

Committee dismayed at lack of leadership on regional jobs

Committee for Ballarat has expressed its extreme disappointment at the absence of leadership on significant, transformational jobs growth for Ballarat and the central highlands region.

Committee Chair Tony Chew said the Western Link Road and associated Ballarat West Employment Zone is a transformational project opportunity. A \$38m investment in the link road would create \$1.4b net added value and generate 9,200 jobs in the short- and medium term.+

These are stunning returns on investment by any assessment+Mr Chew said. They are even more important in Ballarat where the unemployment levels are high, we need to recover at least 1,000 job losses as a consequence of the recent financial troubles, and rapid population growth requires we create at least 10,000 jobs in the next 10 years.+

Recent research also confirms that employment opportunities in Ballarat are strongly linked with employment throughout the region. The studies show that people living in Golden Plains, Pyrenees, Central Goldfields, Hepburn and Moorabool shires travel to Ballarat in high numbers for their jobs. This would make the project an important initiative for the region as well as Ballarat.

So far, there have been small and welcome commitments to funding preparatory studies to construct the link road, and Vic Urban have been commissioned to prepare the land for developments in stage 1 of the Employment Zone. These are insufficient to provide the confidence necessary for investments in new jobs.

In the absence of much greater leadership on this transformational opportunity, people across our regional community will lament increasing unemployment levels and greater challenges to social inclusion and livability.

Mr Chew identified this opportunity: we are calling on all political parties and candidates immediately to pledge a commitment to build Stage 1 of the Link Road. We have undertaken to then work with the government of the day, the City Council and other networks to ensure jobs growth follows urgently.+

There is an ideal opportunity for our political leaders to make a decision that will lead directly to the creation of over 9,000 jobs in and for the region+

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