

Bill Shorten visits Geelong to pledge millions to help auto workers

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Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten announces close to \$60 million in transition support to assist manufacturing in Australia. Courtesy: AAP

LABOR pledged \$1 million to plan for the duplication of the rail line between Waurin Ponds and South Geelong today.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten made the announcement at Waurin Ponds Train Station today alongside Corangamite Labor candidate Libby Coker.

“Waurin Ponds is one of the great suburbs of Australia,” Mr Shorten said. “The story of Waurin Ponds is a story we’ve seen all over regional Australia and the outer suburbs.

“It’s most important that the people who live here have a government in Canberra that understands the life of the growth suburbs and the dreams of people who want to live in this

part of the cities they inhabit. They want to be able to go to work and have their kids use public transport.”

The federal Labor pledge follows on from a \$3 million commitment from the State Government for planning works over the 2016-17 financial year.

Ms Coker said duplication of the railway between the two suburbs would open up the link’s potential over the coming decade.

“It’s great to have Bill here in Geelong, he gets that we need better public transport connections, and this funding will help achieve that goal,” she said.

In the first leadership visit to Geelong for the election campaign, Mr Shorten also pledged \$7.5m to help the city’s auto industry workers.

At 10.30am, Mr Shorten met with workers at Backwell IXL, where he launched the \$59 million Manufacturing Transition Boost alongside Premier Daniel Andrews.

Geelong will secure \$7.5 million as part of the Opposition Leader’s pledge, with more than \$33 million to be distributed statewide.

Mr Shorten said the Turnbull Government was keen to see the back of Australia’s automotive industry. He said foreign competitors would be cheering the collapse of domestic car production.



Premier Daniel Andrews with Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and the Opposition’s Industry spokesman Kim Carr.

“There were 20 countries worldwide that produced cars, now there’s only 19 left,” Mr Shorten said.

“This government goaded the car industry out of Australia. Geelong is a proud car making city and we want to support local jobs, local innovation, local industry.”

But the coalition says the offer is too little, too late.

The money would be used to help workers across the country, especially in Geelong and Adelaide, as car makers pull out of Australia.

Labor estimates up to 200,000 people face a dire future as a result of car manufacturing closures between now and next year. “We simply cannot allow so many Australians to be left in the lurch,” opposition industry spokesman Kim Carr told ABC radio on Monday.

“We need to be able to work with people to secure blue-collar jobs as well as those that are at the top end of town.” A federal Labor government would use the money to boost existing state government industry transition programs in Victoria and South Australia.

Industry Minister Christopher Pyne welcomed Labor’s announcement but said it was “really a Johnny-come-lately approach” given the government has already put programs in place to help these workers.

He highlighted coalition investment in defence manufacturing, innovative jobs and free-trade deals as well as programs for automotive diversification and next-generation manufacturing

Corio MP Richard Marles and Corangamite Labor candidate Libby Coker were also at the South Geelong factory for the announcement with Mr Shorten set to tour around the region today.

Mr Shorten is expected to do a street walk in Geelong later today.