-added food manufacturing."