

Crisis bears down

Sacked workers swamp job agencies

Melinda Marshall

marshallm@leadernewspapers.com.au

ABOUT 450 workers joined the dole queue at Centrelink's Ringwood office in the past year as local employers shed jobs.

Centrelink figures show the number of people receiving help at the Ringwood office for unemployment leapt by 33 per cent in the 12 months to February.

And things are getting worse.

At least 64 workers were retrenched from Croydon car component factory, Australian Automotive Air, late last month as production slumped at the company's main customer, Toyota Australia.

Bayswater North computerised machinery manufacturer ANCA

cut a further 13 jobs this month after laying off 50 local workers in February.

ANCA global operations manager John Connolly said he could not rule out further job losses as export orders continued to plummet.

Ringwood scrap metal recycler CMA Recycling confirmed that it had cut five jobs in the past two months.

Robert Pears, branch manager at Ringwood Job Network recruitment agency Sarina Russo, said jobseekers were pouring through the doors. "Our stats reflect those of Centrelink and we are not seeing any slow down," Mr Pears said.

"About 40 per cent of jobseekers registering each day are from redundancies."

Apprenticeships were also being hard hit. Ringwood group training company MEGT manager Natalie Reynolds said eight apprentices could not be placed last week due to lack of work. The University of Newcastle last month named Kilsyth South and Bayswater North as among the Australian suburbs most vulnerable to job losses.

Swinburne Lilydale senior economics lecturer Alexis Esposto said workers in the outer east were vulnerable because they were more likely to be low-skilled and in casual or part-time jobs.

"We're yet to see the worst of it, it's going to be a bumpy ride," Dr Esposto said.

» More, page 5.



Manuel Gonzalez was recently retrenched from Australian Automotive Air at Croydon.

Picture: ANDY DREWITT N43M705