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PORT FOR THE FUTURE.

PORT FOR HASTINGS TO PROMOTE BUSINESS IN SOUTH EAST.

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Port for the future

By CASEY NEILL

GREATER Dandenong business is getting behind the Port of Hastings as a confidence-booster for investment in the region.

But the Committee for Dandenong is also calling for infrastructure upgrades to support the potential growth.

"At the very least we would need it all operating effectively before the port is in place. Otherwise there'll be no investment," chairman Gary Castrium said.

"They (governments) need to be making the right signals to industry in the area."

Committee for Dandenong and Pitcher Partners will hold a Port of Hastings project briefing for key local businesses on 22 July.

Committee spokeswoman Jill Walsh said the port would drive business growth in the South-East, and the forum would outline the project's key features and help businesses identify opportunities.

Port of Hastings Development Authority CEO Mike Lean will speak, as

will Ports, Major Projects and Manufacturing Minister David Hodgett.

"It's to firstly concentrate on the Port of Hastings development as not a pie in the sky, long-term thing, but to try and bring it forward and put some political pressure to bring it forward," Ms Walsh said.

"It's a good news story for Dandenong. It's huge in terms of confidence and investment."

Ms Walsh said there'd been recent job announcements for Geelong.

"We're a bit bemused by that because there's not been any attention given to Dandenong," she said.

"A large part of the auto component industry is in Dandenong South and the effects of that have not yet been felt.

"That will just gradually roll out and those jobs will go unless there's more investment into Dandenong and more confidence to invest into Dandenong to create jobs for those people."

Mr Castrium said the metropolitan planning authority had designated Dandenong South as a national employment cluster.

"It links in the with port," he said.

"I think the great thing for people in and around Dandenong is employment, and significantly improved infrastructure, because the port's going to require that.

"There's a lot more strength in arguments about extra rail links, extra road links ... and that's certainly going to be good for people living out here and people employing out here."

A 180-hectare site in Dandenong South has been designated as an inland container port, with the Bunnings distribution centre the first business to move in.

Mr Castrium said it would bring thousands of jobs to the area over the coming decade, but would put pressure on roads, particularly Abbotts Road.

He said the Bangholme Bypass concept needed to become a reality to more effectively link the area with EastLink and the South Gippsland Freeway.

He said the Remington Drive overpass, linking the road with Pound Road West, was a key component and

the group would continue to advocate for it to be constructed as a toll road to speed up the process.

City of Greater Dandenong will extend Produce Drive to meet Abbotts Road over the next year as part of the connection, with financial support from a key user of the road, Aldi.

The council has indicated it will expand Abbotts Road to a dual lane carriage way in 2015-'16, completing another piece of the bypass.

But Mr Castrium said there wasn't yet a timeline on sealing Bangholme Road, from the Hammond Road corner.

"It could be a while," he said.

"What we need to advocate is that it needs to happen within a reasonable timeframe, particularly if the Port of Hastings and the inland port development are proceeding.

"We'd love to see one of the parties commit to the Remington Drive overpass before the election.

"We'd be saying that the Remington Overpass is still our priority."