

Unions rally to tackle Telstra

'People power' key to saving call centre: Rorris

A COALITION of unions and community stakeholders will tomorrow launch a final bid to persuade Telstra to keep its Wollongong call centre open.

Earlier this month, Telstra announced a plan to close its call centres in Wollongong, Newcastle, Canberra and Launceston, and instead concentrate its operations in expanded centres in Perth, Townsville, Brisbane and

Sydney. The closure of the Wollongong centre will force 88 workers to either accept redundancy or transfer to a job elsewhere.

South Coast Labour Council secretary Arthur Rorris yesterday urged the public to rally behind the campaign to keep the call centre open.

"It's more than just local jobs, it's also about services to the local economy, Mr Rorris said.

"The decision to run services out of Sydney means we will get a B-grade service and shows that this community is being taken for granted by Telstra."

Delegates from the Communications Electrical Plumbing Union and the Community and Public Sector Union will visit Wollongong, hoping to mobilise enough public opinion to reverse Telstra's decision.

"Things like this are won by people power. The employees and the unions have a role to play, but the pressure needs to be broader than that, and we need to make sure it is well targeted," Mr Rorris said.

Wollongong-based Liberal Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells said she was disappointed Telstra had decided to close its call centre, but added it was not the Federal Government's place to intervene.

"When the shares were sold, there was some talk of rationalisation," Sen Fierravanti-Wells said.