



Friday, 17 February 2017

Open Letter to Gareth Ward MP
Member for Kiama
Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra

What Happened to Your Call for Steel Procurement Reform ?

Dear Gareth,

I write openly and publicly to you to convey the disgust of steelworkers, industry figures and many others in our community that could not believe their ears when they heard the insults hurled towards our steel industry by members of the NSW Liberal Government.

To suggest as he did that the crisis facing the steel industry is due to the laziness and lack of productivity in the workforce suggests that he must have access to some 'alternative facts' to those that the BlueScope Steel CEO, the unions and the international steel industry leaders have been relying on. Or does the NSW Liberal Government really believe that the crisis of overproduction of steel and the international glut is just 'fake news'?

I know that you weren't there when Ryan Park, the Member for Keira moved the Steel Protection Bill in the House but are the ignorant, irrelevant and offensive rants of the Member for Kuringai the best the NSW Liberal Government can offer to oppose the Steel Protection Bill? A Bill that is so important to safeguarding the jobs of thousands of Illawarra workers and the economic future of our region?

I would hope Gareth that you don't share these extreme views from the ultra-right wing nutters in your party that seem to be calling the shots. I also expect that you not only publicly distance yourself from these offensive slurs on our region and our people but that you honour your commitment to address the procurement issue constructively and call an urgent meeting with the key stakeholders on this issue prior to any vote on the Steel Protection Bill.

Given your previous comments on this Bill we understand that you might not support it in its current form. Likewise you must appreciate our disappointment and anger that your Government can't protect jobs in the way that you do not seem to have a problem in protecting the interests of big business, banks and corporations. However, what will not go down well at all Gareth is if your Government shoots down this Bill without a Plan B, an alternative reform of procurement policy to ensure that our money buys our steel and supports local jobs.

I trust that you will give this matter some urgent consideration and your response would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Arthur Rorris
Secretary
South Coast Labour Council