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More jobs than workers at ground zero in Trump's trade war

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Delta, Ohio is ground zero for winners in Donald Trump's trade war.

As tough talk and tariffs roil markets and worry policymakers the 3000 residents of this town, which sits just outside Toledo and in the orbit of once-mighty industrial centre Michigan, are seeing not much in the way of downside.



Rolled coil at Bluescope's Port Kembla works in Australia ADAM MCLEAN

"The biggest problem we have in this general area is that, as of last count, we have 1250 employment opportunities available that we could not fill," Delta Village administrator Brad Peebles tells Fairfax Media.

"So if you have anybody in Australia that wants to work, send them over."

Delta's experience has a particular connection to Australia too. The North Star steel mill, located just outside of Delta, is owned and operated by this country's biggest steelmaker, BlueScope, and has emerged as a major beneficiary of the escalating trade war between the US and China.

The Melbourne-based BlueScope imports 300,000 tonnes of steel coil to the US from its Australian plant in Port Kembla. But it also has about \$3 billion worth of assets in the US, and employs more than 3000 American workers.

BlueScope's North Star steel mill, in Ohio, employs about 400 staff and produces more than 2 million tonnes of steel a year.

BlueScope announced a \$US700 million (\$A959 million) upgrade to the plant in August and Peebles says more development is flowing into the region following the announcement by the Australian steelmaker.

"Since the announcement of the ...expansion a \$65 million scrap plant has been announced as a direct result of the with another \$200mn of investment of new steel processors who will use the NorthStar product" Peebles says.

Mr Trump's 25 per cent tariffs on most imported steel have helped drive up the price of US-made steel, while tax cuts have lifted demand for steel from the country's auto manufacturing and building sectors.

BlueScope was exempted from the tariff partly because the steel it exports to America is turned into higher value product in plants on the country's west coast.

It's a good time to be a steelmaker in America

Mark Vassella

"It's a good time to be a steelmaker in America," says BlueScope chief executive Mark Vassella.

BlueScope last month shot to a full-year profit of \$1.57 billion – its best result in more than a decade – and announced it was considering a major expansion of its Ohio steel mill where it expects strong growth to continue.

Vassella says the company would immediately conduct a feasibility study to add up to 900,000 tonnes of steelmaking capacity to the North Star plant, a third electric arc furnace and a second slab caster.

A decision on the expansion is likely to be revealed in coming months.