

Business must work to keep staff: MWCCI

BUSINESSES have been urged to do all they can to not become a "FIFO statistic" as Mid West mining projects come on stream.

Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO Bill Headley told business leaders to work hard to retain staff amid competition from the resources sector.

"Businesses, look outside square ways to keep current and future staff," he said.

"Put it this way: why would you want to live, work and play anywhere else?"

"Don't be a FIFO statistic."
Mr Headley made the comments in his closing address at the Mid West Economic and Resources Summit.

He also called on employers in the tourism and hospitality industry to grab the opportunities available now to expand their businesses.

"We need to make Geraldton a tourism des-

tination — not a right-hand turn to destinations in the north.

"There are many attractions here, but we need a change of mindset."

"Stop thinking it's our town and tourists are just a pain in the backside."

"Provide good service with a friendly demeanour."

Summit speakers also urged employers to watch for contract maintenance opportunities should

Australia win its bid for the Square Kilometre Array astronomy project.

City of Greater Geraldton CEO Tony Brun said construction

on the project would most likely come from international contractors, but with 3700 dishes there were potential maintenance opportuni-

ties.

"Electrical, cleaning and servicing industries have big opportunity because we're right next door," he said.

— Gavin Box

head clash

time', then there needs to be planning, there business cases need to be put — otherwise it won't be in forward estimates," he said.

The panel was then asked what plans were in place so additional freight and truck movements through Geraldton did not impact on local traffic as mine projects came on line.

Mr Brun said the City had its road corridors and alignments in place and was waiting on the State Government to move forward.

"That's why we need funding for these proj-

ects in the next four years and not after," he said.

Member for Geraldton Ian Blayney sympathised, but blamed the previous State government.

"The problem is, some years ago it wasn't done and Main Roads didn't have funds for it," he said.

The last word went to Mr Headley.

"We have a dual-lane highway between Perth and Bunbury, yet we are going to have 600 road trains a month," he said.

— Gavin Box

Rent assurance

AN influx of cashed-up workers for Oakejee will not result in skyrocketing Geraldton rental prices, according to Member for Geraldton Ian Blayney.

Mr Blayney told delegates at this week's Mid West Economic and Resources Summit

Geraldton was protected by a ready land supply and an aggressive house building sector.

"I don't think the

pressures in the Pilbara will happen here," he said.

"There won't be a scenario in Geraldton where workers get an allowance to rent privately and hike up rents, unlike what happened up north."

Mr Blayney said port developer Oakejee Port and Rail had given the State Government a guarantee it would not give workers such an allowance.

Western Power hits back

WESTERN Power has countered criticism over time taken on development of a 330kV transmission line from Eneabba to Geraldton.

Western Power transmission planning and projects manager Douglas Thomson brought up the issue during a presentation at this week's Mid West Economic

Resources Summit.

He said while forecasts were for power consumption to increase with Oakejee, Geraldton Port expansion and new mines, State Government policy was to build infrastructure "just in time".

"The State requires a return on investment," he said.

Mr Thomson said the regulator required that projects go at the right

time and for the right cost. He said Western Power would consult with the community over the project in late September or early October.

City and industry leaders say that if the transmission line is not built soon it could delay mining and renewable energy projects.

— Gavin Box