

Australian Made push to maintain momentum

CAMERON ENGLAND



REVVED UP: Redarc managing director Anthony Kittel says Australian automotive products are popular in the US. Picture: TOM HUNTLEY

ENERGY rebates for Australian manufacturers and wage deals capped at CPI must be considered to ensure the potential of the current push to “buy Australian”, Australian Made campaign chairman Glenn Cooper says.

Australian Made this week kicked off a national campaign with the message, “It’s never been more important to buy Australian than right now”.

Mr Cooper said the coronavirus epidemic had thrown into stark relief the nation’s reliance on imports and the fragility of some supply lines.

There had been a strong surge of support to “buy local”, Mr Cooper said, but there was a fear that as things returned to normal, shoppers and businesses would revert to buying based on price.

Mr Cooper, former head of marketing and now chairman of Coopers Brewery, who also sits on the boards of Haymes Paint and Bundaberg Ginger Beer, said applications to use the

Australian Made logo were up more than five-fold since January but more had to be done to capitalise momentum.

“There’s a bit of euphoria at the moment, saying it’s great for Australian products, but there are a few hurdles that need to be overcome,” Mr Cooper said.

“No.1 is power and energy.

“The Government needs to give a rebate for energy to all manufacturers.

“If you’re a start-up manufacturer or you’re growing or you’re going to a new production line, I don’t think it’s a massive amount of money to assist with a rebate.”

Mr Cooper said unions also needed to work with employers and suggested that pay rises be held to CPI, or the rate of inflation.

There was also advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, based on World Trade Organisation advice, that Australian companies should not say their product was “better” than imported products, he said.

To follow this advice was just “ridiculous”, Mr Cooper said.

Lonsdale automotive firm Redarc Electronics, which specialises in energy management systems for four-wheeldrives, trucks and other vehicles, has found pushing “Australian made” to the US market to be a winner, with online sales up 100 per cent last month.

Chief executive Anthony Kittel said US customers believed goods made to suit the harsh Australian environment would survive anywhere.

“They really rate our Australian-made product against US and other players,” he said.

Mr Cooper said applications to join Australian Made had jumped from about 60 a month usually to more than 300 last month.