

COOPERATIVE

Please embargo - April 22

EARTHWORKER COOPERATIVE FROM PROTEST TO PRODUCTION



“**Earthworker Cooperative**, an alliance of unions, faith communities, green activists and small manufacturers are facilitating a practical strategy to put green manufacturing jobs in place, starting in Victoria,” Dave Kerin, Project Organiser for **Eureka’s Future Workers Cooperative** announced today, from the site of the Cooperative’s first installation Kildonan UnitingCare agency in Coburg.

“Uniting Church has been an invaluable partner in getting us this far. Antony McMullen, Uniting Church Social Enterprise Catalyst, has made a real difference because people see more clearly the creative nature of this unique alliance. This is about outcomes in employment and for the environment.”

Partners in this alliance, such as progressive companies Everlast and Douglas Solar, are not only concerned about the environment. Speak to them and you are talking to people with hundreds of years of collective manufacturing experience.

“The problem now for any manufacturer, even a cooperative manufactory, is how to compete with cheaper goods from the developing countries, where workers are exploited through very low incomes,” Kerin says.

Kerin has been talking to these little firms for over 10 years and he is passionate: “They have watched the dismantling of Australia’s manufacturing base. They have been on the frontline trying to hold on to Australia’s manufacturing in the green technologies, where the growth trajectory is.”

He says unions are now providing the means to do things differently.

“Unions will provide the way to sell the cooperative’s goods, using the Agreements which they and employers negotiate. Where the employers receive an incentive payment, everybody wins out of the new strategy.

“Cooperative manufactories, building the new green technologies needed by the Nation, provide at least one rail track out of the combined threat of climate and economic crisis,” Kerin says.

“Cooperatives also operate from a set of democratic values shared by unions, faith communities and social movements, enabling the sort of people’s power engagement needed in the economy today.

“Worker-owners on the job, unionised workers and their families consuming the new Australian goods, rewarded employers actively assisting the process, and with social movements campaigning around the economic, environmental and social benefits; Cooperatives provide the appropriate means to achieve all of that.

“This strategy is practical, social sector economics spearheaded by our unions and the rest of civil society.

“Earthworker Cooperative does not seek to eliminate, but rather to position our communities so that we *own* the dual climate and economic crisis facing us, so that we can finally begin to realistically deal with them” Kerin concluded.

**10:00 am Monday 22 April
Kildonan UnitingCare
512 Sydney Rd Coburg
LIGHT REFRESHMENT PROVIDED**