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**LIBBY COKER  
LABOR CANDIDATE FOR CORANGAMITE**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
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**LIBBY COKER:** It's a fantastic day for Geelong and for the Corangamite region. We have a brilliant announcement for you today. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we meet, and pay respects to elders past, present and emerging. I would like to acknowledge a few of the important people we have today, apart from everyone else. We have Martin Pakula from the State Labor team, Minister for Sport. We of course have John Eren and Christine Couzens – our local members here in Geelong. And we have Richard Marles, my friend and colleague, Member for Corio. And importantly today, we have the infrastructure man himself, Anthony Albanese. I remember, standing in the last campaign, hearing him kicking the footy around this ground, making other announcements. What's so important to Geelong, is this club and this ground, that creates so much economic drive and connectivity for our community. When you come out on a Saturday afternoon, and you see the crowds come to Geelong to watch the team play football, it is a sight to behold. Today we are going to make an announcement about the final stage. And so I don't steal any of Anthony's thunder, I'd like to introduce him now to make that announcement. Thank you.

**ANTHONY ALBANESE:** Look, thanks very much Libby, and to my Parliamentary colleagues, and friends, particularly those who've joined us from the Geelong Football Club. This is indeed a great day, and it's great to be back here in Geelong once again with Libby and Richard to announce that a Federal Labor Government will deliver \$20 million to ensure the completion of

this great magnificent stadium. This will be one of the great regional stadiums of the world, but certainly, the best regional stadium in Australia. And it's appropriate, because this is a great regional city. The fact is that this upgrade – completing Stage 5, allowing for the full bowl to be completed, but also an upgrade of the women's facilities here, as well as improving the display and memorabilia that are available through the museum here as well, will bring even more people to Geelong.

This decision will increase the capacity of the stadium to 40,000, and I acknowledge the fact that the Victorian Labor Government is contributing over \$100 million to this project. We contributed \$14 million for the upgrade, the last time I was the Infrastructure Minister six years ago. The fact is that this is a driver of the economy, a driver in jobs in the short term in construction. But in the long term, enabling not just sporting fixtures, but other fixtures to be here in Geelong: bringing tourists, bringing economic activity, and driving this local regional economy.

The other thing is about this ground and about Geelong Football Club, in particular, is that why should Government play a role in terms of funding? The fact is that footy is about more than just kicking a ball around on the oval. It's about identity. It's about a sense of who people are. Football and team sport can really drive, particularly for young people, can drive healthier outcomes. It can also teach young people how to win, how to lose, how to engage with people that they don't go to school with. It is really important, and the fact that we've seen such a growth in the women's game as well is, I think, worthy of congratulations to the AFL. So this is a project that will bring great pride to the city of Geelong, and I think, I'm very pleased that Libby and Richard have lobbied so strongly to make sure that this happens.

Victoria also, can I say – I'll be proud to turn around the infrastructure deficit that's here from the Commonwealth, when it comes to Victoria. At its low point, Victoria was receiving, in the last financial year, 7.7 per cent of the national infrastructure budget. Victorians make up one in four Australians. Victoria is Australia's fastest growing state. Not only the capital city of Melbourne, but of course, Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo – these great regional cities here.

The fact is that, when we were last in Government, we built the Regional Rail Link. We built roads around Geelong here. But in recent times, Victoria simply hasn't got its fair share. We're determined to make sure that happens, and Victoria will in fact be receiving above 25 per cent of the national infrastructure budget. A massive turnaround, and one which is entirely appropriate given that the Commonwealth Government, under the three Liberal Prime Ministers we've had in the chaotic last five years, has short-changed Victorians, has punished them for voting for Daniel Andrews' Government. Well, I look forward to partnering with Daniel Andrews' Government, including Martin Pakula and other Ministers who I've worked with constructively in the past, to actually get things done for Victoria – both in Melbourne, but importantly also, in the regions.

**MARTIN PAKULA:** Thanks Albo, and thanks Libby, and to Richard and John and Christine, and our reps from the Geelong Football Club – Brian Cook and others, Colin Carter. Thanks very much. Look, today's the day for the club, and for my Federal colleagues – I just want to say, on behalf of the Victorian Government, how pleased I am that we have, in the Federal Labor Opposition, a Party that wants to partner with us. As Anthony says, we've been short-changed on infrastructure in Victoria, in infrastructure funding from the Commonwealth in Victoria for the last six years. And it's really meant that in a whole range of major projects, the Victorian State Government and Victorian taxpayers have had to go it alone. And this announcement, like so many other announcements we've heard in recent times, are an example of the fact that, you know, we may be about to see that all change.

We want to see a partnership between the State Government and a Federal Government – one that will work with us on infrastructure, one that will provide Victorians with their fair share. And this \$20 million contribution, to add to the \$102 million that the State Labor Government has

already committed to this project, is incredibly welcome. It's great news for the club and for Geelong more generally. And you know, as John Eren said to me a few moments ago, this will mean that without question, Kardinia Park will be the best regional sporting facility in the nation. This contribution from the Feds will help us to finish that stadium build, so that we will have a 40,000-seat capacity stadium, with the most modern facilities, with female change rooms, better facilities for patrons, for players. And that's something that we are very, very pleased about.

So we look forward to the opportunity to work with the Federal Government that will partner with us, that will ensure that Victoria gets its fair share of infrastructure funding, and will allow us to do so much more by combining our efforts, and by ensuring that Victorian communities are properly looked after, not just from a sporting sense, but from a general infrastructure sense as well. As Anthony says, this is not just a sporting play. This is about growing our regional economies and our regional communities – making sure that the benefits of economic growth are spread beyond the capital cities. It's something that I'm very committed to as Minister for Sport, Tourism and Major Events, and as Minister for Jobs. And I'm so pleased to be here today with Richard and Libby and Anthony and others for this exciting announcement, and I thank the Federal Opposition very much for their commitment.

**RICHARD MARLES:** Thank you. This is a very exciting day for everyone in Geelong, and certainly for supporters of this great club, but for this wonderful city. Can I thank Anthony and Martin for the contribution that they've made, and the announcement that's been made today, which sees the completion of Kardinia Park as the home of Geelong Football Club, and as a modern sporting stadium, which will be the most significant piece of sporting infrastructure in regional Australia. It's great to be here with my colleague Libby, and with Chris and John and Brian, and all the representatives of Geelong Football Club. The heart and soul of Geelong is here at this ground. I first came here in 1975 to watch the Cats play, and it was a very different place then to what it is now. And the significance of this stadium, and what it will be to the Geelong Football Club, is that it future-proofs the Geelong Football Club – men and women – as a part of the Australian Football League. And as well as we're travelling at the moment, there's actually nothing inevitable about that. The Geelong Football Club is the biggest sporting club in regional Australia.

In many respects, it's unlikely that a club of this kind is able to survive in a national competition. But it is, and it's thriving, and this stadium and its completion is so important to that. And that is critical for the town, because there is no more unifying social phenomena in the city of Geelong than the Geelong Football Club. People identify with this team strongly. Life is just better because we have the Cats in our town, and this means we will always have that. This facility, and the \$20 million that's being spent, will ensure that we have women's changing rooms, so that this continues to be an AFLW ground as well at the highest level. And this is the only ground within the AFL which is both a women's and a men's ground. It will also see the completion of the Geelong Sporting Museum, and Bob Gartland is here today, who's done such an incredible job in collecting the memorabilia associated with this Football Club, which when you look at it, is really a journey into all of our childhoods. And that will be there for everyone to see, and it's a wonderful asset for the people of Geelong to be able to see and witness, and the completion of the stadium will allow us to do that.

Finally, I just want to say – Anthony and Martin know this as well as anyone – as politicians, we sometimes at our best we get to direct traffic here and there. But really, today is an achievement of the Geelong Football Club and the Kardinia Park Stadium Trust. It is a wonderful achievement on their part to make the case and to project manage the building of this stadium. And I particularly want to acknowledge Brian Cook, who celebrated his 20<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> – 20th anniversary of the club, and in that period of time, has seen this stadium go from, essentially a municipal suburban facility to one of the key stadiums in this country. And it's an incredible achievement on the part of Brian, and that's as much his work as anyone's here today. And so Brian, for all of the

attention on us at the moment, we just really want to thank you. This is an amazing achievement on your part. Thank you all for coming here today.

**ALBANESE:** I'll be taking questions.

**REPORTER:** Albo, who's winning the game of pork-barrelling down here in Geelong? Is it Labor or Liberal?

**ALBANESE:** What we're engaged in is good policy-making based upon the evidence that's before us. The fact is that Geelong – I've been meeting, for how many years, about this project ...

**PAKULA:** About a decade.

**ALBANESE:** I've visited here on – this would be my third or fourth occasion. Last time around, Joel [Selwood] and I had kick to kick, and I managed not to drop one, to the disappointment of the Fourth Estate. We'll see how we go today. But we make no apologies – no apologies for Victoria getting its fair share. None. And the fact is that Victoria hasn't been getting its fair share. And it's one thing for the Government to come to projects like Regional Rail Link that it opposed and voted against, and come to the opening. It's another thing for them to actually fund new roads like we did – Princes Highway East and West, the Geelong Ring Road, Regional Rail Link, the community infrastructure that we funded, including here, last time we were in Government. The fact is that during that period, Victoria received 26 per cent of infrastructure funding. Under the Coalition, that fell to 7.7 per cent. That's not on. And I worked with, indeed on the Melbourne Metro for example, I worked with the Bailleau Government. We had an M.O.U. We had my Department Secretary on the board of Melbourne Metro. We had \$3 billion in the Budget for Melbourne Metro that was ripped out when Tony Abbott came to office. Well, under Federal Labor, Victoria will get its fair share, and we will invest in infrastructure, invest in schools, invest in hospitals. And we can do that, because we are closing tax loopholes at the top end. That is giving us the capacity to be able to invest in the future economic growth of our cities and our regions.

**REPORTER:** This project was already fully funded by the State Government. Why is the Federal money necessary?

**ALBANESE:** Well, the fact is that the money is necessary, because of some of the additional works that are required, including – this will ensure that the women's change rooms can be specifically for them. That's one of the things that's happened. And it isn't it a good thing, that now in grounds around the country, the issue of women's change rooms, and giving those separate spaces, is something that is being delivered? It's been delivered in small grounds in the community, and it's being delivered now at this major facility. That's a good thing. The sporting museum – making sure that that can go ahead is a very good thing as well. This is a good project. We are very pleased to partner with the Victorian Government and Geelong to make sure that this can be delivered, and this will ensure that this ground is as good as it should be. This ground as good as the people of Geelong. And they deserve a first class facility. That's what they'll get.

**REPORTER:** Kardinia Park's a very well-trod path during election campaigns, but other parts of this electorate in Corio are sitting on unemployment rates of 21 per cent. Wouldn't the money be better off spent on projects that address those sort of issues?

**ALBANESE:** Guess what? This project will create jobs in construction. It will not just create jobs in construction in the short-term, it'll create jobs in the long term. Jobs, in terms of people who

come to this facility, and stay in hotels to watch their footy team play. I'm from Marrickville in Sydney. My tennis partner at the mighty Marrickville Tennis Club, which isn't quite as grand as this, I must say, but it is on grass – he's a Geelong fan. He and a group of people from Marrickville come down here every year to watch the Swans/Cats game. And that – they come for a few days – for a weekend. They spend money here. They are creating jobs here. But as well, this facility, by it being completed – the full bowl – it will ensure that other activities can come here as well, and that will create jobs. We can have cricket here – international cricket here as well. We can have a range of sporting and other activities. This is an ideal location for concerts, for other activities, that will be boosted as a result of this investment. So make no mistake – this investment is precisely about jobs. It's about jobs in the long term, by building a facility that will attract activity to Geelong. And what it will do is ensure that those jobs aren't just during construction, but there during the long term.

**REPORTER:** There's another project in Norlane – the Northern ARC – which needs exactly this amount of money. You would have been briefed on that project. The council and other community leaders are really pushing for that project to be funded.

**ALBANESE:** Well, what we've said is that we'll have city partnerships that aren't just an election commitment. Our city partnership model, when we recreate the Major Cities Unit, will work with Geelong. And I've had countless meetings with G21 and the various groups in Canberra, and here it must be said as well. I've attended meetings and roundtables at Deakin. I've done – I'm a regular visitor to this region. And one of the things that we've said is: we'll honour everything that's in the city deal that's been announced. But we want to build an ongoing relationship between the three levels of Government – Federal, State and local – so that you can have priorities identified, and funding can flow as a result of that. So our city partnership model, I think, is actually what city deals should be, not just one-off signatures on a document and then it disappears. It's about changing the planning relationship so as to identify, for example: what are the comparative advantages of this region that can be developed, that will ensure that economic growth continues into the future? We need to actually be much better than we've been at the past at planning. Our three levels of Government can make things very difficult indeed. But we want to have an ongoing relationship, through a city partnership, that will also engage with organisations like G21, with the private sector, with the university here and other activity, to make sure that we get it right into the future.

**REPORTER:** Libby, can I ask you a quick one? Do you think an announcement like this will help you win your seat? To win the seat?

**COKER:** To me, this is about providing input into the economy, into jobs, and into our social cohesion. I particularly like the fact that it's going to support women's football. I've actually made a number of announcements in Corangamite to support women in sport. So for me – I'm focused, very much so, on delivering for our region. That's my key. That's what's going to win this election: is a focus on what actually delivers for our community.

**REPORTER:** The PM's down here today with Sarah Henderson. Are you worried about that and what effect that may have in the last couple of days?

**COKER:** Not at all. I think that – it is a competition. And where it is – it's a fight to win Corangamite. But my focus has to be on what delivers for our communities. What gives most people a fair go? And at the moment, we haven't seen that with this Government. A lot of people tell me, as I walk through this region, knock on doors, make calls, how frustrated they are that they cannot keep up with the cost of living. Schools and education and climate change – this is coming through as very key issues for our region. And my focus is to make sure that people understand our policy, and make a decision at the election to vote for Labor, because we're the party that's going to deliver for the vast majority of Australians a future that's going to be better

than what it is currently.

**ALBANESE:** Thanks very much.

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**Authorised by Noah Carroll, ALP, Canberra.**