

Wall Street

AUSTRALIAN shares should open higher today after buoyant jobs figures gave Wall Street a boost.

AMP Capital chief economist Shane Oliver said the Dow Jones Industrial Average in the US rallied 1.4 per cent overnight on Friday on the back of a "Goldilocks" jobs report.

"Not too hot, not too cold but just right: unemployment was a very low 3.9 per cent while wages growth is still slow at 2.7 per cent but expected to start rising later this year," Dr Oliver said. The strong data boosted the US greenback and caused global currencies to soften. The Australian dollar fell to around US75.29¢. Dr Oliver said today's Australian retail sales figures are expected to show a small rise.

US appeal for simPRO

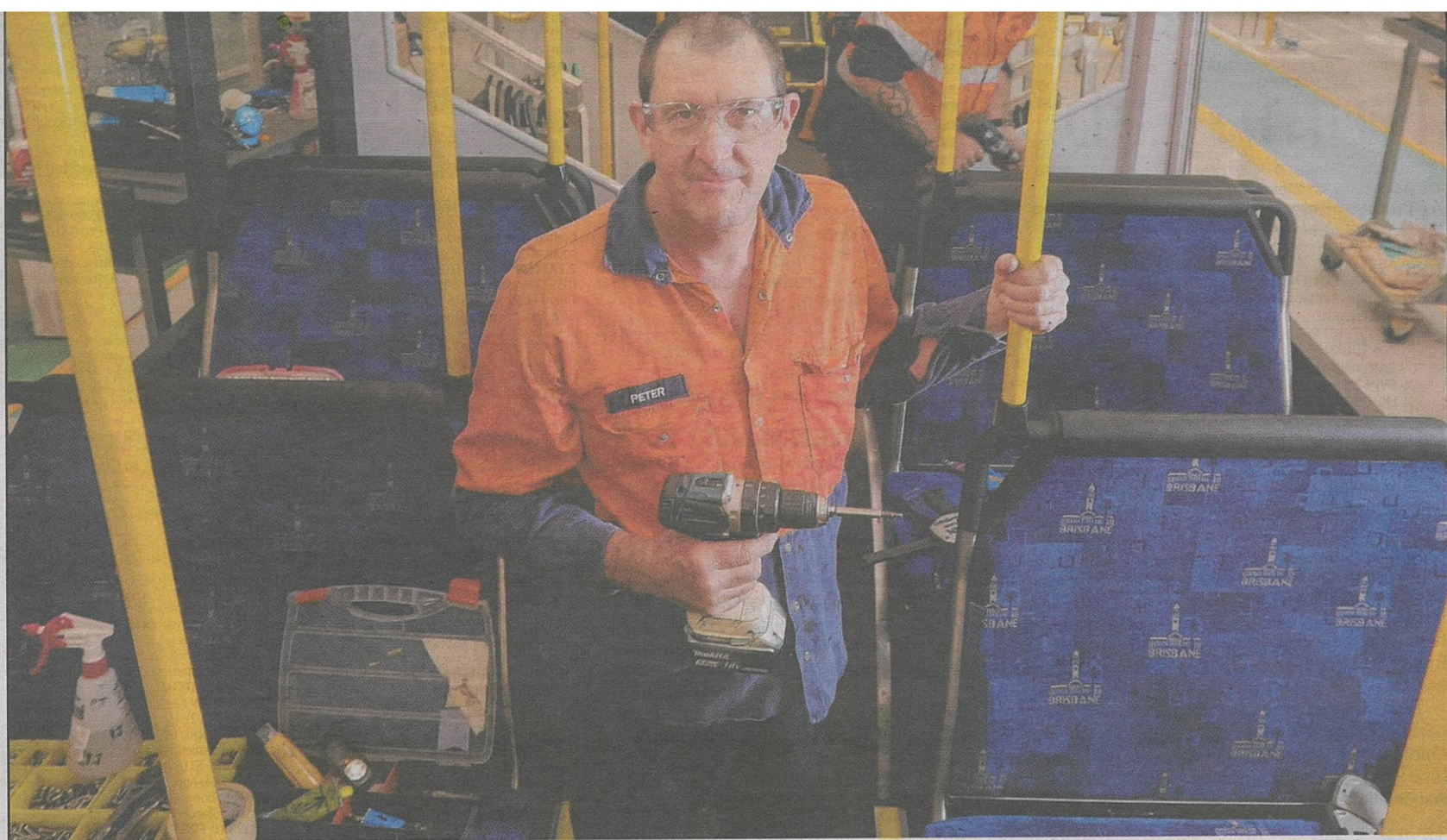
BRISBANE job management software group simPRO has expanded to California to take advantage of booming solar and security markets.

Started in Brisbane in 2002, simPRO has grown during the past 15 years to about 100,000 users around the world via its job management software platforms used by small contracting operations through to corporate enterprises.

In 2016 the company raised \$40 million in capital to fund expansion into the US market.

Glenn Nott, simPRO US president, said the Californian solar industry in particular was a growth market.

"Helping businesses deliver the right people, at the right place and at the right time is



ON THE BUSES: Volgren's Peter Moody on the bus production line at the company's Eagle Farm factory. Picture: Mark Cranitch

VOLGREN ADDS 45 NEW STAFF FOR CANBERRA CONTRACT

BUS body manufacturer Volgren has ramped up production at its Brisbane factory, adding 45 new staff to handle a major order from Transport Canberra.

"Queensland is an important part of our manufacturing capability and we're proud that the facility is now producing buses not just for Brisbane, but for a critical market in the ACT," he said.

"It's exciting to see two full production lines running in Eagle Farm."

He said the Brisbane City Council had also ordered 20

of the articulated buses this year.

Melbourne-based Volgren, which is owned by Brazilian bus manufacturing giant Marcopolo, employs 500 workers nationally at three factories.

The skilled workforce, which includes welders, boilermakers, body builders and electricians, turns out about 550 buses a year.

The chassis come from Swedish manufacturer Scania.

"Across our three manu-

facturing sites in Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane we have the flexibility and expertise to comfortably satisfy high delivery demands from operators all around the country," Mr Dale said.

"In the last five years we've completely transformed the business by adopting smarter and more efficient manufacturing techniques, which have helped halve the time it takes to build a bus.

"We set the target of building a bus body in 500 hours, which at the time was hard for

employees to conceive. But training people at all levels of the business to question process efficiency and to look for opportunities to save time or costs meant we were able to achieve the goal in just four years."

Mr Dale is hopeful the Brisbane factory will pick up more orders from Transport Canberra providing longer-term employment opportunities for staff.

"We know they need more and we are in the hunt for that ongoing work," he said.