

# Geelong needs federal support to put us on the global map

WITH only days until Australia votes for the party that will form the next federal government, the race is on in earnest to influence political leaders and local federal candidates to announce funding commitments for the top priorities in each electorate.

While there have been a number of very positive election commitments made during this campaign, including planning funds for rail line duplication between Waurn Ponds and South Geelong, reclassification of Avalon Airport as a regional airport, \$20 million to upgrade the Great Ocean Road and a \$20 million jobs and investment package, the reality is that many of this region's key

## CHAMBER UPDATE

with Bernadette Uzelac



infrastructure priorities, which will drive investment and jobs, have been sadly overlooked.

Our local candidates understand these priorities only too well and are mostly highly supportive of them, but the lack of traction at this crucial moment in Geelong's changing economy is bewildering.

The big ticket item for this region is, of course, the convention and exhibition centre.

This is a major project that is

estimated to inject \$106.6 million a year into the regional economy, creating 650 direct and indirect jobs during construction and a further 434 direct and ongoing positions.

It's a project that has been around for decades but had failed to gain traction and momentum until more recent years.

While the business case does need to be revised, and funds have been allocated by the State Government to complete this task, the lack of a current business case does not preclude the project from being considered during this election campaign, with any commitment made subject to finalisation of the business case.

Geelong cannot afford to

wait another three years for the next federal election.

Major infrastructure projects transcend state and political boundaries. This is a project of national significance that will attract major international conferences and lift Australia's international tourism and visitor economy, putting Geelong on the international map and on the road to self-sufficiency.

Connect that with an international airport at Avalon and the international thought leadership and research capability emanating out of Deakin University, and we have the ingredients that will propel Geelong's economy and future as a leading regional city.

In Geelong, we are unified in

our efforts to advocate for the region's top priorities. Business, industry and community leaders have collaborated to present a unified voice like no other region in Australia.

A city as diverse as Geelong requires key investment into many areas to drive economic and social prosperity.

Investment in our arts and culture, sporting facilities, city centre, Avalon Airport, Geelong Yacht Club Safe Harbour Precinct, Land 400, road and rail infrastructure, the start-up economy and the collective impact model of GROW are just some of the key transformative priorities that will drive this region's prosperity.

As a key plank in federal

economic reform policy, investing in key infrastructure priorities will deliver substantial stimulus to increase private investment, jobs and the economic pie that will help to drive down our nation's deficit.

Smart investment in key infrastructure projects in a smart city that is champing at the bit to unlock the enormous growth potential within reach makes not only good business sense but good political sense as well. With the right funding policy levers, Geelong's economic future for the next 50 years will be assured.

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