
Steelmakers urge Australian government for boost

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It is reported that local steel unions have called on Australian federal government to take action to boost the embattled industry amid predictions more Illawarra jobs will go over the next 6 months.

Mr Paul Howes national secretary of Australian Workers' Union will recommend a range of initiatives at the union's national conference on the Gold Coast. At the forefront will be a call for the government to use Australian product as it attempts to drag the nation out of the financial crisis via infrastructure spending.

Mr Howes said that "It's no use spending the money on infrastructure, things like roads and bridges and use Chinese steel. By using Australian product the Government can ensure steel mills like Port Kembla keep ticking over."

The Australian Industry Group has released a package of fiscal measures it believes will help protect the jobs market. These include tax incentives for companies which invest in training and development and a call for USD 2 billion to be spent on local, state and national infrastructure.

Mr Leanne Grogan regional manager of Ai Group said that "Illawarra is likely to feel the real impact of the economic downturn as a number of major projects, such as BlueScope blast furnace reline and tourist centre development at Bulli Tops, come to an end."

Mr Andy Gillespie branch secretary at Australian Workers' Union Port Kembla said that the double whammy challenge of the financial crisis and emissions trading scheme made this one of the most crucial periods in steel making history.

He said that "It's not a level playing field at the moment. And what you have with the emissions trading scheme is a situation where Australian companies will lose business and it won't make one iota of a difference to the environment. With one tonne of steel produced here you're 50 per cent better off environmentally than if that steel was produced in some overseas area, because of the process and equipment here, which is what could happen."

(Sourced from www.illawarramercury.com.au)

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