



Todd Hartley from Hilton Manufacturing says Dandenong's manufacturing sector provides good opportunities for jobseekers.

Family success builds bright future

MANUFACTURING is facing stiff competition from overseas but it still remains a major employer in Greater Dandenong providing 22,000 jobs.

Hilton Manufacturing managing director Todd Hartley said while he wasn't hiring at the moment, his Dandenong South company had just gone through a period of rapid expansion and he expected he would

be employing more people in the future.

Mr Hartley, a second-generation manufacturer in the business his parents set up, said school students were amazed by the complexity of the business when they visited the factory floor for the first time.

"We're commissioning our eleventh robot welder at the moment so there's plenty of oppor-

tunities to grow in the business," Mr Hartley said.

He said his company employed 230 staff and was one of the largest subcontract manufacturers in Australia. Hilton Manufacturing makes components for clients including truck, bus and train manufacturers.

"We've got 150 different work centres or pieces of equipment

so people can work their way up from an entry-level position through the shop floor," he said.

Mr Hartley said the area's ageing workforce would create new opportunities and, to attract the next generation, his company was working with Beacon Foundation to employ school leavers. The last intake of ten school leavers was at Christmas.

Roof sparks interest



Project manager Jacques Esper surveys the solar set-up on the roof of Hilton Manufacturing.

Picture: VALERIU CAMPAN

Melanie Gardiner

OVERSEAS DELEGATES TO VISIT SOLAR FARM

A DANDENONG South steel manufacturer's rooftop is attracting international attention.

Hilton Manufacturing recently switched on the largest array of sun-tracking solar panels on a factory roof in the southern hemisphere.

This month the site will host delegations from Taiwan and India, keen to learn more about the technology.

Project manager Jacques Esper said the business would draw about 25 per cent of its power from the 340 solar panels arranged on top of the 15,000sq m factory, which had become a showpiece.

Less energy-intensive businesses, such as warehouses, could expect to draw all their power from a similar system and sell about

75 per cent back to the grid, he said.

The solar farm had created a buzz in the manufacturing industry, because the bespoke steel frame – designed by Hilton Manufacturing – was light enough to install on a rooftop without reinforcement.

"We're hoping to inspire other people, especially (the owners of) empty factory

roofs around us," Mr Esper said. "There are millions of square meters of factory roofs out there which could be used for a good cause."

A viewing platform and training room helped visitors to see the solar farm in action, while a weather station instructed the panels to sit flat in high winds.

It was a tense night when wild weather hit Melbourne

earlier this month. Mr Esper took a laptop to bed and watched the live feed from two rooftop cameras.

"My wife couldn't believe it ... I said I'd rather be watching than collecting solar panels from neighbours' front yards," he said.

The system featured 6km of cable and smart technology that alerted operators to panel defects.

"We thought 'we're doing a one-of-a-kind system, let's put all the smarts in it'."