



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 24 March 2021

Workers take fight for Portland manufacturing jobs to Canberra

The Committee for Portland welcomes the Australian Workers' Union and Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union's fight for the Federal Government to mandate local manufacturing for significant infrastructure projects.

Representatives of the AWU and AMWU this week travelled to Canberra to lobby the government for the introduction of rules requiring 40 per cent of the project use local steel and manufacturing.

The delegation met with Minister Dan Tehan and gained support from Federal MP Bill Shorten.

The campaign comes in the wake of the decision to import steel towers for a local wind farm rather than using Portland's Keppel Prince last month. The company was forced to lay off 42 workers due to uncertainty over future work due to the decision.

The future of about 100 more jobs hangs in the balance as Keppel Prince waits on a decision on which company will win the contract for the Woolsthorpe wind farm in south west Victoria.

The Committee for Portland was particularly disappointed by the decision to import steel as half of the energy produced by the wind farm at Ryan Corner would power the government's Snowy Hydro 2.0 scheme.

Committee Deputy Chair John Weichert says the move to introduce local product mandates for large-scale projects would help protect local jobs, towns and the environment.

"The decision to import steel towers that could have been manufactured in regional Victoria from local steel is disappointing and it makes a mockery of any of the government's talk about supporting local manufacturing and local jobs, and improving environmental sustainability," Mr Weichert says.

"We are pleased that the unions have taken up the fight and recognised how important this issue is to Australians. Whatever happens to Keppel Prince happens to the whole township and we can not afford to miss out on these projects due to the government's inaction. They need to step in to protect jobs, towns and manufacturing as a whole."

MP Bill Shorten, who used to represent the workers at Keppel Prince, says "in the second half of 2020 the manufacturing sector lost more than 56,000 jobs. It's the Morrison Government's job to be boosting the Australian economy not sending jobs overseas."

"It's weak and dishonest for this Government to say it doesn't have control over the tender process. With a stroke of a pen it can mandate the use of local steel and keep jobs in Portland."



Instead its chosen to sacrifice up to 100 jobs in south west Victoria, in favour of a firm that will use a cheap inferior product from China and the further decline of the manufacturing industry in Victoria.

“At a time when every single job counts, Scott Morrison should be ashamed of selling out Australian jobs and betraying Australian workers,” Mr Shorten said.

TO ARRANGE INTERVIEWS, CONTACT: Fleur Morrison on 0421 118 233, or email fleur@premierstrategy.com.au