

■ Call for radical rethink over work creation strategy...

Jobs blueprint

By CAM LUCADOU-WELLS

A RADICAL rethink of the State Government's jobs plan is needed to tackle alarming unemployment rates of 20 per cent in Dandenong and Doveton, say manufacturing and social services leaders.

The State Government, facing a rising Victorian unemployment rate of 6.6 per cent, has placed job creation high on its agenda.

According to Federal Government estimates in September, the south-east's highest jobless suburbs include Dandenong (20.5 per cent), Doveton (20.4 per cent), Dandenong North (11.1 per cent) and Hallam (9.9 per cent).

The region is heading for more potential pain - with 3400 local jobs linked to the departing automotive industry.

South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance executive director Adrian Boden said more government funds were needed to help manufacturers innovate and grow.

"Banks aren't lending money to manufacturers, there are hardly any venture capitalists and governments say they aren't handing out money.

"If we don't invest here, manufacturers have no option but to go overseas."

Mr Boden said the qualifications of skilled migrants were unrecognised and underutilised, and local business needed a "level playing field" to compete for government contracts.

He said the new government's decisions had already penalised manufacturers, such as 48 companies within SEM-MA set to benefit from the abandoned East West Link project.

Many were also depending on the

faltering Port of Hastings expansion.

Emma King, chief executive of the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), said the "clear missing part" of the government's policies was the community sector.

"We're the ones working with those vulnerable. We think we play a constructive part in getting people back to work."

She said the philanthropically-backed Doveton College project - which combined school with early childhood and family services - was an example of how to link unemployed parents with work and study providers.

"Long-term this is cost-effective but most importantly it's going to turn lives around."

Last week Dandenong MP Gabrielle Williams raised her concerns about the human consequences of the car industry's "pending departure" in parliament.

"That is 3400 families that are looking down the barrel of a gun as they face some pretty tough times."

Ms Williams said the region could remain at the forefront of manufacturing's changing face.

Employment Minister Jacinta Allan listed programs to get the state back to work such as incentives for employers hiring long-term jobless, youth and re-trenched workers, and restoring TAFE funding.

Ms Allan said the government set 50 per cent local content benchmarks for its train and tram orders - which would assist local companies such as Dandenong-based Bombardier Transportation.

Good job news on the menu, Page 3.

EMPLOYMENT. ALARM
REGION HEADING FOR 3400 LOSS
OF LOCAL JOBS AS
AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY DEPARTS.

BUSINESS - UNEMPLOYMENT AS
HOTTER TRADE
JOBS BLUEPRINT

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