



DARREN CHEESEMAN MP, MEMBER FOR CORANGAMITE
RICHARD MARLES MP, MEMBER FOR CORIO

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CONNECTING GEELONG BUSINESS

Government launches \$250 million Enterprise Connect network

Geelong is set to benefit after the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Kim Carr, last night delivered on a key election commitment by launching the Rudd Labor Government's \$251 million Enterprise Connect network.

Darren Cheeseman said: "This is good news for businesses in Geelong, where one of the centres will be located, and for the nation."

"Enterprise Connect's \$20 million Innovative Regions Centre will offer direct support to small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Geelong and other targeted regions," Mr Cheesman said.

Richard Marles said: "Geelong and its surrounding region, including the Surf Coast/Barwon, have higher than average unemployment levels – with some areas experiencing unemployment rates of almost 10 per cent."

"The Geelong region is facing pressure and it is vital that we do everything we can to help the region adjust and to make the most of its existing strengths," he said.

The Innovative Regions Centre will provide:

- assistance in business strategies and operations;
- benchmarking of business and manufacturing processes against best practice;
- help in finding the latest research, technology and organisational knowledge to improve products and efficiency;
- access to prototyping and testing facilities to turn good ideas into products; and
- help to cut through red tape and get the best access to government programs.

Mr Cheesman said: "Our manufacturing industries and the services that support them have a great record in innovation and provide a strong base for securing new investment."

"But businesses in the region are facing new challenges and governments need to work with local industry to help it adjust. The advice and grant funding available through this centre will offer meaningful support to local businesses."

Mr Marles said: "The Innovative Regions Centre will give local companies in all sectors better access to new technology, best-practice business advice, export market intelligence and domestic and international supply chains.

"The projects supported by the centre will build stronger connections between local companies, and between Geelong's industrial base and our education, training and research institutions," he said.

A new website with more information on the Innovation Regions Centre is live at www.enterpriseconnect.gov.au or email innovativeregionscentre@innovation.gov.au. Alternatively, call the Enterprise Connect hotline on 131 791.

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