

Just the climate for jobs

'There's no question that job can be created here as part of he response to climate change'

THE global struggle against climate change has created a unique opportunity for the Illawarra to transform itself into a centre of innovation, research and cutting-edge clean technology.

That is the view of ACTU president Sharan Burrow and Federal Opposition industry spokesman Senator Kim Carr, who yesterday outlined a vision for the region's future prosperity.

Both were in Wollongong addressing stakeholders in the Illawarra's manufacturing sector.

"There's no question that jobs can be created here as part of the response to climate change," Ms Burrow said.

"Youth unemployment in this region is frightening, but if there is investment in renewable energy, jobs will be created directly in production and distribution."

Sen Carr indicated a federal Labor government would use existing infrastructure to strengthen links between traditional industries and emerging technologies.

"We want the blue collars to work with the white coats," he said.

"There is a perception that manufacturing is dumb, dirty and dangerous - we want to show that it can be safe, clever and clean."

The recent emergence of climate change as a major policy challenge has created an uncertainty about the sustainability of the Illawarra's traditional industries, especially coalmining and steel production.

However, the message from Ms Burrow and Sen Carr was that "sunrise industries" such as solar, thermal and geothermal energy, could co-exist with those that have sustained the Illawarra for generations.

Those traditional industries would be redefined by cutting edge technologies, clean coal especially, developed in the region and exported internationally.

"Not only can jobs be created, but they can be sustained because there's a perfect symmetry between business, university and the other stakeholders in the sector," Ms Burrow said.

Sen Carr acknowledged the shift would not occur overnight, and that short-term employment trends could be affected.

"We can't protect every job. This isn't about people doing the jobs their fathers did and nothing ever changing," he said. "We've got to approach these problems in a positive frame of mind."



Innovative ideas: ACTU president Sharan Burrow speaks with Senator Kim Carr during an address to stakeholders in