

Manufacturing sector united in common goal

STAKEHOLDERS in the Illawarra's critical manufacturing sector yesterday resolved to speak with one voice and lobby more forcefully to address the needs of industry in the region.

Representatives of business groups and manufacturing firms met union officials and politicians, putting aside natural tensions to explore common ground.

South Coast Labour Council secretary Arthur Rorris indicated consensus was crucial to the region's key employment sector.

"Nationally, we're losing more than 1000 jobs a week in this industry, which forms the backbone of the Illawarra-South Coast economy," Mr Rorris said. "The stakeholders in this sector need to present a united front to government - if we work on the things we agree on, it will be in the best interests of the industry and the region."

The stakeholders reiterated their determination to pull in the same direction on major policy challenges, such as infrastructure and skills development.

Mr Rorris identified the Port Kembla expansion as an example of what multistakeholder groups could accomplish, indicating consensus was vital when pursuing "big ticket items", such as the Maldon-Dombarton rail link.

"Infrastructure is one area where unions are at one with employers and industry groups.

"It's an election year, and this all forms the strategy that will allow this region to do its own bidding."

Work will now begin on a submission to the Federal Economic and Finance Committee, and the united group will seek representation on the NSW Manufacturing Council.